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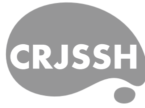

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Gonzalo Guerrero and the Psychology of Identity

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Abstract

Historiographic analysis is underused in academic psychology. In this expository essay, I intend to show that historical events or persons can be described with reference to theory and research provided by empirical psychology. Besides providing evidence-based grounds for a more penetrating historical account, the conclusions drawn from a historiographic analysismay feed back into psychological theory by generating new testable hypotheses. Whereas standard empirical research is focused on statistical associations among quantitative variables obtained in random samples, historiographic analysis is most informative with the use of extreme cases, that is, by asking and showing the limits of what is possible. This essay focuses on the story of Gonzalo Guerrero to explore psychological processes involved in identity transformation.

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Introduction

Academic psychology is largely focused on the use of experimental methods and the statistical analysis of quantitative data. The primary role of theory is to provide hypotheses that are testable in the aggregate, that is, as general tendencies observed across individual people (Danziger, 1990). With prediction being widely accepted as the gold standard of theory-driven empirical work, the task of explanation is neglected or passed on to the humanities. Yet, the assumption that human behavior is lawful despite its apparent complexity must allow for an exploration of the interplay of prediction and explanation (Dawes, 1991; Krueger, 2020).

This essay uses the case of Gonzalo Guerrero, a 16th Century Spanish mariner turned Mayan war captain, as an opportunity to consider questions of psychological identity and identity transformation. The historical truth of the case, which remains uncertain, is of secondary relevance. Instead, we may ask what kind of challenges and limitations we can discern when it comes to identity transformation. With this perspective, the retelling and the exploration of the Gonzalo story becomes rather a thought experiment, and thus a methodological tool that can supplement conventional experimentation and analysis (Brown & Fehige, 2019).

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As the personal intersects with the cultural, and does so beyond any protagonist's lifetime, this essay also asks how the story of Gonzalo relates to conventional cultural frames, such as the trope of '*going native*,' especially from a European perspective. It is acknowledged that this retelling and the reinterpretation of the Gonzalo story can only be tentative and incomplete. In other words, as a thought experiment, this essay is intended to stimulate thoughts that go beyond those that went into writing it.

Going Native

The trope of "*going native*" is familiar but poorly understood. For decades, many young people, particularly in the West,have taken a playful approach, experimenting with provocative garb or eccentric hairdos only to eventually return to the conventional andthe normative. When "*going native*" becomes a more sustained project, what does it do to a person's sense of identity? How does the person see him- or herself and how do others see this person? How do these social perceptions differ between the members of the group of origin and the members of the adopted group?

Alexander von Humboldt, though "interested in everything" (as he asserts in the motion picture *Aire Libre*; Roche, 1996) and travelingwidely, famously resisted the temptation of *going native* (Humboldt, 1852). In contrast, his friend, travel companion, and scientific collaborator, Aimé Bonpland, did. After their epic South American expedition, the Prussian universal scientist returned to his ancestral Berlin, whereasthe French botanist eventually settled in Argentinato grow crops and raise a family. Humboldthas inspired many international conferences, the triennial *International Congress on Humboldt* being among the most notable. The Congress features explorations of the psychological, sociological, historical, and literary aspects of travel in foreign lands. At the IX Congress in Mérida, Mexico,in November of 2018, I offered a psychological perspective on the early Spanish traveler in the Yucatán, Gonzalo Guerrero, and his personal transformation. The present article expands upon thatconference presentation, and the text is partially based on a short essay published in *Psychology Today Online* (Krueger, 2017).

The point of departure is that in the Yucatán peninsula, Gonzalo Guerrero today enjoys the reputation of an influential and inspiring figure,who came ashore during the earliestperiod of the European-Indigenous encounter. A central aspect of his historical, ethnographic, and psychological significance is that he presents an archetype of a person '*going native*.' So shrouded in legend is Gonzalo that the myth cannot be separated from the man. Gonzalo's existence remains a hypothesis rather than a fact. But this ambiguity does not diminish the story. Gonzalo looms large in the Yucatec imagination, and this imagination is an active ingredient to the group-based construction of shared identity in the region. The Spanish chroniclers of the late 16th Century, whose reliability is uncertain, present Gonzalo asa castaway on the shore now known as the Riviera Maya. Soon, Gonzalo risesto prominence amonglocal native groups. Eventually, he leadswar parties in skirmishes with neighboring groups, and then, it has been speculated, also against Spanishinvaders. Gonzalo builds a domestic life witha chief's daughter and begets the first generation of mestizos.

For Gonzalo, *going native* isa survival strategy. The legends that have grown up around him emphasize his martial prowess, and various statues depict him as a warrior, as for examplethe work by Raúl Ayala Arellano in Akumal (Mueller, 2001). These depictions stress the proud and defiant aspect of Gonzalo's persona. The theme of conflict is enshrined in the name by which Gonzalo is remembered. His Spanish appellation (i.e., family name) having been lost, he is now known as Gonzalo Guerrero, or Gonzalo the Warrior. Amuralby Francisco Castro Pachecoin the *Palacio del Gobierno* in Méridatakes a different perspective. Pacheco highlights the generative, familial, and domestic side of Gonzalo's experience. Gonzalo is seen without a warrior's stance or the paraphernalia of battle. Instead, he is clutching his family and looking vulnerable. The play of light enhances him and his psychological tension. His family remains in the shadows, perhaps to remind the visitor of essential differences. This mural is remarkable precisely because it departsfrom the iconic statuary imagery. In stone, Gonzalo manifestsas strong, defiant, and bearded, but otherwise fully Mayanized. In paint, he projectsa

different kind of inner struggle that is part of goingnative.

Psychological science has little to say about the concept of *going native*. There are few pertinent theories and empirical studies. Most of the relevant research is concerned with immigration, addressing questions of assimilation, dual consciousness, or bi- and multi-culturalism(e.g., Hong, Zhan, Morris, & Benet-Martínez, 2016; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). The challenges of migration and immigration are important issues of our time, but they fail to plumbthe experience of those individuals who fully penetrate an alien culture, thereby riskingtheir own radical transformation. Social psychology, as a discipline, traditionallyfocuses on the experience of disempowered or historically oppressed groups (Verkuyten, 2018). This concern may have created a blind spot for the concept of *going native* because this concept is tied to European expansion, domination, and colonialism. It is in this context that those Europeans who, during the era of colonialism, wentnative swam against the historical current. Theprevailing perception was to see these anadromous adventurers as traitors and savages-by-choice (Castelli, De Amicis, & Sherman, 2007). Referring to the experience of Englishmen in India, for example, Kipling warned to "never forget that one is a Sahib" (cited in White, 2010). Then and now, *going native* is to risk rejection and condemnation by one's group of origin.

Psychologically and sociologically, *going native* is particularly challenging because most immigration occurs in the form of group movements. In the European settlement of the Americas entire villages transplanted themselves (Peterson, 1992), seeking to create replicas of their original communities (Hirschman, 2005). Such a concerted group effort mitigates the demands of assimilation on the individual. In this historical context, assimilation, which often sought to emulate another European-based cultural and linguistic norm, has been a process unfolding over generations instead of within an individual's lifespan. Against this historical norm, an individual's assimilation – such as Gonzalo's – to a native culture in the space of a decade seemshighly improbable; if true, it is a radical statement of personal will.

The European Imagination

It is surprisingly difficult to think of specific historical examples of individuals gone native, but it is easy to see how the concept has stirred the European imagination by evoking images and possibilities that are both alluring andfrightening. With reliable historical data being scarce, a handful of literary treatments may illustrate a polarized narrative. On the one hand, there is Tarzan, the Earl of Greystoke (Burroughs, 1912/2014), aristocrat and noble savage all at once, whose natives are nonhuman primates. On the other hand, there is the demonic Colonel Walter Kurtz (Conrad, 1912/1973), who loses his mindin the African jungle ("The horror!"), and whose exploits were brought home in the epic film Apocalypse Now, with Marlon Brando stirring the horror among the viewers (Coppola, 1979).

Ina time of industrial cultural production (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1997), the threat and anxiety of *going native* is occasionally resolved by a hero who becomes a native in order to save the natives from his own people. John Dunbar "Dances with wolves" to save the Lakota (Blake, 1988; Costner, 1990), and the disabled anti-hero Jake Sully in James Cameron's (2009) 'Avatar' scores a triumphant victory over the rapacious industrial white Terrestrials (Krueger, 2010). He achieves this victory by *going native* more fully than anyone before in fact or fiction. He is embodied as one. Hence the Avatar.

There is an instructive difference between Dunbar and Sully. Whereas Dunbar returns to the white man's world, presumably in yet another attempt to protect the natives, Sully's mind is eventually made to permanently reside within the Avatar. Dunbar reconnects with 'home,' whereas Sully finds a new one. Sully drinks up the cup of *going native*. Dunbar, in contrast, evokes the mythology of the Odyssey where life's trials and tribulations are ultimately rewarded witha hero's return (Campbell, 1949), whereas Sully chooses irrevocable immersion. In historical time,Humboldt and Bonplandrepresenta version of this difference. Whereas Humboldt casts himself as an interested, though detached, observer, Bonplandchooses to participate. Whereas Humboldt dies in Berlin, Bonpland expires in a rural outpost in Argentina.

Gonzalo, if he existed, is thearchetype of the Avatar (Littleton, 2011). Flores (2012) notes visual and psychological similarities. Boththe Avatar of the cinema and Gonzalo fight on the side of nature and the natives against European expansion and destruction. Gonzalo loseslife and limb but re-emerges as the Urvater (primeval father) of a new race; the Avatar wins in a Hollywoodhappy ending, in a decisive victory of good over evil.

The varied types of Tarzan, Kurtz, Dunbar, and the Avatarhighlightsome shared elements of the European imagination. On the one hand, there is the identification with the victim (MacGregor, 1991),the romantic fascination with nature and the creatures livingin harmony with it. On the other hand, there is also a jealouslongingto have what they have, and the resolveto take it away from them. Then,and perhaps as a reflection of guilt, there is the fear of being overwhelmed by nature and the natives, of not being able to cope with their strange world, and to either die or be swallowed up. This is a form of ego anxiety (Freud, 1933/1965), the dread of witnessing the disintegration of one's own psyche. The emotionalbase of European domination is thus highly ambivalent (Ullrich & Krueger, 2010), and perhaps, in psychoanalytic terms, sadomasochistic. If this conflict cannot be solved,perhaps it can be understood.

The Gonzalomyth is significant in its departure from this general narrative. If Gonazalo contributes to native self-determination and defense, he does not act out ofheroic ambition to be above thenatives as a European. Such a notion would be incompatible with the uncompromising project of *going native* that he appears to pursue. Unfortunately, much of this is speculation as we know very little about him.One scholar who became intriguedby Gonzalo is Canadian Professor of English Robert Calder. After decades of searching for Gonzalo in the archives and the selva of the Yucatán, Calder producedan insightful and imaginative bookto bring us the legend and the few bits of evidence that have survived (Calder, 2017). Calder is wellaware of what little is known and how much depends on third-party accounts and speculation. Nonetheless, the question of Gonzalo's reality is secondary to this psychological assessment (e.g., Fray Diego de Landa, 1566). What has been written about Gonzalo, truthfully or imaginatively, provides the raw material for a thought experiment on identity transformation.

The Legend

According to the story, Gonzalo isnot a *capitán*, he is a *marinero*. His ship sinks in a storm, thus tapping a deep vein of collective memory such as the voyages and misfortunes from Odysseus to Crusoe. Gonzalo and some of hisshipmates are washed up on the shoreof what is now the Mexican State of Quintana Roo. The local natives capture and eat most of his shipmates, but they saveGonzalo and a few others to be fattened and consumed later. The first of many puzzling questions is 'Was there something special about Gonzalo that saved him for the moment or was it dumb luck?' Either way, Gonzalo and a padre namedJerónimo de Aguilartake advantage of the respite and escapefrom captivity, joiningadifferent group of Maya down the coast. This group seems less interested incastaway flesh. Instead, they enslave the two foreigners. Their reasons are unknown, but we may speculate that they seesome potential value in these captives, such as their use as informants or spies.

Over time, Gonzalo and Jerónimo build trust and earn privileges. The early stages of this process must have been critical, but they are unfortunately the most mysterious. Psychological research shows that the key components of interpersonal trust are perceptions of competence and beneficence (Connelly, Crook, Combs, Ketchen, & Aguinis, 2018; Evans & Krueger, 2009; Krueger & Evans, 2013). A person seeking to build trust must signal the skill and the ability to create value for the other side, and at the same time signal that he will not abuse these skills and abilities for selfish ends. This is comparatively easy for those who already possess social power (Bachmann, 2001; Luhmann, 1979). It is hard for those who do not. Filling this gap in Gonzalo's story with empirically informed speculation, we surmise that Gonzalo (and Jerónimo) do what they canto assure the natives that they are no flight risk. It is likely that they immediately set to the task of learning the local language, and perhaps more importantly, learning tribal norms and taboos. Lastly, it is likely that they willingly execute all labor given to them. In other words, complete submission presents itself as the most promising strategy at this early stage. But this may not be enough. In many cultures, people

despise the submissive, and scorn can turn into lethal aggression (Richards, Rollerson, & Phillips, 1991). This possibility returns us to the hypothesis that Gonzalo (and Jerónimo) remind their captors that they might provide assistance in conflicts with neighboring groups. This strategyof hinting at uniquely valuable servicescould require the use of deception. Gonzalo (and Jerónimo) mightdecide to suggest, perhaps falsely, that they possess privileged and useful information about potential enemy groups.

If this is a fair hypothesis about how Gonzalo redirectsthe natives' appetite, it does not address the process of assimilation. A person may be well versed in the ways of another culture, speak the language, know the mores, and play the cultural game deftly without being assimilated in the psychological or sociological sense. They may just be able and willing to play the part without altering their identity. Cultural anthropologists, for example, rely on methods of 'participant observation' to gather reliable data from the inside of a culture of interest without its practitioners *going native* in the full psychological sense of the term (Jorgensen, 2005). The researchers return to the scientific community to report their findings – as did, for example, Bronisław Malinowski (1922), the godfather of ethnography, who returned to Europe after spending nearly two years in the Trobriand Islands to study the indigenous culture. Members of the host cultures may understand that what they see is merelya skillful performance, or they might be deceived. Either way, their acceptance and approval amounts to the person 'passing' as a member of thegroup (Brown, 1991).

As Gonzalo and Jerónimoenter the second stage of their adjustment, strategic differences emerge and their psychological correlates and consequences come into view. Over time, Gonzalo transcends role-playing and begins to assimilate, whereas Jerónimo holds on to his Castilian identity. If it is Gonzalo's goal to assimilate – and there is no indication that it is not – he has to go beyond the skill acquisition and norm-learning regimen of stage one. A psychological shift is necessary to achieve this, but it is not sufficient. Gonzalo has to signal to his hosts, and to himself, that he means it.This goal can be achieved by making irreversible commitments (Schelling, 1956; Zahavi, 1975). The easy part is to surrender Spanish artifacts and possessions. What little he has – if anything is left – after a period of captivity, he candiscard or give away. There are likely few items he can surrender, and most of these are probably replaceable in the event of a return to Spain. A stronger signal is sent by making lasting changes to his body. The Maya at the time favor tattoos and piercings, and so Gonzalo can signal his intention to assimilate by accepting or asking for locallypreferred body adornments. Changes to the body surface, especially permanent ones, are near universal badges of group membership, enabling others to place a person in a tribal category, or a totemic group or caste (Edgerton & Dingman, 1963). What is more, permitting tattoos and piercings on one's body carries the risk of infection. As humans appear to intuitively understand this risk, they interpret such decorations as honest signals of biological fitness (Koziel, Kretschmer, & Pawlowski, 2010). We do not know how Gonzalo manages this process. He has probably gained some understanding of which tattoos may be requested and which must be earned. Perhaps he also senses that being tattooed and pierced will make him appear strong. Once he beginsto reshape his body along locally recognized and valued lines, he has embarked on an irreversible journey toward assimilation.

In contrast to Gaonzalo, Jerónimoclings to his Castilian identity, doing only what is necessary to survive, while hoping to be rescued by a Spanish vessel. If he wanted to assimilate, Jerónimo would have to surrender not only his Spanishness, but also his Catholicism. The latter may be particularly distasteful to him because he is a padre with, presumably, some standing, however humble, in the church hierarchy. It is harder to deny two identities than it is to deny one. Yet, it is unclear whether Gonzalo's or Jerónimo'sstrategy is riskier with regard to the outcome. The two seem to be betting on different events,with Jerónimobetting on the arrival of Spaniards, and Gonzalo betting on successful integration. Being in the same basic situation, but holding different hopes and fears, Gonzalo and Jerónimo are each other's alter ego. Whereas Gonzalo may fear that his attempt at assimilation mighteventually fail, or that the Spanish will extract him from his new home to subject him to inquisition and punishment, Jerónimo may fear that the Maya might, if they donot slaughter and devour him first, slowly grind him down in a life a servitude. Ultimately,

the presence of Jerónimo is critical for Gonzalo's story because it puts in front of him evidence that mere survival does not require full assimilation and transformation. By going beyond what Jerónimois willing to do, Gonzalo demonstrates that he really means it and that most likely he is hoping to get more out of life than merely not dying.

Indeed, Gonzalo succeeds in love and war. The legend says that Gonzalo finds a wife and fathers children. The assertion that his wife is the chief's daughter accentuates his success, but be that as it may, by bringing forth a family, Gonzalo simultaneously validates and transcends his own assimilation. Without it, he might be a worthy Maya warrior and command martial respect. By becoming a husband and father he forges multiple bonds with the clan, its members, and its institutions. His children are an even more significant identity claim than his tattoos. They cannot be denied, they are part of his self, their fate is bound up with his. His children confirm his generativity, his transcendence into the next generation (Cox, Wilt, Olson, & McAdams, 2010; Erikson, 1963). In the unsentimentalparlance of evolutionary biology, a man's children are costly signals of his fitness (Grafen, 1990). Psychologically speaking, by becoming a husband and father Gonzalo goes fully native.

Little is known about Gonzalo's exploits in war. Some chroniclers and historians credit him with playing a role in the Mayas' success in slowing the Spanish and their Mexican successors' encroachment into their world. By some accounts, full Euro-Mexican dominance over the Yucatán is not achieved until the end of the Caste War in the late 19th Century (Gabbert, 2008). In Gonzalo's time, Spanish penetration of the Yucatán is slow and punctuatedby setbacks. The tropical climate and the karst character of the land discourage agriculture, while the selvafavors local defense with guerrilla tactics. Presuming that Gonzalo is schooled in the Spanish arts of war, he is an asset to his new community. His understanding of Spanish intentions and tactics allows him to anticipate their moves. Thus, Gonzalo's military skills make him more valuable alive than dead. NachánKa'an,the cacique (i.e., the local chieftain), seems to understand this and he usesGonzalo against local rivals and later against the Spanish.

Jerónimo has a harder time. He continues to bet on total submission to buy time. One of his strategiesis to convince his captors that he will not bother their women. They test hisresolveby sending beautiful girls to seduce him; Jerónimo resists – or so he says (we only have his word for it).As Gonzalo earns the chief's trust, he eventually receives a captain's(Nakom) responsibilities to lead warriors in battle, and the hand of the chief's daughter, ZazilHá. Gonzalo makes war and love. From a sociological standpoint, Gonzalo's assimilation is now complete. He has gone fully native. From a psychological standpoint, some questions remain. How has his identity, his self-conception changed? What does it mean for a man like Gonzalo to be authentic? Can we even know?

Jerónimo is our only source, and his report are tainted by self-interest. Perhaps he invented the legend of Gonzalo in order to prove his loyalty to Crown, country, and Catholicism. When Cortés lands in the Yucatán, Jerónimo tells him that there is another Spaniard in the selva. Cortés tellsJerónimoto fetch him, and Jerónimo goes and pleads with Gonzalo to return to the Spanish banner. Gonzalo declines, pointing to his commitments, some of which (e.g., his tattoos, his family) are irreversible. Conceivably, Gonzalo is making a rational decision, judging correctly that he would nolonger function in the Spanish world. He realizes perhaps that havinggone native he will be viewed with suspicion. Gonzalo cannot go back because his transformed body marks him as a heathen. In an attempt to make sense of Gonzalo's choices, one of the chroniclers, Fernández de Oviedo,speculated Gonzalo was a Muslim, a Jew, or a Converso, but not a real Catholic (Calder, 2017). Who else would join the savages!Clendinnennotes how Gonazalo's new-found nativeness would have offended his former compatriots. "For one of their own to acquiesce in such filthiness, and to choose it over his own faith and his own people, was to strike at the heart of their sense of self" (cited by Calder, 2017, p. 83). The identity of the native-goer and the ties to the referent groups are interwoven. This chapter of the Gonzalo legend is psychologically poignant because it elicits the new identity claim in his own words. It shows that Gonzalo's transformation not just happened over the course of nearly a decade, but that he is acutely aware of its meaning, and that he endorses it. By

sending Jerónimo back to Cortés alone, Gonzalo closes the door to his own return in full awareness of the consequences.

Limitations

I have by necessity emphasized the male and the European perspective. What about the female and the Mayan view? Who is ZazilHá, and what is her role in Gonzalo's transformation? Without her, his fate and story might look rather different. This is a chapter that still needs to be written. Meanwhile, we are left to ponder questions of identity that pervade the stories we tell about ourselves (McAdams& McLean, 2013). Extreme cases like Gonzalo are instructive because they highlight conflict and transformation. Such cases are stress tests of identity. Gonzalo's story also highlights some methodological limitations of psychological science. Laboratory experiments continue to be regarded as a gold standard for causal inference (Aronson, Wilson, & Brewer, 1998). Ideally, researchers would randomly assign participants in a decade-long experiment randomly to a full immersion group (modeling the Gonzalo context) and a partial immersion group (modeling the Jerónimo context). Clearly, such an experiment is neither ethical nor practical (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). The Gonzalo story can, however, serve as a thought experiment highlighting the critical psychological issues and questions arising in the context of identity transformation (Krueger, 2020). Though research does not provide clear empirical answers, various parts of the Gonzalo story may resonate with the reader. Perhaps Gonzalo can encourage us to take another look at where we stand and who we are. What are the forces that shape us, and how will we respond when a storm throws us up against an unfamiliar shore?

Some Philosophical Implications

By giving an example of radical identity transformation, Gonzalo invites us to wonder what identity is. Among the definitions offered by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, one is psychological, whereas another is ontological (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The psychological definition refers to personal 'uniqueness' or 'individuality.' The ontological definition refers to 'sameness' or 'oneness.' The latter impinges on the former. Most people, at least in contemporary Western societies, take the continuity of the self for granted (Baumeister, 1997). They assume 'sameness' and 'oneness' as a given. Without it, there could be no individuality. This assumption of ontological sameness allows gradual changes, which, if all goes well, signal maturation and growth, though in the end, there is likely decline (Freund, 2008, Heckhausen& Krueger, 1993). All the while, the ontological self is experienced as one and the same; the ontological self, in other words, anchors identity.

Gonzalo challenges this view. Is he, by the time of his death in the Honduran jungle, still the same Gonzalo that he was when he struggled ashore in the Yucatán? What does 'same' mean in this context? Again, most people, at least in contemporary Western societies, bring an attitude of essentialism to their perception of natural kinds (e.g., plants, animals), human groups and individual persons (Demoulin, Leyens, & Yzerbyt, 2006; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992), and ultimately to themselves (Krueger, Heck, & Athenstaedt, 2017). The idea of essentialism entails the property of immutability. In theory, essentialism is satisfied if there is at least one feature that does not change. This feature, then, would be a person's identity. Psychologically, this view is unsatisfying. If there were one stable feature, it might be a trivial or an irrelevant one, such as the person's favorite piece of classical music or punk rock. This difficulty is – seemingly – avoided if the existence of an essence is claimed without any reference to specific features at all. This idea invokes Plato's theory of forms – as laid out in his Phaedo – where the notions of identity and essence turn into the idea of the soul (Hackforth, 1955). Whereas Plato may have abstained from attributing psychologically comprehensible features to the soul, the less metaphysically mindedwill assume (or, hope, rather) that the soul preserves specific personal memories, even after death (Krueger, 2021).Indeed, many individuals in contemporary culture cling to the notion of postmortem consciousness, including authors of peer-reviewed articles (Lee, 2004).

None of this means that Gonzalo had no identity. The term '*going native*' refers to a complete transformation of identity, not a lack thereof. A transformed identity is simply not an essentialist identity in the Platonic sense. Gonzalo's identity – as the identity of most real living people – is a matter of lived experience comprising feelings, behaviors, perceptions, and thought patterns. When these psychological data are aligned in a person's conscious experience, that

is, when the person endorses them, we may say the person is being authentic (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes, 2017). Without identity, authentic action or affect are impossible. Arguably, Gonzalo was an authentic Spaniard when emerging from the Yucatec surf, and he was an authentic Maya during his final years before dying in battle. Gonzalo challenges us to imagine the gradual but radical transformation of his psychological make-up. In his farewell conversation with Jerónimo, he shows that he retains knowledge of the Spanish language and the Spanish point of view as it pertains to him. We can therefore not say that his identity has changed in the sense of complete identity replacement, where the new identity does not recognize the old. Instead, we caninfer that the new identity has become dominant, in the sense that it is automatically engaged when Gonzalo wakes up and starts his day. Jerónimo is a representative of the past. He can activate Gonzalo's old identity, or at least get him to simulate it.

Conclusion

In closing, it is well to note a curious sociological side to the reception of Gonzalo. In the Yucatán, he is widely known and revered. His legend is a rallying point against the official national point of view, which emphasizes the deeds of the conquistadors. In Mérida, these are the Montejos, father Francisco and his son,el mozo ('junior'). The Montejos' presence is enshrined in urban architecture, which overshadows Gonzalo who has no such thing. The Montejo House on the Plaza Mayor is spectacular in its projection of a conqueror's confidence and arrogance. It is a historic building of undeniable splendor. The city's grand boulevard, the Paseo Montejo, might be more controversial because it is a more recent and thus less historically valuable claim that Montejo's legacy is to be celebrated. Mérida, like the rest of Mexico, is not free from a conflicted identity.

The attentive visitornotices that the Yucatán is Maya country in many ways of psychological import. The Yucatán is far removed from Central Mexico, where the Aztecs provide the indigenous reference point. There, Cortés is credited with creating the race of mestizos with his interpreter and mistress, La Malinche. Cortés is widely reviled in the popular imagination there. Murals by Diego Rivera give expression to this popular sentiment. Consider the psychological problem: how can a positive image of an ingroup – here: la raza of mestizos – be constructed on the back of a demonized Urvater? The Yucatecans have solved this problem by embracing Gonzalo. Their ethnic identity is a blend of the Mayan, the mestizo, and the Mexican, and they trace the mix to someone they can love.

Gonzalo went native, taking a leap without a safety net. Gonzalo's journey is not an Odyssey. In the Odyssey, the eventual return home is the motif behind the voyage; in Gonzalo, the hero does not look back in order to look forward. Some feel that ÁlvarNúñez deCabeza de Vacaisan exemplar of *going native* on a par with Gonzalo. Cabeza was shipwrecked in what is now Florida and he walked thousands of miles to the city of Mexico, a journey that took him eight years and that gained him a reputation as a healer and shaman among native populations along the way (Reséndez, 2007). But Cabeza had one overriding goal: to reach home. He succeeded and reintegrated into his society of origin. Like Malinowsky, he cared about the native cultures he encountered. He wrote about the groups that first enslaved him but then sustained him, and he became a champion for their liberation from slavery (a theme echoed by the Neo-Romantics from 'Dances' to 'Dunbar'). Cabeza followed Odysseus's path. He did not go fully native. His example serves to highlight how bold, extreme, and instructive the case of Gonzalo Guerrero truly is. The old warrior still has much to teach us.

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Conflict of Interest

I declare that the absence of conflicts of interest.

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