

And when the speech that Motecucgoma directed to [Cortés] . . . had concluded, Marina [an Indian woman who accompanied Cortés and who could speak Nahuatl and Spanish] reported it to him, interpreting it for him. And when [Cortés] . . . had heard what Motecucgoma had said, he spoke to Marina in return, babbling back to them, replying in his babbling tongue,

"Let Motecucgoma be at ease, let him not be afraid, for we greatly esteem him. Now we are truly satisfied to see him in person and hear him, for until now we have greatly desired to see him and look upon his face. Well, now we have seen him, we have come to his homeland of Mexico. Bit by bit he will hear what we have to say."

Thereupon [the Spaniards] took [Motecucgoma] by the hand. They came along with him, stroking his hair to show their good feeling. And the Spaniards looked at him, each of them giving him a close look. They would start along walking, then mount, then dismount again in order to see him. . . .

[T]he Spaniards went with Motecucgoma to enter the great palace. . . .

And when they had reached the palace and gone in, immediately they seized Motecucgoma and kept close watch over him, not letting him out of their sight. . . . And when this had happened, the various guns were fired. It seemed that everything became confused; people went this way and that, scattering and darting about. It was as though everyone's tongue were out, everyone were preoccupied, everyone had been taking mushrooms, as though who knows what had been shown to everyone. Fear reigned, as though everyone had swallowed his heart. It was still that way at night; everyone was terrified, taken aback, thunder-struck, stunned.

And when it dawned, everything [the Spaniards] needed was proclaimed: white tortillas, roast turkeys, eggs, fresh water, wood, firewood, charcoal, earthen tubs, polished bowls, waterjars, large clay pitchers, vessels for frying, all kinds of earthenware. Motecucgoma himself ordered it. But when he summoned the noble men, they would no longer obey him, but grew angry. They no longer performed their duty to him, no longer went to him; no longer was he heeded. But he was not therefore forsaken, he was given all he needed to eat and drink, and water and deer fodder [for the Spaniards].

And when [the Spaniards] were well settled, right away they interrogated Motecucgoma about all the stored treasure of the atlepetl, the devices and shields. They greatly prodded him, they eagerly sought gold as a thing of esteem. And then Motecucgoma went along leading the Spaniards. They gathered around him, bunched around him; he went in their midst, leading the way. They went along taking hold of him, grasping him. And when they reached the storehouse . . . then all the shining things were brought out: the quezal-feather head fan, the devices, the shields, the golden disks, the necklaces of the devils, the golden nose crests, the golden leg bands, the golden arm bands, the golden sheets for the forehead.

Thereupon the gold on the shields and on all the devices was taken off. And when all the gold had been detached, right away they set on fire, set fire to, ignited all the different precious things, they all burned. And the Spaniards made the gold into bricks. And they took as much of the green-stone as pleased them; as to the rest of the green-stone, the Tlaxcalans just snatched it up. And [the Spaniards] went everywhere, scratching about in the hiding places, store-

[T]he Spaniards killed and annihilated the Mexica who were celebrating the feast of Huitzilopochtli⁶ at what they call the . . . [Divine Courtyard, Courtyard of the Gods, temple courtyard].

When things were already going on, when the festivity was being observed and there was dancing and singing, with voices raised in song, the singing was like the noise of waves breaking against the rocks. When it was time, when the moment had come for the Spaniards to do the killing, they came out equipped for battle. They came and closed off each of the places where people went in and out. . . . And when they had closed these exits, they stationed themselves in each, and no one could come out any more.

When this had been done, they went into the temple courtyard to kill people. Those whose assignment it was to do the killing just went on foot, each with his metal sword and his leather shield, some of them iron-studded. Then they surrounded those who were dancing, going among the cylindrical drums. They struck a drummer's arms; both of his hands were severed. Then they struck his neck; his head landed far away. Then they stabbed everyone with iron lances and struck them with iron swords. They struck some in the belly, and then their entrails came spilling out. They split open the heads of some, they really cut their skulls to pieces, their skulls were cut up into little bits. And some they hit on the shoulders; their bodies broke open and ripped. Some they hacked on the calves, some on the thighs, some on their bellies, and then all their entrails would spill out. And if someone still tried to run it was useless; he just dragged his intestines along. There was a stench as if of sulfur. Those who tried to escape could go nowhere. When anyone tried to go out, at the entryways they struck and stabbed him. . . .

And when it became known [what was happening], everyone cried out, "Mexica warriors, come running, get outfitted with devices, shields, and arrows, hurry, come running, the warriors are dying; they have died, perished, been annihilated, o Mexica warriors!" Thereupon there were war cries, shouting, and beating of hands against lips. The warriors quickly came outfitted, bunched together, carrying arrows and shields. Then the fighting began; they shot at them with barbed darts, spears, and tridents, and they hurled darts with broad obsidian points at them. A cloud of yellow reeds spread over the Spaniards. . . .

[A]t the time the Spaniards left Mexico, there came an illness of pustules of which many local people died; it was called "the great rash."⁷

Before the Spaniards appeared to us, first an epidemic broke out, a sickness of pustules. . . . Large bumps spread on people; some were entirely covered. They spread everywhere, on the face, the head, the chest, etc. [The disease] brought great desolation; a great many died of it. They could no longer walk about, but lay in their dwellings and sleeping places, no longer able to move or stir. They were unable to change position, to stretch out on their sides or face down, or raise their heads. And when they made a motion, they called out loudly. The pustules that covered people caused great desolation; very many people died of them, and many just starved to death, starvation reigned, and no one took care of others any longer.

⁶Huitzilopochtli: The god of war and the chief god in the Mexican pantheon.