Bartolomé De Las Casas and the Passions of Language

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Abstract

Hailed in our time as a pioneering voice of universal human rights and anti-colonial discourse, Fr. Bartolomé de las Casas (1484 – 1566) is widely considered a vehement, and even violent, writer. My dissertation unveils and evaluates the emotive rhetoric that Las Casas employs in his major works with the aim of converting his reader to the pro-indigenous cause, which sought to enact concrete political goals, such as the abolishment of *encomienda*, or the full de-legitimization of the wars of conquest. Las Casas's rhetorical strategies, I argue, emerge from his idiosyncratic and expansive notion of conversion, a process that he understood through his homiletic and rhetorical praxis. Chapter 1 therefore reconstructs the friar's theorizations on the emotive power of language by reading into his treatise on peaceful evangelization, *De unico vocationis modo*.

And yet, ever since the publication of the *Brevíssima relación de la destruición de la Indias* (1552), Las Casas's impassioned language has fueled all kinds of emotive responses. As performative speech, Las Casas's emotive speech is prone to *infelicity*, that is, its *illocutionary force* may not always achieve its desired *perlocutionary effects*. In order to address this issue and avoid adding yet another emotional response, my critical intervention engages with the intensity embedded in Las Casas's language by reconceiving it as affect.

Drawing from affect theory, I postulate that intensities can be further identified as the workings of discernible affective structures, which, even as they emerge from language, nonetheless operate beyond mimetic and semiotic registers. Chapter 2 posits that the

Brevísima's affective structure is that of reiteration of the image of the abject; chapter 3 underscores the affective structure of interjection in the *Historia de las Indias*, which aids the friar in his effort to evoke shame but also express his and Spain's guilt; and chapter 4 unveils the friar's use of ethnographic digressions in his *Apologética historia sumaria* that reveal the ethnographer's own enamored gaze of the Amerindian and their cultural practices. These affective structures, I conclude, can account for the myriad emotional responses that readers may experience when reading Las Casas.

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Introduction: On the Passions of Language

"Impassioned," "vehement," "hyperbolic," "violent," these have been the usual adjectives used to describe the language of fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1484 – 1566). Yet, behind these high-decibel adjectives usually lies the powerful impression of a slim book.

For better or worse, Bartolomé de las Casas is still primarily known by his famous *Brevíssima relación de la destruyción de la Indias* (1552), an incendiary tract that vividly depicts the atrocities perpetrated by the Spanish conquistadors against the indigenous peoples of the New World. Widely published, translated, and even illustrated,[1] the *Brevísima* helped reinforce anti-Spanish sentiment across Protestant Europe and contributed to the creation of Spain's "Black Legend." Its powerful depictions and wide circulation not only overshadowed the other published treatises of Las Casas, but the *Brevíssima*, synecdochically speaking, seems to have become the friar himself.

The *Brevíssima*'s impassioned language has mainly fueled the ire of Las Casas's detractors for centuries.[2] The conquistador Bernardo de Vargas Machuca took such offense that sixty years after the publication of the *Brevísima* he felt compelled to write the polemical counter-text *Apologías y discursos de las conquistas occidentales* (1612). Vargas Machuca's

[1] As is known and as we will further discuss,Theodor de Bry (1528 -1598) famously illustrated the 1598 Latin edition (*Narratio Regionum indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima*, Frankfurt) of the *Brevísima*. For a historical contextualization and an interpretation of De Bry's images see Tom Conley. "De Bry's Las Casas" in *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, 1992; for more on the circulation and some Protestant uses of the *Brevísima* see José Rabasa. "Of Massacre and Representation: Painting Hatred and Ceremonies of Possession in Protestant Anti-Spanish Pamphleteering" in *Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier*, 2000.

[2] For a list of some of Las Casas's more famous detractors see Isacio Pérez Fernández. "Apéndices." *Brevísima relación de la destruición de las Indias*. Universidad Central de Bayamón, Centro de Estudios de los Dominicos del Caribe, Instituto de Estudios Históricos Juan Alejo de Arizmendi, 2000.

counter-pamphlet, which presents itself as a complement to the abstract theorizations of the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, sets out to defend the tarnished honor of the Spanish nation not only by insisting on the legality of Conquest and punishment, but also by discrediting Las Casas's accounts as hyperbolic. Not unlike some recent critics, Vargas Machuca argues that Las Casas's numbers are inflated, that the Indies were not populated like beehives, that the Indians were not simple like meek sheep, but that they were instead a drunken, irrational, and barbaric people who delighted in the eating of human flesh.

This summary of Vargas Machuca's main criticisms brings to the fore one of the constant lines of attack employed against Las Casas. Throughout four centuries, the accusations put forth against the friar have usually centered on depicting him as a hypocrite, a traitor, an exaggerator, which is to say, a falsifier and a political manipulator, who inexplicably wishes to undo the allegedly civilizing accomplishments of the Spanish Empire in the Indies. And although it might appear that the bulk of these critiques accuse Las Casas the man, the present study argues that, on further inspection, these invectives are instead critiques of his language.

This inquiry therefore proposes an approach to the major works of Bartolomé de las Casas based on a sustained engagement with what I describe as the "passions of language." The passions of language are here understood in two ways: first, in a more traditional sense, the passions of language as the emotions that Bartolomé de las Casas, as author, intends to evoke through language by employing a set of conventions established by both classical and sacred rhetoric; and secondly, the passions that language arouses apparently beyond itself, the ways in which the "*getting-carried-away*" of emotive discourse amplifies the possibilities of its affective reception. The former approach understands the passions in a *constitutive sense*, the passions of language are bound to authorial intent, while the latter approach conceptualizes the passions in a

conditional sense, that is, as de-subjectivized affect. I will outline the intricacies of these approaches, and why I believe they are complementary, but first let us frame the necessity for this line of inquiry.

Lascasian criticism, both historical and literary, has found itself baffled by the emotional impact of the friar's rhetoric, particularly the *Brevísima*. While the nineteenth century saw the first printing of the friar's monumental works,[3] and while nineteenth-century Latin American intellectuals, perhaps paradoxically, saw in Las Casas a precursor of Independence ideals, thus helping to erect the mythical personality still alive today, scholars of the period remained ambivalent towards Las Casas's writings.

Such is the case of Manuel José Quintana, one of his laudatory biographers, who nonetheless repeats the already centuries-old critiques of Las Casas's language, as he alleges that the friar employed "las artes de la exageración y de la falsedad; abultando enormemente, hasta dar en manifiestas contradicciones, los cálculos de población y de estrago, y valiéndose sin escrúpulos de todos los cuentos que le venían a la mano adoptados por la credulidad, y aun quizá a veces sugeridos por su fantasía" (qtd. in Menéndez y Pelayo 9). Within the epistemological framework of nineteenth-century positivism, exaggeration —by "cuentos" Quintana means fictional narratives—, and any traces of the imagination were seen as the strong markers of deficient historical writing.

The nineteenth century's ambivalence toward Las Casas's oeuvre is perhaps more clearly exemplified by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912). In his brief and penetrating assessment of Las Casas as a historian of Columbus, Menéndez y Pelayo cannot help referring to

[3] The *Historia de las Indias* was first published in 1895, and the *Apologética historia sumaria* was published, only partially in the last decade of 19th century as well.

the *Brevísima* (a text unrelated to his topic) as a "monstruoso delirio" that rendered Spain a great disservice, while also arguing that the tone of Las Casas's writing understandably matched the caliber of the atrocious deeds that were indeed committed in the New World, concluding that "a grandes males, heroicos remedios":

> El tono de su polémica humanitaria estaba al nivel de la barbarie de los más atroces encomenderos y devastadores de Indias. Pudo tener disculpa entonces, porque a grandes males, heroicos remedios; pero divulgados sus memoriales por medio de la imprenta y ávidamente leídos fuera de España, no parecieron ya testimonios de celo tan piadoso como acre, sino actas de acusación y libelos sanguinarios, aptos para ser exornados, como en Holanda y en Francia lo fueron, con truculentas estampas de suplicios, sirviendo el texto y sus innumerables glosas de pasto y regalo a todos los enemigos del nombre español, hasta nuestros días. (91)

With this passage Menéndez y Pelayo underscores one of the overarching questions that guides this study: how can a text that can allegedly display pious zeal turn into one that exudes, according to this famous reader, an acrid and insidious passion? What sort of linguistic characteristics or rhetorical structures allow for such a wide range in affective reception? Does language denote or connote emotion? Is rhetoric univocal and exact in its attempts to evoke emotion, or is emotion an autonomous force that follows its own logic?

Menéndez y Pelayo's ambivalent assessment of Las Casas actually provides us with some clues. On the one hand, Menéndez y Pelayo remarks that Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* shows a rather measured and fair critical attitude towards Columbus, and yet, in what reads as completely gratuitous information, he feels compelled to make the following sketch of the friar and his language:

> Sus ideas eran pocas y aferradas a su espíritu con tenacidad de clavos; violenta y asperísima su condición: irascible y colérico su temperamento; intratable y rudo su fanatismo de escuela; hiperbólico e intemperante su lenguaje, mezcla de pedantería escolástica y de brutales injurias. La caridad misma tomaba un dejo amargo al pasar por sus labios. (91)

Menéndez y Pelayo is attempting to sketch a negative portrait of a historical figure, and yet, the characterization (temperament, spirit, and condition) is only substantiated by a negative portrayal of this figure's use of language. In other words, Menéndez y Pelayo's characterization of Las Casas the man is abstracted from the friar's language; and judging by the characterization of that language, it is easy to surmise that Menéndez y Pelayo has the violent language of the *Brevísima* in mind. The rhetoric of the slim but powerful tract has again managed to become the biographical man.

The voicing of Menéndez y Pelayo's critical portrait is itself drenched in affectivity, for the high-decibel adjectives (violent, choleric, rude, hyperbolic, brutal) reveal an affected reader not unlike Vargas Machuca. Love itself is forced to take a bitter drink as it comes out of Las Casas's lips, which is to say, his prolific pen.

To be fair, Menéndez y Pelayo eventually attenuated his sharp tone, admitting that "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas trató el asunto como teólogo tomista; y su doctrina, sean cuales fueren las asperezas y violencias antipáticas de su lenguaje, es sin duda la más conforme a los eternos dictados de la moral cristiana y al espíritu de caridad" (*Advertencia* VIII). One cannot help but notice, however, that while Menéndez y Pelayo exonerates Las Casas the pious thinker, he still condemns the violent writer.

This line of negative criticism, which we are compelled to survey as one that takes up the subject of Las Casas and language, reaches its highpoint with Ramón Menéndez Pidal's polemic book *El Padre Las Casas: su doble personalidad* (1963). In his book, Menéndez Pidal accumulates a substantial body of antagonistic literature, which he then deftly attaches to his main argument that the fierce vein of Las Casas's textual production is a result of a pathological condition, namely, a combination of paranoia and split personality disorder. In the introductory

study to his critical edition of the *Brevísima*, recent Las Casas scholar Isacio Pérez Fernández O.P. constantly refers to Menéndez Pidal's book as a "libro que no tiene de aprovechable una línea" (XII). But Menéndez Pidal's critical assessments of the friar prove to be as revelatory, affectively speaking, as those from Menéndez y Pelayo and Vargas Machuca.

Despite the vitriol, Menéndez Pidal manages to make highly suggestive observations regarding Las Casas's use of language, and because of the emotional intensity of Menéndez Pidal's own prose, we can fruitfully add him to the archive of affected readers that this study strives to understand. For are not the critics' emotional responses as helpful, or perhaps even more in our case, as their analytical conclusions? If one hunts for them, one can read for those moments of textual intensity when the cool and detached style of scholarly prose cracks, the veil rips and lets forth affect in the form of an unexpected collision of with an image, the jarring intensity of a word or a phrase, or the abrupt break with linearity of discourse.

Consider, for example, Menéndez Pidal's tantalizing comparison of Bartolomé de las Casas with Cervantes' best-known character, Don Quixote:

> Don Quijote y Las Casas son razonables y discretos en todo, hasta que les tocan el tema esencial de su vida, la caballería andante y el señorío de los caciques; entonces los dos se sobreexcitan y alteran, entonces izquierdean y se despeñan, dando suelta a su imaginación apasionada. Y para el uno los tranquilos mercaderes, los molinos de viento, los títeres, todos se convierten en odiosos enemigos, en maléficos encantadores, en gigantes descomunales, contra los cuales arremete; y para el otro los más mesurados conquistadores, los más bondadosos y caritativos encomenderos se convierten en gigantes de crueldad, monstruos de tiranía, verdugos diabólicos, a quienes él acomete para lanzarlos a los infiernos. Las Casas es en general un escritor razonable, de buen juicio y circunspección. Admira sobremanera las virtudes de Colón, aprecia la gran habilidad, la prudencia, la moderación de Cortés a la vez que la cultura salmantina de este conquistador, y así de otros muchos; pero en cuanto cualquiera de ellos toca al señorío de los indios, entonces la furia condenatoria del escritor se alborota: Colón merece todos sus infortunios y muchos más, por emplear perros de guerra y otras crueldades contra los salvajes; Cortés es un mentiroso, ladrón, usurpador; Soto es indudable que arde en el antro de Satanás. (338-39)

Menéndez Pidal implies without saying that Don Quixote not only charges at reality with his bodily weapons, but he also attacks these chimeras with speech. Intoxicated with the rhetoric of chivalric romance, Don Quixote jousts against a hostile reality with the arms of literary language, hoping to enact his will through the performativity of his speech.[4] Similarly, Menéndez Pidal paints the portrait of Las Casas as someone who, armed with the intimidating weapons of sacred rhetoric, performs the righteous wrath of a prophet while he passes on terrifying judgements on behalf of God. For Menéndez Pidal reading Las Casas's impassioned condemnations is equivalent to reading the words of a madman.

"But," using the words of Plato's Socrates, "there is also a madness which is a divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men," for not only is *furor poeticus* the marker of a poet-genius, but for Plato (and the entire Judeo-Christian tradition) another divine gift was that of "prophecy, a madness" of its own (*Phaedrus* 465). As one reads Menéndez Pidal's depiction of Las Casas quixotically attacking conquistadores and encomenderos with "la furia condenatoria del escritor," one is compelled to wonder about the sources of this writer's "imaginación apasionada," which empowers him to such a degree that he feels that through his mere speech he can throw men into the pits of hell. In other words, if Don Quixote's speech acts are modeled on chivalric novels, what are the models of Las Casas's most emotional performatives, and what, in truth, are they trying to accomplish?

[4] For more on Don Quixote's use of language and its complex relation with imperialist discourse see Gaylord, Mary M. "Don Quixote's New World of Language." Cervantes: *Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 27.1 (Spring 2007 [2008]): 71-94

Recent literary scholarship has opted, for the most part, to pass over these questions.[5] The reasons are plentiful, but, I suspect two reasons to be chief among them. First, the topic comes too close to old accusations and heated polemics that many scholars might believe lead to a dead end, or to fruitless ideological discussions. Much like nineteenth-century readers, we too possess our own critical sensibilities that might deter us from certain explorations. Second, the impetus of poststructuralist approaches excited a particular mode of inquiry that was more suited to analyzing the content of Las Casas's conceptualizations. We owe to these studies a deeper understanding of Las Casas's thought, and a better understanding of how some of his rhetorical strategies intersect with certain conceptual domains (law, human rights, identity, resistance, subversion, ecology).[6]

Indeed, these studies have cemented the consensus that, like many of his contemporaries, Bartolomé de las Casas was a sophisticated and original thinker. As a skilled politician and man of letters with ample New World experience, Las Casas became perfectly positioned to play a

[5] Juan Durán Luzio and José Miguel Martínez Torrejón are the only scholars who have written on the rhetorical strategies of Las Casas, but their discussion with regards to emotions is limited in scope. The extent of their contribution to the topic will be discussed in depth.

[6] Anthony Pagden's sixth chapter in *The Fall of Natural Man* (1982) offers a critique, still debatable, of Las Casas's ideology; José Rabasa's fourth chapter of *Inventing America* (1993) and his article *Utopian Ethnology in Las Casas's Apologética* (1989) provide nuanced discussions of the political implications of Las Casas's utopian thought/ideology by examining his discourse of primitivism, as well as his articulation of utopian figures; Stephanie Merrim's *The Counter-Discourse of Bartolomé de las Casas* (1993) unveils Las Casas's deconstruction of the binary oppositions established by the coloniality of power; Margarita Zamora's fourth essay in *Reading Columbus* (1993) lays down a more careful analysis of Las Casas's complicated textual dialogue with Columbus; Rolena Adorno's *The Intellectual life of Bartolomé de las Casas*(1992), her third chapter of *Polemics of Possession* (2007), alongside Santa Arias's *Retórica, historia, polémica: Bartolomé de las Casas y la tradición intelectual renacentista* (2001) set a useful contextualization of the friar's intellectual background and a clear sense of his epistemological limits; Sarah Beckjord's third chapter of *Territories of History* (2007) explores the complex relation between Las Casas's accusatory narratological strategies and historical epistemology; José Alejandro Cárdenas Búnsen's *Escritura y derecho canónico en la obra de fray Bartolomé de las Casas* (2011) traces the influence of canon law in Las Casas's major works.

prominent role in the ongoing debates regarding the legality of *conquista* and *encomienda*. But the brilliant juridical thinker and pioneering anthropologist was also a scorching preacher, a condemnatory prophet, a blazing orator, a violent writer, and an inflammatory pamphleteer. These modalities of being share a fundamental goal: moving others towards specific goals by arousing the passions.

As we proposed above, our approach will consist, on the one hand, in reconstructing Las Casas's own thinking with regard to rhetoric and emotions; the passions of language are thus understood in a *constitutive* sense. His was a rhetorical age, *l'âge de l'éloquence*, to use Fumaroli's expression; and the friar's rhetorical praxis was therefore formed by the the homiletic tradition of sacred rhetoric, as well as by the renewed interest in classical rhetoric. Las Casas left sufficient evidence in his works —above all his theoretical treatise on peaceful evangelization entitled *De unico vocatioinis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem*— to allow for a solid delineation of his thoughts and sources regarding the emotive power of language and its most efficient deployment.

On the other hand, our approach begins from the assumption that emotive language is fundamentally *conditional*. The same words can elicit a myriad of affective reactions that may well go beyond the intentions of the person who employs such a language in the first place. If we consider affective speech as performative speech, then it is also prone to *infelicity*, that is, its *illocutionary force* may not always achieve its intended *perlocutionary effects*. Indeed, a contemporary, secular reader may not feel indignant as Las Casas narrates how the conquistadors blaspheme the Christian religion, but he may strongly react, in a way surprising to sixteenth-century readers, when confronted with vivid descriptions of mutilation and torture. For hermeneutics does not only involve the impossible task of reconstituting the text's "original

meaning;" interpretive reading also engages the reader's present, effecting what Hans Georg Gadamer calls a "fusion of horizons."

But Gadamerian hermeneutics, and its eventual evolution into the aesthetic reception theory later developed by Hans Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, did not demonstrate any interest in the emotional response to the text as experienced by the reader in the present. Instead, aiming to reconstruct the hermeneutic horizon, it sets out to correct what might be called an affective fallacy on the reader's part, a term later employed by New Criticism to refer to this interpretive error that emerges from the reader's misplaced feelings, evinced by a text that does not mean to evoke them (Wimsatt and Beardsley).

Our reconstruction of Las Casas's understanding of emotive rhetoric also seeks to ground our interpretation in its historical horizon of meaning. However, with the present study I do not intend to *correct away*, as it were, the issues we highlighted above regarding Las Casas's impassioned language. Ménendez Pidal had enough philological tools to effect a rhetorical interpretation not unlike the one we will pursue here; and yet, his own *affective* experience to Las Casas's language seems to have short-circuited any of those attempts. If there is a truth to Menéndez Pidal's own affective fallacy, we might be hard pressed to find it with the critical mode he himself had mastered. To be sure, Las Casas the writer speaks to us today because he was on the right side of history, but he also speaks to us today because Las Casas is one of the most violent and moving writers in the Hispanic tradition.[7]

[7] One can argue that only the grotesque realism of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599, 1604) may at times transmit a similar intensity to Las Casas's *Brevíssima*, and historically speaking, the argument can be made that one has to wait for Camilo José Cela's tremendismo, Juan Goytisolo's raw imagery, and Roberto Bolaño's appropriative play of sensationalism, to encounter similarly stirring representations. Nevertheless, considering the specificities of Conquest and the quest for a rhetoric that presents itself as running counter to certain literary conventions, one might look at Guaman Poma de Ayala, Rigoberta Menchú and Ernesto Cardenal as the heirs of Las Casas's rhetorical project.

Moreover, the time is ripe for an affective approach to Las Casas that takes into account the pervasive emotional impact of his oeuvre, as the affective turn in humanistic studies is beginning to provide new insights and tools for analysis. One of those insights comes from Brian Massumi, whose article "The Autonomy of Affect" is considered foundational by many affect theorists, and who insists on separating affect from any normative definitions of emotion. Massumi harks back to Deleuze and Spinoza by defining affect as pure intensity, as the moment of collision, signalled a-linguistically by the trembling of the flesh. For Massumi affect is not to be analyzed as a form of mimesis or a semiotic structure, and above all, it should not be equated with emotion; because emotion is a "qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized" (28).

Critics have taken issue with Massumi's insistence on severing affect from representation (particularly linguistic-discursive modes), as well as with the minimization of the role played by the subject (Leys 448-50; Brinkema xiv). Massumi's claim, although still debatable, puts the finger on a key aspect of the historical polemics regarding Las Casas's emotive language. As Menéndez y Pelayo notes, the friar might have had certain emotive intentions, but his works lend themselves to other forms of emotive interpretation. The emotional intensity of Las Casas's oeuvre is conditional as much as it is constitutive. If in order to fully apprehend the constitutive sense in which Las Casas aims to evoke emotions we must set out to reconstruct Las Casas's rhetorical background, we must also apprehend the conditional sense of his emotive language by reconceive it as affect.

My analysis draws from Gilles Deleuze, who actually sets the ground for and begins to develop an affective criticism in his *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* (1981), and in his

Essays Critical and Clinical (1993). Francis Bacon is widely considered to be a violent painter, but according to Deleuze, what directly interests Bacon is "a violence that is involved only with color and line: the violence of sensation (and not of representation)" (*The Logic* x). Bacon isolates the Figure so as to "avoid the *figurative*, *illustrative*, and *narrative* character," hence his minimalistic portrayals not so much of bodies as of energies affecting those bodies (2). The artist creates affects by breaking with the figurative and the discursive, and by privileging the sensational.

What, then, of the artist who deals with language as a medium? In his essay *Literature and Life*, Deleuze affirms that the writer creates affects by creating a new syntax. For Deleuze *syntax* is broadly defined as "the set of necessary detours that are created in each case to reveal the life in things" (*Essays Critical* 2). This new syntax is another language within language, an *affective language* that makes itself known "...with its suspended exclamations as the limit of language, as explosive visions and sonorities, … language seems to be sized by a delirium, which forces it out of its usual furrows" (5). In this sense the *affective writer* is primarily a "seer and hearer" of the "Visions and Auditions that no longer belong to any language" (5). Affect is a corporeal event, hence the affective writer writes for the senses.

Our affective approach will underscore the syntax that allows for Las Casas's explosive "Visions and Auditions" to emerge. This syntax, as I see it, is rooted within the logic of each individual work, and as such, it is differentiated, that is, it takes on discernible forms in each text. I will refer to these syntactic forms as affective structures. These are intertwined and may seem, on the surface, as repetitions of the same excess that characterizes Las Casas's language: repetition, reiteration, interjection, digression. However, as I will demonstrate, these syntactic

structures are conduits of affect in a particular way and can account for the myriad emotional responses that readers may experience when reading Las Casas.

Chapter 1 delves deep into the friar's treatise on peaceful evangelization, daringly entitled *De unico vocationis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem* (*The Only Way to Attract All Peoples to the True Religion*), in order to reconstruct Las Casas's own understanding of emotive discourse. This treatise was written to train New World Missionaries on the proper practices of preaching to indigenous peoples, and as such, the treatise is most certainly a guide on how to do things with words. *De unico*'s central proposition affirms that the one and only way, for the entire world and for all times, to teach men the true religion was established by Divine Providence as persuasive of the understanding with rational arguments, and gently enticing and exhortative of the will. This proposition reveals that Las Casas understands the faculties of the soul in terms of the scholastic framework that posits the understanding and the will as the main sources of human agency. Therefore, Las Casas understands that language, in its effort to persuade and to move, must aim at those particular human faculties. The chapter thus explores the seminal texts —from both classical and sacred rhetoric— that are central to Las Casas in his efforts to convert listeners and persuade readers.

Chapter 2 probes and evaluates how Las Casas employs the rhetorical strategies unveiled in the previous chapter in order to ignite indignation, arouse pity, and strike the fear of God with the *Brevísima relación de la destruición de las Indias.* The *Brevísima*'s highly asymmetrical representations of Indians and Spaniards, codified in the memorable image of lambs being devoured by ravenous wolves and tigers, employs and reworks a particular set of Ciceronian *topoi*, as well as the forceful rebuke that Augustine codifies as the grand style of

preaching. But the text has historically been read as a highly effective sensationalist horror-machine, and this chapter therefore posits that the intensity, or affect, of the *Brevísima* emerges from the syntactic structure of repetition. A repetition, that, in order to avoid desensitization, is projected as a reiteration of the image of corporal destruction. The chapter analyzes the varying crescendo of certain embodied tropes, which serve to intensify the image of corporal destruction until it reaches what I call the marvelous-horrific, that is, Las Casas's most affective representation of uncommon forms of corporal destruction.

Chapter 3 turns to Las Casas's major history, *Historia de las Indias*, which traffics slowly in the negative emotions of shame, guilt and *timor castus* (chaste fear). Las Casas fashions himself as an ethical historian writing history in the modality of Augustine's *City of God*, that is, a history that seeks to trace, meticulously, the Providential hand in historical events. In this chapter I argue that the narrative, which I claim to be character-centered as opposed to plot-centered, is crafted as a narrative of descent and ascent. The narrative of descent chronicles the fall of Christopher Columbus, laying bare his flawed moral choices which ultimately lead to the Admiral's demise. But the narrator constantly interrupts the narrative to reflect on Columbus's fall and incite the reader to be fearful of God's judgment; after the Columbian narrative, the *Historia* goes on to shame and blame the rest of the conquistadors with systematic precision, hoping to serve as a moral compass for the Spanish reader, who is considered as complicit in the enterprise of Conquest. The narrative of ascent, which I argue begins with the sermon by Fray Antón de Montesinos, traces the ascent of the Voice of God, as the Voice Accusatory Truth, embodied by the character of Bartolomé de las Casas the cleric. The narrator employs this strategy as a form of double-fashioning, for he is able to foreground the perlocutionary force of the cleric's highly effective preaching. But the interruptions do not

cease, and the an exhausted historian continues to interject his lamentations. These interruptions, which begin as exhortations and end as lamentations, constitute the *Historia*'s characteristic syntactic structure that allows for the emergence of affect.

Chapter 4 turns to the *Apologética historia sumaria*, a work of natural history that spans over a thousand pages. Here Las Casas sets to counter the discourse of the marvelous that imperialist ethnography used to evoke fear of Otherness. The rhetoric of the marvelous in natural history, dating back to Herodotus himself, seeks to elicit in the reader the elusive emotion of "admiración" or *admiratio*. To sixteenth century readers *admiratio* primarily denoted what we in contemporary English describe as awe, wonder, marvel. Usually considered as a positive emotion, *admiratio* was said to give pleasure, but in most imperialist texts of the period *admiratio* became more increasingly associated with negative emotions, and it is this kind of wonder that fuels the rhetoric of the marvelous in Columbus and Oviedo: their marvelous depictions of Amerindians are meant to open up the door to fear, revulsion, and repugnance.

The *Apologética* sets out to counter this toxic rhetoric, not by challenging the underlying naturalistic principles that guide imperialist ethnography, but by seizing on the palpable contradiction at the heart of such accounts. If the most temperate of climates ought to produce the the best of all natural worlds, then it ought to produce the best of all possible bodies, which, in turn, ought to create the best of all possible cultures. Affect emerges from the structure of digression. Las Casas's own visions and auditions explode from these digressions. But there is no room in the *Apologética* for the violent emotions attributed to *pathos*; the *Apologética* instructs and delights. It employs the *logos* of natural philosophy in conjunction with a textual *ethos* meant to evoke *admiratio* as way to convert and not merely persuade the reader. This constitutes Las Casas's most thorough defense of Amerindians. *Admiratio* ignites our desire to

apprehend Indian otherness. It is an invitation to fall in love. And this is how Las Casas's impassioned language comes comes full circle to the premises of the early treatise *De unico vocationis modo*. The last chapter proves that the *Apologética* employs a language that Las Casas conceived as the only one that could truly convert the Spanish reader.

Chapter One. The Centrality of the Passions in Lascasian Language: *De unico vocationis modo*

I. Conversion and the Affections of the Will

Bartolomé de las Casas thought deeply about the power of language to move others. The extant chapters of Las Casas's first rigorous treatise, daringly intitled *De unico vocationis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem* (*The Only Way to Call All Peoples to the True Religion*), inquires precisely into the way in which men can be moved by the language, the message, and the bearing of the missionary in order that they become willing to believe and accept the Christian faith. *De unico* is a work of startling originality and erudition, which has been hailed, despite St. Ambrose's treatise on which it is partly modeled, as the pioneering treatise on missiology. Las Casas himself seems to have held the treatise in great esteem, referring to it as his "first book" and often citing it in his other works.

De unico, indeed, provides us with an early blueprint of the friar's intellectual and political agenda. Some of Las Casas's cornerstone concepts, as well as some of his most controversial demands, are developed in this early treatise. For our purposes, however, the importance of this treatise lies in the fact that its subject matter forced the friar to study in great depth what divine and secular authorities had to say about the persuasive uses of language. In *De unico*, as he does in his other major works, Las Casas cites his sources with strategic precision, sometimes discussing them at great length. This careful referencing allows us to identify the major sources underlying the friar's own theoretical framework regarding the passions of language.

The original treatise was comprised of two presumably lengthy books, but only chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the first book have survived. Fortunately, its original length notwithstanding, *De unico*'s central proposition is provided in chapter 5, which reads:

> Unus et idem modus et solus docendi homines veram religionem fuit per divinam Providentiam institutus in toto orbe atque in omni tempore, scilicet, intellectus rationibus pesusasivus et voluntatis suaviter allectivus vel exhortativus. Quippe qui esse debet communis universis hominibus de mundo, sine differentia discretionis ullae vel sectarum et errorum vel morum corruptorum.
>
> The one and only way, for the entire world and for all times, to teach men the true religion was established by Divine Providence as persuasive of the understanding with rational arguments, and gently enticing and exhortative of the will. [And that] naturally, such a way must be common to all of world's men, without making any distinctions with regards to sects, errors or corrupt mores. (my translation 16) [8]

The major proposition that "the one and only way, for the entire world and for all times, to teach men the true religion was established by Divine Providence as persuasive of the understanding with rational arguments, and gently enticing and exhortative of the will" is proved by means of seven arguments derived from natural reason and six lengthy discussions, which Las Casas calls examples, of divine authorities. The minor proposition that "such a way must be common to all men, without making any distinctions with regards to sects, errors or corrupt mores" is proved rather quickly with nine arguments that clearly follow from what has already been discussed.

Despite its lengthy formulation, two aspects of the main proposition immediately come to the fore: first, its emphasis on universality, with regard to both time (history) and space (geography); and second, its reliance on the scholastic framework that posits the understanding

[8] Unless otherwise noted, the translations from the Latin are my own.

and the will as the main sources of human agency.[9] Our inquiry will then build upon this preliminary observation: language, in its effort to persuade and to move, must aim at those at the intellect and the will.

Therefore, our analysis of *De unico* must determine how emotive language works in conjunction with rational language so as to move the soul to conversion. Yet, anyone familiar with the jeremiads of the *Brevísima* may find the serene language of chapter 5 of *De unico vocationis modo* somewhat surprising. Lewis Hanke observes that, in his moderated language, Las Casas seems to have made a special effort to put into practice the principles of peaceful evangelization presented throughout the treatise (XXII). Peaceful evangelization, by its very definition, rejects the coercion of physical violence, but of particular interest to us is the fact that Las Casas also seems to eschew any discussion of the violent uses of language. Affectivity appears to be reduced to an encouraging *ethos* and an enticing *caritas*. *Pathos*, as understood by the rhetorical tradition, and the forceful rebuke of the grand style, as formulated by Saint Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*, are not presented as viable tools for the peaceful evangelizer.

Nonetheless, by the time the reader arrives at chapter 6, the seemingly serene logic of the preceding chapter gives way to vivid representations of the violence and chaos associated with war, thus making it evident that the author's place of ennuciation is deeply rooted in the concrete and harsh realities of Conquest. In keeping with the Scholastic nature of the treatise, however, Las Casas claims to do this as a matter of logical rigor. He aims to prove in chapter 6 that the contrary to peaceful evangelization is absurd by affirming that:

[9] "The intellect and the will are the active or causal source in human beings as *De anima* says." Aquinas. *De malo* 6, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Aristotle, *De anima* III.10, 433a13–18.

> ...si aliquibus forte, quibus praedicare aut praedicare facere Evangelium infidelibus incumberet, magis congruum et facilius factu videretur prius ipsos infideles populi Christiani ditioni temporali velint nolint subici debere, quibus subiectis, praedicatio deinde ordinata subsequeretur, no quod illos ad credendum compelleret, sed rationibus suaderet et etiam suaviter alliceret sublatis per dictam subiectionem quamplurimis impedimentis. Et quia nemo infidelium sua sponte velit se Christiani populi vel alicuius principis eius ditioni submittere, potissime infidelium reges, esset profecto necesse devenire ad bellum.
>
> ...if perchance those who ought to preach the Gospel to the infidels thought it easier and more suitable that these infidels ought to be made subjects, even unwillingly, to the temporal power of the Christian people, so that, once subjects, a well-ordered preaching would follow, not forcing them to believe, but persuading them with rational arguments and likewise enticing them in a gentle manner, with the majority of impediments having been removed by the aforementioned subjugation. But as no infidel will willingly become a subject of the Christian people or one of its princes, especially the kings of the infidels, it will certainly be necessary to come to war. (378)

This proposition promptly reads as a critique of the *Requerimiento*, which did allow for evangelization, given that the infidels had already been forcefully subjugated. Throughout chapter 6 Las Casas argues that such a position is untenable, as it inevitably leads to war, and that war, above all things, makes peaceful evangelization impossible. This is how the *modus contrarius* to the major proposition that the preaching of the gospel ought to be "persuasive of the understanding with rational arguments, and gently enticing and exhortative of the will" is posited by Las Casas as war (*conquista*) and resulting slavery (*repartimiento*).

For is this, strictly speaking, the opposite way of preaching the gospel by means of rational persuasion and a gentle enticing of the will? Would not the opposite way be the linguistic violence we associate with rhetorical *pathos*, that is, the coercion it effects through the stirring of the emotions? Would it not be an unnerving message reliant on the forewarnings of eternal damnation? Is there such a thing as a linguistically violent evangelization?

One can think, for example, of the other forms of violence —epistemic, linguistic, and physical— carried out by a minority of Franciscans who had no problem inflicting corporal

punishment alongside indoctrination,[10] and whose Millenarian ideology led the great Franciscan friar Toribio de Benavente "Motolinía" to write to Charles V that "those who do not want to hear the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ willingly may be forced" ("...los que no quisieren oír de grado el santo Evangelio de Jesucristo, sea por fuerza..."; 411).[11]

Yet again, the lengthy proof of chapter 5, anchored on the radical freedom of the understanding and the attractive power of *caritas*, leaves no space for forceful or violent indoctrination. Indeed, Las Casas and his treatise would later play a key role in the debates between the religious orders regarding conversion and baptism, leading some historians like Manuel Giménez Fernández and Helen Rand Parish to argue that *De unico* was the effective cause behind the papal bull *Sublimis Deus* (1537), which Las Casas later added to the treatise as even further proof of his claims (Giménez Férnandez 1971).

In any case, Las Casas felt no need to directly disprove "violent evangelization" as he rightfully concluded that chapter 5 had indirectly addressed the issue. That is why he briefly takes up this concern with violence in chapter 7, which is the final chapter that sets forth a series of corollaries that can be deduced from what has already been proven. The very last section of

[10] This practice, which some have argued persists to this day, has been documented up to the eighteenth century in the California missions: "Corporal punishment is inflicted on the Indians of both sexes who neglect the exercises of piety, and many sins, which are left in Europe to the divine justice, are here punished by iron and stocks. And lastly, to complete the similitude between this and other religious communities, it must be observed, that the moment an Indian is baptised, the effect is the same as if he had pronounced a vow for life. If he escape, to reside with his relations in the independent villages, he is summoned three times to return, and if he refuse, the missionaries apply to the governor, who sends soldiers to seize him in the midst of his family, and conduct him to the mission, where he is condemned to receive a certain number of lashes, with the whip." Jean F. G. De la Pérouse, F.G. Jean. *A Voyage Round the World Performed in the Years 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788 by the Bousole and Astrolabe* (New York, 1968) vol. 1, p. 448

[11] For more regarding disputes and differences between religious orders see: "Chapter 4: The Dispute of the Friars", *Tell Me the Story of How I Conquered You* by José Rabasa; *Fundamentos de la historia de America* by Edmundo O'Gorman; *La conquista espiritual de México* by Jacques Laffaye.

chapter 7 presents a "Corollary to our main purpose" (Corollarium ad nostrum principale propositum), which states:

> Errant religiosi culpabilitier valde, qui praedicationi et instructioni vacant Indorum nostri Occidui Orbis, dum corporalibus terroribus, flagellis et vinculis ac poenis, manu propria vel aliena de eorum mandato corrigere, immo punire ipsos Indos, propter quodcumque peccatum ab eis commisum ante el post conversionem eorum, conantur, etiamsi episcoporum habeant potestatem et auctoritatem.
>
> The missionaries who dedicate themselves to the preaching and instruction of the Indians of our Western World very guiltily err when by their command they insist on correcting, and even more, on punishing these very Indians for any sin committed by them, before or after their conversion, with terrifying corporal punishments, whips, chains and other punitive measures inflicted by their own hand or that of others, even if they have the power and authority of bishops. (548)

He proves this corollary by referring the reader back to his discussion in chapter 5 of a gentle rhetorical *ethos* meant to make the listener well-disposed towards the preacher, and he also reminds us of the many sections in which he proves that the missionary must attract the will of the believer with the enticing power of love.

Throughout the text of the corollary Las Casas does not address the issue of violent language other than mentioning, in passing, that harsh words make any listener ill-disposed towards the preacher. Rather, the negative affections aroused from any kind of corporal suffering appear to be Las Casas's main concern, as it is these that most effectively make the listener's will repel any attempt at conversion. Why then does Las Casas avoid any explicit discussion on the violent force of language? The plain reason is that showcasing the utility of violent language is extraneous to the argument of the treatise. The Scholastic grounding of *De unico* notwithstanding, its overall argument is a political one; any explicit endorsement of rhetorical *pathos*, or of the thundering rebukes available to the sermon, would compromise that message.

At the same time, Las Casas does not disavow or explicitly condemn the use of strong emotive language. On the contrary, the treatise does offer some instances in which the friar not only endorses, but he himself displays the forceful resources of emotive language, given, of course, that the circumstances merit their use. As a last note to the treatise, Las Casas grants that some listeners will remain extremely resistant even after the missionary dutifully follows the only way. If that is the case, Las Casas states, "you may terrify the impudent, if you think it expedient, with the terrible day of judgment and the punishments that they will suffer eternally." ["Nihilominus poterunt terrere protervos, si viderint expedire, iudicio terribili futuro, et poenis, quae passuri sunt aeternaliter" (556).]

Throughout the entire treatise Las Casas takes great pains to avoid this suggestion, as he constantly emphasizes that neophytes must be taught the faith as if they were impertinent children. "Why should I judge those outside?, says Augustine: We address the pagans differently, as if they were ill; they ought to be treated gently so that they will hear the truth." ["Quid mihi de his, qui foris sunt, iudicare? inquit Augustinus: Paganos alloquimur aliter, tanquam infirmos; blandiendum est illis, ut audiant veritatem" (309).] If, as last resort, Las Casas ends up conceding that a terrifying message can be used by the preacher to make pagans tremble, the reader can only surmise the kind of language that the preacher might be allowed to use when Christians are, not only occasionally sinning, but fully blaspheming Christ and the Christian religion.

De unico also contains a lesson in such rebukes. As chapter 6 aims to prove that wars of conquest are as far as possible from "the only way," Las Casas shifts the focus and tone of his argumentation. He unveils his authorities, mostly biblical, in order to disprove any use of violence when preaching the Gospel. Hence, more than a proof, chapter 6 reads like an

exemplary sermon, with which Las Casas provides the missionary with plenty of material to infuse guilt, shame, and fear in the Christians who carry out such wars. We will develop this line of inquiry below, when we delve more deeply into the emotive powers of Scripture.

What we wish to emphasize now, however, is that by proving in chapter 6 that the contrary way to peaceful evangelization is, first and foremost, an ineffective war, Las Casas is able to shift the focus of his treatise to the greater and more urgent problem of genocidal violence. The growing need to address this crisis is part of the reason why Helen Rand Parish surmises that Las Casas wrote *De unico* during his forced two-year retreat in the Dominican convent of Santo Domingo around 1533-34, and not in the early 1520's as Isacio Perez Fernández claims (*Las Casas en México*, 31)

In 1531, a group of distressed encomenderos from Hispaniola complained of Las Casas's preaching, declaring that he only used the pulpit to accuse them of mortal sins. This confrontation resulted in a forced retreat for Las Casas. The joy of the *encomenderos*, however, was short lived. By 1533 Las Casas secretly left the convent and settled in the mountains of Bahoruco. He had set out to complete the pacification of the leader of the Taíno revolt, the indomitable *cacique* Enriquillo. In less than two months two unarmed friars accomplished what a great number of military expeditions could not do in fifteen years. Las Casas had found the only way to attract all peoples to the true religion.

That is why Helen Rand Parish also argues that it was during this time that Las Casas tested the principles of *De unico*, and that, ever after, Las Casas would never again suggest any further need for militarization, however slight. Such a feat must have been decisive and inspiring for Las Casas, as it allowed him to move past his failed attempt at peaceful colonization in Cumaná, while reassuring him that his method was the only alternative to what he always

considered to be the insatiable thirst for more war. It is within this specific context, then, that peaceful evangelization constitutes itself as the sole alternative to the violence of war.

In sum, Bartolomé de las Casas had to treat the subject of persuasion within the treatise in its least violent sense, eschewing any explicit discussions on the capacity of language, both homiletic and rhetorical, to move men by arousing vehement passions. Even so, if *De unico* deliberately suppresses theorization of emotive language he considered as irrelevant, if not outright dangerous, to the missionary cause, the treatise also most punctually discloses the seminal works that shaped Las Casas's broader understanding of emotive language. Given these parts, our task is to reconstruct the whole of Las Casas's understanding of the rhetorical arsenal to arouse all passions, and not just the ones limited to peaceful evangelization.

How, then, is conversion possible within the framework of peaceful evangelization? What are the mechanisms of conversion? And what role do the passions play in such a process?

First, Las Casas begins with the premise, at the time contentious, that all men are rational. Within an Aristotelian-Thomistic framework, things, insofar as they are part of nature, are moved according to their *modus naturalis.* Just as fire tends upward and the stone moves toward the ground, "the rational being has been born with the ability to be moved, led, directed and attracted gently, sweetly, mildly and pleasantly by its free will, so that it will voluntarily listen, voluntarily obey, voluntarily adhere and serve." ["Sed creatura rationalis apta nata est moveri, duci, dirigi et trahi blande, dulciter, leniter atque suaviter, propter arbitrii libertatem, ut voluntarie auscultet, voluntarie obediat, voluntarie haereat et serviat" (25).]

But before the rational being willingly believes, he or she must think, "...for the human being thinks by means of his understanding, he inquires and discourses about everything he hears

about the faith before he gives his assent..." ["...quia cum per intellectum homo cogitet, inquirat et discurrat de uno in aliud eorum, quae de fide audit, antequam assensum prestet..." (28).] Relying primarily on Aquinas and Augustine, Las Casas posits that rational thinking precedes belief. This rational inquiry regarding religious belief is not about finding the truth of faith itself, but about finding the right motives that might induce a man to believe in what has been presented to him as the true religion. The goal is for the human being to understand that it would be a good thing for him to acquiesce and accept that which is offered to him as a good. However, mere rational understanding does not complete the process of conversion.

> Quantum enim est ex ipso, non est ei satisfactum nec est terminatus ad unum, sed terminatur tantum ex extrinseco. Et inde es quod intellectus credentis dicitur esse captivatus, quia tenetur terminis alienis, scilicet, non propriis voluntatis. Et propter hoc dicit Apostulus (2 Corinth.,10): In captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi.
>
> For as far as he is concerned it is still not enough, nor is he determined to believe, but he has only been prompted from outside. Hence it is said that the understanding of the believer is held captive, as if held in a foreign land, not his own land, namely, his will. That is why the Apostle says (2 Corinthians, 10): «We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.» (28)

Reducing understandings to captivity has the imperfect effect of an external stimulus. This capturing of reason is but the beginning of a lengthy process. Las Casas constantly repeats that taking men's understandings captive will take a copious amount of time, for inducing men to faith by means of rational persuasion is closely related to the process of teaching men knowledge. Gradually, imitating the slow processes of nature, the missionary ought to instruct the listener by answering first with familiar and natural examples, and by evoking universal principles that can be clearly apprehended by means of natural reason. Over time, this constant doctrinal instruction is meant to foster a *habitus* in the listener so that he may continue inquiring with less resistance. For "as a continuous drop, falling little by little on a hard stone, eventually

perforates it, so does the frequent, continuous, sweet and gentle instruction, and the timely and perseverant correction... penetrates, enlightens, erodes and purifies..." ["Quemadmodum gutta continuata, paulatim super durum silicem stillando, solem tandem ipsum cavare...penetrat, illuminat, excavat purgatque…" (105).]

Since rational persuasion is in itself not enough to effect conversion, then how does the missionary capture the listener in his own land, in other words, how does he move the listener's will? In order to answer this question we must first discuss how the will and the understanding fundamentally relate to each other. Relying on Aquinas again, Las Casas states that human understanding apprehends objects in two ways: human understanding is either moved by intelligible objects themselves, for example the self-evident principles of mathematical thought; or it is moved voluntarily, in other words, the understanding is moved by the will.

> Alio modo intellectus assentit alicui rei, non quia sufficienter ab obiecto propio moveatur, sed per quandam electionem voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in aliam. Et huiusmodi sunt ea quae sund fidei et religionis Christianae, quia voluntas imperat intellectui quod se ad assentiendum eis determinet, quamvis intellectus non moveatur per aliquod intellectum. Et sic assensus intellectus ex voluntate causatur, quae eligit assentire uni parti determinate ac precise.
>
> In another sense the understanding assents to something, not because it has been sufficiently moved by the object itself, but because by means of a certain choice it inclines voluntarily to one part more than another. And such are the things relating to the faith and the Christian religion, because the will commands the understanding to finally decide to agree to them, for the understanding is not moved by having understood it. And thus the assent of the understanding is caused by the will, which chooses to assent to one part with determination and precision. (105)

Believing in anything that is not self-evident, as that God is both one and three, necessitates the assent of the will. The faculties of the understanding (*intellectus*) and the will (*voluntas*) come together in a single act of *voluntary understanding*. For "the understanding contains within itself the root of freedom, where it originates, as the will contains it formally and completely"

["...intellectus continet radicaliter libertatem, id est, principiative, quam voluntas continet formaliter et completive" (105).]

Therefore, the process of effecting *voluntary understanding*, as expounded by Thomistic doctrine, can be summarized thus: by means of rational argumentation the missionary captures the understanding of the listener, where the root of freedom lies, but the listener can only give up that freedom fully by willing to assent. And just as mere reasoning is not enough to convert anybody to Christianity, mere exhortation of the will is equally ineffective, as the will without reasons is blind. Aquinas is most clear on making this distinction:

> Quia bonum intellectum est objectum voluntatis, et movet ipsam ut finis. Alio modo dicitur aliquid movere per modum agentis, sicut alterans movet alteratum et impellens movet impulsum. Et hoc modo voluntas movet intellectum et omnes animae vires,...
>
> For something having been understood as a good becomes the object of the will, and [the understanding] moves the will by having something to aim for. On the other hand, a thing is said to move as an agent, as what alters moves what is altered, and what impels moves what is impelled. In this way the will moves the intellect and all the powers of the soul,... (*Summa*, Ia. 82, art 4)

Our original question can then be reformulated thus: how does the missionary entice and exhort the will so that it moves or impels the understanding to assent to the Christian faith, or to believe any not self-evident matter? Thomistic doctrine does not delve into rhetoric or homiletics, and Las Casas here gladly joins that faction that, relying on the authority of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, embraces rhetoric as another effective tool for the Christian preacher. But before Las Casas discusses the importance of the art of rhetoric for the missionary cause, he quickly, almost instinctively, proposes the use of love as the great mover of the will. On this subject Las Casas will resort, for the most part, to St. Augustine:

> Modum autem quo allicitur et excitatur voluntas, cum homo audit ea quae sunt fidei et religionis, ponit Augustinus ubi supra, in illud "Nemo venit ad me, nisi Pater meus traxerit eum: Quid hic dicimus, fratres? Si trahimur ad Christum, ergo inviti credimus;

> ergo violentia adhibetur, non voluntas excitatur". Et infra: "Trahitur animus amore... Quomodo voluntate credo si trahor? Ego dico: parum est voluntate, etiam voluptate traheris. Quid est trahi voluptate?" [...] Da amantem, et sentit quod dico; da desiderantem... Ramum viridem ostendis ovi, et trahis illam. Nuces puero demonstrantur, et trahitur, et quo currit trahitur, amando trahitur, sine lesione corporis trahitur, cordis vinculo trahitur."
>
> Moreover, the way in which the will is enticed and aroused when man hears the things regarding faith and religion is posited by Augustine as when we cited above «No one can come to me, unless my Father draws him»: «What do we say here, brothers? If we are drawn to Christ, then we believe unwillingly; then violence is used, the will is not aroused». And below: «The heart is drawn with love... How can I believe voluntarily if I am drawn? I say: It is little to say that you are drawn voluntarily, for you are even drawn with pleasure. What is it to be drawn with pleasure? ... Give me a lover, and he will know what I mean; give me he who desires... Show a green branch to a sheep, and you will draw it. Show some nuts to a boy and you will draw him, and you will draw him where he runs, loving you will draw him, without corporal injury you will draw him, with the bond of the heart you will draw him.» (35)

The lesson is clear. Love is the ultimate enticer of the will, the impeller of all the soul's powers. Love does not drag by force, but instead draws with pleasure. In fact, love is foundational to the structure of the will. Aquinas often refers to the will as the intellectual desire or intellectual appetite (*appetitus intellectivus*), as opposed to the sensitive appetite (*appetitus sensitivus*). The sensitive appetite is moved by objects apprehended through the corporeal senses, while the intellectual appetite desires objects apprehended by the understanding. The goal is to make the listener reach a state where he desires, pleasurably, the non-corporeal good offered to him by the missionary. All men desire the good, and therefore the Christian faith is inherently something that man's intellectual appetite will desire, or in Augustinian language, he will run to it with love.

The paramount importance that Aquinas and Augustine place on love could well make us believe that the will has no other reason for being, yet, there are other affects, distortions of love, that are also capable of affecting the will. At times Aquinas refers to these movements of the

soul as *affectiones*, and that is why Nicholas Lombardo, in his recent study of Aquinas on the emotions, decides to coin these phenomena as "the affections of the will" (75). These affections of the will are psychological phenomena that, unlike the passions of the sensitive appetite, do not necessarily imply a bodily response or reaction. That is why Aquinas can say that God, who has no physical body, insofar as he wills, must also love[12]; and the same can be said of the affections of other bodiless beings like the joy experienced by the angels.

Nevertheless, the nexus of body-soul is structured in a way that allows for the "affections of the will" and the blind passions of the sensitive appetite to interact.

> According to Aquinas, the will's loves, desires, and joys, as well as its hates, aversions, and sorrows, can spill over into the passions of the sense appetite by a kind of overflow, because «it is not possible for the will to be moved intensely toward something without exciting some passion in the sense appetite.» (Lombardo 89)

This is Aquinas's theory of "overflow." This overflow is seen in the responses of the body, as when the "joy of contemplation can soothe pain felt in the senses" (Lombardo 89). But the same applies to the negative "affections of the will". The process can actually be exemplified with hatred: the understanding (*intellectus*) apprehends an act and judges it to be an injustice, the will is then moved by an affection like indignation or hatred, and depending on the affection's intensity, it may or may not overflow and elicit a bodily response.[13]

When Las Casas argues for the missionary to entice the will with love, he is evidently thinking of love as an affection of the will. But what about the other passions? The logic of the treatise makes Las Casas posit love against all the other negative passions. Echoing Stoic

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[12] "Wherever there is will or appetite, there must be love, since love is the first appetitive movement, and if it were taken away everything else would go with it. It has been shown that in God there is will. Therefore it is necessary to affirm that in God there is love" (Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia. 20, 1).

[13] "Thus the Philosopher says in his *Rhetoric* that hate can be of something universal, as when *we hate every kind of thief*. In like manner we can, by means of intellectual appetite, desire non-material goods which sense cannot grasp, such as knowledge, virtues, and things of the sort" (Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia. 80, 2)

doctrine, mainly Cicero and Boethius, Las Casas speaks of the passions as disturbances of the mind (*perturbationes animae*), Cicero's definition of *affectus* in the *Tusculan Disputations*, in order to emphasize the detrimental effect on the evangelizing process.

This is why, early in chapter 5, Las Casas advocates for an absence of these negative passions altogether, as only then can the missionary hope to foster the peaceful environment required for the development of the intellectual *habitus* that leads the believer to fully understand Christian doctrine.

> Quia sicut sidera consueta nobis lucere et terram germinare cessant hoc facere, propter interpositionem nubium obscurarum, sic intellectus et ratio, quae lucent et illuminant hominem in cognitionem veritatis, impediuntur caligine perturbationum. Et sicut aqua maris maenente clara quemadmodum vitrum, visus potest eam penetrare atque videre quae sunt sub agua, sed si turbatur per ventum tunc obstabit visui, sic animus quietus hominis no impedit discursum rationis nec iudicium intellectus; verum si moveatur et turbetur aliqua molestia vel angustia, timore, tristitia, dolore seu etiam ira vel aliorum, quae dant causam pertubationibus, et statim obsistit discursui rationis et iudicio intellectus.
>
> For as the stars, which habitually give us light and make the earth sprout, stop doing so when dark clouds stand in the way, so do the understanding and reason, which illuminate and enlighten man in their apprehension of the truth, become hindered by the mist of mental disturbances. And as when the water of the sea remains clear as glass and our sight is able to penetrate and see what is under the water, but if agitated by the wind then our vision is obstructed, so does man's tranquility of mind does not impede the discourse of reason or the judgment of the understanding, but if it is moved and disturbed by some kind of trouble, anguish, fear, sadness, pain, and even wrath or others that cause disturbances, at once is the discourse of reason and the judgment of the understanding obstructed. (38-40)

This discussion proves crucial for chapter 6, where Las Casas asserts that these negative passions are precisely the ones inevitably elicited by the sensory terrors of war, and that such passions make evangelization impossible. At that point Las Casas describes, in a different order to the Thomistic theory of overflow that we outlined above, how the passions as sensory stimuli lead to disturbances of the mind and, ultimately, to the negative affections of the will.

> Humana enim mens terroribus consternitur, clamoribus, metu et durioribus verbis, sed longe magis cruciatibus turbatur, tristatur, affligitur, refugit proinde audire videreque. Sensus exterior, interior quoque, ut phantasia seu imaginatio, turbatur; caligatur consequenter ratio, intellectus non apprehendit nec potest sumere formam intelligibilem, amabilem seu delectabilem, sed tristabilem potius et odibilem, quoniam illa, ut mala et detestabilia, ut sunt, apprehendit.
>
> Propter quod voluntas non solum non potest affici vel amare, sed potius odire necesse habet atque indignari propter illa terribilia...Ulterius oportet voluntatem progredi ad imperandum irascibli et aliis potentiis, ut repellant contraria.
>
> For the human mind is troubled by terrors, cries, fear, and harsh words, and is upset, saddened, and afflicted even more by torments, and thus it refuses to see or to hear. The external sense, as well as the internal one, like the imagination, become disturbed; consequently, reason is darkened; the understanding is unable to apprehend an intelligible, agreeable, or delightful form, but rather a sad and odious one, as it apprehends those objects as evil and loathsome, as they truly are. (388)
>
> Because of this the will not only is it not able to be moved or to love, but rather it feels the necessity to hate and become indignant on account of those terrors...Furthermore, it is appropriate for the will to command the irascible and other powers to repeal that which is contrary to it. (48)

It is Las Casas's profound understanding of the dialectic between affectivity and intellect that allows him to position the violence of conquest as the exact inverse of peaceful evangelization. By contrast with habitual, drop by drop instruction, the terrors of war abruptly brutalize the external senses, which in turn provide plenty of odious forms for the imaginative faculty; instead of enticing the believer's will with words and acts of love, the detestable images of war move the will by means of hatred and indignation. The affected will then commands the understanding to judge these acts, and incidentally, Christians and Christianity, as despicable and evil.

An unexpected result of this juxtaposition is that it slightly blurs the line between violence and language. The treatise ends up relying on the postulate that language and violence are inextricably linked by their inverse effects on the faculties of the soul. Either the missionary

persuades the Indians with the gentle seductions of language, or the conquistadors subjugate the Indians with the unfeeling "language" of violence.

Yet again, the treatise arrives at this stark choice, most deliberately, by imposing a limit on the affections that can be used to move the will. Within the context of peaceful evangelization, love is the only affection that the missionary should seek to evoke, but, as Aquinas's discussion of the intellectual appetite makes clear, and as Las Casas knew perfectly well, love is not the only affection that moves the will.

We can, therefore, think of persuasion as a more general case of conversion. Persuasion is here understood as the process that captivates the understanding with rational arguments, and moves the will, by means of any affections, to act on the basis of those rational arguments. Within a Christian framework, however, conversion is the most powerful instance of successful persuasion, as love is the most enduring of the passions. But as the general definition of persuasion that we have abstracted from *De unico vocationis modo* relies on an openness to other passions, we must now turn to the art of rhetoric for guidance on how language is actually able to mobilize the passions.

II. The Passions and Classical Rhetoric

We have therefore located the "affections of the will" as the catalyst in the process of persuasion, for it is by means of these affections that the will commands the understanding to assent or repel what the understanding has already apprehended. However, the way in which language itself produces such an affectivity is yet to be determined. Las Casas exhorts the evangelizer to use love, in word and deed, in order to entice the will. And language can

accomplish such a feat, Las Casas asserts, if the preacher diligently observes the precepts of the art of rhetoric.

Las Casas has recourse to what had become the foundational text of homiletics, namely, Book IV of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Augustine's defense of the use of rhetoric by Christian preachers is cited directly by Las Casas:

> Nam cum per artem rethoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis audeat dicere, adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem, ut videlicet illi, qui res falsas persuadere conantur, noverint auditorem vel benevolum vel intentum vel docilem proemio facere, isti autem non noverint? ... ita despiat, ut hoc sapiat? (*De unico* 54)
>
> For since by means of the art of rhetoric both truth and falsehood are urged, who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying, so that they who wish to urge falsehoods may know how to make their listeners benevolent, or attentive, or docile in their presentation, while the defenders of the truth are ignorant of that art? ... Who is so foolish as to think this to be wisdom? (Augustine, *On Christian* 18)

Augustine's assertion must have had a profound resonance with Las Casas. Throughout his long life, Las Casas witnessed an enormous production of rhetorically powerful texts that, in his view, did nothing but promote historical falsehoods about the conquistadors' acts, while reinforcing the many prejudices that had begun to circulate about the indigenous peoples of the New World. As the chapters below will show in more detail, Las Casas's two major works, the *Historia de las Indias* and the *Apologética historia sumaria*, are responses to what he considered false histories, yet quite pernicious precisely because of their rhetorical prowess.

In any case, despite Augustine's eventual reticence about preachers spending too much time studying rhetorical works, his effort to Christianize rhetoric resulted in an endorsement of its fundamental principles and its primary authors, whose work saw the light of day once again during Las Casas's time. The Renaissance's enthusiastic re-appropriation of rhetoric most probably explains why, going even further than Augustine, Las Casas recommends that the

preacher "ought to study the method and art of rhetoric not less but even more so than the rhetoricians and orators themselves." ["Non minus sed magis studendum est praedicatori, ..., modis rhetoricis et industriae, ..., quam rhetores et oratores faciunt" (362).] Bartolomé de las Casas certainly followed his own advice, and although in essence he would remain a Scholastic thinker, he nonetheless probed and studied a myriad of rhetorical treatises, as he considered the art of rhetoric a potent weapon to defend truth and justice.

It will become clear that Las Casas's rhetorical vein is decidedly Augustinian and Ciceronian; but one can find, especially in his most erudite works, direct citations from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Inventione*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the classic rhetorical works that were central to sixteenth-century Humanist culture.

How does rhetoric, then, posit the relationship between emotion and language? Las Casas chooses the passage from *De doctrina* cited above since it also highlights the emotive workings of *ethos*. The art of rhetoric teaches men how to make audiences benevolent, attentive and docile. For Las Casas this translates into yet another way to gently entice the will. The missionary must learn from the art of rhetoric how to move and influence the listener's *animus*, that is, how to move and influence his emotional disposition so that the listener will become attentive and receptive to his message:

> ...praedicator vel doctor...modo et industriae rhetoricae studere debet diligenterque observate praecepta eius in praedicando, ad commovendos et inducendos animos audientium, quam rhetor sive orator studet et observat in orando, ut commoveat et inducat audientes ad ea quae intendit.
>
> The preacher or teacher must diligently study the method and art of rhetoric and keep its precepts while preaching, in order to move and guide the feelings of the listeners, in the same way as the rhetorician or orator studies and keeps its precepts when imparting a speech, in order to move and lead the listener to that which he intends. (52)

The feelings[14] that Las Casas has in mind here are the ones evoked by the emotively mild *captatio benevolentiae*. To corroborate this point, Las Casas turns to book 2 of Cicero's *De Oratore*, where Cicero also explains how the orator employs *ethos*, which turns the listeners benevolent, attentive and docile, for "one of the first precepts of rhetoric is to win over, clearly or surreptitiously, the benevolence of the audience by means of the *exordium*." ["...unum de primis preceptis rethoricae est per exordium clare vel subrepenter benevolentiam audientium ad sibi conciliandos captare" (52).]

Further paraphrasing Cicero (*De Oratore* Book 2. 182), Las Casas maintains that the preacher will make an audience well-disposed toward him by using a "gentle voice, a face expressing modesty, a display of meekness and gentle words" ("Conciliantur autem per vocis lenitatem et vultus pudoris significationem, mansuetudinis ostensionem, placidam verborum comitatem" 52). *Ethos* is achieved by "employing thoughts of a certain kind and words of a certain kind, and adopting besides a delivery that is gentle and shows signs of flexibility, [for that] makes speakers appear as decent, as good in character...as good men." (Cicero, *On the Ideal* 171-2) If the will is to be moved by the power of love, then *ethos* contributes to evoke that passion by teaching the preacher how to perform a seductive gentility (gentle voice, gentle thoughts, gentle words). In other words, *ethos* facilitates the display of *caritas*, and through *ethos* the preacher and listener bond in a mutual feeling of goodwill.

[14]Perhaps still inadequate, we chose to translate "*animos*" as "feelings", since Las Casas does not use "*anima*", which for him would primarily mean "soul", or "*animus*", which could mean mind as well as other significations. ("*Animus, animi*: air, feelings, heart, intellect, mind, soul, spirit, courage, character, pride." Oxford Latin Dictionary. 1982.). But more importantly, Las Casas's use of the plural, and the context of the passage, point to the listener's emotional state of being.

Though we tend to think of *ethos* strictly as a display of the moral character of the speaker, and thus as something distinct from *pathos*, Quintilian regarded *ethos* as a milder form of *pathos*. They are related in the sense that they are both emotive in nature. The emotions associated with *pathos* are spoken of as "violent", while those of *ethos* are considered "gentle and steady; in the one, the passions are vehement, in the other subdued; the former command, the latter persuade; the former are powerful agents of disturbance, the latter of good will" (Quintilian 49). If *ethos* induces docility in its effort to persuade, then *pathos* induces the violent passions in an effort to command.

In fact, Las Casas partially quotes the passage from Augustine's *De doctrina* that we cited above. Augustine alludes to *ethos* by referring to the capacity of the eloquent to make their listeners "benevolent, or attentive, or docile", yet, just a few lines below, Augustine rephrases the same question but with an emphasis on *pathos*: "Should they, urging the minds of their listeners into error, ardently exhort them, moving them by speech so that they terrify, sadden and exhilarate them, while the defenders of truth are sluggish, cold and somnolent?" (118). Indeed, towards the end of book IV of *De doctrina christiana* Augustine christianizes the Ciceronian understanding of the powers of *pathos*, but let us first establish what the pagan rhetorical theorists understood *pathos* to be.

As he quotes and paraphrases Cicero, Las Casas is, in fact, drawing directly from the passages in *De Oratore* where Cicero's characters discuss *ethos* and *pathos* extensively. At this point in the dialogue, Antonius and Catullus are fully engaged in determining what should constitute *inventio*. For Antonius, invention must not only include argumentation (*logos*), but, when inventing a speech, the orator must also seek out material that employs the other two

means of persuasion, *ethos* and *pathos*. Antonius's contention reveals that for Cicero nothing was left to improvisation, even the seemingly natural flow of emotions.

Moreover, at this juncture in *De Oratore* Cicero seamlessly moves the discussion from *ethos* to *pathos*, as if suggesting that an audience that regards the orator favorably has already placed itself in the right disposition to be moved by stronger emotions.

> For nothing, Catullus, is more important than for the orator to be favorably regarded by the audience, and for the audience itself to be moved in such a way as to be ruled by some strong emotional impulse rather than by reasoned judgment. For people make many more judgments under the influence of hate or affection or partiality or anger or grief or joy or hope or fear or delusion or some other emotion, than on the basis of the truth or an objective rule, whether some legal standard or a formula for a trial or the laws. (170)

Ethos and *pathos* lie on the opposite side of rational judgment. When the audience becomes well-disposed towards the speaker, their judgment is already under the influence of an emotion, however mild. Nevertheless, the "strong emotional impulse" that completely overpowers judgment is what Cicero properly identifies as *pathos*.

Cicero's observation highlights that the ultimate aim of *pathos* is to influence judgment. This claim echoes Aristotle's memorable definition of the emotions in the *Rhetoric*, where he defines the emotions as "all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries" (173). But how do the passions actually precipitate a change in judgment?

In book 6 of the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian attempts to illustrate this claim with a tantalizing analogy:

> Of course, Proofs may lead the judges to think our Cause the better one, but it is our emotional appeals that make them also want it to be so; and what they want, they also believe. For as soon as they begin to be angry or to feel favourably disposed, to hate or to

> pity, they fancy that it is now their own case that is being pleaded, and just as lovers cannot judge beauty because their feelings anticipate the perception of their eyes, so also a judge who is overcome by his emotions gives up any idea of inquiring into truth; he is swept along by the tide, as it were, and yields to the swift current. (47, 49)

The power exerted by *pathos* on judgment is here accounted for in three ways. First, putting forth a similar argument to Aquinas's explication of *voluntary understanding*, Quintilian notes that we more readily believe what we *want* to believe. Since our wants are inherently anchored in our emotions, then the orator's task is to use the emotions to modify the listener's desires. Once that is achieved, the listener does the work to persuade himself.

Secondly, Quintilian posits that *pathos* erodes the distance between the listener and the case being pleaded. Pure reasoning, however compelling, is apprehended at a distance. The premise underlying this claim is that the unaffected rational mind grasps things in universal terms. On the other hand, an affected listener immerses himself within the argumentation of any given case as if there was something greatly at stake for him in its outcome. The premise here is that an emotional state of mind intensifies the particularity of the self to the point that we are bound to self-project. The passions draw us in completely. This observation is reminiscent of Las Casas's previous discussion regarding the insufficiency of merely capturing the understanding by means of rational argumentation, where the notion of distance emerges there as well. Persuading men through rational argumentation is likened to holding men captive in a foreign land, as opposed to capturing them in their homeland by wielding the affections of the will.

Yet, it is Quintilian's analogy, which compares the effect of *pathos* to the distorted judgment of lovers, that is perhaps the most illuminating description of the way *pathos* influences judgment. *Pathos* alters perception, and altered perception, in turn, produces altered

judgment. As an instrument of language, however, *pathos* is not meant to alter the perception of our physical senses, although physical responses may occur given the intensity of one's affection (Aquinas accounts for this with his theory of overflow), and the orator indeed strives to evoke visible signs of emotion, for "when the tears, which are the aim of most perorations, start from his eyes, is not the decision given for all to see?" (Quintilian 49). But Quintilian's analogy alludes to the metaphorical sense in which we speak of intellectual perception as vision. Our eyes see the physical world; the eye of the soul apprehends the world through the filter of language. The powers of *pathos* change how we see things through language, and that is how *pathos* produces a specific judgment.

It is no surprise that this particular capacity of rhetoric to alter judgment via affectivity has always been extremely problematic to those who care about the truth. Plato, a rhetorical master in his own right, considered sophistry, poetry, and music of utmost danger precisely because of their affective powers.[15] In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle also expressed some disapproval, flatly stating that "it is wrong to warp the dicast's feelings, to arouse him to anger, jealousy, or compassion, which would be like making the rule crooked which one intended to use" (5). Nevertheless, Aristotle admits that "rhetoric is useful, because the true and the just are naturally superior to their opposites, so that, if decisions are improperly made, they must owe their defeat to their advocates, which is reprehensible" (11). Moreover, Aristotle also grants that rhetoric is useful in two other particular instances: when one has to convince someone who will inevitably resist persuasion by means of knowledge, and when one must plead certain political cases to the masses, who are obviously unable to engage in the minutiae of dialectical reasoning.

[15] The literature on this "ancient quarrel" between philosophy and poetry is extensive. For some excellent discussions on this topic see: Brian Vickers, "Plato's Attack on Rhetoric", *In Defense of Rhetoric*.

Therefore, the utility of *pathos*, and its terrifying power, stem from the immediacy with which it can influence judgment. *Pathos* is a weapon, and as such, it should be used only for the sake of justice.

But what are the linguistic mechanisms rhetoric uses to trigger affectivity? In its subdued embrace of rhetoric, *De unico* only offers Cicero's and Augustine's rather straightforward prescriptions to evoke *ethos*, mostly by downplaying one's self to become endearing and trustworthy. But teaching how to elicit *pathos* was a tall order, and that is why, despite Aristotle's reservations, Latin rhetorical treatises treated the topic extensively.

The knowledge codified by rhetoric was crucial when the orator had to excite the passions from an apparent void. Evoking *pathos* did not demand great skill from the orator when the listeners were already in the emotional state of mind suited to his cause, "for, as the saying goes, it is easier to spur on a willing horse than to rouse a sluggish one" (Cicero, *On the Ideal* 172). However, when the horse was sluggish, the orator then proceeded as doctor who:

> ...before attempting to apply treatment to a patient, he must find out, not only about the disease of the person he wants to cure, but also about his routine when healthy and his physical constitution. I do likewise myself: when I set out to work upon the emotions of the jurors in a difficult and uncertain case, I carefully concentrate all my thoughts on considering, on scenting out as keenly as I can, what their feelings, their opinions, their hopes, their wishes are, and in what direction my speech may most easily lead them. (172)

Although short on details here, Cicero's recommendation harks back to one of rhetoric's fundamental insights. In order to arouse the passions, the orator must make an exhaustive analysis of the listener's disposition. The passions are not born out of thin air; they emerge from the way human beings engage with the world.

Aristotle makes the point most lucidly. After he defines the emotions as those affects that, accompanied by pleasure and pain, alter judgment, he goes on to delimit how certain dispositions of mind and occasions give rise to the emotions in general:

> And each of them [the emotions] must be divided under three heads; for instance, in regard to anger, the disposition of mind which makes men angry, the persons with whom they are usually angry, and the occasions which give rise to anger. For if we knew one or even two of the heads, but not all three, it would be impossible to arouse that emotion. The same applies to the rest. (*Rhetoric* 173)

The orator must know the dispositions, the occasions, and the objects that are deeply associated with in any given emotion. This why Aristotle's extensive discussion of the emotions ends up becoming a catalogue of contextual knowledge associated with particular emotions aroused by particular circumstances. The premise underlying Aristotle's claim is that *pathos* constitutes a fundamental way in which human beings carry themselves in the world.[16]

Many aspects of Cicero's rhetorical theory borrow directly from Aristotle, and the importance Cicero also gives to the contextual analysis of the listener's disposition is definitely one of them. And although Cicero might make affective rhetoric seem like the work of pure intuition (the orator scents out an audience's disposition), in reality he is advising the orator to quickly analyze a set of favorable conditions based on a concrete catalogue of contextual

[16] Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* provides a helpful formulation that clarifies Aristotle's ontological grounding of the passions. Heidegger states that "the *pathe* [passions] are not 'psychic experiences,' are not 'in consciousness,' but are a being-taken of human beings in their full being-in-the-world" (131). Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotelian *pathos* illuminates how the orator's preliminary analysis of the listener's disposition is, in essence, an analysis of how that listener relates to the world. By means of language, the orator forcefully re-orders and alters the present circumstances of the listener's world; this violent rearrangement and re-presentation of the world results in a "being-taken". *Pathos* is the violent instant in which human beings are forced to engage in a different way with the world, or in Heidegger's reformulation of the more general notion of Aristotelian *pathos*: "*pathos* is a determination of beings with the character of alterability" (131).

knowledge. This contextual knowledge, in fact, yields a series of topics (*loci*) that Cicero recommends to evoke pity and indignation, the affects traditionally employed in judicial rhetoric.

In his early treatise entitled *De inventione*, Cicero states that the orator must conclude a speech (*peroratio*) with three things: a summarization (*enumeratio*) of what was argued, a final attempt at fueling indignation (*indignatio*), and an impassioned lament that elicits pity (*conquestio*) (*De inventione* 147). Cicero then lists fifteen commonplaces (*loci*)[17] that the orator can have recourse to in order to arouse indignation, which he defines as taking violent offence at some action. Characteristically of this early treatise, Cicero's presentation of these *topoi* is somewhat disorganized. As he lists these commonplaces, Cicero does not distinguish between occasions, persons, and dispositions. Nonetheless, these topics remain of particular interest to us, for they are, in fact, the most explicit instructions Cicero offers on what the orator ought to do with language when evoking indignation and pity.

Even more, we find that at least nine of these *topoi* are frequently employed by Bartolomé de las Casas, and since they will merit our attention later, we think it fitting to summarize them at this juncture. First, the orator will certainly arouse *indignatio* if he shows that the case being pleaded is a weighty matter. To infuse the case with *gravitas*, the orator ought to invoke the divine, as well as renowned human authorities. Second, indignation can be evoked by highlighting asymmetries. For example, one becomes most indignant when harmful actions are done to people of authority, or when the evil doers prove to be arrogant beyond measure by harming their inferiors. Third, the orator must demonstrate that the misdeeds committed set a precedent for further misdeeds. Fourth, the orator must show that the wrongdoing was clearly intentional, for voluntary misdeeds cannot be pardoned or regarded as

[17] The first ten topics are also listed in the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* II. 48-49.

mistakes. Fifth, the orator must emphasize that a foul, cruel, and tyrannical deed has been done either by force, by violence, or by the influence of riches, for that will swiftly prove that such an act is utterly at variance with law and equity. Sixth, the orator must take great effort in representing the crime as extraordinary, as something unknown amongst savages, barbarous tribes, and wild beasts; these crimes are usually the ones committed against women, children, and men of renown or position, for "by all these circumstances violent indignation is aroused and this can produce the greatest hatred of one who has violated any of these sacred relationships" (147). Seventh, the orator may use the art of comparison in order to amplify the horrific nature of the deed. Eighth, the orator ought to employ vividness (*evidentia*) in his narration of the facts. Vividness is achieved by bringing together "all circumstances, both what was done during the performance of the deed and what followed after it, accompanying the narration with reproaches and violent denunciations of each act, and by our language bring the action as vividly as possible before the eyes of the judge before whom we are pleading, so that a shameful act may seem as shameful as if he had himself been present and seen it in person" (147). And ninth, one cannot but feel indignant when the orator shows that insult has been added to injury in any given crime.

Infusing *gravitas*, highlighting asymmetries, portraying crime as exemplary and intentional, emphasizing its lawlessness, employing comparisons, all these rhetorical strategies belong to the rhetorical endeavor known as amplification (*amplificatio*). On the other hand, though an amplification of its own, the efficacy of the rhetorical device of (*evidentia*) merited its own emphasis. The primary endeavor of *evidentia* was to produce a vivid and disturbing image (*ante oculos ponere*), by which the orator manages to turn himself and his audience into fictitious eyewitnesses.

If emotive amplification and vivid description are the rhetorical devices meant to arouse indignation, then what about pity? Aristotle defines pity as "a kind of pain excited by the sight of anything evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it" (*Rhetoric* 225), and as such, Aristotle posits pity as the contrary emotion to indignation, "for if we sympathize with and pity those who suffer undeservedly, we ought to be indignant with those who prosper undeservedly" (231). These definitions bring us to another key notion of the rhetorical theory of emotions: if the orator possesses the knowledge to evoke a certain emotion, then he can easily evoke its contrary. Is it surprising, then, that the set of sixteen commonplaces that Cicero lists to elicit pity are also affective amplifications and yet another recommendation to employ *evidentia*? Let us consider the five topics that will certainly resurface in our study when we venture more deeply into Las Casas's prose.

First, Cicero advises the orator to prepare the listener for pity by universalizing human weakness, so that "in viewing the misfortune of another he will contemplate his own weakness" (*De inventione* 147). Second, the orator again should emphasize asymmetries, for example, by relating the prosperity the victims once enjoyed and from what evils they now suffer, or by emphasizing how shameful, mean and ignoble acts are particularly unbecoming of people of a certain age or position. Third, pity cannot be evoked by referring to events long past or occurring in a distant future. Hence, the orator needs to remind the listener in what troubles the victims have been, still are, and are destined to be. Fourth, the orator will amplify the pitiable nature of the victim by relating in utmost detail all the separate phases of a given misfortune. And fifth, the orator must again strive for *evidentia*, representing the misfortunes "one by one, so that the auditor may seem to see them, and may be moved to pity by the actual occurrence, as if he were present, and not by words alone" (*De inventione* 147).

Thus, if the Ciceronian orator wants to evoke the contrary passions of pity and indignation, he can simply access the codified knowledge of commonplaces, and filter them through the rhetorical devices of *amplificatio* and *evidentia*. But before we elaborate more on what enables these stylistic conventions to transmit and express emotion, we must mention a third passion underlying the seemingly clear opposites of pity and indignation.

The juxtaposition that Aristotle makes of pity and indignation in the *Rhetoric* readily brings to mind his other memorable juxtaposition of pity and fear in the *Poetics*, where he defines tragedy as a representation of a completed action that through pity and fear brings about the catharsis of such emotions (*Poetics* 47-49). Not only are pity and fear specific to the tragic genre, but Aristotle considers them to be inextricably connected, for as Stephen Halliwell explains in his study of the *Poetics*, "...our pity for others' undeserved suffering depends in part on our sympathetic capacity to imagine, and imaginatively fear, such things for ourselves; and fear for ourselves can in turn be created by the sympathetic experience of others' misfortunes" (177).

Fear is prominently analyzed by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, as it was widely used by orators for political purposes. Thus, pity and fear can also be considered as central passions, not only for the dramatist, but for the orator as well. Nevertheless, one ought to distinguish between the aim of *pathos* in tragedy and the aim of *pathos* in persuasive rhetoric. There are plenty of constitutive differences between tragic drama and affective oratory, but we believe that what most clearly differentiates the two is the highly-debated notion of *katharsis*.

First of all, we cannot speak of Aristotelian *katharsis* —a concept widely debated since the Renaissance— without speaking of *mimesis*. Spectators of tragedy experience pity and fear, but they know that the pity and fear they experience is aroused from a representation of reality

and not reality itself. There is a safe distance from the pitiable and horrible events that allows the spectator to feel those emotions in a safe way. The tragic or pitiable events do not befall us; we are not Oedipus or Antigone; the distance afforded by these representations lies in our knowledge of their mimetic nature, that is, their fictitiousness.

Moreover, according to Aristotle, *katharsis* of pity and fear is possible because tragic plots, although surprising, remain rational. In his article on *katharsis*, philosophy scholar Jonathan Lear convincingly disproves the commonly held interpretation of *katharsis* as a purgation of toxic emotions, as well as the most sophisticated interpretation of *katharsis* as an experience meant to educate people in emotional management. In narrowing the field of what Aristotle might have meant by *katharsis*, Lear implies that *katharsis* has to do with tragedy's ability to arouse pity and fear within a rational framework:

> The world of tragic events must, Aristotle repeatedly insists, be rational. The subject of tragedy may be a good man, but he must make a mistake which rationalizes his fall. The mere fall of a good man from good fortune to bad fortune for no reason at all, isn't tragic, it's disgusting. The events in a tragedy must be necessary or plausible, and they must occur on account of one another. Insofar as we do fear that tragic events could occur in our lives, what we fear is chaos: the breakdown of the primordial bonds which link person to person. For Aristotle, a good tragedy offers us this consolation: that even when the breakdown of the primordial bonds occurs, it does not occur in a world which is in itself ultimately chaotic and meaningless. (325)

Katharsis, therefore, appears to be contingent upon two things, namely the sense of distance intrinsic to representation, and tragedy's ability to preserve meaning even in its portrayal of the terrible.

But the notion of distance is also key in differentiating pity from fear. There is an element of self-projection in pity, hence the need for the orator to universalize human weakness, or to craftily represent the victim as one's equal. But when the distance is too small or null, as in the case of our loved ones or ourselves, then the affect experienced is not pity but terror. "This is

why Amasis is said not to have wept when his son was led to execution, but did weep at the sight of a friend reduced to beggary, for the latter excited pity, the former terror" (*Rhetoric* 229). Pity emerges at the sight of anything evil, deadly or painful that befalls others like ourselves, and, in a theatrical sense, the distance inherent in their otherness allows for the flow of our tears. Fear as terror arises from the immediacy of an existential threat, leaving the body in unresponsive trembling.[18]

When the orator seeks to move others by evoking fear, his primary task is to demonstrate that the listener finds himself confronted with some kind of imminent danger. Although this existential threat is rooted in our bodily existence, the orator needs only to display and amplify the dangerous signs to one's self, one's family, or even one's nation. This rather extended way of conceiving fear is why Aristotle can affirm that "injustice possessed of power is fearful, for the unjust man is unjust through deliberate inclination" (*Rhetoric* 203). Such abstract conception of fear notwithstanding, when the orator turns the signs of danger towards the listener he eliminates the distance that is crucial to elicit pity. We can even think of indignation, pity, and fear as three intersectional affects insofar as they are functions of distance: to evoke indignation, the orator needs to amplify and vividly represent the horrifying acts of the perpetrator; to evoke pity, the orator can simply shift his amplificatory and vivid representation to the victim's sufferings; to evoke fear, the orator could redirect both, the rhetoric of horror and suffering, towards the listener.

[18] In sharp contrast to Aquinas's non-bodily affections of the will, William James insists on defining the emotions by their bodily manifestations. He describes the bodily responses of fear in his well-known essay "What is an emotion", as variations of trembling: "What kind of an emotion of fear would be left, if the feelings neither of quickened heart-beats nor of shallow breathing, neither of trembling lips nor of weakened limbs, neither of goose-flesh nor of visceral stirrings, were present, it is quite impossible to think."

Thus the notion of distance helps us understand how these key passions interrelate. Nevertheless, we previously claimed that the *pathos* of tragedy and the *pathos* of rhetoric can be most clearly differentiated by the notion of *katharsis*. Moreover, we found that *katharsis* relies, in part, on the distance intrinsic to representation. The question thus arises: how is the orator able to do away with the distance inherent to representation so as to avoid *katharsis*? This question underscores a fundamental paradox of affective orations. Insofar as they are highly vivid narrations that exploit all the figures of language for the sake of *pathos*, affective orations may appear indistinguishable from fictitious representations; but insofar as they insist on being truthful accounts of real events, affective orations are constantly offered as non-fictional representations.

For even as the orator employs metaphors to render a pitiable scene more vividly, he must not let the listener forget the factuality of his narration if he is to avoid a cathartic effect. As the orator embodies the voice of the victim through impersonation (*prosopopoeia*), it must not be too mimetic, lest mimetic distance turn his representation cathartic. In his effort to strike fear when representing a horrid event, the orator is not bound by meaning or causality, he might rather want to amplify the chaotic and the irrational, though he runs the risk, as Aristotle warns, of eliciting disgust instead of fear.

The orator's usual claims to fact were not sufficient to persuade anyone of an event's veracity. Rhetorical treatises considered *pathos* as a key element of judicial rhetoric. The affective narratives of this branch of rhetoric constituted, in part, the body of proof of any given case, and as such, they were understood to belong to factual representation. The rhetorical tradition sanctioned the use of figurative and affective language in the orator's narration of the facts. Vivid narrative (*muthos*) was the necessary complement to rational argument (*logos*). As

a result, the usual asseverations regarding the veracity of any given case ended up becoming another kind of rhetorical commonplace. In the end, truth was measured by the intensity of *pathos*, though the orator had to constantly punctuate his affective speech with factual reminders so as to create an non-fictional effect.

Therefore, the orator could avoid *katharsis* if his representation remained open ended, that is, if he avoided emphasizing the causal relationship of events, and also by constantly reminding the audience of the factual nature of his account, thus breaking any sense of theatricality. Furthermore, unlike tragedy, the *pathos* inflicted by rhetorical argumentation was meant to leave the audience hanging on their emotions. Something analogous to *katharsis* could only be experienced when the judge or audience became resolved to act on the basis of those emotions.

In the process of clarifying how pity, indignation and fear interrelate, we came upon the useful conclusion that oratorical *pathos* strives to be anti-cathartic. Nevertheless, we have still to provide a more comprehensive answer to the seminal question driving our general inquiry into the powers of *pathos*: What are the linguistic mechanisms rhetoric uses to trigger the vehement emotions? We have located *amplificatio* and *evidentia* as the primary rhetorical devices recommended to evoke indignation, pity and fear —passions related by a function of distance—, and we have listed some of the classic commonplaces that spring from such devices. But how is the transmission of emotion actually possible? Is *pathos* primarily transmitted through anti-cathartic performance, or through language structures?

Although the codification of rhetorical devices seems to run counter to the dynamics of performance, to the theorists of rhetoric these seemingly opposite means actually came together

to effect the transmission of emotion. In impassioned prose, Cicero posits that the orator needs to experience the emotions more strongly than anyone else so as to transmit them:

> In fact, it is impossible for the hearer to grieve, to hate, to envy, to become frightened at anything, to be driven to tears and pity, unless the self same emotions the orator wants to apply to the juror seem to be imprinted and branded onto the orator himself. [...] For no material is so easy to kindle, that it can catch fire unless fire is actually applied to it; likewise, no mind is so susceptible to an orator's power, that it can be set on fire unless the orator who approaches it is burning and all ablaze himself. [...] For oratory that aims at stirring the hearts of others, will, by its very nature, stir the orator himself even more strongly than it will any member of his audience. (*On the Ideal* 173)

The stronger the emotion of the orator, the more effective the transmission. "But how can we come to be moved?" asks Quintilian, "emotions, after all, are not in our power" (59-61). Quintilian explains that the orator can move himself by means of his image-making faculty:

> The person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them "visions"), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us. [...] We can in indeed easily make this happen at will. (59-61)

Quintilian's observation also sheds more light on the workings of *evidentia*. The orator aims to move others by vivid image-making (*evidentia*), but the power of the image depends on its ability to move the orator first.

Are the passions, then, transmitted by the forcefulness of representation, or by the mere act of presencing how someone else is consumed by an emotion? Cicero and Quintilian seem to privilege *mimesis*, for even if the orator generates emotion by contagion, his own emotion depends on his sensibility to the image he himself has created. In this sense, the orator is an exemplary listener and reactor to his own emotive representation. This is also why the orator's task is constantly likened to that of actors who suffuse their lines with *pathos*, but Cicero affirms

that orators go even further, as they are also the makers of the emotive language they themselves perform:

> But as I said, you shouldn't think this surprising when it happens to us orators, for what can be so unreal as poetry, the stage, the theater? Yet, in such performances, I have often seen myself the eyes of an actor seemed to blaze forth from his mask...Now if this actor, although he went on stage every day, could not perform these lines rightly without feeling grief, do you really think Pacuvius was in a calm and relaxed state of mind when he wrote them? That is surely out of the question. For I have often heard (people say that Democritus and Plato have left this statement on record) that no one can become a good poet without emotional fire and without a kind of inspired frenzy. (*On the Ideal* 174)

Dramaturge and actor at once, the orator, overtaken by *furor poeticus*, creates emotive language as he performs it. And as he performs his own representation he becomes inflamed by it, once ablaze, the fire of *pathos* catches on to those around.

We must, however, take Cicero's poeticized description with a grain of salt. Inspired frenzy aside, all rhetorical theorists constantly emphasize that rhetoric is an art, a *techne*. And furthermore, Cicero's own catalogue of commonplaces clearly demonstrates that rhetoric relied on a set of linguistic conventions to elicit *pathos*. Yet, these codified mechanisms of language did not go against the embodiment of emotion, but were rather thought to enhance the verisimilitude of emotive expression. Quintilian even proposes that *pathos*, naturally experienced, produces a linguistic eloquence worthy of imitation:

> The mere imitation of grief or anger or indignation may in fact sometimes be ridiculous, if we fail to adapt our feelings to the emotion as well as our words and our face. Why else should mourners, at least when their grief is fresh, seem sometimes to show great eloquence in their cries? Why should anger sometimes make even the uneducated eloquent, if not because they have vigour of mind and genuine personality? Consequently, where we wish to give an impression of reality, let us assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who really suffer; [...] Again, when pity is needed, let us believe that the ills of which we are to complain have happened to us, and persuade our hearts of this. ... We shall thus say what we would have said in similar circumstances of our own. (59, 63)

The passions contain within themselves their own eloquence, their own language. The orator can access that language by strongly arousing those passions within himself, as well as by imitating the language of those who experience those passions. It is the *mimesis* of affective language, however, that the rhetorical tradition managed to codify.

We can think of this process in light of the concept of *decorum*, that is, propriety of expression. In the words of Brian Vickers, propriety of emotive expression works because "the listener will judge the speaker's accuracy in expressing emotion by reference to what he has himself felt on similar occasions" (296). And as Vickers asserts further on, the Latin rhetorical tradition "shared the belief that rhetoric had essentially codified real life" (299). In this sense, most of the affective rhetorical figures and tropes were considered as a kind of mimesis of emotional states of being. The claim, which may seem strange to our contemporary understandings of affective language, is that people under the influence of vehement emotions speak eloquently and speak in specific rhetorical figures. Sound and fury signify, and they signify through codifiable language structures. This is how performance and rhetorical figures were understood to work in tandem.

The representation of pity, indignation, and fear are linked to a list of commonplaces, but as the orator filters them through the rhetorical devices of *amplificatio* and *evidentia*, he must also have recourse to a set of affective figures. The figures of speech traditionally associated with emotive amplification are hyperbole, *cataplexis* (threatening or prophesying payback for ill doing), *prosopopoeia* (speaking as another person, particularly the victim), *synonimia* (lexical repetition meant to add emotional force and clarity), *deinosis*, ("language that adds force to facts which are disgraceful, cruel, or odious") *adynaton* (the expression of the impossibility of

expression), *exclamatio* (an emotional outcry), and *interrogatio*, or what we call the rhetorical question (Quintilian 61).

On the other hand, *evidentia* relies primarily on metaphor, as no other figure matches metaphor's image-making power. Also, the vividness of a narration was enhanced by a strict use of the present tense (thus enhancing the effect of making the audience a witness), the use of apostrophe (addressing the characters being "seen"), and all the figures of description, such as *ekphrasis*, *peristasis* (a description of circumstances), *topographia* (description of place), *pragmatographia* (description of an action), and *ethopoeia* (a detailed description of a character). It is through these figures that the orator would articulate the topics that we listed above. And though the classification of these figures is very much the product of artifice, the orator would attempt to transcend their artificiality by the more subtle art of a deeply felt performance.

We must not let go of the fact, however, that an impassioned performance of the linguistic mechanisms we have just outlined only constitutes half of the equation. A carefully premeditated and anti-cathartic performance, executed with the proper use of rhetorical devices and figures, is only a prescription for what the orator must do at the level of language. This linguistic artistry would be rendered ineffective if it lacked a thorough analysis of the listener's disposition and context. Emotive rhetoric must be grounded in the context of the listener, that is, his disposition of mind, the occasions, and the persons to whom he should direct his emotions.

The codification of emotive rhetoric was always meant to aid the orator in his forceful attempt to re-order and alter the present circumstances of the listener's world; these language structures were to facilitate the orator's ultimate end of violently re-arranging and re-presenting the world so as to disorient, or rather re-orient, the listener. For, as Heidegger states, *pathos* is a being-taken of human beings in their full being-in-the-world. And by definition, the state of

"being-taken" presupposes that the entirety of the listener's being is reoriented, thus resulting in a reorientation of the listener's judgment.

Nonetheless, rhetoric's codification of affective language cannot help but accentuate its instrumentality, allowing for a partial application of its principles. Bartolomé de las Casas certainly understood the tenets of rhetorical praxis, but he partially diverged from it as a result of his spiritual understanding of language. The friar's being-in-the-world is other-worldly. He will indeed employ the verbal forms prescribed by rhetoric, but Las Casas's analysis of the emotional disposition of his listener, that is, finding the possibilities of being-seized, differs from the ancients' conception. The actions of men were not only bound by human law, but also by canonical and divine law. In this sense, Las Casas's language transcends judicial rhetoric and its key passions and moves onto a spiritual plane, where the passions have spiritual implications.

III. The Passions and Sacred Rhetoric

Despite the comprehensiveness and far-reaching utility of the powers of rhetorical *pathos*, for Las Casas the art of rhetoric was but one instrument amongst many others. We can think of legal discourse (human, canonical, and divine), for example, as it is another modality of language Las Casas constantly employs throughout his works. Indeed, it will resurface later in our study, as legal discourse usually constitutes the *logos* of the friar's rhetoric, and as such, the notion of legality becomes *that* towards which the affected will aim. But since our focus lies on the affective powers of language, we must now turn to the primary way in which Las Casas understood language to move others, namely, the emotional power of sacred rhetoric.

In the first section of this chapter, we underscored Las Casas's endorsement of fear (he actually uses the verb "to terrorize") as a means to move the most reticent listener of the Gospel. This endorsement compelled us to raise the question regarding the affective language at the preacher's disposal, given that the New World missionary was not only to spread the Gospel, but also preach and tend to the Christian colonizers. Furthermore, we briefly discussed how, in chapter 6 of *De unico vocationis modo*, Las Casas positions preemptive war as the exact contrary to peaceful evangelization, and that, unlike the theoretical and serene chapter 5, chapter 6 reads more like an exemplary and fiery sermon, whose style and tone we tend to associate with Las Casas at his most indignant.

Indeed, if chapter 5 proves the need for peaceful evangelization by means of deduction and exhaustive allusion to authorities, chapter 6 not only proves the contrary proposition, it also teaches the missionary how to preach against those who engage in unjust war. Moreover, the chapter illustrates how the homiletic art aims to evoke certain affects by deploying certain biblical passages, and by performing, in a sense, a live commentary on those passages. But, before we fully engage with Las Casas's exemplary use of scripture, we must briefly explain what the general role of the passions is in Christian life, and then focus on the importance Christianity placed on fear, as the importance of love has already been explained in the first section of this chapter.

At the beginning of this chapter, in our attempt to understand the role love plays in conversion according to Las Casas, we determined that love was but one of the many affections of the will, that is, love was one of the passions that as movements of the soul do not originate in the sensitive appetite. This Thomistic understanding of the affections, or the passions, was more

in line with the naturalistic approach with which Aristotle discusses the *pathe* in *De Anima*, although for Aristotle the soul was primarily an animating principle inherent to all life, hence even the animals are said to experience some passions, and some even possess an imaginative faculty. Aquinas's emotive theory also addresses the passions in their moral sense, in a way similar to the way Aristotle approaches them in his ethical works.[19] But, although Aquinas constantly cites Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he is not interested in the rhetorical underpinnings of Aristotle's affective theory.

Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotelian affective theory underscores how in the *Rhetoric* the passions are analyzed ontologically, that is, the passions as modalities of being defined by particular contexts of human experience. The rhetor can thus simulate a set of conditions that will result in a particular way of "being-taken", that is, in the arousal of a specific passion. In their rhetorical treatises, the Latin orators embrace Aristotle's theory of contextual affectivity, but they do not adhere to his naturalistic or ethical understanding of the passions. For Cicero and Quintilian true eloquence is displayed, above all, in its ability to stir the passions, yet, when they consider the passions directly, that is, philosophically, Cicero and Quintilian align with the Stoics, who insist that the soul must be cured by becoming impervious to the passions.

We must therefore turn to St. Augustine, once again, as affectivity was central to his thought and rhetorical practice. It is Augustine who most clearly explains the general role of the passions in Christian life, and it is Augustine who stresses the importance of reordering the passions through emotive homilies.[20] Once a Ciceronian, Augustine zealously disavows the

[19] Aristotle discusses the role of the emotions in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*.
[20] For more on Augustine's Christianization of classical rhetoric and the therapeutic aspects of preaching see Kolbet, Paul R. *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal*. University of Notre Dame Press. 2010.

Stoic understanding of the passions as perturbations and diseases, for "these affections, when they are exercised in a becoming way, and follow the guidance of right reason, who will dare to say that they are diseases or vicious passions?" (*The City of God* 454).

For Augustine the passions were an inextricable part of our fallen human condition, and the bankrupt promises of Stoicism would only amount to producing the sinful passion of pride:

> For to be quite free from pain while we are in this place of misery is only purchased, as one of this world's literati perceived and remarked, at the price of blunted sensibilities both of mind and body. And therefore that which the Greeks call ἀπαθεια, and what the Latins would call, if their language would allow them, *impassibilitas*, if it be taken to mean an impassibility of spirit and not of body, or, in other words, a freedom from those emotions which are contrary to reason and disturb the mind, then it is obviously a good and most desirable quality, but it is not one which is attainable in this life. [...] And if there be some of its citizens who seem to restrain and, as it were, temper those passions, they are so elated with ungodly pride, that their disease is as much greater as their pain is less. And if some, with a vanity monstrous in proportion to its rarity, have become enamored of themselves because they can be stimulated and excited by no emotion, moved or bent by no affection, such persons rather lose all humanity than obtain true tranquility. (454-55)

Apathy, or blunted sensibility, does not only run counter to our humanity, but Stoic apathy also yields the satanic sin of pride. Within a Christian framework, Stoic tranquility is impossible in this life. This is why the Christian pilgrimage through this world is everything but a tranquil and apathetic one, for:

> Among ourselves, according to the sacred Scriptures and sound doctrine, the citizens of the holy city of God, who live according to God in the pilgrimage of this life, both fear and desire, and grieve and rejoice. And because their love is rightly placed, all these affections of theirs are right. They fear eternal punishment, they desire eternal life; they grieve because they themselves groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of their body; they rejoice in hope, because there «shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.» (452)

Augustine will continue to list many other ways in which Christians fear, desire, grieve, and rejoice, as he considers these affections to be central to the Christian life, and the preacher, therefore, must keep these affections in mind when constructing his homilies.

As we pointed out earlier, in his last advice to the missionaries, Las Casas states that "you may scare the impudent, if you think it expedient, with the terrible day of judgment and the punishments that they will suffer eternally." ["Nihilominus poterunt terrere protervos, si viderint expedire, iudicio terribili futuro, et poenis, quae passuri sunt aeternaliter" (*De unico* 556).] But as Augustine makes clear in the aforementioned passage, the citizens of the holy city of God are also to fear eternal punishment. In fact, both Augustine and Aquinas wrote extensively on fear, as fear was not only structurally related to love, but it was precisely the fear of God that set men on the path to wisdom, for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10; Ps. 111:10; Eccles. 1:16). Thus, in order to get a better sense of how and why the preacher ought to employ fear, let us further examine its spiritual implications.

First of all, both Aquinas and Augustine insist on distinguishing between servile fear (*timor servilis*) and filial or chaste fear (*timor filialis*, *timor castus*). For "if a man turn to God and adhere to Him, through fear of punishment, it will be servile fear; but if it be on account of fear of committing a fault, it will be filial fear, for it becomes a child to fear offending its father" (*Summa,* 2a 2ae. q. 19. art. 2). Yet, servile fear is not an evil thing, but on the contrary, the Patristic tradition considered it a gift from the Holy Ghost.[21] As a gift of God, fear is in essence beneficial, as Aquinas explains:

> For servile fear is like a principle disposing a man to wisdom from without, insofar as he refrains from sin through fear of punishment, and is thus fashioned for the effect of wisdom, according to Sirach 1:27, «The fear of the Lord driveth out sin.» On the other hand, chaste or filial fear is the beginning of wisdom, as being the first effect of wisdom. For since the regulation of human conduct by the Divine law belongs to wisdom, in order

[21] "But servile fear is from the Holy Ghost, since a gloss on Romans 8:15, «You have not received the spirit of bondage,» etc. says: «It is the one same spirit that bestows two fears, viz. servile and chaste fear.» Therefore servile fear is not evil." (*Summa*, 2a 2ae q. 19 art. 4). And "Fear is of several kinds, as stated above. Now it is not «human fear», according to Augustine (De Gratia et Lib. Arb. xviii), «that is a gift of God» —for it was by this fear that Peter denied Christ— but that fear of which it was said (Matthew 10:28): «Fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.»" (*Summa,* 2a 2ae q.19 art. 9)

> to make a beginning, man must first of all fear God and submit himself to Him: for the result will be that in all things he will be ruled by God. (*Summa*, 2a 2ae q. 19 art. 7)

Augustine also discusses this same distinction, but he understands it in terms of love and desire. Servile fear drives out sin by appealing to our self-love (fear of punishment), while chaste fear makes men wise for they act in accordance to Divine law out of love for God (fear of offending him).

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that fear can be employed as a remedy against pride, while also setting the foundation for humility. "According to Sirach 10:14, «the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God», that is to refuse submission to God, and this is opposed to filial fear, which reveres God. Thus fear cuts off the source of pride for which reason it is bestowed as a remedy against pride. Yet it does not follow that it is the same as the virtue of humility, but that it is its origin" (*Summa*, 2a 2ae q. 19. art. 9). And Augustine concurs, stating that "of necessity this fear will lead us to thought of our mortality and of our future death and will affix all our proud motions, as if they were fleshly members fastened with nails, to the wood of the cross" (*On Christian* 38). Indeed, human pride withers before the realization of human mortality, but, spiritually speaking, human pride utterly succumbs before the fearful contemplation of the terrible Day of Judgment.

Furthermore, in the second book of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine outlines a seven-step ascent from fear to wisdom.[22] By the fear of God, Augustine asserts, men are turned towards a recognition of God's will, "so that we may know what He commands we desire and what He commands we avoid" (38). Augustine's insight elucidates the fact that for the believer fear, both servile and chaste, provides perspective. Fear works in conjunction with love so that

[22] The seven steps are: fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel of mercy, love of one's enemy, and wisdom. *De doctrina christiana*. Book II. Chapter VII.

the believer can properly direct his desires. Thus, for Augustine the fear of God not only cures pride, but fear actually regulates man's affections more generally.

This is why Augustine can even prescribe the fear of God to cure the inordinate *cupiditas*, the root of all evil, by which he means all inordinate desire, mainly manifested as lust and greed. In a revelatory passage of the treatise known as *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (*Eighty-three different questions*), Augustine details how servile fear works to lessen *cupiditas* in men who are not enticed by the beauty of virtue:

> The lessening of covetousness [*cupiditas*] begins with the fear of God... [for] there is no one who does not flee pain more than he seeks pleasure, since indeed we see that even the fiercest beasts are frightened away from the greatest pleasures through dread of pain. When this becomes habitual in them, they are said to be broken and tamed. Consequently, since man possesses a reason which, in the service of covetousness through a deplorable perversion, suggests that transgressions can be hidden and carefully prepares the cleverest devices for hiding secret sins, and all for the purpose of not fearing [the judgment of] men, then it follows that men not yet enticed by the beauty of virtue are more difficult to tame than wild animals. (68-69)

In order to rein in cupidity men are to be broken and tamed through language. The difficulty, however, resides in man's ability to think that his actions are unbound when there is a lack of oversight. Augustine's remedy consists in instilling servile fear:

> [This is so] unless they be deterred from sinning by the punishments most truly proclaimed by holy and divine men, and unless they agree that they cannot conceal from God what they conceal from men. But in order that God be feared, one must be persuaded that the universe is ruled by Divine Providence. But one must be persuaded not so much by reasoned arguments, since one who can appreciate them can already perceive the beauty of virtue, as by examples either recent, if there be any, or from history, and especially that history which through the watch-care of Divine Providence has received in the Old and New Testaments the most excellent weight of religious authority. (68-69)

The fear of God, the primary antidote to *cupiditas*, is contingent upon man's belief that God bears constant witness to all of his actions. The preacher must persuade his listeners that God

has seen and sees their doings, he must proclaim the divine punishments, and he must endow his affective language with religious authority by employing examples from Scripture.

This fear-inducing use of religious language seems to find its most terrifying expression in the language of the Old Testament prophets, and that is why these scriptures are employed, not as models for imitation, but as affective re-iterations. Augustine states, for example, that "The more the reign of cupidity is destroyed, the more charity is increased" (*On Christian* 89). He will later quote a verse from Jeremiah, where it reads, "Lo, I have set thee this day over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to destroy" (90). Augustine will then beautifully interpret this verse to mean that the prophet has set out to destroy the reign of *cupiditas* by means of the forcefulness of the Word of God. Despite some minor variations on how Scripture is used, the preferred method seems to be re-iteration, as opposed to imitation, for "the poorer [the preacher] sees himself to be in his own speech, the more he should make use of Scripture so that what he says in his own words he may support with the words of Scripture. In this way he who is inferior in his own words may grow in a certain sense through the testimony of the great" (122)

Quoting a homily on *Genesis* by St. John Chrysostom, Bartolomé de las Casas exemplifies the utility of servile fear as he urges the missionaries to avoid being the cause of blasphemies by not practicing what they teach:

> Non minori cura idem conatur Chrysostomus alibi terrorem incutere his, qui bona docent et male vivunt aut vita sua immunda et conversatioine culpabili gentes seu infideles ut religionem Christianam odio habeant, sunt in causa, [...] Quod autem hoc maxime periculo sumpsit his, qui blasphemiae occasionem praebent, audiamus Prophetam clamantem et ex persona Dei dicentem: «Vae vobis, quia propter vos nomen meum blasphematur in Gentibus». Terribile hoc verbum est et horroris plenum. «Vae» enim, hoc est, quasi lamentatis supplicium illud non evasuros.

> Not with less care, in another place, does the same Chrysostom tries to instill terror in those who teach the good and live badly, or with their foul life and their guilty acquaintance they are the cause of the nations or the infidels having hatred towards the Christian religion. [...] And that those who give occasion to blasphemies are in great danger we hear the Prophet uttering cries and saying on behalf of God: «Woe to you, for because of you my name is blasphemed amongst the Peoples!» These words are frightful and full of dread. For «Woe» is like the lamentation of those who cannot escape punishment. (*De unico* 286-87)

For the believer it is evident that giving occasion to blasphemy, a sin of utmost gravity, merits divine punishment, but St. John Chrysostom, and Las Casas through him, underscores the terrifying aspect of such punishment by modulating the discussion to a prophetic register. More than a personal expression of pain, grief, or distress, and more than a simple rhetorical *exclamatio*, when the prophet utters the word "woe" (and as a verbal weapon it can be aimed, "woe to you"), he is voicing God's indignation and judgment over a past action that can no longer be redeemed. That singular signifier is to strike fear in the heart of the believer, for with astounding immediacy, the prophet's lamentation is able to recast the believer's particular worldly actions unto the highest ethical plane.

This uncanny ability of sacred language to elevate human actions into a struggle with the infinite and the sublime is precisely what grants this language not only its majesty but its distinctive affective power. Augustine therefore demonstrates that the ecclesiastical orator differs from the pagan rhetors precisely because the preacher's language works on a spiritual plane: "Among our orators, however, everything we say, especially when we speak to the people from the pulpit, must be referred, not the temporal welfare of man, but to his eternal welfare and to the avoidance of eternal punishment, so that everything that we say is of great importance..." (*On Christian* 143). Even the most trivial of matters like petty money feuds, says Augustine, are to be treated by the spiritually-minded orator with utmost importance, although he need not use

the most powerful resources of language. As the reader can surmise, sins like blasphemy, greed, pride, and violence rank high on the hierarchy of sins, and as such, they must be addressed with what Augustine deems the grand style.

Las Casas exemplifies the use of the grand style when addressing the greed of the conquistadors. Having drawn attention to the fearful words of prophecy regarding those who give occasion to blasphemy, Las Casas then turns the accusatory sermon of chapter 6 towards those who advocate for pre-emptive wars of conquest, and, above all, to those who participate in them:

> Isti autem qui huiusmodi bellis ad subiugandum gentes infideles priusquam lex Christi eis praedicetur insistunt, vide quo pacto precepta, mandata et leges Dei observant. Ipsi enim vel blasphemant per se ipsos,... vel infidelibus causam fidem Christi contemnendi et ipsum Regem Angelorum et Dominum universorum blasphemandi efficacem prestant,...
>
> But these, who insist on subjugating infidel nations by these sort of wars before the Law of Christ is preached to them, behold how they keep the precepts, the commandments and the laws of God. For these, or they blaspheme by themselves, ... or give efficient cause for the infidels to slight the faith of Christ and blaspheme against the very King of Angels and Lord of All Things…(413)

The friar then sets the ground for an emotive re-iteration of prophetic scripture. As a first step, Las Casas lists a set of moral imperatives that all Christians must observe; he does so by citing key biblical passages from three of the major prophets. He quotes Isaiah (1:16-17), where Scripture reads, “Cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (411). The rapid forcefulness of these paratactic verses contrasts sharply with the more expansive passage that Las Casas quotes from Ezekiel (18:4-13), where it reads:

> Behold all souls are mine... the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right... And neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife... and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

> he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live... [But if] he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. (The textual suppressions are done by Las Casas 411)

These words from Ezekiel also serve the purpose of listing even more divine commandments, but they are fraught with *timor servilis* as God's threat of mortal punishment frames the entire passage. And finally, Las Casas takes recourse to the severe words of Jeremiah (7: 5-12), the "weeping prophet" who prophesied Israel's destruction for worshiping Baal:

> Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. (411)

Jeremiah's words reveal man's futile attempt to hide transgressions from God. Indeed, the prophetic words are meant to strike fear as they enumerate every single abomination that God has in fact seen, but the expression "even I have seen it" is most frightful as it connotes God's own negative affectivity. After hearing those words, the believer can expect God's indignation, wrath, and jealousy, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God" (Exod. 34:14 KJV).

The affective power of sacred language is clearly exemplified by these prophetic passages, yet, Las Casas has but merely uttered them. Again, the preacher punctures the heart of the believer by their adequate re-iteration. In other words, the ancient words of the prophets are to be re-embodied and interpreted by the preacher, so that he redirects that language towards the believer. Through exegesis, at times quite figurative, the preacher can link the believer's sinful

acts with these passages. This is how Israel, metonymically speaking, becomes the believer who presently listens to the words, for like Israel, the believer has been led astray.

Therefore, Las Casas proceeds to strategically depict, in a way familiar to those acquainted with the *Brevísima*, the ways in which the invaders and colonizers have sinned:

> For this kind of men invade with the most cruel war those who have not wrong them in any way ... and killing them, tearing their human bodies to pieces with no regard for sex or age, piercing them with swords and spears, cutting their heads with a single blow to the neck, and killing them in such a manner that the poor souls, oh pain!, are at once sent to the final flames. And these, who are in no need of stealing, for they have everything under their feet, take other men's wives to commit adultery. And what to say about incests, rapes and concubinages that last even until death? I say they steal servants, female slaves, oxen, donkeys and everything there is in nature. I keep silent about the deprivation of honors and dignity suffered by the kings and natural lords, leaving those who escaped the sword with a life more bitter than death. I also keep silent about the wounded, who with mutilated arms and amputated hands, feet and other members, are reduced to perpetual slavery from which none of them expects to be freed but only by death itself. (412)

The reader will notice that in its formal resources, Las Casas's language employs some basic strategies of rhetorical *pathos*, such as *synonymia*, *exclamatio*, *adynaton*. Nevertheless, this narrative is to be employed not merely for its rhetorical force, but as evidence for the further application of prophetic language, hence its emphasis on listing the sinful acts. Las Casas therefore juxtaposes this narration with the prophetic language that he has already cited:

> And what about «do not shed innocent blood, do not betray one's brother, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow, do not sadden men, spoil none by violence, give bread to the hungry»? ... Is this not stealing, even pillaging, killing, committing adultery, raping, staining everything with a multitude of incests, committing perjury, making sacrifices to Baal, that is, to the singular idol that dominates, possesses, and turns into his subjects those who act this way? Namely, their desire to rule and their immense greed/desire (*cupiditas*) to enrich themselves, which is insatiable and has no end. For this is also idolatry. Because Baal means «my idol, or he who dominates me, or he who possesses me» according to Jerome. (414-16)

Las Casas re-iterates the divine commandments as listed by both Isaiah and Ezekiel through a rhetorical question that allows him to blame those who invade for greed as breaking all these commandments. Moreover, this passage is particularly striking in the figurative interpretation that Las Casas makes, with the help of Jerome, of Baal as *cupiditas*. These men are not greedy, Greed dominates them. They have forsaken their God, and as idolaters they instead burn incense unto Greed.

But the friar's interpretation goes even further, as he re-iterates the words that God spoke through Jeremiah in order to summon God as a witness of these crimes:

> But, even after all this, the spreading of the Christian religion and the zeal for the faith of these preachers has not yet been satisfied, but, so that by them alone the divine precepts are accomplished, they feign a thousand false testimonies, at times saying with perjury that [the men they invade] are dogs, idolaters, that they are entangled in other loathsome crimes, that they are stupid, foolish and for that reason unfit and incapable of faith and religion, as well as of a Christian life and its customs. And thus, these good men make these false and pernicious and even heretical lies, so that the wars, aggressions, robberies and other iniquities and loathsome crimes that they commit may seem as just and as having some pretext, or at least appear excusable. «Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.» (412)

The ironic tone that portrays the conquistadors as zealous preachers and good men maintains the passage in a state of tension that seems to break only with the re-iteration of the prophet Jeremiah's frightening words. Las Casas exemplifies how the preacher can employ Augustine's remedy against man's attempt to hide his sins from God. And in case the implicit punishment connoted by God's terrifying words of witnessing has not been clear enough, Las Casas, as he will do often, extends the logic of Old Testament prophesy to the entirety of the Spanish nation, for "Those that are so afflicted and dismayed, would they not cry to God and would not God listen and hear their cry? And would not His fury become indignant against us, until He will injure us with his sword so that our women become widows and our children orphans?" (412-

14). That particular section of chapter 6, and thus the accusatory sermon, comes to a close with this fearful pronouncement.

Chapter 5 of *De unico* openly discusses the utility of rhetorical precepts with regards to teaching (*logos*) and delighting (*ethos*) the listener. *De unico* does not openly discuss the instrumentality of *pathos*, but more than a counter-proof, chapter 6 provides an example of how to move the heart of the sinner with its fear-inducing sermon against war and greed written in the Christianized form of the grand style. For it is necessary that "the ecclesiastical orator, when he urges that something be done, not only to teach that he may instruct and to please that he may hold attention, but also to persuade that he may be victorious." (Augustine, *On Christian* 136-38)

From Augustine's teachings Las Casas understands that the passions play a key role in the life of the believer, and, furthermore, that they can be re-ordered by effective preaching. Indeed, Augustine legitimizes the use of passionate discourse as it can move the believer towards righteousness:

> And just as he is delighted if you speak sweetly, so is he persuaded if he loves what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, sorrows at what you maintain to be sorrowful; rejoices when you announce something delightful, takes pity on those whom you place before him in speaking as being pitiful, flees those whom you, moving fear, warn are to be avoided; and is moved by whatever else may be done through grand eloquence toward moving the minds of listeners, not that they may know what is to be done, but that they may do what they already know should be done. (*On Christian* 136)

The Ciceronianism of this passage notwithstanding, Augustine's radical Christianization of rhetorical *pathos* is better appreciated in his insightful observations concerning the Christian grand style:

> The grand style differs from the moderate style not so much in that it is adorned with verbal ornaments but in that it is forceful with emotions of the spirit. Although it uses

> almost all of the ornaments, it does not seek them if it does not need them. It is carried along by its own impetus, and if the beauties of eloquence occur they are caught up by the force of the things discussed and not deliberately assumed for decoration. It is enough for the matter being discussed that the appropriateness of the words be determined by the ardor of the heart rather than by careful choice. For if a strong man is armed with a gilded and bejeweled sword, and he is fully intent on the battle, he does what he must with the arms he has, not because they are precious but because they are arms. Yet he is himself the same, and very powerful, even when «wrath provides a weapon as he seeks one.» (150)

The grand style, as employed by the ecclesiastical orator, does not necessarily need rhetorical ornamentation. This constitutes its essential differentiation from the classical approach to style. As Auerbach has cogently demonstrated, for Cicero and all classical rhetoricians the gradations in style were taken in an absolute sense (35). *Decorum* required that lofty themes be expressed with lofty diction and style. On the other hand, Christianity's conceptual shift and its Scriptural culture engendered the style that Auerbach coins as the *sermo humilis*, which allowed the sublime to be expressed in a lowly style. This is why Augustine is indeed able to advise the Christian rhetor to privilege emotive spontaneity: the ardor of the heart is to determine the style of discourse.

As modern as Augustine's recommendation might sound to us, it is deeply rooted in his understanding of the affective power of Scripture. In a sudden apostrophe in chapter XIV of *De doctrina*, Augustine reacts to a verse from Jeremiah that he has just cited as he considers it powerfully moving in its humble purity: "O eloquence more terrible that it is more pure, and because it is more genuine more powerful! Truly "a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces"! Through this very prophet God Himself said that His word is like this hammer when it is spoken by the holy Prophets" (139). Despite some lyrical, and thus highly figurative, passages of Jeremiah, here he is alluded to as the paragon of the moving grand style because of its straightforward, pure style.

Yet, this grand style does more than simply instill servile fear. For it is by means of this style that the "the hard heart is to be bent to obedience..." (164). Indeed, the heart (*cor*) is central to Augustine's theology of preaching,[23] for the hammering words of the prophet are meant to break the stony heart in pieces, thus opening the possibility of redemption. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26 KJV). Contrition is the breaking of the heart, or in other words, its sensitisation.

The affective power of sacred language converts man from his sinful ways by means of contrition. Contrition elicits God's mercy, for in the words of David, "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). The relationship with the divine is thus re-established affectively, for God will then look after the man "*that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2). And here we are presented with an bodily sign of the efficacy of God's Word: trembling. The preacher is to rechannel God's word so that the contrite believer may again tremble in holy fear.

If Aquinas posited fear as the remedy to pride, now he illustrates how the actual process unfolds in the believer as contrition:

> ..."pride is the beginning of all sin," because thereby man clings to his own judgment, and strays from the Divine commandments. Consequently that which destroys sin must needs make man give up his own judgment. Now he that persists in his own judgment, is called metaphorically rigid and hard: wherefore anyone is said to be broken when he is torn from his own judgment. But, in material things, whence these expressions are transferred to spiritual things, there is a difference between breaking and crushing or contrition, as stated in Meteor. iv, in that we speak of breaking when a thing is sundered into large parts, but of crushing or contrition when that which was in itself solid is reduced to minute particles. And since, for the remission of sin, it is necessary that man should put

[23] "Augustine's realization of the *cor's* importance gave him a powerful tool in preaching. The *cor* was used as a transformative tool of analysis; that is, it was a tool which helped him study, examine, and expose the behavior of listeners. The very act of doing so was transformative, as it involved exposing the *cor's* desires to God's Scripture and Spirit." (Sanlon 78)

> aside entirely his attachment to sin, which implies a certain state of continuity and solidity in his mind, therefore it is that the act through which sin is cast aside is called contrition metaphorically. (*Summa*, Supp. q. 1 art. 2)

Man gives up his judgment when the terrifying words of the prophet break his stony heart. An all or nothing phenomenon, only contrition makes man cast his sin aside. The violence of this conception contrasts sharply to the way Quintilian speaks of rhetorical *pathos* influencing judgement as lovers are blinded by love. Yet, as we saw earlier, love is the fundamental passion at the heart of Christian conversion, and it is through contrition, that love is re-established. This is the emotive impact caused by the manifestation of the sacred through language: contrition binds man (*religare*) once again to a sacred order.

Chapter Two. Pity, Indignation, Servile Fear, and the Marvelous-Horrific: *Brevíssima relación de la destruición de las Indias*

I. "*Poner en molde*:" from the Voice to the Letter

Of all of Las Casas's published writings, it is the *Brevíssima relación de la destruición de las Indias* that has captured the imagination of the world. This was not immediately the case. As Isacio Pérez Fernandez notes in his study of the *Brevísima*, the initial years following its publication in 1552 are actually marked by a surprising silence regarding the work. Yet the little book quickly spread, especially abroad, despite the belated effort by Philip II to seize the friar's writings.

It is not difficult to see that the *Brevíssima's* memorable power lies in its masterful use of emotional rhetoric, for how can one forget its frenetic rhythm, its haunting images, its sudden cadences, its prophetic lamentations. Yet, this slim pamphlet was not born in a day. Hence, before we venture into our own analysis of its emotive rhetoric, let us outline what might be considered the three critical phases in the coming-to-be of the *Brevíssima*. This contextualization will allow us to locate its place of enunciation, which is a necessary step in any analysis of emotive discourse.

As Juan Durán Luzio has demonstrated, the "documento génesis" of the *Brevísima* is the so-called *Carta a Xevres* (1516), which was sent by the Dominican friars of Hispaniola to the First Chamberlain of Charles V, William of Croÿ, Lord of Chièvres. As a young Las Casas was crafting reform with Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, then regent of Spain, the New World Dominicans sought to reach the king-to-be Charles I through a letter addressed to his tutor and Chamberlain, William of Croÿ.

This letter to William of Croÿ can surely be considered a precursor to the *Brevisíma*, as its content (particularly the information relating to Cuba and Hispaniola) is clearly recycled and re-elaborated by Las Casas twenty-six years later. Some motifs (e.g. the appeal to Christian conscience and the Day of Judgment, the emphasis on the innocence and simplicity of the Amerindians, the inability of expression, etc.), as well as the structure of some memorable and disturbing images (e.g. mutilation as a weapon of terror, the vivid descriptions of dogs tearing apart children, etc.) that we associate with the *Brevísima* are already elaborated in the *Carta a Xevres*. Even the *Brevísima's* famous episode in which Hatuey speaks of gold as the Spaniards' god is already narrated in this letter.[24]

Undoubtedly, the *Carta a Xevres* reveals itself to be the earliest attempt at narrating the terror that unfolded on the islands of Hispaniola and Cuba, and Las Casas returned to it as he rightly considered it an indispensible part of the testimonial archive. Moreover, the letter also reveals itself as the first codification of a linguistic practice, that is, as the birth of a rhetoric that, in its effort to effect political change in the New World, thought it necessary to appeal to the interlocutor's passions. That is why Las Casas not only reuses the information contained in the *Carta a Xevres*, but he even seems to adopt its style as it re-employs many of its images.

Charles V did not publicaly react to this rhetoric until Las Casas read it to him on April of 1542, which brings us to the second critical moment in the gestation of the *Brevísima*. The King convened his advisors and the Council of Indies to look more closely into what Las Casas had reported earlier and would convey again in a "cierta relación." The royal chronicler Alonso de Santa Cruz tells us that "se juntaron muchos días á cierta hora señalada hasta que del todo les

[24] For more on the *Brevísima's* re-elaboration of these themes from the *Carta a Xevres* see Durán Luzio, Juan. *Bartolomé de las Casas ante la conquista de América: las voces del historiador*. EUNA. 1992.

leyó cierta relación que traía por escrito bien copiosa. Él les informó de palabra fuera de la dicha relación de muchas otras cosas que convenían al servicio de Dios y de Su Majestad y del bien de los habitadores de las Indias Occidentales" (217). Alonso de Santa Cruz then summarizes the aforementioned *relación*, which follows the order of the first part of the *Brevísima* as we know it today, but with the salient difference that, as Santa Cruz states, Las Casas then accused the conquistadors by name.

As a consequence of this meeting, Charles V commissioned the making of new laws that were largely based on the corrective measures (*remedios*) that Las Casas presumably presented alongside his *relación*. These laws were to become the famous and polemic *Leyes Nuevas* of 1542. However, these laws did not deal directly with the issue of soliciting persmission for more *conquistas* amongst other things, and this prompted the friar, according to Pérez Fernández, to write the text that would eventually become the printed version of the *Brevísima* of 1552.[25] Pérez Fernández argues that "...lo que pretendió con la redacción de la *Brevísima*, en este momento, fue suplir esas deficiencias; concretamente presionar para que en las Leyes Nuevas, ya redactadas, y antes de su próxima promulgación, se prohibiesen expresa y taxativamente las conquistas" (112). And as the Valencia manuscript of 1542 confirms, Las Casas had in effect written, more or less, the *relación* that we know now, and which strategically suppressed the name of the conquistadors in order to condemn the entire process of *conquista*. Thus, the handwritten *Brevísima* that was completed on December 8th of 1542, which most probably

[25] *"...esta marginación del tema de las conquistas, debió sublevar el ánimo del padre Las Casas y comenzó a comentarlo con distintos personajes, por quienes 'fue inducido y mandado yo' que, de las 'matanzas y estragos de gentes inocentes y despoblaciones de pueblos... pusiese algunas con brevedad por escripto'; y 'él lo hizo.' De manera que la redacción de la Brevísima (iniciada en Monzón de Aragón en septiembre de 1542) fue motivada por la redacción de las Leyes Nuevas que se había hecho en Valladolid en el verano anterior, aunque serán promulgadas el 20 de noviembre siguiente*." (Pérez Fernández 110)

emerged from the previous text that was meant to be read outloud, was meant to circulate amongst influential people who could press for the Crown to rectify the deficiencies of the *Leyes Nuevas*.

Why, then, print this *relación* ten years later? For a long time this question eluded many *lascasistas*. Lewis Hanke asks, "¿Por qué este largo retraso en recurrir a la palabra impresa para transmitir su mensaje? ¿Por qué había luchado cerca de cuarenta años ante el rey y el Consejo y ante asambleas eclesiásticas sin usar una sola vez el libro como instrumento de propaganda?" (*La actualidad* XII). Hanke goes on to list the many failures that punctuated Las Casas's life: his failed attempt at peaceful colonization in Cumaná (Venezuela) in 1520; his effort, begun in 1537, to peacefully evangelize the territories then known as Tezulutlán and Verapaz (Guatemala) had certainly failed by 1552; an essential aspect of the *Leyes Nuevas* had been revoked by the Crown in 1545; his tenure as Bishop of Chiapa was a frustrating experience to say the least (Las Casas was almost killed); and the famous debate against Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, despite the wide sympathy for his case, ended in an indecisive verdict. This way of synthesizing Las Casas's biography leads Hanke to conclude that "Tal vez se convenció de que había llegado el tiempo de dar a sus ideas una forma más permanente y hacer que llegaran a un público más amplio" (XIII).

There might be some truth to Hanke's conjecture. For by 1545 Las Casas was already getting impatient with the inability of the royal house to implement the laws (he was constantly witnessing its opposition in México and Perú). After listing a litany of complaints in a letter to Prince Philip written in 1545, Las Casas posits his next move almost as a threat:

> ¡Sienta V. Al. qué vida podrá tener un obispo cristiano, y qué remedio terná, viendo cada día estas cosas nefandas, no pudiéndolas remediar y siendo obligado a poner la vida por el remedio de cada una dellas, y no viendo que ay acá justiçia, ni fidelidad, ni temor que se tenga al Rey! Ya creo que me va Dios declarando lo que devo hazer, porque así como vine acá sin tiempo ni sazón, porque ese Consejo Real de las Yndias me dió más priesa

> de la que menester fuera, así creo que quiere Dios que torne a hinchir los çielos y la tierra de clamores y lágrimas y gemidos en esa corte y en ese mundo, hasta que salga Luçifer destas Indias, las quales señorea y manda oy mejor que nunca en los tiempos de la infidelidad más profunda destas gentes mandava. (*Cartas* 223-24)

This threat to swell up the heavens and the earth, the court and the Old World, with clamors, tears, and moans unveils a deeply held desire in Las Casas to spread his message so broadly that it would inevitably force rightful action.

That is why Isacio Pérez Fernández proposes, convincingly, that Las Casas went on to publish the *Brevísima* as a response to two forces. One was the overwhelming negative reaction of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru against the New Laws, and the decision of the Crown to revoke, in 1545, the part of the law that prohibited the inheritance of *encomienda* (110). The other urging reason was that the absence of a clear verdict from the Valladolid debate of 1552 resulted in a renewed pressure to request *licencias* for more *conquistas*. "Y el peligro de que se les concediese fue lo que motivó la decisión del padre Las Casas de imprimir los tratados *Aquí se contiene una disputa o controversia* y la *Brevísima*" (115). In other words, by 1552 Las Casas realized that he had to attack *encomienda* and *conquista* once again, and this time with utmost force.

The most significant editorial change that Las Casas makes to his printed *Brevísima* is the addition of an *Argumento* and a *Prólogo* dedicated to Prince Philip. In the opening *Argumento* Las Casas writes that it appeared to him most suitable to print the *relación* so that the Prince could read it more easily (6). And in the *Prólogo* he says again, "deliberé, por no ser reo callando... poner en molde algunas (y muy pocas)... para que con más facilidad Vuestra Alteza las pueda leer" (8). We must take this particular reason for printing with a grain of salt. We know of at least 54 copies of the 1552 edition, which led Pérez Fernández to conjecture that

Sebatián Trujillo printed a normal run of 100 copies (145). Did Prince Philip really need 100 copies?

As we will discuss in more depth shortly, the *Brevísima* is indeed written with the royals in mind, but Las Casas, as we saw in the letter above, had also come to believe that God had selected him to to swell up the heavens and the earth, the court and the Old World, with clamors, tears, and moans ("hinchir los çielos y la tierra de clamores y lágrimas y gemidos"). The power of the press presented itself to him as one way of fulfilling that mission. In other words, Bartolomé de las Casas printed the *Brevísima* because he wanted his *relación* to circulate as widely as possible, and what is more, he printed it being fully cognizant of the incendiary nature of its rhetoric. The voice that had been used before the Council and before the court, was now put into printing form.

Indeed, the wide circulation of the *Brevísima* was aided by the press, but I argue that by crafting its rhetoric as primarily emotive, Las Casas all but ensured its dissemination. What, then, is the rhetorical framework of the *Brevísima*? Is it meant to be a supplement to what has been considered as the more "serious" discourse of the legal treatises —such as the *Treinta proposiciones muy jurídicas* or the *Tratado comprobatorio del imperio soberano*— or is it foundational to them? In its appeal to the emotions, does the *Brevísima* shed all appeals to reason? We can now look into these matters.

Again, these are not facts; this is Las Casas's understanding of a dynamic. Moved by the passions, an affected will expresses its affection by acting upon a certain objective, or as Aquinas frames it, the affection moves the will towards the object of understanding. The rational presentation of this objective is what rhetoric deems as *logos*, one of the three modes of

persuasion. Despite its disproportionate emphasis on affective narrative, the *Brevísima relación de la destruición de las Indias* is also meant to appeal to the understanding by inserting small references to a larger rational framework. Indeed, this is not the text where Las Casas wishes to expound his rational arguments with utmost precision and care. But, as our previous discussion shows, Las Casas understands that affective rhetoric without rational objectives is blind, and therefore ineffective.

Consequently, before we focus on the rhetorical strategies and *topoi* that Las Casas employs to evoke the affects associated with judicial rhetoric, we must first inquire into the argument of the pamphlet as a whole, that is, we must look for the appeals to reason (*logos*) embedded in the *Brevísima*. What are the rational arguments that frame, or punctuate, so much emotive language? Who exactly is Las Casas trying to convince, and what actions is this language demanding?

At first, this matter appears to be clear. We have pointed out how both the opening *Argumento* and *Prólogo* emphatically state that the explicit addressee of the *Brevísima* is Prince Philip II, then in charge of New World affairs. But Las Casas also states, explicitly, that he hopes the text will persuade and move the Prince in such a way that he would become an ally and an advocate of the Indian cause in communication with Charles V: "constándole a Vuestra Alteza algunas particulares hazañas dellos, no podría de contenerse de suplicar a Su Majestad con instancia importuna que no conceda ni permita las...conquistas;..." (8). Although an implicit addressee, the presence of the Crown is constantly felt throughout the *Brevísima*. Indeed, the argument has been made that the text was mostly meant to serve the interests of Empire.[26] Under

[26] See Castro, Daniel. *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism*, Duke University Press, 2007.

this interpretation Las Casas was one of the Crown's most valued allies, as the *Brevísima's* accusations helped justify the deepening of royal intervention and control.

But this aspect of the pamphlet can also be understood, rhetorically, as an attempt to establish *ethos*. Las Casas gives the text an official imprint by calling it a *relación*. It is a deliberate choice, for as José Miguel Martínez Torrejón has rightly pointed out, the *Brevísima* draws from abundant oral and written sources, which Las Casas discloses at times, making the text not a *relacíon*, but, in fact, a collection of testimonies (221). And this shows clearly in its subtitle: Colegida por el obispo don fray Bartolomé de las Casas... Indeed, there are constant references to witnesses ("...según me dijeron algunos de los que allí se hallaron...", "Y dicen los testigos..."), references to written documents like legal evidence (*probanzas*) and letters, and the chapters on Santa Marta and Perú are completely reliant on the letters by the bishop Juan Fernández de Angulo and the Franciscan friar Marcos de Niza.

Nevertheless, Las Casas clearly chose to place the text within the genre of *relación* in order to emphasize its believability. Located somewhere in-between the ephemeral space of the letter and the archival space of official history, *relaciones* were pragmatic insofar as their information was meant to be useful, but they surpassed the act of mere reporting as their content was cogently organized and written by men of letters (Mignolo 1982) If, as a *relación,* the *Brevísima* presents itself as a textual narration of particular human actions that have concrete political repercussions, then, strictly speaking, the *Brevísima* is not a work of history, although its historicity is important, for the narration of the deeds are to be represented as true events, that is, as facts.

In other words, one of the main reasons why the friar's pamphlet does not belong to the genre of history is because the discursive practice of the *relación* deliberately manipulates its

sources in order to transform the information into practical data for the use of the official body. The writing of history for Las Casas, which is markedly Augustinian, is a reflective practice that contemplates the eternal, as its primary task is to read the signs, to trace the movements of the Providential hand throughout the unfolding of events. A *relación*, on the other hand, is extremely pragmatic as its temporal horizon ends with the present: given this information, the King is to act now: "porque de la innata y natural virtud del rey así se supone, conviene a saber: que la noticia sola del mal de su reino es bastantísima para que lo disipe, y que ni por un momento solo en cuanto en sí fuere lo pueda sufrir" (7). Hence, though very much a collected work of testimonies, the *Brevísima* is offered as a *relación* in order to persuade the official powers, and as such, it has to appeal to their interests.

But there is yet another pervading presence within the text: God. The narrative voice does not address God directly, as we see, for example, in the works of St. Augustine, who very adroitly manages to constantly address God, himself, and the reader within a single paragraph. In fact, after the *Argumento* and the *Prólogo* Las Casas does not even address the King or the Prince directly. Only first person deictics abound ("Yo vide todas las cosas arriba dichas", "...estando yo presente, murieron de hambre...*"),* which are employed to enhance the testimonial aspect of the narration. When Las Casas wishes to draw the attention of the King or Prince, he does so indirectly, voicing his wish that God may enlighten those in power to remedy the situation: "Dios sea Aquel que lo dé a entender a los que lo pueden y deben remediar" (72). Similarly, the authorial voice will only allude to God's presence and interventions quite indirectly: "...y el día del juicio será más claro, cuando Dios tomare venganza de tan horribles y abominables insultos…" (77). As the passage shows, God is summoned as the unavoidable

witness of man's actions. And just as the King will act accordingly, so will God, when he passes his final judgment on the deeds of the *conquistadores*.

These constant allusions to secular and divine authority allow Las Casas to highlight the ethical implications of the actions he is narrating. The juxtaposition of the narrative against the authority of the Crown calls for the judicial mode of rhetoric, and for an argument (*logos*) that is mostly framed in terms of legality and justice. On the other hand, when the *relación* of the conquistadors' deeds is set against the background of divine authority, the narrative employs the exhortative language of forceful rebuke, which is more emotive than rational. Therefore, it is only within the domain of judicial rhetoric that an appeal to reason can be made.

As the *relación* is an "official" account of the desolation of a vast land, the *Brevísima* relates how a group of Spaniards transform themselves into tyrants by engaging in unjust wars, and by establishing an unjust form of slavery: "Dos maneras generales y principales han tenido los que allá han pasado que se llaman cristianos en extirpar y raer de la haz de la tierra a aquellas miserandas naciones. La una por injustas, crueles, sangrientas y tiránicas guerras: la otra, ...oprimiéndolos con la más dura, horrible y áspera servidumbre… " (14-15). Unsurprisingly, Las Casas attributes the cause of this behavior to their insatiable greed and ambition ("la insaciable cudicia y ambición que han tenido..." 15). This constitutes, in its bare bones, the legal argument of the entire work.

The logic of the pamphlet does not allow Las Casas to explain his original understanding and application of canonical law to New World contexts. Other texts, like the *Treinta preposiciones muy jurídicas*, the *Tratado sobre la materia de los indios que se han hecho esclavos*, or the *Tratado comprobatorio del imperio soberano*, which work strictly within a legal framework, do that more thoroughly and effectively. Nonetheless, in the *Brevísima* Las Casas

does make a point of stating the he knows —the "expositive" utterance is here simoultaneously a "verdictive" one— with certain and infallible knowledge that the Indians could wage just war against their invaders ("…cierta e infalible ciencia que los indios tuvieron siempre justísima guerra contra los cristianos, y los cristianos una ni ninguna: nunca tuvieron justa contra los indios; ..." 23). An informed reader, and certainly Philip II, would readily understand that with this brief reference Las Casas is not only alluding to his other treatises, but to the larger, ongoing, and heated debate that included other high-profile voices, such as Francisco de Vitoria (*Relectiones De Indis et De Jure Belli*) and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (*Democrates alter sive De justis belli causis apud indios*).

Moreover, in its effort to further accentuate the illegality and injustice of the actions carried out by the conquistadors in the Indies, the *Brevísima* employs an ironic and dismissive tone towards the then nascent lexicon of Imperial expansion. In other words, Las Casas wants to reverse the widening acceptance of the terms *descubrimiento*, *conquista* and *encomienda*. He usually recasts these terms in a negative light by continually slighting them: "que no conceda ni permita las que los tiranos inventaron, prosiguieron y han cometido, que llaman conquistas...las dichas conquistas..." (8-99). The friar also turns these terms on their head by employing them as antitheses, discovery versus destruction, conquest versus invasion and so on: "en el pueblo que le repartían, o como dicen ellos, le encomendaban," (36-37); "...pasaron para destruir otras provincias, que ellos llaman descubrir,..."(60). And Las Casas sometimes provides an amplified counter-definition: "mientra que duraron (como dicho es) lo que ellos llaman conquistas, siendo invasiones violentas de crueles tiranos, condenadas no sólo por la ley de Dios, pero por todas las leyes humanas, como lo son, y muy peores que las que hace el turco para destruir la Iglesia cristiana" (40).

We must briefly note, however, that this sly attempt to effect a conceptual reversal applies to more than imperial discourse, as it is also utilized in a religious sense. Intent on embracing the innocence of the Indian perspective, the authorial voice will mostly employ the word *cristiano* in an ironically. The text abounds with these ironic uses, "...los que tienen nombre de cristianos" (77), and Las Casas is therefore forced to address the implicit readers of the pamphlet as "verdaderos cristianos."

All this use of condescension, mockery, and irony can be rightfully attributed to an affective tone, and one might argue that as such, this rhetorical strategy does not belong to the rational mode of argumentation. Yet, the emotional impact of ironic tone is a rather minor one, especially when compared to the other strategies that we will examine below, and, as we mentioned before, the ultimate goal of this lexical reversal is to counteract the growing legitimization of the key concepts underlying the enterprise of *Conquista*.[27] This is also why the *Brevísima* notoriously omits the names of the conquistadors (who could be easily identified by an informed reader like Philip II), for as Las Casas himself implies in his prologue, he is interested in condemning and putting a stop to an entire process ("las dichas conquistas") and not in seeking punishment for a few individuals. The irony that Las Casas so dexterously utilizes is meant to work on the reader's conceptual framework regarding his perception of conquest as a legal enterprise, and as such, this rhetorical strategy can be considered as furthering a form of rational persuasion that Conquest is unjust war.

Las Casas critiques the *Requerimiento* in a similar way. He recreates a scene where he mockingly portrays the conquistadors' use of the *Requerimiento* in New Spain:

[27] For more on the evolution of the concept of *conquista* see Charles Gibson, "Conquest and So-Called Conquest in Spain and Spanish America". *Terrae Incognitae*. 1980. Vol. 12. p. 1

> Considérese por los cristianos y que saben algo de Dios y de razón y aun de las leyes humanas, qué tales pueden parar los corazones de cualquiera gente que vive en sus tierras segura y no sabe que deba nada a nadie y que tiene sus naturales señores, las nuevas que les dijeren así de súpito: «Daos a obedecer a un rey extraño que nunca vistes ni oístes, y, si no, sabed que luego os hemos de hacer pedazos». (47)

The appeal to the reasoning faculties of the reader are clearly manifested here, although it is unexpectedly mixed with an implicit call for empathy, for we are asked to imagine what the Indians might *feel* when listening to such threatening words. In the intellectual act of apprehending the illegality of the *Requerimiento,* we are also to feel for its victims. Moreover, the language of the *Requerimiento* itself is here reworked with astounding condescension, as Las Casas knows that this mocking tone will readily expose the underlying irrationality. He then has recourse to irony once again, saying one thing and meaning another, as he relates that Hernán Cortés sends forth Alvarado and Olid to the south "con este tan justo y aprobado título" (48).

In sum, these are the scarce ways in which the text makes a tenuous appeal to reason. Las Casas avers that the Spaniards are engaged in an unjust war, but he is not going to prove with logic why that is so. His reference to his "infallible knowledge" is only meant to echo his legal treatises, as well as Vitoria's. Instead, the logic of the pamphlet compels the friar to rely on irony as a an economic way to remind the reader of the blatant illegality of the deeds he is relating.

But what is more, this particular way of appealing to reason demonstrates that Las Casas conceived the *Brevísima* as a text that was meant to subvert a *discourse*, and not as a text that would logically disprove its fundamental tenets. The *Brevísima* provides an alternative lexicon that serves the reader as a kind signpost: the antithetical terms to *conquista*, *descubrimiento*, and *encomienda* become themselves the objectives towards which the understanding reaches when prompted by the will. This is how the *Brevísima* subtly guides the understanding. Yet,

conquistadores will be viewed as *tiranos*, *conquistas* will be regarded as *invasiones*, *descubrimientos* will be understood as *destrucciones*, *encomiendas* will be revealed as *esclavitud*, and *cristianos* will be shown to be *apóstatas*, if and only if, the reader feels pity, indignation and pious fear. It is with these affections that the *Brevísima* aims to influence the reader's judgment, and move his will to put an end to the wars of conquest and abolish illicit slavery.

II. Employing Pity Against *Encomienda*

As a work of judicial rhetoric, the *Brevísima* aims to accuse the conquistadors, and thereby the whole enterprise of Conquest, of engendering economic and natural destruction, unjust war, unjust slavery, tyranny, and blasphemy of the Christian religion. This is quite an array of accusations, but the language summoned to condemn them all relies on arousing only a few passions. Since judicial rhetoric works within the strict dichotomy of accusation and defense, its affective resources were usually limited to evoking the contrary passions of pity and indignation. As expected, Las Casas attempts to evoke these two affections, but as he also places his narrative against the background of divine authority, he have take recourse to the spiritual affection of fear (*timor servilis*). If the reader does not act, he risks divine punishment. Yet, we must single out the experience of horror, which escapes the parameters established by the conventions of judicial rhetoric. Horror is not a judicial passion, but one that can be understood within the parameters of aesthetic production. Indeed, we will discuss how some of the *Brevísima*'s most horrifying images follow their own logic. But first, let us consider how the *Brevísima* manages to evoke pity, indignation, and fear.

Aristotle understands pity to be the pain we feel at the sight of anything evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it. There is an inherent asymmetry to pity, and that is perhaps why Cicero's list of commonplaces for the evocation of pity seem to hinge on varying modes of rhetorical amplification. The orator must exaggerate the prosperity the victims once enjoyed and from what evils they now suffer; he is to amplify the pitiable nature of the victim by relating in utmost detail all the separate phases of their misfortune; he must display how shameful, mean and ignoble acts are particularly unbecoming to certain people. The amplificatory nature of these *topoi* suggests that the more asymmetrical the representation, the more pitiful it will be.

Right from the beginning the *Brevísima* lays out what appears to be a highly idealized depiction of the inhabitants of the New World. Living in idyllic lands that are vibrantly and densely populated as hives, Amerindians are portrayed, with a seemingly unending chain of superlatives, as paragons of simplicity, obedience, and humility. Their delicate physicality is a sign, not just of their weakness, but of their innate nobility: "...que ni hijos de príncipes y señores entre nosotros, criados en regalos y delicada vida no son más delicados que ellos, aunque sean de los que entre ellos son de linaje de labradores." (12). Their poverty is a manifestation of their spiritual health, as they lack ambition, pride, and greed. And what is more, no other people were ever so ready to embrace Christianity: "Son eso mesmo de limpios y desocupados y vivos entendimientos, muy capaces y dóciles para toda buena doctrina, aptísimos para recebir nuestra santa fe católica y ser dotados de virtuosas costumbres, y las que menos impedimentos tienen para esto que Dios crió en el mundo;..." (12). Las Casas masterfully closes this passage by quoting an expression he attributes to some Spaniards who were unable to deny the Amerindians' state of beatitude: "«Cierto, estas gentes eran las más bienaventuradas del mundo

si solamente conocieran a Dios»" (13). This is, in a nutshell, how Las Casas portrays the paradisiacal innocence that the indigenous peoples once enjoyed.

Equally masterful is the transition from such a description. It is at this juncture that Las Casas introduces what is perhaps his most famous sentence: "En estas ovejas mansas, y de las calidades susodichas por su Hacedor y Criador así dotadas, entraron los españoles desde luego que las conocieron como lobos y tigres y leones crudelísimos de muchos días hambrientos" (13). This metaphorical (and allegorical) image captures, in essence, the emotive force of the entire text. Most of the other images in the *Brevísima* can be read as expansive commentaries and interpretations of this one. We will discuss the three prevailing modes of the image in further detail in our next section that deals with horror. But, for now, as this image immediately follows the initial description of beatitude that opens the *Brevísima*, we contend that it is employed here to represent the sudden and violent fall from paradise. In other words, this paradigmatic image also functions as the catalyst for the upcoming descriptions of misfortune.

When Aristotle outlines in his *Rhetoric* what he considers to be the necessary frames of mind of those who are to feel pity, he underscores that the listener has to be able to imagine the misfortune happening to himself. This is a tall order if we grant that the principal readers of the *Brevísima* are Philip II, Charles V, and perhaps the members of the Consejo de Indias. Yet, the *Brevísima* does emphasize how nobles are killed and enslaved ("Comúnmente mataban a los señores y nobles de esta manera..." "estaban sobre dos mil hijos de señores, que era toda la flor y nata de la nobleza de todo el imperio de Motenzuma") In fact, it can be argued that this emphasis on the misfortunes befalling the New World nobles works as one of the organizing principles of the narrative. To be sure, the *dispositio* of the text is structured around the route of discovery, as Las Casas wants to reconceptualize it as a route of destruction, and the text can be

said to center on the horrific episodes that can be attributed to the enterprise of a series of particular *conquistadors*. But if our focus remains with the perpetrators, then each episode can only be said to repeatedly paint the general figure of a nameless tyrant. This redundancy is displaced when we consider the narrative from the point of view of the victims, as some of the more developed episodes are actual depictions of how specific *caciques* are murdered and tortured.

The narration of the destruction of the five kingdoms of Hispaniola, for example, is in actuality an account of the individual slaying of its *caciques* (Guarionex, Guacanagarí, Caonabó, Behechio, Anacaona, Higüey). Indeed, some of the most memorable episodes of the *Brevísima* center on the cruel murders of other *caciques*, who are named, be they Hatuey, Motenzuma, Atabaliba, or Bogotá. The text's emphasis on representing the destruction of Indian nobility does underscore the tyrannical behavior of the conquistadors, but as we read the text for its affective aim, then such portrayals demonstrate a willingness on behalf of the author to establish an emotive connection with the royal addressee. For the friar knows that his intended readers' will not feel a thing if there is a lack of empathetic resonance between the situation of the victim and that of the reader.

Yet, with the initial description of the natives' beatific state, Las Casas extends the notion of nobility. All Indians ("*a toto genere*"), Las Casas makes clear, are noble in character. According to Aristotle, representing the victims of misfortune as noble in character sets the ground for an effective evocation of pity, for "most piteous of all is it when, in such times of trial, the victims are persons of noble character: whenever they are so, our pity is especially excited, because their innocence, as well as the setting of their misfortunes before our eyes, makes their misfortunes seem close to ourselves" (*Rhetoric* 227). Pity can be said to be almost

universally felt when the victims are portrayed as noble and innocent. Moreover, Aristotle implies that vivid narration, what rhetorical theory refers to as *enargeia* or *evidentia*, equally enhances our ability to relate to the victims as *evidentia* produces an effect of proximity. This is why Cicero recommends representing the misfortunes "one by one, so that the auditor may seem to see them, and may be moved to pity by the actual occurrence, as if he were present, and not by words alone" (*De inventione* 147).

Thus, because Las Casas has his eye on abolishing *encomienda*, he knows that the success of the *Brevísima* in tackling the issue depends on a pitiful representation of the misfortune that he understands to be unjust Indian slavery. In fact, the friar proves that *encomiendas* are nothing but thinly veiled forms of unjust slavery in a treatise that was published alongside the *Brevísima*, namely, the *Tratado sobre la materia de los indios que se han hecho esclavos* (1552). This treatise contains narrative vignettes that employ a similar kind of affective rhetoric, but they are meant to complement the legal reasoning that drives the treatise as whole. The frenetic rhythm of the *Brevísima*, on the other hand, is driven by its own affective intoxication, and thus, its representations of slavery are emphatically emotive.

Consider, for example, the scene that Las Casas uses to close the chapter dedicated to region encompassed by Costa de las Perlas, Paria, and the island of Trinidad, where slave raiding became rampant as the Taíno population was almost exterminated in Hispaniola and Cuba. The passage centers on the unloading of a slaving ship on the coast of Hispaniola or San Juan, Las Casas does not state where exactly:

> Después, desque los desembarcan en la isla donde los llevan a vender, es para quebrar el corazón de cualquiera que alguna señal de piedad tuviere verlos desnudos y hambrientos que se caían de desmayados de hambre, niños y viejos, hombres y mujeres. Después, como a unos corderos los apartan padres de hijos y mujeres de maridos, haciendo manadas dellos de a diez y de a veinte personas, y echan suertes sobre ellos para que

> lleven sus partes los infelices armadores, que son los que ponen su parte de dineros para hacer el armada de dos y de tres navíos, y para los tiranos salteadores que van a tomallos y salteallos en sus casas. Y cuando cae la suerte en la manada donde hay algún viejo o enfermo, dice el tirano a quien cabe «Este viejo daldo al diablo, ¿para qué me lo dais, para que lo entierre? ¿Este enfermo para qué lo tengo de llevar, para curallo?». Véase aquí en qué estiman los españoles a los indios y si cumplen el precepto divino del amor del prójimo, donde pende la Ley y los Profetas. (79)

Although *evidentia* is said to rely on a detailed contextualization, this evocative image appears ungrounded. It is, instead, an exemplary image, that is, it is meant to be representative of the countless instances that something like this occurred. It is also worth noting that nothing within the emotive logic of this scene refers the reader to a legal framework. For, in the sixteenth-century, slavery could well be justified as Las Casas himself makes clear on his treatise on slavery. One could take slaves, justly, in the aftermath of a just war. This is why Las Casas's treatise on slavery begins by proving that *conquista* is, first and foremost, an unjust war. From there it follows, logically, that the survivors have been unjustly enslaved.

But this passage does not appeal to reason, here the heart is invited to be broken by the mere sight of the naked and starving bodies. The authorial voice even feels the necessity to burst onto the scene ("es para quebrar el corazón de cualquiera que alguna señal de piedad tuviere"), however mildly, and appeal to the reader's *piedad*. Furthermore, through a reworking of the initial metaphorical image that portrays the Indians as meek sheep, Las Casas accentuates the humiliation and utter devalorization of the victims' humanity: enslaved bodies are separated like herds of sheep.

Unwilling to leave it there, Las Casas also adds a spiritual dimension to this pitiful scene. The devalorization that results from the commodification of the enslaved body is set against the Christian precept of *caritas*. The robbers and shipowners "cast lots" ("echan suertes") on these

human herds,[28] and they find the sick and the elderly completely devoid of value as they will not produce gold. The conquistadors make slaves, Las Casas writes elsewhere, in order to make gold out of the bodies and souls for which Jesus Christ was crucified ("por hacer oro de los cuerpos y de las ánimas de aquellos por quien Jesucristo murió" 62). Though hard for some contemporary readers to imagine, this sentence must have had quite a resonance to sixteenth-century Christian ears.

Yet, the passage that we have just analyzed is transparent in its emotive aim. The recreation of the scene is slow (by the *Brevísima's* standards); it is narrated in the present tense; the scene is enlivened with the use of *prosopopoeia*; and it is infused with utmost *gravitas* as the friar summons divine authority. Other than its decontextualized, paradigmatic aura, the rhetorical structurating of the scene unveils a conscious effort to utilize *evidentia* in order to evoke pity. Yet, these developed scenes are but privileged moments in the narrative. In truth, the *Brevísima's* rapid pace demands an austere style, which is predominant throughout the narrative.

Take for example, the following passage that strives to reveal the brutal effects of implementing *encomienda* in Hispaniola:

> Y la cura o cuidado que dellos tuvieron fue enviar los hombres a las minas a sacar oro, que es trabajo intolerable, y las mujeres ponían en las estancias, que son granjas, a cavar las labranzas y cultivar la tierra, trabajo para hombres muy fuertes y recios. No daban a los unos ni a las otras de comer, sino yerbas y cosas que no tenían sustancia; secábaseles la leche de las tetas a las mujeres paridas, y así murieron en breve todas las criaturas; y por estar los maridos apartados, que nunca vían a las mujeres, cesó entre ellos la generación. (24)

[28] There is reason to suspect that the sentence is charged with even more biblical *pathos* as the prophecy of the psalmist that reads, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Psalms 22:18) was fulfilled when the Roman soldiers who, having crucified Christ, said: "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be." (John 19:24) If so, this allusion would very effectively amplify the innocence of the victims (for who is more innocent than Christ), and the wickedness of the slavers.

The narrator makes no emotional commentary or emotive appeals. The passage is fast and factual. All the same, this passage is meant to illustrate the terrible reality that, as a system of forced labor, *encomienda* is nothing but a slow and torturous form of extermination. The reader, however, is not explicitely asked to feel anything. There are hardly any emotive indicators; there is no amplification; there is no elaborate Ciceronian periodicity but a rather straightforward syntax; nor is there any attempt to further delineate what could be a striking image.

In this sense we could say that the *relación* delivers on its title, as it fully exercises another pervading rhetorical strategy, namely, *brevitas*. Under *brevitas*, horrific details, and the emotions that emerge as a consequence of their description, are implied. Moreover, Las Casas has set himself the task of relating specific historical events that unfolded for five decades across a vast geography. Indeed, when compared to the raw descriptions of the *Carta a Xevres,* or to the longer scenes of Las Casas's own *Historia de las Indias*, it is clear that the *Brevísima* is truly selective of its material, and that, what it does in the end choose to narrate has, in effect, been greatly compressed.

Nevertheless, Las Casas will still attempt to stir the passions within these constraints. To the laconic passages that render information quickly, he usually appends a sentence or a final clause with an affectively striking content. Yet, how odd it seems, what a strange sensation indeed, to stumble upon these type of sentences: "En tres o cuatro meses, estando yo presente, murieron de hambre por llevalles los padres y las madres a las minas más de siete mil niños. Otras cosas vide espantables. Después acordaron de ir a montear..." (28-9). A short sentence informs us that seven-thousand children died of starvation in the island of Cuba. What are we to feel? The narrative moves on ("Otras cosas vide..."), leaving us emotionally disoriented.

We could surmise that Las Casas was really moved by this incident, as he speaks of it in his major history, where he reminds us that he had been denouncing the incident since the earliest *memorial*, ca. 1515. Of particular interest to us, however, is his narration of an emotive reaction to the (re)presentation of this fact. Back in 1515, Las Casas, then a *clérigo*, was back in Spain to inform the dying King Ferdinand of the situation in the Indies. Las Casas thinks it fitting to speak to Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, then Bishop of Burgos, and at the time in charge of New World affairs:

> Determinóse también de hablar al obispo por seguir el parecer del dicho confesor, y una noche, pidiéndole audiencia, refirióle, por una memoria que llevaba escrita, algunas de las crueldades que se habían hecho en la isla de Cuba en su presencia, entre las cuales le leyó la muerte de los siete mil niños en tres meses, como arriba queda relatado; y agraviando mucho el clérigo la muerte de aquellos inocentes por caso extraño, respondió el señor obispo (siendo el que todo lo de estas Indias gobernaba): «Mirad qué donoso necio, ¿qué se me da a mí y qué se le da al Rey?», por estas mismas y formales palabras. Entonces el clérigo, alza la voz y dijo: «¿Qué ni a vuestra señoría ni al Rey que mueran aquellas ánimas no se da nada?, ¡oh gran Dios eterno!, y ¿a quién se le ha de dar algo?», y diciendo esto sálese. (*Historia* 110)

The passage singles out the responsibility of the ecclesiastical and political authorities not just to do something, but also to *feel* something for the awful death of these children. As we will argue below, Las Casas's *Historia* is largely written in the vein of Augustinian historiography, which emphasizes the spiritual meaning of *res gestae*, and therefore highlights men's actions not just to educate (as Cicero would say), but to convert the reader. To be sure, the next chapter of this study will attempt to explain in more detail the complex role the passions play in the greater project of Lascasian historiography. But, at this juncture, this passage clearly illustrates that the disquieting sentence that depicts the same event in the *Brevísima* was indeed intended, despite its brevity, to evoke pity in the reader.

Hence, we can better discern the affective motives behind the structure of the following passage, which continues with the overarching endeavor of providing a pitiful portrayal of Indian slavery, or *encomienda*:

> Después de que todos los indios de la tierra desta isla fueron puestos en la servidumbre y calamidad de los de la Española, viéndose morir y perecer sin remedio, todos comenzaron unos a huir a los montes, otros a ahorcarse desesperados, y ahorcábanse maridos y mujeres y consigo ahorcaban los hijos, y por las crueldades de un español muy tirano que yo conocí se ahorcaron más de doscientos indios. (28)

This depiction is given to us in a single sentence that is ostensibly factual in its presentation. Again, the content itself (*encomienda* leads to the desperate self-annihilation of entire families) is most evocative of pity, yet the sting is saved for the last clause, which violently grounds what was only a generic sketch to the particular reality of a real Spaniard the author knew, and who was responsible for the self-hanging of a precise number of two-hundred Indians.

The rhetorical purpose (not factual or historical) of constantly highlighting the number of victims, something for which Las Casas has been strongly criticized as his numbers are purportedly exaggerated, is twofold. Indeed, large numbers are meant to shock and to infuse the narration with *gravitas*. But also, to a narrative of massive violence and genocide, numbers serve the supplementary purpose of anchoring the ungraspable. The continuous mention of numbers, whether inflated or not, is to be interpreted as a sign of *the real*, and as such, numbers constitute an economical means of emotive amplification. This is why they are usually found in the extremely short, and yet highly emotive, clauses under discussion.

But we can even go further and contend that a forceful and emotive concluding clause is, in fact, a stylistic motif of the *Brevísima*. As the structural limitations of the *Brevísima* make it impossible for Las Casas to employ *evidentia* every time he wishes to endow his text with affectivity, he has recourse to these clauses as a compressed form of *amplificatio*. Yet at times,

these clauses intensify the narrative vignettes to such a degree that they might be ambiguous insofar as their emotive intent.

Take for example, a scene from the chapter on Nicaragua. Las Casas narrates how, as a result of Pedrarias Dávila's arbitrary decision to relocate Indians in Nicaragua (he considered them property), they were not able to produce bread for the Spaniards, "y como no hubo pan, los cristianos tomaron a los indios cuanto maíz tenían para mantener a sí y a sus hijos, por lo cual murieron de hambre más de veinte o treinta mil ánimas, y acaeció mujer matar su hijo para comello, de hambre" (36). The accusation is clear. Pedrarias (who is not named) is guilty of mass murder by means of starvation. The large number is provided to astound the reader and to anchor him in a terrible reality. That is "the fact." But what about the last clause of the sentence?: "..., y acaeció mujer matar su hijo para comello, de hambre."

With that lurid detail, which could not be put more briefly, Las Casas endows the fact with disproportionate intensity, thereby rendering as an *affective fact*. If the reader is to pause and reflect on this clause, it becomes clear that it intends to illustrate the inconceivable degree of desperation and suffering that the natives must undergo, in this case a woman, so as to cannibalize their progeny. Given this explanation, one may conclude that the clause is meant to elicit pity in the reader. But the way in which it is quickly attached to the end of the sentence, making it seem almost like an afterthought, only augments its force. More than pity the reader may be rightly inclined to feel briefly shocked, for this clause might be said to render the fact sensational. We will discuss sensationalism, and affective facts, at greater length in our next section, although it has already, perhaps unavoidably, announced itself as we are reading for the rhetoric of pity, the passion designated by Las Casas to influence the reader's judgment with regards to *encomienda*.

But there is also a biblical resonance to the employment of the connective syntagma "Y acaeció...", which is constantly employed by Las Casas in his *Brevísima* in order to attach these shocking clauses. In the Bible, this simple phrase is widely used to conjoin discourse, but it can also be used, most strikingly, to introduce an awe-inspiring, as well a terrifying, description. So we read in Exodus 12:29, for example: "And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,..." (King James Version); "Y aconteció que a la medianoche Jehová hirió a todo primogénito en la tierra de Egipto" (Reina-Valera); "factum est autem in noctis medio percussit Dominus" (Vulgate). And in Luke 2:15: "And it came to pass, as the angels were departing from them into the heaven, the shepherds were saying to one another," (King James Version); "Y aconteció que cuando los ángeles se fueron de ellos al cielo, los pastores se dijeron unos a otros:..." (Reina-Valera); "et factum est ut discesserunt ab eis angeli in caelum pastores loquebantur..." (Vulgate).

In both examples, the reader is placed before the uncanny ability of sacred language to elevate the most humble humanity into a struggle with the infinite and the sublime. The supernatural is introduced most simply, almost casually. As we have stated before, this *sermo humilis* is precisely what grants sacred language not only its majesty but its distinctive affective power. Thus, when Las Casas attaches the aforementioned clauses, as foreign and sensational as they might sound to some ears, he is simply utilizing the *sermo humilis* that must have been deeply ingrained in him. The great difference lies, however, in the fact that for the *Brevísima* the wondrous events are "las matanzas y estragos de gentes inocentes y despoblaciones de pueblos, provincias y reinos que en ellas se han perpetrado,..." (5).

Despite the disorienting aspect of these simple and yet highly emotive clauses, which we have now considered as an effect of the *Brevísima's* biblical style, one can find plenty of explicit

appeals to pity throughout the narrative. Some of the most pronounced appeals to pity occur when Las Casas depicts, always briefly, the desolation of the land. These expressions are repeated to such a degree that they can be considered another emotive motif.

Take for example the chapter regarding the desolation of Cuba. As the chapter comes to an end, Las Casas turns to the first person not only to reaffirm himself as a witness, but to be able to externalize the emotion that is elicited in him by the view of the desolated land: "...y así asolaron y despoblaron toda aquella isla, la cual vimos agora poco ha y es una gran lástima y compasión verla yermada y hecha toda una soledad" (29). This "gran lástima" is later coupled with heartbreak when Las Casas speaks of the desolation of la Costa de las Perlas: "Y es una gran lástima y quebrantamiento de corazón de ver aquella costa de tierra felicísima toda desierta y despoblada" (78). Such emphatic expressions of pity are markedly personal, which means that, in light of rhetorical conventions, they are intended to evoke pity by means of contagion. Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, for Cicero and Quintilian the transmission of affect was highly contingent upon the success of the orator in adequately expressing his own true *pathos*.

Yet, in the chapter that describes the desolation of Naco and Honduras, Las Casas again employs this motif in a slightly different manner: "Y agora pasamos y venimos por ellas, y las vimos tan despobladas y destruidas que cualquiera persona, por dura que fuera, se le abrieran las entrañas de dolor" (49). Whether this sentence is highly effective in its emotional appeal is hard to say, as the narrator is universalizing (and thus diluting) his experience, something that goes against the precepts of affective rhetoric. Yet the sentence remains interesting as it itself exhibits the dynamics of transmission. In other words, the reader may expect to encounter yet another expression of pain from the first-person narrator, but instead the narrator displaces the emotion

unto a hypothetical anybody. The reader is expected to fill in this gap with his own affective response. The reader is any person ("cualquiera persona").

Las Casas makes use of this *hypothetical feeler* (reader) in his epilogue as he writes:

> Y para que más compasión cualquiera cristiano haya de aquellas inocentes naciones y de su perdición y condenación más se duela, y más culpe y abomine y deteste la cudicia y ambición y crueldad de los españoles, tengan todos por verdadera esta verdad con las que arriba he afirmado, que después que se descubrieron las Indias hasta hoy, nunca en ninguna parte dellas los indios hicieron mal a cristianos sin que primero hobiesen recebido males y robos y traciones dellos. (109)

Here the hypothetical reader is asked to feel pity. As we have stated before, the evocation of pity hinges on an effective amplification of its inherent asymmetry, and as Aristotle points out, our pity is especially excited when we are made aware of the victims' innocence. Las Casas thus insists (against the critics who find this too unbelievable) that the Amerindians, who have cruelly perished without being converted to Christianity, never committed any wrong. But the passage also makes evident that as result of feeling this "compasión," the reader will readily blame the greed, abhor the ambition, and detest the cruelty of the Spaniards. Yet it is somewhat difficult to envision the reader blaming, abhorring, and detesting after he has experienced a deeply felt compassion. But Las Casas is here referring the reader to the other passion that is inextricable connected to pity, its contrary passion, namely, indignation.

III. Tyranny and Righteous Indignation

Judicial rhetoric posits indignation as the contrary passion to pity as it also emerges from the inherently asymmetrical representation of victim and criminal. Evoking indignation, therefore, relies on the same rhetorical strategies of *amplificatio* and *evidentia*, but with an obvious shift in focus. Whereas eliciting pity called for a detailed display of the victim's

misfortune, indignation is aroused by amplifying the perpetrators' arrogance, cruelty, and tyrannical behavior.

We have seen that if the reader is taken with pity, then *encomienda* reveals itself as a terrible form of unjust slavery. This is one of the primary ways in which the *Brevísima* attempts to influence the judgment of its reader through affective rhetoric. Alongside this strategy, the text also has recourse to the arousal of indignation. More concretely, we contend that Las Casas deploys indignation in order to break the tenuous alliance established between the Crown and the *adelantados*. For even if the title of *adelantado* endowed the conquistadors with enormous power by granting them the right to conquer and govern a recently discovered territory. The title was also intended to keep in place the hierarchy of power. Politically shrewd, Las Casas knew that if his text was successful in portraying the conquistadors as tyrants, that is, as having transformed themselves into absolute, irrational, cruel, and illegitimate rulers, then he was sure to strike a chord with his noble readers.

The *Brevísima* thus strives to amplify the despotic ways inherent to the figure of the tyrant. As Aristotle makes clear in his *Politics*, the tyrant, a perverted imitation of the wise monarch, rules from a place of arbitrary power that seeks only its own advantage. Moreover, a tyranny sustains itself through terror, as it continuously sows distrust, takes away the power from its subjects, and humbles them.[29] This is why, in order to evoke righteous indignation, Cicero advises the orator to emphasize or amplify the cruelty, the arbitrariness, and the arrogance of the tyrant, as that representation will promptly reveal such deeds to be utterly at variance with law and equity.

[29] Aristotle. *Politics*. Book V. Chapters 8-12.

The *Brevísima* surely portrays the conquistadors' arbitrary use of power, but these representations are also frequently accompanied by an unsettling depiction of the arbitrary use of violence. Or rather, in this text arbitrary power is arbitrary violence. Such is the case, yet again, of Pedrarias Dávila, who, like all *conquistadores*, is only referred to as another "tirano." The narrative affirms that once he had established himself in Nicaragua, Pedrarias would randomly send off fifty men on horseback "y hacía alancear toda una provincia mayor que el condado de Rusellón, que no dejaba hombre ni mujer ni viejo ni niño a vida por muy liviana cosa, así como porque no venían tan presto a su llamado o no le traían tantas cargas de maíz, que es el trigo de allá, o tantos indios para que sirviesen a él o a otro de los de su compañía,..." (36). Pedrarias exterminates entire provinces because his petulant desires are not fulfilled.

In like manner, Las Casas blames Pedrarias's arbitrary relocation of natives for a devastating famine that resulted in massive death. What was his justification? Las Casas writes: "...quiso hacer nuevo repartimiento de los indios, porque se le antojó (y aun dicen que por quitar los indios a quien no quería bien y dallos a quien le parecía)..." (36). Whether he acted on a whim, or just to benefit those whom he favored, does not really subtract from the rhetorical effect that is pursued here. Again, the so called historical fact is secondary. This dual suggestion is meant to delineate how the figure of the tyrant, who is always enslaved by his passions, exercises power in perverted ways.

The *Brevísima* will constantly offer emphatic portrayals of tyrannical behavior, as they were undoubtedly offensive to those in power. Whether Prince Philip, or even Charles V, could have felt the righteous indignation that Cicero believes was to be felt by any law-abiding citizen, who naturally fears and despises tyranny, can not be easily determined. Although, the argument could be made, from the standpoint of classical culture (especially Plato), that tyrannical

behaviour is offensive to anyone because it directly opposes reason. Nevertheless, the depictions in the *Brevísima* are geared towards painting the image of the tyrant as an usurper of legitimate power. Las Casas is explicit in stating that the conquistadors act this way "porque del todo han perdido todo temor a Dios y al rey..." (39). Conceived in this manner, the depiction of tyrannical deeds will stir the indignation of the Crown, as an awareness of tyrannical deeds breaks the bond of trust and legality established between the monarch and its subject the *adelantado*, while simultaneously recasting the conquistadors as an existential threat to monarchic power.

The text, however, goes beyond these specific tactics meant to ignite indignation in the nobles, as it also insists that "cualquiera cristiano" will detest and abhor "las dichas conquistas" once they have been made aware of the Spaniards' "crueldad." Las Casas considers, perhaps too sensibly, that the negative affectivity produced by witnessing cruelty is universal.

But there are specificities, according to Cicero, one can only feel but indignant when the orator shows that insult has been added to injury. As we know, indignation emerges from the rhetorical amplification of the inherently asymmetrical representation of victim and perpetrator. Highlighting added insult amplifies the arrogance and wickedness of the accused, for such insults, as their name implies, are wholly unnecessary. This rhetorical amplification reveals the perpetrator's cruelty, and that, in turn, makes the reader feel indignant.

Thus, early on in the narrative, we read that the Spaniards "hacían apuestas sobre quién de una cuchillada abría el hombre por medio o le cortaba la cabeza de un piquete o le descubría las entrañas" (17). With this detail, Las Casas is hoping to highlight the Spaniards' cruelty. Violence is sport for them. It is fun. But we can also envision this strategy backfiring, as with other similar attempts, since Las Casas seems to have a pious reader in mind. Would a conquistador not enjoy reading this passage? Does it not also portray their great military skill?

A similar attempt is made when the narrative turns to the unfolding of events in Yucatán. The author speaks of a random Spaniard who mutilates a prince ("un hijo de un señor") as he jokes. Furthermore, "este hombre perdido se loó y jactó delante de un venerable religioso desvergonzadamente, diciendo que trabajaba cuanto podía por empreñar muchas mujeres indias, para que vendiéndolas preñadas por esclavas le diesen más precio de dinero por ellas" (64). Indian women are not only enslaved, but they are raped in order to increase their value as commodities. Yet, the reader's indignation is supposed to be inflamed at this man's cruel joke, which literally adds ("boast") insult to injury ("serial rape"). But would this scene not be slightly comedic to someone who does not believe in the humanity of the Amerindians?

Indeed, these sort of questions can emerge once we distance ourselves from considering Prince Philip and Charles V as the primary readers of the *Brevísima*. And what these questions seem to imply is that indignant reactions to cruelty might not be so universal after all. What are we to make of the cruel reader? Las Casas does not have this reader in mind, and as we will see shortly, this is one of the factors that endows the *Brevísima's* rhetoric with the capacity to be re-appropriated for other affective purposes. With these observations we do not wish to imply, however, that the *Brevísima* utterly fails at arousing indignation in the "true" Christian reader (or even the common contemporary reader), but we do want to point out the limits of some these *topoi*.

Yet, consider the following sketch that is also meant to elicit indignation by emphasizing how insult is added to injury. As the Spaniards unleash their wrath on Hispaniola, some take the infants away from their mothers' arms in order to kill them, while others "daban con ellas en ríos por las espaldas riendo y burlando, y cayendo en el agua decían: «¿Bullís, cuerpo de tal»" (17). This representation could not be more asymmetrical. It is has now become incredibly difficult to

envision the cruel reader who would enjoy this brief sketch. The *prosopopoeia* skillfully unveils the cruelty and wickedness necessary to mock what could well be the fatal spasms of an infant's body as it drowns in the river. It is also incredibly difficult to conceive of a reader who would not feel indignant when reading that sentence.

In other words, that well-known sketch from the *Brevísima* is highly effective because it focuses on the death of an infant child, amplifying the asymmetry to its utmost. Who more innocent and vulnerable? This is also why the reader is meant to feel indignant, and terrified, when he reads further down: "Y acaecía algunos cristianos, o por piedad o por cudicia tomar algunos niños para mamparallos, no los matasen, y poníanlos a las ancas de los caballos; venía otro español por detrás y pasábalo con su lanza. Otro, si estaba el niño en el suelo, le cortaba las piernas con el espada" (22). This kinetic image again illustrates how violence becomes sport, but the fact that this sport is played with bodies of children not only underscores the cruelty of the Spaniards, but it is a bold attempt at provoking the pain we define as indignation.

In fact, what we are now discussing is yet another rhetorical *locus* that Las Casas has recourse to often in order to arouse indignation. Judicial rhetoric calls for an amplification of what could well be the greatest asymmetry, namely, the crimes committed against women and children. By amplifying these sort of crimes, Cicero says, "violent indignation is aroused and this can produce the greatest hatred of one who has violated any of these sacred relationships" (*De inventione* 147). It is to this end that Las Casas crafts the following scene found in the chapter on Tierra Firme:

> Otra vez, yendo a saltear cierta capitanía de españoles, llegaron a un monte donde estaba recogida y escondida por huir de tan pestilenciales y horribles obras de los cristianos mucha gente, y dando de súbito sobre ella tomaron setenta o ochenta doncellas y mujeres, muertos muchos que pudieron matar. Otro día juntáronse muchos indios e iban tras los cristianos peleando, por el ansia de sus mujeres e hijas; y viéndose los cristianos

> apretados no quisieron soltar la cabalgada, sino meten las espadas por las barrigas de las muchachas y mujeres y no dejaron de todas ochenta una viva. Los indios, que se les rasgaban las entrañas de dolor, daban gritos y decían: «Oh, malos hombres, crueles cristianos, ¿a las iras matáis?». Ira llaman en aquella tierra a las mujeres, cuasi diciendo: «Matar las mujeres señal es de abominables y crueles hombres bestiales». (33-34)

By focusing on the gratitous massacre of eighty women, this scene illustrates how the Spaniards earn the oxymoronic appellative "crueles cristianos." Moreover, it is through the screams and wailing of Indian men, who have lost their daughters and wives and whose entrails, we are emphatically told, are torn with pain, that Las Casas foregrounds cruelty. And although this scene also elicits pity, our indignation is particularly excited because the massacre of these women (here considered as vulnerable as children) is portrayed in a way that emphasizes its terrible arbitrariness. It was carried out for no other reason than to inflict terrible pain.

Indeed, if the reader experiences indignation, then Las Casas has succeeded in making him detest the cruelty of the Spaniards, which translates to a hatred of their tyrannical wars of conquest. But with the *Brevísima* the friar also strives to deal with the origins of so much carnage. The reader should not only feel pity for Indian suffering and indignation at the conquistadors' tyrannical deeds; the reader must also abhor the Spaniards' prideful ambition, and he must be able to blame their insatiable greed, which Las Casas considers the root of all evils. But as these matters are dealt with more effectively in a spiritual sense, the *Brevísima* must have recourse to the spiritual affection that drives out pride and greed, namely, the servile fear of God.

IV. Fearing God's Punishment

One of the most developed scenes in the *Brevísima* (about two pages, which is a lot of space for a pamphlet this size) is the one that focuses on the *cacique* Hatuey. The scene is quite distinctive as it is one instance, perhaps the only one, in which Las Casas recreates an inward

reaction of the natives regarding the foreign invasion. To be sure, the text portrays plenty of utterances by the natives (*prosopopoeia*), but they are mainly generic laments that can be uttered by anyone who experiences similar circumstances. Here we are offered a glimpse of an intimate deliberation amongst the natives:

> «Ya sabéis cómo se dice que los cristianos pasan acá, y tenéis experiencia qué les han parado a los señores fulano y fulano y fulano y a aquellas gentes de Haití (que es la Española). Lo mesmo vienen a hacer acá. ¿Sabéis quizá por qué lo hacen?». Dijeron: «No, sino porque son de su natura crueles y malos». Dice él: «No lo hacen por sólo eso, sino porque tienen un dios a quien ellos adoran y quieren mucho, y por habello de nosotros para lo adorar nos trabajan de sojuzgar y nos matan.» Tenía cabe sí una cestilla llena de oro en joyas, y dijo: «Veis aquí el dios de los cristianos; hagámosle, si os parece, areítos (que son bailes y danzas) y quizá les agraderemos y les mandará que no nos hagan mal». Dijeron todos a voces: «Bien es, bien es». Bailáronle delante hasta que todos se cansaron, y después dice el señor Hatuey: «Mirá, como quiera que sea, si lo guardamos, para sacárnoslo al fin nos han de matar: echémoslo en este río». Todos votaron que así se hiciese y así lo echaron en un río grande que allí estaba. (26-7)

First of all, this scene brilliantly exposes the Spaniards' idolatry of gold. A contemporary reader perceives that it is precisely Hatuey's complete lack of understanding of commodity fetishism that allows him to highlight it in all its absurdity. But it is clear that Las Casas forges this scene as a moment of dramatic irony, where only the reader understands that Hatuey's "naive" reaction is, in truth, a condemnation of the Spaniards' insatiable greed, for the Christian reader can see that the conquistadors have turned gold into their god. Las Casas will reinforce this point again when he speaks of Nuño de Guzmán, who began enacting "las crueldades y maldades que solía y que todos allá tienen de costumbre, y muchas más, por conseguir el fin que tienen por Dios, que es el oro..." (59).

Trying to make sure the message comes across, Las Casas feels the need to bring in his authorial voice and break the ironic tone when he comments on Hatuey's decision to reject Christian salvation: "Dijo luego el cacique, sin más pensar, que no quería él ir allá, sino al

infierno, por no estar donde estuviesen y por no ver tan cruel gente. Ésta es la fama y honra que Dios y nuestra fe ha ganado con los cristianos que han ido a las Indias" (27). As it can be inferred, the reader that Las Casas calls "verdadero cristiano" is bound to feel indignant when reading this scene. But the appeals to the spiritual reality excite an even greater tension when the text speaks of divine punishment.

Augustine makes it perfectly clear that *cupiditas* can be effectively lessened by infusing the fear of God, and that, in order for the preacher to be able to instill this fear (*timor servilis*), he must persuade the listener that the universe is ruled by God's Providence (Augustine, *Question* 68-9). To this end, the *Brevísima* will constantly remind the reader of God's interventions. This requires a spiritual interpretation of the historical events that Las Casas chooses to narrate. Take, for example, the destruction of the Spanish city named Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala:

> Los españoles hacen en ellos grandes estragos y matanzas y tórnanse a Guatimala, donde edificaron una ciudad, la que agora con justo juicio con tres diluvios juntamente: uno de agua y otro de tierra y otro de piedras más gruesas que diez y veinte bueyes, destruyó la justicia divinal;... (54)

Excessive rain, an earthquake, and a volcanic eruption are here interpreted as recreations of the biblical Flood. They are not only signs of God's justice, but of his ire. Again, Las Casas speaks of another sign, as the narrative arrives to the torture of the cacique Bogotá in Nueva Granada, it turns the focus to God, who expresses his own affective reaction, namely, his hatred of such cruelties, by setting the entire town aflame: "Y estando atormentándolo, mostró Dios señal de que detestaba aquellas crueldades en quemarse todo el pueblo donde las perpetraban" (102). Las Casas will even go on to claim that God himself takes vengeance, Old Testament style, of the Spaniards' terrible deeds: "Dejaron toda la tierra escandalizada y puesta en la infamia y horror de su nombre, con algunas matanzas que hicieron, pero no muchas, porque los mató Dios antes

que más hiciesen, porque les tenía guardado para allí el castigo de los males que yo sé y vide que en otras partes de las Indias habían perpetrado" (88). One of the failed attempts at conquering Florida, where many died early in the expedition, is daringly interpreted as God himself killing these conquistadors for evil deeds that Las Casas himself has witnessed.

It is the historicity of these events that enables Las Casas to re-evaluate them within the framework of Divine Providence. The pious historian interprets these events as clear manifestations of God's judgment. This will be, in fact, the epistemological framework of Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias*. Yet, within a universe that is ruled by Divine Providence, evil deeds are also impregnated with a terrible future. The narrative voice, in what Menéndez Pidal negatively calls "la furia condenatoria del escritor," feels empowered to suggest that the perpetrators of *conquista* are already burning in hell: "Y así, el más infelice capitán murió como malaventurado, sin confesión, y no dudamos si no que fue sepultado en los infiernos (si quizá Dios ocultamente no le proveyó según su divina misericordia y no según los deméritos dél) por tan execrables maldades" (91). It is worth noting that, in narrating the end of Hernando de Soto, Las Casas leaves open the possibility of God's mercy. This becomes more difficult to do when he speaks of Pedro de Alvarado, who burned the lands of Guatemala to the ground "como si fuera fuego del cielo" (55).

This brings us to one of the most powerful paragraphs in the *Brevísima*. As Las Casas brings to a close the chapter on the destruction of Guatemala, he understands that he has left something unsaid about Pedro de Alvarado, who had been previously introduced with this description:

> Digo de verdad que de lo que ambos hicieron en mal (y señaladamente del que fue al reino de Guatimala, porque el otro presto mala muerte murió), que podría expresar y colegir tantas maldades, tantos estragos, tantas muertes, tantas despoblaciones, tantas y

> tan fieras injusticias que espantasen los siglos presentes y venideros e hinchese dellas un gran libro, porque éste excedió a todos los pasados y presentes, así en la cantidad y número de las abominaciones que hizo como de las gentes que destruyó y tierras que hizo desiertas, porque todas fueron infinitas. (48)

Although the *Brevísima* deliberately suppresses the names of the *conquistadores* in order to condemn *conquista* as a whole, Alvarado is here pointed out as the anomaly, the greatest terror amongst all the terrifying tyrants. As the narrator laments again that he cannot express the entirety of Alvarado's cruelties, the narrative is suddenly interrupted with an exclamation that, in fact, aims for the expression of the inexpressible:

> ¡Oh cuántos huérfanos hizo, cuántos robó de sus hijos, cuántos privó de sus mujeres, cuántas mujeres dejó sin maridos, de cuántos adulterios y estupros y violencias fue causa, cuántos privó de su libertad, cuántas angustias y calamidades padecieron muchas gentes por él, cuántas lágrimas hizo derramar, cuántos sospiros, cuántos gemidos, cuántas soledades en esta vida, y de cuántos damnación eterna en la otra causó: no sólo de indios, que fueron infinitos, pero de los infelices cristianos de cuyo consorcio se favoreció, en tan grandes insultos, gravísimos pecados y abominaciones tan execrables. Y plega a Dios que dél haya habido misericordia y se contente con tan mala fin como al cabo le dio. (56)

This seemingly interminable lament, whose force relies on a very effective use of anaphora, asyndeton, and parataxis, can only be broken with the mention of eternal damnation, as that is where all human actions are properly recast. Yet, it is the striking last sentence that puts the reader at odds. This is a subtle appeal to our conscience. Can God really be satisfied with the corporal death that Alvarado eventually suffered? Is that punishment commensurable with his actions? The previous lamentation (one long sentence, and thus a long breath) weighs heavy on the reader by the time he arrives to the last sentence that implies God's mercy. As a result, we are coerced to answer the question in the negative; we are forced to desire Alvarado's eternal damnation. This must have been a most unsettling experience for the sixteenth-century Christian reader.

The text provides the key as to why the friar feels empowered to link the conquistadors' sinful deeds and the Final Day of Judgment, and that is the spiritual notion of *reprobum sensum*. Unlike the divine punishments that only become clear in retrospect, and which are usually physical in nature, and unlike the threat of the future and final punishment of hell, *reprobum sensum* constitutes yet another form of divine punishment. Paul the Apostle explains what this means in the *Epistle to the Romans*:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; [...] And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Rom. 1:28 KJV)

Not only is a reprobate mind a form of divine punishment, but it also is a clear sign of God's wrath. Therefore, Las Casas constantly interprets the Spaniards' mind-boggling insensitivity as a sign of *reprobum sensum*: "...insensibles hombres (que la codicia y ambición ha hecho degenerar del ser hombres, y sus facinorosas obras traído en reprobado sentido)..." (6); and what is more, the text will even posit that the Spaniards' cruelty only increases as God lets them fall deeper and deeper into insensitivity: "...y añidían muchas más y mayores y más nuevas maneras de tormentos, y más crueles siempre fueron, porque los dejaba Dios más de golpe caer y derrocarse en reprobado juicio o sentimiento" (25). Thus, it is precisely the notion of a reprobate mind that enables Las Casas to modulate the haughtiness and blunted sensibility inherent to martial violence to a spiritual plane that undermines it completely.

The *Brevísima* employs this tactic in order to subvert the discourse of victorious

repression. Consider, for example, the extensive commentary on the efforts of Oñate and Alvarado to crush the Indian "rebellions" in Nueva Galicia:

> Y los tristes ciegos, dejados de Dios venir en reprobado sentido, no viendo la justísima causa y causas muchas llenas de toda justicia que los indios tienen por ley natural, divina y humana de los hacer pedazos si fuerzas y armas tuviesen y echallos de sus tierras, y la injustísima y llena de toda iniquidad, condenada por todas las leyes que ellos tienen para sobre tantos insultos y tiranías y grandes e inexpiables pecados que han cometido en ellos, moverles de nuevo guerra, piensan y dicen y escriben que las victorias que han de los inocentes indios asolándolos, todas se las da Dios porque sus guerras inicuas tienen justicia, como se gocen y glorien y hagan gracias a Dios de sus tiranías, como lo hacían aquellos tiranos ladrones de quien dice el profeta Zacarías, capitulo XI: «Pasce pecora occisionis, quae qui occidebant non dolebant sed dicebant: "Benedictus Deus quod divites facti sumus"». (61)

A reprobate mind also means blindness. With this passage the *Brevísima* turns the discourse of Holy War on its head. The victory of unjust wars is not a sign of God's approval, but of God's wrath. Furthermore, Las Casas sets forth re-iteration of Scripture that King James renders as: "Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed *be* the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not" (Zach. 11: 4-5 KJV). Under Las Casas's interpretation, the words from the prophet Zachariah allude to the main motifs of the *Brevísima*. The Indians are being slaughtered for the sake of gold, and while those who slay them blasphemously bless God, the royals who are meant to protect them feel no pity. The problem, according to this interpretation of the prophet, is desensitization. Yet, by re-iterating scripture (and by only alluding to the verse that speaks of the shepherds) the text is meant to frighten its royal reader as it places him directly before God's wrath.

The text, however, also attempts to instill fear on its common reader by deploying this same notion of *reprobum sensum* in wider sense. Las Casas is not writing to those that God has already given over to a reprobate mind, but to those who can still become sensitive to the horrors

of "las dichas conquistas." In other words, the representation of desensitization is actually employed to make the reader sensitive. Hence, when the text references *reprobum sensum*, the reader can expect an almost unbearable intensification of a horrific deed, as can be seen in the following image:

> En este reino, o en una provincia de la Nueva España, yendo cierto español con sus perros a caza de venados o de conejos un día, no hallando qué cazar pareciole que tenían hambre los perros, y toma un muchacho chiquito a su madre y con un puñal córtale a tarazones los brazos y las piernas, dando a cada perro su parte, y después de comidos aquellos tarazones, échales todo el corpecito en el suelo a todos juntos. Véase aquí cuánta es la insensibilidad de los españoles en aquellas tierras y cómo los ha traído Dios in reprobum sensum, y en qué estima tienen a aquellas gentes criadas a la imagen de Dios y redemidas por su sangre. Pues peores cosas veremos abajo. (64)

Facing this passage the reader is not afraid of God; he is terrified by the unbearable and disgusting image of desensitization itself. This image places us beyond pity, beyond indignation, and beyond *timor servilis*. Despite its straightforward tone, the narration of the dismemberment of the infant is unbearably slow. His legs and arms are given to many dogs, and then they are invited to feast on what is left over of a body. One could argue that this image is an attempt at employing *evidentia*, but the image is unconventional. Although it is narrated in the present tense, there are no metaphors, no colors, and only the most minimal context. The narrator tells the reader that he will see even worse things. Is that possible? This image therefore leads our analysis of the *Brevísima's* into its enduring powers of horror, or what Deleuze tantalizingly calls the logic of sensation.

V. Reiteration and the Image of the Marvelous-Horrific

Guided by Las Casas's own theorizations on *pathos*, our textual analysis has so far delimited the constitutive aims that guided Las Casas in the crafting of the *Brevísima*'s emotive

rhetoric. Our reading unveils pity, indignation, and the servile fear of God, as the key passions that the Dominican intended to elicit in his royal readers. But as we stated in our introduction, our inquiry into the friar's emotive language is interested in locating the moments of intensity (affect) alongside its underlying syntactic structures —syntax understood within the framework of Deleuzian affective criticism— that allow for such moments to emerge.

Despite the *Brevísima*'s transparency with regard to its immediate political motives (the Prologue is clear in this regard), the booklet's circulation, and to some degree its legacy, have transcended its rhetorical and emotive horizon. Paraphrasing Menéndez y Pelayo, a text written with the impulse of pious zeal somehow became a bloody pamphlet ("libelo sanguinario") that has taken to display an acrid and insidious passion, which Spain's enemies willingly exploited (91). Indeed, for centuries (since Vargas Machuca at least) there has been a simplified, though no less significant, understanding of the *Brevísima* as nothing more than a devious rhetorical machine meant to induce horror. In this sense, one might not be completely misguided in classifying it as one of the earliest masterpieces of sensationalism.

Given the historical consequence, the circulation, the controversies, the polemics, the influence, and the relevance ignited by this particular reception of the text, I believe that our critical efforts should not dismiss this impression as yet another anachronistic and decontextualized reading. Moreover, Las Casas himself would not have been surprised at this impression of the *Brevísima* as a horror machine, because the friar hoped that Prince Philip, the targeted reader of the *Brevísima*, would also experience horror.

In the brief introductory note to the *Brevísima*'s final addendum, which bears the unassuming title "Lo que se sigue es un pedazo de una carta…," Las Casas makes it clear that another kind of fear (as opposed to *timor servilis*) was very much at play in the *Brevísima*: "...

pero por ser este pedazo que queda, lleno de cosas notables, parecióme no deberse dejar de imprimir, porque no creo que causará mucho menor lástima y *horror* a Vuestra Alteza, juntamente con deseo de poner el remedio, que algunas de las deformidades referidas" (my emphasis, 113). The added testimony of the addendum, which the friar hopes will elicit both pity and *horror*, corroborates the purpose of the friar's own horror-inducing representations.

By contrast, coming to read the fragment just after having finished the *Brevísma*, the reader will sense an abrupt change; the note falls clearly outside the parameters of literary language. Indeed, the austere and prosaic language of the letter's fragment only foregrounds Las Casas's rhetorical craft, but the fragment nonetheless reads as a kind of coda to the *Brevísima* as its narration succinctly restates some of the text's most impactful images, e.g. death through slavery (115), the biblical image of a child dashed against the stones (115), two-hundred Indians thrown into spear-filled holes meant to kill Spanish horses (117).

Moreover, even as the introductory note to the addendum provides an explicit statement from Las Casas that horror is one of the text's emotive ends, we note that, as the reader advances through the *Brevísima*, the text encourages the reader to experience horror, usually referred to in the text as "espanto."

The *Brevísima'*s frenetic rhythm is punctuated with constant use of the rhetorical figure of the *adynaton*, deployed here as way of expressing the impossibility of expression:

> ¡Decir las cargas que les echaban de tres y cuatro arrobas, y las llevaban ciento y doscientas leguas! [...] ¡Decir asimesmo los azotes, palos, bofetadas, puñadas, maldiciones y otros mil géneros de tormentos que en los trabajos les daban! En verdad que en mucho tiempo ni en papel no se pudiese decir, y que fuese para *espantar* los hombres. (my emphasis, 24)
>
> Particularmente no podrá bastar lengua ni noticia e industria humana a referir los *hechos espantables* que en distintas partes y juntos en un tiempo en una, y varios en varias, por

> aquellos hostes públicos y capitales enemigos del linaje humano se han hecho... (my emphasis, 40)
>
> Y es verdad que si hobiese de decir en particular sus [Alvarado's] crueldades hiciese un gran libro que al mundo *espantase*. (my emphasis, 55)

The narrator is not able to say, that is, to signify *the real* of conquistadors' atrocities; the deeds are too horrific; they are just too many; they are beyond human language, beyond signification. And yet, if the narrator were able to say, to speak and signify, the world would be utterly horrified.

These reminders of what cannot be said are so pervasive that they might feel redundant: "Otras cosas vide espantables" (29), "Allí vide tan grandes crueldades que nunca los vivos tal vieron ni pensaron ver" (28), "...que no podría lengua humana decirlo" (35), etc. Nevertheless, these adynatic interjections serve a particular function within the aesthetics of horror, namely, of actually drawing the reader in and keeping him in suspense, so that when a representation of horror actually surfaces, the reader's curiosity has already been aroused and granted (textual) permission to experience (join in, even enjoy) the horror.

The repetitive use of the figure of the *adynaton* is a rhetorical strategy deliberately deployed by Las Casas in his effort to aggrandize the horrific, but the *adynaton*'s appeal to the reader's morbid curiosity need not be a deliberate or conscious aesthetic choice on Las Casas's part. Enjoyment can also be a function of the horrific itself. One of Julia Kristeva's most compelling insights in the *Powers of Horror*, posits that the contemplation of the horrific (via the abject) inherently involves, paradoxically, a kind of *jouissance*, for "one does not know [the abject], one does not desire it, one joys in it (*on en jouit*). Violently and painfully. A passion" (9). Even as horror repulses us, as a passion it draws us in with its sick and painful pleasure.

But what the reader feels is not necessarily what the author feels; and we do not wish to imply that Las Casas sadistically enjoyed creating these images of horror, although his rhetorical artistry speaks to an impassioned, perhaps obsessive, involvement on his behalf. In fact, in one of the most startling moments of the *Brevísima*, the authorial voice interjects intself into the narration to make his own affect known: "Estamos enhastiados de contar tantas y tan execrables y horribles y sangrientas obras, no de hombres, sino de bestias fieras, y por eso no he querido detenerme en contar más de las siguientes" (89). The author, burdened with the task of narrating a seemingly unending sequence of atrocious deeds, voices feeling not so much horrified as jaded and therefore unable to go on ("enhastiado").[30] This interjection is a brilliant performative stroke; whether it is true or not does not matter. As with the constant statements that validate the feeling of horror in the reader by reminding him that what is being narrated is actually horrifying, with this interjection the author also anticipates and validates the reader's own feeling of disgust and jadedness.

Let us pause. Disgust and morbid pleasure have now entered our discussion, prompted on the one hand by Kristeva's notion of the abject, and on the other by Las Casas's own narrative interjection. The horrific is but one interpretation of the affective force that emerges from the *Brevísima*. In other words, the fact that disgust and morbid pleasure constitute valid emotive reactions only demonstrates that our interpretive focus on horror risks becoming a reductionist approach that fails to grasp the key structure that lends the *Brevísima*'s its more encompassing intensity. Taking up the postulate of Deleuzean affect theory that distrusts any analysis that centers on identified emotions, because emotions are intensities "owned and recognized," let us

[30] "Enhastiar: Tener hastío." "Hastío: Vulgarmente sinifica poca gana de comer y aborrecimiento del manjar por indispoción del estómago;" (*Tesoro de la lengua castellana*; Covarrubias)

then reorient our inquiry and pursue the syntactic or textual form that allows for the irruption of affect more broadly. What is the affective structure in the *Brevísima* that facilitates the transmission of intensity?

The sensationalist axis of the *Brevísima* is the image of the decimated body. If affect is a corporeal event, an appeal to the reader's viscerality by means of an embodiment of the writer's harrowing "Visions and Auditions," to use Deleuze's terms, then, we argue that the structure that catalyzes affect in the *Brevísima*, that is, the key to the text's unbearable intensity, is that of its intensifying repetition, and more concretely, the repetition of the images of corporal destruction.

Repetition in the *Brevísima* is not without variation. Las Casas understood that monotonous repetition risks desensitization, and that is why the text strategically advances towards the unbearability of affect by intensifying the images of corporal destruction through varying iterations. This intensification of the image finds its justification, according to the *Brevísma*'s narrator, in the historical development of the atrocious deeds themselves: "Y son tantas [las crueldades] que [los españoles] afirmaron la regla que al principio pusimos: que cuanto más procedían en descubrir y destrozar y perder gentes y tierras, tanto más señaladas crueldades e iniquidades contra Dios y sus prójimos perpetraban" (89). Las Casas posits a *regla*, which emerges from his interpretation of the historical developments of Conquest, and allows him to structure the pamphlet as a *crescendo* of horrifying scenes in order to confirm this rule. The narrative rule drives the intensification, as well as the repetition of horrific images. Affectively speaking, the *Brevísima* is a progression towards hell.

What most readers experience as horror is thus triggered by two complementary functions that work on two different planes: image intensification follows the logic of representation, while repetition follows the logic of affect, or in the words of Deleuze, the logic

of sensation. The former sees to the intensification of the image itself by reworking its metaphors, imagery, etc., while the latter seeks to elicit the sensation of unbearability in the reader by means of a constant reiteration of the *Brevísima*'s sweeping vision of corporal destruction.

I find it useful, for the sake of analysis, to divide the overarching vision of corporal decimation into recognizable visual motifs, or embodied tropes. I will delve into three motifs, which I offer here neither as an exhaustive nor rigorously schematic treatment of the *Brevísima*'s plethora of visual resources, but more so as way of organizing the dizzying array of images that the text intertwines at the same time as it repeats and intensifies them.

Now to the intensification and iterations of the first visual motif. Consider the memorable opening motif of sheep being devoured by cruel wolves, tigers, and lions ("En estas ovejas mansas...entraron los españoles desde luego que las conocieron como lobos y tigres..." 13). Following the logic of sensation, Las Casas reworks this image over and over increasing sensational aspects until it approaches what Kristeva calls the abject, that is, the dissolution of the subject-object relation into an ambiguity that prompts the affects usually associated with the *Brevísima* (horror, repulsion, disgust, etc.), and which ultimately threatens the collapse of meaning itself.[31]

[31] "Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by [abjection] literally beside himself. When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable object. The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire" (Kristeva 1); "Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles,..." (4) ; "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity" (9).

At first, the *Brevísima*'s opening image of destruction may strike the reader as an allegorical image given its metaphorical nature and its marked biblical resonance.[32] Allegorically understood, the metaphorical image of sheep being devoured by ravenous and cruel beasts recasts the massacres of Conquest onto a spiritual plane that interprets the Amerindian slaughter as martyrdom, for not only were the apostles sent forth as sheep amongst wolves, but the image of a slaughtered lamb directly connotes Christianity's central allegory of Christ as the Lamb of God who is innocently sacrificed for the sins of the world.

Guided by the logic of sensation, Las Casas intensifies this metaphorical image of Indians as sacrificial sheep by exploiting the metaphor's literalness, that is, its inherent connection to animality. Towards the end of the *Brevísima*, as the narrative is about to close the last chapter that deals with the occurrences in the New Kingdom of Granada (Colombia), Las Casas brings back the sheep metaphor in a scene where enslaved natives are given as stock to an *encomendero*, and "El diablo comendero dizque hace llamar cien indios ante sí; luego *vienen como unos corderos*; venidos, hace cortar las cabezas a treinta o cuarenta dellos y dice a los otros: lo mesmo os tengo de hacer si no me servís bien o si os vais sin mi licencia (my emphasis, 107-08)." This representation, which at its core depicts a horrifying scene of human decapitation, is here foregrounded as a literal slaughter of lambs, for the Indians march, in silent animality, toward their death.

Similarly, in the opening paragraphs to the account of the destruction of Hispaniola, the narrator has recourse to the metaphor, in this instance elaborated as an analogy, in order to underscore the inherent asymmetry of a massacre of the most vulnerable: "Entraban en los pueblos ni dejaban niños, ni viejos ni mujeres preñadas ni paridas que no desbarrigaban y hacían

[32] "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:..." (Matt. 10:16)

pedazos, como si dieran en unos corderos metidos en sus apriscos" (17). Under normal circumstances, the sheepfold ("aprisco") as a space connotes safety, but here the analogy turns that connotation on its head and fosters a sense of defenselessness as well as impotence (the space is inescapable). In other words, the sheepfold becomes a makeshift slaughterhouse where the abdomens of pregnant women are pierced through, and the bodies of children are animalistically cut into pieces as though they were butchered meat.

This form of intensification, the animalization of the victims, is still very much within the domain of mimesis (for it continues to rely on a metaphorical function), but it nonetheless signals the underlying presence of the abject, for "the abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*" (Kristeva 12). Following the logic of sensation, Las Casas will repeat this sensational strategy of animalization until he has no need to portray the Indians as sheep, for even an analogy to a pig will do: "...enseñaron y amaestraron lebreles, perros bravísimos que en viendo un indio lo hacían pedazos en un credo, y mejor arremetían a él y lo comían que si fuera un puerco" (18). The cadence of this sentence is of a very particular ugliness, as the word "puerco" was, and still is, especially grating to Spanish ear.[33]

And again, from sheep to swine, the narration insists on the animalization of the victim. The texts reiterates the sensationalist rhetoric of animalization with yet another analogy the now generic pack animals: "Y los mesmos cristianos se hacían llevar en hamacas, que son como redes, a cuestas de los indios, porque siempre usaron dellos como de bestias para cargas. Tenían

[33] The word was grating to sixteenth-century Spanish ears. Readers can recall the humorous spin that Cervantes gives to the repulsive signifier of "puerco" in the second chapter of *Don Quixote*: "En esto sucedió acaso que un porquero, que andaba recogiendo de unos rastrojos una manada de puercos (que sin perdón así se llaman), tocó un cuerno, a cuya señal ellos se recogen, y al instante se le representó a D. Quijote lo que deseaba, que era que algún enano hacía señal de su venida…"

mataduras en los hombros y espaldas de las cargas, como muy matadas bestias" (24). Violence, in this case the violence of encomienda, leaves a trace on the Indian body. These sores ("mataduras"), which belong to the terrain of the animal, are not only signifying traces of the victim's dehumanization, but they are also signifying traces of the oppressor's inhumanity.

Furthermore, the *Brevísima*'s intoxicating drive toward intensification (via animalization) leads Las Casas to hyperbolize a motif that can be dated back to the *Carta a Xevres*,[34] namely, that the Spanish conquistadores oppress the Indians to such a degree that their dehumanization makes them lowlier to animality itself: "...oprimiendolos con la más dura, horrible y áspera servidumbre en que jamás hombres *ni bestias* pudieron ser puestas" (my emphasis 15).

Through hyperbole this motif reaches its ugliest form early in the *Brevísima*, in a topic paragraph where Las Casas posits the general causes of the Indies' destruction. In this passage he affirms that the destruction of the Indies came about as result of the Spaniards' insatiable greed, as well as the Indians' fragility and humility. This combination of factors blinded the Spaniards to such a degree, Las Casas claims, that they were not only unable to see the Indians' humanity, but some were unwilling to recognize the Indian's instrumental animality: "...a las cuales no han tenido más respeto ni dellas han hecho más cuenta ni estima (hablo con verdad, por lo que sé y he visto todo el dicho tiempo) no digo que de bestias, porque plugiera a Dios que como a bestias las hubieran tratado y estimado, pero como y menos que a estiércol de las plazas" (15). Another haunting cadence that quickly disarms the reader with its repulsive force. Instead

[34] This observation has been made by José Miguel Martínez Torrejón in footnote 52 of his edition of the *Brevísima*. He cites two quotes that employ the same motif in the *Carta a Xevres*, "Eran tenidos los perros en harta más estima que no los indios, y más valían" and "ninguna estima se tenía destas gentes más que de mulos" (*Brevísima* 15).

of human beings, the narrator tells us, some conquistadors see animal excrement, others see even less.

The second visual motif is that of mutilation or dismemberment. Consider Las Casas's well-known representation of mutilation as an evil machination of the Spaniards meant to instill fear in the Indians: "Otros, y todos los que querían tomar a vida, cortábanles ambas manos y dellas llevaban colgando, y decíanles: «Andad con cartas», conviene a saber: «Llevá las nuevas a las gentes que estaban huídas por los montes»" (17). Rabasa has interpreted this iteration as an interpellative moment that illustrates the confluence between the force of law and the force of conquest, that is, as a merging of writing and violence: "In sending Indians with severed hands hanging from their necks, the Christians devised a heinous form of *speech as bodily act* in that the "letter" at once summons the Indians to recognize the new regime of law and conveys the force that will make the 'news' effective" (*Writing Violence* 3-4). Indeed, in this scene mutilation is not foregrounded *abjectively*, here the bodily is still bound to a form of speech, mutilation *signifies* and in doing so it does not bring about the abject's collapse of meaning.

This representation of mutilation also allows for an allegorical interpretation. The sketch brilliantly translates what at first sight might appear as a brutal (although conventional) military tactic unto a spiritual plane where the Spaniards are incurring into a kind of blasphemy. As Christians, the Spaniards are in theory commanded to spread the gospel, the "good news," but mutilated hands replace what ought to be the joyous message of redemption. The inherently metaphysical and incorporeal language of the Christian sacred is here transformed into decimated and putrefying flesh.

Furthermore, as Las Casas presses this allegory further he also intensifies it, bringing it

closer to the abject. In the chapter that narrates the De Soto expedition in "La Florida," the mutilation motif resurfaces and is reworked with intense irony:

> A mucho número de indios, en especial a más de doscientos juntos (según se dice) que enviaron a llamar de cierto pueblo o ellos vinieron de su voluntad, hizo cortar el tirano mayor desde las narices con los labrios hasta la barba, todas las caras dejándolas rasas. Y así, con aquella lástima y dolor y amargura, corriendo sangre los enviaron a que llevasen las nuevas de las obras y milagros que hacían aquellos predicadores de la santa fe católica, batizados. (90-1)

The first sentence informs the reader, straightforwardly, of the fact. As we have already noted, this factual tone is a rhetorical strategy that serves the *Brevísima* to underscore *the real*. The fact conveyed by this sentence is therefore no ordinary fact, it is an *affective fact*. This sentence not only denotes the sadistic precision with which this mutilation is undertaken (a flattened face is spectacularly horrific), but it also connotes the intention of the perpetrators to use this vision as a vehicle of horror. The following sentence modulates the affective fact, through irony, into a spiritual dimension. The mutilated face is a Christian miracle, a good work and a spreading of the Good News, in fact, this mutilation is a massive baptism.

The ironic remark of the previous passage guides the reader to an allegorical reading, and as such it serves in some sense as a safeguard against the abject. But the descent into the abject is inevitable when mutilation is represented at the margins of regime imposition, as well as outside an allegorical framework. A Spaniard capriciously requests that a son of a noble follow him and leave his homeland, he replies in the negative, and the Spaniard responds "«Vete conmigo, si no, cortarte he las orejas». Dice el muchacho que no. Saca un puñal y córtale una oreja y después la otra. Y diciéndole el muchacho que no quería dejar su tierra, córtale las narices, riendo y como si le diera un repelón no más" (64). Are we now confronting Kristeva's

abject? Not quite. After all, the Spaniard's laughter allows us to read intentionality. As repulsive as this scene is, we can say that this is sadism, pure and simple.

But guided by the logic of sensation, Las Casas repeats the motif of mutilation to such an extent that it is bound to lose its interpretive anchors, and that is why the motif will at times surface in the text as pure spectacle. In the passage that narrates Juan de Arévalo's massive mutilation of hands and noses in Nueva Granada, the motif re-emerges: "...y cortó mucha cantidad de manos de mujeres y hombres y las ató en unas cuerdas y las puso colgadas de un palo a la luenga, porque viesen los otros indios lo que había hecho a aquéllos, en que habría setenta pares de manos, y cortó muchas narices a mujeres y a niños" (106). The way the motif of mutilation is represented here does not allow for our previous interpretations. This vision does not convey mutilation as a kind of speech as bodily act, and it is given to us without allegorical referents. This long stick on which hang seventy pairs of mutilated hands is nothing other than what *it is*, and what it was meant to be: a spectacle of the abject.

Reading the *Brevísima* for affect, Theodor de Bry seized on the visceral intensity of these visual motifs, for as the text's foremost illustrator, de Bry understood that the *Brevísima*'s sensationalism lends itself to decontextualized images, which in turn would allow for a wider affective reception. In other words, the visual motifs, which at times foreground the abject at the expense of the narrative itself, made the *Brevísima* the perfect visual text to inflame Protestant hatred for the Spaniards without getting bogged down by the complex context of Conquest.[35]

[35] "The *force* (at once political and aesthetic) of de Bry's illustrations does not depend on adding information alien to Las Casas, but on how, as supplements, they displace the Indians as the central subject of the *Brevíssima*; rather than expressing compassion for Indians they promote hatred of Spaniards" (Rabasa, *Writing Violence* 255). Also, see Conley, "De Bry's Las Casas" (1992).

Mutilation is featured in many of de Bry's plates, but one of them is dedicated solely to this motif, particularly in its iteration as the cutting of noses and hands [Figure 1]. Whether this plate illustrates the De Soto expedition or another does not matter, as mutilation of noses and hands is repeated throughout the entire text. De Bry is interested in making his viewers cringe with a spectacle of the abject, and he therefore portrays a kind of triptych within the plate that shows a mutilation sequence from left to right, starting with the cutting of noses (left), to the suspended ax about to cut a hand (middle), to the handless "Indian" exiting the frame (right).

Wider in scope, our third and final motif is that of *uncommon corporal destruction*. The *Brevísima* usually articulates this motif through the rhetorical notion of *admiratio* in a delimited sense. Las Casas does not summon, in this case, the rhetoric of the marvelous as the representation of wondrous beauty (we will come back to this notion in chapter four), but rather as the awful as in awe-inspiring *and* terrifying. This motif does not function as a repetition of similar imagistic content but as the reiteration of bodily decimation presented through the frame of the unbelievable, the monstrous, the *marvelous-horrific*.

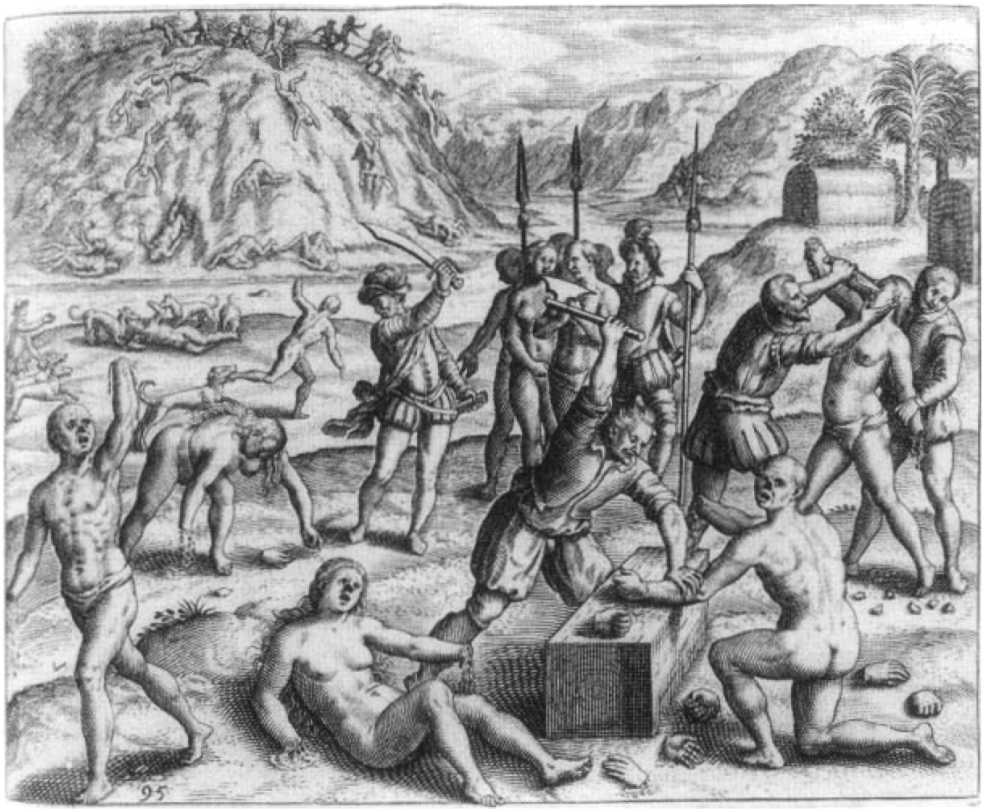

Figure 1: *Narratio regionvm Indicarvm per hispanos quosdam deuastatarum verissima*, 1598, page 95. Illustrations engraved by Johann Theodor and Johann Israel de Bry after Iodocus Winghe. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Even more so than the previous motifs that we have discussed, by its very nature, the motif of uncommon corporal destruction, which I call *the marvelous-horrific*, constitutes an explicit summoning of the gaze. When the Indians begin to fight back Pedro de Alvarado in Guatemala, the otherwise frenetic narrative pauses and dwells on certain defensive traps set up by the Indians to counter the destructive power of horsemen:

> Entonces inventaron unos hoyos en medio de los caminos donde cayesen los caballos y se hincasen por las tripas unas estacas agudas y tostadas de que estaban los hoyos llenos, cubiertos por encima de céspedes y yerbas, que no parecía que hobiese nada. Una o dos veces cayeron caballos en ellos no más, porque los españoles se supieron dellos guardar, pero para vengarse hicieron ley los españoles que todos cuantos indios de todo género y edad tomasen a vida echasen dentro en los hoyos, y así las mujeres preñadas y paridas y niños y viejos y cuantos podían tomar, echaban en los hoyos hasta que los henchían

> traspasados por las estacas, *que era una gran lástima de ver*, especialmente las mujeres con sus niños. (my emphasis 52)

Las Casas emphasizes this affective event for its inherently visual quality. The "hoyo" is brimming with pierced bodies, which the narrator explicitly prompts the reader to imagine. The hole serves to delimit the space that not only grounds the imagery of carnage but brings it into sharp focus. It is an operative field that highlights the bodily Figures and renders them sensible. And this is yet another intensification, in a sense a literal articulation of the conceptual trope of *multum in parvo*, which de Bry beffitingly illustrates [Figure 2].

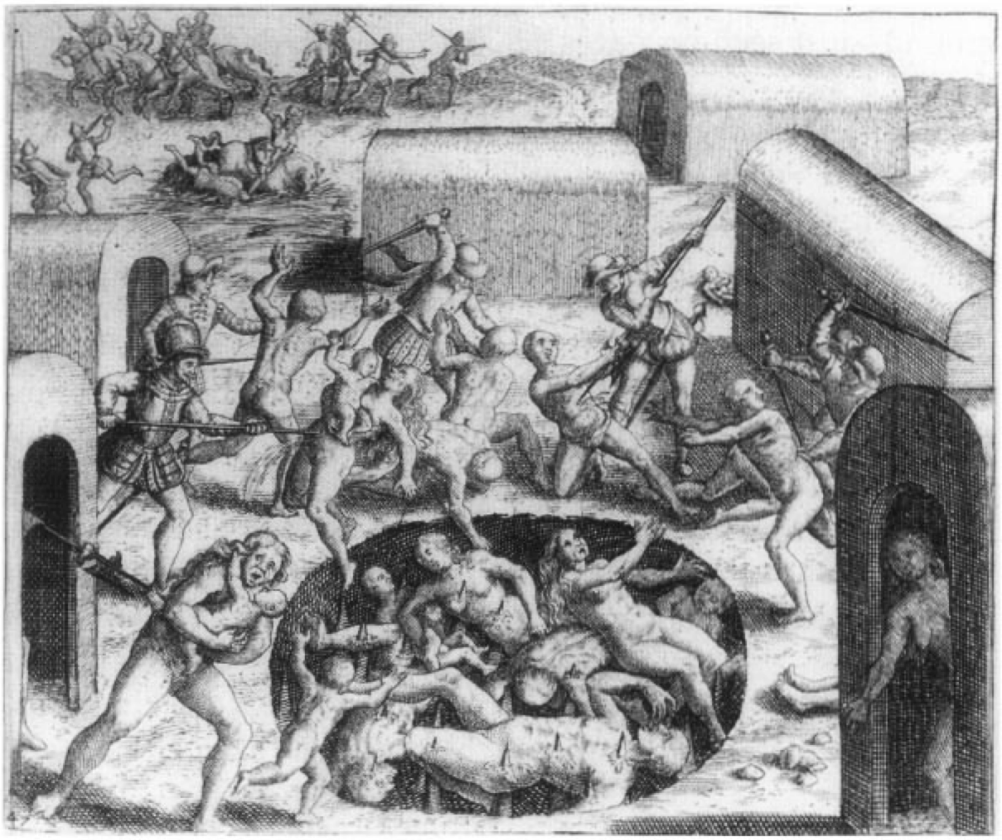

Figure 2: *Narratio* 1598, p. 47.

In de Bry's illustration the hole is logically centered, exuding a centripetal force on the massacres portrayed in its surroundings. Again, this plate reads the abject in Las Casas's text as

de Bry understands that this hole is not so much the end of a massacre, as its perverse culmination.

Furthermore, the motif of uncommon corporal destruction incurs directly into the domain of the monstrous in the passage that illustrates how enslaved Indians fish for pearls. The narrative first outlines the affective fact:

> Métenlos en la mar en tres y en cuatro y cinco brazas de hondo; desde la mañana hasta que se pone el sol están siempre debajo del agua, nadando sin resuello, arrancando las ostias donde se crían las perlas. Salen con unas redecillas llenas a lo alto, y a resollar, donde está un verdugo español en una canoa o barquillo, y si se tardan en descansar les da de puñadas y por los cabellos los echa al agua para que tornen a pescar. (80)

With only a few masterful details —swimming without catching their breath, from dawn until dusk, no rest— this passage eschews an abstract interpretation of this scene as yet another example of forced labor or slavery. To be sure, the scene is depicting an illegitimate power structure (after all, this is in theory meant to illustrate the horror of *repartimiento*/*encomienda*), but the logic of sensation drives Las Casas towards another emphasis: bodily torture.

The narrative then moves on to display the corporeal effect of this torturous form of pearl fishing:

> … porque vivir los hombres debajo del agua sin resuello es imposible mucho tiempo, señaladamente que la frialdad continua del agua los penetra, y así todos comúnmente mueren de echar sangre por la boca, por el apretamiento del pecho que hacen por causa de estar tanto tiempo y tan continuo sin resuello, y de cámaras que causa frialdad. Conviértense los cabellos, siendo ellos de su natura negros, quemados como pelos de lobos marinos, y sáleles por las espaldas salitre, que no parecen sino monstruos en naturaleza de hombres, o de otra especie. (80)

The disparate visual elements of this depiction come together to forge a visual zone of undiscernibility between man and animal, life and death. Invisible forces of nature (cold sea, hot light, mineral salt), spurred by the forces of oppression, are here rendered visible on the canvas of a tortured dying body. And as the Indian body is decaying while alive, it inevitably abandons

its human form. Neither transformation nor decomposition, what Las Casas calls the monstrous is Deleuzian deformation.[36] The reader is placed head to head with the abject.

On the one hand, the *Brevísima* follows the route of destruction in a quasi-chronological order, and on the other it attempts to confirm its own rule that the atrocities will worsen as the narrative advances. The motif of corporal destruction filtered crafted as the marvelous-horrific has a climactic iteration, namely, as consumption of human flesh. Las Casas deploys it with care twice in the text, as the two most potent examples that God had given over the Spaniards to a reprobate mind (sense). First, the motif is formulated as cannibalism in the description of one of Pedro de Alvarado's heinous machinations. Let us remind ourselves that Pedro de Alvarado receives the lengthiest condemnation by Las Casas in the text's most memorable exclamation, which reads as a major punctuation to the whole text. For Las Casas few conquistadors, if any, could sink below Pedro de Alvarado, and the *Brevísima* therefore reaches a premature climax, as it were, in the chapter that details the atrocities committed in Guatemala.

In this chapter, the reader is informed of Alvarado's custom to give the Indians as food to each other:

> Tenía éste esta costumbre: que cuando iba a hacer guerra a algunos pueblos o provincias llevaba de los ya sojuzgados indios cuantos podía, que hiciesen guerra a los otros, y como no les daba de comer a diez y a veinte mil hombres que llevaba, consentíales que comiesen a los indios que tomaban. Y así había en su real solenísima carnecería de carne humana, donde en su presencia se mataban los niños y se asaban, y mataban el hombre por solas las manos y pies, que tenían por los mejores bocados. Y con estas inmanidades, oyéndolas todas las otras gentes de las otras tierras, no sabían dónde se meter de espanto. (55)

[36] "But deformation is always bodily, and it is static, it happens at one place; it subordinates movement to force, but it also subordinates the abstract to the Figure. When a force is exerted on a scrubbed part, it does not give birth to an abstract form, nor does it combine sensible forms dynamically: on the contrary, it turns this zone into a zone of indiscernibility that is common to several forms, irreducible to any of them; and the lines of force that it creates escape every form through their very clarity, through their deforming precision (we saw this in the becoming-animal of the Figures)." (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sensation* 59)

Although this passage seeks to highlight Alvarado's utter desensitization, the abject erupts onto the scene as the reader is quickly hit with the knowledge (not really developed as an image) that children are grilled for consumption and human hands and feet have become culinary delicacies ("los mejores bocados"). Even though it is stated only once that children are burned on grills, and Las Casas does not

Figure 3: *Narratio* 1598, p. 50.

enhance the image with analogies or metaphors, the detail does not escape de Bry's sensationalist eye, and he foregrounds the image in a plate that also features the marvelously-horrific butchery [Figure 3].

The *Brevísima* ends with the motif of uncommon corporal destruction in its iteration as consumption of human flesh:

> Pues otra obra diré que no se cuál sea más cruel y más infernal y más llena de ferocidad de fieras bestias, o ella o la que agora se dijo. Ya está dicho que tienen los españoles de

> las Indias enseñados y amaestrados perros bravísimos y ferocísimos para matar y despedazar los indios; sepan todos los que son verdaderos cristianos y aun los que no lo son si se oyó en el mundo tal obra: que para mantener los dichos perros traen muchos indios en cadenas por los caminos que andan, como si fuesen manadas de puercos, y matan dellos y tienen carnicería pública de carne humana, y dícense unos a otros: «Préstame un cuarto de un bellaco desos para dar de comer a mis perros hasta que yo mate otro», como si prestasen cuartos de puerco o de carnero. Hay otros que se van a caza las mañanas con sus perros, y volviéndose a comer, preguntados cómo les ha ido, responden: «Bien me ha ido, porque obra de quince o veinte bellacos dejo muertos con mis perros». Todas estas cosas y otras diabólicas vienen agora probadas en procesos que han hecho unos tiranos contra otros. ¿Qué puede ser más fea ni fiera ni inhumana cosa? (108)

A true closing vignette, this passage recapitulates all the motifs we have analyzed: animalization, mutilation, the marvelous-horrific as consumption of human flesh. And what is more, the *Brevísima*'s overall vision of corporal destruction comes full circle. The opening image of sheep being devoured by ravenous beasts, an image that initially evokes an allegorical (biblical) reading, becomes, through the logic of sensation, literalized: human beings are literally being devoured by ravenous beasts.

Chapter Three: Pride, Shame, and the Stirring of Conscience: *Historia de las Indias*

I. The Ethics of Historiography

If the *Brevísima'*s masterful minimalism turned it into a global press sensation, the drive towards rigor that sustains the *Historia de las Indias* (1527-1561) makes for a work so expansive that it may test the patience of the non-committed reader. The friar's daemonic excess, which yields the shimmering intensities that draw our critical eye, is also responsible for other kinds of prolixity, like his exhaustive references and lengthy scholarly digressions perhaps better suited for his juridical treatises.

This approach, however, need not be considered a structural flaw. I will argue, after all, that digression becomes the propitious textual space for affect in the *Apologética*. The *Historia de las Indias*, although it does not bear the adjective *apologética* in its title, is very much a defense, not of the natives (that was the end of the *Apologética*), but of the friar's own version of the story. In other words, apologetic from its conception, the *Historia* was mostly written as a reaction to other historical accounts, and it therefore wears the heavy armor of exhaustive explanations, themselves supported by a seemingly inordinate number of authoritative references.

The polemicist streak of the *Historia* is made clear from the start, in the book's impressive prologue, where Las Casas clearly lists the reasons that moved him to write such a pointed and rigorous history. The prologue itself is organized as an erudite proof, echoing a scholastic *dispositio*, where Las Casas lays down the four possible motives for writing history, analyzes the virtues and vices of each, and judges the canon of ancient historians according to

the aforementioned motives. Only then does he provide his own motives and does lay down his objectives, seven to be exact, while explicitly informing his reader of which model historians, with whom he shares similar motives, inform his overarching rhetorical strategies.

Not only does the prologue generously provide the interested reader with a hermeneutic blueprint to the work as whole, but the text can be read on its own as a rich meditation on historiography, namely, as a reflection on the rhetorical, political, intellectual, and spiritual import of the act of writing history. Cutting across all these domains lies the tension between truth and emotion, as Las Casas claims to have written the "true history," and blames most other historians for being blinded by their temporal passions. Underscoring the fact that he is a priest, in this prologue Las Casas affirms himself to be free from those misguided passions. What role, then, do the passions play in Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias*?

According to Las Casas, there are four motives that lead historians to write history: 1) the historian wishes to pursue literary glory, 2) sets out to gain political favor, 3) is moved by an ethical impulse, and 4) is moved by the greatness of historical events themselves in conjunction with an altruistic impulse to save them from oblivion.

As my terse summary reveals, the first two motives can be easily transformed into sentences with active verbs, as opposed to the passive constructions of the latter two. On the one hand, the first two classes of historians pursue desires, while the latter are driven by necessity. With this transparent schematization Las Casas is able to contrast the literary and political historians with the ethical and altruistic historians. This juxtaposition then allows for the prologue to provide a harsh assessment of the first group, which swiftly follows.

The literary historians, those who "deseosos de fama y de gloria, para ganarla manifestando su elocuencia, eligen aqueste camino" (I: 3), fool themselves and their readers, as

their superfluous pursuit of literary excellence, which is accompanied by a tendency to fictionalization, must unavoidably dilute the truth, which is history's noble end. But Las Casas reserves his most biting critique for the political historians, those who write history "por servir y agradar a los príncipes," for they deceive the monarch "con palabras blandas y suaves y a la sensualidad sabrosas, loándole lo que no debe o induciéndolo por ellas a lo que desviarlo debría…" (I: 3-4) And what is even a greater cause for alarm, the political historian ends up destroying the entirety of the political body ("todo el estado del rey lo destruye y, en cuanto en sí es, lo aniquila"), as he is not only misleading the king, but through his perpetual writing he will continue to sway public opinion in the same harmful direction (I: 4).

Much like the famous book-burning curate Pero Pérez from the first part of *Don Quixote*, Bartolomé de las Casas condones the inquisitorial censorship of certain books ("los malos libros deben los reyes vitar de sí, y no sólo por sí no leerlos, pero prohibirlos en sus reinos"), providing the example of the Roman praetor Quintus Petilius, who gained approval from the senate to burn Numa's books on the grounds that they allegedly undermined religious beliefs (I: 5). The classical example notwithstanding, censorship was very much a reality in Las Casas's time, and he brings the matter to bear on the present:

> Ejemplo de esto ya en el mundo sabemos haber acaecido, y porque las historias, así como son utilísimas al linaje de los hombres también, no siendo con verdad escritas, podrán ser causa como los otros defectuosos y nocivos libros, pública y privadamente, de hartos males, por ende no con menor solicitud deben ser vistas, escudriñadas y limadas, antes que consentidas salirse a publicar. (I: 5)

Las Casas was successful in preventing the publication of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's captivating dialogue *Democrates alter de justis belli causis apud Indios* (*A Second Democritus: on the just causes of the war with the Indians*), though its author was ultimately able to print it in Rome. Moreover, Santa Arias has aptly noted that the year 1552, when this prologue was written, saw

the publication of both Fernández de Oviedo and López de Gómara, while Sepúlveda was in the process of renewing his petitions to print his *Democrates alter* (17).

It is worth noting that for Las Casas censorship is merited, not just because the king ought to suppress false information and erroneous doctrine, but also because such works can wield the seductive power of words, which the printing press perpetuates. And although we might feel compelled, and rightly so, to take Las Casas's words with a grain of salt at this instance, since he himself was a seductive writer (and successful pamphleteer) with an acute instinct for the power of words, his stated concern in this work is for ethical substance and not the shimmer of storytelling: "Veo algunos haber en cosas destas Indias escrito… ocupados en la sequedad estéril e infructuosa de la superficie, sin penetrar lo que a la razón del hombre, a lo cual todo se ha de ordenar, nutriría y edificaría; los cuales gastan su tiempo en relatar lo que sólo ceba de aire los oídos y ocupa la noticia..." (I: 13)

Las Casas therefore moves on to describe a generic profile of the ethical historian, portrayed with transparent gestures of self-referentiality, thus effectively foreshadowing his own propitious entrance into the prologue later. But, at this point, the prologue sketches ethical historians as those who, seeing that the truth has been distorted, are compelled with a zeal for the truth ("con celo de que la verdad no perezca") and dedicate their life to defend it, "mayormente sintiendo que por semejante solicitud suya impiden a muchos gran perjuicio;..." (I: 3) Again, the passive construction ("por la misma necesidad compelidos") used to describe the motive of the ethical historian contrasts sharply with the self-propelling ambition that motivates literary and political historians. The historian is here compelled by the need to set the record straight, moved by the zeal of truth, and moved by an ethical feeling of saving others from harm. In other words, Las Casas's ethical historian is driven by passion.

Foreseeing the objection that any passion will hinder the veracity of historical writing, Las Casas astutely bypases this tension between emotion and truth by referring the reader to the identity of the historian. Historical writing, the friar argues, has been entrusted to learned priests and spiritually minded historians, for they are not blinded by the passions that seek temporal gain. True history emerges from the testimonial accounts of priests, some of whom have been fueled by righteous passion.

From the multiple historians that Las Casas brings to the discussion in the prologue, he singles out three that he aspires to imitate. First, the Dominican extensively cites and commends Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60 BC – after 7 BC) who, although Greek, wrote an apologetic history on behalf of the Romans in order to correct the Greeks' erroneous belief that considered the Romans as barbarians and the origins of Rome's first settlers as being vile and not free ("por causa de librar su griega nación del error en que estaban, estimando a los romanos por bárbaros, y el origen de los primeros pobladores de Roma haber sido gente vil y no libre…." I: 9-10). In sum, Dionysius's history is guided by the noble act of defending another people to his own people.

Secondly, Las Casas underscores that Josephus (37 – c. 100) was moved to write his *Antiquities of the Jews* "porque los griegos depravaban la antigüedad de la nación judaica, afirmando que no eran antiguos y ninguno de los historiadores antiguos hacía mención de ellos" (I: 10), and that, similarly, in order to refute even more false and defamatory accounts from non-Jewish historians, Josephus wrote down *The Jewish War* and the apology *Against Apion*.

Thirdly, Las Casas cites and translates the opening passage of Augustine's *De civitate Dei contra paganos*, in order to support his claim that the ethical historian is moved by an ethical necessity, as well as by the vehemence of religious zeal:

> Como en tiempo del Rey Alarico, rey de los godos, Roma dellos con grande estrago y matanza fuese destruída, los cultores de los ídolos, falsos dioses, que llamamos paganos, echaban la culpa a la cristiana religión, blasfemando del verdadero Dios nuestro, que por haber recibido la fe todo aquello les venía; pero yo, con celo de la casa de Dios, determiné contra tales errores y blasfemias escribir los libros de la *Ciudad de Dios*. (I: 11)

Fueled by righteous passion (the Latin is even more emphatic, as Augustine claims to be burning with zeal - "exardescens zelo domus Dei"), Augustine's monumental theological work is conceived as reaction *against* detractors, making it the paradigmatic work of Christian apologetics, and, for Las Casas, the most authoritative model for an apologetic history.

Therefore, before Las Casas parses out the seven objectives that the *Historia de las Indias* is meant to accomplish, he makes manifest his own ethical necessity in what is the prologue's most intense passage:

> Resta, pues, afirmar con verdad solamente moverme a dictar este libro la grandísima y última necesidad que por muchos años a toda España, de verdadera noticia y de lumbre de verdad en todos los estados della cerca deste Indiano Orbe, padecer he visto; por cuya falta o penuria ¡cuantos daños, cuántas calamidades, cuántas iacturas, cuántas despoblaciones de reinos, cuántos cuentos de ánima, cuanto a esta vida y a la otra hayan perecido y con cuánta injusticia en aquestas Indias; cuántos y cuán inexpiables pecados se han cometido, cuánta ceguedad y tupimiento en las conciencias, y cuánto y cuán lamentable perjuicio haya resultado y cada día resulte, de todo lo que ahora he dicho, a los reinos de Castilla! Soy certísimo que nunca se podrán numerar, nunca ponderar ni estimar, nunca lamentar, según se debría, hasta en el final y tremebundo día del justísimo y riguroso y divino juicio. (I: 12-13)

Expectedly, Las Casas's motive is stated as the ethical necessity to provide a true account regarding the deeds of the Indies, but, the passage is suddenly interjected by a long *exclamatio*, whose anaphoric structure (cuántos..., cuántas..., cuántas...) is reminiscent of the one Las Casas employs in the *Brevísima* to lament Pedro de Alvarado's interminable evil deeds.[37] But whereas

[37] Again, this prologue was composed in 1552, the year Las Casas revised and published the *Brevísima*. Here is the *Brevísima*'s long exclamation on Alvarado's horrible deeds: "¡Oh cuántos huérfanos hizo, cuántos robó de sus hijos, cuántos privó de sus mujeres, cuántas mujeres dejó sin maridos, de cuántos adulterios y estupros y violencias fue causa, cuántos privó de su libertad, cuántas angustias y calamidades

the lamentation that underscores Alvarado's atrocities is employed, in a structural sense, to put a halt to the rapid rhythm of one of the *Brevísima*'s most horrifying chapters, the lamentation of the *Historia*'s prologue serves as an overture to the entire work. Even as Las Casas claims that such deeds can never be adequately assessed and lamented ("nunca ponderar ni estimar, nunca lamentar"), he uses this claim to preface a work that is precisely an exhaustive catalogue of assessments, judgments, and lamentations with regard to the historical events of the Indies.

The prologue's lamentation-exclamation is therefore key to understanding the affective dimension of the *Historia de las Indias*. From the point of view of the author's present, this history is being written to remedy a present deficiency in historical knowledge, but from an anagogic point of view, this history dares to look back from the Day of Judgement and examines all the things that went wrong, finding much cause for lament. Therefore, unlike the *Brevísima*'s direct appeal to the vehement passions (pity, indignation, fear) that classical rhetoric had codified as catalysts to immediate political action, the *Historia* traffics slowly in negative emotions that spring from the internal biting of conscience, namely, shame, guilt, and lamentation. It is therefore not surprising that the other figure of speech that permeates the *Historia*, alongside *exclamatio*, is that of the rhetorical question (*interrogatio*), for the most part deployed as a way to incite the Augustinian notion of *veritas redarguens*, that is, the terrible truth that accuses and gnaws at our conscience.

Moreover, the *Historia*'s prologue also looks toward the future, particularly when it considers the utility of ethical history for future readers. Borrowing heavily from Diodorus

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padecieron muchas gentes por él, cuántas lágrimas hizo derramar, cuántos sospiros, cuántos gemidos, cuántas soledades en esta vida, y de cuántos damnación eterna en la otra causó: no sólo de indios, que fueron infinitos, pero de los infelices cristianos de cuyo consorcio se favoreció, en tan grandes insultos, gravísimos pecados y abominaciones tan execrables. Y plega a Dios que dél haya habido misericordia y se contente con tan mala fin como al cabo le dio." (*Brevísima* 56)

Siculus and Cicero, Las Casas underscores the ethical value of history as an art that can teach us by example, or as Cicero famously puts it, history as the teacher of life (*magistra vitae*). Las Casas thus makes the argument, through Diodorus, that true history is useful for those who aspire to a virtuous and righteous life:

> Sola la historia, representando las cosas acaecidas, abraza y contiene dentro de sí toda utilidad, porque a seguir lo honesto pone espuelas, abomina los vicios, los buenos ensalza, abate a los malos, y finalmente, con la experiencia de las cosas que relata, muy mucho provecho trae para la vida virtuosa y recta. (I: 8)

The chain of predicates in this passage that Las Casas translates from Diodorus refers to the moral lessons that a reader can derive from the careful consideration of historical narrative; but, as it will become evident, for Las Casas this passage also speaks to a particular agency, not of history itself, but of the historian's authorial voice. The *Historia*'s moral lessons are not only embedded in its literary representations, but they are also highlighted by the voice of an extremely involved author who textually performs the abominating of the vices, takes down evil men, and praises the historical agents of good.

As the prologue progresses, Las Casas develops this narratological strategy and endows his authorial voice with even more authority, as he makes the claim that true, ethical historiography can be used in the future as a way to supplement and substantiate juridical claims:

> Aprovecha tan bien la noticia de las historias para corroboración y también aniquilación de las prescripciones y de los privilegios, que no ayuda poco a la declaración y decisión jurídica de la justicia en muchos negocios y de grande importancia, necesarios en los reinos y en favor de las cosas humanas; porque, según los juristas, las corónicas, mayormente antiguas, hacen probanza o, al menos, adminículo de prueba, en juicio... (I: 9)

By alluding to royal privileges and ordinances, this passage underscores how the narrative of early-American historiography was in many ways circumscribed by what Rolena Adorno refers to as the *polemics of possession*. Adorno brings to the fore how some of the best-known and

ambitious historiographers of the period —Guamán Poma, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, el Inca Garcilaso— hoped to directly intervene, by means of their historical narratives, in the juridical polemics of the period.

A political animal who always managed to secure royal favors despite his many adversaries and the Crown's own capriciousness, Las Casas produced a history, which, unsurprisingly, cuts across the juridical debates of the period. Following Adorno's track, Cárdenas Bunsen's study of Las Casas demonstrates how, in crafting the *Historia*, Las Casas follows a framework established by canonical law. And yet, weighing the significance of the work as a whole and of histories in general, the prologue alludes to eternal law, which supersedes natural, human, and canonical laws, by emphasizing God's final evaluation of all deeds on the Day of Judgement: "De aquí parece cuánta fidelidad y con cuánta prudencia, temor y discreción y sabiduría se debe guardar en las historias por los coronistas, y cuán culpados y reos serán ante el juicio de Dios, si precipitándose, no tuvieren en mucho culpar a unos y relevar de culpa a otros contra la verdad y justicia…" (I: 9). Unlike the more secular-minded historians of the period, Las Casas's ethical impulse leads him to modulate the burden of historiography to a spiritual plane. Indeed, for Las Casas historiography intervenes in the juridical affairs of the world, but of greater import are the repercussions of those very same interventions, for they will ultimately be judged by God. Las Casas's ambitious *Historia de las Indias* is not only written for posterity; it is written for eternity.

The friar thus sets out to write an ethical history that "first and foremost" ("lo primero y principal" I: 9) attempts to make manifest God's "profound and inscrutable judgements," as well as "the execution of his most righteous and infallible divine justice…" ("...manifestación de sus profundos y no escrutables juicios y ejecución de su rectísima e infalible divina justicia" I: 19).

Although this may strike some readers as a tall order, Las Casas's position here is an orthodox embrace of the Augustinian notion of providential history, which posits that one of the principal tasks of the spiritually-minded historian is to trace the interventions of the Providential Hand in historical events.

And yet, Las Casas's commitment to face the darkest aspects of colonization will inevitably lead him, more often than not, to moments of aporetic hesitation. Why would God allow such atrocious and massive killings of innocent people? Why do some conquistadors appear to receive divine punishment in this life while others die peacefully in their beds? Although clearly unsure at times, Las Casas tries to formulate answers to these questions, as the extraordinarily horrific representation of the conquistadors' deeds, which he himself recreates, seem to demand an explanation.

From the seven objectives that Las Casas hopes to accomplish with this history, I will focus on four, which not only speak directly to the emotive rhetoric of the *Historia*, but also, I argue, are key to understanding the structuration of the work.[38] Hence, one of the main objectives of the *Historia* is to provide a more thorough assessment of each of the conquistadors' deeds, however harsh that assessment might be, in order to counter the imperial discourse of martial glory and its evocation of pride. Las Casas thus claims to have written this history,

> ...por templar la jactancia y gloria vanísima de muchos y descubrir la injusticia de no pocos, que de obras viciosas y execrables maldades se glorían, como si pudieran arrear

[38] The other three objectives not pertinent to our discussion are the following: 1) Las Casas states that he undertakes the writing of this historical work in order to lay bare the true motives of the Catholic Monarchs, hoping to demonstrate that the unfolding of events was not entirely their fault, or as they would have wished; 2) the friar writes this history for the sake of transmitting geographical and scientific knowledge: "...por dar claridad y certidumbre a los leyentes de muchas cosas antiguas de los principios que esta máchina mundial fué descubierta, cuya noticia dará gusto sabroso a los que la leyeren;..." (I: 20); and 3) to save marvelous deeds from oblivion: "...para manifestar, por diverso camino que otros tuvieron, la grandeza y numerosidad de las admirables prodigiosas obras que nunca en los siglos olvidados haberse obrado creemos" (I: 20).

> varones heroicos de hazañas ilustrísimas; porque se conozcan y distingan para utilidad de los venideros los males de los bienes y de las virtudes los grandes pecados y vicios nefandísimos. Y que yo reprenda y abomine las cosas muy erradas de los españoles, nadie se debe maravillar ni atribuirlo a aspereza o vicio, porque, según dice Polibio en su *Historia de los romanos*, lib. I: «El que toma oficio de historiador, algunas veces a los enemigos debe con sumas alabanzas sublimar, si la excelencia de las obras que hicieron lo merece, y otras veces a los amigos ásperamente improperar o reprender, cuando sus errores son dignos de ser vituperados y reprendidos.» (I: 20)

This history will therefore seek to undo the haughty pride, essentially a diabolic passion, that Las Casas understood to be pervasive in the Spain of his time. More concretely, Las Casas seeks to turn on its head, through the *Historia*'s impassioned rebukes and reprimands, what he considered to be the tendency of some histories to emulate the heroic representations of the epic genre through the mythification of the conquistadors and their deeds. The *Historia*'s narrator will unrelentingly accuse the Portuguese historians João de Barros and Gómez Eanes de Zurara,[39] and later Oviedo and Gómara, of writing idealized versions of *conquista*, "ficciones," as well as displaying sycophantic and unjustified praise for the conquistadors' so-called heroic deeds.

The *Historia* is therefore, in a sense, an anti-epic history that reads other historical accounts against the grain, seeking to foreground the sinful nature not only of the conquistadors' deeds, but also of the historical representations that cast a heroic light on such deeds. Las Casas therefore wields, excessively by some critics' standards, the authority that Polybius grants the ethical historian to reprimand, by means of narrative interruptions, the historical actors in order to destroy such mythifications. But, how does the friar go about using that authority to "temper" pride? And whose pride needs tempering?

In our reading of *De unico vocationis modo*, it became clear that Las Casas subscribed to the strategic use of fear by Christian rhetoric as a way to temper pride. "You may terrify the

[39] "Y es cosa de ver, los historiadores portogueses cuánto encarecen por ilustres estas tan nefandas hazañas, ofreciéndolas todas por grandes sacrificios a Dios." (I: 126)

impudent," Las Casas concedes in *De unico*, "if you think it expedient, with the terrible day of judgment and the punishments that they will suffer eternally" ("Nihilominus poterunt terrere protervos, si viderint expedire, iudicio terribili futuro, et poenis, quae passuri sunt aeternaliter" 556). Under this conception, human pride succumbs before the fearful contemplation of the terrible Day of Judgment.[40]

In the *Brevísima* Las Casas attempts to instill the servile fear of God (*timor servilis*) in his royal reader by employing Scriptural re-iterations that make manifest God's impending judgment, thereby hoping to ignite Philip's immediate action. However, the *Historia*'s prologue makes clear that, unlike the *Brevísima*, this particular text was written for posterity and understood its intervention mainly as a spiritual one. In other words, compared to his treatises and letters, this text (alongside the *Apologética*) in some sense endeavors to steer away from the pressures of political expediency.

Therefore, given the text's relative freedom, the *Historia* can afford to temper pride through the slower and more thorough process of reflexive contrition. Las Casas the historian assesses the guilt of the characters of his narrative with great precision: Columbus took slaves in ignorance of *ius gentium*, according to Aristotle, Cortés acted like a tyrant, etc. In this sense, blaming is very much a performative speech-act, one whose emotive effect on the Spanish reader aims to be that of shame (its perlocutionary force); for by blaming and shaming Spain's national

[40] As we stated in our first chapter, both Aquinas and Augustine considered fear (*timor*) to be a remedy against pride. "According to Sirach 10:14, «the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God», that is to refuse submission to God, and this is opposed to filial fear, which reveres God. Thus fear cuts off the source of pride for which reason it is bestowed as a remedy against pride" (Aquinas, *Summa*, 2a 2ae qu. 19. art. 9); "...of necessity this fear will lead us to the thought of our mortality and of our future death and will affix all our proud motions, as if they were fleshly members fastened with nails, to the wood of the cross" (Augustine, *On Christian* 38).

heroes, Las Casas begins the tempering of any elation the reader may already feel regarding Spain's illegitimate imperial expansion.

But the process does not stop there. The authorial voice will intervene even more and address the reader directly, as with the following paragraph, to which we will return later, that comments on Columbus's first sin, namely his introduction of illegitimate violence in Spain's colonization project:

> Todo esto aquí se ha traído por ocasión de las palabras susodichas del Almirante, para que los que esta historia leyeren, adviertan y cognozcan el origen, medios y fin que las cosas destas Indias tuvieron, y alaben al Todopoderoso Dios, no sólo por lo que hace, pero también por lo que permite, y *teman* mucho los hombres de que se les ofrezcan ocasiones con colores de bondad, o por excusar daño alguno con que puedan ofender, mayormente dando asa donde la humana malicia halle principio y camino para ir adelante y con que se excusar; y para no incurrir en tales inconvenientes, necesario es nunca cesar de suplicar por preservación dellos a Dios. (my emphasis, I: 208)

The reader is warned. Portentous events might be a test from God, and only the fear of God — here implicitly understood as the beginning of wisdom— will keep the reader from making major mistakes. Pray, dear reader, that God keep you from incurring into irredeemable sins.

With these kind of interjections, in other words, by evoking shame, Las Casas the historian hopes to temper his readers' pride, particularly if they were previously taken by the emotive force of other historical accounts that praised the deeds of the conquering Spaniards. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines shame as "as a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds, past, present, or future, which seem to tend to bring dishonour," one of them being "making profit out of what is petty or disgraceful, or out of the weak, such as the indigent or dead; whence the proverb, 'to rob even a corpse,' for this is due to base love of gain and stinginess" (211).

Following this rhetorical understanding of shame, the *Historia* does not offer a sensationalist account of the violence of Conquest in the mode of the *Brevísima*, but a detailed

account of disgraceful acts, such as unbridled lust and illicit profiting of the Spaniards, which brings them and their nation great dishonor. The Spanish reader is thus chief among the targeted readers of the *Historia*, for Aristotle also makes clear that shame is a transferable emotion in the sense that "men also feel shame when they are connected with actions or things which entail disgrace, for which either they themselves, or their ancestors, or any others with whom they are closely connected are responsible" (219). The *Historia* is an attempt to establish this shameful connection between Spanish reader and Spanish conquistador.

Moreover, the prologue's ethical specifications signal that the shaming authorial interjections are meant to aid readers in casting away their pride, that is, their steadfast attachment to an erroneous judgement. For this also constitutes the definition of pride, namely, clinging to one's own judgment. As we discussed in our first chapter, according to Aquinas, the cure for pride, understood as the clinging to one's erroneous judgment, is called contrition, for:

> … "pride is the beginning of all sin," because thereby man clings to his own judgment, and strays from the Divine commandments. Consequently that which destroys sin must make man give up his own judgment. Now he that persists in his own judgment, is called metaphorically rigid and hard: wherefore anyone is said to be broken when he is torn from his own judgment. But, in material things, whence these expressions are transferred to spiritual things, there is a difference between breaking and crushing or contrition, as stated in *Meteor. IV*, in that we speak of breaking when a thing is sundered into large parts, but of crushing or contrition when that which was in itself solid is reduced to minute particles. And since, for the remission of sin, it is necessary that man should put aside entirely his attachment to sin, which implies a certain state of continuity and solidity in his mind, therefore it is that the act through which sin is cast aside is called contrition metaphorically. (*Summa*, Supp. Q.1 Art. 2)

Only contrition, metaphorically understood as a sundering, a shattering more forceful than mere breaking, makes man cast his sin of pride aside by casting aside his flawed judgment in its entirety. For Aquinas the metaphor of contrition thus signifies correction and clarity of

judgment, a lucid understanding and assessment of the ethical consequences of one's own actions.

But Aquinas's understanding of contrition as that which casts away pride also alludes to the effects of the power of God's Word, particularly as voiced by the prophet's rebuke. And here we can turn to Augustine for guidance, for he posits that pride is not only a problem with judgment but a matter of the heart that the preacher can address. In *De doctrina*, Augustine stresses that the Christian preacher must rely on the Word of God, that is, re-iterate Scripture, in order to shatter men's prideful hearts. As we pointed out in our opening chapter, Augustine makes Jeremiah the epitome of what a preacher can achieve through the grand style of sacred rhetoric: "Oh eloquence more terrible that it is more pure, and because it is more genuine more powerful! Truly 'a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces!' Through this very prophet God Himself said that His word is like this hammer when it is spoken by the holy Prophets" (139).

Much like the Ciceronian orator, the Augustinian preacher should strive to move his listeners by moving himself first. The preacher, however, is asked to imbibe God's awesome voice, to become its medium and get carried away by divine inspiration, for only then will the preacher's language reach the grand style that can hammer the heart of the believer. The hammering words of the prophet are meant to break the stony heart in pieces, thus opening the possibility of redemption: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26 KJV). For Augustine it is clear that contrition is the breaking of the heart, or in other words, its sensitisation ("a heart of flesh"). Yet, this grand style does more than simply instill servile fear and re-sensitize the heart; by means of the grand style "the hard heart is to be bent to obedience..." (164). The grand style is therefore the most powerful tool in the preacher's

toolbox, as with the grand style he can achieve contrition and obedience in the believer. In fact, generally speaking, the end of sacred rhetoric is obedience, that is, the way in which the sinful can again reconnect with the sacred order.

Through the affective structure of *interjection*, Las Casas will open up space in the *Historia de las Indias* for the grand style of preaching. Las Casas will interrupt the narration over and over again, using his own narrative vignettes as parables for preaching ("entreponiendo a veces algunos morales apuntamientos" I: 22). Initially, these interjections will come as stark break with narrative, when Las Casas the author turns to the reader in order to preaches to him in the grand style. But Las Casas will eventually make himself into a character and inhabit the historical narration as a young Las Casas, the cleric (*el clérigo*), who will be able to retransmit the powerful sermons of the Dominicans (Pedro de Córdoba, Antón de Montesinos, Bernardo de Santo Domingo) from within the narrative. In the *Historia*, Las Casas fuses homiletic praxis with historical narrative.

This discussion leads us to consider the other three objectives of this text, which I have grouped together as they are specifications of an overarching objective, namely, that the *Historia* is written for the spiritual well-being of others. If on one the hand the *Historia* is written to temper Spanish pride in the Conquest, on the other hand it is written for the well-being of both Amerindians and Spaniards. Thus, the friar claims to have written this history in order to liberate his own people from their mistaken understanding with regards to the Amerindians, thinking them to be less human, as well as to aid the Amerindians themselves by pleading their case to the Spanish reader.[41]

[41] "Quise tomar este cuidado… por librar mi nación española del error y engaño gravísimo y perniciosísimo en que vive y siempre hasta hoy ha vivido, estimando destas océanas gentes faltarles el ser de hombres, haciéndolas brutales bestias incapaces de virtud y doctrina, depravando lo bueno que tienen y

These objectives, which center on defending the Amerindians against slanderous beliefs, are actually achieved not by this work but by the *Apologética historia sumaria*, where Las Casas provides the Spanish reader with an exhaustive proof of Amerindian humanity, as expressed by their rational faculties and sophisticated civilizations. But, contrary to one perception of Las Casas as a hater of his own nation (a view espoused by most of his critics), the prologue also insists that this history is written for the well-being and utility of Spain, and this goal does indeed guide the *Historia*'s core message. The sermons that endow this text with great emotional intensity are directed at the Spanish reader, as the *Historia* will repeatedly argue that the well-being of the Indies is inherently connected to both the material and spiritual well-being of Spain ("por el bien y utilidad de toda España, porque conocido en qué consiste el bien o el mal destas Indias, entiendo que conocerá la consistencia del bien o del mal de toda ella." I: 19-20).

The *Historia de las Indias* renders Spain the service of providing ethical clarity on its most momentous enterprise. This clarity, however, will become a bitter pill to swallow, for by the logic of the arguments cited above, as the *Historia*'s dark progression unfolds, the divine punishment that threatens Spain becomes only a matter of time. Hence, with this text Las Casas strives to make the Spanish reader complicit in the actions of Conquest, thereby forcing the reader to feel shame for the "original sin" of the Spanish reader's own nation, and thus bringing him toward an embrace of a state of contrition as a last recourse to avoid God's wrath. In the end, the *Historia de las Indias* not only remain incomplete, but the voice of its author plunges wearily into an utter state of resignation, leaving only space for a prophet's lamentations.

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acrecentándoles lo malo que hay en ellas, como incultas y olvidadas por tantos siglos, y a ellas, en alguna manera, darles la mano, porque no siempre, cuanto a la opinión falsísima que dellas se tiene, aterradas como lo están y hasta los abismos permanezcan abatidas. (I: 19-20)

II. Shaming Heroes, Undoing Pride

Originally organized around six books that would cover a decade each, the *Historia de las Indias* was meant to cover about sixty years of New World history (from 1492 - 1550), though a later addition that depicts the Portuguese colonization of Africa precedes these dates by many more decades. Las Casas, as is known, only completed the first three books, ending the narrative around 1522. Given the period of time Las Casas managed to cover, almost half of the work is focused on the voyages of Christopher Columbus, and the latter half of the narrative, though it includes vignettes that lay bare the worst deeds of later conquistadors, follows closely the character of the author Bartolomé de las Casas himself as an *encomendero* and cleric.

The narrative has therefore been criticized as excessively fragmented, adding unnecessary difficulty to an already highly digressive text (Saint-Lu XVI). This observation is accurate, for after the text begins to lose track of Christopher Columbus in the middle of book II, the narrative becomes more and more fractured as colonization efforts expand geographically within short periods of time.

We must add, however, that the narrative does follow through with the ethical burden that Las Casas takes on in his prologue. In other words, if this history is to make good on its ethical responsibility to weigh the deeds of history's main actors, then it is forced to follow them closely. Therefore, given this priority, the *Historia* ends up being a character-centered narrative as opposed to a plot-centered narrative.

By crafting a character-centered narrative, Las Casas goes against an ancient narratological tradition that dates back to Aristotle, who argues that representations, particularly tragic ones, should privilege plot, for "tragedy's most potent means of emotional effect are

components of plot, namely reversals and recognitions," while characterization should remain secondary, for "it is not in order to provide mimesis of character that the agents act; rather, their characters are included for the sake of their actions" (*Poetics* 51, 53). To be sure, Las Casas conceives the development of his story as a tragic one, but the accusatory bent of his narrative supersedes, for the most part, the structural efforts meant to reveal the great tragic reversal embedded in the enterprise of discovery, namely, a turn from the God-given opportunity to bring Christianity to what Las Casas deemed as almost perfect societies to the destructive pillaging and terrifying massacres of tyrannical invasion. Las Casas understood that such a reversal could not be ascribed to a single action performed by a single man, but he nonetheless makes Christopher Columbus a synecdochical figure that represents that turn, that is, Columbus's fall will be crafted in way that it speaks to the fall of all later conquistadors, as well as the fall and imminent demise of Spain itself. Through the Columbian synecdoche, Las Casas solves the problem of creating a tragedy that is character-centered.

In other words, instead of creating a mimesis of actions, Las Casas's historical narrative, driven by an ethical force, is mostly a mimesis of character. For as Aristotle also makes clear, "character is that which reveals moral choice…" (*Poetics* 53); and it is to characterization, I argue, that we must turn if we wish to uncover not only an overarching structure to the entire work, but also the way in which this history works to stir up the reader's emotions.

Despite the great pathos conveyed by the representation of a tragic reversal of Spain's fate, as signified by Columbus's own story, Las Casas nonetheless aspires to achieve the most potent emotional effect through other means. The *Historia*'s most potent means of emotional effect do not rely on the classic components of a tragic plot, but on the emphatic and strategic

use of language, both the language that the characters speak (diction is one of the most effective approaches to characterization) and the language of the author as commentator.

Hence, as the *Historia* does not really have a unifying plot, but a multitude of plots anchored on powerful characterizations, the author will take it upon himself to endow the text with emotional intensity by means of speeches (mostly sermons), some from the *Historia*'s characters, but mostly from the author himself, who eventually becomes a vociferous character in this narrative. This particular strategy gives Las Casas plenty of space to achieve some of the *Historia*'s most memorable effects *and* affects.

Since Las Casas's privileges words over the arrangement of actions for emotional effect, let us then define the contours of this impassioned language. Las Casas the author constantly interrupts the historical narrative to insert extensive commentaries, most of which read like small sermons crafted in the mold of what Augustine deems the grand style of preaching. These narrative disruptions, which also let in other forms of discourse (political speeches by the characters, moving images, legal disquisitions, exhaustive citations, insertion of historical documents followed by a long gloss, exclamations, questions, etc.), and which themselves employ a myriad of emotive rhetorical strategies, can be understood as the working of an overall affective strategy that I call interjection, that is, the deliberate break with discourse that opens up space in the text for the emergence of affect.

Moreover, by means of the rhetorical strategy of interjection, Las Casas can also juxtapose legal observations with specific evil deeds, or in the words of Las Casas himself, "aplicando el hecho al derecho." This interpretive move on the author's part is what Anthony Pagden claims to be Las Casas's hermeneutic circularity from *ius* to *factum* and vice-versa (158). In other words, Pagden argues that the friar's histories are a "dead end" insofar as Las Casas

crafts his representations only with a view to an eventual application of his own juridical hermeneutic. According to Pagden, Las Casas's historical works are therefore not useful "philosophical histories" that offer causative explanations the way Joseph de Acosta and Francisco Clavijero will eventually do in their own historical works. Although Pagden's observation is essentially accurate, it nonetheless remains a decontextualized one, because it ignores how these *hermeneutic explanations* are constitutive of a broader narrative logic, and the way in which they serve the wider-encompassing strategy of *affective interjection*.

The narrative logic is centered on character development as the careful characterization of Columbus sets up the text for a narrative of descent, the counterpart being that of Las Casas's characterization of his own young self, Las Casas the cleric, whose story yields the structure of the narrative of ascent. On the one hand, the *Historia* takes a cue from Augustine's *City of God*, a narrative which is driven by the central polarizing tension between the destruction of the earthly city (narrative of descent) and the birth and purpose of the heavenly, spiritual city (narrative of ascent). But on the other hand, Las Casas can be said to structure his narrative more generally in accordance with the biblical vision of man's narrative destiny, a vision which yields, according to Northrop Frye, the four primary narrative movements in all literature.

"These are, first, the descent from a higher world; second, the descent to a lower world; third, the ascent from a lower world; and, fourth, the ascent to a higher world. All stories in literature are complications of, or metaphorical derivations from, these four narrative radicals" (*Secular Scripture* ch. 4). In turn, these narrative radicals correspond to the four levels of the imaginative topocosm that Frye posits in *Words with Power*, his second study of the Bible, namely "heaven", "the earthly paradise or Garden of Eden, where man lived before the fall", "the world of ordinary experience we live in," and "the demonic world of hell." Even as the

intervention of the Dominicans and the cleric-reformer Bartolomé de las Casas sets in motion a counter-narrative of redemption, as an unfinished text, the *Historia* mostly represents a descent, from the earthly paradise discovered (again) by Columbus to the demonic world of hell brought about by the conquistadors.

It is within this narrative context that the reader is asked to consider the authorial interruptions that provide juridical commentary on the narrative. In the first book of the *Historia*, Las Casas is heavily invested in portraying the slow fall of the Admiral, and he does so not only by highlighting the precise sense in which Columbus's deeds are in fact illegal and sinful, but by outlining, through affective interjections, Columbus's descent as an emotive crescendo. These interjections attest that Las Casas does not only want his reader *to understand* the illegal underpinnings of the characters' actions he is narrating, but that he wants the reader *to feel* the ugliness of injustice and its lasting consequences in the Indies. The authorial commentary rides along the tragic storyline and punctuates it by performing, through the heavy use of emotive rhetorical figures like *exclamatio* or *interrogatio*, an increasing indignation, lamentations, and, toward the end, an exhausted resignation.

Let us then begin by closely examining how the portrayal of Christopher Columbus, whose narrative is one of descent, is punctuated by Las Casas affective strategy. Las Casas the historian, who as transcriber and biographer of Columbus became one of his most thorough readers, may at times seem to have imbibed the Admiral's eschatological view of himself. The *Historia* not only interprets Columbus's actions in the Spanish global enterprise of colonization as the one of utmost importance, but, within the text's providential framework, Columbus proves to be the key to universal history itself.

The time thus having arrived for God to show his mercy to the entire world, Las Casas begins history by signaling how God providentially chooses Columbus "para de su virtud, ingenio, industria, trabajos, saber y prudencia confiar una de las egregias divinas hazañas que por el siglo presente quiso en el mundo hacer" (I: 27). The historian even draws attention to the fact that this man's name bears a special spiritual signification:

> Suele la divinal Providencia ordenar que se pongan nombres y sobrenombres a personas que señala para se servir conformes a los oficios que les determina cometer, según asaz parece por muchas partes de la Sagrada Escritura; … Llamóse, pues, por nombre, Cristóbal, conviene a saber, *Christum ferens*, que quiere decir traedor o llevador de Cristo, y así se firmaba él algunas veces; … Tuvo por sobrenombre Colón, que quiere decir poblador de nuevo, el cual sobrenombre le convino en cuanto por su industria y trabajos fué causa que descubriendo a estas gentes, infinitas ánimas dellas, mediante la predicación del Evangelio y administración de los eclesiásticos sacramentos, hayan ido y vayan cada día a poblar de nuevo aquella triunfante ciudad del cielo. También le convino, porque de España trujo el primero gente (si ella fuera cual debía ser) para hacer colonias, que son nuevas poblaciones traídas de fuera, que puestas y asentadas entre los naturales habitadores destas vastísimas tierras, constituyeran una nueva, fortísima, amplísima e ilustrísima cristiana Iglesia y felice república. (I: 28-9)

Just as God renamed Abraham so that his name would signify "father of multitudes," (the historical interpretation of this name is varied as Abraham not only fathered Israel but the great Abrahamic religions), so Christopher Columbus's name, the historian argues, can be read in light of the development of universal history, as he is chosen to bring Christ into the New World, and to populate, or colonize, heaven with the souls of those New World inhabitants who were predestined for salvation.

It is worth noting that when establishing the etymological connection between "Colón" and "colonia," Las Casas favors (or perhaps forces) a spiritual connotation, effectively downgrading the earthly colony as tertiary in purpose. But even this worldly colony, which at this point in the narrative is spoken about in the subjunctive mood ("que asentadas… constituyeran"), is posited as an extension of the Church first, and as a blessed republic second.

Moreover, the *Historia* provides the reader with a portrait of Columbus, which not only underscores how his innate qualities were manifestly given to him by God to undertake the enterprise of discovery, but continues to endow Columbus's historical significance with a spiritual meaning:

> ... y porque de costumbre tiene la suma y divinal Providencia de proveer a todas las cosas, según la natural condición de cada una, y mucho más y por modo singular las criaturas racionales, y cuando alguna elige para, mediante su ministerio, efectuar alguna heroica y señalada obra, la dota y adorna de todo aquello que para cumpliemiento y efecto della le es necesario, y como éste fue tan alto y tan arduo y divino negocio, a cuya dignidad y dificultad otro alguno igualar no se puede, por ende a este su ministro y apóstol primero destas Indias creedera cosa es haberle Dios esmaltado de tales calidades naturales y adquisitas, cuantas y cuales para el discurso de los tiempos y la muchedumbre y angustiosa inmensidad de los peligros y trabajos propincuísimos a la muerte, la frecuencia de los inconvenientes, la diversidad y dureza terrible de las condiciones de los que le habían de ayudar, y finalmente, la cuasi invincible importuna contradicción que en todo siempre tuvo, como por el discurso desta en lo que refiere a él tocante, sabía que había bien menester. (I: 27)

The historical significance of the Discovery of the Indies is of such magnitude that it hardly admits comparison with other events. Given this importance and guided by the Providential framework of his narrative, Las Casas conjectures that God indeed selected a man that could rise to the occasion. In other words, the friar therefore surmises ("creedera cosa es") that Columbus was in endowed by God with the necessary qualities, that is, with the right character, to undertake all the trials and tribulations that were to come, including the challenge posed by the Spaniards themselves, whom Las Casas here characterizes as terribly harsh individuals ("dureza terrible"). Thus begins *Historia*'s characterization of the Admiral, who Las Casas already baptizes as the first Apostle of the Indies.

Insisting on the providential, and therefore spiritual, interpretation of Columbus's role in history, Las Casas the historian enhances Columbus's characterization by depicting his religious habits, which evince his religious devotion:

> … cuasi en cada cosa que hacía y decía o quería comenzar a hacer, siempre anteponía: "En el nombre de la Santa Trinidad haré esto o verná esto"... en cualquier carta o otra cosa que escribía, ponía en la cabeza: *Iesus cum María sit nobis in via*; … Ayunaba los ayunos de la Iglesia observantísimamente; confesaba muchas veces y comulgaba; rezaba todas las horas canónicas como los eclesiásticos o religiosos; enemicísimo de blasfemias y juramentos, era devotísimo de Nuestra Señora y del seráfico padre San Francisco; pareció ser muy agradecido a Dios por los beneficios que de la divinal mano recibía, por lo cual, cuasi a proverbio, cada hora traía que le había hecho Dios grandes mercedes, como a David. (I: 29)

Las Casas the historian emphasizes, with a heavy hand, what was professed to be, even by other accounts, Columbus's own religious zeal in order to structure his narrative as one of descent — the fall of the hero which the narrative will merge with the fall of Spain— and a promised ascent towards some form of political and spiritual redemption for both Spaniards and Indians. Hence, the *Historia*, which in the characterization of Columbus shares much with the tragic mode, is setting the ground for the hero's fall, "since tragedy is mimesis of those superior to us, poets should emulate good portrait painters, who render personal appearance and produce likenesses, yet enhance people's beauty" (*Poetics*, 83).

As the passages cited above make manifest, at the initial stages of the narrative, Las Casas enhances Columbus's character so that he is perceived as a tragic hero, that is, better than us. In fact, positive portrayals that highlight the same kind of deep religious devotion are not reiterated in the *Historia* until the arrival of the Dominicans, particularly with the textual portrait of fray Pedro de Córdoba.

As we will see shortly, the arrival of the Dominicans constitutes the crucial turning point in the narrative, for with it Las Casas represents Divine Providence's most decisive intervention in what had already begun to unravel as a road to perdition for both Spaniards and Indians. The friar's providential reading of history thus leads him to establish a connection, via representation, between the first flawed agent of this history (Columbus as both a quasi-Adamic figure and a

version of the Aristotelian tragic hero) and the agents of this history's redemption (the Dominicans as messianic prophets and Las Casas as Saviour).[42] In Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias*, narrative movement and ethical signification are one.

At this stage in the narrative the optimism is evident, as the man entrusted with the primary mission of *spiritual colonization* is portrayed as perfectly suited to the enterprise's ethical significance. Las Casas the historian even underlines, or perhaps exaggerates, Columbus's awareness of what the friar argued, throughout most of his life, was the primary purpose of Spanish colonization, namely, the conversion of the indigenous peoples to Christianity ("… celosísimo era en gran manera del honor divino; cúpido y deseoso de la conversión destas gentes, y que por todas partes se sembrase y ampliase la fe de Jesucristo" I: 30).

[42] As my argument unfolds, further clarification is needed here. Las Casas knew that Columbus had a sinful past; after all, it is none other than Las Casas himself who writes the most critical history of the fifteenth-century Portuguese slave raids on the coasts of Africa. Las Casas knew that Columbus and his brother were trained on those ships, but he nonetheless chooses not to emphasize that connection until later in the narrative when Columbus begins to act immorally in the Indies. The logic of the narrative (which follows a tragic mode) demands that Columbus be presented as initially innocent or in some way better than us, for only then can Las Casas interject his reflections on Columbus's errors —on the one hand what Aristotle calls *hamartia*, and on the other a kind of original sin— that brings the whole enterprise down.

Critics have rightly surmised that Las Casas added the ten chapters (I: 17-27) on Portuguese exploration (usually anthologized as the *Brevísima relación de la destrucción del África*) at a much later date, for, toward the end the text, Las Casas promises the reader that he will deal with the subject in full later. But another interpretation that corroborates this thesis is simply that the chapters on the Portuguese expeditions are markedly different in tone, and they momentarily break the original structure I have posited of descent and ascent. The Africa narrative is penned by the older, more radical Las Casas who is willing to question all the premises of colonization itself, even if Christianity were to benefit from its doings. He accuses the Portuguese historian Gómez Eanes de Zurara of "washing" and "painting" ("enjabona y alcohola") over the ugly slave trade that he himself narrates by stating that some of those slaves would eventually become Christians. When the narrative returns to Columbus on chapter 28, there is an abrupt return to the opening optimism we have identified as key to the structure of the text, as well as a return to the portrayal of Columbus as a heroic agent of discovery.

The text advances in its portrayal of Columbus as a heroic protagonist by underscoring his faith, in essence a spiritual virtue, in the outcome of his enterprise. As doubt and fears begin to take hold of his crew to the point of near-mutiny, Columbus remains steadfast; his confidence is rendered by Las Casas as a veritable act of faith ("sólo él tuvo fe firme y perseverante constancia de la divinal providencia, que no había de ser de su fin defraudado" I:199). Columbus's unshakeable faith in Divine Providence is rewarded with a gift of vision; he is the first one to see land. He sees a light at night "que era como una candelilla que se alzaba y bajaba. Cristóbal Colón no dudó ser verdadera lumbre, y por consiguiente, estar junto a la tierra, y así fué" (I: 198). Columbus discovers, by an act of vision, by the seeing of a light, an unknown world engulfed in darkness. Las Casas seizes this alluring detail and offers the reader a spiritual interpretation of it, namely, that Christopher Columbus, as the bearer of Christianity, the *Christum ferens*, was to bring spiritual light to a world that lacked it ("… y se le atribuyese haber primero visto la tierra por ver primero la lumbre en ella, en figura de la espiritual, que, por sus sudores, había Cristo de infundir en aquestas gentes que vivían en tan profundas tinieblas" I: 199).

Furthermore, Las Casas also underscores how Columbus's faith in Divine Providence brings him temporal goods. The monarchs, who promised monetary remuneration to whoever would see land first, eventually award it to Columbus, and Las Casas interprets this seemingly trivial occurrence as an act as divine justice ("De donde podemos colegir un no chico argumento de la bondad y justicia de Dios, el cual aun en este mundo remunera como también castiga" I: 199) Moreover, as soon as the narrative arrives at the moment of discovery (chapter 40), the narrator takes the liberty of granting, with a performative gesture, Christopher Columbus the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea that he seeked from the monarchs:

> De aquí adelante será razón de hablar de Cristóbal Colón de otra manera que hasta aquí, añidiendo a su nombre el antenombre honorífico, y a su dignísima persona la prerrogativa y dignidad ilustre, que los reyes tan condignamente le concedieron, de Almirante, pues con tan justo título y tantos sudores, peligros y trabajos, pretéritos y presentes, y los que le quedaban por padecer, lo había ganado, cumpliendo con los reyes mucho más, sin comparación, de lo que les había prometido. (I: 200)

As innocuous as this paragraph may seem, this narrative moment, salient for its solemn tone, reveals that Las Casas took sides in favor Columbus against the movement that sought to discredit and displace him and his family from New World affairs. The title, which included his right to wealth and governorship, was to become a central issue in the polemics that would ensue between the Columbus family and the Spanish Crown.

Within the framework of characterization that I am pursuing here, however, Columbus's transformation into Admiral can be read as the apex of Columbus's positive development as a character. He has fulfilled the first part of his mission without deviating from its ethical and spiritual purpose. From here on, the Admiral's deeds will acquire a heavier significance, which means that Las Casas's narrative has effectively created a set up from which the Admiral can fall.

Hence, Las Casas modulates the narration by initiating what we identified as the narrative of descent. First, the author highlights that Columbus believed that the fragility of his enterprise resided in the domain of monetary profit. The Catholic Monarchs, spent out from the wars of reconquest, believed themselves to be making a great sacrifice in funding Columbus's expedition. Queen Isabella purportedly sold her own jewels to partly fund the expedition. The narrative can thus foreshadow Columbus's downfall, which emerges from his eagerness to please the monarchs monetarily:

> Así que, por esta causa, el Almirante nunca pensaba ni desvelaba y trabajaba más en otra cosa que en procurar cómo saliese provecho y rentas para los reyes, ...pero no teniendo

> tanta perspicacidad y providencia de los males que podían suceder, como sucedieron, por excusación de los cuales se debiera de arriesgar toda la prosecución y conservación del negocio, y andar poco a poco, temiendo más de lo que se debía temer la pérdida temporal, ignorando también lo que no debiera ignorar concerniente al derecho divino y natural y recto juicio de razón, introdujó y comenzó a asentar tales principios y sembró tales simientes, que se originó y creció dellas tan mortífera y pestilencial hierba, y que produjo de sí tan profundas raíces, que ha sido bastante a destruir y asolar todas estas Indias, sin que poder humano haya bastado a tan sumos e irreperables daños impedir o atajar. (I: 207-8)

Columbus tragic flaw (his *hamartia*) is here stated in a threefold manner: his lack of foresight (*pro-videntia*), his ignorance of divine and natural law, and a deficient rational judgment. But unlike a tragic hero, his flaws not only bring about his own ruin, but that of an entire world. Columbus's tragic flaw, formulated by Las Casas as ignorance of the laws of peoples, makes him introduce a violent form of colonization, as opposed to what the friar interprets to be Columbus's divine mission, namely, spiritual colonization. Columbus sets the precedent of colonial violence, on both bodies and lands, making him the first one to plant the seed out of which grows a deadly and pestilential weed, and which will lay down roots to such depths that it will become impossible to weed out.

And yet, at this point in the narrative Las Casas does not fully condemn the Admiral, for he has not yet represented all of his condemnable actions. In fact, Las Casas the historian interjects himself into the narrative and offers what amounts to a kind of excuse on Columbus's behalf:

> Yo no dudo que si el Almirante creyera que había de suceder tan perniciosa jactura como sucedió, y supiera tanto de las conclusiones primeras y segundas del derecho natural y divino, como supo de cosmografía y de otras doctrinas humanas, que nunca él osara introducir ni principiar cosa que había de acarrear tan calamitosos daños, porque nadie podrá negar él ser hombre bueno y cristiano; pero los juicios de Dios son profundísimos, y ninguno de los hombres los puede ni debe querer penetrar. (I: 208)

This passage evinces that, at this point in the narrative, Columbus is still being crafted in the image of the tragic hero, who is to some degree ignorant of his purpose, but the hero's own hubris and flawed judgment bring about the tragedy that the reader can foresee, unlike the hero, all along.

If Columbus's character serves the function of the tragic hero in this tragic history, then Las Casas the historian fulfills the function of the Greek Chorus, that is, a commentator who provides the spectator-reader with the moral underpinnings of the drama. And we therefore come across one of the most salient examples in the *Historia* of the affective structure of textual interjection, where Las Casas the historian makes one of his first chorus-like appeals to the reader as he ponders on Columbus's actions:

> Todo esto aquí se ha traído por ocasión de las palabras susodichas del Almirante, para que los que esta historia leyeren, adviertan y cognozcan el origen, medios y fin que las cosas destas Indias tuvieron, y alaben al Todopoderoso Dios, no sólo por lo que hace, pero también por lo que permite, y teman mucho los hombres de que se les ofrezcan ocasiones con colores de bondad, o por excusar daño alguno con que puedan ofender, mayormente dando asa donde la humana malicia halle principio y camino para ir adelante y con que se excusar; y para no incurrir en tales inconvenientes, necesario es nunca cesar de suplicar por preservación dellos a Dios. (I: 208)

As we noted with regard to an earlier porting of this passage, the moral lesson is clear: fear of God should supersede and guide all our endeavours.

Columbus's downfall begins immediately after the apex of discovery. During his first voyage he takes Indians captive, and Las Casas surmises, reading against the grain, that they were held against their will. Columbus takes seven Lucayos with him, the first Amerindians that came into contact with the Spaniards and a people whom Las Casas considered closer to an Adamic state of innocence. When Las Casas writes in his own narrative that the Lucayos willingly joined the Spaniards, he is paraphrasing Columbus closely. A few pages later,

however, Las Casas will seize on Columbus's own observation that the Indians would flee as soon as they were able to ("cuando podían huir se huían"). Las Casas therefore conjectures that the Admiral must have captivated them against their will, and the conjecture allows Las Casas to put forth another interrogation meant to appeal to the reader's conscience: how can such violence be excused? ("parece bien que los detuvo contra su voluntad, y si éstos eran casados y tenían mujeres y hijos para mantener, y otras necesidades, ¿cómo esta violencia se podía excusar?" I: 209).

This immediate interposition of a moralizing rhetorical question is one of Las Casas's preferred tactics in this work. The friar reads imperialist writings, such as Columbus's *Diario*, against the grain and, by means of constant questionings (*interrogatio*), pushes the reader to agree with him. In fact, it is the space afforded by the affective structure of interjection that allows Las Casas to insert these pointed questions, through which the friar can magnify even the smallest of ethical violations.

The *Historia* relates how toward the end of his first voyage the Admiral takes Indians captive again in Cuba, and Las Casas takes the opportunity to accuse Columbus of having violated natural law (*ius naturalis*) and the law of peoples (*ius gentium*) by taking Indians captive:

> … de seis mancebos que en ella venían, los cinco que se entraron en la nao (porque el otro quedó en la canoa), los hizo detener contra su voluntad, para llevar consigo en Castilla… en la verdad, no fué otra cosa sino violar tácita o interpretativamente las reglas del derecho natural y derecho de las gentes, que dictan y tienen que al que simple y confiadamente viene a contratar con otros, mayormente habiéndose ya confiado los unos de los otros y tratado amigablemente, lo dejen tornarse a su casa, sin daño de su persona ni de sus bienes, libre y desembargadamente. (I: 232-4)

With this passage the friar even manages to intensify the maliciousness behind the Admiral's violations by foregrounding the Indians' friendliness and trust. However, immediately after

providing this juridical observation, Las Casas modulates his accusation to an emotional plane: "¿Qué sintiera el Almirante si los dos cristianos que envió la tierra adentro, por fuerza los detuvieran, o en qué crimen creyera que habían incurrido?" (I: 232-4). With this question Las Casas is seeking to guide the reader, mostly by means of emotive intuition, to the inevitable conclusion that the Indians have right on their side and can bear just war against the Spaniards.

What is even more, the calm with which the reader was given a moral lesson on fearing God, followed by the not so calm legal lesson on the rights of peoples, signals an increasingly impatient narrator who performs, through textual interjections, an incremental indignation over the protagonist's immoral deeds. In other words, Las Casas the historian gets increasingly worked up as Columbus continues taking Indians captive, for, after all, these were in effect the same kind of slave raids that Columbus learned from the Portuguese. Nevertheless, since Las Casas is set on deploying the representation of Columbus's fall as a form of synecdoche that illustrates Spain's fall, the friar understands that the textual performance of his indignation will be more effective if incrementally represented; and thus, the narrative therefore slows down, the author seizes the moment to intermingle his reflections on what he identifies to be the defining moments of ethical failure.

Las Casas interprets the subsequent episode of unethical behavior as a catalyst for all the shameful actions to come. The Admiral takes seven women and three children captive *to give* to the Taíno men he took before in Cuba, and Las Casas speaks of this act as a trendsetting moment in Columbus's fall. The friar remarks how, within the logic of sin, one sin opens the door to other sins of even greater magnitude, and that in this case Columbus proved to be no exception to the rule ("Y porque nunca suelen los hombres caer en un solo yerro, ni un pecado se suele solo cometer, antes suele ser mayor el que después sobreviene, así acaeció al Almirante…" I: 233).

With this observation the narrative begins the task of tracing Columbus's deeds as a line of descent, as opposed to merely noting the Admiral's unethical deeds as isolated sins. Therefore, at this point in the Columbian narrative, the author implies, by means of his continuous commentary, that there might be no return in this tragic fall.

The fall, however, must be represented incrementally, and thus, working directly from Columbus's text, Las Casas paraphrases the Admiral's own reasoning behind this action, writing that Columbus said that he took these women so that the Indian men would behave better while in Spain ("Esto dice él que lo hizo porque mejor se comportan los hombres en España habiendo mujeres de su tierra que sin ellas;" I: 233). But then the friar shifts, strategically, from the paraphrase to the direct citation, transcribing Columbus's own words, who excuses himself of taking Indian women captive with this reasoning:

> ... «porque ya otras veces muchas se acaeció traer hombres de Guinea en Portugal, y después que volvían y pensaban de aprovechar dellos en su tierra, por la buena compañía que les habían hecho, y dádivas que les habían dado, en llegando en tierra jamás parecían. Así que teniendo sus mujeres, ternán gana de negociar lo que les encargare… (I: 233)

Despite the casual tone with which Columbus speaks of this matter, his words connote the violence of the Portuguese slave raids in which he himself participated. The Admiral is willing to take Indian women as a coercive and extortionary strategy (Indian women provide extra leverage against escape of male Indian slaves), and he nonchalantly speaks of being able to hold the women captive ("teniendo sus mujeres") while being in command of the Indian men ("lo que les encargare").

Much was clear to Las Casas, but before he himself glosses Columbus's own words, the friar ends the citation by noting that, yes, in fact, these are Columbus's own words ("Todas estas son palabras formales del Almirante." I: 233). By means of this quick reminder, Las Casas

effectively highlights the lack of conscience embedded in the Admiral's words, giving a subtle nod to the sensitive reader who, following the friar's previous cues, has already joined Las Casas in the process of reading Columbus's own words against the grain.

But the voice of an indignant preacher and prosecutor has been waiting for the propitious time to interject itself in this particular moment of the Columbian narrative, and therefore the Admiral's actual words ("palabras formales") are also here employed as a prop that can catalyze a chain of prosecutorial questions from the historian himself:

> Gentil excusa ha dado para colocar o justificar obra tan nefaria. Pudiérasele preguntar, ¿que si fué pecado y que tan grave, quitar o hurtar o robar con violencia las mujeres que tenían sus propios maridos, pues el matrimonio es de derecho natural, y es rato, y cuanto al oficio de la naturaleza es común así a los infieles como a los fieles? Item, ¿quién había de dar a Dios cuenta de los pecados de adulterio que cometieron los indios que llevó consigo, a quien dió por mujeres aquellas mujeres, y si quizá se añidió alguno de incesto, que es mayor que el adulterio, si por caso eran muy propincuos parientes? ¿Y los que cometerían también de adulterio los maridos de aquéllas, casándose no pudiendo, prohibiéndolo la ley natural, con otras mujeres? (I: 233)

This commentary exemplifies one of Las Casas's another mode of interjection in the *Historia*: the friar usually dramatizes and performs a textual debate ("pudiérasele preguntar") with the written texts that he himself cites. Here he puts forth a series of rhetorical questions to Columbus himself. Aided with a quick use of *synonymia* ("quitar o hurtar o robar"), these rhetorical questions are amplified to such a degree that the reader is urged to accept the friar's interpretation of Columbus's violent deeds as unlawful. Las Casas's diction augments the gravity of the deed by shifting from the generic term of sin to the specific and more scandalous term of incest ("pecado," "grave," "violencia," "adulterio," "incesto"). The rhetorical questions found in this passage are, in fact, oblique yet forceful accusations.

Given the *Historia*'s own rigorous and ethical demands, Las Casas will not go easy on Columbus despite the friar's prior expressions of sympathy and admiration for the Admiral.

Moreover, the violence with which Columbus takes the Indians captive would not immediately evoke indignation, or be readily perceived as sinful or unlawful to readers of the time. This is why Las Casas wields what we have posited to be the *Historia*'s characteristic rhetorical strategy to lay bare the moral ugliness behind such acts, namely, authorial interruption. By means of these relentless narrative interjections, this particular one being characterized by the use of *interrogatio*, Las Casas forcefully imply that Columbus is to blame for the captive Indians' violation of the ethical bond of marriage, and that, even worse, the Admiral may have even prompted them to commit incest, both acts being violations of natural law.

But the *Historia* is not only written to reveal the ugly truth of Spanish colonization; it also aims to serve as a moral compass to the Spanish reader. Las Casas thus seizes this moment and, using Columbus's case as an example, he writes a brief reflection on the vulnerability of all men when it comes to acting ethically, for even prudent men are prone to err when it comes to Christian prudence:

> Ciertamente, inconsideradamente se hobo aquí el Almirante, aunque en otras cosas era prudente. Muchos son prudentes, y fueron en el mundo en lo que toca a las cosas humanas y temporales, pero faltan muchas veces y en muchos actos, cuanto a la rectitud de la razonable y cristiana prudencia. (I: 233)

Las Casas calls the reader's attention to the salient fact that despite the plethora of Columbus's admirable qualities, he lacked the most important one at the most important moment: foresight guided by Christian ethics. This is how Las Casas's providential narrative thus begins to foreground that Columbus's willingness to take Indians captive was a fatal error that brought about a misalignment with God's plans. In other words, Columbus's own foresight (*providentia*) did not align with God's grand vision for him and the Indies (*Providentia*).

The sin of taking Indians captive, prompted by a lack of foresight on the Admiral's part, is enough for Divine Providence to turn on him and unleash a continuous streak of tribulations and afflictions on the Admiral as punishments, which the author of the *Historia* will not shy away from identifying as such.

> Por sola esta injusticia, y no razonable, antes muy culpable obra, sin que otra ninguna el Almirante hiciera, podía bien cognoscer ser merecedor ante Dios de las tribulaciones y angustias en que después toda su vida padeció, y que muchas más le diera; porque muy diferentes son los juicios de los hombres y la estimación y tasación que hacemos de los grados y quilates de los pecados, a los que juzga y tasa Dios, que lo lleva y determina por muy delgado. (I: 233-4)

Despite the author's claim that the imperfect condition of human judgment makes men at times incapable of assessing the true weight of their sins, Las Casas daringly interprets that for this very sin of taking Indians captive Columbus earned his upcoming adversity, and even more ("y que muchas más le diera").

The unbreakable certainty with which the friar usually passes judgment on the deeds of this history's actors has been unsettling readers for centuries. But homiletic praxis, a performative practice in its own right, informs Las Casas's textual strategy as he performs the speech-act of blaming, or passing judgment on Columbus's sins. In his *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (*Eighty-three different questions*) Augustine tells the preacher that "in order that God be feared, [the believer] must be persuaded that the universe is ruled by Divine Providence" (68). In other words, the servile fear of God, *timor servilis*, is contingent upon man's belief that God bears constant witness to all of his actions. The preacher must persuade his listeners that God has seen and sees their doings, and Las Casas reworks that notion, historiographically, by textually performing an authorial certainty that his own judgments are indeed aligned with God's. In other words, the *Historia* is crafted to stir the reader's conscience,

making him fear God's unceasing witnessing of his actions, precisely because the reader is confronted with an authorial point of view that claims to coincide, at all times, with the Providential point of view.

From this standpoint as God's witness, Las Casas utters his discourse at the reader whenever the opportunity arises. Columbus taking Indians captive provides such an opportunity and that is why, having passed judgment on Columbus's deed, the preacher-historian can turn to the reader and make the moral lesson even more explicit:

> Un pecado nos parece acá que no es nada o que no perjudica tanto, por nuestra ceguedad o costumbre o facilidad de pecarlo, o también por el bien que procede algunas veces dél; pero, delante de Dios, es juzgado por muy grave y muy pesado, cuya consideración si la alcanzásemos, nos haría temblar las carnes. (I: 234)

This passage has recourse to *timor servilis*: if we would consider the true magnitude of our sins, even if it does not seem as much of a fault then, we would be trembling with fear before God's incoming judgment. But the friar then sharpens his message and takes aim at the particular feeling of pride ("no se debe lisonjear") that the Spanish reader may harbor with regards to the eventual "benefits" or any kind of good that may have come out from the dark origins of Spanish colonization:

> Y no se debe lisonjear ni engañar nadie confiando, que, por los bienes que salen algunas veces de los pecados, sean excusados, porque aquellos bienes no salen de la maldad humana, que de sí no es apta para que della salga bien alguno, sino sola y precisamente del abismo y profundidad de la bondad y providencia divina, la cual no permitiría que algún mal ni pecado se perpetrase, si antes quel pecador lo cometa ni piense, no tuviese ordenado el bien, o de su justicia o de su misericordia, que ha de sacar dél; y así no quedará sin su debida pena el que lo comete, puesto que sean muchos y grandes los bienes que dél procedan o puedan proceder. (I: 234)

Las Casas's message to the reader is clear: one should not fool oneself, or take pride in, the eventual good that might result as a consequence of our immoral actions, for all the good proceeds from God, while the sin will still provide a reason for divine punishment.

Indeed, the *Historia* is highly invested in weighing the spiritual significance of Columbus's discovery; but the work is equally invested in connecting that spiritual significance not only with the story's protagonists but with its readers. Las Casas devotes a whole chapter (76), which precedes Columbus's victorious meeting with the monarchs in Barcelona, to reflect on the spiritual significance of Columbus's discovery with the aim of not merely engaging with the Spanish reader's emotions while he reads, but to reveal to him that he is also fully accountable for the long-term repercussions of the Spanish Conquest.

This powerful chapter opens by linking Columbus's discovery to Queen Isabella's evangelizing concerns, and it therefore gives the friar another opportunity to argue that the final end of such a discovery was the expansion of Christianity. But, in a sudden interruption, the narrative shifts discursive direction and addresses the Spanish readers as the inheritors of a great debt:

> No es razón de dejar de hacer mención del más sublimado beneficio con que Dios dotó y engrandeció, sobre los otros reinos cristianos, a toda España, de que Cristóbal Colón fué segunda causa, conviene a saber, que le eligió, entre todos los que confiesan su nombre, para ofrecerle tan cierta y sancta ocasión y tan copiosa materia…. Por esta razón deberían de mirar y tener profundamente todos los españoles, que este don tan preclaro, negado a todas las otras cristianas gentes y concedido a todos ellos, es muy poderoso talento, del cual y de la usura que con él eran obligados al dador dél retornar, el día del juicio y aun de su muerte, se les pedirá estrecha y muy delgada cuenta; y cuán rigurosa será, por lo que abajo se refiriere bien claro parecerá. (I. 330-1)

With this passage Las Casas astutely recasts Columbus's achievement as one that binds all Spaniards in a spiritual accounting with regards to Spain's involvement in the New World. Las Casas alludes here to Christ's Parable of the Talents ("es muy poderoso talento, del cual y de la usura que con él eran obligados al dador dél retornar") found in the *Gospel According to Matthew*, which depicts a lord giving three of his servants a certain amount of talents (money) hoping that they will make a profit from them.

Las Casas's allusion to this parable is meant to strike fear, for as his readers well knew, the parable ends with a day of reckoning: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." According to the parable, only two out of the three servants double their talents, while the one that was given one talent hid it in the earth out of fear of losing it. The lord's harsh rebuke was very much in Las Casas's mind as he penned the passage quoted above:

> Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. … And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (*Matthew* 25: 26-30 KJV)

Las Casas claims that the Spaniards have been singled out by God and have been given a great talent, of which there will be an accounting in the manner of this parable. But, what must have been very destabilizing to the Spanish reader, the historian has already foreseen the end to this story, and it does not bode well for the Spanish nation ("y cuán rigurosa será, por lo que abajo se refiriere bien claro parecerá"). In other words, the many readers who would have readily recognized the allusion to the parable are here faced with the daring implication that Spain has nothing to show, no usury, for its discovery of the New World. The friar suggests that the end of the narrative will show Spain to be an unprofitable servant that will be cast into the outer darkness of God's eternal punishment.

This powerful chapter constitutes a key interruption in the *Historia*, for Las Casas will now return to the Columbian narrative only to spur the story of the Admiral's decline, or using the friar's own term, his "descrecimiento." Columbus meets with the Catholic Monarchs in Barcelona to great joy; he is granted the title of the Admiral of the Ocean Sea; he secures a fleet

for his second voyage, and he enjoys an uneventful trip back to the Indies. But, upon his return to Hispaniola, Columbus finds the Navidad settlement destroyed, and no living sign of the 39 Spaniards that he left behind. Columbus is informed by Indians, who come on behalf of the friendly cacique Guacanagarí, that as soon as he left, the Spaniards began to fight amongst themselves, taking Indian women and gold at their pleasure. On top of everything, Columbus is told that some of these Spaniards took their unruly behavior to the land of the cacique Caonabo, who ended up killing eleven of them.[43]

From here on Las Casas will not miss a chance to underscore not only how Columbus is forced to confront chaos that seems to have been initiated beyond his control, but also the manner of his response, which is what drives his tragic fall. Columbus begins to settle in Hispaniola, but his men begin to quickly perish from illness and hunger. The Spanish settlers blame Columbus for their ills, and their inherent distrust of him for being a foreigner is aggravated to the point that they begin an uprising. They plot a return to Spain, and refuse building public works, such as the Admiral's own governing palace. Las Casas marks this as the beginning of the end:

> … fuéle, pues, necesario al Almirante añadir al mando violencia, y a poder de graves penas, constreñir a los y a los otros para que las semejantes obras públicas se hiciesen. De aquí no podía proceder sino que de todos, chicos y grandes, fuese aborrecido, de donde hobo principio y origen ser infamado ante los reyes y en toda España de cruel y de odioso a los españoles, y de toda gobernación indigno, y que siempre fuese *descreciendo*, ni tuviese un día de consuelo en toda la vida, y finalmente, desta semilla se le originó su caída;..." (my emphasis I: 376-7)

[43] "... comenzaron entre sí a reñir e tener pendencias y acuchillarse y tomar cada uno las mujeres que quería y el oro que podía haber y apartarse unos de otros; … y aquéllos con otros nueve se habían ido con las mujeres que habían tomado y su hato, a la tierra de un señor que se llamaba Caonabo, que señoreaba las minas… , el cual mató a todos diez u once." (I: 358-9)

Although the narrative presents the Admiral's violent use of power against Spaniards as the origin ("semilla") of his demise, it is not its cause. According to the narrative, his harsh treatment of the settlers was something Columbus had to do ("fuéle necesario") in order to reaffirm his authority and carry on with the purpose of settling the new land. But as the narrative progresses, Columbus's *hubris*, having been ignited by the adverse circumstances he was already facing, drives him to act beyond the limits of moral action, effectively leading him to his real *nemesis*, that is, initiating the worst possible violence against the indigenous peoples.

Presented somewhat unexpectedly (although Las Casas has already laid down the reasons that Caonabo had to wage just war against the Spaniards), Spanish explorers return with news of imminent war, and Columbus determines to use fear as a deterrent:

> … Caonabo se apercibía para venir sobre la fortaleza y matar los cristianos. Oídas estas nuevas por el Almirante, acordó enviar 70 hombres de los más sanos y la recua cargada de bastimentos y armas...y dióles por capitán a Alonso de Hojeda… para que con ella anduviesen por la tierra y la allanasen, mostrando las fuerzas y poder de los cristianos para que los indios temiesen y comenzasen a enseñarse a obedecerlos… (I: 378-379)

Alonso de Hojeda, also known for his own hubris, captures Caonabo and executes an excessively brutal public punishment on one of Caonabo's vassals. He cuts his ears off for allegedly failing to punish certain Indians who had fled with some of the Spaniards' clothes while crossing a river.

In order to endow the subsequent scene with more pathos, the historian informs us that Caonabo, although captive, hopes to receive justice from the Admiral for Hojeda's excessive and unjustified punishment. But alas, in Columbus Caonabo finds instead a man ready and willing to cut his head off:

> Llegados los presos a la Isabela y [Caonabo] con ellos, mandó el Almirante que los presos llevasen a la plaza, y con voz de pregonero les cortasen las cabezas; ¡hermosa justicia y sentencia para comenzar en gente tan nueva ser amados los cristianos, para

> traerlos al cognoscimiento de Dios, prender y atar a un rey y señor en su mismo señorío y tierra, y pared por medio della, condenarlos a muerte y a su hermano y sobrino, por una cosa en que quizá ninguna culpa tuvieron, y ya que la tuviesen, siendo tan leve y habiendo de preceder mil comedimientos y justificaciones primero! (I: 380)

Immediately after the *affective fact* is stated ("les cortasen las cabezas"), the author interjects an ironic, and therefore condemnatory, exclamation praising the "beauty" ("hermosa justicia") of this act of "evangelization" ("para comenzar ser amados...traerlos al cognoscimiento de Dios"). This ironic exclamation serves a double function. On the one hand, with this *exclamatio* the author performs his indignation over this cruel, terror-inducing, and unjust punishment, allowing the reader to partake in that feeling, and on the other hand, it reminds the reader once again of what Las Casas insists was Columbus's, and Spain's, purpose in discovering the New World, namely to invite the Indians to the Christian religion by means of love.

But the friar also appends a rhetorical question (*interrogatio*) to this passage, hoping to highlight the absurdity behind Hojeda's act of mutilation, and attached to this question is yet another ironic exclamation that rehearses one of Las Casas's favorite motifs: the "good news" of the gospel are here substituted with the transmission of the cringing fear of physical violence:

> También, ¿cómo se pudo averiguar, prendiéndolos luego como Hojeda llegó, y no sabiendo cosa ninguna de la lengua, que el cacique tuviese la culpa, y su hermano y su sobrino fuesen inocentes? Lo mismo fué gentil ejecución de justicia la que hizo en presencia del mismo cacique y en su pueblo y señorío, cortando las orejas al vasallo ajeno Hojeda; ¡buenas nuevas cundirían de la mansedumbre y bondad de los cristianos por toda la tierra! (I: 380)

This passage also proves to be key to the Columbian narrative of descent, as it binds the "first injustice" committed in the Indies with Christopher Columbus's character flaw, namely, his ignorance of the law of peoples (*ius gentium*), according to which, Caonabo could wage just war against the Spanish colonizers.

> Esta fué la primera injusticia, con presunción vana y errónea de hacer justicia, que se cometió estas Indias contra los indios, y el comienzo de derramamiento de sangre, que después tan copioso fué en esta isla, como abajo parecerá, placiendo a Dios, y después désta en todas las otras infinitas partes dellas. (I: 380)

Las Casas has thus implied, through a concatenation of emotively intensifying rhetorical moves (exclamation, question, exclamation), that the first unjust shedding of blood, hereby instituted under the guise of justice, and which was to spread to all of the Indies, originates with Christopher Columbus himself.

And yet, Las Casas the historian hesitates to blame the Admiral fully for this injustice at first, ascribing fault again to his ignorance of the lawful right of Caonabo to punish the Spaniards and insisting that the Admiral's intentions were always good.

> … y verdaderamente, yo no osaría culpar la intinción del Almirante, por lo mucho que dél conocí, porque, cierto, siempre la juzgué por buena, pero, como dijimos en cap. 41, el camino que llevó y muchas cosas que hizo, dellas, creyendo que acertaba de su voluntad, dellas, constreñido por las angustias que le sucedieron, como, placiendo a Dios, diremos, fue por error grandísimo que tuvo cerca del derecho. (I: 381)

But the narrator has already acknowledged that good intentions, when undertaken in ignorance of certain principles (in this case juridical ones), result in condemnable actions. Is mere ignorance forgivable? The narrative itself will provide the answer, as not only will many more of Columbus's reprehensible actions will unfold, but such deeds are interpreted by Las Casas as setting precedent for all actions to come, such as Columbus's military strategy of terrorizing the native population:

> Es aquí mucho de considerar, para que se vea mejor el principio que siempre llevó este negocio de las Indias, que, como ha parecido en los capítulos precedentes, el Almirante y sus cristianos, y después todos cuantos en todas estas tierras y reinos entraron y anduvieron, lo primero que trabajaron siempre, como cosa estimada dellos por principal y necesaria para conseguir sus intentos, fué arraigar y entrañar en los corazones de todas estas gentes su temor y miedo, de tal manera, que en oyendo cristianos, las carnes les estremeciesen; para lo cual efectuar hicieron cosas hazañosas, nunca otras tales ni tantas vistas ni aun pensadas ni soñadas, como, Dios queriendo, se verá. (I: 381-2)

Columbus, allegedly through ignorance, sanctioned all the most incredible atrocities ("ni aun pensadas ni soñadas") that were to come by legitimizing the striking of fear as a form preemptive defense.

In fact, as the narrative advances, Las Casas's portrayal of Columbus shifts from that of a well-intentioned Admiral who makes grave mistakes to that of an aggressive military commander and inventor of extraordinary cruelties of war ("exquisitas invenciones").[44] After representing the violence wielded against Caonabo under the Admiral's watch, the narrative reports that Columbus, still blind to his own injustice, feels threatened by the whole land, prompting him to double-down on his combative strategy:

> El Almirante, como cada día sentía toda la tierra ponerse en armas, puesto que armas de burla en la verdad, y crecer en aborrecimiento de los cristianos, no mirando la grande razón y justicia que para ello los indios tenían, dióse cuanta más priesa pudo para salir al campo para derramar las gentes y sojuzgar por fuerza de armas la gente de toda esta isla… (I: 413)

Las Casas will always insist that the Indians had no true weapons to face the Spaniards ("armas de burla") in order to render the clash between Spaniards and Indians more asymmetrical. For according to Cicero, if the orator wants to evoke the contrary passions of pity and indignation, he must always emphasize, through *amplificatio* and *evidentia*, any asymmetries between victim and perpetrator.

Therefore, in order to foreground the heinous aspects of Columbus's military strategies at this point in the narrative, Las Casas amplifies and evinces the horrific asymmetry of war by bringing the reader's attention to what he considered to be the most terrifying of military

[44] Exquisito: Término latino, vale extraordinario (*Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, Covarrubias); Exquisito: singular, peregrino, extraordinario, raro, y de particular aprécio y calidad. (*Diccionario de autoridades*)

weapons ("más terrible y espantable arma"), that is, the use of war dogs, who within an hour could tear a hundred Indians to pieces,

> porque como toda la gente desta isla tuviesen costumbre de andar desnudos totalmente, desde lo alto de la frente hasta lo bajo de los pies, bien se puede fácilmente juzgar qué y cuáles obras podían hacer los lebreles ferocísimos, provocados y esforzados por los que los echaban y açomaban en cuerpos desnudos o en cueros y muy delicados; harto mayor efecto, cierto, que en puercos duros de Carona o venados. (I: 413)

The friar invites the reader to picture the terrifying image of carnage by foregrounding the nudity of the Indian body ("bien se puede fácilmente juzgar"). The passage closes with an asymmetrical, and sensorially suggestive, contrast between the naked Indians' delicate skin ("cueros delicados") and the hard meat of pork and deer ("puercos duros de Carona o venados").

The narrator pursues this line of emotive amplification, bringing Columbus even further down to a state of utter immorality. Las Casas makes the claim that the use of war dogs was first employed at this point in world history:

> Esta invención comenzó aquí excogitada, inventada y rodeada por el diablo, y cundió todas estas Indias, y acabará cuando no se hallare más tierra en este orbe, ni más gentes que sojuzgar y destruir, como otras exquisitas invenciones, gravísimas y dañosísimas a la mayor parte del linaje humano, que aquí comenzaron y pasaron y cundieron adelante para total destrucción de estas naciones, como parecerá. (I: 413)

The author intensifies his audacious claim by means of lexical amplification ("excogitada, inventada, y rodeada"; "comenzaron y pasaron y cundieron"), superlatives ("gravísimas" "dañosísimas"), and by the salient reference to the devil himself. But, what is even more striking, this passage marks the end of the paragraph that opened with the Admiral as the main subject ("El Almirante, como cada día sentía…"). Columbus is the agent that unleashes this diabolic war, and the reader is nudged to connect the dots and conclude that this paragraph is not only an intense condemnation of the practice dog warfare, but of the Admiral himself. In other words, if the practice of employing dogs in war was first put to use at this point in history, then

Columbus himself is the one to blame, and the reader may as well substitute, guided by the unforgiving logic of the passage, that "esta invención comenzó aquí excogitada, inventada y rodeada por *el Almirante*." Indeed, we are far from the pious Columbus that the narrator painted for us in the opening chapters of the *Historia*; the Admiral is now carrying out the work of the devil himself.

Although it is clear to the reader that the Admiral has now effectively fallen from grace, Las Casas's exhaustive narrative of descent has one more condemnable deed to highlight, for, using the words of the friar, Columbus is yet to sow another evil seed whose eventual roots will corrupt all New World matters. According to the narrative, Columbus's rather cruel military invasion forces the indigenous peoples to surrender completely, and the Admiral then goes on to impose a tribute of gold, an act which Las Casas will eventually interpret as the one that lays the foundation for the eventual systems of *repartimiento* and *encomienda*. But as soon as the narrator informs the reader of Columbus's imposition of tribute, the narrator interjects and redirects his commentary to the reader:

> Bien creo que los prudentes y doctos lectores cognoscerán aquí cuán justamente fueron impuestos estos tributos y cuán válidos de derecho, y cómo los eran los indios obligados a pagar, pues con tantas violencias, fuerzas y miedos, y precediendo tantas muertes y estragos y disminución de sus estados, de sus personas, mujeres y hijos y libertad de todo su ser y aniquilación de su nación, les fueron impuestos y ellos concedieron a los pagar. (I: 417)

Here Las Casas deploys his characteristic ironic and mordant remarks ("cuan justamente fueron impuestos…"), which are meant to ignite the prudent reader's intuition that the imposition of this gold tribute is bereft of any legal foundations ("cuán validos de derecho"). But the ironic gesture of the passage is also reinforced with a restatement, emotively amplified, of the facts ("violencias" "fuerzas" "miedos" "muertes" "estragos" "aniquilación"), *affectively* limiting the

reader's ability to object to the friar's juridical claim. Affect is a paralyzing force, and Las Casas always employs it when when the point needs to be made more forcefully.

Indeed, the character-centered narrative of descent outlines, with the aid of the author's constant affective interventions, the concatenation of the Admiral immoral choices: one bad choice leads to a worst one. The Columbian narrative, however, is also the story of Spain's original sin. Columbus is blamed for initiating the worst practices of Conquest: the military strategy of fear-inducing preemptive strikes, the abhorrent use of extraordinary violence and cruelty (exemplified by the use of war dogs), and the unjust imposition of tributes, which would pave the way for the systematic slavery and exploitation of Amerindians.

And yet, despite the deluge of condemnations from the author, which until now have served the purpose of attesting that Columbus has already fallen from God's grace, the Admiral's demise, understood in a worldly sense, has yet to be narrated. Ending his third voyage, an ill and exhausted Columbus returns to Hispaniola only to find out that the Spaniards have rebelled against his brother Diego Columbus. As the Admiral tries to resolve the issues, Francisco de Bobadilla arrives a few days later, having been appointed by the Monarchs as the new Governor of the Indies. Bobadilla, who also came to investigate charges made by the Spanish settlers against Columbus and his brothers, restores the rebellious squire Francisco Roldán as Mayor of Isabela, and sends the Admiral and his brother back to Spain in shackles.

As Las Casas's narrative sums up the details of the Admiral's enshacklement, he interjects his ardent commentary into the narrative to emphasize, quite memorably, Columbus's fall from political favor:

> Cosa pareció esta absurdísima, descomedida y detestable juntamente y miseranda y miserable, que una persona en tanta dignidad subida, como era visorrey y gobernador perpetuo de todo este orbe y por muy merecido renombre Almirante del mar Océano, y

> que con tantos trabajos, peligros y sudores, aquellos títulos, por singular privilegio de Dios escogido, había ganado, y con mostrar al mundo este mundo tantos siglos encubierto al mundo (porque así lo diga) y peculiarmente a los reyes y reinos de Castilla, con vínculo antidotal y por natural razón establecido, a perpetuo agradecimiento había obligado, que tan inhumana y descomedidamente y con tanto deshonor haya sido tratado, cosa, por cierto, indigna de razón recta fué y más que monstruosa. (II: 187)

The length of this period is astounding; the whole passage is written in one sentence. Rhetorical convention dictated that the period (*periodos*) be used when the orator had to amplify the gravest of matters and pass on solemn judgment, as it endowed such expressions with an adequate rhythmical, and therefore emotive, force.[45] The symmetry of this sentence, a period with four members ("*Cosa* pareció esta… *que* una persona… " - "..., *que* tan inhumana… *cosa* indigna de razón recta fué… " A - B - B - A) allows Las Casas to solemnly, and indignantly, accentuate the awesome nature of the Admiral's fall. Columbus's imprisonment and the sudden removal of his titles here become a "thing" ("cosa") that cannot be uttered or described with a simple statement; rather, the unspeakable "thing" is periphrastically defined by means of a deluge of negative adjectives ("absurdísima," "descomedida," "detestable," "miseranda," "miserable," "inhumana," "indigna," "monstruosa") that formally enclose, providing a sharp contrast, the recapitulation of the Admiral's travails and achievements ("trabajos" "sudores"). With this emotive period Las Casas allows the reader, momentarily, to see this fall from Columbus's *emotional* perspective: why does calamity befall a man who does not deserve it?

But the *Historia*'s Providential point of view, continously foregrounded by the author's extensive commentaries, has conditioned the reader to be more receptive to the friar's eventual interpretation that Columbus's adversity is, in fact, a form of punishment for his violent actions

[45] For more on the period as a figure of speech see Mueller, Janel: "Periodos: Squaring the Circle" in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, edited by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

against the Amerindians. In an extensive interjection that runs for an entire chapter (Book I, ch. 161), Las Casas frames this interpretation by employing a metaphor from the *Book of Proverbs*:

> Quiero aquí volver el rayo de la consideración, antes que pase adelante, a la infalible y menuda providencia de Dios y sabiduría sempiterna, la cual, puesto que parece que no habla, clamores da, empero, en las plazas y en las puertas de la ciudades, enmedio de las compañas, y en todas partes y lugar levanta su voz, como dice Salomón en el primero de sus *Proverbios*. ¿En qué había ofendido de nuevo el Almirante, salido de Castilla con mucha gracia de los reyes y con poderes, favores y mercedes más abundantes, de camino haber descubierto la tierra de Paria, principio de toda la gran tierra firme de este orbe, con perlas y oro, con tan inmensos sudores, peligros y trabajos? Después de llegado a esta isla, donde pensaba resollar y consolarse, halló materia de tanta tristeza y amarguras, sabido el levantamiento de Francisco Roldán, sin haber sido causa dél; con cuánta diligencia, paciencia, solicitud, sufrimiento y cuidado trabajó de asegurarlo, perdiendo tanto de su autoridad, recibiendo muchos descomedimentos de los alzados, disimulando muchos defectos de los que consigo estaban, dignos de castigar, padeciendo cada día nuevos temores de que los tenía consigo le habían de dejar, como se ha contado. (II: 106-7)

Las Casas characterizes Divine Providence here as an *accusatory voice* which, although it may appear to be silent to the reader, it is actually crying and shouting ("clamores da") in all the public places. This memorable opening sentence forcefully captures the reader's attention, especially if he is familiar with the biblical text alluded to here, as such reader can deduce that a fierce rebuke looms in the horizon.

Before Las Casas unleashes his condemnation, however, the passage above also formulates the question that is central to the Columbian narrative: what has the Admiral done, he who started so well at his departure ("salido de Castilla con mucha gracia"), to deserve not only such a rebellion, a source of great sadness and bitterness in its own right ("tanta tristeza y amarguras"), but also the humiliation that came with the loss of his authority? This question is part of a dramatic set-up meant to add force and clarity to the upcoming accusation; in other words, the friar poses and emphasizes the question only to answer it himself through his Providentialist hermeneutic:

> Esta cuestión no tiene otra respuesta que cuadre, sino que la Divina Sapiencia, en esto que a nosotros nos parece, parecía que callaba, y en deponerle del estado que le habían dado, clamaba y levantaba su voz en las plazas, que no por los daños e injusticias que hacía a los cristianos (porque dado que le habían acusado de muchos que había justiciado de antes, quizá lo habían bien merecido, y eran 10 ó 12, o quizá no tantos), sino por las grandes injusticias y guerras y imposición de tributos y agravios y no por persona humana, ni con haber ni riquezas del mundo, recompensables, que había hecho a los indios, y actualmente hacía y tenía propósito de hacerlos, con la granjería que trataba de querir henchir toda la Europa de estos inocentes indios, inicuamente hechos esclavos, aunque a él parecía que con intinción santa, y es cierto, yo creer, quél creía que no erraba. (II: 108)

According to the friar, Columbus's fall *was* the voice of God's Wisdom shouting in the square, that is, the Admiral's punishment was then made palpably clear for those who wanted to see it. This adversity was God's way of rebuking Columbus —not for punishing the Spaniards— but for violently, and illegally, taking Indians captive and hoping to make a profit out of thier slavery ("querir henchir toda la Europa de estos inocentes indios"). But the Admiral did not heed God's voice, and, as the biblical text states, a storm of calamity was to descends upon him.

By framing the passage with the figure of the Wisdom's accusatory voice, Las Casas nudges the reader into accepting that it is God's wisdom ("sabiduría sempiterna"), and not the historian's own interpretation, that lays bare Columbus's trials as a form divine punishment. But the allusion to this Voice also aims to strike the fear of God in the reader, as the personification of this Wisdom's Voice can be found in one of the most disquieting passages in the *Book of Proverbs*:

> Wisdom calls aloud outside; / She raises her voice in the open squares. / She cries out in the chief concourses, / At the openings of the gates in the city / She speaks her words: / «How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? / For scorners delight in their scorning, / And fools hate knowledge. / Turn at my rebuke; / Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; / I will make my words known to you. / Because I have called and you refused, / I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, / Because you disdained all my counsel, / And would have none of my rebuke, / I also will laugh at your calamity; / I will mock when your terror comes, / When your terror comes like a storm, / And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, / When distress and anguish come upon you. / Then

> they will call on me, but I will not answer; / They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. / Because they hated knowledge / And did not choose the fear of the Lord, / They would have none of my counsel / *And* despised my every rebuke. … » (Prov. 1: 20-30 NKJV)

In the biblical text, the Voice of Wisdom clamors in order to 1. make its knowledge manifest ("I will make my words known to you"), 2. to verbalize its actual rebuke, and 3. to make explicit the terrible consequences of not heading its counsel ("because you disdained my counsel… I will laugh at your calamity"). Generally, the *Historia* itself works alongside this tripartite structure, as it represents the historical events (knowledge), it shames the conquistadors (rebuke), and forewarns the Spanish reader explicitly, or implicitly, by foregrounding God's divine punishments when visible in the narration of the conquistadors deeds (moral consequence).

Following this structure, the narrative of Columbus's descent must therefore end with a representation of his final "calamity," as well as his "distress and anguish." Las Casas the historian thus strikes a tragic note in an extensive commentary following the brief depiction of Columbus's death:

> Y así pasó desta vida en estado de harta angustia y amargura y pobreza e sin tener, como él dijo, una teja debajo de que se metiese para no se mojar o reposar en el mundo, el que había descubierto por su industria otro nuevo y mayor que el que antes sabíamos felicísimo mundo. Murió desposeído y despojado del estado y honra que con tan inmensos e increíbles peligros, sudores y trabajos había ganado, desposeído ignominiosamente, sin orden de justicia, echado en grillos, encarcelado, sin oirlo ni convencerlo ni hacerle cargos ni rescibir sus descargos, sino como si los que juzgaban fuera gente sin razón, desordenada, estulta, estólida y absurda y más bestiales bárbaros. (II: 330)

The figure of the tragic hero is itself the nexus of the ironic force that drives tragic representation, and Las Casas therefore underscores the great irony that the discoverer of the world was somehow worldless in the end. But the *Historia* is more than the tragic representation of one man, it is also a wide-ranging reflection, homiletically expressed, on Columbus as a

synecdochical figure for Spain as whole. Thus, the representation of the Spaniards who acted against the Admiral as being irrational, disorderly, and bestial barbarians ("gente sin razón, desordenada, etc."), is a forewarning to the Spanish reader, which informs him that seemingly irrational forces, perhaps Turkish barbarians, may execute a similar punishment on Spain.

Therefore, now fully preaching to the reader, the historian exploits the scene of Columbus's miserable death in order to highlight the inescapable connection between sin and punishment, even if it may appear as absurd:

> Esto no fué sin juicio y beneplácito divino, el cual juzga y pondera las obras y fines de los hombres, y así los méritos y deméritos de cada uno, por reglas muy delgadas, de donde nace que lo que nosotros loamos él desloa y lo que vituperamos alaba; quien bien quisiere advertir e considerar lo que la historia con verdad hasta aquí ha contado de los agravios, guerras e injusticias, captiverios y opresiones, despojos de señoríos y estados y tierras y privación de propia y natural libertad y de infinitas vidas que a reyes y a señores naturales y a chicos y a grandes, en esta isla y también en Veragua, hizo y consintió hacer absurda y desordenadamente el Almirante, no teniendo jurisdicción alguna sobre ellos, ni alguna justa causa, antes siendo él súbdito de ellos por estar en sus tierras, reinos y señoríos, donde tenían jurisdicción natural y la usaban y administraban, no en mucha dificultad, ni aun con demasiada temeridad, podrá sentir que todos estos infortunios y adversidades, angustias y penalidades fueron de aquellas culpas el pago y castigo. (II: 330)

Las Casas begins with an irrefutable, and therefore astute, premise: God judges men's actions by strict and precise rules ("reglas muy delgadas") that may be hard for human beings to apprehend. God, in his omniscience, sees what we do not see. But then, a similarly omniscient historian summarizes, both concisely and exhaustively, the narrative of Columbus's condemnable deeds ("agravios, guerras, injusticias, captiverios," etc.), while simultaneously inviting the reader ("quien bien quisiere advertir") to ponder them from an ethical point of view. The recapitulation is here already framed as a condemnation, allowing the reader to easily intuit ("podrá sentir"), without much difficulty or temerity, that Columbus's tragic end was, in effect, divine punishment.

The *Historia* makes Columbus's story one of a paradise lost and a promise thwarted, a second fall of man. From here on, the *Historia* proves merciless with all the other agents of Conquest, all of whom are portrayed as inheritors of Columbus's original sin. Although slower in pace, yet much like in the *Brevíssima*, the cycle of atrocious deeds and their eventual punishment grows exponentially as the narrative covers the rapid expansion of Conquest. Alonso de Hojeda has a disastrous expedition to Tierra Firme and dies penniless; Diego de Nicuesa, "que en esta isla de prudente fue muy estimado… hubo al mejor tiempo de faltarle… [porque] nuestro Señor tenía determinado de lo castigar con su total fenecimiento por la matanza que hizo en Cartagena." And as the narrative moves from depicting the heinous deeds of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa to those of Pedrarias Dávila, the narrator uses the interlude to inform the reader that what follows will show Vasco Nuñez's punishment:

> Dejemos agora por un rato de hablar de Vasco Núñez y su compañía, que toda su ocupación y ejercicio no era en todo este tiempo otro sino el dicho, y comencemos a referir el principio y discurso de cómo se le aparejaba su San Martín e propio dignísimo castigo rodeado por el divino juicio. (III: 13)

Here Las Casas foregrounds divine punishment with a lively reference to the popular Spanish saying "a cada cerdo le llega su San Martín," ("every pig awaits his Saint Martin"), for a pig would be slaughtered to commemorate the holiday of Saint Martin of Tours. Like the pig, Vasco Nuñez is awaiting his death, that is, his punishment, which Las Casas metonymically substitutes for Nuñez's son-in-law Pedrarias Dávila. In other words, Pedrarias is Vasco Nuñez's San Martin, as Pedrarias mercilessly decapitates him.

Indeed, in Las Casas's vision, the iniquity of the Conquest grows to such a degree that God uses it at times to punish its human agents, the conquistadors themselves. In a passage where Las Casas directly blames the Council of Indies for institutionalizing massacre, robbery,

and invasion under the guise of pacification, the historian reframes the term *adelantado* to mean "he who advances towards evil" and thus towards his own death, both spiritual and physical:

> Entre otras mercedes que se les hacían era comúnmente hacelles adelantados, y porque se adelantaban en hacer males y daños tan gravísimos a gentes pacíficas, que ni los habían ofendido, ni algo les debían con los mismos adelantamientos que procuraron hallaban y hallaron su muerte, como la gallina escarbando el cuchillo. (III: 234-5)

The reader can therefore expect that subsequent representations of deeds of the conquistadors will end with a form of punishment. According to Las Casas, the conquistadors themselves seek this punishment, like a chicken digging a knife ("como la gallina escarbando el cuchillo"), that is, the conquistadors laboriously seek their wealthy only to find the instrument of their death. After Columbus there are no more tragic heroes, only textbook villains.

Expecting evil action from the protagonists, however, does not mean that the characterization of the *Historia*'s conquistadors becomes less complex, for Las Casas knows that the conquistadors are still heroes in the Spanish imaginary. He still has the difficult task of crafting representations that temper pride, and he will therefore seeks to foreground the conquistadors' acts as shameful, bringing out what can be seen as their inherent baseness or insignificance, while simultaneously discrediting the political (epic) historians who portray their deeds as "hazañas ilustres."

One of the most interesting portrayals in the *Historia* is the one Las Casas makes of Hernán Cortés. Given the fact that the *Historia* is unfinished, Cortés represents the lowest point in the *Historia*'s broad narrative of descent (which would perhaps have belonged to Alvarado or Pizarro in Las Casas's eyes). We first encounter Cortés in the narrative as a "criado" and "secretario" of Cuba's governor Diego Velázquez, whom certain Spaniards are plotting to remove from his post. Las Casas emphasizes that Cortés was the only one willing to sail back to

Spain and forward the complaints against Diego Velázquez. But, "estando para se embarcar en una canoa de indios con sus papeles, fué Diego Velázquez avisado y hízolo prender y quísolo ahorcar" (II: 528). Velázquez forgives him, but he removes Cortés from his post as secretary.

At this point in the narrative, Las Casas takes this historical occurrence to discredit the historian Francisco López de Gómara, whose version of this same story places Cortés on a higher footing than Velázquez:

> Gómara, clérigo, que escribió la *Historia* de Cortés, que vivió con él en Castilla siendo ya marqués, y no vido cosa ninguna, ni jamás estuvo en las Indias, y no escribió cosa sino lo que el mismo Cortés le dijo, compone muchas cosas en favor dél, que, cierto, no son verdad, y entre otras, dice, hablando en el principio de la conquista de México, que no quiso hablar en muchos días de enojado a Diego Velázquez, y que una noche fué armado donde Diego Velázquez estaba solo con solos sus criados, y que entró en la casa, y que temió Diego Velázquez cuando lo vido a tal hora y armado, y que le rogó que cenase y descansase, y Cortés respondió que no venía sino a saber las quejas que tenía dél y a satisfacerle y a ser su amigo y servidor, y que se tocaron las manos por amigos y que durmieron ambos aquella noche en una cama. (II: 528)

The narrator not only stresses that Gómara lacks the authority of an eyewitness ("no vido cosa ninguna"), but that his only source of information on this case was Cortés himself ("no escribió cosa sino lo que el mismo Cortés le dijo"). Moreover, Las Casas's quick and flat recapitulation of Gómara's story portrays Cortés as a threatening ("fué armado") macho who is not afraid of confronting Velázquez, and whose verbal skills can turn an enemy into a friend within seconds.

> Esto es todo gran falsedad, y cualquiera cuerdo puede fácilmente juzgar aún de las mismas palabras que, en su compostura, Gómara, su criado y su historiador, allí dice, porque siendo Diego Velázquez gobernador de toda la isla, como él allí concede, y Cortés un hombre particular, dejado aparte ser su criado y secretario, y que le había tenido preso y querido ahorcar, y que lo pudiera hacer justa o injustamente, ¡que diga Gómara que no le quiso hablar por muchos días y que había ido armado a preguntar que qué quejas tenía dél y que iba a ser su amigo y que se tocaron las manos y que durmieron juntos aquella noche en una cama! (II: 528)

The narrator tells us that Gómara's version of the story is patently absurd given the hierarchical power Diego Velázquez had over Cortés at the time. But the exaggerated details, such as

Gómara's claim that Cortés and Velázquez slept on the same bed ("y que durmieron juntos aquella noche en una cama!"), underline the story's lack of verisimilitude, which Las Casas highlights with his mocking exclamations.

Las Casas the historian then goes on to display his own authority as eyewitness, and directly contradicts Gómara's rendition of an empowered Cortés:

> Yo vide a Cortés en aquellos días, o muy pocos después, tan bajo y tan humilde, que del más chico criado que Diego Velázquez tenía quisiera tener favor; y no era Diego Velázquez de tan poca cólera, ni aun de tan poca gravedad que, aunque por otra parte, cuando estaba en conversación era muy afable y humano pero cuando era menester y si se enojaba, temblaban los que estaban delante dél, y quería siempre que le tuviesen toda reverencia, y ninguno se sentaba en su presencia aunque fuese muy caballero, por lo cual, si él sintiera de Cortés una punta de alfiler de cerviguillo y presunción, o lo ahorcara, o a lo menos lo echara de la tierra y lo sumiera en ella sin que alzara cabeza en su vida. (II: 528-9)

From the abundant literary portrayals of Cortés —starting with Cortés's own epistolary self-fashioning, to Bernal Díaz, to Gómara, to Lasso de la Vega, and even Cervantes's quick but eye catching "cortesísimo Cortés"— one would be hard pressed to find such a humbling and demeaning portrayal of this conquistador. Here he ranks lower than the lowest servant, and Las Casas the historian affirms to have seen him lowly and humbly begging for favor after having begged for his life.

But in this passage Las Casas also marks Hernán Cortés's grotesque pride, reminiscent of the one displayed by Roman generals beginning with Caesar, whose imperial cult led to the name *divus Julius*. Cortés's similarly rapid (because unjust) ascent blinded him to such a degree that like Julius Caesar he wished to be perceived as a living divinity and a son of Jupiter:

> Así que Gómara mucho se alarga imponiendo a Cortés, su amo, lo que en aquellos tiempos no sólo por pensamiento estando despierto, pero ni durmiendo, por sueños, parece poder pasarle. Pero como el mismo Cortés, después de marqués dictó lo que había de escribir Gómara, no podía sino fingir de sí todo lo que le era favorable; porque como

> subió tan de súpito de tan bajo a tan alto estado, ni aun hijo de hombre, sino de Júpiter desde su origen quisiera ser estimado. (II: 528-9)

Gómara's history, which Las Casas insists is nothing but Cortés's own attempt at monumentalising himself, is written from the perspective of the accomplished hero. But, from an ethical perspective, Las Casas sees a blatant lie rooted in pride. Within a Christian worldview, we must note, this accusation is no slight matter. The pride that makes one believe himself to be on par with divinity is precisely the definition of Satanic pride. But what is even more appalling in Las Casas's view is that Cortés's arrogance and Satanic pride not only fuels Gómara's historical account, but perpetuates a false narrative: "... propia arrogancia de Hernando Cortés y astucia con que tiene hasta hoy engañado al mundo y los historiadores que escribieron sus hechos en lengua española..." (III: 222).

Furthermore, the historian relates that, through dishonest means, Cortés manipulates Velázquez, who chooses him to lead an expedition to a new land discovered by Grijalva. But not soon after, Velázquez regrets his decision. When Cortés finds out that Diego Velázquez was going to cancel his expedition, however, he leaves in the middle of the night and takes as much bastimentos as he deems necessary.

Las Casas represents this act as a flat out mutiny and robbery of the Crown's resources, and, in a remarkable scene, he shrewdly places the proof of the sin in the mouth of Cortés himself:

> Todo esto me dijo el mismo Cortés, con otras cerca dello, después de marqués, en la villa de Monzón, estando allí celebrando Cortes el emperador, año de 1542, riendo y mofando y con estas formales palabras: «A la mi fe, anduve por allí como un gentil corsario.» Dije yo, también riendo, pero entre mí: «Oigan vuestros oídos lo que dice vuestra boca.» Puesto que otras veces hablando con él en México en conversación, diciéndole yo con qué justicia y conciencia había preso aquel tan gran rey Moctezuma y usurpádole sus reinos, me concedió al cabo todo, y dijo: «*Qui non intrat per ostium fur est et latro*.» Entonces le dije a la clara, con palabras formales: «Oigan vuestros oídos lo que dice

> vuestra boca», y después todo se pasó en risa, aunque yo lo lloraba dentro de mí, viendo su insensibilidad, teniéndole por malaventurado. (III: 226-7)

Unlike previous conquistadors, Las Casas cannot easily demonstrate God's divine punishment in Cortés's life. On the one hand, the *Historia* does not get to narrate all of his deeds, and on the other, Cortés died in Spain having enjoyed relative success (although embittered since he was undermined by the Crown). This scene, however, does the trick. Las Casas the character witnesses Cortés's cynical acceptance of his unjust deeds. And yet, the re-iteration of Scripture, which we have described above as a key performance of sacred rhetoric, comes out of Cortés own mouth, effectively condemning himself with the passage from John 10:1, «He that entereth not by the door is a thief and a robber;».

Las Casas the preacher, who at this moment is listening, actually speaks in silence ("Dije yo, también riendo, pero entre mí") redirecting Cortés's own words to his own ears ("Oigan vuestros oídos lo que dice vuestra boca."), thus unveiling, for the reader, their condemnatory signification. The narrator tells us that this scene had been repeated in Mexico, where he was able to voice the same admonishment to Cortés; but Cortés laughs, and Las Casas with him (presumably going along). And again, the friar tells the reader that he was crying internally ("lloraba dentro de mí"), for he interprets Cortés's laughter as a sign that God has given him over to *reprobum sensum*, that is, to utter desensitization, meaning that Cortés will not be redeemed.

Moreover, Las Casas's narrative sets out to de-mythify Cortés's alleged rhetorical prowess. Even as Cortés incorporates Jerónimo de Aguilar and Doña Marina as "lenguas," or rather, precisely because of Aguilar and Malintzin, Las Casas insists that any meaningful communication between Cortés and the peoples he invades is, in fact, quite scant. According to

Las Casas the historian, the elaborate speeches that Gómara puts in Cortés's mouth as he invades Tabasco are pure fiction:

> ¿Qué mayor insipiencia y disparates que dice aquí Gómara, y aun, qué más claras mentiras? Que sean claras mentiras y compostura de Gómara parece, porque tantas pláticas y tan largas y particulares no podían pasar entre gentes que no se entendían, como él confiesa no entenderse, según queda dicho; … ¿Con qué milagros y mansedumbre y santa vida y de mucho tiempo experimentada les probaba Cortés que tenía derecho de entrar en tierra tan ajena dellos y tomar relación y dalla al mayor señor del mundo? Y también que lo quería hacer y él venía para su bien; ¿qué nación del mundo oyera tales palabras, que con mucha razón y justicia no trabajara y debiera trabajar de hacellos pedazos? Luego insipiencia grande fué la de Gómara fingir razones para excusar y justificar las tiranías de Cortés…" (III: 237-8)

Gómara's idolatrous history renders Cortés an ideal courtesan who wields his words as skillfully as he wields his sword, a man accomplished in both arms and letters. Las Casas tears apart at this seductive portrayal, not by providing a hyperbolized evil counter-portrait, but by actually introducing sensible doubt —through an unforgiving strand of piercing questions— on Gómara's historical narrative because it does not tackle the issues of translation. In other words, Las Casas the historian, who is ordinarily accused of passionate distortion, deals a deadly blow to Gómara's rhetorical aspirations by foregrounding that his representations lacks basic verisimilitude.

Moreover, in the subsequent episode, Las Casas provides the reader with a representation of what communication really looked like. When Cortés arrives at Vera Cruz, he insists in meeting Moctezuma, despite the envoy's pleas and gifts. Later, at Zempoala he finds out that the cacique bears resentment to Moctezuma, and Gómara relates that Cortés offers himself as an ally, while preaching to him the fundamental message of Christianity. Las Casas again pierces through this by reminding the reader of the obvious gaps in communication:

> Y dice Gómara cerca deste punto muchas vanidades y algunas falsedades, para colorar las obras que por aquellas tierras hizo su amo Cortés, como siempre hizo, como decir que con Marina o Malinche les preguntó por los señores que por aquella tierra había, y otras muchas cosas que por no experto intérprete y que apenas sabía hablar en vocablos de

> aquella lengua comunes, como *daca pan*, *daca de comer*, y *toma esto por ello*, y todo lo demás por señas, no se sufría;... (III: 249)

Las Casas's version can be interpreted as yet another fiction, as he did not witness these exchanges either. And yet, unlike Gómara's, the friar's presentation is highly effective. In the *Brevíssima*, Las Casas manages to render the absurdity of the *Requerimiento* by underscoring not only its unintelligibility to the Indians but its own absurd language. Similarly, in the *Historia*, Las Casas insists on the issue of linguistic intelligibility between Indians and Spaniards, and from there on he compellingly argues that a historian's heroic representation of the conquistador's rhetorical prowess can only be fictional and absurd, as his translators can only know common phrases ("vocablos comunes"), such as "give bread here," or "take this for that."

The only form of communication that Cortés is interested on, according to Las Casas the historian, is the one that can further his tyrannical plans. And only in this sense does the friar concede to Gómara some truth with regard to Cortés's dialogues. As a textbook tyrant, Hernán Cortés seeks to use language to divide and conquer:

> … y dice asimismo [Gómara] que Cortés se holgó de hallar en aquella tierra unos señores enemigos de otros, para poder efectuar mejor su propósito y pensamientos. Que fingiese aquesto, conviene a saber, que había señores enemigos de otros, o que verdad fuese, pensamientos y deseos y fin de propio tirano eran, o porque fingía o hallaba oportunidad en las discordias de aquéllos para mejor poder subjuzgar los unos y los otros tiránicamente, como lo hizo. Ser tirano y con mala consciencia desear y poner por obra lo dicho, parece manifiestamente porque todo tirano, como carezca de razón, de derecho y de justicia, según el Filósofo en el libro V de la *Política*, cap. 11, huélganse de las discordias, si las tienen, los que quieren tiranizar, y si no las tienen procuran que las tengan, porque estén divididos y así más fácilmente subjuzguen los unos y los otros; saben que si todos fuesen juntos y conformes, con más dificultad, y a las veces nunca, podrían subjetar ni tiranizar a ningunos, y si por algún tiempo pudiesen prevalescer no duraría tanto su tiránico señorío. (III: 249)

Not only by Aristotle's own definition can Cortés be most definitely labeled a tyrant, but, citing Josephus, Las Casas the historian compares Cortés to Pompey:

> Por aquesta misma vía Pompeyo, aquel capitán romano, siendo enviado por el pueblo romano contra Tigrano, … como entendiese que había bandos y disensiones entre dos parcialidades, … cognosció ser tiempo aparejado para invadir la ciudad y por fuerza de armas entralla y tiránicamente subjetalla y hacella tributaria del Imperio romano, y así lo hizo; y desde entonces y por aquella vía injusta y tiránica, Judea y sus habitadores, los judíos, perdieron su libertad… (III: 249-250)

Las Casas is not necessarily opposed to the idea of heroism. The friar admits that there are historical figures who might rightfully claim the label of hero. In Mexico, Cortés could have acted like Titus, who became a savior to the Greeks by liberating them from Philip, the Macedonian king:

> … y si así lo hiciera Cortés con los cempoalenses, y si fuera verdad estar injustamente a Motenzuma subjetos, perdida su libertad, pudiérensele deber con razón las gracias y nombre de salvador y defensor dellos; pero hízolo por el contrario, privando a los de Cempoal y también al gran rey y señor dellos y de otros muchos, Motenzuma, de todos sus señoríos, de todo su honor, de las vidas, y no sólo de su libertad, como dello se gloría y escribe Gómara, su criado y su historiador, y todo el mundo sabe: y que de aquí se siga debérsele nombre de puro tirano y usurpador de reinos ajenos y matador y destruidor de innumarbles naciones, júzguelo cualquiera hombre prudente, mayormente si es cristiano, y esta historia con verdad lo irá más declarando. (III: 251)

The portrait of Cortés presented here, though incomplete at this point in the narrative, upends the heroic narrative of his deeds. A power-hungry thief, traitor, and tyrant, Cortés is not a talented evangelizer, political mastermind, and consummate man of arms, but a pure force of destruction.

In fact, using one of his favorite motifs, Las Casas affirms that the one and only preaching that Cortés ever articulated successfully was that of violence. In Cempoala, Cortés and his horsemen take advantage of certain plains to kill as many Indians as possible, Las Casas reports it could have been about 30,000 souls. This, Las Casas affirms ironically, was the first preaching of Gospel that Cortés brought to New Spain. ("Salieron en fin a ciertos llanos, sin tantos arroyos y acequias, donde los de caballo pudieron hacelles daño, los cuales alancearon

innumerables; y díjose que habían muerto en esta entrada sobre 30.000 ánimas; y ésta fué la primera predicación del Evangelio que Cortés introdujo en la Nueva España" III. 240-1).[46] Instead of circulating the Good Word, upon his entrance Cortés catalyzes the circulation of terror.

But as we have been arguing throughout this chapter, the emotive ends of the *Historia* lie in tempering pride and evoking shame. Therefore, as with the Columbian narrative, Las Casas the historian will not lose the opportunity to remind his reader of their own implication with this sinful vortex that has now become the Spanish Conquest:

> Veis aquí con qué tiene Cortés engañado a todo el mundo y no sin culpa de muchos de los que lean su falsa historia, no considerando que aquéllos estaban quietos en sus casas, sin ofensa nuestra ni de nadie, y que no eran moros ni turcos que nos infestan y maltratan, no mirando más del sonido, que mató y venció, y, como ellos dicen, conquistó tantas naciones y robó para sí e envió tanto oro a España y llegó a ser marqués del Valle; y desta culpa los lectores della no son inmunes, al menos los que son letrados. (III: 241)

If he has read Las Casas's version of event, the reader has been enlightened: he has seen the evidence ("veis aquí") of the dark underside of Cortés's supposed heroic story. But a stern rebuke is nestled within this passage for a particular kind of reader. Cortés continues to deceive the world in part because "you," man of letters and reader of Gómara, have gotten carried away ("no mirando más del sonido") with the idolatrous fictions of Cortés's heroism.

Indeed, always appealing to a Christian conscience, this history is written as a corrective to Spain's vain heroism and Satanic pride. The highly involved historian-commentator follows his "heroic" protagonists closely, reducing, exposing, and shaming them and their deeds. But

[46] I am following Las Casas's re-figuration of Cortés closely, which is, as I have been arguing, purposefully reductive in order to elicit shame. It goes without saying that historical and literary interpretations of Cortés admit more complexity. For more on Cortés and the relation between violence and discourse see Rabasa, "Dialogue as Conquest in the Cortés-Charles V Correspondence" in *Inventing America*, 1993.

once the reader feels ashamed for his nation and its heroes, what then? Let us turn to the narrative of ascent, which centers on the cleric Bartolomé de las Casas in whom the reader can place his hopes for redemption.

III. The Cleric and the Embodiment of Voice

As the *Historia de las Indias* depicts the deeds of the conquistadors, the narration needs to rely on the authorial voice to signal any moral failings on the protagonists' part. This changes as the Dominicans and the cleric Bartolomé de las Casas now become the subject of the narrative, and they can actually voice God's rebuke *from within* the narrative. We have been insisting that interjection is the affective structure that permeates the *Historia*. Affect here is not catalyzed by the shocking vision as much as by the haunting audition of the accusatory voice of God, speaking through its prophet, Bartolomé de las Casas.

This section will therefore trace the movement, or transmigration, if you will, of God's Voice in the latter part of this history. God's Voice, however, has different manifestations. We have seen it depicted already as the Voice of Wisdom, which Las Casas the historian equated with the Voice of Providence. Those significations will remain, but the Voice will play the role of accusatory truth in what I call the *Historia*'s narrative of ascent.

The axial point of the narrative is chapter 54, towards the end Book II, where the narrative of descent has just consolidated with the heinous representation of Vasco Nuñez's and Pedrarias Dávila's deeds. As they are left plotting against each other, Las Casas interweaves a narrative of ascent that begins with the arrival of Dominican friars to Hispaniola: "Por este tiempo, en el año de 1510, creo que por el mes de setiembre, trujo la divina Providencia la Orden

de Sancto Domingo a esta isla, para lumbre de las tinieblas que en ella entonces había y en todas estas Indias se habían después de engrosar y ampliar." (I: 381)

The characterization of the Dominicans, crafted as an explicit foil to the characterization of the conquistadors, emphasizes the Dominicans' saintliness, as expressed through their mortifications and austerity, and their learning, as expressed through the content of their righteous sermons. Their story begins with friar Domingo de Mendoza, memorably described by Las Casas as a virtuous and knowledgeable man who versified Saint Thomas's *Summa* in order to memorize them and have them at his fingertips. ("Este padre fué muy gran letrado; casi sabía de coro las partes del Sancto Tomás, las cuales puso todas en verso, para tenerlas y taerlas más manuales, y, por sus letras y más por su religiosa y aprobada y ejemplar vida, tenía en España grande autoridad" II: 382). The issue of authority is crucial, as these men not so much exert it as exude it through the exemplarity of their spiritual life and the depth of their knowledge.

Mendoza selects three friars: Pedro de Córdoba, a man gifted by God with great learning, a beautiful countenance, and great judgment; friar Antón de Montesinos, "amador también del rigor de la religión, muy religioso y buen predicador;" and Bernardo de Santo Domingo. According to Las Casas, the settlers expected that the primary responsibility of these friars was to minister the Christians in the New World. Hence, they are all surprised when every Sunday after mass Pedro de Córdoba begins evangelizing the Indians given in *repartimiento*. From their many qualities, Las Casas the historian will mostly emphasize their talent for preaching (after all the Dominican Order is the *Ordo Preadicatorum*).

Hence, amongst Pedro de Córdoba's many talents, the historian remarks that he was an excellent preacher, and Las Casas the cleric was to remember the time the he heard him preach in Hispaniola "... un sermón de la gloria del Paraíso que tiene Dios para sus escogidos, con gran

fervor y celo; sermón alto y divino, e yo se lo oí, e por oírselo me tuve por felice" (II: 382, 384). Antón de Montesinos was also a devoted preacher, particularly in the mode of the rebuke, "porque, ciertamente, tenía especial gracia y hervor en persuadir las cosas que tocaban al ánima y tenía en ello tanta eficacia, que pocos le oían que no saliesen compungidos o enmendados" (II: 454).[47]

Appalled by the way the Spaniards treated the Indians, and later informed by Juan Garcés about the horrors of the war that preceded the *repartimientos*, the Dominicans, after much prayer, fasting, and meditation, decide to craft a sermon together that would mark a different path for the colonizers. Pedro de Córdoba chooses Antón de Montesinos to deliver the sermon, since, again, Montesinos possessed the gift for efficacious preaching, particularly in the mode of the choleric rebuke: "tenía gracia de predicar, era aspérrimo en reprender vicios, y sobre todo, en sus sermones y palabras muy colérico, eficacísimo, y así hacía, o se creía que hacía, en sus sermones mucho fruto; a éste, como a muy animoso, cometieron el primer sermón desta materia… " (II: 440).

And because it was Advent season, the Dominicans decide to preach the sermon on the fourth Sunday, when they would sing the verse from the Gospel of John (1:23) in which the Pharisees ask John the Baptist "What sayest thou of thyself?" and he responds "I *am* the voice of

[47] Las Casas provides a memorable example of the forcefulness of Montesinos's persuasive powers, which I wish to share here: "En la ciudad de Sancto Domingo estaba una mujer sentenciada a que la ahorcasen, y de tal manera sentía la muerte con impaciencia, que no quería confesarse, y así iba impenitente y desesperada; llamaron al padre fray Antón Montesino, un poco antes que la sacasen para la justiciar, el cual le dijo así como entró, aspérrimamente aquestas palabras: «¡Vos no os queréis confesar, mujer perdida! ¿No sabéis que os habéis de ver dentro de una hora delante del riguroso juicio de Dios, que luego os ha para siempre de condenar a las penas infernales? ¿Qué hacéis, decid? Tornad, triste de vos; no os perdáis.» De tanta eficacia fueron estas palabras, que la mujer, como atónita y asombrada, como si ya ardiera en las eternales llamas, pide que se quiere confesar y comulgar, y ansí, contrita y contenta de morir, fué ahorcada." (II: 454)

one crying in the wilderness." Antón de Montesinos thus takes this verse as foundation for his sermon:

> … tomó por tema y fundamento de su sermón, que ya llevaba escripto y firmado de los demás: *Ego vox clamantis in deserto*. Hecha su introducción y dicho algo de lo que tocaba a la materia del tiempo del Adviento, comenzó a encarecer la esterilidad del desierto de las conciencias de los españoles desta isla y la ceguedad en que vivían; con cuánto peligro andaban de su condenación, no advirtiendo los pecados gravísimos en que con tanta insensibilidad estaban continuamente zabuillidos y en ellos morían. Luego torna sobre su tema, diciendo así: «Para os los dar a cognoscer me he sobido aquí, yo que soy voz de Cristo en el desierto desta isla, y por tanto, conviene que con atención, no cualquiera, sino con todo vuestro corazón y con todos vuestros sentidos, la oigáis; la cual voz os será la más nueva que nunca oísteis, la más áspera y dura y más espantable y peligrosa que jamás no pensasteis oír.» Esta voz encareció por buen rato con palabras muy pugnitivas y terribles, que les hacía estremecer las carnes y que les parecía que ya estaban en el divino juicio. (II: 441)

The *vox* is no other than the voice of Christ that speaks through the voice of Montesinos. But by means of an allegorical (spiritual) function, this sermon renders a precise meaning, namely, that the voice of this friar that speaks loudly on this island is also the voice that awakens a desensitized listener by exposing the sterile desert of their conscience ("la esterilidad del desierto de las conciencias de los españoles desta isla"). Simply put, the voice of God, the voice of priest, and the voice of conscience all miraculously coincide in this privileged moment that is Montesinos's sermon.

But Montesinos's homiletic strategy also seeks to heighten the emotive force of the sermon's message, and he therefore delays the actual *voicing* of the Voice. Montesinos speaks about the Voice, namely by foregrounding its terrible nature, before he actually speaks *It*, that is, before he delivers its message:

> La voz, pues, en gran manera, en universal encarecida, declaróles cuál era o qué contenía en sí aquella voz: «Esta voz, dijo él, es que todos estáis en pecado mortal y en él vivís y morís, por la crueldad y tiranía que usáis con estas inocentes gentes. Decid, ¿con qué derecho y con qué justicia tenéis en tan cruel y horrible servidumbre aquestos indios? ¿Con qué autoridad habéis hecho tan detestables guerras a estas gentes que estaban en sus

> tierras mansas y pacíficas; donde tan infinitas dellas, con muertes y estragos nunca oídos, habéis consumido? ¿Cómo los tenéis en tan opresos y fatigados, sin dalles de comer ni curallos en sus enfermedades, que de los excesivos trabajos que les dais incurren y se os mueren, y por mejor decir, los matáis, por sacar y adquirir oro cada día? ¿Y qué cuidado tenéis de quien los doctrine, y conozcan a su Dios y criador, sean baptizados, oigan misa, guarden las fiestas y domingos? ¿Estos, no son hombres? ¿No tienen ánimas racionales? ¿No sois obligados a amallos como a vosotros mismos? ¿Esto no entendéis? ¿Esto no sentís? ¿Cómo estáis en tanta profundidad de sueño tan letárgico dormidos? Tened por cierto, que en el estado que estáis no os podéis más salvar que los moros o turcos que carecen y no quieren la fe de Jesucristo.» Finalmente, de tal manera se explicó la voz que antes había muy encarecido, que los dejó atónitos, a muchos como fuera de sentido, a otros más empedernidos y algunos algo compungidos, pero a ninguno, a lo que yo después entendí, convertido. (II: 441-2)

The core message was simple: you are living in mortal sin. But the simple message was delivered not as a law, but as a direct accusation for specific deeds ("en él vivís y morís, por la crueldad y tiranía que usáis"). The conquistador's tyrannical wars of conquest, as well as the settlers unjust and cruel treatment of the Indians are behind this accusation of sin, but Montesinos emotively amplifies the accusation by unleashing a concatenation of crisp and forceful rhetorical questions crafted to stir the conscience of the listener.

The sermon's artistry thus follows the conventions established by both classical and sacred rhetoric, that is, that the orator ought to reserve the figures of pathos for the exordium and the peroration. The exordium is made emotive by means of an amplification (*encarecimiento*) of the *voice* (the subject) through a particular kind of *synonymia* ("más nueva" "más áspera" "dura" "más espantable y peligrosa"), which Quintilian understands as *deinosis* (supplementary language that adds the force of fear), or as Las Casas himself observes, Montesinos emphasizes the voice with aggressive and terrifying words that would elicit a trembling of the flesh ("Esta voz encareció por buen rato con palabras muy pugnitivas y terribles, que les hacía estremecer las carnes…"). The peroration, on the other hand, is also an emotive amplification, but this one relies on an excessive use of *interrogatio*, in a breath Montesinos unleashes a total of ten

questions, ("¿con qué derecho y con qué justicia... ¿Con qué autoridad... ¿Cómo los tenéis... ¿Y qué cuidado tenéis… ¿Estos, no son hombres? ¿No tienen ánimas racionales? ¿No sois obligados a amallos... ¿Esto no entendéis? ¿Esto no sentís? ¿Cómo estáis ….dormidos?"), with which Montesinos aims to overwhelm the listener and bring the sermon to a close on an emotive highpoint. Nevertheless, despite the rhetorical craft and, if one believes Las Casas, what was an equally powerful delivery, no Spaniard converted.

Montesinos's sermon sets the tone for what becomes the defining characteristic of the *Historia*'s narrative of ascent. For while the narrative of descent clearly originates with Columbus's downfall, which paves the way for the descent of all conquistadors, the narrative of ascent begins with the delivery of a stirring and memorable sermon. I argue that the protagonist of this ascent is not, strictly speaking, the emancipatory movement initiated by the Dominicans, nor even the worldly ascent of the character of Las Casas the cleric, but the ascent of the Voice of God Itself as the voice of accusatory truth. From this point on, the *Historia* will represent the struggles that the Voice will face in order to emerge victorious. The Voice, as personified by Montesinos, wishes to speak, to cry out the terrible, accusatory truth, which awakens the internal voice of conscience in the listener.

But the narrative of ascent also highlights the resistance and the obstacles that the Voice faces. After Montesinos inaugural sermon, the Spaniards, full of ire and indignation, demand that Montesinos retract his sermon. In order to placate their near-lynching reaction, Pedro de Córdoba tells them that they will look to it, and that they will receive an answer the following Sunday. Preaching to a packed church, as the Spaniards await a retraction, Montesinos takes a passage from Job and doubles down on his previous message, promising to provide evidence of the truth that had so embittered the colonizers. ("Tornaré a referir desde su principio mi sciencia

y verdad, que el domingo pasado os prediqué y aquellas mis palabras, que así os amargaron, mostraré ser verdaderas" II. 444-5). As the Dominican friars will not yield an inch, the *encomenderos* decide to take matters in their own hands and begin to plot against them in league with the Crown.

The dramatic force of the narration notwithstanding, Las Casas the historian interjects the narrative at this point to comment on the challenges the listener must overcome when he hears the voice of accusatory truth:

> Acabado su sermón, fuése a su casa, y todo el pueblo indignado contra los frailes, hallándose, de la vana e inicua esperanza que tuvieron que se había de retractar de lo dicho, defraudados, como si ya que el fraile se desdijera, la ley de Dios, contra la cual ellos hacían en oprimir y extirpar estas gentes, se mudara. Peligrosa cosa es y digna de llorar mucho de los hombres que están en pecados, mayormente los que con robos y daños de sus prójimos han subido a mayor estado del que nunca tuvieron, porque más duro les parece, y aun lo es, decaer dél, que echarse de grandes barrancos abajo; yo añido que es imposible dejallos por vía humana, si Dios no hace grande milagro; de aquí es tener por muy áspero y abominable oirse reprender en los púlpitos, porque mientras no lo oyen, paréceles que Dios está descuidado y que la ley divina es revocada, porque los predicadores callan. Desta insensibilidad, peligro y obstinación y malicia, más que en otra parte del mundo, ni género de gente consumada tenemos ejemplos sin número y experiencia ocular en estas nuestras Indias padecer cada día la gente de nuestra España. (II. 445)

The preacher's voice is itself a form of redemption, because it is a merciful act from Divine Providence that makes manifest God's law. But the truth is a harsh thing for those in sin to hear, and we must note that the *Historia* is Las Casas's attempt to transmitting this truth to the reader. The possessive pronouns ("nuestras Indias" -"nuestra España") that Las Casas uses to point out that this danger and evil are particularly bad with the Spaniards who go to the Indies is yet another gesture that attempts to make the Spanish reader complicit.

Although most readers today would find little cause for disagreement with Montesinos's sermon (and Las Casas's message in general), at the time this history was written Las Casas must

have expected to have resistant readers who would react as angrily as the *encomenderos*. Aware of this fact, throughout the narrative, Las Casas the narrator will persistently represent all kinds of angry reactions to the Voice of God manifested as the Voice of accusatory truth, particularly from the Bishop Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, whom the narrative, through the character of Las Casas the cleric, condemns harshly.

For anger, within this context, has a pointed spiritual significance. Anger bears witness to the manifestation of God's voice as the voice of the truth that accuses. This notion, as with most uses of sacred rhetoric in Las Casas, can be traced to Saint Augustine. This hated truth that accuses is discussed in a key passage of the *Confessions*:

> Why, though, does "truth engender hatred," why does a servant of yours who preaches the truth make himself an enemy to his hearers, if the life of happiness, which consists in rejoicing over the truth, is what they love? It must be because people love truth in such a way that those who love something else wish to regard what they love as truth and, since they would not want to be deceived, are unwilling to be convinced that they are wrong. They are thus led into hatred of truth for the sake of that very thing which they love under the guise of truth. They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate it when it accuses them. In this attitude of reluctance to be deceived and intent to deceive others they love truth when it reveals itself but hate it when it reveals them. Truth will therefore take its revenge: when people refuse to be shown up by it, truth will show them up willy-nilly and yet elude them. (*Confessions* 219-20)

This passage denotes the Augustinian notion of *veritas redarguens*, the truth that accuses and reveals. As the preacher voices the truth, it finds and unveils the man who has been willingly hiding from it. Augustine's insightful claim is that all men actually love the truth, but when their love is misdirected, such men decide to regard what they love as truth. The preacher's harsh sermon can thus be understood as an invitation to the believer to redirect his desire, to align it with a desire for the real Truth (God). But if the listener hates it and makes manifest his hatred by his anger, then Truth (God) will take revenge on him by eluding him, while simultaneously

exposing him. This astute maneuver allows Augustine, and Las Casas, to interpret anger and resistance as signs that only confirm that the truth has been made manifest.

The *Historia*'s narrative of ascent therefore traces the trajectory of the Voice of Truth by punctuating the moments when certain characters accept the truth that reveals and accuses their evil deeds against the Indians, while other characters react angrily at this same Voice of Truth. But just as the narrative of descent had a protagonist in Columbus, the narrative of ascent has its own protagonist, the man who will embody the Voice of accusatory truth: Bartolomé de las Casas the cleric ("el clérigo"). Here we must note the important distinction between Las Casas the cleric, a character of the story referred to in the third person, and Las Casas the historian, the narrator who interjects the narrative in the first person. This strategy allows Las Casas not only to highlight the rhetorical effectiveness (perlocutionary force) of his mission during his first years as *Procurador de los Indios*, but it also elevates the monumental authority of himself as historian and as consequential actor with regard to New World matters. It is a double self-fashioning, the narrator fashions the character of the cleric, who, in turn, fashions the historian.

Let us then turn to the initiation of this crucial character. The narrative portrays how the Voice crying in the wilderness reaches Las Casas the cleric in the Augustinian conversion scene from the *Historia*:

> El cual, estudiando los sermones que les predicó la pasada Pascua, o otros por aquel tiempo, comenzó a considerar consigo mismo sobre algunas autoridades de la Sagrada Escritura, y, si no me he olvidado, fué aquélla la principal y primera del *Eclesiástico*, cap. 34, *Inmolantis ex iniquo oblatio est maculata, et non sunt beneplacitae subsannationes iniustorum. Dominus salus sustinentibus se in via veritatis et iustitiae. Dona iniquorum no probat Altissimus, nec respicit in oblationes iniquorum: nec in multitudine sacrificiorum eorum propitiabatur peccatis. Qui offert sacrificium ex substantia pauperum, quasi qui occidit proximum suum. Qui effundit sanguinem et qui fraudem facit mercennario, fratres sunt*.[48] (III: 92)

[48] "The offering of him that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, is stained, and the mockeries of the unjust are not acceptable. The Lord is only for them that wait upon him in the way of truth and justice.

The biblical citation, which the narrator will not interpret directly, demonstrates that this scene is crafted with the reader in mind. From a representational point of view, we are led into this scene as if we are going to look upon, from the outside, someone else's intimate moment of conversion, but the passage instead deploys a scriptural re-iteration to us, the readers. We are first asked to connect the dots and link the passage with what has already been preached by the Dominicans, namely that having Indians in *repartimiento* equals, or is, wicked murder, a mortal sin.

The narrative then zooms into the cleric's introspection, which harks back to the accusatory message voiced by the Dominican friars, as well as the cleric's own resistance to its calling to change his ways:

> Comenzó, digo, a considerar la miseria y servidumbre que padecían aquellas gentes. Aprovechóle para esto lo que había oído en esta isla Española decir y experimentado, que los religiosos de Sancto Domingo predicaban, que no podían tener con buena conciencia los indios y que no querían confesar y absolver a los que los tenían, lo cual el dicho clérigo no aceptaba; y queriéndose una vez con un religioso de la dicha Orden, que halló en cierto lugar, confesar, teniendo el clérigo en esta isla Española indios, con el mismo descuido y ceguedad que en la de Cuba, no quiso el religioso confesalle; y pidiéndole razón por qué, y dándosela, se la refutó el clérigo con frívolos argumentos y vanas soluciones, aunque con alguna apariencia, en tanto que el religioso le dijo: «Concluí, padre, con que la verdad tuvo siempre muchos contrarios y la mentira muchas ayudas.» El clérigo luego se le rindió, cuanto a la reverencia y honor que se le debía, porque era el religioso veneranda persona y bien docto, harto más que el padre clérigo; pero cuanto a dejar los indios no curó de su opinión. Así que valióle mucho acordarse de aquella disputa y aun confesión que tuvo con el religioso, para venir a mejor considerar la ignorancia y peligro en que andaba, teniendo los indios como los otros, y confesando sin escrúpulo a los que los tenían y pretendían tener... (III: 92-3)

The most High approveth not the gifts of the wicked: neither hath he respect to the oblations of the unjust, nor will he be pacified for sins by the multitude of their sacrifices. He that offereth sacrifice of the goods of the poor...is like him that killeth his neighbour. He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, are brothers." (*Ecclesiasticus* 34: 21-27 Douay-Rheims)

Not only does the text catalyze the cleric's memory of the Voice of truth, as it had been imparted to the cleric by the Dominicans' sermons, but he remembers having become an enemy of the truth by countering with frivolous arguments and vain solutions ("frívolos argumentos y vanas soluciones").

Although one may argue that the experience of conversion always follows similar parameters, the catalyzing force of scripture, combined with a reflection on one's own resistance to God's calling, echoes Augustine's own conversion story. Just as the seed had been planted in Las Casas by Pedro de Córdoba's preaching, Augustine was an avid listener and admirer of Ambrose's preaching, leading him, by book VIII of the *Confessions*, to a serious study of Scripture and to seriously consider converting to Christianity. But mere understanding is not enough; Augustine is hindered by his own lustful habits from fully converting.

But let us then recall the famous Garden scene where Augustine portrays his internal struggle against the reasoning of his sin, also characterized as frivolous: "The frivolity of frivolous aims, the futility of futile pursuits, these things that had been my cronies of long standing, still held me back, plucking softly at my garment of flesh and murmuring in my ear, «Do you mean to get rid of us?»" (166). Feeling defeated, a tearful Augustine suddenly hears a voice singing over and over again, "Pick it up and read, pick it up and read." Therefore, Augustine "stung into action," reads in silence "the passage on which my eyes first lighted: *Not in dissipation and drunkenness, nor in debauchery and lewdness….; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires*. I had no wish to read further, nor was there need. No sooner had I reached the end of the verse than the light of certainty flooded my heart and all dark shades of doubt fled away" (168). Conversion is act of the will, one converts oneself to Christianity; but, paradoxically, it is also a gift from God. This

paradox is fully at work during the privileged moment of scriptural re-iteration. Scriptural revelation comes in at the right moment when God intercedes and allows the believer to interpret the textual meaning of the biblical passage in light of the believer's own life's narrative.

Similarly, for Las Casas the power of the scriptural passage from *Ecclesiasticus* that affirms, "He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, are brothers," has the effect of sensitization, as the cleric begins to fully consider, for the first time, the misery suffered by the Indians. But the passage also clarifies to the cleric that as an *encomendero* who profits from Indian slavery, he *is* the man that passage refers to as the one who defrauds the laborer of his hire, and therefore, he is no different than those who shed blood.

But, as Las Casas repeatedly argues in *De unico*, conversion is not a matter of a second, or a thing that is given. Conversion takes time, it takes reading, and it springs from within:

> Pasados, pues, algunos días en aquesta consideración, y cada día más y más certificándose por lo que leía cuanto al derecho y vía del hecho, aplicando lo uno a lo otro, determinó en sí mismo, convencido de la misma verdad, ser injusto y tiránico todo cuanto cerca de los indios en estas Indias se cometía. En confirmación de lo cual todo cuanto leía hallaba favorable y solía decir e afirmar, que, desde la primera hora que comenzó a desechar las tinieblas de aquella ignorancia, nunca leyó en libro de latín o de romance, que fueron en cuarenta y cuatro años infinitos, en que no hallase o razón o autoridad para probar y corroborar la justicia de aquestas indianas gentes, y para condenación de las injusticias que se les han hecho y males y daños. Finalmente, se determinó de predicallo; y porque teniendo él los indios que tenía, tenía luego la reprobación de sus sermones en la mano, acordó, para libremente condenar los repartimientos o encomiendas como injustas y tiránicas, dejar luego los indios y renunciarlos… (III: 93)

To convert is an act of understanding ("convencido de la misma verdad") in conjunction with an act of the will, which prompts the friar to preach on behalf of that truth (which he now sees confirmed everywhere). But if he is going to preach against *encomienda*, the cleric cannot embody the sin he is condemning, and he therefore casts away his own *encomienda*, to Diego Velázquez's surprise. The cleric from now on embodies the Voice of accusatory truth.

The narrator will therefore emplot the narrative of the cleric with a series of key moments, or signs, that confirm that the cleric's newfound willingness to preach such truth, his calling to embody its voice, is a divine calling. Menéndez Pidal believes this turn in the narrative reveals Las Casas's delusional self-importance, but within the interpretation I am positing here, the friar's spin on the narrative actually serves to make the character of the cleric seem instrumental, and in some sense secondary. The character of the cleric, whom one should not equate wholeheartedly with Las Casas the narrator, is a character that embodies the Voice of truth, as his characterization (as with every other major figure in the book) is developed mostly in function of God's providential interventions in history. Although Las Casas is indeed monumentalising himself, the narrative zooms into the ways in which the message, which starts with the Dominican friars and not with Las Casas, finds receptive ears that keep the emancipatory movement going.

The first sign offered by the narrative that God has chosen the cleric to lead the pro-Indianist cause by becoming a voice of truth occurs when the cleric's friend, Pedro de la Rentería, reunites with him and shares an epiphany he had while in Jamaica, which consisted in crafting a plan to liberate the Indians. The narrator describes how the cleric experiences a sense of awe (*admiratio*), as he interprets the dual epiphany as a sign from God. ("Oído por el padre clérigo su motivo y causa, quedó admirado y dio gracias a Dios, pareciéndole que debía ser su propósito de ir a procurar el remedio destas gentes *divinalmente ordenado*, pues por un tan buen hombre como Rentería era, sin saber dél, antes, como se dijo, estando muy apartados, se le confirmaba;" my emphasis III: 97).

Moreover, Las Casas the narrator will hardly miss an opportunity to document the zeal and effectiveness of the cleric's preaching. Pedro de Córdoba sends the first Dominicans from

Hispaniola to Cuba, and upon meeting Las Casas and hearing of his preaching, they believe they have found in the cleric a valuable ally, as if God had sent down an angel from heaven: "...les pareció que les había proveído Dios lo que habían menester, como si les hobiera enviado un ángel del cielo" (III: 99). Even though Las Casas the cleric avoids preaching for several weeks, he was asked by the newly arrived Dominican friars to impart a sermon. The cleric seizes the moment to get confirmation of the content of all the sermons he has preached while in Cuba. Las Casas the cleric therefore synthesizes the harshest propositions in one sermon, and preaches it with great vehemence, leaving the Dominican friars in awe of his zeal and fearlessness: "y todas juntas las tornó en presencia de los religiosos a repetir y afirmar con más vehemencia y libertad que antes las había dicho. Los religiosos quedaron admirados de su hervor y cuán sin temor afirmaba cosa tan nueva y para aquellos tan amarga, diciéndoles que en aquel estado no se podían salvar;" (III: 99-100). Zeal and its synonyms (hervor, celo, solicitud) will become the words that the narrative constantly associates with the cleric, for zeal intensifies the Voice and renders it as cry (clamor): "I *am* the voice that cries in the wilderness."

But the more the narrative portrays the efficacy of the Voice of accusatory truth, via the cleric, the more the resistance to it grows. The *encomenderos*' plot prompt the Dominicans to send Las Casas the cleric to Spain in order to intervene at Court. After heated exchanges with Lope Conchillos and Bishop Rodríguez de Fonseca, the determined cleric manages to meet with an old and frail King Fernando, who agrees to a "larga audiencia" in Seville, but dies before it can take place. The cleric thus writes and sends two *relaciones* (the *Memorial de Destrucciones and Remedios*), one in Latin for Adrian of Utrecht, and one in Spanish to Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros, then co-regents of Spain. Here the voice begins to wield the pen.

The narrator reports that the cleric's zeal wins Cisneros over, and he chooses the Hieronymite Order to undertake a project of reform. Cisneros arranges a meeting at the monastery of San Bartolomé de Lupiana, where he explains the nature of the enterprise to the Hieronymite friars. Las Casas the narrator narrows his focus onto a telling observation that Cisneros makes regarding the cleric: "el cardenal encareció muy mucho el celo y solicitud del dicho clérigo, en haber venido de tan lejanas tierras, por aquestas océanas mares, sin pretender cosa propia temporal, repitiendo algunas veces: «Ahora creed que *divinitus* ha venido acá este clérigo»" (III: 116). According to Cardinal Cisneros, the cleric Bartolomé de las Casas came to Court by divine design.

Cisneros's claim that God has sent the cleric is almost immediately confirmed by the strange scene that follows Cisneros's approval of a reformation plan on this "junta," which, according to the narrator, had gathered the most important personages of Spain at the time:

> Después de haber platicado en esto y en lo que se debía hacer para efecto del breve despacho, mandó el cardenal que buscasen y llamasen luego los porteros al clérigo, el cual estaba en el sobreclaustro del mismo monasterio, esperando lo que había de salir de aqueste acto, encomendando a Dios los alumbrase, y cuasi estaban todas las puertas cerradas; y como no lo hallasen, preguntando a todos por el clérigo de las Indias, de manera que fué notorio a todos los caballeros y grandes y corte, que dijimos estar en el coro bajo, junto a la sacristía, van corriendo a Madrid a buscallo y no lo hallan. El clérigo, ya cansado de esperar, determinó bajarse y no halló puerta abierta; pero descendió por la escalera que descendía a la sacristía donde estaba el cardenal, con los que con él estaban, que tenían la puerta cerrada, y oyendo hablar llamó y respondieron diciendo si habían visto al clérigo de las Indias, dijo: «Yo soy.» Dicen que se vaya por otra parte, porque por aquella puerta no podía entrar. Tórnose por donde había descendido, y finalmente halla puerta para salir al cuerpo de la Iglesia y della pasa por medio del coro donde estaban todos los señores y grandes sentados, el cual fué de todos bien mirado, y es de creer que el obispo de Burgos lo miraría más y quizá con harto dolor de su ánima, considerando que le habían excluído del Consejo de las Indias, donde tanto había mandado, por su causa. (III: 116-7)

The author takes his time crafting the scene, which allows an allegorical interpretation that discloses, once again, the role of the cleric as the embodiment of the Voice of Truth. In Las

Casas's account, the cleric is physically removed, in an allegorical wilderness, from the heart of the gathering, that is, from the privileged space that will produce a redemptive decision. All the doors are closed to this voice. Yet they seek him who has voiced the truth, but he cannot be found. The cleric, who embodies the voice of the truth that accuses, knocks at Fonseca's sacristy door. As soon as Fonseca recognizes the cleric's voice through the minimal but divinely resonant "*I am*" he chooses not to open the door. Fonseca thus loses his opportunity for redemption. The cleric, the voice, enters triumphantly through the chorus, much to Fonseca's chagrin. As the narrative progresses, the historian will interject dramatic scenes that show how Fonseca is publically accused and exposed by the voice of the cleric in every important "junta." Instead of yielding, Fonseca's pride hardens in a way that exemplifies the workings of the Augustinian notion of *veritas redarguens*: "Truth will therefore take its revenge: when people refuse to be shown up by it, truth will show them up willy-nilly and yet elude them" (*Confessions* 220).

Despite the continuous setbacks, the *Historia* will foreground time and again how the cleric manages to gain favors and protection from those in power. Cisneros's reformation plans are eventually thwarted as the Hieronymites side with the encomenderos. Foreseeing their weakness, the cleric alerts Cisneros, who appoints the cleric as their overseer. It is the hand of Providence that compels Cisneros to appoint the cleric as *Procurador de los indios*, for he thought it necessary "que en la corte hobiese alguna persona que tuviese cuidado de procurar lo que cumpliese a los indios, y que aquél había de ser hombre de *ciencia y conciencia*;..." (my emphasis III: 134). With this appointment the cleric embodies, officially, the voice of knowledge and the voice of conscience.

And yet, the cleric's rhetorical prowess is put to the test once again. Unable to stir the Hieronymites away from their unwillingness to implement Cisneros's reform, Las Casas the cleric travels back to Spain only to encounter a disfavored Cisneros, who soon dies (1517). The cleric then turns all his persuasive energy on the Flemish Chancellor Jean le Sauvage. The narrative tells us that the chancellor became extremely fond of the cleric and supported his plans for a peaceful colonization by peasants and priests, but that he dies only a year after Cisneros, in 1518, at which point William of Croÿ, the chief minister of a young Charles I, reappoints the cleric's archnemesis, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, to the Council of the Indies. Las Casas the narrator will note this to be yet another major setback for the cleric's divine mission: "Muerto el gran chanciller, cierto, murió por entonces todo el bien y esperanza del remedio de los indios; y ésta fué la vez segunda que pareciendo estar muy propincua la salud de aquestas gentes, por los juicios de Dios secretos, se les deshizo de tal manera, que pareció del todo ser la esperanza perdida. Prevaleció luego el obispo y pareció subir hasta los cielos, y cayó el clérigo en los abismos" (III: 182).

Ever unyielding, the persistent cleric presents the peasant colonization venture to the interim chancellor, whom the narrator portrays as "tan pesado y flemático, que se dormía en los Consejos" (III: 183). Nevertheless, using his rhetorical prowess, the cleric finds favor with the Flemish courtiers, particularly the nephew of the Lord of Laxao, who was the King's *sommelier du corps* and slept in the King's chambers. This "mosior de La Mure" wanted to be informed of the cleric's project. The cleric relates the atrocities committed in the Indies, leaving La Mure terrified and willing to assist the cleric in his mission ("el fin que pretendía el clérigo y de las causas dél y lo demás que tocaba a estas Indias; dióle larga relación de todo. Quedó espantado de tanta maldad y crueldades y diminución de tantas gentes, … quedó asimismo obligado a lo

favorecer con cuantas fuerzas tuviese" III: 184). In the narrative of ascent is precisely a representation of how the Voice of Truth always manages to find receptive ears.

Empowered by the Flemish Courtiers, the cleric goes on to recruit peasants for his peaceful colonization project. Las Casas the narrator takes this opportunity to document how the success of the project at its initial stages was largely due to the cleric's own rhetorical virtuosity:

> … y llegando a algunos lugares, hacía juntar las gentes dellos en las iglesias, donde les denunciaba, lo primero, la intención del rey, que era poblar aquestas tierras; lo segundo, la felicidad, fertilidad, sanidad y riqueza dellas; lo tercero, las mercedes que el rey les hacía, con las cuales podían ser con verdad, cuanto a los bienes temporales desta vida, sin cuasi trabajo, bienaventurados; con lo cual, los corazones de todas las gentes levantaba, porque, lo uno, todo lo que afirmaba, decía y con verdad que lo sabía por vista de ojos y por muchos años lo había experimentado; lo segundo, porque tenía en el hablar gran eficacia. (III. 191)

Here the narrator informs the reader, quite purposefully, that the evocative language the cleric uses to describe the beauties of the New World ("felicidad," "fertilidad," "sanidad," "riqueza") lifts the hearts of the listeners ("los corazones de todas las gentes levantaba"). His is a language that persuades by reaching the emotive core. The narrator further evinces the efficacy of this language with a moving example. A seventy-year old man from Coruña, who had fathered 17 children, decides to sign up as a peasant colonizer. The cleric asks him: "«Vos, padre, ¿a qué queréis ir a las Indias siendo tan viejo y tan cansado?» Respondió el buen viejo: «A la mi fe, señor, dice él, a morirme luego y dejar mis hijos en tierra libre y bienaventurada»" (III. 192).

The antagonistic Rodríguez de Fonseca, however, manages to obstruct the cleric's recruitment of peasants by bribing his aid, who sabotages the project by taking matters into his own hands and selecting settlers who were quite the opposite of peasants, namely, anyone willing to make themselves rich quickly and at the expense of the Indians.

But the *Historia*'s narrative of ascent is a representation of how the Hand of Providence will continue to open doors for the cleric, who provides the same moving *relación* to the Court's

royal preachers, gaining favor with them. The preachers scold Rodríguez de Fonseca and the Council of Indies and encourage the cleric to move forward with his project. Advised by the Dominicans to shift his efforts to Tierra Firme, the cleric seeks to obtain special permission, or a *capitulación*, that would allow him to settle the coast of Tierra Firme with the aid of the second Admiral Diego Columbus.

The cleric's new project, however, encounters another antagonist. Fonseca brings in a priest from the Indies, Juan de Quevedo, the first Bishop of Darién, the first city founded on Tierra Firme, as someone who can attest that peaceful colonization in the area is impossible. The narrative lingers on several scenes that depict intense verbal exchanges between the cleric and the Bishop. The Bishop of Darién represents one of the greatest challenges yet for the Voice of Truth, since Quevedo was an eloquent man who could also claim that his argumentation was based on his experiences in the Indies.

The narrative therefore zoom into one of their heated exchanges, which occurs as the Admiral Diego Columbus and the Bishop pass the time playing a game of "tablas." Las Casas the cleric overhears the Bishop affirm that wheat could not grow in Hispaniola, but the cleric had with him at the time some wheat grains from that very island:

> El clérigo llevaba en la bolsa ciertos granos de muy buen trigo, de ciertas espigas que habían nacido debajo de un naranjo en la huerta del monasterio de Sancto Domingo desta ciudad, y dijo con toda reverencia y mansedumbre: «Por cierto, señor, yo lo he visto muy bueno en aquella isla y pudiera decir; veislo, aquí lo traigo conmigo.» El cual, así como oyó hablar al clérigo, con sumo inflamiento, menosprecio e indignación, dijo: «¿Qué sabes vos? Esto será como los negocios que traéis; ¿vos qué sabéis de lo que negociáis?» Respondió el clérigo modestamente: «¿Son malos o injustos, señor, los negocios que yo traigo?» Dijo él: « ¿Qué sabéis vos o qué letras y ciencia es la vuestra, para que os atreváis a negociar los negocios?» (III: 337)

With this scene the narrator fashions the cleric as a prudent speaker. The cleric does not immediately interrupt the game of *tablas* with an accusation; instead, the astute cleric reverently

and obediently ("con toda reverencia y mansedumbre") presents the material evidence that what Quevedo is saying is a flat lie. The actual showing of the seeds exposes the Bishop of Darién as untrustworthy. And, one must note, the cleric responds to the Bishop's haughtiness and indignation with conscience-piercing question («¿Son malos o injustos, señor, los negocios que yo traigo?»), thereby gaining ethical ground.

But Las Casas the narrator also illustrates the efficacy of the cleric's rebuke style. When pressed by Quevedo to explain on what knowledge he dares to interfere in New World matters (« ¿Qué sabéis vos o qué letras y ciencia es la vuestra, para que os atreváis a negociar los negocios?»), the Voice of accusatory truth takes over the cleric:

> Entonces el clérigo, tomando un poco de más licencia, mirando siempre de no enojar al obispo de Badajoz, respondió: «Sabéis, señor obispo, cuán poco sé de los negocios que traigo, que con esas pocas de letras que pensáis que tengo, y quizá son menos de las que estimáis, os porné mis negocios por conclusiones, y la primera será: que habéis pecado mil veces y mil muchas más por no haber puesto vuestra ánima por vuestras ovejas, para librallas de las manos de aquellos tiranos que os las destruyen. Y la segunda conclusión será, que coméis sangre y bebéis sangre de vuestras propias ovejas. La tercera será, que si no restituís todo cuanto traéis de allá, hasta el último cuadrante, no os podéis más que Judas salvar.»

The narrator makes the observation that the cleric never intended to make the Bishop angry, a strange observation given the forceful and accusatory nature of the cleric's three conclusions ("conclusiones"), in order to highlight that *veritas redarguens*, and not the cleric, is the thing that angers the bishop, who opts to escape the conversation by taking recourse to mockery:

> Desque vido el obispo que por las veras no podía mucho con el clérigo ganar, comenzó a echallo por burlas y mofas, riéndose y escarneciendo de las saetadas que el clérigo le daba. El clérigo, todavía, teniendo el rigor de las veras, díjole: «¿Reísos, señor? Debríades de llorar vuestra infelicidad y de vuestras ovejas.» Dijo el obispo: «Sí, ahí tengo las lágrimas en la bolsa.» Respondió el clérigo: «Bien sé que tener lágrimas verdaderas de lo que conviene llorar es don de Dios, pero debíades de, sospirando, rogar a Dios que os las diese, no sólo de aquel humor que llamamos lágrimas, pero de sangre que saliese del más vivo del corazón, para mejor manifestar vuestra desventura y miseria y de vuestras ovejas.» (III: 337-8)

This scene of verbal warfare ("saetadas") portrays the cleric as winner because his voice, rapid eloquence aside, possesses the force of truth ("rigor de las veras"). At the same time as the scene dramatizes that one form of resistance to the Voice of Truth is cynicism, it provides the reader with a moral lesson: ask for the gift of tears.

According to the historian, upon hearing of this altercation, Charles V calls for an "*audiencia*" to hear them both out. This brings the narrative to the climax of the cleric's story, and to the climax of this particular manifestation of the Voice that first descended through Antón de Montesinos. In other words, the Voice finally reaches the Monarch. Instead of providing the reader with a verbatim speech, the narrator strategically summarizes the Bishop of Darién's speech, celebrating Quevedo's preamble as elegant and graceful:

> [Comenzó con] un preámbulo muy gracioso y elegante, como quien solía graciosa y elocuentemente predicar, diciendo que muchos días había que deseaba ver aquella presencia real, por las razones que a ello le obligaban, y que agora que Dios le había complido su deseo, cognoscía que *facies Priami digna erat imperio*; lo que el poeta Homero dijo de la hermosura de Príamo, aquel excelente rey troyano. Cierto, pareció muy bien a todos, y de creer es que al rey no menos agradó el preámbulo. Tras el proemio añidió luego que porqué él venía de las Indias y traía cosas secretas, de mucha importancia, tocantes a su real servicio, y que no convenía decillas sino a sólo Su Majestad y su Consejo, por tanto, que le suplicaba que mandase salir fuera los que no eran del Consejo; y dicho esto, estuvo así un poco y hízole señal el gran chanciller y tornó a sentarse. (III: 340-1)

Much like the political historians that Las Casas discredits in the preface to this work, Juan de Quevedo's exordium unveils his mastery for artful adulation. The King, however, not pleased with the answer, asks him to speak then and now, but the bishop restates that he would rather speak in private with the King and the Council of Indies. Charles V orders him to speak again, and having no choice, the Bishop states, quickly and bluntly, that the Spaniards would perish of hunger if they did not have the Indians in *encomienda*, and that he believes that they are "siervos a natura."

Las Casas the narrator does not grant the Bishop's rhetoric the eloquence of the preamble; instead, the narrator diminishes the Bishop and his arguments by means of comparison. The Monarch then bids the cleric to speak:

> Entonces, el clérigo, quitando su bonete y hecha muy profunda reverencia, comenzó desta manera: «Muy alto y muy poderoso rey y señor: yo soy de los más antiguos que a las Indias pasaron y ha muchos años que estoy allá, en los cuales he visto por mis ojos, no leído en historias que pudiesen ser mentirosas, sino palpado, porque así lo diga, por mis manos, cometer en aquellas gentes mansas y pacíficas las mayores crueldades y más inhumanas que jamás nunca en generaciones por hombres crueles ni bárbaros irracionales se cometieron, y éstas sin alguna causa de razón, sino solamente por la cudicia, sed y hambre de oro insaciable de los nuestros. … Viendo todo esto yo me moví, no porque yo fuese mejor cristiano que otro, sino por una compasión natural y lastimosa que tuve de ver padecer tan grandes agravios e injusticias a gentes que nunca nos las merecieron, y así vine a estos reinos a dar noticia… (III: 342)

The cleric in turn does away with an exordium and privileges his experience ("palpado...por mis manos"). His message is rooted in both the authority of the eyewitness and the Christian value of compassion. And then the narrator fashions the cleric as someone whom God has send to favor the Monarch above everybody else in his Kingdom:

> Va tanto a Vuestra Majestad en entender esto y mandallo a remediar, que dejado lo que toca a su real ánima, ninguno de los reinos que posee y todos juntos se igualan con la mínima parte de los estados y bienes por todo aquel orbe; y en avisar dello a Vuestra Majestad, sé yo de cierto que hago a Vuestra Majestad uno de los mayores servicios que hombre vasallo hizo a príncipe ni señor del mundo, y no porque quiera ni desee por ello merced ni galardón alguno, porque ni lo hago por servir a Vuestra Majestad, porque es cierto hablando con todo el acatamiento y reverencia que se debe a tan alto rey e señor que de aquí a aquel rincón no me mudase por servir a Vuestra Majestad, salva la fidelidad que como súbdito debo, si no pensase y creyese hacer a Dios en ello gran sacrificio; pero es Dios tan celoso y granjero de su honor, como a él se deba solo el honor y la gloria de toda criatura, que no puedo dar un paso en estos negocios, que por sólo él tome a cuestas de mis hombros, que de allí no se causen y procedan inestimables bienes y servicios de Vuestra Majestad; y para rectificación de lo que dicho tengo, digo y afirmo que renuncio cualquiera merced y galardón temporal que Vuestra Merced me quiera y pueda hacer, y si en algún tiempo yo o otro por mí, merced alguna quisiere y pidiere directe ni indirecte, en ninguna cosa de las susodichas Vuestra majestad me dé crédito, antes sea yo tenido por falso, engañador de mi rey e señor. (III: 343)

Las Casas the cleric alludes briefly to what is truly at stake, Charles own soul, and moves the focus of his speech to the "goods" ("bienes") that he will receive if he heeds his words. This a courtier's speech, lacking the forcefulness that we have been used to until now. The king says he will look into the matter, even though the narrator states that everyone approved of the cleric's position.

The narrator's decision to opt for a courtier's speech, markedly different in tone and style from the prophetic rebuke, becomes clearer as the narrative unfolds. The Voice of Truth was not aiming at the Monarch yet, as the narrator tells us that the Monarch leaves for Austria, thus failing to ensure the cleric has adequate support for his project in Cumaná (the *capitulación* was approved only in principle).

But the Voice of Truth, the narrator confirms, has had an effect on the Bishop of Darién, who writes a *Memorial* supporting the cleric's views, and proclaims his change of heart to the Chancellor: "Desta plática que allí el obispo tuvo resultó mucho mayor crédito que se dió al clérigo, por ver que los que se le habían mostrado enemigos, por lengua y escrito confesaban lo que él decía, y parecía que con sola la fuerza y virtud de la verdad que traía a todos vencía" (III: 353). Las Casas the narrator suggests that the cleric wins over his enemies by merely embodying the force and virtue of truth, but, as we have been arguing (and Las Casas implies), the Voice of the accusatory truth benefits from the rhetorical virtuosity of Bartolomé de las Casas, both the author and the character.

As the narrative comes to an end, however, the force of truth that the cleric embodies does not get him through his next and final venture. The fleet carrying the Franciscans who would aid the cleric in Cumaná is dispersed after a storm, and only five of twenty-five actually arrive in Hispaniola. Moreover, the already existing missions in Cumaná, which were designated

in the plan as a source of support for the cleric and his peasants, had also been previously destroyed by a tropical storm. On another front, the *encomenderos* ensure that Las Casas gets no support from the governor of Tierra Firme, and, on top of it all, the narrator highlights that there has been continuous slave-raiding in the land, which makes the Indian Guayqueris and the Caribs to kill any settler on the coast, thus effectively ending any hopes that the cleric's project of peaceful colonization can actually be implemented.

Rumored dead, the reader encounters a beaten and doubtful cleric at the end of the *Historia*. The cleric arrives on Hispaniola and decides to spend most of his time with the Dominicans in Santo Domingo. One day, conversing with Fray Domingo de Betanzos, the cleric becomes greatly moved:

> [Betanzos] le dió muchos tientos que fuese fraile, diciendo que harto había trabajado por los indios, y pues que aquel negocio tan pío se le había desbaratado, parecía que no se quería Dios servir dél por aquel camino. Entre otras respuestas y excusas que le daba, fué decir que convenía esperar la respuesta del rey para ver qué le mandaba. Respondió el buen padre: «Decid, señor padre, si entretanto vos os morís, ¿quién rescibirá el mandato del rey o sus cartas?» Estas palabras le atravesaron el alma al clérigo Casas, y desde allí comenzó a pensar más frecuentemente en su estado, y al fin determinó hacer cuenta que ya era muerto, cuando las cartas o respuestas del rey allegasen; y así, pidió el hábito… (III: 386-7)

The cleric, who embodied the Voice of Truth that stirred the conscience of many, is now moved himself by the same Truth that recasts man's actions unto the eternal. The cleric takes the habit and dies. The *encomenderos* were ecstatic, "porque vían faltalles, como si lo vieran enterrado, aquel que les estorbaba los robos que hacían.." (III: 387). But this is not the end of the story. Although incomplete, Las Casas closes the third book by bringing the story full circle. Indeed, this marks the end of the cleric, but there was in him a new man: "Sino que después resucitó, a lo que puede creerse por voluntad de Dios, a pesar de muchos, para estorbar algunos males que estorbó con el favor divino, y para mostrar al mundo con el dedo, como el sol, el estado

peligroso en que muchos vivían y el sueño letárgico y profunda ceguedad que los descuidaba…" (III: 387). What begins with the fall of one man —Columbus— ends with the resurrection of another — the Dominican Friar Bartolomé de las Casas.

Chapter Four. Unethical Fear, Ethical Wonder, and Embodied Love: *Apologética historia sumaria*

I. Natural History and Fear of the Monstrous-Other

As its title suggests, the *Apologética historia sumaria* (1527-1561) is a natural history written as a defense of Amerindian civilizations. Excised from the *Historia de las Indias*, the *Apolgética* sets out to counter a specific strand of natural history which the friar considered not only slanderous but highly insidious. The discursive force of natural history, with its claims that interpret nature as an immutable order of things, was used to justify violence and subjugation of peoples who were depicted as lacking in reason, and were therefore, by nature, incapable of ruling themselves.

This difficult task was even more challenging when one considers the powerful fictions created by those who believed Amerindians to be less than human by nature. The origins of this pre-modern form of determinism can be traced to Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, where he expounds on the theory of the five climatic zones attributed to Parmenides. Complementing this theory with the theory of the bodily humors, Aristotle conjectures that the northern barbarians living in the cold regions, near the frigid zone, were, by nature, courageous but not intelligent, while the Asians (Arabia) and Africans (Libya and Aethiopia), who dwelled closer to the torrid zone, were intelligent but not courageous; only the Greeks possessed both intelligence and courage due to the temperate climate of the Mediterranean. If only the Hellenic peoples would unite, Aristotle surmised, they could in fact rule the world.

Human beings who were found living in the torrid zone, in the scorched part of the earth, were destined to be, by nature, outside the parameters of a superior humanity. The influence of this line of thought was long lived. The southern parts of India and Africa were within the torrid zone, and that is why, in his influential *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder speaks of monstrous races in Ethiopia and India, who "have been made by the ingenuity of nature as toys for herself and marvels for us" (II: 32). The medieval theologian and cosmographer Pierre d'Ailly, whose *Ymago mundi* (1410) was assiduously studied by Christopher Columbus, subscribes to the theory of the five climatic zones with all its moral repercussions. One map from d'Ailly, which was carefully annotated by Columbus, uses color to denote the scorching heat of the inhospitable torrid zone [Figure 4].

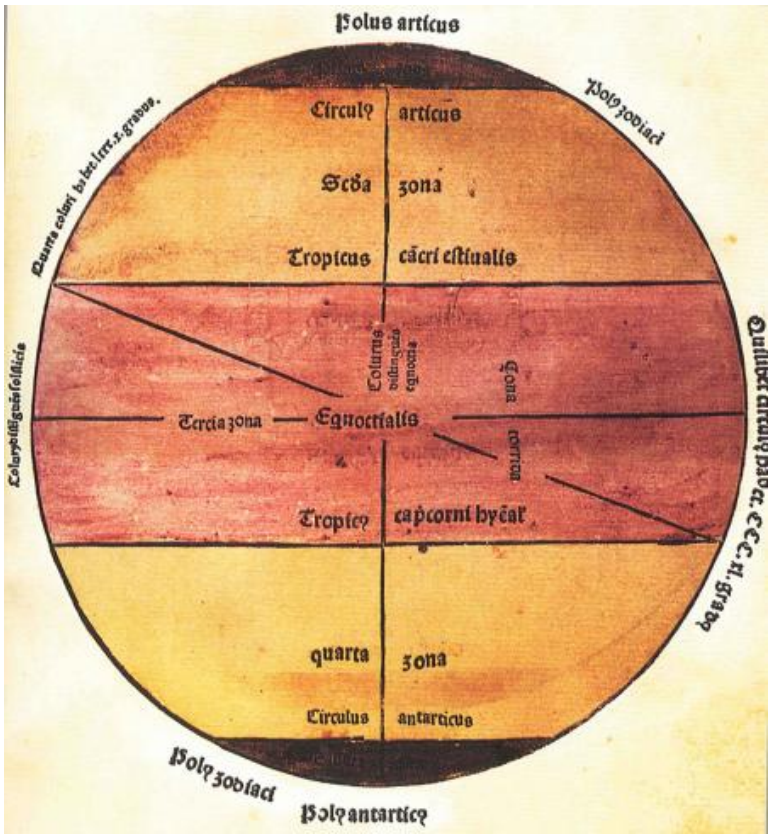

Figure 4: *Ymago mundi*, Pierre D'Ailly, 1410, (1483), Louvain, Belgium.

But to his surprise, Columbus finds that the skin color and straight hair of the Arawak and Taínos does not resemble the blacks slaves from Guinea. Columbus also marvels at the edenic and temperate geographies of the New World, but his openness to the exuberant newness of this natural world does not extend fully to its human inhabitants, as he still considers the Taínos as good slave material, and he expects to find more marvelous human monstrosities as he approaches the lower latitudes. For, after all, some Indian informants apparently told Columbus in his first voyage that "lejos de allí había hombres de un ojo y otros con hocicos de perros que comían los hombres y que en tomando uno lo degollaban y le bebían su sangre y le cortaban su natura" (*Diario* Nov. 4 1493). It is with such ease that Columbus's imagination gives birth to the pervasive fiction of the monstrous cannibals, also known as the *caribes*.

This is the same tradition that informs Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535 onward), the *Apologética*'s primary intertext. Despite the sensuous joy with which Oviedo describes American nature, particularly its food, he has no qualms in describing the Indians of Urabá as people who "comen carne humana, y son abominables, sodimitas y crueles," and he doesn't limit his negative portrayal to those who dwell in those lower latitudes. In fact, his natural history tends towards a negative portrayal of most Amerindians.

When Oviedo narrates the customs and mores of the Taínos, for example, he is quick to interpret such behaviors as vices. The Indians allegedly unable to control their passions, rebel in diabolic rituals that involve excessive drinking and smoking, while Indian women are depicted as lustful creatures who commonly abort their babies because they do want to be able to continue enjoying sexual pleasures ("no quieren estar ocupadas para dejar sus placeres"). Moreover,

Oviedo astutely mixes moral history with naturalistic discourse, as when he makes the following claim that Amerindians were, by nature, incapable of becoming Christians:

> Pero, en fin, estos indios, por la mayor parte de ellos, es nasción muy desviada de querer entender la fe católica; y es machacar hierro frío pensar que han de ser cristianos, y así se les ha parecido en las capas, o, mejor diciendo, en las cabezas; porque capas no las traían, ni tampoco tienen las cabezas como otras gentes, sino de tan rescios e gruesos cascos, que el principal aviso que los cristianos tienen cuando con ellos pelean e vienen a las manos, es no darles cuchilladas en la cabeza, porque se rompen las espadas. Y así como tienen el casco grueso, así tienen el entendimiento bestial y mal inclinado. (*Historia general* I: 111)

Oviedo's argument that posits marvelously thick skulls as evidence of the Indian's bestial and perverse understanding, flows seamlessly from the marvelous and bellic image of a conquistador's sword breaking on an Indian's head. These vivid descriptions reveal that natural history, as a form imperial discourse, not only employs discourse rooted in a kind of natural determinsim, but it also draws from the rhetoric of the marvelous in order to produce negative representations of Indian otherness.

The rhetoric of the marvelous in natural history, dating back to Herodotus himself, seeks to elicit in the reader the elusive emotion of "admiración" or *admiratio*. To sixteenth century readers *admiratio* denoted a wider semantic field, what we in contemporary English describe as awe, wonder, marvel, and even awful. But usually considered as a positive emotion, *admiratio* was said to give pleasure, and that is why, Aristotle marks in his *Poetics*, "all men exaggerate when relating stories, to give delight" (123). *Admiratio* also intersected philosophical discourse, for, to paraphrase Plato, *admiratio* or wonder was said to be the beginning of philosophy, the emotion that ignites the desire to know, the alluring force that draws us in toward something that was previously unknown.

As Stephen Greenblatt has argued, with the advent of both Spanish and English imperial expansion, *admiratio* was to become the central emotion (or vortex of emotions) in the moment of encounter; for Greenblatt wonder "is the central figure in the initial European response to the new world, the decisive emotional and intellectual experience in the presence of radical difference" (*Marvelous* 14). *Admiratio*, however, admits negativity, and the argument can be made that within a certain tradition of natural history, especially its imperialistic kind, radical difference was almost always presented as wondrously monstrous in order to validate an increasingly Eurocentric view of the world.

This is the kind of *admiratio* that Columbus employs in some of the most memorable depictions of the natives in his *Diario*, and which Oviedo employs exclusively when he describes the mores of the Amerindians. In other words, their marvelous depictions of Amerindians can be wonderfully seductive, but they are also meant to open the door to fear, revulsion, and repugnance. The rhetoric of the marvelous as employed by imperialist ethnography, transforms the Indian's Otherness into something something to be feared. These marvelously emotive fictions hide the Indian's face in a foreign sub-humanity; the Indian's summoning gaze is put safely at a distance, or rather, this rhetoric creates distance, the chilling distance that invites and condones violence.

The *Apologética* sets out to counter this toxic rhetoric, not by challenging the underlying naturalistic principles that guide imperialist ethnography, but by seizing on the palpable contradiction at the heart of such accounts. If the most temperate of climates ought to produce the best of all natural worlds, then it ought to produce the best of all possible bodies, which, in turn, ought to create the best of all possible cultures.[49] It is absurd, Las Casas constantly affirms,

[49] This constitutes a schematic outline of the *Apologética*'s argument.

to consider that God would have created a vast new world filled with human monstrosities, which are, by their very definition, the exception to the rule. ("...por ende que no era posible tan numerosa o innumerable parte como cupo a estas tan dilatadas regiones de la naturaleza de los hombres, hubiese de consentir que saliese naturalmente en toda su especie monstruosa, conviene a saber, falta de entendimiento y no hábil para el regimiento de la vida humana…" *Historia* 13). Las Casas therefore looks deep into the tradition and crafts an argument from within.

Nicolás Wey Gómez has compellingly argued that Las Casas deployed the authority of Albertus Magnus's *De natura loci* (ca. 1252), in order to claim that the torrid zone was indeed suitable for human life. "By way of schooled argumentation and with recourse to testimony about the nature and culture of the New World accumulated over decades of colonial experience, Las Casas sought to prove this claim in an effort to discredit apologists of empire who had invoked place as the basis for considering Amerindians to be slaves by nature. And, as Las Casas

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I. Six natural causes that aid the faculty human understanding:

1) The influence of the heavens
2) The quality of the region and the disposition of the land
3) The composition of bodily members and external/internal sense organs
    - Sobriety in eating and drinking
    - Temperance in sensual affections
    - Moderation in the search and care of worldly and temporal things
    - Absence of negative disturbances of the soul caused by the passions
4) The leniency and mildness of the weather
5) Parental age
6) Good and healthy nourishments

II. Historical argument:

Three principles of civilization (according to Aristotle):

1) monastic - ability to rule one self
2) economic - ability to rule one's family
3) political - ability to rule one's society - composed of 6 social classes: farmers, artisans, warriors, businessmen, priests, judges/rulers

well understood, no one among Aristotle's Christian commentators could claim higher authority on the subjects of nature and place than Albertus Magnus, 'whom God most singularly perfected in the secrets of nature and in all natural philosophy'" (*The Tropics* 237).

And yet, it is the way in which the narrative complements the theory that interests us here. One must inquire into how Las Casas's lived experience is *rhetorically presented*. Both Columbus and Oviedo bring with them, whether explicitly or not, a long list of authorities, but as we have pointed out, their narratives havee recourse to the rhetoric of the marvelous in order to evoke a range negative emotions that promote the effectiveness of their discourse and thus advance their own interests. As with theoretical issue, Las Casas does not go outside the rhetorical tradition but instead seeks to correct it. The *Apolgética*'s narrative of experience, what we now call ethnography, employs a corrected form of *admiration* by restoring its philosophical dimensions and, more importantly, employing to evoke not fear but a seductive awe.

II. Wonder and the Ethics of Proximity

Much like Columbus's exalted descriptions of the New World, Las Casas spends the first 22 chapters of the *Apologética* describing, with utmost delight, the ideal climate, the perfect geography, the clear rivers, the bountiful mountains, the healing plants, the delicious fruits, the wondrous animals of Hispaniola. These descriptions are actually organized as an emotive *crescendo*, for they depict and sketch the contours of the island in four metaphorical surveys, or *vueltas*, ending with the Vega Real, which the friar considered the most beautiful region of Hispaniola. As with the *Brevíssima*, but in a diametrically opposite direction, the opening

paragraphs of each *vuelta* are characterized by the heavy use of the rhetorical figure of the *adynaton*, that is, as an expression that denotes the impossibility of expression.

In the first *vuelta*, Las Casas speaks of a province full of "cerros y sierras y llanos, todo lleno de alegría, hermosura, fertilidad y amenidad, que no me ocurren palabras con qué encarecer y engrandecer la dignidad de todo ello" (*Apologética* I: 16). Las Casas uses the same figure in the second and third *vueltas*, so by the time the reader arrives at the Vega Real, the figure of *adynaton* appears nearly spent: "y como muchas particularidades y en encarecida manera se hayan afirmado de la fertilidad y bondad todas y tantas provincias como hay en esta isla y de su grandeza, no parece que puede haber ya más vocablos, ni para relatar las condiciones y calidades desta Vega, ni vehemencia para con encarecimiento las dar a entender" (I: 47).

Las Casas will, nevertheless, still offer the reader a vehement depiction of the natural marvel that is the Real Vega, which comes as a climax to the first part of the book:

> Hacen esta Vega o cércanla desde que comienza hasta que se acaba dos cordilleras de altísimas y fertilísimas y graciosísimas sierras… Por cualquiera parte destas dos sierras que se asomen los hombres se parecen y descubren veinte y treinta y cuarenta leguas a los que tienen la vista larga, como quien estuviese en medio del océano sobre una altura muy alta. Creo cierto que otra vista tan graciosa y deleitable, y que tanto refrigere y bañe de gozo y alegría las entrañas, en todo el orbe no parece que pueda ser oída ni imaginada, porque toda esta Vega tan grande, tan luenga y tan larga, es más llana que la palma de la mano, antes tan llana como una mesa de bisagras. Está toda pintada de yerba, la más hermosa que puede decirse, y odorífera, muy diferente de la de España. Píntanla de legua a legua, arroyos graciosísimos que la atraviesan, cada uno de los cuales lleva por las rengleras de sus ambas riberas su lista o ceja o raya de árboles siempre verdes, tan bien puestos y ordenados como si fueran puestos a mano. Y como siempre esté esta Vega y toda la isla como están los campos y árboles en España por el mes de abril y mayo, y la frescura de los continuos aires, el sonido de los ríos y arroyos tan rápidos y corrientes, la claridad de las dulcísimas aguas, con la verdura de las yerbas y árboles, y llaneza o llanura tan grande, visto todo junto y especulado de tan alto, ¿quién no concederá ser el alegría gozo y consuelo y regocijo del que lo viere, inestimable y no comparable? (I: 47, 49)

The vision that this passage offers is carefully crafted. Nature is here exalted by being compared to art, with God the creator as artist. The vertiginous expanse of the Real Vega is not only seen through the analogies to the boundless sea, or to the perfect flatness of a carefully leveled table, but the joyful expanse of the Vega is also felt in the rhythm of the prose, prompted by a clever use of the figure known as *polysyndeton*, the repeated use of conjunctions, "se descubren veinte *y* treinta *y* cuarenta leguas… ríos *y* arroyos tan rápidos *y* corrientes… yerbas *y* árboles *y* llaneza o llanura…" alongside a strategic amassing (*accumulatio*) of edenic images. This exciting rhythm comes to a halt with the highly emotive figure of *interrogatio*, the rhetorical question, ("¿quién no concederá ser el alegría gozo y consuelo y regocijo del que lo viere, inestimable y no comparable?") which Las Casas employs here in order to unite the feeling of wonder with the feeling of joy.

But as a work of natural history, or an ethnographic work avant-la-lettre, the *Apologética* is not bound by the norms of the *relación*, or the decorum of the historian. Thus, in a discursive gesture that renders Las Casas as an unexpectedly modern author, the *Apologética* admits the full subjectivity of the author. Las Casas the ethnographer, speaking in the first person, offers the reader a personalized reflection on the effects that this wondrous vision has on himself:

> Digo verdad, que han sido muchas y más que muchas, que no las podría contar, las veces que he mirado esta Vega desde las sierras … y considerándola con morosidad cada vez me hallaba tan nuevo y de verla me admiraba y regocijaba como si fuera la primera vez que la vide y la comencé a considerar. Tengo por averiguado que ningún hombre prudente y sabio que hobiese bien visto y considerado la hermosura y alegría y amenidad y postura desta Vega no ternía por vano el viaje desde Castilla hasta acá, del que siendo o filósofo curioso o cristiano devoto, solamente para verla, y después de vista y considerada se hobiese de tornar; el Filósofo para ver y deleitarse de una hazaña y obra tan señalada en hermosura de la naturaleza, y el cristiano para contemplar el poder y bondad de Dios que este mundo visible cosa tan digna y hermosa y deleitable crió para en que viviesen tan poco tiempo de la vida los hombres, y por ella subir en contemplación qué tales serán los aposentos invisibles del cielo que tiene aparejados a los que tuvieren

> su fe y cumplieren su voluntad, y coger dello motivo para resolvello todo en loores y alabanzas del que lo ha todo criado. (I: 49-50)

With this passage Las Casas sublimates wonder; a sublimation which not only restores the philosophical dimension embedded in *admiratio*, but endows it with a divine impetus reminiscent of a Platonic ascent to a higher realm. In other words, *admiratio* is here used as a corrective, or shall we say, as an ethical emotion, for it can reorient one's focus toward spiritual contemplation. In other words, the pleasure afforded by the contemplation of the wondrous Real Vega is a gift from God. When the friar speaks of their "gracious" rivers and hills he means to say that they are divinely gifted, God's grace is upon the land. This "natural" grace speaks to the contemplator, and the vision of this earthly paradise thus facilitates a turn, a conversion (*con-vertere* - "to turn together"- "to turn around") towards a spiritual, and therefore ethical, realm.

Throughout the *Apologética*, Las Casas will persistently draw parallels between the marvelous grace with which God paints the Vega Real and the marvelous grace that guides the cultural practices of Amerindians. Their artifacts are "cosas maravillosas," their mores, their laws, their speech, everything will be worthy of "admiración." More concretely, when the argument of the *Apologética* leads Las Casas to demonstrate that Amerindian civilizations had a class of artisans, one of the six political classes required of a rational, self-governing republic, the friar exploits the inherently delightful description of art-making, as can be seen from his detailed description of Aztec feather painting.

Las Casas begins by listing, with utmost delight, the colors of the feathers that the Indians employed in their painting:

> Estas plumas eran verdes, coloradas o rubias, moradas, encarnadas, amarillas, azules o presadas, negras y blancas y de todas las demás colores, mezcladas y puras, no teñidas por alguna industria humana, sino todas naturales, tomadas y habidas de diversas aves, y por esto tenían en grande precio cualquiera especie de aves, porque de todas se

> aprovechaban; hasta de los pajaritos más chequitos que por toda la tierra y el aire podían hallarse guardaban los matices de las colores para que unas con otras concordasen y la obra hermoseasen tanto y más propiamente que ningún pintor del mundo. (I: 323)

This tender passage underscores how Amerindian art-making practices are in tune with their paradisiacal world. Indian artists employ natural colors —not dyed by human hands— but given to them by their Creator. Las Casas wants us to give in to his suggestion that the Indian's sensibility is perhaps more acute than those of European artists, as their nuanced search for color and shade demonstrates the delicacy of their perception and aesthetic taste.

Furthermore, with nothing but these feathers, Las Casas states in astonishment, the Indians can make anything their imagination desires.

> Asentaban esta pluma sobre lienzo de algodón y sobre una tabla, y en ello, de la misma manera que tomaran con pinceles de las colores que tuvieran aparejadas en sus conchas o salseretas, así tomaban de las plumitas de todas colores que tenían en sus cajoncitos o vasos, distinctas y apartadas. Si querían hacer un rostro de un hombre o figura de otro animal o otra cosa que hacer determinaban, y era menester pluma blanca, tomaban de la blanca; y si era menester verde, tomaban de la verde; y si colorada, colorada, y pegánbanla con cierto engrudo muy sotilmente, de manera que para los ojos de un rostro de hombre o de animal donde se requirían poner blanco y negro y la niñila del ojo, con la sotileza que un gran pintor con un delicado y sotilísimo pincel hacía la diferencia de las partes del ojo, aquello hacían y hacen ellos de pluma, *y esto es cierto cosa maravillosa*. (my emphasis I: 323-4)

The marvelous here is not constituted by a reconfiguration of fantastical elements; the marvelous is the revelation of another kind of human grace, a refreshing manifestation of the always admirable powers of human subtlety, rationality, and ingenuity. The friar is presenting us with a humanity that God not only did not forsake, but quite the opposite, a humanity endowed with a plethora of gifts (grace).

But if the reader remains unconvinced, Las Casas will bridge the distance with another example. Indeed, the Amerindians used to make animals, shields, and other objects, but their

ingenuity, their reason, Las Casas tells the reader, is clearly displayed in their creations of Christian paintings and retablos:

> Y dado que antes que los cristianos allí entrásemos hacían deste oficio y artes cosas perfectas y maravillosas, un árbol, una rosa, una yerba, una flor, un animal, un hombre, un ave, una chequita y delicatísima mariposa y un monte y una piedra o peña, tan al propio que no era menos sino que si contrahacían una cosa viva, parecía que estaba viva, y si era cosa natural la que querían representar, parecía natural, por los cuales efectos mostraban bien la sotileza de sus ingenios y cuán grande y extraña era su habilidad; pero sin comparación, después que con la ida de los españoles vieron nuestras imágenes y nuestras cosas, tuvieron materia larga y eficacísima ocasión para mostrar bien la viveza de sus entendimientos, la limpieza y desocupación de sus potencias o sentidos interiores y exteriores y su mucha capacidad, porque como nuestras imágines y retablos son grandes y de diversas colores bien pintados, tuvieron lugar de más y mejor extenderse y ejercitarse y señalarse en aquella su tan sotil y nueva arte cuando nuestras cosas quieren sacar y contrahacer. (I: 324)

The Spanish reader can now begin to picture, imaginatively and figuratively, what these marvelous art works say about of their makers. The marvelous effect remains, but Las Casas here allows the reader to consider the art's origin, namely the Amerindians' lively understanding and subtle *ingenio*, as not so radically different from the one the reader possesses.

Figure 5: *Mass of Saint Gregory*, School of San José los Naturales, New Spain, 1539. Feathers on wood. Le Musée des Jacobins d'Auch, France.

Even though Las Casas knew that Indian understanding is not necessarily commensurable with a European episteme, this example serves him as a way to short-circuit any attempts at an unproductive fetishization of the Indian marvelous. In other words, this example prevents the reader from considering indigenous art as so outside the norm that it threatens the universalizing notion of *the human*, the notion which drives and sustains the entire *Apologética*.

Therefore, not forgetting the human element, Las Casas's awe-inspiring explication of the art of feather painting comes with an intimate depiction of the feather painter at work:

> Y porque uno de los grandes primores que por su arte hacen es poner la pluma de tal manera, que si hacen un dosel o un manto o vestidura o otra cosa, mayormente larga o grande, por una parte mirándola parece ser dorada, sin tener oro; por otra parece tornasol; por otra tiene lustre verde, no teniendo principalmente verdura; por otra, mirada al través, tiene otra hermosa color y así de otras muchas, todas con lustre y *maravillosa gracia*; de aquí es que se suele un oficial de éstos estar sin comer y sin beber un día entero, poniendo y quitando plumas, según que vee más convenir los matices, y para que la obra cause más diferencias de lustres y colores y más hermosura, mirando, como dije, de una parte y después de otra; una vez mirándola al sol, otras a la sombra, otras de noche, otras de día o cuasi de noche, otras con poca lumbre, otras con mucha, otras de través y por sosquín, otras por el contrario y al revés. Finalmente, imágenes y retablos y otras muchas cosas de las nuestras han hecho y hacen cada día, de pluma, interponiendo también cosas de oro en sus convenientes lugares, que hacen la obra más vistosa y preciosa, *que a todos los del mundo pueden poner en grande admiración*. (my emphasis I: 324-5)

The description of the feather painter lingers on the careful process of selecting the right feather. The passage takes its time, just as the Indian feather painter forgets time when he contemplates the dazzling dance between color and light. But this gentle image of a delicate artist invites us, tenderly, to wonder at his delicate perception, at his "maravillosa gracia," at his humanity.

Wonder is thus employed not as a way to augment the fear of difference, but as a way to bridge of distance. In the *Apologética admiratio* is a forceful invitation to the reader to get close and see the grace that God has bestowed on the inhabitants of the New World. A spiritual contemplation of the other that can redeem the self.

III. Digression and the Ethnographer's Enamored Senses

The *Apologética*, following the same formula for conversion that Las Casas outlines in *De unico*, employs both *logos* and an *ethos* guided by *caritas* in order to defend the Indians against the accusation that they are uncivilized, irrational savages meant to be slaves by nature. The *Apologética*'s appeal to the reader's reasoning faculties, the *logos* of the work, consists in

enumerating and explicating a series of natural and cultural conditions that evince the Indian's use of human reason, and then providing evidence that proves that such conditions do in fact exist based on experience. *Ethos*, on the other hand, guides Las Casas in his crafting of an alluring ethnographic narrative, for, as we have pointed out, the friar well knew that, the principles of natural philosophy notwithstanding, the true battle lay with the rhetorical effectiveness of such narratives.

Therefore, under this Christianized understanding of ethos, the visions and auditions of Las Casas the ethnographer are constructed in order to elicit the love of one's neighbor. These ethnographic descriptions, however, differ from the preceding examples, as they do not readily conjure the rhetoric of the marvelous at its most exalted. Unlike the lengthy passages of the Vega Real or the depiction of the Nahua feather painters, these brief digressions tear the veil of exalted rhetoric and reveal the affects of an ethnographer. As we will see, these quick and highly sensory depictions are rather intimate, tender, and unexpected, as they constitute a privileged form of the text's numerous digressions. In the *Apologética*, affect emerges from the structure of digression.

But before the reader encounters any captivating visions and auditions of the Indian neighbor, he will first face visions of a blessed nature. Consider this visual digression from the ethnography description that centers on the first region of Hispaniola. Not prefaced by anything, this vision shows up unexpectadly:

> Hay en ella unos gusanos o avecitas nocturnas que los indios llamaban cocuyos, la media sílaba luenga, y en Castilla llamamos luciérnagas, o quizá son escarabajos que vuelan, las tripas de las cuales están llenas de luz; son tan grandes, que con uno vivo en la mano, y mejor si son dos, se pueden rezar maitines en un breviario de la letra menuda, e yo los he rezado, según creo, como con dos candelitas. El pellejuelo que tienen en la barriga es transparente, y cuando vuelan o les alzamos las alillas resplandece la luz que tienen; luego en anocheciendo salen y están los campos y los montes, en mil partes, como si

> estuviesen llenos de candelillas. No se alzan mucho en alto de tierra. Tomado uno se toman muchos, porque acuden muchos adonde ven como preso a uno. Muertos y estrujados con las manos, y puestas aquellas tripillas por el cuerpo, como hacían los indios, y más si fuesen pegadas sobre vestidos, queda todo el cuerpo reluciente como luz esparcida, puesto que dura poco, pero siempre dura cuando vivos. (I: 16-7)

This is a visual feast: portable candles, flames hovering over hills and fields, shimmering Indian bodies. This "Vision," to use Delueze's term, can indeed be qualified as wondrous, but what do we gain by the name here? The language employed to paint this vision is not that of vehemence. Instead, the passage exudes an everyday resonance with its profuse use of diminutives ("avecitas," "candelitas," "candelillas," "alillas," "tripillas") and its depiction of a habitual act ("rezar matines"). It is an everyday wonder, a narration of an ordinary affect.

Similarly, the friar-ethnographer digresses and writes of another everyday wonder, but this one captures the ear:

> En estas muy altas sierras se crían unos pajaritos de diversas colores, hermosos a lo que tengo entendido por lo que se me ha dicho, pero yo no los he visto sino oído y bien oído, los cuales cantan a tres voces cada uno solo; digo que cantan por sí a tres voces que, cierto, es cosa de maravilla, no juntas todas tres voces, sino una tras otra diferentes y consonas como tiple y tenor y contra, pero tan presto todas y tan claras y dulces que cuasi parecen tres juntas y tres subjectos o órganos que las producen. Cosa es que no se puede su dulce sonido encarecer ni dar bien a entender más de que es una música mucho dulce y deleitosa. Yo los he oído algunas veces en aquellas muy altas sierras, y testifico que es cosa para provocar a los hombres que los oyesen a dar muchas y magníficas gracias a Dios en oyéndolo la primera vez. Para gozar de aquel canto, luego se ha de asentar el hombre y con silencio pararse a oír, porque en sintiendo cualquiera estruendo luego callan y por ventura se esconden. (I: 21)

The sweet sound cannot be reproduced by the text. The beauty of this "Audition," to use Deleuze's term, eludes language and the reader has to settle for an analogical description of the bird's singing (compared to three different organs), and a testimony that the *effect* on the ear is in truth an *affect* ("testifico que es cosa para provocar a los hombres que los oyesen a dar muchas y magníficas gracias a Dios").

But, as may be expected, these affective digressions acquire their full force when they reveal the love for an enticing human Other. Consider, for example, the alluring image that emerges from a simple narrative digression from a more heady discussion that sets out to prove the causal relation between temperance ("mansedumbre") and moderate climate ("templanza de los tiempos"):

> Si un indio está durmiendo y otro viene a llamallo, no sabe despertallo de presto por no dalle pena, sino que estará una hora muy pasito estirándole, si tiene camisa o manta, de la halda, o si no la tiene, meneándole del pie poquito a poquito, y con muy blandas y bajas palabras, hasta, sin cuasi sentirlo, despertarlo. (I: 190)

The wondrous image of an Indian summoning another from sleep, by gently swaying his foot for up to an hour while uttering soft and quiet words, is meant to captivate the Spanish reader in his own land, that is, to stimulate and excite his will to believe in this previously unheard of humanity. The image connotes a gentleness, a tenderness, a goodness, that delights, seduces, and excites our sympathy. Yet as the image settles, as its novelty fades, it becomes apparent that we are facing an everyday event, that the image's wonder emerges from our ignorance.

And yet, the precision with which this image is conjured remains beguiling because of its intimacy, because of its proximity, because what it is truly being offered to us is Las Casas's enamoured gaze. Once recognized, Las Casas's enamoured gaze can be seen guiding all the examples that serve as the experiential component to the grand proof that is the *Apologética historia sumaria.* These are the kind of literary shimmers, suffused with positive affect, with which Las Casas aims to convert the reader to the argument that Amerindians are fully rational by nature, and therefore, fully human.

But in the *Apologética* the ethnographer's enamoured gaze memorably yields to the voice of the Indian at his most moving. One of Menéndez Pidal's more pointed critiques of Las Casas

is that "el indio para Las Casas no tiene otro interés que el de ser atropellado por el español" (324), and that this lack of interest is reflected in his flat representations of indigenous peoples. The rhetorical (emotive) ends of such portrayals, namely arousing indignation and pity by means of emphatically polarized representations between victim and perpetrator have answered this question in one sense. Nevertheless, the question remains on why Las Casas does not give much more *literary voice* to the Indians.

The most eloquent voice Las Casas gives to any Indian character is that of Hatuey, with his memorable speech on the Spaniards idolatry of gold (in both the *Brevísima* and the *Historia*), and another similarly striking speech is addressed to Columbus by an old cacique in Cuba, a speech which is made to foreshadow Columbus's demise. But those voices are filtered through highly rhetorical and mimetic conventions. Let us recall that Las Casas accused Gómara's history of unrealistic dialogues between Indians and Spaniards, which points to the fact that Las Casas consciously resisted making the Indians into something they were not, even if permitted to do so by the literary conventions of his time.

Guided by a different kind of rigor, however, the *Apologética* allows Las Casas to foreground the voice of indigenous peoples in way that is moving, accessible and still authentic. In the section that deals with the way parents raise their children, Las Casas dedicates two entire chapters (II: chs. 223,224) to a series of exhortations given by Nahua parents to their children, as well as their tender responses. It is the closest he can get to an affective "Audition," as Las Casas explicitly points out that he trusted the rendition of these exhortations into Spanish by the Franciscan friar Andrés de Olmos, and that even then, the translation is imperfect.

Las Casas inserts these lengthy translated exhortations, and he lets them go on for pages withholding his commentary until the very end. They are, in effect, textual digressions that allow

the reader to come close to Indian discourse and speech, but also, affectively speaking, to witness a moving "Audition:"

> Exhortación que hacía un padre a su hijo
>
> Hijo mío, nascido y criado en el mundo por Dios, en cuyo nascimiento nosotros tus padres y parientes posimos los ojos, has nascido y vivido y salido como el pollito del cascarón, y creciendo como él te impones al vuelo y ejercicio temporal; no sabemos el tiempo que Dios querrá que gocemos de tan preciosa joya; vive, hijo, con tiento, y encomiéndate al Dios que te crió que te ayude, pues es tu padre que te ama más que yo. Sospira a él del día y de noche y en él pon tu pensamiento; sírvele con amor, y hacerte ha mercedes y librarte ha de peligros. A la imagen de Dios y a sus cosas ten muncha reverencia y ora delante dél devotamente y aparéjate en las fiestas. (II: 435)
>
> Padre mío, muncho bien habéis hecho a mí vuestro hijo; por ventura, ¿tomaré algo de lo que de vuestro corazón para mi bien ha salido, con lo cual decís que cumplís conmigo, y que no terné excusa si en algún tiempo hiciere lo contrario de lo que me habéis dicho? No será, cierto, a vos imputado, padre mío, ni será vuestra la deshonra, pues me aviséis, sino mía; pero ya veis que aún soy muchacho y juego con la tierra y aún no me sé limpiar las narices; ¿dónde, padre mío, me habéis de dejar o enviar? Soy vuestra carne y sangre, por lo cual, confío que otros consejos me daréis; ¿por ventura desampararme heis? Cuando yo no los tomare como me los habéis dicho, ternéis razón de dejarme como si no fuese vuestro hijo. Agora, padre mío, con estas palabras poquitas, que apenas sé decir, respondo a lo que habéis dicho. Yo os doy gracias, y estéis en buena hora y reposad, padre mío. (II: 440)
>
> Madre mía, muncho bien habéis hecho a mí vuestra hija; ¿dónde me habéis de dejar, pues de vuestras entrañas soy nacida? Harto mal sería para mí si no sintiese y mirase que sois mi madre y yo vuestra hija, por quien tomáis más trabajo del que tomaste en me criar niña al huego, teniéndome en los brazos soñolienta de fatiga. Si me quitárades la teta o me ahogárades con el brazo durmiendo ¿qué fuera de mí? Pero con el temor que desto teníades no tomábades sueño quieto, mas velábades estando sobre aviso, y no así de presto os venía la leche a las tetas que me distes, por los trabajos que teníades, y por estar embarazada conmigo trabajar no podíades. Con vuestros sudores me criastes y mantuvistes, y aún no me olvidáis agora dándome avisos; ¿con qué os lo pagaré yo, madre mía, o cómo os serviré yo? ¿O con qué os daré algún descanso, madre mía, porque aún soy muchacha y juego con la tierra y hago otras niñerías y no me sé limpiar las narices? (II: 447)

Stylistic features of Nahuatl —such as parallel constructions, repetitions, diminutives, solemn rhetorical questions—, as well as imagery proper to Nahuatl's own rhetorical conventions— "juego con la tierra y aún no me sé limpiar las narices"— shine through this translation,

rendering the passage distant and yet bringing the reader closer to difference. But the rhetorical strategy here is an editorial one, and Las Casas selects passages in which tenderness surfaces so rapidly that it even eclipses the fatherly exhortation. The friar knows that by making audible these speeches, he can reveal the universal affective bond between parent and child, which will engage most readers. Both the content and the sound are here to enamor.

But that affective force belongs pure to the textual digression, for when Las Casas does comment on them, he first praises their rhetorical sophistication, stating that they could not achieve their full rhetorical effect rhetorical as they are mere translations: "[estas] amonestaciones creo yo que sonaban mejor en la lengua mexicana que en la romance que les dio el padre susodicho…" (II: 447). By praising their eloquence, however, the friar takes the opportunity to emphasize, yet again, the cultural sophistication of Amerindians: "las gentes destas Indias tienen natural elocuencia, y así les es fácil orar y representar sus bienes y males como si todas las reglas y colores de la Retórica hobiesen aprendido y embebido en sí toda su vida… mayormente las mexicanas" (II: 447).

Furthermore, at this point in the *Apologética*, Las Casas is particularly interested in foregrounding the content of these exhortations, wherein lies the proof that the Amerindians possessed economic prudence (rule of one's household), laying the groundwork for a discussion of political prudence. Relying on the sheer force of the passages, Las Casas quickly highlights, by means of a succinct rhetorical question, what he intuits some readers may have already grasped:

> … considerando sólo la sentencia dellas… ¿quién podrá decir con verdad que alguno de los preceptos de la ley natural que se contienen en nuestro divino Decálogo, ni en los que conciernen a las virtudes de la prudencia y justicia y fortaleza y temperancia, que son las que llaman morales, y todo lo demás tocante a la modestia y honestidad, en especial, que

> son partes de la temperancia, en las dichas exhortaciones o avisos y consejos paternales falta? (II:447)

The Amerindian's temperance, which was previously portrayed through the alluring image of an Indian gently and softly waking up another, can also be perceived, or rather heard, in Indian speech and discourse. And yet, paraphrasing Andrés de Olmos, Las Casas indirectly asks any reticent reader for an openness of mind and heart: "por las dichas pláticas y aviso, dice él, podrán colegir los que con *buenas entrañas quisieren considerar* lo que estas pobres gentes e indios naturales… alcanzaban por natural razón" (my emph. II: 448). One must have a good disposition, an openness, towards these revelations of otherness. As an ethnographer Las Casas allows himself to be affected by his subject, because as a master rhetorician, Las Casas knows that to produce *evidentia*, the putting before one's eyes of an emotive event, demands that the rhetor himself be as genuinely and authentically possessed of the emotion he wishes to transmit.

But, going back to the language of rhetoric, there is no room in the *Apologética* for the violent emotions attributed to *pathos*; the *Apologética* instructs and delights. It employs the *logos* of natural philosophy in conjunction with a textual *ethos* meant to evoke *admiratio* as way to convert and not merely persuade the reader. This constitutes Las Casas's most thorough defense of Amerindians. *Admiratio* ignites our desire to apprehend Indian otherness. The gentility of expression, the tenderness of the image, the intimacy that only an enamoured gaze can reveal, constitute, to borrow a phrase from Emmanuel Levinas, a kind of non-coercive "rhetoric without eloquence."

Indeed, the distinction that Las Casas stresses in *De unico* between *ethos* and *pathos* bears a great resemblance to the distinction Levinas makes between the *Saying* and the *Said*. The *Saying* is a "drawing nigh to one's neighbor… in the saying we approach our fellow-man

instead of forgetting him in the enthusiasm of eloquence" (141). The emotive rhetoric of the *Apologética* not only draws the reader near to the Indian neighbor, but its evocative visions are offered as an invitation to fall in love. Unlike imperialist ethnography, Lascasian ethnography wields the impetus of wonder endowed with love as way to encourage an ethical transcendence that can decidedly bridge the unethical distance of fear.

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