

## Moved with Rage: The Politics of Emotion in *Libro de Alexandre*

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This article explores the ethics of royal anger in the 13th-century Iberian verse narrative *Libro de Alexandre*. Composed by an anonymous cleric in northern Iberia in the early 13th century, the *Libro de Alexandre* is an epic *tour de force* that draws from source material like *Historia de Proeliis* and *Alexandreis* to narrate a fictionalized biography of Alexander the Great, the famous king of Macedonia (356-323 BCE). Throughout the poem, excessive rage haunts Alexander, leading him to forget his Aristotelian education and ultimately destroy the very foundations of his secular and spiritual empire, based ideologically in Thebes. Scholarship on *Alexandre* has largely focused on its role within the *mester de clerecía* genre (González-Blanco García, Willis) and the Christianization of a pagan tale (Curtis, Brownlee, Michael). Uría Maqua (1996; 1997) emphasizes Alexander's demise to argue that the poet sought to caution his Christianate audience against the sin of pride (*soberbia*). Other studies detail the poem's transmission and reception in court circles (Ancos 2009, 2012; Arizaleta 2008, 2010), and read Alexander as an ideal *caballero* whose engagement with Darius's Persian forces allegorizes the spirit of Reconquest for Christian Iberia against the Muslim-occupied south (Pearce, Arizaleta 2008, Casas Rigall). The theme of memory has been underscored as a source of cultural transmission of the classical past (Pascual-Argente) and a mechanism that connects burgeoning models of secular authority with traditional religious discourse (Weiss). Pinet and Surtz explore the scholarly persona of Alexander as a further legitimization of clerical knowledge within an intellectually limiting Christian perspective. And, most recently, Francomano has explored the poem's sense imagery to suggest that Alexander's spiritual salvation is incompatible with his classically inspired desire for secular glory.

While these last studies come close, generally absent from this great body of work is any significant attention to how the poet infused contemporary ethics of emotion into his construction of Alexander—and what this characterization can tell us about the poet's psychological blueprint for kingship. Employing an affective framework that rejects progress narratives<sup>1</sup> and is careful not to essentialize 13th-century Iberia into an emotional monolith, this article argues that the *Alexandre* poet crafts a tension between expressions of excessive rage and competing notions of emotional restraint (*mesura*) in order to allegorize a capricious and intellectually dulled image of royal power that Castilian rulers steeped in frontier politics would, and needed to, avoid. This exploration of Alexander's inability to control his rage, and the negative consequences it has both to his imperial project and his spiritual health, offers a more balanced view of this cleric's model of Iberian kingship.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norbert Elias's 1930 *Civilizing Process* first suggested a diametric model of emotions wherein premodern society's emotional hysteria can be juxtaposed to modernity's more civilized control of emotions. Translated into English in the 1970s, Elias's theory gained momentum with Peter and Carol Stearns' concept of "emotionology," which used the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a progress divider to mark the more juvenile and capricious premodern emotional expressions from those of the more civilized, modern forms of emotion ("Emotionology" 1985). Along with Barbara Rosenwein and Simon Doubleday, I reject the idea that modern people are somehow more emotionally civilized than our premodern ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> The poem exists in two nearly complete manuscripts and various fragments. The oldest, called "O" after its former owner, the Duke of Osuna, dates to the late 13th- or early 14th-century, has 2,5000 stanzas, and is housed in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid (M.S. Vitr. 5-nº10). The other, "P", dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, has 2,639 stanzas, and

Cultural thought surrounding the ethics of royal anger in the centuries leading up to the *Libro de Alexandre* were diverse. However, it was commonly agreed that excessive manifestations of anger as a mental faculty (what Thomas Aquinas called *passiones animæ*) were spiritually and corporally dangerous and should be avoided (Barton, 371). The roots of this philosophy, with links to ancient Stoicism's rejection of emotional excess, are evident in the works of Aristotle and St. Augustine, and develop further through San Isidoro of Seville and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Kings who were perceived as irascible could and were accused of violating the limits of what William Reddy terms an emotional regime: that collective set of normative emotions and practices that govern a political body and serve as the "necessary underpinning of any stable political regime" (129). Affect theory has, until recently, not found its place as a serious method of inquiry in literary and cultural studies due in part to its ostensibly subjective approach (Johnson, 7).<sup>3</sup> However, the emotional regime that governed adequate expressions of royal anger in medieval Iberia drew from these classical and early Christian sources and was further codified in philosophical and legal treatises like *Libro de los doce sabios*, St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae*, and Alfonso X's *Siete partidas*. Additionally, Iberian poets, including the *Alexandre* author but also Berceo and others, cultivated this regime in their

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is housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (MS. Esp. 488). The Manuscript "O", whose copyist self-identified in the final stanza as Juan Lorenzo de Astorga, employs a Leonese dialect. Manuscript "P" bears the copyist name Gonzalo de Berceo and favors an Aragonese dialect. Such & Rabone note that P is probably truer to the original manuscript, though copied later (5). While there is no ultimate consensus on the date or place of publication, scholars generally agree that it was written sometime in the first third of the 13th-century in northern Iberia. The poem has been linked to the scholastic environment based around the *studium generale* curriculum at the incipient University of Palencia in the years between 1217 and 1227 (Uría Maqua 1987, 441; Franchini 35-43). Uría Maqua (2000) has even suggested that the poem was composed here by a team of authors under the direction of Berceo. Conversely, Arizaleta (1999; 2000; 2008; 2010) and Rucquoi emphasize the poem as a *speculum principii* that was composed in courtly circles for the practical and spiritual benefit of Castilian royalty. My reading follows this approach to poetic reception, guided also by Ancos's inclusion of the receptor as part of the authorial body of the text, someone whose consumption creates additional meaning for the poem (2012, 263). See also his precursor to this study, "Textos cerrados y obras abiertas" (2009), in which he suggests that *mester* authors had a conscious understanding of the cultural and spatial weight of their creation (158). For a detailed review of the possible dates of composition and authorship, see García Gaul's introduction in Cañas Murillo, *Libro de Alexandre*, 2018, pp. 15-30, and Arizaleta (2008). For information on the poet's source material, including the French *Alexandreis* (written in Latin) and the *Historia de Proeliis*, see Arizaleta (1999, 53-80), Michael (1970, 12-217) and Willis, *The Relationship of the Spanish Libro de Alexandre*, 1934. For a comprehensive study of medieval Alexandrian literature in Western Europe, see Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, 1956. Barletta considers this study unrivaled in its scope, yet also criticizes Cary's cursory attention to the Alexander figure in Iberia and, specifically, in the Arabic and *Aljamiado* traditions (2010 73). For a detailed survey of Castilian Alexandrian literature in the Iberian Peninsula, see Lida de Malkiel, "Datos" (1962) and more recently Zuwiyya, *Companion to Alexander Literature* (2011) and Stoneman *Alexander the Great: A Life in legend* (2008). The two most influential Alexandrian texts outside of the Western Latin tradition produced in Iberia are the Arabic *Life of Alexander* (García Gómez, 1929) and the *Aljamiado Alexander* (Nykl, 1929).

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's *Affective Geographies* (2020) advances affect theory in the field of Early Modern Hispanism by reading Cervantes's many emotional expressions through what he terms an "affective economy," a critical paradigm that "casts emotions as an alternative commodity to be constantly shared, circulated, plundered, recovered, and revalued" (5). We may read the *Alexandre* poet's affective economy—through which he condemns excessive anger as a vice incompatible with kingship—in part as the literary product of 13th-century Iberia's "emotional regime" (Reddy) or "emotional community" (Rosenwein): "Groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or *devalue*—the same or related emotions (my emphasis). Other studies linking affect to cultural production in premodern Iberia include Piera, *Women Readers*, 2019. On Anger specifically, see Doubleday "Anger" 2015a (also his chapter "Anger" in *Wise King* 2015b); Barton "Gendering Anger" (2005). For more on the intersection between politics and affect, see Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* (2014); Protevi *Political Affect* (2009).

fiction.<sup>4</sup> Rulers accused of violating the emotional regime faced strong rhetorical and political opposition that could even justify political regime change (Doubleday 2015a). The formalized limits of medieval anger, as well as the acute repercussions that a ruler could face for violating those limits, thus make emotions—particularly anger—in *Libro de Alexandre* an attractive and worthwhile critical subject.

Moreover, emotional restraint and ideological openness become valuable affective commodities for Iberian rulers operating in a fluid frontier space who needed to leverage shaky alliances with sovereigns of competing political, religious, and economic interests in order to ensure the health and growth of their domains. Far from a theater of Reconquest, 13th-century Iberia was a complex network of cultural intersection that often valued political convenience over religious ideology. While many examples exist, Alfonso X's military alliance with Abu Yusuf, the Marinid Emir, against Alfonso's rebellious son Sancho in 1282 illustrates the fallacy of Reconquest discourse when held up to even the most general historical scrutiny.<sup>5</sup> For courtly Iberian audiences ready to delight in the *Libro de Alexandre*, but who were also engaged in the construction of textual meaning as active cultural receptors (Ancos 2012, 263), the resulting portrait, I argue, is one of a ruler whose excessive anger restricts his ability to successfully navigate the complexities of 13th-century Iberian geopolitics. The suggestion that Alexander exemplifies the virtues of kingship is problematized by the fact that his emotional shortcomings lead to his imperial and spiritual doom. Read in this light, Alexander becomes an illegitimate absolutist in an era of ideological nuance.

#### *“Un culebro irado:” Harnessing Anger*

This section considers how emotions operate in the text initially with special attention to Aristotle's doctrine and Alexander's young characterization. It details the prevailing cultural thought on adequate expressions of royal anger in and around the poet's contemporary Iberia. It documents how Alexandrian wisdom literature, *Speculum principii*, as well as philosophical and legal treatises all attempted to regulate anger into a practical framework for achieving desirable political and spiritual goals, namely order and salvation. I argue that the *Alexandre* text actively strove to be a part of this framework.

The *Alexandre* poet's conception of anger as a dangerous emotion that should not exceed certain limits is established early in the narrative when Aristotle introduces both us and the prince to a series of value statements according to which eternal fame won on the battlefield

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<sup>4</sup> In the *Libro de Apolonio*, another Iberian retelling of a well-known story of antiquity, the wicked king Antioco desires to kill Apolonio because of the “yra et grant pesar” he experiences when Apolonio uncovers the king's incestuous relationship with his daughter (Corbella 36.c). King Apolonio himself, who is lauded for his “grant mesura” (527.b) is similarly moved by rage when he dishonorably strikes his daughter posing as a minstrel, drawing blood (528.a). In one of the more compelling Marian miracles, the Virgin Mary grows angry with a bishop who has excommunicated a priest for knowing only Her mass (Berceo *Milagros* no. 9; *Cantigas de Santa María* no. 32). While not the focus of this paper, these examples invite further consideration of anger's role in medieval Iberian literature.

<sup>5</sup> Another example is Fernando III's religiously diverse alliance of soldiers at the Battle of las Navas in 1212. Both cases illustrate instances in which religious ideology was relegated in favor of political expediency. Brian Catlos proposes the principle of “Convenience” (*conveniencia*) when describing the geopolitical dynamics of frontier life in late medieval Iberia (“Conveniencia” 2001; *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom* 2014, esp. 508-535). For more studies on medieval Iberian border crossing in both the geographic and ideological sense, see Fancy *Mercenary Mediterranean* (2016); Sampedro Vizcaya and Doubleday *Border Interrogations* 2008; Barton “Traitors” (2002); Bennison “Liminal States” (2001).

(71.bc; 78.ab) must be tempered with judicial restraint and control of one's emotions.<sup>6</sup> For example, Aristotle explicitly tells Alexander not to be conquered by greed or love or spite when exercising judicial privilege: “Quando fueres alcáll”, siempre juega derecho: non te vença cobdiçia nin amor nin despecho” (59.ab). He furthermore cautions that avarice blinds rulers to what happens around them: “El príncipe avariento non sabe qué'l contez” (63.a). This version of Aristotle, who teaches the philosophical tenets of virtue to his young pupils, appears throughout the medieval genre of wisdom literature that was so popular in the poet's time (Francomano 191). The Latin *Secretum Secretorum*, whose main source was an earlier Arabic text (*Kitāb Sirr-al-asrār*: كتاب سر الأسرار) is a collection of pseudo-Aristotelian didactic letters addressed to his pupil Alexander on a broad range of topics. It was copied and translated widely by the time the *Alexandre* was composed, and cautions Alexander to temper his passions in order that “virtue and knowledge be accomplished.”<sup>7</sup>

Often used as interchangeable terms, the name given to this wisdom literature when applied to the political realm is *Speculum principii*, or mirror of princes. In Castile, where the poet lived and operated, many *Speculum principii* were translated from earlier Classical and Arabic sources in the famous workshops of Fernando III (r. 1217-52) and his son Alfonso X ‘El Sabio’ (r. 1252-84).<sup>8</sup> Relying on the wisdom of classical sages, texts like *Calila wa Dimna* and *Bocados de oro* offered to entertain and entice those privileged enough to consume them, but also proposed to instruct audiences in the art of kingship. *Bocados* in particular is another text, like *Secretum secretorum*, that drew from earlier Arabic source material (*Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim*: *Maxims and Aphorisms*: مختار الحكم ومحاسن الكلم) but additionally made its way into the Castilian vernacular c. 1250 and thus closer to the *Alexandre* poet's shelf of muses. Chapters XXII and XXIII of *Bocados* cover Aristotle's counsel to the young Alexander. The sage emphasizes wisdom (*sabiduría*) as the soul's armament and mirror of one's wits (*seso*), and stresses that kings should be “retenedor de su ira do la ha de retener” (Guadalajara Salmerón 471-2). The similarities between these versions of Aristotle and the one presented in the *Alexandre* are telling. Because the exact year of composition of the *Alexandre* is uncertain, it is difficult to say whether the *Alexandre* poet was working with these texts specifically (especially the *Bocados*). If he was writing before the *Bocados* appeared in the Castilian vernacular, then it's reasonable to assume that he knew and drew from earlier Latin texts like the *Secretum secretorum*. And, quite possibly, he may have consulted earlier versions of Aristotelian wisdom literature in the original Arabic (like the *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim* mentioned above) that passed through the hands of Castilian translators in the early part of the 13th century.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, what is clear is that the *Alexandre* poet was able to draw from an operative and substantial collection of wisdom literature while crafting his own Aristotle.

It is in part Alexander's delight in the tyrannical wonders of the sea—which mirrors life on earth (2312) and is incompatible with the concept of *mesura* (2318)—that leads to his divinely sanctioned doom. In the concluding section of the poem, it is God, citing Alexander's *desmesura*, who exerts his punishment upon the king:

<sup>6</sup> I use Juan Casas Rigall's 2007 edition of *Libro de Alexandre*. All citations refer to stanza and verse. All translations are my own.

<sup>7</sup> “en ti de virtudes e de sciencias sea acabada” (Bizzarri Ch. XVI).

<sup>8</sup> For more on Castilian Translation Workshops see O'Callaghan *Learned King* ch. 9 “Literature and Learning (esp. pp. 134-144).

<sup>9</sup> LaCarra even suggests the possible existence of a Hebrew translation of the *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim* that appeared previous to *Bocados* (1992, 46). Cited in Guadalajara Salmerón (66).

Pesó al Criador que crió la Natura:  
 ovo de Alexandre saña e grant rencura.  
 Dixo: “¡Este lunático que non cata medida  
 Yo’l tornaré el gozo todo en amargura! (2329)

Notably, God also displays acute anger in this section (*saña e grant rencura*), but the poet is sure to qualify this emotion in line with Christian thought on divine punishment for personal excess (*que non cata medida*). Deuteronomy speaks of God’s “furious wrath” in the context of Sodom and Gomorrah’s penalty for wickedness, and the Christian rhetorician Lactantius (d. ca. 330) argued that God becomes angered (*irascitur*) and hates (*odit*) the wicked (Rosenwein 2006, 42-45). Alexander’s death is the result of a justly angry God who punishes the king for his unjustly excessive emotions.

The poem’s lessons concerning the dangers of emotional *desmesura* mirror the poet’s contemporary thought governing the emotional regime to which kings should subscribe. The works of both San Isidoro and Saint Thomas Aquinas adhere to a proto-Aristotelian worldview in which emotions are cognitive judgements based on sensory perceptions of real-world phenomena (Rosenwein 2006, 35). For San Isidoro, Anger (*Ira*) was one of three passions—the other two being Desire (*Cupiditas*) and Lust (*Libido*)—that “provoke in the spirit of man the greatest of tribulations” and “lead to many perturbances in the spirit, and sometimes lead to such wrongdoing that one can neither be permitted the respect of a good reputation nor refrain from personal danger.”<sup>10</sup> In similar fashion, St. Thomas defined emotions as *passiones animæ*, wherein the spirit (*animus*) is moved or otherwise externally prompted to suffer/endure (*patior*) (*Summa theologiæ* Ia.2.æ.22,1). Every emotion has a corresponding opposite except that of anger (*passione iræ*), which is caused by a latent evil (*ex malo difficili jam injacente*) and which induces violence (*motum ad invadendum*) (Ia.2æ.23,3). Following St. Augustine’s *Ethics* (I, 13), Aquinas wrote that all of the spirit’s passions are “morally evil” (*sunt malæ moraliter*) because of their corrosive effects on the soul (Ia.2æ.24,2). Anger would therefore be the most dangerous of all the emotions. Lacking an emotional counterweight to hold it in check, and spurred on by its inherent lack of reason (*Ira non est cum ratione* Ia.2æ.46,4), St. Thomas considered anger the leading cause of the “diseases and afflictions of the spirit” (*morbos vel perturbationes animæ* Ia.2æ.24,2).

Closer both chronologically and spatially to the poet’s courtly Castilian environs, works like the *Libro de los doce sabios* and the *Siete partidas* also warned about the dangers of emotional excess. The *Libro de los doce sabios* was commissioned by Fernando III for the young prince Alfonso X of Castile as a *speculum principis* following in the tradition of wisdom literature discussed above. While in some instances it condoned royal anger as a means of expressing authority, it also praised emotional restraint (*temprança*) as a “maravillosa virtud” (Walsh 82). The text further explains that “Que sy el señor o príncipe o regidor non remediase su saña con tenplamiento, muy de ligero podría fazer cosa en daño grande del pueblo, e de que se arrepentiese e por ventura non pudiese remedair” (Walsh 82). Alfonso X would remember this lesson when it came his turn to rule. His legal code the *Siete partidas* cautions that a ruler might lose the faith of his subjects “if he be so base against them that they come to fear him.”<sup>11</sup> With

<sup>10</sup> “...quæ in animis hominum multas perturbationes gignunt, et interdum cogunt ita delinquere, ut nec famæ nec periculi sui respectum habere permittant” (*Etimologías* VIII.xi.95).

<sup>11</sup> “Cuando el fuesse tan crudo contra ellos, que ouiesse a auer del gran miedo ademas” (*Las siete partidas del sabio rey Don Alfonso*, edition Gregorio López, Partida II, Title I, Law III, p. 728).

the exception of perhaps the *Siete partidas* and St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae*, both of which were composed some decades after the *Alexandre's* suspected date of composition in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the *Alexandre* poet relied on this collective body of literature governing the emotional regime of anger when he composed his work. Channeling then both the figure of Aristotle as he appeared in popular wisdom literature, as well as contemporary approaches to emotional restraint rooted in the Stoic and Christian drive for virtue and salvation, the *Alexandre* poet establishes a religio-political framework for kingship and sets his Alexander loose.

In fact, as I will now argue, the poet infused these ideas into his characterization of Alexander in order to craft an image of an Iberian king whose excessive anger directly foreshadows secular demise as well as spiritual punishment. Signs of doom announce his birth even, such as a darkened sky from which fall heavy rocks (8.b; 9.b). His arrival into this world creates a tempestuous sea (*todo'l mar fue irado* 8.c) and a violent snake (*un culebro irado* 10.c). The snake as a symbol of corruption is undoubtedly an allusion to humanity's original sin (Genesis 3), and links Alexander's birth with predestined vice. As Willis explains, these prodigies appear also in the 12th-century French *Roman d'Alexandre* (1934, 6-11), and Such & Rabone point to their Biblical precedent in Revelation 16 (680). Portents appear also in the Iberian *clerecía* work *Poema de Yúçuf*, as Joseph initially envisions eleven stars warring with each other in the sky (Johnson 6.bc), and later, marking his arrival into Egypt, the dark sky clears into a resplendent light (59). However, whereas the omens in *Yúçuf* emphasize Joseph's prophetic, holy character in the Islamic tradition, the signs announcing Alexander do the opposite. Reappearing also at the time of Alexander's death, the night sky is described as "mala e peligrosa" and the stars of heaven engage each other in battle (2602-2604). These are important omens that serve to create textual links between Alexander's problematic ethos and affective ire. The portents have a chilling effect on the citizens of Corinth, who come to fear the prince even as a toddler hardly able to speak (12.d).

This rage is equally present in adulthood and, more importantly, during the first moments of his political reign. As a young prince, Alexander cannot stomach the thought of paying tribute to Darius's Persian empire, and just the idea whips him into a "grant follonia" that affects both his body and his mind (24.a). In this section we can see the Stoic ideas of the "first movements" of pre-emotion (St. Thomas's *transmutationes corporales*) that warned one of an oncoming, harmful cognitive perception which the virtuous person would know to avoid (Rosenwein 2006, 39; 2015, 148). Physically, Alexander is described as losing color in his face while also being overcome with a dark countenance (23.ab). He bites his lips (24.a; 30.b) and is again described as discolored (31.a). Emotionally, his rage drives him into a feral illness (*fiera maletía* 30.b). And finally, newly coronated as the king of Macedonia, we see how his citizens still fear Alexander just as they did when he was a child: "quando fue coronado, / pavor avié tod'omne que'l oviesse irado" (198.ab). Operative rage, then, defines Alexander's person from birth, through his upbringing, and into his kingship. It spiritually haunts him and physically marks him, and it inspires in his subjects the acute threat of distemperate harm.

#### "En lenguas tierras" *Frontier Allegory*

Having established how the poet, elaborating on his sources, also relied on contemporary illustrations of Aristotle as well as various definitions of the emotional regime that governed anger in order to construct a problematic image of Alexander's kingship, this section will explore how the poet qualified this vision of kingship within a recognizable political space that

allegorizes the anxieties of 13th-century frontier life. Looking outward from Castile, the borders of this landlocked kingdom expanded rapidly in the first half of the 13th century. Uniting first with the kingdom of León (1230), Fernando III's armies secured Córdoba (1236), Sevilla (1248), and Cádiz (1250). Close to these events in time and location, the *Alexandre* poet infuses the narrative with textual allusions to these and other Iberian frontier events of geopolitical significance. Reading the poem in this light charges the text with a new didactic weight, which in turn necessitates a more urgent and practical reading of Alexander's military operations for the courtly audience. Gathered in the throne room and other places of public discourse to hear musicians recite sections of the poem (the work was too long to be consumed in one sitting), political leaders, high-ranking military figures, and other people of the court would be more inspired by any successes Alexander may experience and, of concern here, cautioned against replicating any of his failures. Qualifying Alexander's campaign within the historical context of Castile's expansionist push will allow for a more effective appraisal of the poet's construction of Alexander's rage as either operating within or beyond the emotional register, and what effect this has on our understanding of the poem's ultimate lesson concerning kingship and emotional restraint.

It bears mentioning that certain expressions of royal anger were easily justified and even expected at times, especially when political authority was threatened. The practice of *ira regia*, for example, allowed for kings to punish more serious crimes like treason informally with banishment instead of through capital punishment (Grassotti). Linehan, citing Lucas de Tuy's *Cronicon Mundi* (1236), writes that 13th-century Iberia was a society in which "a Christian ruler could be commended by one of his bishops for securing peace and justice by dropping his enemies from towers, and drawing, burning, cooking and skinning them alive" (24). Accordingly, the same Fernando III who gave his prince son the *Libro de los doce sabios* also occasionally boiled his victims in large pots of water, or "had skinned alive, and by means of various sorts of torture ensured that the kingdom remained in peace and justice." At times we might infer that the poet approves of this behavior in Alexander. In noting the poet's reaction to Alexander's ignominious disposal of Pauson's body ("Todos los traidores assí debién morir" 186.a), Willis writes that these asides represent a unique element of the *Alexandre* separate from the source material (1934, 60). Michael similarly writes that the poem ascribes to an absolutist view of "medieval kings' need to keep their authority unquestioned and their persons inviolate" (84). Under certain circumstances, the *Alexandre* poet appears at times to endorse the extreme measures with which Alexander attempts to mitigate early threats to his rule.

However, beyond the need to demonstrate absolute authority, the text reveals that often Alexander's behavior exceeds the judicial limits of *ira regia*, or even that measured, pragmatic, and goal-oriented rage that works like *Doce sabios* and *Siete partidas* occasionally recommended. For example, we learn of Alexander's sadistic penchant for feeding criminals to his horse Buçifal (113), and we see him attempt to hang the messengers of Darius as revenge for what Alexander perceives as the Persian king's rhetorical insolence (794). While the poet is curiously silent about these acts of unbridled violence, he does appear to disapprove of similarly capricious behavior in other characters, most notably in the section detailing the sack of Troy by the Greeks, which Alexander himself narrates. In the battle between Hector and Achilles, the thoroughly enraged Greek champion (whom the poet previously associates with Alexander through their links to Thebes) is described as "fierament'irado" (699.b). Equally incensed language is used to describe Achilles throughout this passage: his nostrils flare (696.c), his attacks are charged with the energy of fire (698.d), and even his very movements are infused

with rage (“tornada con ira” 701.a). Upon defeating Hector, Achilles in this battle frenzy drags Hector’s lifeless body around the city in a spiteful display that the poet qualifies as “una grant crüeldat” (713.a). This section must be read in connection with Cleodas’s previous claim that Achilles is native to the town of Thebes (discussed below), a town which Alexander holds momentarily before burning it to the ground. Like his geographic descendant Achilles, Alexander will perform equally mercurial acts of dishonor in his battle blindness. Certainly, the instances in which Alexander is most unhinged occur during his military campaigns which, framed within recognizable textual spaces that allegorize Iberia’s frontier politics, ultimately cast the ruler as an undesirable example of royal authority.

Scholarship on political allegory in *Libro de Alexandre* cites the poem’s classical and biblical content in their arguments. Clara Pascual-Argente’s ekphrastic study on the funerary passages and manuscript imagery emphasizes the poet’s “preoccupation with the creation and transmission of a cultural memory of the classical past” (74). Geraldine Hazbun extends the traditional definition of the scholarly *mester de clerecía* agenda (López-Estrada; Willis 1956) by suggesting that the cleric’s obligation was “a duty/ministry undertaken in order to foreground specific memories of past deeds” (92). Emily Francomano and Fernando Riva highlight the poem’s connection to Babylon. For Francomano, the poem’s sense imagery in the passage describing Babylon invites the reader to ponder the rise and fall of Alexander’s empire (190), while Riva focuses on Alexander’s family heritage to conclude that “la asociación del rey griego en la narrativa del imperio babilónico y su caída es explícita” (1038). Yet while classical elements are undeniable and expected in this story of the most famous hero of antiquity, allusions to the poem’s historical present are equally informative.

These instances occur early in the poem and demonstrate the poet’s commitment to recalling a more recent past that is grounded not in classical legend, but instead the easily recognizable world of the poet and his audience. The allusion to Charlemagne’s control over “África e Marruecos, quantos regnos y son” (88.c) relies on the audience’s knowledge of a contemporary historical figure to express and frame Alexander’s imperial goals with an eye to the present. This allusion brings the story into a recognizable textual space which is later given geopolitical specificity through the poet’s description of Alexander’s horse, Buçifal, which is valued greater than the entirety of Castile (*Castiella* 118.d). Moreover, the poet’s *mappa mundi* digression (276-94), based mainly on a passage from the *Alexandreis*, nonetheless draws on the 7th-century Iberian scholar Isidoro of Seville’s concept of the Greek tripartite political divisions of the world (Such & Rabone 687). The poet asks its contemporary audience to look back at an ancient legend, though the anachronistic allusions to Iberian familiarities have the effect of pulling the legend into the audience’s world.

Read together in the context of Alexander’s campaign of conquest, such allusions to the poem’s more recent past-in temporal (*Carlos*), geographic (*Castiella*), and ideological (*mappa mundi*) terms—support a reading of the text as one steeped in the concerns of “early Iberian empire” (Barletta 22). Simone Pinet writes that the many cartographic allusions “support a surface, cultural view of the world, one particularly linked to power” (92). In her studies linking clerical production to court reception, Arizaleta compares key passages—like the rumors of Alexander’s illegitimacy (19-20), and his investiture ceremony (196-210)—to similar descriptions found in chronicles in order to argue that the poem cultivates a heroic image of Castilian kingship intimately linked with “su espíritu de conquista” (2008, 74). Julian Weiss, exploring Arizaleta’s reading of Alexander as a monarch of Reconquest, takes this analogy to its natural limits. He emphasizes an implicit analogy between the historical foreign oppression of

Toledo by Muslim forces, and the Greek submission to Darius's foreign control in the text, in order to suggest that the recovery of Corinth was a "moral imperative" and "precondition for future expansion" (125) for the poet's Alexander. Pearce similarly terms Alexander "a prince of the Reconquest," making sure to qualify his claim by explaining that monarch does not apply to campaigns "in which religiously mixed armies pursued a wide variety of imperial, expansionist, and economic goals" (108).

This comparison—Alexander as the symbolic savior figure who reunifies a fragmented whole—is compelling only so far as Reconquest discourse holds up to historical scrutiny, and even Weiss admits that the analogy is "too tenuous to be developed" (124). As Alejandro García-Sanjuán and others have recently demonstrated, the term "Reconquest" is more an "ideological concept" that explains 19th-century Spanish nationalist rhetoric more than it accurately historicizes frontier dynamics in premodern Iberia (162).<sup>12</sup> It is, he continues, a "highly biased and distorting academic approach" that homogenizes and idealizes a fictitious medieval Spanish mentality of two diametrically opposing confessional identities (i.e. northern Christian vs. Andalusian Islam). The connection is further problematic in that Alexander, I argue, is fundamentally a flawed anti-hero. The fact that he perishes due to his moral shortcomings casts doubt on his symbolic role as figurehead in the retaking of *patria* from foreign hands.

Yet it is Pearce's qualification of Alexander as a prince (as opposed to monarch) that—setting aside the problematic notion of Reconquest—most accurately invokes the poem's true territorial gaze. By the time of the poem's composition in the early 13th century, the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba that took such rapid control of Iberia—and which some critics read as the poetic inspiration behind Darius's unjust oppression—had already splintered into independent *Taifa* kingdoms for nearly a century and a half. At the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the kingdoms of León (which by this point had not yet united with Castile), Portugal, Navarre, Aragon, Valencia and Granada all circled Castile in an uneasy yet stable political environment. Contrary to a theater of Reconquest, it is actually this dynamic environment of independent, competing kingdoms that the poem mirrors when establishing the relationship between Alexander's Corinth and the neighboring kingdoms of Nicalao, Armenia, Athens, and Thebes. That is, *Libro de Alexander* is not a narrative of empirical conquest in the name of ideological recovery, but instead one of colonization in the name of "cellular reproduction" (Bartlett 307).<sup>13</sup> Whereas the former connotes the relatively straightforward practice of seizing land and resources, the latter reflects the fluid frontier space of medieval Iberia in which borders constantly shifted, labor was scarce, and rulers had to leverage shaky alliances with kingdoms of competing political, religious, and economic interests in order to promote the health and growth of their kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Framed within a tense frontier landscape in which royal power often depended on a ruler's ability to negotiate unsuspecting alliances with people of fundamentally opposite ideologies, Alexander becomes just one prince of many. More importantly, as the text simultaneously reveals, this one prince is vulnerable to excessive fits of rage that threaten his ability to cultivate necessary alliances, consequently leaving his empire vulnerable to ruin.

The poem arrives at this framing by juxtaposing the diametric relationship between Alexander and Darius (22-26) with the following sections that then abandon this rivalry in favor

<sup>12</sup> See also Tolan, "Using the Middle Ages to Construct Spanish Identity (2002). See also chapter 10 of Gabriele and Perry's recent study *The Bright Ages* (2021), especially pp. 137-42.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Weiss, 124.

<sup>14</sup> For studies on medieval Iberian border crossing, see Sampedro Vizcaya and Doubleday, *Border Interrogations*, 2008. See also Barton, "Traitors," 2002, and Bennison, "Liminal States," 2001.

of a project best described as the annexation—through conquest—of more-or-less independent kingdoms. Specifically, little mention is made of Darius and his Babylonian authority in the following scenes that depict the battle with Nicalao (127-41), as well as Alexander’s encounter with Armenia (160-68) and his destruction of Thebes (211-44). Instead, the narrative frames these events as clashes between competing bodies of authority independent of the Babylonian liberation arc. Nicalao, for example, is characterized respectfully as “un rey muy estrevudo” (129.a). The title of king, as opposed to vassal (*vasallo*) or lord (*señor*) indicates that Nicalao is not beholden to Darius’s yoke. Alexander’s battle-challenge to Nicalao derives simply from his wish to test the mettle of his troops (127) and, more specifically, the mere sight of the king and his “people” (*gentes* 129). The poet’s use of sight as a sensory phenomenon that elicits an emotional reaction in Alexander is notable here, and I will return to it in the final section below. The scene moreover stands out for its mysterious setting. Namely, the poem does not specify who controls the territory over which the two chiefs meet and eventually battle. The only definitive information provided is that Alexander and his cadre rode to “luengas tierras” and that Nicalao “mandava grant regno” (129.b). We are not told, however, where that kingdom is, or whether the “foreign lands” into which Alexander has ventured belong to Nicalao. In a narrative of more than 2,600 stanzas, complete with authorial posturing and digression, silent lacunae can speak louder than exposition. In light of such uncertainty, the geopolitical force of the narrative, previously established by Alexander’s quarrel with Darius, is thrown into doubt, highlighting instead a frontier environment that invokes Iberia’s historically fragmented, buttressed spaces.

The following scenes of conquest of Armenia, Athens, and Thebes are couched in similar frontier rhetoric. Historically, Armenia was a tributary of Persia that did not come under Greek rule until after Alexander’s defeat of Darius in 331 BCE. However, in the text, Armenia’s challenge to Greek authority derives from the city’s own ambition in response to the perceived weakness of Phillip’s kingdom (160). It is Armenia that decides to challenge Greece, and Armenia alone who is punished:

Armenia, maguer sopo la nemiga asmar,  
de su malaventura non se pudo guardar;  
¡mas lo que ella quiso sobre otri echar,  
todo lo ovo ella en cabo a lazarar! (165)

This message is repeated again two stanzas later when the “mistake” of challenging Phillip’s reign is attributed to those Armenians specifically: “e que nunca farién otro tal fallimiento” (167.d). Shortly after Alexander is crowned in Corinth, the Peloponnesian city states Athens and Thebes offer similar challenges. While the Athenian statesman Demoste is largely implicated in this defiance (211.c; 213.b), it is the city itself which receives the collective blame: “Atenas en tod’esto un seso malo priso: / enfestós’al rëy--, obedecer no’l quiso” (211.ab). The representatives of the city who are sent to treat with Alexander “accept their guilt” and throw themselves at the hands of the king (*coñociessen culpa* 214.b). It is not until the narrative arrives at Thebes that Darius is reintroduced as a force operating against Alexander (216.ab). Yet this influence is quickly subverted when the narrative moreover cites the long history of conflict that existed not just between Macedonia and Thebes (216.cd), but also between Thebes and the surrounding kingdoms in general: “Era müy malquista Tebas de su frontera, / ca baviera con ellos siempre en grant dentera” (221.ab). It is the sin of the people of Thebes alone, who are rumored to lead evil lives (223), that instigates Alexander’s rage and leads to the city’s

destruction: “a Tebas el pecado: / ¡mandó que le pusiessen fuego de todo cabo!” (242.cd). These are significant qualifications that relegate Darius’s influence over the Greek city-states in favor of a more dynamic, certainly less binary, construction of political friction in and around Peloponnese. While the poem sometimes perceives the Armenian, Athenian, and Thebian challenges in terms of betrayal of Alexander’s absolute authority, these scenes in practice suggest that authority in the peninsula was exercised by multiple independent actors and for a variety of competing interests.

*‘Todo lo olvido:’ Forgetting to Remember*

It is within this geotextual space that Alexander first comes to test the limits of his rage, and later falls victim to its excess. Central to this reading is the poet’s use of memory as both a spiritual compass for and necessary component of kingship. More than a scholastic skill valued by the poem’s clerical hand, more than a lens through which feats of antiquity could be recalled and glorified, memory in the poem functions in tandem with the theme of governing by calling attention to the dangers of royal opacity through the encouragement of *sapientia* and *mesura*. Specifically, Alexander’s inability to recall his past education and ancestry, induced by excessive and uncontrollable anger, delegitimizes his empire and anticipates his spiritual ruin. Memory then symbolizes a commitment to *sapientia* in both the clerical and political dimensions. This reading provides aesthetic unity to the work, revealing how the poem strove from the beginning to craft Alexander’s political shortcomings as the precursor to the moral hubris he exhibits in the final half of the text.

In order to see how memory informs our reading of the text, we must first return to the early sections of the poem in which Aristotle is charged with the youth’s scholastic upbringing. He is described initially as a veritable sponge of learning, yet notably comes to forget key elements of his schooling. First, the poem emphasizes the young Alexander’s focus and impressive capacity to recall lessons:

Nada non olvidava de quanto que oyé;  
non le cayé de mano quanto que veyé;  
Si más le enseñassen, él más aprenderié:  
¡sabet que en las pajas el cüer non tenié! (18)

This astute characterization soon changes, however, with the introduction of Alexander’s lament against Greece’s tributary position to Darius’s empire (21-31). The rage produced by the idea of paying tribute all but paralyzes him, affecting both his body and mind (discussed above). Of significance here are the effects of this illness on Alexander’s psyche. He admits to Aristotle that he is forgetting his education due to the ire (*rencura* 40.d) and sorrow (*grant pesar* 41.d) which Darius’s control over Greece causes him. The poem insists on this point through the repetition of the phrase “todo lo olvido” in two consecutive stanzas (40.d; 41.d). Notably then, Alexander’s capacity to recall his Aristotelian curriculum is predicated on his mercurial constitution.

This caprice will also affect his ability to recall Aristotle’s warnings against judicial overreach (59.ab) and authoritarian excess (63.a). The angrier he gets, the less he remembers. His incensed behavior draws our attention to what Geraldine Hazbun has called “spontaneous memory:”—emotionally triggered responses largely shaped by “negative feelings of anger, vengeance, shame, and guilt” (108-9). In this study, she writes about the significance of memory in *Alexandre* and its contemporary *Libro de Apolonio*:

In these works, which are based on material from Greco-Roman antiquity, processes of appropriating, commemorating, recounting, and even forgetting the past form a rich thematic and ideological seam, and an essential part of their ethos. (92).

Of significance here is Alexander's process of forgetting his own past in favor of an all-consuming desire to conquer his enemies. Both Isidoro of Seville and Saint Augustine emphasized the value of sensory perception, and especially sight, in the cognition process. For Isidoro, whose work the *Alexandre* author most certainly had access to, sight was the sense most closely linked to memory because of its liveliness (*vigere*) and proximity to the brain (Francomano 191-2). Recall that it is the sight of Nicalao's subjects that incites Alexander toward irritation and eventual battle: "¡Quando vio estas gentes y el rey tan argudo, / do no'l comié se iba rascando a menudo!" (129.cd). Similarly, Alexander's inability to control himself upon seeing Pausona then takes on additional significance since his sight induces his memory into a kind of bellicose myopia: "desque lo ovo visto, no's pudo retener" (181.b). Finally, we can read the king's infatuation with Darius in a similar light: "no'l membrava de cosa ninguna conquistar, / ca por lidiar con Dario quirié todo morir" (876.cd). Alexander's transposition of imperial conquest in favor of what reads as a personal vendetta against Darius follows the Augustinian model of the "mental vision," which prioritizes perceptual proximity in the cognition process over other elements more removed by time and space (i.e. Corinth and his tutor's lessons).<sup>15</sup> The closer he gets to his political rivals in Greece, and later to Darius, the further he alienates himself from his political obligations.

Memory also functions in the text to challenge the efficacy of Alexander's conquests through a juxtaposition of political theory versus application. As Alexander ventures further into his campaign of conquest, his rage overcomes him to the point that he not only forgets his scholarly lessons, but also the valuable council that he has received along the way. As noted above, the poem frames a distinct political vision, including Aristotle's warnings against judicial overreach (59.ab) and gubernatorial greed (63.a) in addition to his idea for sociopolitical acculturation (1848-9). Beyond that, it is actually the advice of Cleadas that most clearly articulates the poem's colonial economy.

After sacking Thebes, Alexander grants an audience to the minstrel Cleadas, who will attempt unsuccessfully to persuade the Greek king to spare the town. This is a significant moment in the poem for a few reasons. First, Cleadas's characterization as a common bard who is also an erudite learner resembles the characterization that the poet gives himself early in the poem. The often-quoted second line of the poem, in which the poet outlines his duty or *mester* reads: "Mester trayo fermoso: non es de joglaría; / mester es sin pecado, ca es de clerezía" (2.ab). This line has been cited as justification for a scholarly codification that differentiates the more erudite craft of the cleric from the baser duties of a minstrel.<sup>16</sup> However, the language used to

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<sup>15</sup> "So let us use for preference the evidence of the eyes; this is the most excellent of the body's senses, and for all its difference in kind has the greatest affinity to mental vision" (From Augustine's *Trinity* 304). Quoted in Francomano, 206.

<sup>16</sup> For example, special interest has been paid to the perceived degree of distinctness between *clerecía* and *juglaría* poetry, or whether later 14th-century *pareado* poems should be included as *mester* works. For a review of this scholarship, see Weiss's introduction in *Intellectuals and Ideologies*, especially page 2 and footnotes 2 and 3. For a comprehensive study on the roots of the *clerecía* movement, see González Blanco García. See also Uría Maqua's treatment of the expression in *Panorama crítico*, which Pascual-Argente considers "not only the culmination but

describe Cleadas's minstrel abilities is strikingly similar: "Un joglar de grant guisa --sabié bien su mester--, / omne bien razonado que sabié bien leer" (232.ab). Willis (1956) has suggested that the *Alexandre* poet was, at the very least, not hostile to the *jugar* craft, and Musgrave (132) has pointed to this stanza in particular as evidence that for the *Alexandre* poet, the occupation of minstrel (as opposed to cleric) was "not necessarily despicable". In fact, I suggest that the *Alexandre* poet actually regards Cleadas's minstrel talents in high esteem. Like the poet himself, who is skilled in "curso rimado" (2.c), Cleadas is similarly talented in his craft (*grant guisa*) and clearly holds a command of rhetoric and letters (*bien razonado que sabié bien leer*). It is thus conceivable that the *Alexandre* poet actually projected elements of his own personal ethos into Cleadas. Linking the poet's own poetic ethics with those of Cleadas adds additional significance to the minstrel's rhetorical approach, since we may then read in Cleadas's entreaty a reflection of how the poet perceived Alexander's destruction of the city Thebes. This minstrel exercises an impressive control over the narrative at this point, capturing Alexander's attention and leaving the fate of Thebes in a precarious state of suspense as the king listens on.

Notably, one of Cleadas's first points is to highlight the cruel rage for which Alexander is known: "¡Todo'l siglo se teme de la tu amargura! / ¡quando estás irado, has fiera catadura!" (233.cd). By beginning here, Cleadas invites his audience—both Alexander and the reader/listener—to recall the king's driving rage that we have seen govern him elsewhere to undesirable results. Cleadas's initial words act to remind Alexander of the potential of his emotions to blind his judgment. Furthermore, Cleadas reinforces Aristotle's schooling and advice when he lauds Alexander as a "buen escolar" (234.b) in whose person "son ajuntados seso e clerezía, / esfuerço e franqueza e grant palaçianía" (235.ab). The overall message of Cleadas's first point is a general entreaty for Alexander to curb his anger and instead exercise the erudite and measured foundations of his scholastic upbringing, principle among them wit (*seso*) and scholasticism (*clerezía*).

Once Cleadas has established this idea, he then turns to emphasize a different kind of memory that has to do with the collective heritage of the city itself. Cleadas reminds the king that famous figures like Diomedes, Achilles, and Bacchus are all native to this place. He even includes Hercules in this list, Alexander's alleged ancestor, which has the effect of placing the king among the city's descendants and linking him directly to the city itself. By invoking famous heroes of antiquity, Cleadas leverages the process of commemorating while also making a metacommentary on the stability of fame itself; to destroy the city would be to destroy the very images of these heroes, but also the reverence due to them by current and future leaders. He entreats Alexander to spare the city (237.d) concluding with the suggestion that doing otherwise would be dishonorable and inspire only doubt in his subjects (241).

Cleadas falls silent, and Alexander is left with a decision to make. Not surprisingly at this point, he gives in to his rage and orders the very foundations of the city burnt to a crisp: "Tebas fue destróida e fue toda cremada" (243.a). Commenting on this passage, Weiss writes that Alexander "has destroyed a symbolic place at the heart of his future dominions" (125). More than a symbolic act, the destruction of Thebes actually portends the ideological and physical ruin of his empire. Here, Cleadas's appeal to Alexander's kinship bonds with the city through Hercules are doubly significant. By destroying this sacred space of remembrance and commemoration, Alexander rejects the very processes through which he may one day be equally cast into the collective memory of immortal fame. It is fame and the promise of future glory that

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also the exhaustion of this line of inquiry" (2012, 182). Indeed, as early as 1965 Alan Deyermond was challenging what he judged as an arbitrary distinction between the two concepts ("Mester" 112).

drives the logic of Cleadas's plea when he insists that the city be pardoned because "Omnes daquí salieron que te sabré contar" (237.c). But Alexander has no desire to be deferential to the institutional memory of the city, something of which he is very much a part. Thus we can read Cleadas's words as a haunting prophecy of doom when he sings: "si tú lo destruyeres, / nunca acabarás todo lo que quisieres" (240.ab). Alexander's instinct to destroy the very thing connecting him to his past—a past to which his rage has utterly blinded him—represents the beginning of the end for his imperial project.

*'Çisma e mal fervor: ' An Empire Undone*

The underlying tensions between royal anger and colonial expansion finally culminate when Alexander is compelled to articulate a vision for the sociopolitical infrastructure of his kingdom. The passage takes place in Asia after Darius's defeat. Here, his soldiers express a desire to return home. In a moment of uncharacteristic calm and pragmatism for Alexander, he declares that if they were to do so, his new subjects will quickly find a different lord, which would turn their empirical project into a "mala error" (1848.d). Instead, he argues for a gradual process of integration in which the new subjects learn and adopt Corinthian mores. Only once cultural mimesis has achieved critical mass will his new holdings be secure:

Los que se nos rindieron por derecho temor,  
si entre nós e ellos non oviere amor,  
quando nos traspongamos avrán otro señor.  
¿Seremos nós caídos en tan mala error?

Vayamos con aquellos-- algunt poco afaziendo:  
irán nuestros lenguajes, nuestro fuero sabiendo;  
de nuestra compañía irán sabor prendiendo;  
¡después, podremos ir alegres e ridiendo! (1848-49).

His answer is jolting. After having witnessed the fate of Armenia and Thebes, in which Alexander kills and mutilates thousands of innocent citizens (167.b; 231.c), in addition to the cold-blooded execution of a great deal of Tyrian mothers and children (1114), the audience is left to wonder why these victims were excluded from the king's sociopolitical vision that he outlines here. Yes, these Greek cities would be more familiar with Corinthian customs than his conquered subjects in the Near East, and thus less in need of the kind of top-down project of acculturation that Alexander describes. Nonetheless, the king's acculturation project seems ideologically abrasive to his *modus operandi*, which is largely predicated on martial force (15; 66; 127) and tends to reject diplomatic solutions (158; 794). By illuminating the dichotomy between the ability to *take* lands and holds, and the ability to secure those lands and its resources—this passage additionally calls into question the efficacy of all of Alexander's past and future territorial acquisitions. Armenia and Thebes were easily taken by Alexander's forces, but little indication is given as to how these regions might function under Corinthian rule. How many valuable magnates and statesmen were slaughtered in that group of 1,100 Armenians (167.b), and who remains to establish and maintain order? What good is the decimated Thebian city to an expanding Macedonian (or Castilian) kingdom in increasing need of secure nodes of supply? In a few short lines, the scene essentially upends the stability of Alexander's imperial project, as the reader is simultaneously made to recall Alexander's path of carnage and look forward with

anxiety at his path ahead. As I have demonstrated, this political uneasiness foreshadows not only Alexander's imperial failures, but also serves to connect a political reading of the poem with a moral/religious one.

This paper has argued for a reading of Alexander as a negative model of Iberian kingship whose inability to remember—induced by a destabilizing rage—anticipates his imperial and spiritual ruin. In the final section of the poem, it is God, citing Alexander's *desmesura*, who exerts His rage upon the king:

Pesó al Criador que crió la Natura:  
 ovo de Alexandre saña e grant rencura.  
 Dixo: “¡Este lunático que non cata mesura  
 Yo'l tornaré el gozo todo en amargura! (2329).

Alexander succumbs to God's punishment, and the empire which he spent an entire life consolidating is immediately undone. His lands are divided amongst his followers, who are then driven by their own ambitions to fight amongst each other: “entró en los varones çisma e mal fervor: / querié ir cadaúno basteçer su honor” (2664.cd). This detail, though minor, nonetheless recalls the succession dispute instigated by the historical Fernando “the Great” of Castile (r. 1037-65). Like Alexander, Fernando also styled himself an emperor of a vast kingdom, and he declared himself such in 1056. Yet, like Alexander, Fernando's kingdom is thrown equally into civil war after his three sons Sancho, Alfonso, and García compete for their father's properties even as his entombed body is still warm. The poet of the *Libro de Alexandre* entreats his royal audience to not be governed by rage, and instead adopt the virtues of *sapientia* and *mesura*. Moreover, as this final implicit allegory to contemporary Iberian history suggests, the poet composed this work because he wanted his audience to enjoy a recollection of the classical past, but also use the poem's apocalyptic lessons to navigate the historical present.

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