

DISCOURSE MAP AND EMPIRE BUILDING IN
ÁLVAR NÚÑEZ CABEZA DE VACA'S 1542 *LA RELACIÓN*

Ramón SÁNCHEZ
Chicano and Latin American Studies Department
California State University, Fresno
ramons@csufresno.edu

Nosotros dimos muchas gracias a Dios nuestro señor por aquello que oímos porque estábamos desconfiados de saber de christianos. (...) Y nosotros les dezíamos [a los indios] que les íbamos a buscar [a los españoles] para dezi-lles que no los matasen ni tomassen por esclavos, ni los sacassen de sus tierras, ni les hiziessen otro mal ninguno, y desto ellos se holgaban mucho. [C]laramente se vee que estas gentes todas, para ser atraídos a ser christia-nos y a obediencia de la imperial magestad, an de ser llevados con buen tratamiento, y que éste es camino muy cierto y otro no.¹

The above citation shows how Cabeza de Vaca, after many years of being a castaway, is ready to march forth from the site he identifies as the place with buckle/horseshoe nail (*hevillata de talabarte de espada/un clavo de herrar*) to finally reconnect with Spanish forces and reaffirm his *cristiano*/Hispanic imperial identity. Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 account contains many landscape symbols of the kind mentioned above that he uses to convey the Spanish imperial endeavor. They are part of what I call a narrative map, which articulates ideological sites and contains the non-scale and distorted elements of an itinerary map, making a space known to others who share the cul-

¹ Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, Zamora, Augustin de Paz y Juan Picardo, 1542, sigs. G8^v, H1^r, H1^v. The Cabeza de Vaca translations are my own, and for the Spanish quotations, I follow the original orthography. "We gave many thanks to God our Lord for what we heard because we had despaired of hearing news of Christians. (...) And we told the indios that we were searching for those men in order to say to them to stop killing and taking them as slaves and taking them from their lands and harming them in any other way. The natives were greatly pleased to hear this. (...) Clearly it can be seen that to bring all these people to Christianity and under the command of the Imperial Majesty they must be given good treatment, and this is the only certain way, for there is no other."

tural references.² This narrative representation of landscape aids Spanish conquerors by supplying ideological support and guidance with which to transform appropriated lands and vanquished people. In this study, I examine the ideological struggle between the indigenous and Spanish symbolic worlds in Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 *La Relación*. The analysis will focus on four sites, which Cabeza de Vaca identifies as follows: the place of boxed cadavers, Apalachen, *Isla Malhado*, and the buckle/horseshoe nail place.

Background

The basic background for Cabeza de Vaca's account of the Pánfilo de Narváez Expedition (1527-1536), which is authorized to conquer in the Americas the land from *Río de las Palmas* to the cape of *la Florida*, is the following.³ As one of the four survivors of the Narváez Expedition, Cabeza de Vaca, in his 1542 narrative, published at Zamora, Spain, tells about the failed Narváez Expedition and his difficult journey from Florida to almost the Pacific Ocean in the American land. With the permission of Charles V, Governor Narváez leads an expedition in April 1527 that consists of five ships and about 600 armed men. Cabeza de Vaca is treasurer of the expedition, representing the Spanish crown's interests, and he is also among the 300 expeditionary soldiers who enter inland into Florida in 1528 but who end up unable to reconnect with the ships.⁴ At that point, the expeditionary members construct barges and launch themselves into the sea and end up shipwrecked somewhere on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. From there, Cabeza de Vaca, along with three companions, tries to reconnect with *cristianos* and journeys inland westward. The castaways finally encounter a Spanish slave raiding party in 1536 near the Sinaloa River close to the Pacific Ocean. Before and after meeting the Spanish military forces, Ca-

² An itinerary map is a distorted map with no scale and with a series of destinations (sites) on a travel route or routes, set as clearly as possible, that serves the competent traveler. Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious World: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 46, 53, 54.

³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A3r.

⁴ Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz, eds., *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez*, v. 1, Lincoln, University Of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 374.

beza de Vaca observes their violent destruction of the native communities in the region.⁵ He then meets and joins Melchior Díaz, Chief Justice of Culiacán, in pacifying the natives of this region. He returns to Spain in 1537.

The Spaniards enter the Americas and try to adapt and, significantly, to transform its environment.⁶ As Ralph Bauer notes, for Cabeza de Vaca it means the promotion of imperial cultural space as Spanish forces extend control over other people.⁷ Cabeza de Vaca's discourse map contains the assumption that as a representative of the crown his travel through indio territory establishes the Spanish right to rule over those he calls "bárbaras naciones" (barbarian nations), confirming the Spanish political and religious possession of the territory from the *Río de las Palmas* to *Florida*.⁸ Cabeza de Vaca makes it clear that it is his duty to inform about his journey in order to assist those who in the name of His Majesty go to conquer lands in the Americas, bringing the barbarous people knowledge of the true faith and true Lord and place them under His Majesty's authority: "los que en su nombre fueren a conquistar aquellas tierras y juntamente traerlos [a las bárbaras naciones] a conocimiento de la verdadera fe y verdadero Señor de Vuestra Magestad."⁹ His language assumes the conquered space is stabilized by the designating imperial elements of true faith, Lord, and Sovereign. The emphasis is on the notion of a frontier whose existence is defined by its association to the emperor, who officially fixes lands, people and their identities.

However, from the moment the Narváez expeditionary members invade the American mainland to the time the surviving castaways reconnect with fellow *cristianos*, it is clear that they learn routes—and with them indigenous cultural patterns—from native

⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. H3r.

⁶ Gustavo Verdesio, "The Original Sin Behind the Creation of a New Europe: Economic and Ecological Imperialism in the River Plate," in *Mapping Colonial Spanish America: Places and Commonplaces of Identity, Culture, and Experience*, eds. Santa Arias and Mariselle Meléndez, Cranbury, NJ, Temple University Press, 2002, p. 137-158, p. 149.

⁷ Ralph Bauer, *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 41, 42.

⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A2r, A3r; Padrón, *The Spacious World*, p. 78, 79.

⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A2r, A3r. "Those who in the name of His Majesty go to conquer those lands [in the Americas] and in conjunction bring the [barbarous people] knowledge of the true faith and true Lord and place them in Your Majesty's service."

captives, guides, interpreters, and influential native people.¹⁰ The indios take the Spaniards along terrain they know and have given cultural meaning to, asserting territorial ownership through their landscape narratives, making it clear that they define territorial boundaries.¹¹

In Cabeza de Vaca's discourse map, the indigenous peoples' presence arises because he needs their landscape narratives of the region, for instance, so that the Spanish can reach the golden city, or for their survival, or once they are castaways to fulfill their goal to reconnect with fellow *crístianos*. This, though, means he has to work with the narrative of indio spatial sovereignty.¹² From the natives' discourse maps, Cabeza de Vaca gains geographical and indigenous cultural knowledge. For example, the castaways use women guides ("las mujeres (...) llevándolas por guía") and "Estevanico el negro" as an intermediary between the Spaniards and the indio acquires route and village information ("El negro les hablava siempre y se informava de los caminos que queríamos ir y los pueblos que avía y de las cosas que queríamos saber").¹³ Cabeza de Vaca reconfigures the knowledge of the terrain he receives from the natives within a Spanish imperial cultural frame because, one, it is being used to reconnect to the *tierra cristiana* and, two, as he states, he will later give this geographical intelligence to the crown to facilitate the continuing Spanish conquest ("la relación (...) para los que en su nombre (Vuestra Magestad) fueren a conquistar aquellas tierras").¹⁴

¹⁰ Rolena Adorno, "The Negotiation of Fear in Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios*," *Representations*, v. 33, Special Issue: The New World, Berkeley, University of California Press, v. 33, Winter 1991, p. 163-99, p. 168.

¹¹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. D3^v, G7^v, D5^v; Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the 'Borderlands' of the Early Southwest," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Williamsburg, Virginia, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, v. 68, n.1, January 2011, p. 5-46, p. 5, 10.

¹² Barr, "Geographies of Power," p. 7, 19.

¹³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. F5^v, G7^v. "They took (the women) as guides." "The black would always spoke with them and gained information about routes we desired to travel and the villages along the way and other things we wanted to know."

¹⁴ Brian J. Harley, "Rereading the Map of the Columbian Encounter," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, London, Taylor & Francis, Ltd, v. 82, n. 3, September 1992, p. 522-536, p. 526. Harley comments on the dependence of Europeans on indigenous directions. Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A2^r. "The account (...) is for those who in Your Majesty's name will go to conquer those lands."

Cabeza de Vaca's rhetoric of sanctification and Christianization builds on the previous mentioned royal claim to possession and Governor Narváez's official ritual of land possession ("levantó pendones por Vuestra Magestad y tomó la possession de la tierra"), implying his fulfillment of his duty by establishing *cristiano*/Hispanic value-laden boundary constraints on the indigenous people.¹⁵ Both as castaway and as pacifier with military power, Cabeza de Vaca, as a service to "Dios nuestro Señor and Vuestra Magestad" (God our Lord and Your Majesty), rhetorically and, if possible, forcefully turns indio territory into *tierra cristiana* (Christian land). For instance, when the castaway Cabeza de Vaca is made into a healer ("*físico*") by the natives, his practice of appealing to our Lord and giving the sign of the cross ("supliqué a nuestro Señor", "santiguado") symbolically communicates to a Hispanic audience he is placing the indios under Spanish sovereignty and thus changing their identity.¹⁶ Likewise later after the shipwrecked survivors rejoin Spanish forces and Cabeza de Vaca regains backing of military might, the categorizing of the indio as *cristiano* who serves *españoles* ("ser cristianos y servir a Dios nuestro Señor de la manera que les mandásemos") reclassifies the land as bound within the Spanish empire.¹⁷

From the start, the Spanish imperial imprimatur of the Americas is meant to supplant the indigenous representation.¹⁸ A discourse map with its sites then not only arranges space in terms of distance and location, but through various *cristiano*/Hispanic rhetorical ideological constructs develops a particular image of the world.¹⁹

¹⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A6^r. "The governor raised the banners and took possession of the land on behalf of Your Majesty."

¹⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. E6^r.

¹⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. H6^r. "(the indios) be Christians and serve God our Lord in the manner they (the Spaniards) commanded."

¹⁸ David Day, *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 50, 52.

¹⁹ Pavel N. Medvedev and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method In Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction To Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 14. "Social man is surrounded by ideological phenomena, by object-signs of various types and categories: by words in the multifarious forms of their realization (sounds, writing, and others), by scientific statements, religious symbols and beliefs, works of art, and so on. All of these things in their totality comprise the ideological environment, which forms a solid ring around man."

The place of boxed cadavers

On 15 April 1528, the Narváez expedition makes an exploration into the mainland. Along their route, the members of the Narváez expedition find in a native village (“en su pueblo”) boxes with the corpses, which are recognized as those of *cristianos* (“los quales eran cristianos”) who have been covered with painted deerskins.²⁰ The boxed corpses mark a space with indio symbols that are unintelligible to the expeditionary members. Nevertheless, fueled by the rise of their concerns about losing authority, legitimacy, and power, Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow expeditionary members realize that the indigenous ritual discourse representation of the site does not lend itself to the imposition of a Spanish imperial perspective. The native place of boxed cadavers communicates symbolically that they are equal to the Spaniards in bilateral relationships, challenging their jurisdiction over the landscape. It may seem strange that the expeditionaries do not ask the four indio guides they have with them to interpret the meaning of the dead men who lay, ironically, in “caxas de mercaderes de Castilla” covered with “cueros de venados pintados.”²¹ These marked men do present the shifting of the forms of political and juridical jurisdictions away from the Spanish conquerors, who cannot secure the site onto their realm’s chart.

For the expeditionary members, the indios are infringing on prerogatives regarded as exclusively theirs: the preeminence of their *cristiano* religion and Hispanic culture. The indigenous signs and symbols are seen as demarcating a land and indicating the Spaniards have trespassed into an indio place, negating the claim of the Spanish expeditionary members as being the ones who solely delimitate boundaries and approve conceptions of rule.

The expeditionary members cannot accept the natives’ authority in giving meaning and legitimacy to that space. As conquerors, however, they find it difficult or impossible to reclaim or to assimilate or accept the *cristiano* bodies in the boxes, for they have been

²⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A6^v, A7^r, I2^v. “en cada [caxa] estava un cuerpo de hombre muerto (...) cubierto con unos cueros de venado pintados (...) los quales eran cristianos.”

²¹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A6^v, A7^r. “crates used by Castile merchants, painted deer hides.”

changed through a “barbarian” ritual. The indigenous place of boxed cadavers questions the expedition members’ right to mark a place as legitimate or not and to dictate its historical meaning. If the natives have the authority to chart and designate land that is supposed to already belong to the Spanish crown, as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo official royal chronicler of the Indies states, then that also makes the Spanish conquerors’ imperial endeavor appear unacceptable and unlawful.²² Ideologically speaking, for the Spaniards this is an obstructed route that they need to unblock.

From the beginning, Cabeza de Vaca’s discourse map declares the region he travels as a strange barbarian land (“*estrañas tierras... bárbaras naciones*”), and as such it is the indios who make the space alien to the Spaniards and give it unclear boundaries.²³ The notion of barbarian plays an important role in the Spanish conqueror’s approach to the reordering of indigenous territory and their assimilation. Cabeza de Vaca’s landscape narrative draws on the perceptions that the *cristiano*/Hispanic conqueror is fighting for civilization (Hispanicization) against barbarism, for the true religion against the false one, and for fulfillment of history against the lack of one.²⁴ Cabeza de Vaca’s landscape narrative is orientated toward a Spanish imperial domain, which declares that the barbarian is “on the other side of Christian existence” and that the indio’s alien and uncivilized ways must be expurgated.²⁵

In the background of *La Relación* are the memories of a religious/empire building crusade known as *la Reconquista*, which for many Spaniards of the conquest period feeds their sense of righteous duty

²² Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, v. 2, ed. Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso, Madrid, Ediciones Atlas, 1992, p. 17-20. Oviedo, official chronicler of Charles V, promotes the argument that ancient sources (e.g., by Aristóteles, Plinio, Beroso) give the Catholic monarchs dominion (“con derecho tan antiquísimo”) over the Indies long before Columbus made his discovery, p. 20. He states, “[V]olvio Dios este señorío a España a cabo de tantos siglos.” (God returned this lordship to Spain after so many centuries), p. 20.

²³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A2’.

²⁴ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 18, 19. To better understand the ways that a barbarian was perceived, one can look at the definitions Bartolomé de Las Casas codifies in *Apologética Historia Sumaria* (c. 1552) but that were already in the *cristiano* culture of the 1500s. The main definitions of barbarians I would like to highlight from Las Casas’ work are the following: (1) a barbarian lacks proper behavior, (2) lacks proper language, (3) lacks basic forms of government, and (4) lacks the true religion.

²⁵ Padrón, *The Spacious World*, p. 104.

to Christianize and civilize the barbarian indios.²⁶ It is not surprising that labeling the indigenous people “barbarians” authorizes the Spanish conqueror to use violence against them.²⁷ Cabeza de Vaca’s designation of native people as “muy barbaras naciones” promotes Spanish imperial view that the encounter between the *crístianos* and the indios as one between civilized and barbarous people. Since the savage natives by definition reside in unrecognized space, the Spanish conquest of their land and communities is justified. After all, at one point he tells the natives to serve and adore the Christian God, for they are now vassals of the Spanish crown (“sirviessen y adorassen como mandávamos”), and at another point, he comments on how the land would be productive if developed by men of reason (*gente de razón*), meaning the *crístiano*/Hispanic people.²⁸

For the Narváez expeditionary members, the dead *crístianos* in the boxes with the indio cultural markings are a barrier to their success, challenging their imperial hierarchical sense of superiority and right to territorial appropriation and interpretation. Under the circumstances, they cannot perform their duty to compel the “savage” people to become Christians and civilized (Hispanicized) and accept Spanish dictates and the dispossession of their land.²⁹ Raymond Craib observes that a map captures “in usable fashion those aspects of a ‘territory’ (whether political, social, economic, or geographical) that pertain to the reader’s control and to create spaces for the articulation of control.”³⁰ The place of dead men, though, impedes the Spaniards’ imposition of the imperial designation, negating thier cultural and political demarcations.

Consequently, the *crístianos*’ reaction to the site is to see it as a reflection of a degraded world without Christianity or Hispanic

²⁶ *La Reconquista* (718-1492) refers to the struggle between Christian forces and Moorish forces for the Iberian Peninsula that is crucial in the development of the Castilian ideological basis for what becomes the Spanish Empire. Hernán G. H. Taboada, “Mentalidad de reconquista y primeros conquistadores,” *Revista de Historia de América*, New York, Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, núm. 135, July-December 2004, p. 39-48, p. 43.

²⁷ Medvedev and Bakhtin, *The Formal Method In Literary Scholarship*, p. 21, 22.

²⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A2^r, H6^r, E3^r. “sería tierra muy frutífera si fuesse labrada y habitada de gente de razón.”

²⁹ J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 62; Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig., F3^v.

³⁰ Raymond B. Craib, “Cartography and Power in the Conquest and Creation of New Spain,” *Latin American Research Review*, New York, The Latin American Studies Association, v. 35, n. 1, 2000, p. 7-36, p. 21, 22.

cultural meaning. For the expeditionary members, who find themselves responding to the indigenous landmarks that restrict them, the concept of struggling against barbarous people becomes an important possible way by which to open the route for the continuation of the imperial endeavor.³¹ This is so because in order to save the indio from their uncivilized manners the expeditionary members are obligated to conduct a just war against them, and the result would be to bring supposedly submitting natives under the crown's authority.³² This gives the Narváez expeditionary members the opportunity with which to re-inscribe the site by imparting on it their imperial ideological meaning.

The Spaniards and natives present two unmediated claims to the place of boxed cadavers. The expeditionary members step into the boundaries of a native village ("su pueblo") and encounter the indigenous re-figured dead men, who for the Spaniards represent the threat of incorporation into an indio domain. The Indianized dead *cristiano* bodies defy the Spanish conqueror's political and geographic authority to define and chart the land. This strikes at the expeditionary members' self-identification as empire builders. In addition, the indigenous inscription of the space projects the natives' existence as independent of the Spaniards' defining power. In a moment of stressful uncertainty for the expeditionary members, they are forced into a conflicting cross-discourse by the indigenous cultural framing of the dead.

They cannot selectively appropriate elements of the natives' ritualized place because of the fear of annexing indigenous aspects that are at odds with their ideological perspective. Their response, then, to the boxed cadavers is to make the unknown *cristianos* known within their cultural context by attempting to totally re-imprint the location. The ritualized *cristiano* cadavers, representing the native site, are delegitimized by declaring the indigenous act as a barbarian ceremony, an act of idolatry ("Al comissario le pareció que esto era especie de idolatría"), and consequently an act that cannot be accepted as legitimate.³³ Since these framed corpses cease to be *cristianos*, they must be done away with, and therefore the

³¹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A2^r.

³² Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 62.

³³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A7^r. This looked to the commissary like a type of idolatry.

dead bodies are burned (“*quemó las caxas con los cuerpos*”).³⁴ The Spanish expeditionaries as conquerors act to remedy things and, as in a just war, halt the harm the natives are inflicting. The problem of the place of boxed cadavers is resolved by erasing and transforming the indio site through a *cristiano*/Hispanic cleansing act that rectifies and fits things into what they consider as a valid Spanish imperial representation of the place.

Apalachen

On 1 May 1528, the Narváez expedition splits into two parts. The ships sail away, and Narváez, Cabeza de Vaca, and a large number of men enter the mainland in the region that today is Florida in search of the golden city.³⁵ In their previous exploration, they captured four natives who inform the Spaniards that the small lumps of gold the Spaniards found come from the province of Apalachen (“*avía una provincia que se dezía Apalachen*”), which becomes for the Spaniards the city of Apalachen.³⁶ At this point, the expeditionary members have not seen Apalachen, but they do not doubt the existence of the golden city, for they have accepted its existence long before they set foot on the mainland of America.

The Apalachen site is interpreted as the golden city where the Spaniards can gain economic and political power, and social status. Metaphorically, this city offers the expeditionary members renewal, for within that context they can reach their highest development as they fulfill the imperial endeavor and be rewarded for serving the Spanish crown. For Cabeza de Vaca, as treasurer of the Narváez Expedition, he is there to insure the crown’s share of the gold and to truly incorporate Apalachen into the emperor’s spatial realm. In such ways, Cabeza de Vaca thus displays his loyalty to the Monarch over all other loyalties.

Though Apalachen is an indio place, Cabeza de Vaca’s discourse map at first turns it into a golden city by applying rhetorical elements, phrases, and words that assist in constructing Spanish imperial cultural space out of an native one, but which, of course, do not

³⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A7r. “He burned the boxes with the corpses.”

³⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A8r, “treientos hombres” (three hundred men).

³⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A6r, A7r.

necessarily render a well-grounded sense of the native cultural world that is there.³⁷ This is exemplified by the expeditionary members' association of the term gold (*oro*) with Apalachen. When their coerced guides inform them that "muy lexos de allí avía una provincia que se dezía Apalachen en la qual avía mucho oro," the Spaniards turn the location into their expected city of gold.³⁸ The word "oro" makes the site mean prosperity to the Spaniards as it silences the natives and makes them appear passive, constraining and fixing them to their station in the imperial grid. On the other hand, the expeditionary members become active social constructors of the territory before them, building their Spanish identity through a contrast between them and the people they call indios.³⁹

Cabeza de Vaca's landscape narrative restructures and reinterprets indio knowledge whereby the Spanish conqueror imposes himself on the natives as he appropriates their territories and later entrenches himself politically.⁴⁰ Ricardo Padrón, who examines Hernan Cortés' *Segunda carta de relación* as a discourse map, points out that this type of space creating way-finding process is more than adequate for the task of forging an empire.⁴¹ For the Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow expeditionary cohorts, the Apalachen site promises the golden city whose conquest will make their suffering and pain meaningful as Cabeza de Vaca observes: "Mas con vernos llegados donde desseávamos y donde tanto mantenimiento y oro nos avian dicho que avía, paresçionos que se nos avía quitado gran parte del trabajo y cansancio."⁴² Cabeza de Vaca's Apalachen site partially obliterates indigenous cultural content and/or conceals it. The Spaniards' whole focus is on the city of gold, which is the interpretation

³⁷ V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 33.

³⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A7r. "that very far from there was a province called Apalachen where there was much gold."

³⁹ Lee M. Panich, "Missionization and the Persistence of Native Identity on the Colonial Frontier of Baja California," *Ethnohistory*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, v. 57, n. 2, Spring 2010, p. 225-262, p. 228.

⁴⁰ J. Omar Moncada Maya, "Construyendo el territorio. El desarrollo de la cartografía en Nueva España," *Historias de la Cartografía de Iberoamérica: nuevos caminos, viejos problemas*, Héctor Mendoza Vargas y Carla Lois, coordinadores, México, Instituto de Geografía UNAM e Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía e Informática, 2009, p. 161-182, p. 164.

⁴¹ Padrón, *The Spacious Word*, p. 93.

⁴² Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. B3r. "But having gotten to where we longed-for and where we were told awaited us food and gold, it seemed to us that a great portion of our hardship and fatigue had been taken away."

they give the natives' account. This distorts the expeditionary members' understanding of the landscape, for the natives mention "oro" but not a city of gold. The conception of the golden city, though, helps the Spaniards classify and situate what is for them an unknown land as well as its diverse indigenous people within their bounded imperial space. For the expeditionary members, the route for them appears now to truly lead to the location where they can gain wealth, raise their social status, and fulfill their duty to the crown. The Spaniards' interpretation of the indigenous people's statements about the land reflects their embedded *cristiano*/Hispanic cultural assumptions, and their assumed perception of Apalachen allows the imperial discourse to flow and reproduce itself on the terrain they do not know but making it ideologically known.⁴³

The expeditionary members, though, need to acquire the native geographical knowledge in order for them to make their way to Apalachen. In this case, their captured natives lead them to that place. However, once the Narváez expeditionary members reach Apalachen, they are forced to recognize that it is not the golden city. Cabeza de Vaca informs, "En el pueblo avia quarenta casas pequeñas y edificadas baxas y en lugares abrigados."⁴⁴ In retrospect, the natives' response to the Spaniards' queries about the pieces of gold can be understood in different ways. One is that their tale of the origin of the gold is a way to lead the Spaniards away from their territory and bypass their village or villages and direct them to others. This the expeditionary members do not conclude.

For the native informants, Apalachen is a "provincia" (a province), identifying the place as a territory and not a city. Their oral representation of Apalachen is that of being a space that is not part of their tribal group, which shows they understand territorial boundaries.⁴⁵ This perspective is reinforced when the Spanish force encounters a native chief ("señor") who informs the expeditionary members "que era enemigo de los de Apalchen."⁴⁶ It appears that in the exchange between natives and Spaniards about the Apalachen

⁴³ Robert Paine, "Columbus and Anthropology and the Unknown," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, London, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1995, p. 47-65; p. 55.

⁴⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. B3^r. "The village consisted of forty small houses that were built low and in sheltered places."

⁴⁵ Barr, "Geographies of Power," p. 25, 26.

⁴⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. B2^r. "that he was an enemy of the Apalachen."

site each gives the location a different significance. Both parties communicate incompletely and/or misunderstand one another concerning the meaning of the site. Nevertheless, they do have an impact on each other's purpose and goal.⁴⁷

The Apalachen the Spaniards reach is disappointing, but for them the idea of finding a golden city does not die. Afterwards, for instance, Cabeza de Vaca locates golden cities in his narrative landscape. He informs that the indios tell him that one city toward the north ("hazia el norte") where "avía allí pueblos de mucha gente y casas muy grandes." In his ideological chart, this site can only refer to a higher civilization. There is also the wealthy settlement on the South Sea ("Mar del Sur") he learns about where "siempre tuvimos notiçia que aquella mar es más rica que la del Norte."⁴⁸ Cabeza de Vaca continues to take notice of such places and to attempt to fix their locations, showing that the discourse map of *La Relación* does not mirror land as simply terrain nor the cultural indigenous geography in an objective manner, but in addition, it constructs and disseminates a broad imperial spectrum of concomitant ideological elements. His narrative map's empire building orientation emerges from an evolving history of *cristiano*/Hispanic conquest, and consequently it acts as a vehicle that transmits those Spanish determinations and expectations.⁴⁹

Isla Malhado

After the frustrating experience at Apalachen, the expeditionary members find themselves in a bad situation: isolated, in hostile territory, and running out of resources with no hope of getting resupplied by their ships or reconnecting with them. They eventually embark on barges they construct and escape in that manner, setting forth from the place they name *vaía de Cavallos* and head toward *Río*

⁴⁷ Panich, "Missionization and the Persistence of Native Identity", p. 230, 231.

⁴⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. G7^r, G1^v, H7^r, H7^v. "Toward the north (...) There were many very populated towns with big houses." "[The South Sea] which we always understood was a richer sea than the Northern one."

⁴⁹ John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping, and the Geo-coded World*, New York, Taylor and Francis, Inc., 2004, p. 65. A text-map like a map is a function of "social circumstances arising only within certain social structures."

de Palmas.⁵⁰ This act confirms that the members of the Narváez expedition have altered their goal, seeking now the *tierra cristiana* (Christian land), which is the vaguest space geographically but the most specific ideologically. It is broad and flexible because of geographical uncertainties and continuous Spanish armed expansion that is pursuing the goal of the universal empire.⁵¹ It is presumed to be an ever enlarging zone of Spanish imperial cultural values that function as all-encompassing, giving the castaways a Spanish sense of purpose and identity.⁵² In addition, the *tierra cristiana* points to a *cristiano*/Hispanic world that contrasts with the barbarian one.

With the loss of Apalachen as the city of gold and the retreat by the Spaniards toward the Christian land, their validating claims to the region and to its indigenous people are shaken. Cabeza de Vaca's discourse map now becomes one whose purpose is to reconnect with fellow Spaniards. However, Cabeza de Vaca's actions need to be more than just the practical reaction to the need to escape in order to reconnect with *cristianos*. What is missing is why this is meaningful ideologically. Apalachen is gone; their military might is gone; and Governor Narváez declares at one point that it is every man for himself ("cada uno hiziesse lo que major le pareciesse que era para salvar la vida").⁵³ All these events undermine the castaways' imperial commitment to erect an empire.

Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow expeditionary members do escape from Florida on barges they construct, but they end up shipwrecked somewhere west of the Mississippi River, at a place called *Isla Malhado* (Bad Luck Island).⁵⁴ When the castaways first look around the island, they believe they have reached *tierra de cristianos* (Christian land) because "la tierra estava cavada a la manera que suele estar tierra donde anda ganado."⁵⁵ They are sadly disappointed though. Their mapping gaze is constrained by their plight and expanded by the hope that the *tierra cristiana* is within reach. The castaways' unidirectional perception is shaken because the demar-

⁵⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. B6^v, B8^r, B8^v.

⁵¹ J. H. Elliott, *Spain and its World 1500-1700*, London, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 8, 9.

⁵² Padrón, *The Spacious World*, p. 97.

⁵³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. C4^r. "Each should do what he thought best to save his life."

⁵⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. C5^v, C7^v, C8^r.

⁵⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. C4^v, C5^r. "the ground was trampled in the manner that is usually done by cattle."

cation between the land of non-*cristianos* and *cristianos* is no longer defined by their *cristiano*/Hispanic perspective. The land is not distinctly marked or discerned by them. This leaves the shipwrecked men being designated by native borders and their cultural frames.

Once the expeditionary members lose the remaining barge, end up being naked, are without provisions or shelter, and no longer have military power, Cabeza de Vaca cannot portray himself as conquer. He cannot at this point be the forceful conqueror who sets the imperial grid on the land. In addition, on *Isla Malhado*, from a weak position the Spanish castaways have to contend with multifarious indigenous groups. The dramatic moment that displays the possible cultural and/or physical end of the Spanish castaways is when Cabeza de Vaca asks the natives to take them in or they will die (“rogué a los indios que nos llevasen a sus casas”). The natives accept them, saving their lives. This situation, though, raises questions about their loyalty and commitment to their imperial obligations. Cabeza de Vaca’s defense is that no other course of action is possible in order to survive, “visto que otro remedio no avía y que por qualquier otro camino estava más çerca y más çierta la muerte,” and then he insists he is continuing his efforts to reach the *tierra cristiana*.⁵⁶

However, to add to their troubles, it turns out that the castaways are not incorporated into the native community that first saves them and later by other tribal groups. There appear to be two main reasons for this. First, sometime after they are rescued by the native group, some of the castaways commit cannibalistic acts, which can be understood as resulting from the necessity to survive. These acts by some, though, do place in jeopardy the existence of all of the castaways and weaken the indigenous people’s willingness to accept the shipwrecked Spaniards as members of their community, for the natives now consider them in the manner that the Spaniards see the indios: as barbarians. Cabeza de Vaca points out, “Deste caso se alteraron tanto los indios y hubo entre ellos tan gran escándalo que sin duda que si al principio ellos los vieran los mataran y todos nos viéramos en grande trabajo.”⁵⁷ At that point on *Isla Malhado*, it

⁵⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. C6^r, C7^r. “seeing there was no other solution and that any other course of action would lead to bringing death closer and make it more certain.”

⁵⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. C7^r, C8^r. “Because of this, the indios became very upset and became such a great scandal that, without a doubt, if they had seen the act earlier they would have killed them. This placed all of us castaways in great danger.”

appears that the castaways are in danger of being erased from the indigenous sphere. The second reason for their exclusion appears to be that the natives associate the *cristianos* with disease. For instance, the castaways are accused of being responsible for a stomach ailment that kills half of the native community (“una enfermedad de estómago de que murió la mitad de la gente dellos”).⁵⁸ Cabeza de Vaca and his companions are left in a limbo. They are set outside the indigenous people’s community borders, remaining an ambiguous group but one which needs to be contained by the natives.

As castaway, they have to work within the social space of the numerous and established *Isla Malhado* native groups, who reinforce their conceptions of their collective self through their group actions. Cabeza de Vaca uses a discourse map to attempt to make valid the Spanish imperial possession of land. The indigenous people have their own landscape narratives and rituals that record and validate their territorial space. As Juliana Barr points out, indigenous people’s lore “reconstitutes boundary markers.”⁵⁹ An instance of this is when Cabeza de Vaca goes with the *Malhado* islanders to the sea coast in April (1529) for blackberries. He notes their cultural rituals, such as native dances and their celebrations (“areytos y fiestas”) and their social interactions, which define the route and mark the place with what they consider significant.⁶⁰

As a castaway, the main voice which defines Cabeza de Vaca in the indigenous community is not his, but instead that of the native. The islanders insist Cabeza de Vaca and his companions must take their strength from the land where “las piedras y otras cosas que se crían por los campos tienen virtud (...) y que nosotros que éramos hombres cierto era que teníamos mayor virtud y poder.”⁶¹ Such imprinting of the land by the natives communicates a different interpretation than that of the Spaniards of what one takes from the location. This makes it difficult for Cabeza de Vaca to claim outright these indio places as *cristiano* ones.

The natives designate space for the shipwrecked Spaniards, e.g., they ensure for them safe passage or reconfirm their limita-

⁵⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. C8^r.

⁵⁹ Barr, “Geographies of Power,” p. 31.

⁶⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. D1^v.

⁶¹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. D1^v. “The stones and other things that arise in the fields have virtue (...) and we who were men surely have greater virtue and power.”

tions.⁶² Cabeza de Vaca and his companions are passed from one native community to another as well as contained and directed. Even when they travel on their own, in order to survive the castaways are aware that they need for people they encounter along the route of them.⁶³ Many times, the castaways need to be at least tolerated by the natives as they seek out shelter, food, and directions. Cabeza de Vaca must communicate with the tribal people, especially through signs, such as when he informs a group of natives that he dearly needs their help: "Yo salí a ellos y llamelos (...) Hízelos entender con señas."⁶⁴ Recognizing the presence, size, and significance of the natives, Cabeza de Vaca uses and needs their defined spaces, which brush up against his imperial concepts of bounds and domains in his discourse map. Consequently, to function, Cabeza de Vaca has to adapt to their territorial sovereignty, to navigate their cultural geography, and function within the dynamics of their communities.

For the shipwrecked expeditionary men on the island, questions arise about what is being possessed, understood, discovered, and defined, as well as what is being failed at and succeeded in.⁶⁵ The survivors of the Narváez expedition are no longer an army and they lack resources. In addition, they have no authority among the natives and need their assistance and knowledge of the region. In this dismal situation, the castaways are unable to fulfill the conquest in the originally intended manner and are, therefore, not able to demand high status and wealth. This is clearly revealed when Cabeza de Vaca ceases to be a castaway by reconnecting with a Spanish military party, whose members demand the obedience of the indios who have come with the castaways. These armed Spaniards call themselves the lords of the land and classify Cabeza de Vaca and his companions as people of no importance or worth: "gente de poca suerte y valor, y que ellos eran los señores de la tierra a quien avian de obedesçer y servir."⁶⁶ At the *Isla Malhado* site, this question aris-

⁶² Jualiana Barr notes this type of spatial relationships in her work. Barr, "Geographies of Power," p. 25, 26, 27.

⁶³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. C8^v, D1^v, D4^v, D5^v, D7^v, E2^v, E3^v, E6^v, E8^r, F5^v.

⁶⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. F7^v, C6^r. "I went forth calling them (...) I made them understand through signs."

⁶⁵ Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. H3^v. "People of no importance or worth and because they were the lords of the land the indios have to obey and serve them."

es about what does the empire building project mean under marooned condition? What does his discourse map have to say about him in this place? Consequently, Cabeza de Vaca attempts to overcome his uncertainty on *Isla Malhado* by re-locating himself in the imperial scheme in order to fulfill his obligation to the crown and thus to validate himself.

It is at this low point for the castaways that Cabeza de Vaca reinterprets his mission by re-conceptualizing and making the space meaningful in terms of his ideological framework, in which terms, such as “nuestro Señor,” “cristiano,” “verdadera fe,” “servicio a Vuestra Magestad,” all conceive space as a set stage for Spanish conquest.⁶⁷ He cannot justify his actions as simply driven by the need to escape. In his landscape narrative, Cabeza de Vaca is not just a person without social ties moving along a route. Instead, he journeys with imperial purpose, for he is a representative of the crown. As such, he rhetorically imposes a representation of the land whose landmarks are to be understood as valid spatial controls because of the power of Spanish imperialism, part of an accepted historical right to conquer and govern (“conquistar y gobernar”).⁶⁸

Cabeza de Vaca still works off the imperial *cristiano*/Hispanic cultural foundations he begins with, through which he transforms the significance of *Isla Malhado* from someone else’s land where he is the trespasser to a place that is to be defined and delimited in the name of the Spanish crown. This means he cannot be defined by native symbolism as were the *cristianos* in the place of boxed cadavers. Consequently, he solves the problem of lost meaning by proclaiming his actions on the *Isla Malhado* site are directed clearly to achieve *cristiano* redemption, renewal, and regeneration. He will bring the shipwrecked *cristianos* out of the barbarous lands and into the *tierras cristianas*, stating, “[Q]ue yo los passaría de los ríos y ancones que topásmos [a tierra Cristiana] (...) [que Dios] me avía de sacar de quella catividada.”⁶⁹ In this way, he proves his loyalty by

⁶⁷ Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 21. Voloshinov observes that the sign cannot be “divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse”. He also notes that “Every ideological sign—the verbal sign included—in coming about through the process of social intercourse, is defined by the *social purview* of the given time period and the given social group.” Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A2^r, A2^v, H6^r.

⁶⁸ Craib, “Cartography and Power,” p. 22. Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A3^r.

⁶⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. D5^v, H2^v. “I will lead them across rivers and inlets that barred our way (...) for God would take me out of this captivity.”

not abandoning his fellow *españoles* and bringing back to the emperor his discourse map. At that moment, in his narrative map, there appears to be no blank space—no silent space—for the landscape is designated in broad strokes as either *tierra cristiana* or the non-*tierra cristiana*, which is expressed by phrases, such as “muchas y muy estrañas tierras,” “muchas y muy bárbaras naçiones.”⁷⁰ The blanks spots as silences in his discourse map, nevertheless, are still there, but from his perspective they come across as supporting and legitimizing the Spanish imperial endeavor, for they are filled with *cris-tiano*/Hispanic cultural assumptions.⁷¹

At times, one can hear in Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative the muffled or marginalized or fragmented native ideological/geographical information, which undermines the Spanish unidirectional imperial understanding of the situation.⁷² For instance, at the Apalachen and then the *Isla Malhado* site, Cabeza de Vaca is forced to respond to the native cultural signs, for his empire building ideological constructs cannot hide the indio challenges to an imposed Spanish identity on them and their land.⁷³ Though Cabeza de Vaca’s discourse map sites are never free from their *cris-tiano*/Hispanic cultural context or the motives that define the conqueror’s goals, they are also impacted by the indigenous perspectives as expressed through their territorial boundaries and meaning of their sites, forcing on him different relationships, e.g., as slave, *físico*, merchant.⁷⁴ The shipwrecked Cabeza de Vaca as healer (“*físico*”), for instance, is led by natives along routes where he and his fellow castaways are used in ritual plundering and robbing of other native groups (“eran todos saqueados y robados”).⁷⁵ The natives set forth the lay of the land with their own territorial political assertions. In *La Relación*, the *Isla Malhado* site becomes a contested one, revealing the disputed claims of culturally different people as they react to each other’s constructed space.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A2^r. “very strange lands, very barbarous people.”

⁷¹ J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, Ed. Paul Laxton, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 85, 86.

⁷² Harley, “Rereading the Map of the Columbian Encounter,” p. 527.

⁷³ Medvedev and Bakhtin, *The Formal Method In Literary Scholarship*, p. 120, 121, 122.

⁷⁴ Barr, “Geographies of Power,” p. 43.

⁷⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. F8^r.

⁷⁶ Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 11. The response to a cultural sign is with another cultural sign.

The buckle/horseshoe nail place

Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow castaways travel across the indigenous people's landscape, seeking to reach the Christian land. They eventually reach the spot Cabeza de Vaca describes as the buckle and horseshoe nail place. It is there that they see an indio wearing "al cuello (...) una hevilleta de talabarte de espada y en ella cosida un clavo de herrar."⁷⁷ They ask the indio about the objects, and he informs them that some bearded men like them ("barvas como nosotros") had brought those items. At this point, Cabeza de Vaca's landscape narrative presents this site as the location where the Spanish castaways realize they will finally connect with fellow *cristianos* who are within reach, saying, "Nosotros dimos muchas gracias a Dios nuestro Señor por aquello que oímos."⁷⁸ The equipment pieces of a Spanish military force (the buckle and the nail) promise an end to Cabeza de Vaca's and his companions' estrangement from their fellow Spaniards. For Cabeza de Vaca and his companions, this point on the journey designates the threshold to the Christian world. They are about to step out of a barbarous space and reconnect with Spanish history (considered the real history). By entering the *tierra cristiana* their fragmented journey, suffering, exile, and their "miserable captivity" is about to conclude, and so he states with great relief, "[D]imos muchas gracias a Dios nuestro Señor por querernos sacar de tan triste y miserable captiverio."⁷⁹

The concluding re-linking act, though, does not come easily to his companions Castillo and Dorantes, who not only hesitate to rejoin with their imperial comrades but also express, at least at that moment, that the attempt is not to their liking: "A ellos se les hizo de mal esto."⁸⁰ Cabeza de Vaca's words fail to move them. Castillo and Dorantes will not seek out and finally reach Spanish forces, excusing themselves as being tired and because of effects of the experienced hardship ("escusándose por el cansancio y trabajo"),

⁷⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. G8^v. "saw an indio wearing around his neck a sword belt buckle and sewn to it a horseshoe nail."

⁷⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. G8^v.

⁷⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. G8^v, H2^v. "We gave many thanks to God our Lord for allowing us to escape this sad and wretched captivity."

⁸⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. H2^v.

which Cabeza de Vaca does not accept, for they are younger and healthier than him (“major que yo por ser más rezios y más moços”).⁸¹ The Spanish castaway’s inconsistent reactions, at the buckle and horseshoe nail place, reveal that the rhetorically assumed Spanish imperial codes and modes of social duty and legitimacy have become ambiguous. The ordering principles of conquest now appear to be lacking as well as a replacement for them. Castillo’s and Dorantes’ sudden lack of clear intentions or concrete actions to reconnect with fellow Spaniards fixes them in a limbo space in which they can be confined and neglected. The buckle and horseshoe nail landmark turns into a place of uncertainty and loss of identity.

From among the Spanish castaways, it is Cabeza de Vaca who thrusts forward intending to re-connect with his fellow conquerors. He leaves Castillo and Dorantes behind at the buckle and horseshoe nail place and steps out to reach his fellow Spaniards. Cabeza de Vaca states he recognizes and upholds the sovereignty of the “Sacra, Cesárea, Católica, Magestad” (Sacred, Imperial, Catholic Majesty). He is the one who serves “Dios nuestro Señor” (God our Lord) who leads him to the Christian land.⁸² In the process, Cabeza de Vaca shows he is a dutiful loyal servant of the emperor who carries to *Vuestra Magestad* his memories (“memorias”) —in part, as a landscape narrative— that asserts the crown’s sovereignty.⁸³

Cabeza de Vaca points out that his memorable act of reconnecting to his fellow conquerors meets the objectives of both saving *crístianos* and claiming the traveled land for the crown. His determination to offer his discourse map to the emperor confirms both his acceptance of the right to empire building and the obligation to fulfill God’s plan for the Spanish crown, fulfilling the imperial demand for detailed descriptions of these journeyed lands officially possessed by the crown.⁸⁴ He redeems and is redeemed, for his action shows him determined to acknowledge *Dios* and to fulfill his formal obligation to the emperor.⁸⁵

Cabeza de Vaca, as suffering but loyal witness of the emperor, gives the terrain an imperial conception, transforming the buckle

⁸¹ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. H2^v.

⁸² Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sigs. A1^v, F7^v.

⁸³ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. A2^r.

⁸⁴ Barr, “Geographies of Power,” p. 7.

⁸⁵ Bauer, *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures*, p. 33, 36.

and horseshoe nail place into a symbol of hope, for he will reunite with Spaniards.⁸⁶ He will not be absorbed into the world of the indigenous people, for instance, a fellow Narváez expeditionary member Doroteo Teodoro who does join the indios.⁸⁷ Instead, he is committed to the conversion of the natives (“dexáramos christianos”) as well as re-establishing a hierarchy that subordinates the indio to the *español*, which reflect tensions concerning justice and duty within the Spanish imperialist process.⁸⁸ Cabeza de Vaca reiterates through his act of reconnection that he is *español* and in the process transmutes the buckle and horseshoe nail place into a terrain that is now part of true history. As the embodiment of the narrative map, Cabeza de Vaca leaves the buckle and horseshoe nail place and heads out towards his militarily powerful associates ready to offer his capabilities for completing the endeavor of establishing the empire.

CONCLUSION

Although there are many discourse map sites in Cabeza de Vaca’s 1542 *La Relación*, I concentrated on four, the place of boxed cadavers, Apalachen, *Isla Malhado*, and the buckle/horseshoe nail place, because their study exemplifies-over a range of different situations Cabeza de Vaca experiences the struggle between the Spanish and indigenous people’s symbolic worlds. The discussion of the mentioned locations informs one about the importance of the military factor and imperial ideals for the Spaniards in the conquest process. However, in spite of Spain’s military success, the natives are not totally defeated. The examination of the mentioned sites reveals the importance of the native knowledge of the terrain in the Spaniards’ understanding of the “New World”.

Cabeza de Vaca’s 1542 account contains many landscape symbols that he uses to convey the Spanish imperial endeavor. They are part of a narrative map, which articulates ideological sites and makes a space known to others—in this case Spaniards—who share

⁸⁶ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 30, 31.

⁸⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. C2^r.

⁸⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación*, sig. G8^r; Daniel Castro, *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism*, London, Duke University Press, 2007, p. 27.

the cultural references. Cabeza de Vaca's discourse map sites do not simply give a location along a route. They also function as imperial territorial signs in an appropriation process that attempts to structure a vast and unbounded space for the Spaniards, binding conquered territory and its indigenous people to the empire. Cabeza de Vaca contributes to the creation of a landscape and people that did not exist for the Spaniards before 1492. Nevertheless, the result is not a complete success for the conqueror because the territorial representations used by Cabeza de Vaca are not solely *cristiano*/Hispanic conventions. Cultural symbols do not simply flow one way, influencing only one group. There is cross-cultural interaction. In Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación*, the ideological struggle between the indigenous and Spanish symbolic worlds is a constant that surfaces and can be recognized in his discourse map sites.

