

NAKED AND ALONE IN A STRANGE NEW WORLD:  
EARLY MODERN CAPTIVITY AND ITS  
MYTHOS IN IBERO-AMERICAN  
CONSCIOUSNESS

by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During graduate studies at the University of Texas at Arlington, I reviewed Frederick Turner's *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit against the Wilderness* in a colloquium conducted by Professor Steven Reinhardt. Turner's remarkable thesis expanded on the Weberian premise that the advance of Western history has spiritual dimensions best understood as the process of the disenchantment of the world. This disenchantment resulted from the rationalization of life where scientific inquiry increasingly replaced magic and superstition as the solution for life's dilemmas. The human spirit thus became increasingly disconnected with nature and rendered the individual spiritually empty. Turner cites as evidence the American captivity sagas—nothing, he argues, has “as much to tell us of the spiritual stakes involved in exploration.”<sup>1</sup> It was at this juncture that I became captivated by the idea of New World captivity. The result is the dissertation that follows, which is a continuation of the dialogue that began many semesters ago. I am indebted to Dr. Reinhardt and his colleagues who initiated the discourse and encouraged their students to wrest the deepest meanings from history.

In this spirit of the *Annales*, the French school of historical inquiry that encourages multi-disciplinary methods, the faculty of the Transatlantic History Program at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) emboldened their students to

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit against the Wilderness* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 231.

reach across disciplines in order to reveal the myriad complexities of cross-cultural interaction. I am most thankful for the opportunity to study under such pioneering scholars, made possible by a Transatlantic Scholarship awarded by the History Department. The faculty demonstrated further confidence in my abilities by allowing me to serve as a graduate research assistant and, eventually, a graduate teaching assistant. Whereas the financial assistance helped pay bills and provide sustenance, the experience was ultimately priceless as it further honed my scholastic attributes and solidified my resolve for a life of academic pursuits.

My initiation to academia occurred many years ago thanks in part to two scholars who inspired by example. Dr. William D. Pederson introduced me to the infinite nuances of political psychology where sometimes we find self-actualized individuals behaving independently of natural and societal forces. Dr. Milton Finley demonstrated that history is as much about individuals and their unique personalities as it is about intangible social forces. Weber's "prophet" can sometimes prove just as influential as any mode of production. I have long gravitated toward both social theory and historical practice, and this dissertation evidences my attempt at some synthesis of the two.

While I have others to thank for the journey that brought me here, the fruits could not have materialized without the help and patience of my committee members: Dr. Douglas Richmond, Dr. David Narrett, Dr. Richard Francaviglia, Dr. Joyce Goldberg and Dr. Steven Reinhardt. I am the beneficiary of a collection of five lifetimes of knowledge and experience. I am honored to have such distinguished

academics guide me along this arduous, often snail-paced process. They are as much part of this dissertation as I am, but its flaws are mine alone, as the flaws evidence my inability to match the notable example of my mentors.

Many more are to be recognized for their help and contributions. The devoted staff at the UTA Interlibrary Loan Department gathered a world of sources and sent them to my doorstep. Had it not been for this priceless service, I doubt the project could have materialized. I must also recognize the efforts of Nancy Brown-Martinez, the resident expert of the Center for Southwestern Research at the University of New Mexico, who went beyond the call of duty in helping to locate obscure sources. I also confess a need to thank the faceless pioneers of the modern internet and the personal computers that afford us access. Only a short time ago, a project of this nature would have required massive amounts of travel, time, and finances to visit various libraries and archives around the world. Now we can access many of those once distant repositories from our own living rooms. Some collections, however, still require the physical presence of the researcher. My gratitude is thus extended to the staff and reference librarians who manage several manuscript resources such as the Edward E. Ayer Collection at Chicago's Newberry Library, the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at University of Texas in Austin, and Special Collections at the University of Texas in Arlington.

Some close and dear friends have provided encouragement although they may have never realized the profoundness of their support—Jawana Coleman, Larry Richardson, Jr., Charles Turner, Jamie Campbell, Vicki Via and, especially, Laurie

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June 19, 2008

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<sup>2</sup>Jaquette Hawkes, *Man and the Sun* (New York: Random House, 1962), 8.

ABSTRACT

NAKED AND ALONE IN A STRANGE NEW WORLD:  
EARLY MODERN CAPTIVITY AND ITS  
MYTHOS IN IBERO-AMERICAN  
CONSCIOUSNESS

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This study compares and contrasts early modern (1500 - 1650) American captivity narratives of Jerónimo de Aguilar, Gonzalo Guerrero, Juan Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade, Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda, Fray Francisco de Avila, and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán. Although originally touted as "true histories," they should be seen primarily as literary works imitative of popular heroic lore that suffused 16th-century Iberia and Europe. Because the chroniclers penned the narratives years after the experience, subjective memory supplanted objective empiricism. The narrators employed acceptable literary conventions highly imbued with Christian and medieval ritual and imagery to express physical and mental rites of passage. Considering the mythical archetypes and that very little factual

corroboration exists, this dissertation argues that the narratives should not be regarded as reliable records of historical events. They are, however, cultural artifacts that are useful in understanding the larger psycho-social dynamics of the transatlantic world; thus, they aid construction of a *histoire des mentalités* that contributes to an understanding of the mythos that defined the captivity experience as a microcosm of the larger play between European and American peoples.

Through a textual-contextual analysis premised on structural, functional and psychoanalytic theories of myth and ritual, the study posits that the first-person narratives evidence the captives' negotiation of the dichotomous European and Amerindian cultures in attempts to survive and gain acceptance. The writing of the narrative served as a rite of passage back to Christendom and as an expression of the spiritual essence of the ordeal that defied description. It can also be demonstrated that other contemporary authors, like Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, employed mythical convention to make sense of captivity experiences for the reader and to embellish Spanish exploits so as to justify imperial prerogatives.

While contemporary narrators cast their characters as Christian heroes, post-colonial Latino authors celebrated some of the early captives as embodiments of *mestizaje* considering their rejection of "Spanish-ness" and embrace of "Indian-ness." This juxtaposition of contemporary with post-colonial treatments of the early modern captivity sagas further substantiates that, because of their mythical aura, the narratives offer unique insight into individual and cultural mentalities, but they are not reliable records of what actually happened during the captivity experience.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In February 1519, Hernán Cortés embarked upon the fateful expedition that resulted in the subjugation of the Mexica and the creation of Nueva España (New Spain) in what is now Mexico. During preparations for this venture, Cortés received reports from his advanced scouting party that, surprisingly, some Christians already resided somewhere in the Yucatán peninsula. According to one eyewitness chronicler of the expedition, news of the existence of these Christians weighed heavy on Cortés's mind, so much so that he dispatched a rescue party in hopes of locating the rumored Christians. About one month elapsed before one of these individuals, Jerónimo de Aguilar, finally appeared to relate the first captivity tale to emerge from the Americas.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of a century, several more captivity revelations

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<sup>1</sup>Bernal Díaz del Castillo described the situation in *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Madrid, 1632; reprint, México, D.F.: Editora Pedro Robredo, 1939); a translation of the work is provided by A. P. Maudslay, trans., *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521* (New York: Ferrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), 25 – 46. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar authored a more structured and detailed account of Aguilar's captivity in *Crónica de la Nueva España* (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1971). When quoting original sources, I will provide the English translation of the original Spanish in the text and offer the unedited Spanish in the footnote citation for comparative purposes. I must point out that during the sixteenth century, Spanish spelling, punctuation, and grammar differed extensively from one author to the next, and even varied within the same manuscript. This resulted from the use of various dialects unique to each Iberian province during the Middle Ages. In 1492, Antonio de Nebrija made the first effort to bring uniformity to the language but it was not until 1713 with the creation of the Real Academia Española that Spain brought linguistic and literary conformity by mandating Castilian as the norm.

would follow that offered the Europeans a first glimpse into the strange and often incomprehensible culture of the Native Americans. These early modern captivity narratives, although originally touted as *historias verdaderas* (true histories), are in fact heroic mythologies that reveal less about the actual events and more about the subconscious anxieties affecting the authors and their society, both of which struggled with the American revelations that seemingly contradicted entrenched beliefs.

The mythology becomes evident when contrasting narratives of Aguilar and his companion Gonzalo Guerrero, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Juan Ortiz, Hans Stade, Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda, Fray Francisco de Avila, Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, Francisco del Puerto and Lucía Miranda. These captivities occurred at various sites in the western hemisphere between 1510 and 1630. Three captives authored their own account, which was intended for publication—Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán. Fontaneda and Avila also penned their own narratives but for a more official readership. Collectively, I reference these as the “first-person narratives.” The tales of Aguilar, Guerrero, and Ortiz were incorporated in more general histories authored by contemporary chroniclers of the Spanish *entrada* in the New World. For the purpose of simplification, I will refer to these as the “chronicled narratives.” Later generations

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Despite the effort, however, differences persisted between Latin American and Iberian renderings. Because most primary source material that I consulted for this project originated in the sixteenth century, I have taken literary license to uniformly spell and punctuate Spanish words and proper nouns within the text so as to avoid confusion on the part of the reader. I have, however, attempted to remain faithful to the original spelling and grammar when providing the quote in the citation.

of Latin American novelists refashioned the legends of Guerrero, Francisco del Puerto and Lucía Miranda for more modern readers.<sup>2</sup> These I will reference as “captivity legends.” Although many other Europeans suffered captivity in the Ibero-American frontiers during this period, very few opted to relate and/or record their experiences, and those who did received the most notoriety thanks to these surviving literary transcriptions.

I have chosen for various reasons to limit this study to those narratives produced between 1500 and 1650, although captivity in the Americas persisted long afterwards. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proved transitional for the transatlantic world. Revolutions occurred in religious, political, and philosophical thought. The captivity narratives that emerged from the Ibero-American contact zones at this time largely reflect the psycho-social unease that accompanied such sweeping change. The mid-seventeenth century can be seen as that arbitrary point when, prior to this time, Catholic societies accepted *a priori* knowledge that supposedly derived from scripture or through divine revelation to saints; afterwards, the Enlightenment fostered more empirical, or *a posteriori*, knowledge that brought about more scientific innovations.<sup>3</sup> A revolution thus occurred in European mythos. Despite the momentous changes, Catholic Iberians held to their faith and many of

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<sup>2</sup>Also, with the exception of Lucía Miranda’s mostly fictional account, the captivity narratives that I have identified concern male characters. I therefore employ the masculine voice (*hero, his*) when referring to the heroic subjects, although it is understood that heroines also populate the mythological genre.

<sup>3</sup>See Marcia L. Welles, *Arachne’s Tapestry: The Transformation of Myth in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1986).

their chroniclers showed little reservation in couching the captivity experiences in literary conventions familiar to themselves and their readers. They had to work within the mythical framework of the time. The mythical patterns imitated cultural motifs of heroic adventures whose universality stems from what Lévi-Strauss refers to as “unconscious psychic structures.”<sup>4</sup>

I have also opted to narrow my focus only to those documented captivities where cross-cultural interaction occurred. Some sixteenth-century European explorers and colonists suffered shipwrecks that left them stranded on isolated, uninhabited islands. They became, in a sense, captives to geography and some went on to record their experiences. Arguably, all of these captivities have an element of geographical isolation, and thus are two dimensional.<sup>5</sup> Because I am primarily concerned with cultural dynamics, however, I have excluded the “geographical captivities” like those of Maese Joan and Pedro Serrano, two men who separately endured complete and total isolation on two desolate Caribbean islands in the Serrano Keys (c. 1528).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Rossi, 109. The psychoanalytic school of myth further points out that the chroniclers can only offer “an approximate description of an unconscious core of meaning. The ultimate meaning of this nucleus was never conscious and never will be.” Carl Jung, “The Psychology of the Child Archetype” in C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, eds., *Essays on Science and Mythology: The Myths of the Divine Child and the Divine Maiden* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 75.

<sup>5</sup>The spatial aspect may be considered as a territorial rite of passage. See Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monica B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 15 – 25.

<sup>6</sup>A reprint of the primary account of Maese Joan’s ordeal can be found in Lesley B. Simpson, “The Spanish Crusoe: An Account by Maese Joan of Eight

The parameters of this study allow focus on a finite number of narratives produced within a definable historical era. We are thus able to identify patterns that lead us to draw some tentative conclusions, namely that these captivity narratives constitute a corpus of literature connotative of heroic lore. They must, therefore, be viewed not as reliable historical records, but embraced as cultural artifacts that offer insight to the psycho-social complex of the early modern transatlantic world. The problem, then, is that of historical analysis. If their factuality is suspect, then what usefulness do they provide to modern scholars? I argue that the narratives offer bountiful troves for cultural historians interested in understanding the *mentalités* of the captives and their society. This dissertation introduces a plausible method whereby the narratives may be deconstructed in such manner as to elicit historical insights from the literary components. The model may fail in its attempt to account for every textual nuance identified by scholars, but it sufficiently addresses the inherent myth and, therefore, offers a valuable heuristic tool that helps elicit historical meaning from mostly literary texts.<sup>7</sup>

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Years Spent as a Castaway on the Serrano Keys in the Caribbean Sea, 1528-1536,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 9, no. 4 (1929): 368 – 376. Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, offers a secondary account of Serrano’s condition in *Comentarios Reales de los Incas, Parte I*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1961).

<sup>7</sup>Edward Muir makes a similar argument regarding his analysis of ritual. See *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 6.



When considered collectively and individually, these early captivity narratives are more myth than they are history.<sup>8</sup> The texts reveal discernible patterns of the hero archetype common throughout mythology. The profuseness of this archetype and its symbolic imagery requires an assessment of the literary components to arrive at a comprehensive historical analysis and to elicit the meanings that contemporaries derived from these tales.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the captivity narratives constitute rich texts that offer a profound understanding of the *mentalités* that suffused the sixteenth-century transatlantic world.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>“History” may be defined as a factual account of some past human event that has been substantiated by primary records and other authenticated sources subjected to scholarly scrutiny. The captives of this study are historical personages and they did suffer some form of captivity. This may be substantiated by contemporary accounts. The factual historicity of the narratives ends here, however, since no corroboration exists of what actually occurred during the captivity.

<sup>9</sup>Throughout this study, the term *hero* is used in a mythic-literary sense to describe the central character of a literary plot that undergoes a remarkable journey characterized by separation from home, initiation to an exotic world, and a return to, or in some instances a refusal to return, home. Personal enlightenment often results from the cyclical journey. The modern use of the word generally connotes a person of exceptional courage who risks life for the betterment of others. In its medieval context, however, *hero* would have designated someone favored by the Christian God who exhibited exceptional, perhaps superhuman strength, endurance, and ability and who could act as an intermediary between mortals and the deity. Demonstrably, contemporary authors considered the captives as heroic. Various captivity narrators introduced later in this study generally described New World adventurers as “heroicos caballeros” (heroic cavaliers) who accomplished “heroicos hechos” (heroic deeds). Furthermore, when considering the literary style in which the authors opted to relate the captivity experiences, the heroic connotations become even more apparent.

<sup>10</sup>The present work is an effort to show how various captivity narratives depict certain aspects of collective psychologies, or *mentalités*, situated within the early modern transatlantic world. Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, founders of the French *Annales* school of historical inquiry that emerged in 1929, introduced the

The language that the narrators, separated by time and space, used to relate diverse captivities communicated a collective unease with the potential meanings of the captivity experience and, more generally, contact with the New World. Rather than straightforward narratives of events, allusions of acculturation, rescue, defection, and identity permeate the texts. Given that all of the captivity narratives relied upon distant memories of the experience, subjective license interceded. The chroniclers penned the narratives years and sometimes decades after the fact, and no single captive or eyewitness purported to keep a daily journal of events. Consequently, inaccuracies, ulterior motivations, and societal conventions crept into the narratives leading to an imitation of Judeo-Christian and medieval heroic lore. Because the captivity sagas unfolded in pre-literate societies and in geographical regions untouched by Europeans, veracity rested entirely with the captive who returned to relate the tale. Lacking corroboration and documentation, the narratives

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concept of *mentalités*. They hoped to move beyond traditional political and event history by promoting, instead, an innovative method characterized by problem-oriented analysis of the entire range of human activity best achieved through collaboration with the social sciences. See Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929 – 89* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1 – 2. In conjunction with the *Annales* school, Claude Lévi-Strauss, in attempts to understand cultures and identify universal laws governing them, refined structuralist theory in a manner tailored for anthropological inquiry. He posited the belief that events and phenomena manifested by particular societies and cultures could best be understood and explained by their subsurface structures. The idea evolved from Marxist theory and from semiology, or the study of signs within a society, pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913). In applying the concepts, Lévi-Strauss argued that language, music, art, literature, dress, and other social manifestations are forms of expressions structured by unconscious laws which may best be understood as mythology. For comparisons of *Annales* and structuralist approaches to history, see Lynn Hunt and Jacques Revel, eds., *Histories: French Constructions of the Past* (New York: The New Press, 1994).

could more easily evolve into cultural myths that reflected sixteenth-century European and colonial attitudes and concepts regarding the New World.<sup>11</sup>

These attitudes are discernible from the common themes and patterns that emerged from Aguilar's captivity tale that were to be repeated through the successive narratives produced over the course of the century. The similarities in structure and imagery evidence patterns that prompt some tentative postulates. Predominant themes include acculturation, identity, and assimilation, which the narrators never confronted directly but nonetheless couched within the language of the tales. Even more deeply embedded within the language is the prevailing sense of apprehension on the part of those authors who had years to reflect on the experiences before penning the accounts. For this reason, the narratives express a subconscious anxiety produced by the existential quandary of identity and the sense of belonging evoked by the captivities. For instance, when Aguilar finally united with Cortés's army, the soldiers reportedly could not "distinguish [Aguilar] from an Indian."<sup>12</sup> So thorough was his transformation that, as a result of the eight-year captivity, he had

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<sup>11</sup>We have some assurances that the captives and other contemporary witnesses are historical personages in view of official government documents that recorded their service. The actual captivity events have no corroboration, however, which force scholars to remain suspect of the highly subjective narratives. Some records that exist in the colonial archives include those of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and one of his fellow captives, Andrés Dorantes. One manuscript relates the service of Dorantes. "Información de los servicios del capitán Andres Dorantes de Carranza en la conquista de la Florida con Pánfilo de Narváez," 19 de agosto 1612, México, Center for Southwestern Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico (CSWR).

<sup>12</sup>" . . . aunque allí junto con él, porque le tenían por indio propio . . ." Díaz, Capítulo XVIII.

even lost much of his ability to speak Spanish. The rescue thus proved problematic for Aguilar and those like him caught up in the larger cultural collisions between very different societies. In the attempt to relate a fantastic life-altering experience, the various authors relied on societal literary conventions accepted as historically sound by contemporary standards. In actuality, however, the texts more accurately reflected individual and societal attitudes. The early modern captivity narratives incorporated mythological ritual and imagery that feigned realism while communicating unease with the American encounters.

In many cases the unease proved justifiable given the number of captives who so thoroughly assimilated to Indian society that they refused to return to their Christian roots. Defection was most troubling for Europeans considering the implications of a “civilized” Christian opting to live with people whom the Europeans thought to be savage and irrational. This theme of assimilation and defection to Indian society is yet another that emerged early on in Aguilar’s tale as evidenced by his companion, Gonzalo Guerrero, who refused rescue and repatriation. Although Aguilar expressed sincere joy for being found, he reportedly told Cortés that Guerrero did not share the same sentiments.<sup>13</sup> The chroniclers asserted that Guerrero refused to join Cortés’s cadre despite Aguilar’s appeals and that Guerrero’s resistance stemmed from the belief that he would no longer be accepted by Christian society. He was, from all accounts, thoroughly assimilated—he had nose and ear

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<sup>13</sup>Aguilar was recorded as having exclaimed “Dios y Santa Maria e Sevilla!” in a show of joy and happiness to be reunited with his countrymen. Díaz, Capítulo XVIII.

piercings, he had Indian children, and his adopted tribe recognized him as “a Cacique and captain in wartime.”<sup>14</sup> Guerrero, therefore, refused to abandon his adopted people for fear of being rejected and possibly condemned by his own people. He could no longer identify with the Spaniards, and even if he could, his Indian children and the woman who bore them could never fully assimilate to Christendom. All colonial societies experienced a degree of defection from members who, like Guerrero, became so thoroughly *Indianized* that they opted to remain with their captors when given the opportunity to return home.

New World captivity and its phenomena such as assimilation increased exponentially over the course of four centuries, prompting Indian captivity to become what some scholars describe as “a massive historical reality.”<sup>15</sup> The threat of captivity was ever present as the European colonizers pushed farther and farther toward the interior of the American continent. No one was immune—soldiers and prelates, rich and poor, women and men, filled the lists of those who experienced captivity. Once captured, the individual was reduced to the basic instinct of survival, which required the negotiation of a new worldview and mythological schema that, superficially, appeared diametrically opposite that of Christendom. The anxieties that resulted from this mediation of two different worlds found expression in

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<sup>14</sup>“y tíeneme por cacique y capitán cuado hay guerras.” Díaz, Capítulo XVII.

<sup>15</sup>James Levernier and Hennig Cohen, eds., *The Indians and Their Captors* (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), xiii.

contemporary literature and folklore and communicated a worldview conditioned by Old World perceptions juxtaposed with New World realities.

The earliest American captivities allowed former captives and other chroniclers to fashion hero-epics based on actual experiences but that replicated, to some degree, mythologies that flourished in popular literature. Each narrator, whether primary or secondary, who chose to tell a captivity story did so with a literary license that imperiled objectivity. Each writer had an ulterior motive that, although reflective of the individual's attitude, mirrored the larger cultural signifiers of identity; thus, they structured the captivity tales into ritualized myths that were fine-tuned to their era. For sixteenth-century Europeans, those signifiers included Christianity as well as the specific cultural edifices that subdivided Europe. For the Iberians, it was Catholicism's God, the Crown, and a militaristic and literary tradition that evolved from nearly eight hundred years of the *Reconquista*, Iberia's protracted struggle against the Muslims that culminated in 1492, and the *convivencia*, the quasi-peaceful interludes where Christians, Muslims, and Jews formed complex exchange societies.<sup>16</sup>

As Iberian and other European writers celebrated their heritage, American colonists and their *mestizo* descendants discovered that the old modalities no longer served American realities. A new culture and heritage metamorphosed from its

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<sup>16</sup>“Exchange societies” connotes frontier cultures that form complex border economies through the exchange of goods, services, and even slaves. Similar exchange economies evolved in the Americas. See Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

mixture of European, Indian, African, *criollo*, *mestizo*, and *zambo* populations.<sup>17</sup> Guerrero's refusal to return with Aguilar exemplified this new dynamic. His rejection of the old and adoption of the new planted one of the first seeds that would ultimately yield the notion of *mestizaje*—the fusion of European, African, and American ethnicities—for modern Latin American culture.<sup>18</sup> Denounced as a heretic, Guerrero's reputation had to wait centuries before it could be restored and his memory celebrated. When later generations of Latin American writers recalled the memories of Guerrero and other captives like him, the heretical denouncements became cause for praise and rejection of Spanish colonialism. The revisionism resulted in new heroic epics, but this time honed for Latin American cultures eager to define an identity apart from the Spanish colonizers and their myths.

Because early captivity tales are masked by mythical signifiers, they cannot be read as reliable historical texts that detail accurate events over time. Instead they are embodiments of cultural mentalities. They evidence individual attempts to rationalize extraordinary experiences that could only find conceptualization in the symbolic forms common to contemporary society. This does not negate their significance to modern historians. These subjective narratives offer bountiful insights

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<sup>17</sup>*Mestizo* refers to a descendant of mixed Indian and Spanish ancestry. *Criollos* were those of direct Spanish ancestry born in the American realms. Spaniards labeled the children of mixed African and Indian or Spanish and African parents as *zambos*.

<sup>18</sup>*Mestizaje* is a complex ideal that varies among Latin American populations. Overall, though, it implies a celebration of the cultural mixture rather than a rejection of it. See Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of 'Mestizaje' in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

for those who attempt to understand the motivations, attitudes, and psycho-social transformations that evolved over the centuries. Furthermore, comparison between contemporary and modern portrayals of the sixteenth-century captivity sagas reveals how myth, the manifestation of psycho-cultural stimuli, undergoes transformation when cultural and societal necessities mandate alternative worldviews.

### 1.1 Historiography

Until very recently, the earliest captivity sagas that occurred in the Spanish American contact zones received scant attention from scholars. Some of the current attention is perhaps owed to the renewed focus on Spanish colonialism brought about by the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Columbus's landfall in 1992.<sup>19</sup> Greater accessibility to archival sources afforded by digitization may account for some of the increased interests.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps much is owed to relatively recent trends in cultural history that emphasize "serial, functional, and structural approaches to understanding society as a

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<sup>19</sup>J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492 – 1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xi.

<sup>20</sup>Researchers of this topic have been impeded by the diffuse distribution of archival sources. What does exist may be found in the manuscripts housed in Spain's national archives, repositories in the United States, and in the numerous Latin American archives. The time and travel requirements are considerable and can easily consume a life-time. Any student of captivity history knows well the observation of one scholar who, commenting on a researcher's effort to piece together a history of certain Spanish captivities, wrote that the project would prove "arduous, meticulous, and lengthy. . . . His will be no easy task." Letter from Professor Robert Chamberlain to Professor F. V. Scholes, August 9, 1973, in Scholes Collection, Box12A, Folder 20, CSWR.



total, integrated organism.”<sup>21</sup> The objective of the cultural historians is the comprehension of collective *mentalités* that are expressed through symbolic forms. Nowhere can cultural functions be better juxtaposed and scrutinized than in those cross-cultural contact regions where *mentalités* clashed, and no individuals afford a better microcosmic glimpse of the larger whole than those who crossed the cultural thresholds as captives to an alien *other*.<sup>22</sup>

With the exception of Cabeza de Vaca’s account, relatively few historians have attempted any comprehensive analysis of the existing narratives, and studies mostly offer a literary exegesis considering the inherent dramatization that the

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<sup>21</sup>Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2. This focus and its governing methodology owes much of its intellectual underpinnings to the French *Annales School*, which emerged in the 1960s as scholars tailored an application of Fernand Braudel’s and Levi-Strauss’s anthropological structuralist model to better suit historical inquiry.

<sup>22</sup>For more on the concept of the “the other” as being the inverse of the writer’s image of self, see Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia Press, 1989), 209 – 243. My thesis regarding these captivity narratives approximates Certeau’s general observations that travel literature and ethnographical descriptions of New World adventurers, regardless of their empirical foundation, are legends or tales that “cannot be identified with the system of real practices. . . . [T]hese legends symbolize the alterations that were instigated in the encounter that one culture made with another. The new experiences of a society do not unveil their ‘truth’ through a transparency of these texts; these experiences are transformed there according to the laws of a scientific setting which belongs to the period. In this respect the reading of texts has much to do with an interpretation of dreams; both texts and dream interpretations form discourses about the other, about which we can wonder what is actually told there, in those literary regions that are always drawn from what is really occurring”(211). Certeau goes on to posit that “through writing is formed our relation with the other, the past”(212).

narratives possess.<sup>23</sup> They are sagas, much like contemporary romances, and thus more readily offer themselves to literary interpretation. The current study attempts to move beyond this by incorporating the literary dimension within a historical context with the aid of various theoretical models regarding the relation between myth and individual and collective psychologies.<sup>24</sup>

Certain authors have made progress toward filling the historiographical void. Fernando Operé authored the first and most serious effort at synthesizing a body of existing Spanish captivities and their significance to the development of the Spanish

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<sup>23</sup>Of the more recent contributions is that of Andrés Reséndez, *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: Basic Books, 2007). Some of Reséndez's arguments parallel my own. He posits, for instance, that Cabeza de Vaca engaged in "self-conscious scripting" in order to "curry royal favor" and to "avoid problems with the Inquisition"(7). Reséndez goes on, however, to construct a history of events that supposedly occurred during Cabeza de Vaca's trek across North America. In doing so, Reséndez engages in substantial speculation that renders his recreation of events less convincing considering that he must rely on Cabeza de Vaca's narrative as the authoritative source. I maintain that captivity narrative's such as this must be rejected as an accurate *histoire événementielle*. They are instead cultural artifacts that can help historians gain a better understanding of the *mentalités* of that era.

<sup>24</sup>Hayden White and other innovators have pushed historians to "recognize the active role of language, texts, and narrative structures in the creation and description of historical reality." They argued that historians need not place the literary text within the context of the epoch to arrive at an understanding of its ultimate meaning. Rather, the more profound interpretations are achieved through comparing texts and their language with one another. Although I embrace much of their methodology, my purpose is to portray, as much as possible, the myriad structural edifices that encapsulate and inform the captivity narratives. These structures existed in symbolic forms other than language; thus, the context becomes ever important. See Lloyd S. Kramer, "Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra," in Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, 97 – 128.

frontiers in North and South America.<sup>25</sup> His work, *Historias de la Frontera: El Cautiverio en la América Hispánica* (*Frontier Histories: The Captive in Hispanic America*), was a sweeping examination of how the Spanish captivities from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries aided in the construction of New World identities and economies. Operé's research provides a much needed source on which subsequent captivity scholars can build. This dissertation continues the dialogue that Operé initiated, but with some differences. I have chosen to limit this study to those captivities that occurred during the period of early exploration and colonization and ends by the middle of the seventeenth century. My concern is for the mythos—that complex of societal attitudes and beliefs—surrounding the captivities, and thus my study is more *histoire des mentalités* than Operé's *histoire événementielle*. It is my contention that these early narratives cannot be considered accurate records of the events, but rather reflections of the existing mentalities. Contrary to Operé's assertion that “instead of heroes, the captives were considered marginal beings by the society from which they were torn,” I argue that these earliest captivity tales had elements of mythological lore that rendered the ordeal heroic to contemporary readers.<sup>26</sup>

This literary element received attention from Lisa Voigt in her dissertation entitled “Sites of Captivity in Colonial Latin American Writing: *La Florida del Inca*,

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<sup>25</sup>Fernando Operé, *Historias de la Frontera: El Cautiverio en la América Hispánica* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001).

<sup>26</sup>“Más que héroes venían a ser sujetos marginados en la sociedad de la que habían sido arrancados.” Operé, 21.

*Cautiverio Feliz, Caramuru.*”<sup>27</sup> Basing her interpretation on literary methods, Voigt argued that the authors of the three New World captivity narratives wrote the tales in such a way that “emphasizes the transformative effect of captivity as well as the power of the transformed captive.”<sup>28</sup> For Voigt, the “sites of captivity” became “site[s] of creativity and power” for both the captor and the captive. Voigt’s premise has significance for this study, which will similarly demonstrate that by relating the captivity in a manner reflective of heroic prose, the chroniclers endeared the captives to their monarch and people by demonstrating that, by divine fiat, the captives survived a debasing and perilous experience. In the process, those who returned glorified Christianity and Iberian culture and even performed miracles in the name of God. The captives thus found empowerment and eventual freedom through their faith.

In juxtaposition to the scholarship regarding New World captivities, Ellen Friedman pioneered a study of Spanish captives in North Africa during the early modern age.<sup>29</sup> Using archival resources in Spain, Friedman identified 450 Spanish captives taken by North African Muslims between 1572 and 1589 and a total of 9,500 between 1572 and 1769. In her analysis, the physical and psychological threat

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<sup>27</sup>Lisa Voigt, “Sites of Captivity in Colonial Latin American Writing: *La Florida del Inca, Cautiverio Feliz, Caramuru*” (Ph.d. diss., Brown University, May 2001).

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>29</sup>Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

posed by the Muslims existed in Spain long after the *Reconquista*.<sup>30</sup> This anxiety found expression in the literary venues and prompted Miguel de Cervantes, himself a captive of the Muslims, to pen *Don Quixote* (1605), which many describe as the first modern novel. Although my study does not attempt comparison of Spanish captivity in North Africa with its New World counterpart, the significance of Friedman's thesis lies in its demonstration that Iberians grew accustomed to the idea of captivity long before their New World experiences. She further indicates the importance that Spanish society placed on the ransoming of its Christian subjects from the clutches of non-Christian peoples—in this instance, the Muslims. Greater emphasis is also given to the psychological toll exacted from Iberian society by the constant threat of Muslim raids.

That these few studies comprise the body of scholarship regarding Iberian captivity is indicative of the general neglect of the subject. This lack of treatment prompted Operé to describe the Spanish captives as “las victimas silenciosas” (the silent victims) of cultural collisions on the New World frontier.<sup>31</sup> The same neglect, however, is not true for English counterparts. Abundant primary sources provided researchers with a wealth of manuscripts regarding captivity in the North American English colonies from the early colonial period to the United States westward

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<sup>30</sup>Friedman, 3-6.

<sup>31</sup>Operé, 9. Operé's characterization is problematical because obviously the Indians proved the ultimate victims of Spanish domination. I argue that the captives were not victims; rather they and/or their chroniclers transformed the experience, through literary constructions patterned after heroic epics, to serve societal and political purposes that supported European efforts of colonization.

expansion in the 1800s. From these sprang two substantial works on the subject—*The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre* (1984) by Richard VanDerBeets, and *The Indian Captivity Narrative: 1550-1900* (1993) by Kathryn Z. Derouian-Stadola and James Levernier.<sup>32</sup> Both studies approach their subjects more as literary works, thus less emphasis is placed on historical analysis, but they offer insights that are useful to historians who study the phenomena. VanDerBeets’s methodology has special significance to this study because it validates a synthesis and analysis of English captivity narratives based on the mythological elements of the archetypal hero.<sup>33</sup> According to VanDerBeets, this universal motif of the hero’s separation, initiation, and return is ever present in the English captivity genre. I will demonstrate that the same holds true for the earliest captivities defined herein and that it is reflective of contemporary cultural stimuli as well as more general rites of passage.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Richard VanDerBeets, *The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984); Kathryn Zabelle Derouian-Stadola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

<sup>33</sup>VanDerBeets, 44-50.

<sup>34</sup>Arnold van Gennep formulated a theorem of ritual practice that, when applied to captivity narratives, advances an understanding of the common literary structures and motifs and helps to translate them to real-life experiences for functional analysis. Van Gennep posited an individual’s life, regardless of culture or society, as a series of passages that require theories (religion) and techniques (magic and *rites de passage*) to enable the individual to pass from one position to another. He defined the phases, or *schéma*, of the passage as separation, transition, and incorporation that allowed for regeneration, which he considered a law of life and the universe. Van Gennep defined various types of passages, including territorial, which he called the “magico-religious aspect of crossing frontiers,” and individual

Perhaps no study has as much thematic parallel to this research as Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence*.<sup>35</sup> Slotkin attempted to define and trace the evolution of the American hero archetype (i.e., the solitary frontiersman who exhibits extraordinary survival skills when confronted with the wilderness and its Indian inhabitants) in the literary tradition of the English colonies and, eventually, the United States. The impetus for the development of the American hero, according to Slotkin, was the English colonial captivity narrative, which "functioned as a myth, reducing the Puritan state of mind and worldview . . . into archetypal drama."<sup>36</sup> My research demonstrates that a similar drama unfolded in the Spanish colonial world, set within the worldview of the Iberians, which considered the New World explorers and colonizers as living examples of the literary heroes of medieval lore that embodied the ideals of Iberian civilization.

Other scholars who have labored over the meanings of North American captivity include Norman Heard and, more recently, David J. Weber. Heard used primary accounts of Indian captivity for his study, *White into Red*, which probes the possibilities of why whites of southwestern North America often opted for

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passages, where outsiders must undergo rites of initiation before permitted to commune with the group. Van Gennep, 1 – 14.

<sup>35</sup>Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600 – 1860* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

<sup>36</sup>Slotkin, 94.

assimilation into Indian culture.<sup>37</sup> Weber, who recently contributed *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, similarly noted the phenomena of white assimilation into Indian communities, and argues that this pattern was with very few exceptions entirely one way—that is, whites were much more amenable to assimilation with Indians than Indians were to Western society.<sup>38</sup> Frederick Turner, in *Beyond Geography*, offers a plausible explanation for the white defections in that once acclimated to Indian society, the white captives found spiritual fulfillment beyond that which would have been possible in European society. The rigidity of Western mores that forced adherence to an artificial hierarchy proved less appealing to those who came to experience Indian mysticism that nurtured harmony between all things.<sup>39</sup>

Scholarship regarding New World captivity has been either entirely literary or entirely historical in its methodology, and more focused on North America despite the fact that the phenomena traversed the Americas. The French *Annales* school of historical inquiry, however, introduced new methodological possibilities for unlocking the deeper meanings of captivity literature. Employing an interdisciplinary approach made more fashionable by the *Annales*, John Demos authored *The*

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<sup>37</sup>Norman J. Heard, *White into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973).

<sup>38</sup>David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 226.

<sup>39</sup>Turner, *Beyond Geography*, 231-254.



*Unredeemed Captive* (1994), which examined a Puritan captivity narrative.<sup>40</sup> In his efforts to “write a story,” Demos helped bridge the gap between literary and historical analysis, refined later by Jill Lepore in *The Name of War*, which gracefully connected “language, war, bondage, and memory.”<sup>41</sup> Gary L. Ebersole’s *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity*, is also a “history of storytelling, a study of the narrative, representational and reading practices used in making sense of captivity.”<sup>42</sup> Continuing in this vein, R. J. Gilmour contributed a dissertation “situated at the juncture between historical and literary scholarship” regarding unredeemed captives in colonial North America.<sup>43</sup>

James Brooks further contributed to captivity scholarship with *Captives and Cousins* (2002), which examines the clash of cultures and the resulting creation of the Southwestern borderland exchange communities in North America over the course of three centuries.<sup>44</sup> By intermingling empirical data gleaned from various archival sources with social theory, Brooks arrives at an explanation of how,

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<sup>40</sup>John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, xi; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), xxii.

<sup>42</sup>Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>43</sup>R. J. Gilmour, “‘Imagined Bodies and Imagined Selves’: Cultural Transgression, ‘Unredeemed’ Captives and the Development of American Identity in Colonial North America” (Ph.d. diss., York University, 2004), 45.

<sup>44</sup>James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

between 1540 and 1880, captive exchange systems “knit diverse communities into vital, and violent, webs of interdependence” characterized by “mutually intelligible symbols through which cultural values, interests, and needs could be defined.”<sup>45</sup> These symbols, (Brooks cites the Pawnee Morning Star Ritual, for instance), were the reflection of underlying substructures that Brooks defined as an “archetype for a system of sacred violence and exchange” that held honor as the primary trait.<sup>46</sup> Brooks also argues that Spanish romances that stemmed from the violence of the *Reconquista* were symbols for the “strands of desire and repulsion that stretched across the [Christian/Muslim] cultural frontiers,” which fostered an intense code of honor often reflected in the ballads.<sup>47</sup> Brooks concludes that when these two traditions clashed in the sixteenth-century borderlands, the inherent honor systems mutually practiced by both societies and expressed in their symbolic rituals and prose, “promote[d] long-term patterns of coexistence and cultural exchange.”<sup>48</sup>

Brooks’s premise has elements of Lévi-Strauss’s idea of kinship and reciprocity. According to this theory, psycho-social stability depends on the order (structure) imposed by society upon the formlessness of nature. When opposing groups converge, they intermingle through marriage, which forms the basis of kinship. This exchange produces dialectics between groups that results in a synthesis,

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<sup>45</sup>Brooks, 39 – 40.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 26.

or reciprocity, of two seemingly opposite structures. These structures equate to a system of relations as perceived by the mind.<sup>49</sup> Brooks perhaps gravitated toward this model as it offers an efficient method to evaluate the meanings of cross-cultural contact. Similarly, the structural concepts serve as the theoretical nucleus around which I piece together an analysis of the early captivity sagas.

### 1.2 Mythology and Its Utility

I propose that the archetypal structure and imagery of the captivity narratives afford insight to how the authors perceived the dynamic interaction between the individual captives, their society, and the New World spaces and cultures (the *other*). They tell us much about the mentalities of Iberian and European society but offer only hints of how Indians actually perceived the European strangers considering that the Indian *other* is peripheral and is allowed to speak only through the narrator. Through the texts, the narrators communicated rites of passage between geographical spaces and groups. The psychological/spiritual dimensions of the passage found expression through mythical literary constructions accepted as valid history by their society. Interpreting the history, then, requires deconstruction of the myth.

Myth, as I apply it in this study, is best understood as a communicative device, highly symbolic in its written or oral form, which promotes cultural solidarity and assists the thinking individual in reconciling an individual's spiritual essence with nature, the imagined with the real, the rational with the irrational, the

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<sup>49</sup>Ino Rossi, "Structure and History in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*," in Ino Rossi, ed., *The Unconscious in Culture: The Structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss in Perspective* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1974), 107 – 122.

unconscious with the conscious, the *us* with the *other*.<sup>50</sup> Myth is the “shaper of identities” at the cultural and individual levels.<sup>51</sup> All individuals must operate within and embrace the mythos of the larger whole if the individual is to remain a viable component that contributes to and is accepted by society. If the individual rejects the mythical conventions of his or her culture, s/he is often ostracized or at least marginalized, sometimes even killed, since the rejection threatens the cultural vitality and cohesion fostered by the mythology. If and when two opposite mythological schemas interact, as James Brooks demonstrated in *Captives and Cousins*, a dialectical occurs where synthesis may result for the mutual ordering of a new reality.<sup>52</sup>

Mythology exhibits common forms and archetypes around the world because it responds to the common anxieties of the human psyche—fear of death, fear of the unknown, sense of isolation, etc. Because myth requires artistic language as the medium of communication within a group, it often shapes and codifies collective identities. It is, as one scholar described:

. . . the intelligible mask of that enigma called ‘national character.’  
Through myths the psychology and world view of our cultural  
ancestors are transmitted to modern descendants, in such a way and

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<sup>50</sup>Richard Chase’s definition is also appropriate—“myth is an esthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural forces into a manageable collaboration with the objective facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious minds.” Quoted by Jerome S. Bruner, “Myth and Identity” in Henry A Murray, ed., *Myth and Mythmaking* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 276.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 280.

<sup>52</sup>Brooks, 39 – 40.

with such power that our perception of contemporary reality and our ability to function in the world are directly, often tragically affected.<sup>53</sup>

The “transmitters” of myth collectively constitute a society’s educational complex of formal and informal systems. Language, literature, folklore, oral traditions, art, music, history, religion, science, and politics communicate a hypothetical worldview that distorts reality in an attempt to reconcile the known with the unknown in order to assuage the fundamental fears.

Modern scholars have come to regard myth and its universal archetypes as conveyors of mental processes that aid scientific study of the human psyche and its intangible perception of space, time, and circumstance. Social scientists and psychologists have mined myth for its usefulness to both cultural studies and individual psychoanalysis. Myth’s significance to cultural studies was best articulated by structural anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss, who insisted that the psyche can be studied scientifically if we begin at the premise of the invariant human mind. Regardless of the cultural divisions, the human brain is identical in its physical composition and responds to external stimuli in similar manners. For this reason, structuralists believe that it is possible to identify and predict certain mental behaviors common to the human species and to ascertain the common links shared across time, space, and culture. Carl Jung, a pioneer of psychoanalysis, was the first to define this common link as the “collective unconscious” that functions at the

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<sup>53</sup>Slotkin, 3.

instinctive or subconscious level and is structured by archetypes.<sup>54</sup> According to Jung, this unconsciousness communicates through associative symbols that scholars may use to understand the functions of the mind.<sup>55</sup> These mythic symbols appear as art, words, linguistic sounds, and many other forms of communication—metaphorically, the “road maps of the mind.”

While Jung and Lévi-Strauss looked for subconscious structures, the functionalist, Emile Durkheim, set about to discern the “enduring source of human social identity and fellowship—*solidarité*.”<sup>56</sup> He defined myth and religion as authoritative forms and customs that powerfully link the individual to society via a *conscience collective*.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Lévi-Strauss sought commonalities among

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<sup>54</sup>Carl Jung, *The Portable Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 102. Jung theorized that the collective unconscious lies at the root of individual and social psychology and was formed during the prehistory of man. Archetypes are the contents of the collective unconscious that give shape to its otherwise ethereal form, and when these archetypal symbols are collected psychologically, myths are born. Comparative mythology thus reveals the archetypal motifs. Because of this relationship, Jung postulated that myths are psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul. For an excellent analysis of Jungian psychology, see Wilson M. Hudson, “Jung on Myth and the Mythic” in Robert A. Segal, ed., *Psychology and Myth*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 197 – 213.

<sup>55</sup>See Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979).

<sup>56</sup>Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), viii. For a comprehensive but succinct analysis of Durkheim, see Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>57</sup>Durkheim coined *conscience collective* to describe commonly shared sentiments and beliefs within society that help create the moral fabric that governed individual behavior. He argued that myth and religion served to promote common

superficial differences. He argued that cultures are systems of symbolic communication and that myths are legitimate translation devices that can allow modern society to read ancient cultures.<sup>58</sup> Roland Barthes, a fellow structuralist who worked independently of Lévi-Strauss, argued that:

If one wishes to connect a mythical schema to a general history, to explain how it corresponds to the interests of a definite society, in short, to pass from semiology [linguistics] to ideology. . . . [The reader] must focus on the mythical signifier as on an inextricable whole made of meaning and form. . . . It is the reader of myths himself who must reveal their essential function.<sup>59</sup>

Proceeding from these assumptions, structuralists focused their analysis on the mythical archetypes in an attempt to explain the rudimentary motivations of cultural behavior. They came to disavow the utility of history by insisting that the interpretation of words used to convey perception allows a degree of ambivalence to intrude, which permits subjective precepts to creep into the historical record,

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morality. Durkheim, unlike Jung and Lévi-Strauss, was less concerned with the origin of myth at the subconscious level and more concerned with its function.

<sup>58</sup>Lévi-Strauss proceeded from the basic assumption that, “notwithstanding the cultural differences between the several parts of mankind, the human mind is everywhere one and the same and that it has the same capacities.” *Myth and Meaning*, 19. See also *Anthropology and Myth: Lectures 1951 – 1982*, trans. Roy Willis (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987). Jaan Puhvel also offers an excellent survey of the trends in mythological scholarship in *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) and G.S. Kirk provides a provocative critique of the various fields of inquiry in *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

<sup>59</sup>Roland Barthes, “Myth Today” in Robert A. Segal, ed., *Structuralism in Myth: Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Dumézil, and Propp*, vol. 6 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 128 – 129.

rendering it less than accurate, thus less scientific. Archetypes, however, present patterns that traverse culture, language, and time. This universality constitutes what Jung and Lévi-Strauss define as a “collective unconscious” that is more instinctual than rational. Language, ritual, and other symbols used to communicate ideas via mythological archetypes derive their meaning from the vast collective unconscious that evolved with the human brain. Myth, therefore, should not be equated to a fable that negates reliable history. Arguably, both myth and history are so thoroughly entwined that one could not exist without the other.<sup>60</sup> It is incumbent on the modern scholar, then, to ponder the meanings of the myth that may reside within the history rather than discount it.

Through application of the models I have described, the inherent myth of the captivity tales herein examined reveals complex psycho-social struggles amidst personal, national, and cultural crises that erupted when the Iberian and American worlds collided during the early modern period. The narrators called upon conventional literary imagery borrowed from a Judeo-Christian and medieval

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<sup>60</sup>Professor David J. Weber explores the function of myth and its relation to history in Spanish colonial societies in *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), ix. Joseph Campbell also emphasized the point: Myth is “symbolic expression [that] is given to the unconscious desires, fears, and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior. Mythology, in other words, is psychology misread as biography, history, and cosmology. The modern psychologist can translate it back to its proper denotations and thus rescue for the contemporary world a rich and eloquent document of the profoundest depths of human character.” Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: MJF Books, 1949), 256. Lévi-Strauss postulates that scientific or modern historical study “remains astride our own mythology.” He goes on to argue that in western societies, history has replaced the traditional forms of mythology. *Myth and Meaning*, 41-43.



militaristic heritage to make sense of an intensely personal, perhaps spiritual, rite of passage through other-worldly spaces and peoples. The captivity narratives have both a personal and social context. As individuals who lived through the ordeal, the captives underwent tremendous psychological duress caused by the shattering of their cultural, socio-economic underpinnings from which their mythical worldview stemmed. As units of the larger whole, of Durkheim's *conscience collective*, they negotiated and rationalized two diametrically opposed myth systems, finding commonalities that assisted their survival. What resulted was the emergence of the first transculturated *mestizos*—individuals who, despite their heritage, could no longer be considered purely Spanish or purely Indian.<sup>61</sup> Following their captivities, they could operate astride the threshold that separated two distinct cultures. Except for that of Fontaneda's, the first-person and chronicled narratives present the captives as Christian subjects, who as patient sufferers came to serve God's purpose by demonstrating curative and superhuman marvels wrought in his name. In this manner, the captives became heroes to Christians and shaman-like entities to Indian societies.

Although my ultimate purpose is to show how the mythic text relates to the larger societal context, the mythical component also requires consideration of the historical personage of the individual captive and his ordeal. Regardless of their literary nature or the narrator who dealt in societal conventions, the early modern

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<sup>61</sup>In a literal context, *mestizo* refers to a child of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry; it carries the connotation of bloodline. I use it here in a psychological sense instead.

narratives had basis in actual individual experiences that resulted in a “spiritual awakening” of sorts. This mythico-spiritual component is perhaps best explained by Jung and his practitioners, especially Joseph Campbell, who translated the scholarship for a more popular audience and considered myth as the expression of the spiritual essence of the individual. Campbell synthesized the various schools of myth to explain the phenomenon of the archetypal hero of the monomyth—the universal story, presented in many disguises, that ultimately reveals common forms and motifs that transcend culture, time, and place, but ultimately relate to the individual.<sup>62</sup> The archetypal motif is defined as thus:

The hero of the monomyth searches for something lost, and in that process undergoes a series of transformations as significant thresholds are crossed. Three essential elements make up the middle of the monomythic life: the Departure from home, the Adventure in the unknown world, and the Return with some new understanding.<sup>63</sup>

The hero myth is regarded by scholars as the “most human and overtly psychological of the dominant myth patterns. . . . [They] reflect our priorities . . . [and] our particular cultural values.”<sup>64</sup>

In broadest terms, the literary pattern begins when the hero, or in this case the hero-captive, is torn from his family or culture often through divine fiat or because of

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<sup>62</sup> Campbell’s thesis is an amalgam of Carl Jung, Lord Raglan, Otto Rank, Sir James Frazier, and others who contributed to the psychoanalytic branch of archetypal mythology.

<sup>63</sup>David Leeming, *Myth: A Biography of Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 118.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 7, 117.

some circumstance beyond his control. The captive confronts an unfamiliar environment and begins a journey in an attempt to reunite with the familiar environment. During the process, the hero undergoes trials and tribulations that test and build his moral fabric. In the cyclic drama, the sojourner eventually finds his way back to the point of origin, back to the familiar. It is at this point when the hero confronts the agonizing option whether or not to return. After enduring Herculean-like tasks in order to reunite with the familiar, it would seem reasonable that the return would be welcomed, but it is not always so. Because the hero underwent personal and cultural transformation during the perilous journey, he came to question his identity and loyalties. It is now the hero's choice to return to the once *familiar* and share the revelations with kin, or the hero can refuse and instead embrace a new identity with the now familiar *other*.

This literary pattern of a cyclical drama, according to some scholars, is grounded in reality as individuals progress through life by participating in "rites of passage." The pattern is characteristic, as Arnold van Gennep asserts, of an individual's transition from one position to another, usually following a life crisis or life-altering episode, such as child birth, puberty, or marriage. The rite helps the individual adjust to the new status.<sup>65</sup> Rites alone, however, cannot thoroughly help the person compensate; they must connect with a theory, which Van Gennep equates with religion. The captivity narratives demonstrate the point. The narrators situated their rites of passage within a Christian context to give meaning to the experience for

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<sup>65</sup>Van Gennep, vii, 2 – 3.

themselves and the society that they chose to return to and emulate. I propose that the first-person narratives served a dual purpose in this regard. While they related a rite of passage across other-worldly frontiers, the texts themselves functioned for the captives, through the act of narrating, as another rite of passage back to Christendom.

Those chronicled narratives allow the captive to speak only through the narrators, who must have also recognized the spiritual implications of the captivity experiences given the mythical constructs. The captive's spiritual awakening was of less importance, however. The chroniclers of Spain's New World incursions recognized the captivity sagas as heroic exploits that supported Spain's imperial prerogatives. Society's heroes are often those who substantiate and perpetuate cultural myths and dogma. The chroniclers thus related the experiences in symbolic prose that embellished and often obfuscated reality in an effort to translate that reality in a recognizable form achieved by adherence to mythological and literary convention based on heroic lore. For this reason, the early captivity narrators emphasized the familiar symbols—sea voyage, journey through exotic lands, captivity, miracles, torments, intense personal trials, fear, and homecoming. They deemphasized the personal enlightenment achieved when the individual captives arrived at an understanding of the inherent humanity of their Indian captors. To have professed an observation contradictory to the prevailing mythos that defined the Christian *us* in opposition to the pagan *other* would have risked heresy and condemnation. The narrators had little choice other than to conform to the conventional worldview as defined by their society. For this reason, there are only

hints of the psychological/spiritual transformations experienced by the individual captives. Undoubtedly these individuals emerged from their harrowing ordeals with increased wisdom that possibly transcended a pure Christian ethos as defined by Catholic doctrine. Their understanding of the Indians' humanity would have greatly benefited the cultural exchange had it been properly communicated and comprehended by the larger society.<sup>66</sup> This is the real history that had been obfuscated or silenced by societal prerogatives.

Instead, the captivity sagas emanating from the New World served sixteenth-century authors as cultural edifiers. By casting them in mythological conventions, the authors made sense of "reality" by structuring and ordering it to conform to familiar convention so that the experience was not too threatening to themselves or their audience. The tales presented captives who miraculously completed the ritual cycle to return from their otherworldly experiences with more profound faith in Christ brought about by the sufferings the captives endured. Their return signified that Christian civilization was superior to savagery, that the Christian was miraculously preserved in the face of unimaginable terrors. Those captives who refused to return from their ordeal, however, posed significant problems. How could any reasonable Christian prefer the life of the savage? Their rejection of rescue was a critique of the

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<sup>66</sup>There is some evidence that Bartolomé de las Casas was among those few who did comprehend the implications of the captivity experience as related by the narratives. Las Casas partly relies on Cabeza de Vaca's narrative in drafting *Apologética historia summaria* (México, D. F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1967). See also Rolena Adorno, "The Discursive Encounter of Spain and America: The Authority of Eyewitness Testimony in the Writing of History," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (Apr., 1992): 220 – 227.

prevailing Catholic mythology and it caused considerable unease among its practitioners. The manner in which the transatlantic communities of the sixteenth century confronted these issues helped either to reinforce the existing Iberian mentalities or to forge new ones for emerging Latin American societies confronting different realities. In the interim, the heroes—those individual captives—lost their cultural identity in the ritual process, emerging from their ordeals reborn as acculturated entities—the hybrid progenitors of Latino culture. This story had to wait several centuries before it could be told.

Post-colonial generations of Latin Americans who desired both political and cultural independence from Spanish domination hailed many of the captives, and especially the defectors, as heroes who represented the idea of *mestizaje*. Whereas the sixteenth-century captivity narrators failed to fully develop the heroic potential of their characters by suppressing the enlightened message, modern Latino authors took literary license to better express the enlightened aspects of the captivity message concerning the humanness of Indian culture. Although suppressed, the voices were not entirely muted by the sixteenth-century narrators. Cabeza de Vaca, for example, articulated one of the first objections to Spanish policies. At one point in his narrative, Cabeza de Vaca declared that, while the Spanish soldiers desired slaves, “we wanted freedom for the Indians.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>“ . . . nofotros andavamos a les bufcar libertad.” Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo treynta y quatro.

### 1.3 Methodology

I contend that, although the chroniclers purported to write “true histories,” they instead conformed to the conventions of their society that often confused history with myth. Consequently, the captivity narrators related their tales as heroic epics, which in actuality offer more insight to the individual and societal *mentalités* than it does to the historical events that cannot be corroborated or accepted as reliable. As cultural artifacts, the narratives are useful representations of the psycho-social complex that informed and was informed by the captivity experiences. Those narratives authored by the former captives express their attempts at mediation of two contradictory worlds. Those captivity narratives authored by secondary chroniclers served to perpetuate, among other things, Christendom’s superiority and the rightness of colonial imperatives. In the process, the various authors related subconscious anxieties and ambiguities regarding the identity of self, its relation to the larger society, as well as to the Indian *other*. This existential component could find expression only in mythic prose familiar to contemporary audiences.

Having introduced the confines of the study and the theoretical method, *Chapter Two* introduces the captivity narratives and their sources. I have organized them in three categories: 1) the first-person narratives written with the intent of publication for popular consumption or for more official reasons, 2) those chronicled narratives authored by contemporary chroniclers who relied on either eyewitness or secondary reports, and 3) those largely relegated to legend and modern historical fiction. The first category includes the narratives of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca,

Hans Stade, Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda and Francisco de Avila and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán. The second group includes Jerónimo de Aguilar, Gonzalo Guerrero, and Juan Ortiz. The last group includes legends such as Lucía Miranda and Francisco del Puerto, but also overlaps with the legend of Guerrero. Although serving various authorial purposes, these captivity narratives, with the exception of Fontaneda's, evince repetitive patterns and imagery connotative of heroic lore, which render the historical reliability suspect. Although an aberration, Fontaneda's narrative contains similar elements and its juxtaposition accentuates the mythical nature of the other narratives.

*Chapter Three* situates the narratives in their historical context in order to explain how the authors conformed to societal conventions exhibited in artistic perceptions of the world and Christendom's place in it (refer to T-O Map, Figure 3.1), captivity, literary currents, and in reaction to societal pressures requiring adherence to secular and ecclesiastical doctrine. Those who would become captives, as well as those who would chronicle the exploits, carried to the New World shared experiences and memories of a dynamic era of Iberian history. At the onset of the American discoveries, the peninsula struggled toward unification despite the competing provincial interests. Early modern Spain has been characterized as a society in conflict, reeling from discord largely brought about by provincialism, the Muslim invasions, the ensuing Reconquista, and the expulsion of the Jewish



enclaves.<sup>68</sup> As an emerging nation-state, Catholic Spain forged its identity in relation to the Muslim, Jewish and, after 1517, Protestant threats to its Roman Catholic heritage despite the fact that Spanish culture was largely an amalgamation of all three. Literature thrived, especially that which reinforced Iberian ideals and heroics forged during centuries of religious wars. These literary influences affected the manner in which the chroniclers related the captivities. For this reason, Golden Age literary works like *Amadís de Gaula*, which characterized heroic epics reminiscent of the Greek sagas and romantic chivalry, are particularly relevant. Paralleling the romantic theme was that of captivity, which permeated many literary works in the Golden Age, and especially Cervantes's most celebrated work, *Don Quixote*.<sup>69</sup>

Like Cervantes, who also endured captivity among the Muslims, the Iberian captives penetrated well beyond the cultural walls of those border regions to become subjects to what contemporaries considered to be *savage* peoples. In the process, dialectical transformations occurred. The captives brought with them their Old World baggage which they used to rationalize their irrational and potentially deadly experiences that, in the end, resulted in new rationalities. Once having returned to their once familiar kin, the captives who narrated their own tale and the chroniclers who narrated the sagas as told by others used mythological conventions that could easily be understood by the collective society; but the transformative revelation

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<sup>68</sup>Henry Kamen, *Spain, 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict* (London: Longman, 1991).

<sup>69</sup>George Camamis, *Estudios Sobre El Cautiverio en el Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, S. A., 1977).

would be rejected or misunderstood by the larger audience. In the end, the heroic journeys would be used by Iberian writers like Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, as justification for the Spanish conquest rather than as an indictment against it.

*Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five* deconstructs the narratives by comparing and contrasting the texts in order to show how, when placed within the historical context, the literary elements yield substantive insight to the captives' worldview. *Chapter Four* analyzes the ritualized element of the narratives through the repetitive pattern of the separation, initiation, and return. The narratives invariably open at the moment of violent separation and eventual isolation. The reader seldom learns of the subject's background. It is as if life's significance only began at this point of separation. Once in the power of their captors, gone are the captives' cultural edifices that provided a sense of identity and security. The separation was soon followed by the ritual of initiation into the captor society. The captives and chroniclers alike devoted much ink to describing the tribulations resulting from the initiation experience as this is the classic core of the journey. Because no corroboration exists, we have only the word of the eyewitness as to what exactly transpired. Undoubtedly, the captives underwent extreme isolation as well as physical and psychological torments, but scholars can never be certain that the events, as they are narrated, are accurate. The descriptions are couched in highly symbolic imagery borrowed from contemporary Christian and secular literature. Many narratives even credit their subjects for performing miracles in the name of their Christian god, much like the Christian and medieval folkloric heroes who accredited God with granting success and favor by working through

them. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the final ritualistic motif—the return. Here is the point where the captives must confront the once familiar that has by now become foreign. They are forced to undergo another rite of passage, but they never fully cross back over the cultural threshold. Instead they straddle it and thereby possess an ability to traverse both Indian and colonial societies. The narratives exhibit the methods employed by the captives to win acceptance in two diametrically opposed cultures and the resulting psychological stressors induced by the redefining of self.

*Chapter Five* provides a contextual interpretation of the common imagery that runs through all the narratives. The narrators placed much emphasis on the captives' physical appearance, language, and mannerisms. The imagery suggests anxiety stemming from a common struggle with the ultimate meaning of contact with the New World, which had scant frame of reference in Old World tradition. This anxiety extended well beyond the sixteenth century and appears even as late as the twentieth century when post-colonial societies grappled with their own sense of being and identity. At this late date, legends of captivity resurfaced, especially of certain lost captives (those who either refused to return or simply never resurfaced) and were again expressed in novelistic form. Because these lost Iberians have few historical traces, their tale was fictionalized and tailored to modern Latino sensitivities. Whereas contemporaries recoiled from the implications of “civilized” Christians willingly defecting to the world of the pagan “savage,” modern Latino writers embraced the irony and argued that it was a repudiation of Western values.

The modern retelling of the captivity sagas offered the mestizo culture a new mythology created from the historical dialectic.

Analysis of Cabeza de Vaca's tale, which concludes the chapter, extrapolates meaning from the imagery and ritual inherent in the narrative. The title of this dissertation is partly borrowed from Cabeza de Vaca's lament of how he "wandered lost and naked through many and very strange lands."<sup>70</sup> No primary captivity narrative better reveals the full spectrum of the heroic adventure and its ultimate meaning to the individual captive, his contemporaries, and even to modern society. Cabeza de Vaca's saga unfolds across both real and mythical geographical spaces given meaning to contemporaries only through the quill of the narrator. His story presents the common motif of captivity literature and brings to bear the heroic mythologies, the Iberian literary traditions, and the Iberian historical experiences in the transatlantic world.

*Chapter Six* summarizes and discusses the postulates that support the argument that the early modern captivity narratives presented contemporaries with mythical lore that served hidden agenda and relayed shared anxieties embedded within what purported to be factual histories. Sixteenth-century writers seldom distinguished between history and myth. The captivity chroniclers thus relied on traditional literary motifs and constructs to narrate what they considered "true histories" of the American sagas that emanated from the Spanish and Portuguese

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<sup>70</sup> ". . . por muchas y muy efracias tierra que an duue perdido y en cueros. . ."  
Cabeza de Vaca, Proem.

colonies. Comparisons of the surviving narratives reveal a pattern imitative of popular Biblical and medieval mythologies and heroic folklore that prevailed in contemporary Europe and Iberia, which would later be transplanted to the American colonies. The early Iberian captivities possess—in the manner of their relation, by popular perception, and in their memory—symbolic elements of the archetypal hero. For this reason, the captivity sagas are less a matter-of-fact historical record and more subjective accounts that reveal the mentalities of the narrator and their personal struggles with cultural identities at a time of uncertainty when new worlds unfolded in the sight of those who long believed that Christendom centered the universe. Their sagas became the heroic tales that validated the European concept of Christendom and its superiority over pagans. Those who refused to embrace the accepted mythology proved most troubling since they posed psychological threats to Iberian identity defined by the notion of “civilization” and “savagery.” How could any “rational” Christian embrace the faith of the savage? The question caused much consternation among a people seeking constant justification of their faith and society. The inability to come to terms with the implications of the question left little alternative. As had happened to countless others in medieval societies who may have deviated from Christian ideals, those captives who refused the return became branded as heretics. Generally when the Spanish colonizers were ejected by their colonial subjects did new generations of Latino authors retell the stories of those heretical defectors. Their rejection of Spanish colonialism became cause for

celebration by Latino writers in search of a new identity following the ouster of the colonial governments.

Individually, the captives underwent cultural transformations brought about by the negotiation of seemingly divergent mythological schemas. According to the accounts, the Indian captors recognized that these white captives possessed supernatural powers that proved beneficial to tribal survival. Consequently, the captives' utility to the tribe insured their survival and elevated their reputations as shamans. Several captives became heroic figures to both Iberian and Native American peoples although the captives struggled to survive among both cultures. Other captives like Avila and Fontaneda either failed to describe or downplayed their status in Indian society and instead offered their experience as a paradigm of Christian suffering. In the end, they all offered unprecedented insight to American civilizations, although the degree of sympathy expressed toward the Indians varied from one narrative to the other. The sympathetic revelations, however, were often lost on the Christians, who could not understand why many of the captives expressed endearment to their captors or refused to return home. The answer is perhaps buried within many captivity narratives that reveal how the Indians came to regard their European captives as "children of the sun," an esteemed designation.<sup>71</sup> This same degree of accommodation and respect would not have occurred in a mythological

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<sup>71</sup>"En todo este tiempo nos venían de muchas parte a bufcar, y decían que verdaderamente nofotros éramos hijos del fol." Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo veynte y dos. Fontaneda, p. 34, also alludes to his Indian captors' reverence for the Spaniards as gods.

system where its practitioners considered its dogma as historically inevitable and universally correct while all others were expendable.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Turner best developed this idea by arguing that Constantine and early Church fathers subverted Christ's mysticism by converting it to what he refers to as "routinization" and "traditionalization" in an attempt to transform it to a state religion. It resulted in an "historical interpretation" that made it "the very engine of history." Rather than a cyclical religion that emphasized spiritual renewal, Christianity instead became a linear religion that would culminate in Christ's return. See Turner, 60 – 65.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

The captivity narratives are found in both published and non-published sources authored during the period of Spanish exploration and colonization (1492 – 1650).<sup>1</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade, and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán authored their narratives for the purpose of mass publication. Francisco de Avila and Hernando d’Escalante Fontaneda also penned their accounts, but intended them for a select readership. The remaining sagas of Jerónimo de Aguilar, Gonzalo Guerrero, Juan Ortiz and others found expression through secondary accounts written by chroniclers such as Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Diego de Landa or Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca. Those captives who either opted not to return or never had the opportunity received from contemporaries little literary mention so as to become

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<sup>1</sup>Compared to the rather profuse body of English colonial captivity narratives, the Spanish variants are rare and must be extracted from various sources. Susan Socolow attributes the sparseness of Spanish captivity narratives of the colonial period to the lack of a strong literary tradition and to a religious tradition that emphasized the Babylonian captivity, symbolic of divine punishment for disobedience. See “Spanish Captives in Indian Societies: Cultural Contact along the Argentine Frontier, 1600 – 1835,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (Feb. 1992): 73 – 99. Socolow’s conclusion, however, is questionable considering the flow of books between Spain and its American colonies. The fact that many captives adopted Indian culture and never returned is another reason for the rarity of Spanish narratives. Professor David Weber ponders another possibility, suggesting that Puritans considered the redemption of captives as a sign of God’s favor, whereas Spanish Catholics look to suffering, not deliverance, as a signifier of faith. See *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, 226.



what Operé described as the “los ignorados protagonistas” (the forgotten protagonists) of the New World encounters.<sup>2</sup> In most instances, the chroniclers neglected to even name them, as if attempting to erase them from memory. Of those who willingly defected, Gonzalo Guerrero received the most notoriety thanks to his companion, Aguilar, but also in part to Guerrero’s fabled resistance to the Spanish invasion of Mexico that rendered him as a paradigm of Mexican heritage.<sup>3</sup> Two obscure captivity sagas that further helped express post-colonial identities include the sagas of Francisco del Puerto and the mostly fictional, Lucía Miranda, whose legends served twentieth-century novelists searching for Argentine identity.

Despite the geographical, cultural, and chronological complexity, the inherent mythology and common themes of these sagas unify the genre, leading to some general hypotheses. Considering the questionable accuracy of the facts, the narratives offer scholars cultural artifacts useful to construct a *histoire des mentalités*. Overall, the narratives reflect the authors’ attempts to make sense of New World experiences. Furthermore, those first-person narratives, like Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*, evidence an effort to win acceptance from Christendom following a long sojourn with pagans by demonstrating that the captive remained faithful to Christian precepts. Other chroniclers such as Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, couched their captivity narratives within larger works that substantiated the rightness of

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<sup>2</sup>Operé, *Historias de la frontera*, 9.

<sup>3</sup>Gonzalo’s story would be fictionalized by modern Mexican authors like Eugenio Aguirre, *Gonzalo Guerrero: novella histórica* (Mexico, D. F.: UNAM, 1980).

Spain's colonial prerogatives. Regardless of the authorial motivation, the efforts resulted in narratives highly imbued with archetypal patterns of heroic lore, mimicking to some extent heroic epics as expressed in popular Iberian and other European literary forms. Contemporary writers often compared Spanish exploits in America to "heroic deeds" like those described in romances of chivalry.<sup>4</sup> The analogy must have extended to those captives who returned and related harrowing journeys rivaling biblical and medieval adventures.

## 2.1 First-Person Narratives

### *2.1.1 Cabeza de Vaca*

The captivity of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca provided the basis for the most famous sixteenth-century narrative that has been recognized not only for its historical value, but for its intrinsic literary characteristics, already identified by scholars as "heroic literature" in the manner of Golden Age romances.<sup>5</sup> It was among the first primary captivity narratives authored and published (1542 in Zamora, Spain) by a surviving captive, whereas the narratives of Aguilar, Guerrero, and Ortiz are owed to secondary writers. The enduring significance of Cabeza de Vaca's account is evidenced by its many editions published over five centuries and in several

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<sup>4</sup>Chroniclers such as Bernal Díaz del Castillo repeatedly referred to "los heroycos hechos" (the heroic deeds) and cited "los libros de Amadis y otros corros de caualleros" (the books of Amadis and other works of knightly tales). See Díaz, *La Conquista de Mexico*, Capitulo CLI, CC, CCIII, and CCIV.

<sup>5</sup>Martin A. Favata and José B. Fernández, in an introduction to Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Account: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Relación* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 17.

languages.<sup>6</sup> It had much contemporary influence, securing for Cabeza de Vaca a position as *adelantado* (governor) of the Rio de la Plata and it prompted subsequent expeditions as the Coronado venture (1540) into the northern regions of Nueva España (Mexico) in search of the fabled Seven Cities of Cíbola. Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación* also influenced Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who relied upon it when composing *Apologética historia sumaria* (1550).

Cabeza de Vaca's journey began in 1528 following his appointment as treasurer for the region of Florida, which extended from the Rio de las Palmas (River of the Palms) in northern Nueva España to the southern tip of the Floridian peninsula. He accompanied Pánfilo de Narváez, who had been granted the right to conquer and colonize the area. The expedition, consisting of 600 soldiers and colonists, endured numerous calamities that forced repeated returns to Cuba, but finally landed in the area of Tampa Bay in April 1528. According to the narrative, Narváez and Cabeza de Vaca argued bitterly over alternative courses of action that eventually led to their split and the eventual disaster that resulted in the death of many and in captivity for the survivors.

After separating from the ships, Narváez's party became lost in the Floridian wilderness, forced to fend against hostile natives, hunger, and tempestuous weather. Cabeza de Vaca, along with Andres Dorantes, an infantry captain, Captain Alonzo del Castillo Maldonado, and Estevan (Estevanico), an African moor, constructed

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<sup>6</sup>I will reference the 1555 edition of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación y comentarios del gounerador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* (Valladolid: F. F. de Cordoua, 1555).

crude boats that afforded passage along the Gulf Coasts, past the mouth of the Mississippi River, and eventually in November 1528 to a long narrow island (Malhado--Island of Misfortune) off the Texas coast. There Cabeza de Vaca encountered natives and eighty other Spaniards, the majority of whom, over time, succumbed to diseases that eventually reduced the community to fifteen. The survivors, including Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions, became slaves to Indians. According to the narrative, Cabeza de Vaca and companions gained a reputation as healers and shamans. With this notoriety, he and the others became successful traders among the natives for five years as they steadily trekked westward. Scholars cannot pinpoint Cabeza de Vaca's actual journey since so few details exist. Some speculate that the route went from San Antonio Bay area to the Colorado River, to the Llano River, to the Rio Grande above the junction of Conchos, then onto Chihuahua and Sonora to the Village of the Hearts where he eventually reconnected with a Spanish slave scouting party.<sup>7</sup>

Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow survivors returned to Spain and reported to the Audiencia de Esponola (Santo Domingo); the transcript of his testimony was printed by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, one of the Crown's

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<sup>7</sup>Several scholars have debated the approximate route of the Cabeza de Vaca party. For a comparison of these, see Favata and Fernández, 14 – 16. The variances between the supposed routes are attributable to the fact that scholars have only the narrative from which to lift geographical clues. The narrative itself, however, is imprecise, highly subjective, and composed from memory. For this reason, I assert that neither this nor any of the captivity narratives can be interpreted as accurate records of events.

historiographers, in *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*.<sup>8</sup> Afterwards, in March 1540, Emperor Carlos V christened Cabeza de Vaca with the title of *Adelantado* (governor) and then granted him authority over the Province of the Rio de la Plata.<sup>9</sup> He failed as governor, largely because his progressive Indian policies engendered many critics from influential Spaniards, and thus found himself arrested and then banished to Africa. He died in 1557, perhaps believing that his heroic tale and its lessons were lost on his generation. We are left to imagine how he may have contemplated the irony of the situation—he escaped captivity amongst the Indians only to die a captive of his own people.

### 2.1.2 Hans Stade

With the captivity saga of Hans Stade, the Hessian, scholars are again afforded a unique autobiographical account authored by a survivor of captivity. He first published his tale in Marburg in 1557, and later editions appeared at Frankfurt.<sup>10</sup> Stade differs somewhat from the other case studies in that he was a Hessian rather than Iberian, although he shipped with the Portuguese and Spaniards to the New World where he underwent captivity amongst the Tupinamba in Brazil. Regardless

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<sup>8</sup>Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1959).

<sup>9</sup>Cabeza de Vaca also published an account of his South American venture that appeared in the 1555 edition of *La relación*.

<sup>10</sup>Two translations from the German text are referenced: Hans Stade, *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1547 – 1555 Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil*, trans. Albert Tootal (New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), and *Hans Staden: The True History of His Captivity, 1557*, trans. Malcolm Letts (New York: Robert M. McBride and Co., 1929).

of his origins Stade, like his Iberian contemporaries, related his experiences in mythological prose common to the early modern Western world. Arguably, this demonstrates that the early captivity experiences were not only informed by Iberian mythologies, but that these mythologies traversed Western cultures and served Europeans steeped in Christian literary tradition dispersed across Europe via Catholicism.

Hans Stade's story began in 1547 when he decided to embark for the Indies for reasons not explained other than "if it should so please God, to visit India."<sup>11</sup> Having failed to make the vessel for India, Stade settled for an alternate adventure. He made two voyages to South America, the first with a Portuguese captain, and after returning to Lisbon in late 1549 he traveled to Spain and shipped with and served as a gunner to the Spanish captain, Don Diego de Senabria. Arriving again in Brazil, the armada crashed on shore during a storm and Stade found himself in the Portuguese settlement of Sancte Vincente (Saint Vincent) and later in Brikioka, where he was captured by the Tupi cannibals.<sup>12</sup>

While a slave to the Tupi, Stade explained that he was under constant threat of being devoured in cannibalistic rituals. He described psychological torments in that they forced him to witness the slow death and consumption of other captives while they taunted Stade with threats of similar tortures. Stade survived, however, by

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<sup>11</sup>Stade, 15. Like the other captivity sagas, very little was revealed regarding the familial backgrounds and genesis of the adventure.

<sup>12</sup>Stade details his capture in pages 51 – 53.

winning the trust of his captors by demonstrating his ability as a warrior as well as a shaman. Finally, in the fall of 1554 a French captain, Wilhelm de Moner, exchanged goods with the Tupi in return for Stade's release.<sup>13</sup>

Stade's narrative possesses many of the elements of the heroic archetype. The tale unfolds in the cyclical pattern of the separation, initiation, and eventual return to the point of origin. Consistent with the genre, Stade repeatedly credits miraculous intervention for his deliverance—"In such manner did the Almighty Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, help me out of the hands of these tyrants (barbarians)"—and he uses his Christian faith and foreknowledge of impending events to win the favor of his captors.<sup>14</sup> Similar to the Iberian narratives, Stade's tale is replete with references to nakedness, miracles, Christian symbolism, and the development of mutual affection between captive and captor.

### 2.1.3 *Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda*

A lesser known early captivity tale is that of Fontaneda, who in about 1575 authored his own narrative following his return from what he estimated to be seventeen years of captivity among the Floridian Indians who resided near Cape Canaveral on the Atlantic coast.<sup>15</sup> Fontaneda's narrative is a sharp contrast to the others because it lacks literary embellishments and archetypal structure, mostly owed

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<sup>13</sup>Stade, 111-12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>15</sup>Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda, *Memoir of Do. d'Escalante Fontaneda Respecting Florida*, trans. Buckingham Smith with original Spanish text (Coral Gables, Florida: Glade House, 1945), 31.

to his apparent illiteracy; therefore, ironically, it offers more reliable empirical observations than do the other captivity accounts.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, similarities exist in that the narrative encourages and condones Spanish imperial policies. Fontaneda recommended that the Crown implement a bold colonization policy toward Florida. The narrative thus justified, despite its lack of sophistication, Spanish colonial prerogatives with blatant disregard for the Indians.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Fontaneda, like the other captivity authors, most probably had more self-serving motives for drafting his narrative, namely to land a job. He boasted of his ability to speak four Indian dialects and concluded that “no one knows that country so well as I know it.”<sup>18</sup>

This self assessment was probably accurate considering the seventeen years spent in captivity (c. 1550 – c. 1567).<sup>19</sup> Only about thirteen years of age when captured, Fontaneda’s ordeal occurred before he could undergo formal education in Spain.<sup>20</sup> Because Fontaneda was illiterate in Spanish at the time of his rescue, his narrative contained grammatical and spelling inconsistencies that make translation

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<sup>16</sup>See editorial commentary, Fontaneda, 14.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 35 – 36.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>19</sup>The precise dates are disputed by scholars considering Fontaneda’s narrative contains conflicting information. See editorial commentary, Fontaneda, 11 – 12.

<sup>20</sup>The narrative informs that Fontaneda and his brother were sailing to Spain for their education when their ship sank off the Floridian coast. Fontaneda, 33.



very difficult.<sup>21</sup> He employed no punctuation, thus the text is quite laborious.<sup>22</sup> What can be deciphered, however, reveals a narrative void of ritual structure and symbolism. Juxtaposed to the other narratives, it reveals how culture rather than the experience may directly affect the manner in which the survivors related their experience.

Fontaneda's narrative poses difficulties in formulating a comprehensive analysis of the early narratives. One would assume, based on what is known of white captives, that because of Fontaneda's youth at the time of capture, he would have more readily assimilated to Indian society and refused rescue. Unlike most of the other narratives that implore humane treatment for the Indians, however, Fontaneda advocates enslavement of the Floridian natives.<sup>23</sup> He advises the king to construct forts to prevent further captivities and to protect the new dominions. He refers to the Indians as "brutes."<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, Fontaneda's narrative lacks sufficient clues to

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<sup>21</sup>One seventeenth-century commentator noted that the text is "a very good narrative, but the man had no understanding of the art of writing." ("Muy buena relacion, aunque de hombre que no conocia el arte de escribir"). Fontaneda, 77.

<sup>22</sup>This was not entirely unusual, however. A perusal of sixteenth-century manuscripts reveals that Spanish usage had little consistency even amongst the learned, largely owing to the provincial dialects of Iberia. Oftentimes the same word could have several different spellings within the same sentence, which could extend uninterrupted for several pages. Scholars point out, however, that the extreme grammatical inconsistencies demonstrate that the author was uneducated. See editorial commentary, Fontaneda, 23.

<sup>23</sup>"... A buena manera conbidandoles la pas y metellos debajo d alas cubiertas A mari dos y mugeres y Repartillos por Vasallos A las yslas y avn en tierra firma por dineros. . ." Fontaneda, 74.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 33.

arrive at a satisfactory analysis. He does not reveal much about his initiation or the circumstances surrounding his rescue. We can, however, surmise from the clues that do exist in the narrative that Fontaneda had selfish motives for penning the account and that he wished to demonstrate that, despite years of Indian captivity, he remained a loyal Christian subject who supported the imperial interests of Spain. Fontaneda certainly lacked the sophistication to craft a highly structured and symbolic narrative that could evoke Christian heroics, thus his method proved less an existential pondering of captivity and a more straightforward description of Florida and its inhabitants. The narrative therefore must be accepted as an aberration that neither supports nor refutes the hypothesis I advance.

#### *2.1.4 Fray Francisco de Avila*

Another of the lesser known captivities is that of the ecclesiast, Francisco de Avila, whose brief narrative was incorporated and embellished by Fray Lu s Ger nimo de Or  in *Relaci n de los martires que ha habido en las Provincias de la Florida (Relation of the Martyrs of Florida)* published circa 1612.<sup>25</sup> As with the other captivity accounts, Or  provides the reader with very little background on Father Avila, other than that he was “a young priest of the province of Castile and a native of the city of Toledo.”<sup>26</sup> According to Or , Avila, a Franciscan, sailed for Florida in 1595 along with other priests of his order “to continue the conversion of

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<sup>25</sup>Lu s Ger nimo de Or , *The Martyrs of Florida, 1512 – 1616*, trans. Maynard Geiger (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1936). Fray Avila’s narrative comprises pages 87 – 96.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

the Indians of Florida and to teach them Christian doctrine.”<sup>27</sup> While Avila attended the mission at Ospe (Jekyll Island off the southern coast of the state of Georgia), the Guale Indians descended on his abode in the middle of the night and violently carried him away to captivity for about one year.

The narrative unfolds similarly to the others with the separation, initiation, and return motif. The initiation account is rife with the imagery employed by the other narratives, including the customary allusions to miracles. Avila emphasized how he was “stark naked” and went about “always naked even during the worst cold of winter.”<sup>28</sup> Following a severe beating that nearly killed him, Avila credited God, who “was pleased that [the wounds] should be healed in a short time without any curative means . . . . giving me such good health and strength that never in my life have I experienced the same.”<sup>29</sup> Afterwards, according to the narrative, Avila had the reputation among the Indians as “the resurrected one.”<sup>30</sup>

Unlike most of the other narratives, the Indian antagonists acquire a more sinister reputation. Avila described how the Indians “looked like demons;” they “practiced witchcraft;” and they fell “under the inspiration of the devil.”<sup>31</sup> In addition to their evilness, Avila described his Indian captors as tempters. Avila described how

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<sup>27</sup>Oré, 66.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 89, 91.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 88 – 89, 90, 92.

the Indians pressed him to forsake his beliefs to “become an Indian” to “enjoy what [they] enjoy.” He went on to lament how he “perceived the persecution of the devil . . . who tempt[ed] me and [made] me disconsolate.”<sup>32</sup> Other narratives offer similar portrayals of Indians as “tempters” such as that of Salazar’s account of Aguilar and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán’s portrayal of his “happy captivity.”

Although purported to be Avila’s direct testimony, Oré took some literary license to embellish and complete the narrative. At one point, Oré admitted that “Father Avila did not write [this] in his relation but it was given to me by another religious. . . . [There are] divers others, which I pass over in order to avoid prolixity.”<sup>33</sup> Oré concluded the narrative by describing how Domingo de Avendaño, governor of Florida, rescued Father Avila, and then avenged the deaths of the other prelates by destroying the Indians’ food crops year after year “as a punishment of God for having killed the fathers.”<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.1.5 *Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán*

Núñez’s saga unfolded along Spain’s Chilean frontier where the Araucanian Indians vehemently resisted Spanish rule for more than a century. According to Núñez’s narrative, the Araucanians took him captive in May 1629 in the midst of a battle and then released him six months later following ransom. Núñez recorded his experience decades after the fact in *Cautiverio feliz, y razón individual de las*

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<sup>32</sup>Oré, 92.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 95 – 96.

*guerras dilitados del Reino de Chile (The Happy Captive, and Particular Reasons for the Protracted Wars in Chile)*, which did not see publication until 1863 although copies of his draft circulated through official channels.<sup>35</sup> Although authored during the middle of the seventeenth century when the initial shock of discovery had faded, Núñez's narrative presents several similarities in structure and imagery that warrant comparison with its sixteenth-century predecessors.

Núñez was a young soldier of about twenty years old when captured, but he did not pen his account until in his fifties; therefore, the entire narrative, like the others, is composed from memory. For this reason, what was purported to be an accurate historical text is nothing of the sort. It amounted to subjective recall conditioned by Núñez's Jesuit schooling and literary tradition. He described his experience as a "happy" one because the Indians treated Núñez with dignity in honor of his father, Alvaro Núñez, who they respected as a benevolent warrior.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, he related his saga in highly ritualistic prose characterized by separation, initiation, and return. Throughout the text, emphasis was placed on physical and Christian imagery that reveals more about Núñez's attitudes than it does about the actual event. The theme of nakedness again surfaces as it had in the other

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<sup>35</sup>Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascañán, *Cautiverio feliz, y razón individual de las guerras dilitados del Reino de Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1973).

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, Primera Parte. Núñez's narrative may serve as a South American variant that intersects with and may support Brooks's thesis (*Captives and Cousins*) in that captive exchange systems in violent frontier communities characterized by interdependence rested on cultural values such as honor. Refer to my analysis of Brooks in *Chapter One*.

narratives. Núñez's separation and initiation deviates, however, in that his nakedness is not forced because of the respect the Indians rendered to him. When the Indians learned of his heroic ancestry, they refused, according to Núñez, "to strip me of my clothing" and only "bade me to strip . . . so that I should not be impeded by my clothing" in the event I fell into the water."<sup>37</sup> His honor and identity (i.e. his cultural clothing)—two underlying themes that connect all the narratives—thus remained intact.

Similar to his predecessors, Francisco Núñez had an ulterior reason for narrating his account so many years after the fact. By the end of his life, he was nearly destitute thanks to having lost much of his possessions to Indian raids and thanks to having personally financed and supplied his soldiers while defending the garrison at Boroa. When the monetary reimbursements failed to arrive from Madrid, Núñez set out to convince the Crown, via his narrative, that his service to Spain demanded something more than a life of penury. At one point he lamented that "this is what I have had out of the war in Chile, to be sought after when danger was greatest and pushed aside as it receded, until I find myself now at the end of my days an exile in a foreign land, seeking solace where there is none to be found."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> ". . . pues habiendo empezado a despojarme del vestido no pasó adelante con su intento. . . ; . . .que me desudase y pusiese más ligero, a que le respondi, que ninguna suerte sabia nadir ni sustentarme en el agua." Núñez, 31, 34.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 154.

## 2.2 Chronicled Narratives

### 2.2.1 *Jeronimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero*

Aguilar and Guerrero, the two *naufragios* (castaways), are among the earliest recorded accounts of Spanish captivity in the Americas. Discovered in 1519 by the landing party of Hernán Cortés as he prepared for the invasion of Mexico, Aguilar gave an account of his saga to various authors who chronicled the Spanish incursions in the Americas.<sup>39</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo purported to be an eyewitness to Aguilar's rescue although the actual narration was not recorded until about fifty years later with Díaz's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la nueva España* (c. 1568).<sup>40</sup> Variations of the story also appear in Francisco Cervantes de Salazar's *Crónica de la nueva España* (c. 1567) and Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (c. 1566). The descriptive accuracy of all three accounts is suspect considering the factual variances, but what is important is how these chroniclers opted to remember and relate the captivity saga.

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<sup>39</sup>Although there are various primary accounts of Cortés's invasion of Mexico, most of which record the story of Jerónimo de Aguilar, this study relies mostly on the account provided by Díaz, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1632). By the time of Cortés' expedition, Díaz was a veteran of Central American explorations, having accompanied Hernandez de Cordova in 1517 and then Grijalva in 1518. It was during the Grijalva voyage that the Spaniards learned of the possible existence of castaways.

<sup>40</sup>Bernal reportedly began his work in 1551 and completed it in 1568, motivated in part to correct what he considered to be inaccuracies of other chroniclers. Although he dispatched a copy to Madrid for publication, it was shelved until 1632. For a succinct analysis of Bernal's chronicle, see Rolena Adorno, "Discourses on Colonialism: Bernal Díaz, Las Casas, and the Twentieth-Century," *MLN* 103, no. 2, *Hispanic Issue* (Mar., 1988), 239-258.

According to the various sources, Aguilar and Guerrero were among about eighteen castaways washed ashore at Cozumel following the sinking of their ship on its voyage from Darien, on the Panamanian isthmus, to Hispaniola. The castaways became captive of the Maya for about eight years. Of the eighteen, Aguilar and Guerrero were, according to accounts, the only two who survived the captivity rigors of overwork, disease, and sacrifice to Indian idols. In relating this tale, the chroniclers emphasize the drastic cultural transformations that both Aguilar and Guerrero underwent during their ordeal. Much significance was placed on physical appearance. Díaz described that when Aguilar was reunited with Cortés's landing party, the captive was unrecognizable as a Spaniard and could barely speak his native language:

[One of Cortés's soldiers] soon brought the Spaniard to Cortés but before he arrived where Cortés was standing, several Spaniards asked . . . where the Spaniard was? Although he was walking by his side, for they could not distinguish him from an Indian as he was naturally brown and he had his hair shorn like an Indian slave, and carried a paddle on his shoulder, he was shod with one old sandal and the other was tied to his belt, he had on a ragged old cloak, and a worse loin cloth, with which he covered his nakedness, and he had tied up, in a bundle in his cloak, a *Book of Hours*, old and worn. When Cortés saw him in this state, he too was deceived like the other soldiers, and asked . . . 'Where is the Spaniard?' On hearing this, the Spaniard squatted down on his haunches as the Indians do and said 'I am he.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>“Y luego se vino el Tapia con el español adonde estaba Cortés. Y antes que legasen, ciertos españoles preguntaban al Tapia: Qué es el español?—aunque allí junto con él, porque le tenían por indio propio, porque de suyo era Moreno y tresquilado a manera de indio esclavo, y traya un remo al hombro, una cotara vieja calzada y la otro en la cinta, y una manta vieja muy ruin, e un braguero peor, con que cubría sus verguenzas, y traya atado en la manta un bulto, que eran *Horas* muy vijas. Pues desde que Cortés lo vió de aquella manera, también picó, como los demás soldados, y preguntó al Tapia que qué era español. Y el español como lo entendió se



Although Aguilar expressed sincere joy at having been rescued, he informed Cortés that the other captive, Gonzalo Guerrero, refused to rejoin his kin as he had become so assimilated into his adopted Indian family, that he would not be accepted back in the Spanish community. Again, the account renders much emphasis on physical appearance: “My brother Aguilar, I have a wife and three children, and I am now a chief and captain of many warriors. My face is tattooed and ears are pierced. What will the Spaniards think of me when they see me in this manner?”<sup>42</sup> The ideas represented by this physical symbolism are further denoted by the parallelisms with contemporary mythology. In the narration, a pattern unfolds where Spaniards underwent a *separation* from their familiar world brought about by a shipwreck at sea.<sup>43</sup> During a long *initiation*, Aguilar and Guerrero struggled to survive in an alien land and culture unlike any conceptualized in their Old World frame of reference. Aguilar credited his rescue and salvation to his steadfastness in faith, symbolized by

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puso en cuclillas, como hacen indios, e dijo: Yo soy.” Díaz, Capítulo XVIII. A *Book of Hours* contained the Catholic liturgy that accompanied most prelates.

<sup>42</sup>“Hermano Aguilar, yo soy casado, y tengo tres hijos, y tienenme por cacique y capitán cuando hay guerras; íos vos con Dios; que yo tengo labrada la cara e horadadas las orejas; qué dirán de mí desque me vean esos españoles, ir desta manera?” Díaz, Capítulo XVII.

<sup>43</sup>Significant literary connotations are connected with water imagery, which were seldom lost on Catholics. Moses, the hero of ancient Israel whose name means “drawn from the water,” was first found adrift in the Nile River (Exodus 2); Jonah’s ordeal occurred at sea in the belly of a whale (leviathan) (Jonah 1-2); Christ, born in a manger (watering trough), walked across the water, and sanctified the practice of rebirth through water baptism (Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John in the New Testament).

his *Book of Hours* that he presented at his return. Guerrero, however, metamorphosed as a transculturated creature and heretic. His body markings defied the Christian tenets that stipulated no one “should make any cuttings in the flesh . . . nor print any marks” on the body.<sup>44</sup> His name, too, symbolized defiance—Guerrero, the warrior.<sup>45</sup>

This and other imagery that will be discussed in subsequent chapters makes Aguilar’s tale something much more than a simple story. It was shrouded in contemporary mythological conventions. The duality of the protagonist (Aguilar) and antagonist (Guerrero) is a common literary motif. We must therefore be skeptical even of Guerrero’s existence considering Aguilar’s tale concerning his companion had no corroboration. Based on what is known, no other Spaniard encountered Guerrero directly. Whether real or imagined, Guerrero’s existence in the minds of the narrators affords insight into the society of that day since his character embodies the subconscious anxieties produced by a Christian’s rejection of Christendom and adoption of paganism. Furthermore, Aguilar’s sympathies were not too contradictory to those of Guerrero. Whereas Gonzalo demonstrated his affection for the captors through rejection of Spanish society, Aguilar, though less radical, compromised his

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<sup>44</sup>Leviticus 19:28.

<sup>45</sup>Accounts vary regarding his real name. One source renders it Gonzalo Araca and possibly Gonzalo Marinero. Landa, 8. We must assume that “Guerrero” is the *nom de guerre* given him by one of the chroniclers or soldiers, or is perhaps a translation from the Maya’s descriptive term as applied to him. Questions regarding his name or even his existence further substantiate my claim that the captivity narratives are not reliable histories despite the authors’ claims of truth.

affections when, according to the chroniclers, he “asked Cortés to give [the Indians] a letter of recommendation, so that if any other Spaniard came to that port they would treat the Indians well and do them no harm.”<sup>46</sup> In the end, both the protagonist and antagonist demonstrated concern for the wellbeing of their former captors—another unifying theme that emerges from the captivity literature.

### 2.2.2 *Juan Ortiz*

The more detailed accounts of Juan Ortiz’s captivity in Florida are recorded in two sixteenth-century chronicles often cited as authorities on the subject. A Portuguese chronicler, described only as the Gentleman of Elvas, penned one. As an eyewitness to the expedition, he went on to chronicle Hernando De Soto’s exploration through Florida and the lower Mississippi Valley in 1539. Many experts speculate that he was actually Alvaro Fernandez.<sup>47</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, authored the second and perhaps more popular narrative of Ortiz’s captivity in *La Florida del Inca* (1605).<sup>48</sup> Garcilaso, who was a first generation mestizo from the Peruvian province of Cuzco, constructed his secondary account from conversations he had with members of the De Soto expedition decades after the fact.

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<sup>46</sup>Díaz, Capítulo XVIII.

<sup>47</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, *The Narrative of the Expedition of Hernando De Soto, By the Gentleman of Elvas*, T. Hayes Lewis, ed., in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528-1543* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1953).

<sup>48</sup>This study references the 1605 publication that has been reprinted from the original by Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida del Inca* (Madrid: Fundacion Universitaria Española, 1982).

According to these two narratives, De Soto's men were not long ashore when they spotted a "Christian, naked and sun-burnt, his arms tattooed after their manner, and he in no respect differing from them."<sup>49</sup> When rescued by De Soto's party, the long lost Christian related his ordeal that stretched back to 1527, twelve years prior to the 1539 De Soto expedition. Ortiz was captured while searching for the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition (made famous by Cabeza de Vaca), which had disappeared following explorations along the Floridian Gulf Coast in 1527. According to sources, Indians lured Ortiz and another man to shore using a letter supposedly left by Narváez. The Indians then subdued and subjected Ortiz and his companion to cruel tortures that claimed the life of the latter, but when Ortiz was about to be roasted alive, the daughter of the Indian *cacique* (chief), Hirrihigua, intervened to keep Ortiz as a slave.<sup>50</sup> While in captivity, Ortiz endured numerous hardships and was marked for sacrifice when the women again intervened and helped Ortiz escape to another tribe of Indians whose *cacique*, Mucozo, was more welcoming, thanks to Ortiz's reputation as a skillful hunter.

Mucozo purportedly facilitated Ortiz's repatriation to the Spaniards following De Soto's landfall. Interestingly, Ortiz showed reluctance—"the captive, thinking himself jested with, as he had supposed himself to be before, [told Mucozo] that his thoughts no longer dwelt on his people, and that his only wish now was to serve

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<sup>49</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, 149.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 151.

[Mucozo].”<sup>51</sup> Again the familiar theme that runs through the early captivity genre is repeated: Ortiz reportedly implored De Soto to show mercy for Mucozo and his tribe, asking De Soto not to “slay these people; they have given me my life!”<sup>52</sup> De Soto responded to Mucozo that “in freeing and sending [me] the Christian, [Mucozo] had done no more than keep his word and preserve his honor . . . holding him henceforth to be a brother . . . [and would] favor him.”<sup>53</sup> Ortiz went on to become a guide and interpreter for De Soto throughout the remainder of the latter’s explorations and deprivations from Florida to the Mississippi River (De Soto enslaved and killed many Indians during the journey).

Garcilaso de la Vega, the Inca, authored the other version of Ortiz’s captivity. Scholars have described Garcilaso as “De Soto’s Homer,” whose subjective account of the expedition can be compared to *The Odyssey* or *El Cid*.<sup>54</sup> Analysis of Garcilaso’s rendition of Juan Ortiz’s tale reveals classic use of heroic symbolism similar to those of other captivity narratives. Ortiz embarked upon his ordeal from the sea. Like all heroic figures separated from their home, he underwent harrowing trials and tortures, narrowly escaping death. A young Indian girl—the maiden—intervened on his behalf, and in the midst of his tribulation, Ortiz cried out to his

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<sup>51</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, 152.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>54</sup>Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight, Jr. and Edward C. Moore, eds. *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543, Vol. II* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), ix – x.

God, who responded by assisting Ortiz in a feat that his captors considered nothing less than a miracle. With this miracle, Ortiz eventually won favor with the Indians who adopted him as one of their own but then allowed his return to his countrymen in hopes he could obtain for them the favor of the advancing Spaniards.

Garcilaso most likely had various reasons for detailing Ortiz's captivity with such artistry. It is noteworthy to point out here that Garcilaso likely identified with Ortiz. As a mestizo who lived in Spain, Garcilaso existed on the margins of that society and thus found in Ortiz a kindred spirit. In one passage, Garcilaso told how the Indians rebuked Ortiz as being "neither Spaniard nor [Indian] warrior."<sup>55</sup> Such ambiguity was not lost on an author who was neither entirely Spaniard nor Indian, but who longed to be accepted as both. This sentiment would be shared by millions of Latinos, eventually, and later found expression in Latin American literature.

### 2.3 Captivity Legends

Archival manuscripts and published sixteenth-century Spanish chronicles of the various American expeditions contain many references to Spaniards, African slaves, and others who either willingly fled into the wilderness to live with the natives or who became captives and never returned.<sup>56</sup> A few who did return wrote

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<sup>55</sup>“ . . . que no era Epañol, ni hombre de guerra.” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 40.

<sup>56</sup>The very first defection occurred during Columbus's second voyage in 1493 when Miguel Díaz and several others escaped punishment for serious crimes by running away to live with the Indians of Santo Domingo. See Washington Irving, *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, Volume 2 (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1828), 117.

brief accounts of their captivities, only to have some official file them away in a morass of forgotten bureaucratic files that hid the individuals and their sagas from historical memory for several generations. Two notable examples include Fray Juan Falcón and Diego de Medina, both of whom endured several years of captivity in Chile during the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>57</sup>

We can only speculate with regards to why so many who returned, like Falcón and Medina, failed to publish their accounts, yet more understandable is the silence of those who never returned. The defectors fled to pre-literate societies, and those captives held against their will who could never escape would have had no opportunity to write even if they wished. For all practical purposes, they became lost to history and contemporaries. English colonists referred to their lost compatriots as the “unredeemed captives”—unredeemed in the Puritanical sense where the Christian soul was lost to, corrupted by, and physically and spiritually scarred by the wilderness of the “red devils.”<sup>58</sup> For Puritanical Christians, devils and demons had to be expunged from society. The Spaniards, however, exhibited different attitudes that viewed Indians as potential subjects. Redemption simply required conversion. In Columbus’s assessment:

they were a people to be converted and won to our holy faith by love and friendship rather than by force. . . . They should be good servants

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<sup>57</sup>Fray Juan Falcón, “Declaración,” 18 de Abril 1614, AGI; Diego de Medina, “Declaración,” 1615, AGI; both accessed from Portal de Archivos Españoles at <http://pares.mcu.es/>; Internet.

<sup>58</sup>See the primary account of John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (Bedford: Applewood Books, reprinted from the 1853 edition).

and very intelligent, for I have observed that they repeat everything that is said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, for they appear to me to have no religion.<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, Columbus's society reviled those who opted for cohabitation with the Indians. Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán expressed contempt for those Spanish captives who "live among the Indians by choice, following their ways and abandoning themselves to the same vices and sloth, to the forgetting of their Christian upbringing."<sup>60</sup> Núñez's attitude accentuates contemporary perceptions that the defectors showed a "rejection of civilization and its rationality," something exceptionally important to the Spaniards; thereby the captives "abandon[ed] their Euro-American civility and their very Spanish-ness."<sup>61</sup> Because contemporaries considered their lost captives as heretics, it is more understandable why the society wasted so little ink on their memory. Furthermore, the defections served to critique a society considered superior to others and that was not prepared to

Although forgotten by the Iberians, many of the "unredeemed" captives emerged as mythical heroes for later generations. Their initiation and assimilation into New World cultures redefined identities later embraced by the post-colonial Latin American societies. Chief among these Latin American heroes was Gonzalo

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<sup>59</sup>Christopher Columbus, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus, Being his Own Log Book and Dispatches*, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 55 – 56. See also Gilmour, "Imagined Bodies and Imagined Selves," Chapter 3 and 4, which offers an excellent description and comparison of Spanish, French, and English attitudes regarding the Indians.

<sup>60</sup>Francisco Núñez de Pineda Y Bascuñán, *The Happy Captive (Cautiverio Feliz)*, trans. by William C. Atkinson. (London: Folio Society, 1977), 123.

<sup>61</sup>Gilmour, 253.



Guerrero, who attained status as a brave warrior that helped his adopted people resist Cortés and the other Spanish invaders. For modern Mexico he came to symbolize *mestizaje*, the idea of racial and cultural miscegenation that produced the mestizo populations and modern Latino cultures. Sufficient evidence exists to assess how these lost captives are remembered by modern Latin America. Legends emerged from oral traditions that some modern Latino authors transcribed to print. Two of the more prominent include the legends of Francisco del Puerto and Lucía Miranda. Both had some basis in fact, although it is very difficult to piece together the history from original accounts. Francisco del Puerto was supposedly a young cabin boy who accompanied the Juan de Solís expedition (c. 1516) to the Rio de la Plata. The attempt to colonize the area ended in tragedy for Solís and in captivity for the young boy. About ten years later, Sebastian Cabot made another attempt at colonizing the same area where he supposedly discovered and rescued Francisco, taking him back to Spain. At the same time, Lucía Miranda was among Cabot's group who stayed behind to establish the first colony that ended when the Guarani Indians descended upon it and either killed or captured the inhabitants. Their treatment in twentieth-century popular fiction and scholarship demonstrates how the legends served Latin American culture. Their modern depiction juxtaposed to the sixteenth-century narratives affords a remarkable comparison that demonstrates how the mythology of captivity persists.

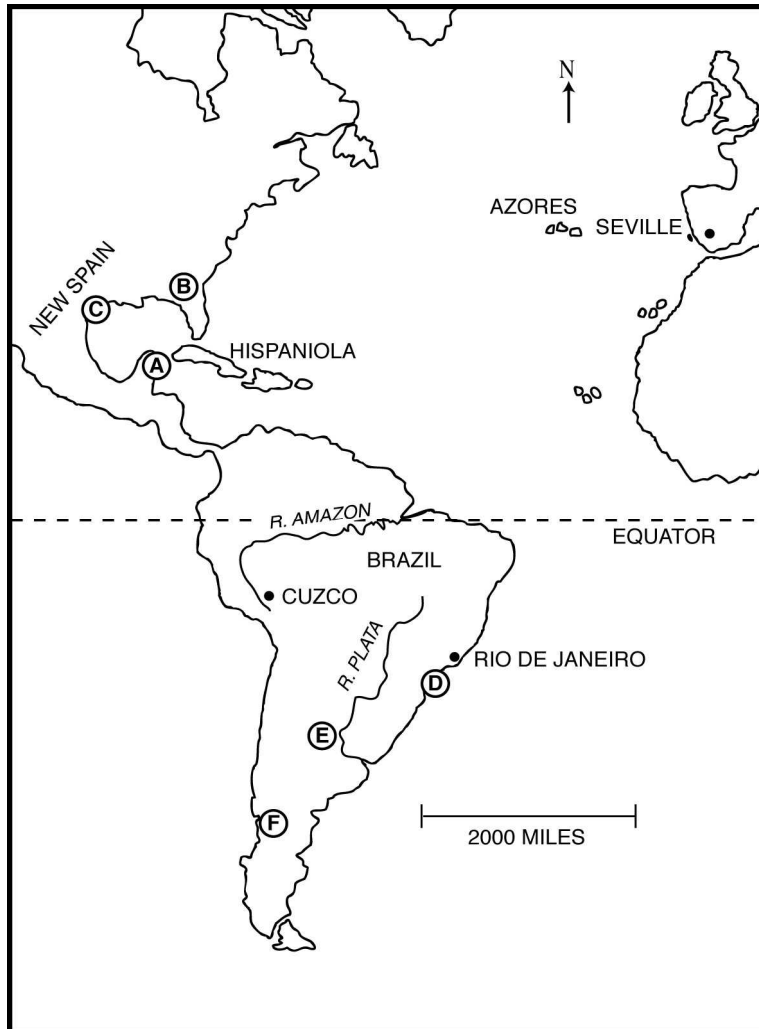


Figure 2.1 Map depicting the sites of captivity. A. Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero; B. Juan Ortiz, Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda, and Fray Francisco de Avila; C. Álvar Núñez de Cabeza de Vaca; D. Hans Stade; E. Francisco del Puerto and Lucía Miranda; F. Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CAPTIVITY AND SOCIETY

The captivity narrators presented their stories as factual accounts of individuals taken against their wills by savage peoples living in an exotic world. The narratives are highly subjective and rely on ritualized structure and symbolic imagery. The veracity of much of the content is thus suspect, which then prompts scholars to question its historical usefulness. Nonetheless, complete rejection would prove tragic. Although their *histoire événementielle* (history of events) may be inchoate, the narratives are in fact rich sources for *histoire des mentalités* (history of mentalities). They offer a glimpse into the psycho-social complex of the transatlantic world created when the Iberians (and those who followed) fanned across the Americas, and the historian's task is to translate that glimpse in order to give it meaning to the modern world.

Interpretation requires the historian to turn to what Tzvetan Todorov described as philological exegesis, which requires historical extrapolation to arrive at an understanding of textual symbols.<sup>1</sup> Lévi-Strauss, structuralism's pioneer, argued that history was of secondary importance to structural anthropology. The concept, however, met with criticism from Lucien Febvre, the force behind *histoire des*

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<sup>1</sup>Todorov, Tzvetan, *Symbolism and Interpretation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 149.

*mentalités*. Febvre insisted that any analysis of ideas absent their historical context “distorted the psychological reality” by over generalizing.<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this study, I have incorporated the methods of Todorov and Febvre considering that my goal has been to explain only those early modern mentalities affecting and affected by the captivities. Lévi-Strauss’s methodology was more concerned with finding the invariable structures common to all cultures. Since we are only concerned with a microscopic specimen of the whole, it is thus necessary to situate the captivity narratives within their proper historical context to connect the textual imagery with the larger societal concepts that are conveyed.

When considering the historical situation, the ritualized structure and symbolic imagery that suffuses the captivity narratives connotes a rite of passage and a subconscious unease with the ultimate meanings of New World contact and its relation to Western identity.<sup>3</sup> Of more immediate and practical concern to the first-person narrators was their desire for acceptance by Christian society. Similar to the violent rite of separation and initiation experienced when taken captive by Indians, the captives’ conscious act of narration constituted a less traumatic rite of passage back to Christendom. Although less violent, the return to Western society proved no less difficult because of the existing prejudices. Without an understanding of these larger societal attitudes that framed the epoch, the captivity narratives lose their

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<sup>2</sup>Revel and Hunt, eds., *Histories*, 31.

<sup>3</sup>For analysis of ritual and its relation to the individual, see Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*. See De Certeau, *The Writing of History* for discussion of identity and its relation to the other.

ultimate relevance as historical works. The narratives are indeed the products of individuals, but the authors were not islands. Their linguistic/narrative structure could only have meaning if shared by the larger society. Through their ritual and imagery, the narratives communicated to the Iberian and larger European audiences subconscious anxieties that stemmed from contact with the alien other.

Three major streams of consciousness are evident in the authors of the narratives: anxiety over contact with the other; identity; identification with the other; and the desire for acceptance by Christian society despite the captive's sojourn with the alien other. To demonstrate the importance of these subconscious streams, it is necessary to consider the larger political and cultural realities of early modern Iberia. First, the idea of captivity itself had long been framed by centuries of conflict (712 – 1492) that resulted in thousands of Christian subjects becoming captives of the Moors. Scholars have argued that the enduring fear of possible capture produced intense distrust of foreigners and of those captives who were possibly tainted by the experiences.<sup>4</sup> Second, contextualizing the narratives within the larger literary trends of heroic romances reveals the mythical framework that informed the sixteenth-century mind. Third, the mythological conventions helped articulate identity and what it meant to be either Christian or Spanish, or both. Having lived and cooperated with, and having acquired the physical and linguistic characteristics of their Indian captors, the captives discovered that their countrymen questioned their loyalties. If they were to reintegrate to western society, then the captives had to convincingly

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<sup>4</sup>Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age*, xxv.

prove their enduring loyalty to Christianity. In a society where institutions such as the Inquisition policed faith and blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*), conformity proved a question of life and death.

### 3.1 Captivity in Iberia

Whereas the New World, like Utopia or Eden or so many other places of fable, existed on the fringes of imagination for most Europeans, the harsh realities of medieval life mandated adherence to a worldview where the heavens and all life revolved around Christendom. When those who traversed the Atlantic Ocean happened across continents and peoples no where referenced in the Bible or allowed for in accepted conceptualizations of geographical spaces (see T-O Map, Figure 3.1), the effect had to be momentous and possibly threatening.<sup>5</sup> New realities began to dawn, but only slowly and only after intense societal upheavals. Those captured and assimilated by the exotic cultures were among the very first forced by necessity to negotiate the imagined with the real considering their experiences occurred in mythic

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<sup>5</sup>The contemporary T-O (*orbis terrarum*) maps adeptly portray the medieval concept of the earth's geographical limitations based on *a priori* knowledge derived from scripture. The circular map is divided into three spherical regions (the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe) associated with the three sons of Noah. In many T – O maps, Jerusalem, the birthplace of Christianity, rests at the exact center. The Christian symbolisms are evident. The tripartite map represents the trinity and the three sons of Noah who supposedly repopulated the earth. Oftentimes, the face of Christ was superimposed, thus allowing the circular disc to serve as a halo. The formation of the “T” serves as a depiction of the crucifix. Prior to acceptance of Galileo's heliocentric model, it was believed that all the heavenly bodies further revolved around Jerusalem, obviously located at the center of the universe. The T-O maps help us to understand the shock Europeans must have felt when the New World discoveries called into question this long-lived world view. For further discussion, see Norman J. W. Thrower, *Maps and Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 40 – 42.

zones existing outside the known earthly realms as depicted in medieval maps. In the process their mental awareness expanded beyond the limitations of most Europeans whose only understanding of captivity and its effects had been preconditioned by centuries of warfare with Islam within the known world.

For the most part, the majority of the captives and chroniclers came from the Iberian Peninsula and/or the Spanish realms, thus were they heavily influenced by Spanish culture.<sup>6</sup> Hans Stade is the only exception, as he arrived from the German province of Hesse, but shipped to the Americas with the Iberians. Although German, Hans Stade shared a common Christian (Catholic) and classical heritage with his Iberian counterparts. Furthermore, Germany (the Holy Roman Empire) was, at the time, politically unified with Spain under the rule of Carlos V (Carlos I in Spain), Holy Roman Emperor, King of Spain, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact dates of their respective births, the captives and their chroniclers lived between 1490 and 1660, truly a momentous epoch in European and, particularly, Spanish history given the emergence of the Spanish state with the expulsion of the Moors, the New World discoveries, the Reformation, and humanist influences. Based on its treatment in popular literary and ecclesiastical works, the reality of foreign captivity had been firmly planted in Iberian conscious thanks to the long struggle between Christendom and Islam. From the earliest

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<sup>6</sup>A majority of Iberian captives came from the coastal regions of Andalusia in southern Spain (see Figure 3.2). The geographical origin of the captives' chroniclers is also of importance since the captivity narratives mimic certain patterns of heroic mythology that would have been common lore for most anyone born in the Iberian sphere of influence.



Figure 3.1 T-O Map depicted in the *Etymologiae* of Isadore of Seville (1472).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Isadore of Seville, *Etymologiae* (Augsburg: Guntherus Zainer, 1472), Book XIV.



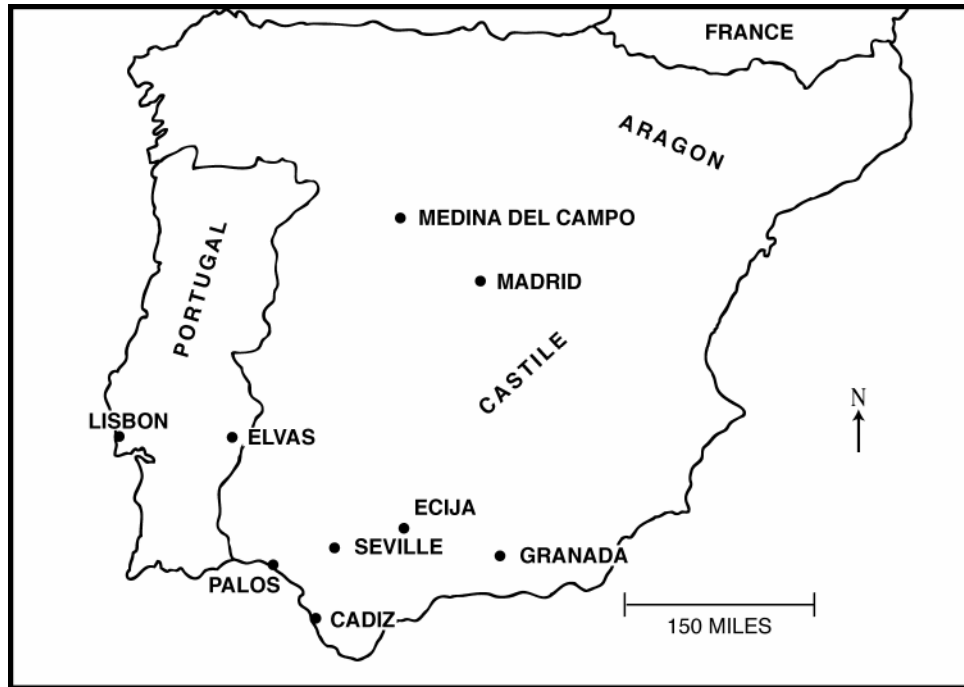


Figure 3.2 The Iberian Peninsula. Depicted are various geographical points of origin of several captives and their chroniclers: Jerónimo de Aguilar (Ecija); Gonzalo Guerrero (Palos); Juan Ortiz (Seville); Cabeza de Vaca (Cadiz); Bernal Díaz del Castillo (Medina del Campo); Gentleman of Elvas (Elvas). A secondary chronicler of the captivity of Juan Ortiz, Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, was born in the Peruvian city of Cuzco, which is depicted in Figure 2.1.

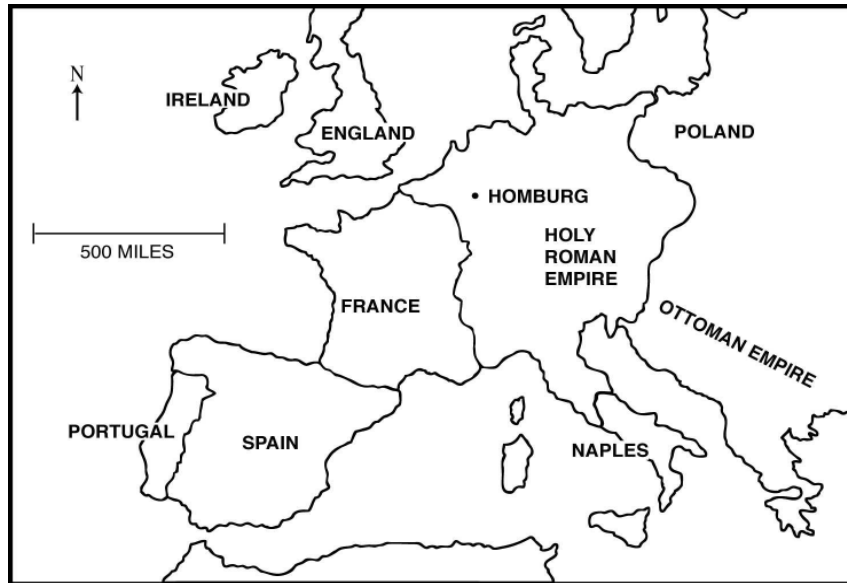


Figure 3.3 Map of Europe. Hans Stade's home was Homburg (today Bad Homburg, near Frankfurt, Germany). At the time, the Holy Roman Empire and Spain united in a loose confederation under the rule of Carlos V, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella and who was at once Holy Roman Emperor and the king of Spain from 1516 to 1556.

Muslim invasions during the eighth century, the taking and ransoming of soldiers and civilians on both sides of the religious divide became a way of life.<sup>8</sup> By the thirteenth century, the extent of Christian captivity had grown to such proportions as to require the creation of two religious orders, the Mercedarians and Trinitarians, whose task it was to track and rescue as many Christians as possible from the Infidels.<sup>9</sup> Although the Catholic monarchs ousted the final remnants of Islam from the peninsula in 1492, the threat of captivity continued for at least two more centuries thanks in part to the corsairing activities of the North African Muslims, who found that Christians put monetary value on their subjects.<sup>10</sup> This long history of Muslim captivity would have significant psychological affects as reflected in Iberian literature and attitudes toward foreigners.

Scholars have given some attention to medieval/early modern Iberian and North African captivity and its relationship to the ransoming orders. José María Ramos y Loscertales, from all accounts, published the first significant study of

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<sup>8</sup>Three works regarding Spanish/Islamic captivity inform this study: Bruce Taylor, *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age* (Boston: Brill, 2000); James Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986); Jarbel Rodriguez, *Captives and their Saviors in the Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007); and Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age*.

<sup>9</sup>Brodman, 11.

<sup>10</sup>Friedman, xxv.

medieval captivity in 1915.<sup>11</sup> James Brodman would later become an authority on the subject following his groundbreaking *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain* succeeded by Bruce Taylor's *Structures of Reform*, Ellen Friedman's *Spanish Captives in North Africa*, and Jarbel Rodriguez's *Captives and their Saviors*. These studies portray frontier populations at constant risk of looting and slaving raids by Muslim corsairs. The experts differ, however, regarding the psychological effects. Brodman, for instance, concluded that "so persistent and ordinary was this problem that individual instances of capture rarely elicited much notice beyond allusions in chronicles and wills."<sup>12</sup> To the contrary, Friedman found that the long enduring anxiety led to a siege mentality among the Spaniards and even contributed to their xenophobia by making them wary of foreign cultures and religions.<sup>13</sup> The attitudes inevitably affected Iberian perceptions of both the New World cultures and those who became captive to them.

The purpose here is not to draw specific comparisons between Old and New World captivity. Obviously, similarities existed as did differences. Of most importance to this study is an analysis of the long term psycho-social toll exacted on contemporary society and how it may have affected transatlantic attitudes. Fear of capture permeated Iberian society. Captivity or even the threat of captivity produced

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<sup>11</sup>José María Ramos y Loscertales, *El cautiverio en la Corona de Aragon durante los siglos XIII, XIV y XV* (Saragosa, 1915).

<sup>12</sup>Brodman, 1.

<sup>13</sup>Friedman, xxv.

intense insecurities among the populations living along the coastal regions and Christian/Muslim frontiers of Iberia. Friedman cited one official from the city of Gibraltar who, as late as 1614, expressed to King Felipe III that the people could never rest from the fear of being captured: “nether at night nor during the day, neither in bed nor at mealtimes, neither in the fields nor in our homes.”<sup>14</sup> The colonial populations living along the Araucanian frontier in South America expressed similar sentiments as the numbers of those taken captive by the Araucanian Indians soared to the hundreds and possibly thousands.

Although the number of New World captives paled in comparison to that of the Old, the threat was nonetheless real for those colonists, prelates and soldiers living, fighting, working, and proselytizing in the Americas. There they discovered Indians took captives for slightly different reasons than did the Muslims. Captives provided Indians with sacrificial bodies, slaves, or possible replacements for those Indian warriors lost in battle.<sup>15</sup> Although Christian slaves proved useful to Muslims, the latter discovered economic advantage in the former considering the lofty ransoms often exacted for the Christian’s release.<sup>16</sup> Assimilation and adoption of captives was never a high priority and often required that the Christian convert to Islam. Indians did not place the same importance on religious beliefs or bloodline. Like the

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<sup>14</sup>Friedman, xvii.

<sup>15</sup>For an account of some possible motivations, refer to Nathaniel Knowles, “The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82, no. 2 (March 22, 1940): 151 – 225.

<sup>16</sup>Friedman, 55 – 59.

Muslims, however, Indians came to find economic advantage in their Christian captives. After about 1540 as the Indians came to better understand the motives of the Spaniards, Christian captives often served as bartering tools to extract from the Spaniards those commodities that Indians found useful. Hans Stade's narrative was the first to depict this change. When a French trading party bartered with Stade's Tupi captors, he remarked how he begged for freedom only to have it denied since his master "wanted to have many goods" for him.<sup>17</sup>

Several scholars have argued the connection between captivity and the creation of frontier economies in the Americas, which may be compared to that of the Christian/Muslim frontier in Iberia. Although American captives increasingly acquired economic value to the Indian captors over the course of the sixteenth century, the mythos of captivity nonetheless persisted.<sup>18</sup> As late as 1650, Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán penned *Cautiverio Feliz* (*The Happy Captive*) with reliance on traditional mythological ritual and imagery, although within his narrative he clearly denoted the practical economic value that the Indians placed on his captivity. Despite the admiration that Núñez claimed to garner from his Araucanian captors, he was not freed until the Spaniards offered ransom in the form of goods and

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<sup>17</sup>Stade, *The True History of Hans Stade's Captivity among the wild tribes of Brazil*, 94.

<sup>18</sup>For the economic aspect, refer to Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, Operé, *Historias de la Frontera: El Cautiverio en la America Hispanica*, and Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*.

an exchange of Indians taken captive by the Spaniards.<sup>19</sup> It is this persistence of mythological themes that suggests captivity acquired existential dimensions which could only be understood by the captives, their chroniclers, and countrymen in terms of its mythical language that related it to more familiar images.

Friedman suggests that North African captivity carried with it similar psychological baggage that altered Spanish perceptions of life. She depicts its pervasiveness throughout Spanish society by citing the reminders of captivity—chains and shackles—that hung in public buildings and churches, the campaigns to raise funds for ransoming parleys, the processions of returning captives, and those who were rescued left to beg in the streets.<sup>20</sup> Literature also served to disseminate the realities of North African captivity and much of this was owed to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Spain's greatest novelist and himself a captive amongst the Muslims. While the American captives never found so great a literary master to preserve their ordeals in the popular mind, there can be little doubt that the same literary trends that influenced Cervantes similarly conditioned the narratives that emanated from the New World.

### 3.2 Iberian Literary Traditions

The captives and their chroniclers would have listened to and read countless tales of heroic deeds where the lines often blurred between fact and fiction. They lived at a time of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries when the Golden

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<sup>19</sup>Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, *Cautiverio feliz*, 118, 130, 141.

<sup>20</sup>Friedman, 166.

Age of literature dawned, characterized by mythological themes, heroic epics, and mystical prose.<sup>21</sup> The uniqueness of the Spanish genres is owed to its exaggerated style of Baroque literature that had originated in the Italian Renaissance and borrowed its imagery from Ancient Greek and Roman myths. The Spanish literary Renaissance began during the first half of the fifteenth century thanks in part to Juan de Mena, the first Spaniard to translate Homer and thus introduce to Iberia the heroic epic, which would be masterfully imitated over the next two centuries. Spanish Humanists like Antonio de Nebrija, father of Spanish philology, also assisted in the revival of interests in classical studies.<sup>22</sup> While Humanism led Germans and other European societies toward Reformation and Enlightenment, it fostered tradition and counter-reformation in the Iberian Peninsula that attempted to shield its population

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<sup>21</sup>Several studies of Spanish literature inform this treatise. Irving A. Leonard is among those who have noted the Spanish tendency to blur the lines between fact and fiction. See *Books of the Brave: Being an Account of Books and of Men in the Spanish Conquest and Settlement of the Sixteenth-Century* (New York: Gordian Press, 1964), 14. Leonard pioneered the study of the Iberian transatlantic book trade of the sixteenth century. Leonard's scholarship goes far in helping to substantiate the influence that mythology wielded over several generations of Iberians. Additional studies include Linton Lomas Barrett, ed., *Five Centuries of Spanish Literature: From the 'Cid' Through the Golden Age* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1962); R. O. Jones, *A Literary History of Spain: The Golden Age Prose and Poetry, The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1971); James R. Stamm, *A Short History of Spanish Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

<sup>22</sup>Nebrija produced the first text for Spanish (Castilian) grammar. A facsimile reproduction can be found in Antonio de Nebrija, *Gramatica Castellana: Texto establecido sobre la ed. <<princes>> de 1492*, eds. Pascual Galindo Romeo y Luis Ortiz Muñoz (Madrid: Gráficas Reunidas, 1946), CSWR.



from further divisiveness, especially considering that the Catholic monarchs sought political unification.<sup>23</sup>

The captives and their chroniclers were born into European societies undergoing rapid change at the dawn of the Early Modern Age (c. 1500). The rudiments of the Spanish nation-state emerged from the competing provincialisms and political chaos of the Middle Ages with a confederation of the two major Christian strongholds of Iberia—Castile and Aragon. Soon after the 1469 marriage of the two Catholic monarchs, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, the final assault against the remaining Moors began, resulting in the defeat of the last Muslim kingdom of Granada in 1492. This centuries-long *Reconquista* (712 – 1492), which pitted not only Christendom against Islam, but eventually, Christendom against

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<sup>23</sup>European interpretations of classical Greek and Roman texts led the Humanists to revive the studies of art, literature, science, and philosophy. They rejected the traditional modes of knowledge through faith and divine revelation, and embraced rationalism, empiricism, and a common morality. Renaissance Humanism affected the political, literary, and social development of most European societies. Luther's boldness, for example, was owed in part to the premier Humanistic proselytizer Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch Augustinian monk who courageously questioned many practices of the Catholic hierarchy. Because the Church placed blame for the Protestant revolt on the Humanists, Pope Paul IV, in his counter-reformation efforts, banned most of the Humanist works. Furthermore, thanks to the Lutheran movement, Iberian Humanism, introduced by Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros during the first decade of the sixteenth century, was short lived. For a general history, see Wilson H. Coates, Hayden V. White and J. Salwyn Schapiro, *The Emergence of Liberal Humanism: An Intellectual History of Western Europe* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

Judaism, honed the Iberian character, and greatly influenced politics, culture, economy, and its literary and mythical traditions.<sup>24</sup>

Not long after the Iberian expulsion of the Moors in 1492, Christopher Columbus happened across the New World. What he had hoped to be a shorter route to the trade markets of Asia actually proved to be a voyage to uncharted continents. In a short period of time after Columbus's initial voyages, the Iberians, propelled by the momentum initiated by the *Reconquista*, carried their Catholic and militaristic zeal to the New World and created a vast empire. Scholars have argued whether Spanish encroachment in the New World was, in fact, the historical consequence of a militaristic and missionary spirit ingrained by centuries of cultural-conflict between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish enclaves.<sup>25</sup> The power struggle, along with the cross cultural contact between the three, molded a unique society that developed a world-view amalgam of Roman Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, and classical traditions. To this day, Spanish society exhibits the assimilative characteristics in language, architecture, and literature, which it eventually transplanted to Latin America.

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<sup>24</sup>Norman Roth, "The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492," *The Historian* 55, no. 1 (1992): 17-30; Henry Kamen, *Spain, 1469-1714: A Society in Conflict*.

<sup>25</sup>J. H. Parry examines the merits of this argument in *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery Exploration and Settlement, 1450 to 1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 22 – 3. D. W. Meinig continues with Parry's theme in *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Vol. 1, Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

Golden Age literature largely grounded the Iberians during this time of unrest and rapid change. Its evolution stretched back to approximately the year A.D. 1200, when “The Poem of the Cid” was anonymously introduced into the popular literature.<sup>26</sup> “The Cid” codified, for the first time, the new Castilian dialect, thus giving literary birth to the Spanish language. Its verse defined an emerging “national” character, forged during the intense contest for Iberian domination between the Christian Spaniards and Islamic Moors. The Cid served as the *nom de guerre* of Ruy Diaz, who devoted his life to the struggle against Islam, although he in fact had originally fought on the side of the Moors. In helping to defeat his Moorish rivals on numerous occasions, his countrymen elevated his memory to heroic stature. Scholars attribute the poem’s imagery more to mythology than to historicity, and thus “The Cid” illustrates the first expression of the heroic aspirations of a people.<sup>27</sup>

The literary trends initiated by “The Cid” blossomed over the course of the thirteenth century and resulted in the *Grande e general estoria*, a compilation of historical literature from antiquity to contemporary times edited and translated by Alfonso X de Borgoña, el Sabio, in 1272. For the first time, Iberian society could read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which was among the first to have introduced classical

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<sup>26</sup>Cesáreo Bandera Gómez, *El “Poema de mio Cid:” poesía, historia, mito* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1969).

<sup>27</sup>George Ticknor, *A History of Spanish Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965), 13. See also Richard Fletcher, *The Quest for El Cid* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

mythology to western Europeans.<sup>28</sup> By about 1530, the poet Juan Boscán translated to Castilian the Italian masterworks of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, which opened a plethora of artistic possibilities for the Iberians that ultimately influenced Cervantes.

The Iberian militaristic character forged out of the conflict with Islam, coupled with the predominant literary modes of classical, religious, and secular myths, produced an immense fondness for the heroic epic. Its popularity climaxed with *Amadís de Gaula* during the first half of the sixteenth century when Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo translated into Spanish well known Arthurian legends.<sup>29</sup> The Spanish masterpiece, before the close of the century, would go on to be translated into just about every other European language—Portuguese, German, Italian, French, and English. The first surviving copies of Montalvo's date to 1508, but scholars have found remnants of the *Amadís* tale that date to about 1420 that were most likely used by the author to compose his work.<sup>30</sup> Because of its influence on the generation of the captives, some description of its thematic structure is necessary.

*Amadís* is a lengthy epic characterized by its many interweaving plots and subplots and myriad character developments that orbit its main protagonists, Amadís. His journey, like so many before and after, patterns the archetypical heroic saga

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<sup>28</sup>Isabel Torres, ed. *Rewriting Classical Mythology in the Hispanic Baroque* (United Kingdom: Tamesis, 2007), 8.

<sup>29</sup>Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula* (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, 1991).

<sup>30</sup>Frank Pierce, *Amadís de Gaula* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 18.

where there is a separation, initiation, and a return. His *separation* repeats a familiar pattern in Classical and Christian mythology—he is placed in a chest by his mother, who then sets him afloat on the open sea. Amadís is subsequently rescued and raised by a noble knight. The *initiation* begins once Amadís is himself knighted and betrothed to his beloved, Oriana. To prove his valor and his love, Amadís undertakes Herculean adventures filled with violence, romance, and magic. Amadís eventually *returns* from his quests and marries Oriana, thus fulfilling prophecies of the novel’s priestess.

Other heroic epics enjoyed a wide readership during the early 1500s, but *Amadís* remains representative of the genre and historical sources demonstrate the novel’s influence with the conquistadores.<sup>31</sup> Surviving *registros* (registers) of the House of Trade (Casa de contratación, established 1503) at Seville demonstrate that *Amadís* was among the most popular books among the colonizers.<sup>32</sup> Because of its proliferation in the Indies, Queen Isabel, wife of Carlos I (Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor) who ruled Spain in the King’s absence, issued the following decree in 1531:

I have been informed that many books of fiction in the vernacular which are unrelated to religion such as *Amadís* and others of this sort go to the Indies; since this is bad practice for the Indians and

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<sup>31</sup>Ticknor estimates that other popular works of the *Amadís* genre numbered at least seventy, 227. Furthermore he cites a sixteenth-century historian, Mexia, who claimed that these works of fiction were “read by all and believed by many,” 229.

<sup>32</sup>Registro de Diego de Montoya, in Irving A. Leonard, *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Indies with Some Registros of Shipments of Books to the Spanish Colonies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), 53.

something with which it is not well for them to be concerned or to read, I command you . . . neither to permit nor allow any person at all to take any books of fiction . . . but only those relating to the Christian religion . . .<sup>33</sup>

By the time of Isabel's decree, the *Amadís* novel had already inspired a generation of colonizers. This is somewhat evident when Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Cortes's chronicler, described the march into the Aztec capital in 1519 as thus:

These great towns and cues and buildings rising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadís. Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream. It was not surprising therefore that I should write in this vein. It was all so wonderful that I do not know how to describe this first glimpse of things never heard of, seen, or dreamed of before.<sup>34</sup>

Heroic novels like *Amadís* maintained a transatlantic popularity throughout the sixteenth century. *Registros* of ships bound for the Indies as late as 1596 show that literature such as *El Cid* and *Amadís* remained in high demand by the colonials.<sup>35</sup> The decline of the heroic genre may have started in the mid- sixteenth century with the introduction of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), which introduced the picaresque novel, characterized by its tones of social realism as experienced by the peasant class.<sup>36</sup> Cervantes's classic, *Don Quijote* (1605), proved transitional, however, mocking the romances of chivalry while introducing the form of the first

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<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Leonard, 3.

<sup>34</sup>Díaz, Capítulo LXI.

<sup>35</sup>Leonard, in *Romances of Chivalry*, published a selection of primary *Registros* from the Archivo General de Indias at Seville.

<sup>36</sup>Stamm, 79 – 81.

modern novel.<sup>37</sup> It also heralded a new age in Spanish literature when mythology underwent transformation as Europeans slowly came to terms with increased knowledge that forced a reevaluation of long held beliefs, and that led them to the threshold of the Enlightenment where empiricism replaced Biblical erudition.<sup>38</sup>

While the heroic genre may have undergone a decline toward the latter part of the sixteenth century and definitely by the seventeenth, its influence was paramount during the period of discovery and exploration when our subjects became captives in the New World. During this age, the Iberian penchant for literature blossomed on both sides of the Atlantic, and the market was able to better address the demand thanks to Johannes Gutenberg's printing press invention in the 1440s. Scholars of Golden Age literature have been unable to identify precisely how many copies were reproduced of any one work, but their popularity among a diverse audience is evident through the many references found in the royal decrees, ship registers, and documents issuing from the Americas.

Furthermore, that many of the conquistadores considered their own efforts paralleled the literary mythic adventures is made apparent by Pedro de Casteñeda, a chronicler of the Coronado expedition:

[I do] not write fables like some of the things we read in our day in the books of chivalrous deeds. . . .there are things which have

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<sup>37</sup>Barrett, 208 – 109; Miguel de Cervantes, in the prologue, describes that his novel is an invective against the romances of chivalry—*Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Iztapalapa, D.F.: Real Academia Espanola, 2004).

<sup>38</sup>Regarding the subtle transitions in seventeenth-century Spanish literary mythology, refer to Marcia L. Welles, *Arachne's Tapestry: The Transformation of Myth in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1986).

occurred . . . in these regions, to our own Spaniards, in conquests and skirmishes they have had with the natives, that surpass in wondrous deeds not only the books already mentioned but those which are written about the twelve peers of France.<sup>39</sup>

If the conquistadores qualified as heroes in the minds of their chroniclers, then also would those Spaniards who survived Indian captivity. Garcilaso, el Inca, described *La Florida del Inca*, in which he included Juan Ortiz's tale, as a "history . . . of heroic Spanish cavaliers."<sup>40</sup> Díaz del Castillo repeatedly cited Spanish actions as "heroic deeds."<sup>41</sup> To transform the unimaginable into the comprehensible, to give it mental form and substance, the Iberians had to resort to the familiar; they cast their journeys in the shadows of the great fictional epics of their day, affixing the nominal forms of the hero archetype to their experience. In the process, they justified Spain's imperial objectives through portrayal of the conquistadores' efforts as noble and, as demonstrated by the example of the captives, favored by God.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>“Tiempos leemos en los libros de cavallerias que si no fuese por llevar aquellas fabulas de encantamientos hay cosas el día de hoy acontecidas en estas partes por nuestros españoles en conquistas y rrecuentros habidos con los naturales que sobrepujan en hechos de admiracion no solo a los libros ya dichos sino a los que se escriben de los doce pares de francia. . .” *Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola, Pedro de Casteñeda de Nájera's Narrative, 1560s (copy 1596)* in Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds. *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539 -1542* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 2005), 430 and 489.

<sup>40</sup>“Historia . . . de otros heroicos caballeros Españoles.” Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida del Inca*, title page.

<sup>41</sup>Díaz, Capítulo CLI, CC, CCIII, and CCIV.

<sup>42</sup>The religious imagery leaves little doubt that the narrators drew parallels between captivity ordeals and Christian suffering that resulted in God's favor and deliverance. For example, some scholars have noted the Christ-like portrayals of



While the heroic themes permeated medieval and early modern literature, captivity experiences would also find expression in the fictive web of contemporary sagas. The captivity genre may be traced to the poet Gonzalo de Berceo, who during the thirteenth century composed *Vida de Santo Domingo*.<sup>43</sup> Berceo's subject, Saint Dominick of Silos, gained fame during the Reconquista as a miraculous liberator of Christian slaves. The poet apparently based his narrative on the *Miraculos romancados*, a compilation of seventy miracles attributed to Saint Dominick as told by former captives and recorded by the monks of Silos. During the following years, captivity accounts increased. Friedman compiled a substantive bibliography that demonstrates the profuseness of the genre which obviously influenced Cervantes, who popularized the theme in *Don Quiote de la Mancha*, *Los baños de Argel*, *El trato de Argel*, and *Los cautivos*.<sup>44</sup>

When the accounts of New World captivities began to trickle back to Europe during the sixteenth century, the existing realities and myths surrounding Christian captives had already conditioned the Old World audience for the evolving revelations. While the theme itself was not new, the novelty rested in the exotic setting that found no parallel in European conceptions other than the mythical lands

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Cabeza de Vaca in *La relación*. See Favata and Fernández, ed., *The Account*, 18; Reséndez, *A Land So Strange*, 5.

<sup>43</sup>Gonzalo de Berceo, *La Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Rio Janos, 1978).

<sup>44</sup>George Camamis offers an excellent study of the captivity theme in "El Tema del Cautiverio en la Narrativa del Siglo XVII" (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 1973).

where classical and biblical heroes once ventured.<sup>45</sup> Although touted as “true histories,” the narratives did very little to quell the misperceptions of America and its aboriginal cultures. Considering that the explorers and colonizers themselves had difficulty grasping the ultimate significance of the exotic other, they had little choice other than ensconce the realities in the mythologies of the day. What other metaphor could one cite other than that image that had universal recognition in the culture? As one chronicler surmised, the Spaniards venturing in the New World “surpass[ed] in wondrous deeds” the fables of old.<sup>46</sup>

Understandably, the Euro-Iberian imagination could readily envision the captivity sagas in terms of the familiar myths. The imagery was congruous. The captivity narratives echoed the separation-initiation-return patterns of Amadís’s journey that further replicated classical and biblical sagas. The ordeals began with water imagery—the captives emerged to their fates from the ocean, Amadís from the sea, Moses from the Nile River in Egypt, Jonah from the sea.<sup>47</sup> From this watery

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<sup>45</sup>Cervantes de Salazar offers a survey of biblical and classical ideas regarding the New World. See *Cronica de la Nueva España*, Libro primero, Capítulo I.

<sup>46</sup>Pedro de Casteñeda de Nájera, “Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola, 1560,” in Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539 – 1542* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 2005), 430. Fernando Pizarro y Orellana argued that the actions of the New World adventurers required the same “veneracion” (veneration) as was given the “heroe” (hero) Hercules. See *Varones ilustres del Nuevo Mundo: descubridores, conquistadores, y pacificadores del opulento, dilatado, y poderoso imperio de las Indias occidentales* (Madrid: 1639), 1.

<sup>47</sup>Details of the birth of Moses are found in Exodus 2. The symbolic parallels are apparent—the infant Moses was placed in an “ark of bulrushes” and floated

passage, the heroes went on to endure incomprehensible trials and tribulations where the hero was strengthened by the deity and miraculously preserved despite the imminence of death. God spared Hans Stade from cannibalistic consumption and Juan Ortiz from torture just as he preserved the ancient Hebrews and biblical heroes in their moments of peril. This initiation of the hero was followed by the return where the fact of the rescue itself testified to the miracles. Faith was strengthened, the prevailing myth preserved.<sup>48</sup>

While New World realities became obfuscated by Old World myths, the gravity of the situation was not lost on the captives. Of paramount importance were practical concerns associated with day-to-day survival. Ideas of heroics were most likely of little relevance. Once emancipated, however, the method and manner of relating the tale to the rest of the world took on greater importance. When the captives returned, no doubt they reeled from the reactions of their compatriots, who could not recognize the captives as ever having been Europeans, much less Spanish. Cabeza de Vaca's synopsis of his reunion is exemplary: ". . . I caught up with four Christians on horse back who were quite perturbed to see me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians. They looked at me for a long time, so astonished that

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down the river (Exodus 2:3); even the infant, Christ, was placed in a manger, or watering trough (Luke 2:7). Water imagery is everywhere present in the Bible—Noah and the flood (Genesis 6); Jonah and the whale (Book of Jonah); Jesus walks on water (Matthew 14:25). That the captives were all delivered into captivity following a sea voyage or shipwreck coincides nicely with the well known biblical and secular imagery.

<sup>48</sup>Raglan, 189 – 190.

they could not speak or ask me questions.”<sup>49</sup> The captives thus confronted a new imperative—convince the rescuers that, despite their appearance, they (the captives) remained faithful Christians and loyal subjects regardless of the long duration with the savages. They well understood that, given the pressures to conform to societal conventions, those who deviated from the norm risked being ostracized and, in some cases, condemned as heretics.

### 3.3 Societal Imperatives

The society to which the captives returned had not changed much from when they separated from it. Nonetheless, sixteenth-century Europe was experiencing calamitous change brought about in part by the shift from feudalism to mercantilism,

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<sup>49</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, Capítulo treinta y tres. In *A Land So Strange*, page 216, Reséndez describes how that once the initial shock faded, colonial officials welcomed Cabeza de Vaca and his small party with festivities, and that their tales spurred another wave of conquests to the north of Nueva España. Similarly, according to Cervantes de Salazar’s *Cronica*, Capítulo XXVI and XXVII, Cortés and his men warmly welcomed Aguilar with festivities although he looked like an Indian. The scenes remind of those that played out in Spain when ransomed captives, returning from their Muslim enslavers, participated in religious festivities and processions through various towns (see Friedman, 163). The processions served as a rite of passage for the captives and as an important fund raising opportunity for the ransoming orders. In the case of Cabeza de Vaca and Aguilar, before the celebrations commenced, the soldiers eyed the captives with suspicion. Cabeza de Vaca confessed to being held under guard by the Spaniards until they reached the town of San Miguel de Culiacán. According to Cervantes de Salazar, Cortés’s soldiers threatened Aguilar with a sword and Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, described how De Soto’s men nearly killed Juan Ortiz before he communicated his Christian origins by sign language. I maintain that Cabeza de Vaca and the other captives who authored their narrative did so, in part, to win acceptance and recognition by the larger society. They crafted their tale in such manner as to suggest that their return was orchestrated by God, who used them as he had other heroic figures for a greater purpose. We know that Cabeza de Vaca’s official reports of his captivity are partly responsible for securing favor from the Crown, and that Cabeza de Vaca also hoped to profit from the publication of the narrative. See Favata and Fernández, eds., *The Account*, 13, 26.

the emergence of nation-states out of feudal provincialism, and the Protestant Reformation, fueled in part by Renaissance humanism, that threatened the monopoly of Catholicism over Europe's spiritual and political affairs. Each European society exhibited its own unique response to the dynamics. English society, for example, became engulfed in turmoil for much of the century as Protestant and Catholic powerbrokers maneuvered against one another. The scene repeated itself across the continent, but in some societies such as Spain, the threats provoked an intense effort to shield the peninsula from foreign influences and to cling to tradition. In the process, the Spanish Crown sought to revive and strengthen existing bulwarks that had long proved effective in promoting subservience and solidarity—the Inquisition and its *raison d'être*, Catholicism. When returning from captivity, the individuals would have had to confront these religious imperatives that demanded faithfulness and adherence to a dogma defined by a Church and Crown very unforgiving of nonconformists and those tainted by infidels.

The Catholic Inquisition, an ecclesiastical tribunal mandated to curtail heresy, originated in 1184 during the Church's attempt to suppress the French Cathars, who practiced doctrines that contradicted Catholic dogma. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Inquisition became a powerful tool of the popes who sought to exercise spiritual dominion over the Catholic world. It would serve Ferdinand and Isabella who, like the popes, considered spiritual conformity essential to political control. Their reliance on the Inquisition grew out of distrust of Jewish *conversos* (Christian converts, or so-called “new Christians”), who had long endured anti-Semitic

sentiments in the peninsula. For reasons still debated by scholars, the Dominican ecclesiast, Alonso de Hojeda, convinced Isabella of the threat imposed by false converts. Pope Sixtus IV, in 1478, responded with a papal bull that officially established the Spanish Inquisition at the disposal of the Catholic monarchs.<sup>50</sup>

By 1480, with the bureaucratic structure in place, the Inquisition began prosecuting alleged heresies of the *conversos*. The results proved catastrophic for the Jewish population as thousands underwent trial, torture, and then condemnation via the *auto de fe*, where the convicted received final punishment in a public forum. Many more Jews fled to Portugal, Italy, and North Africa. To further insulate the peninsula against the influence of the Jews and converted Moors (the *moriscos*), the “cult of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood),” materialized during the 1480s thanks to the Inquisition.<sup>51</sup> This effectively denied to the descendants of either Jews or Muslims the right to hold public office. More profoundly, however, it tainted the minorities as culturally impure and thus a stain on Spanish honor. Of such importance was the ideal that those Spaniards who sailed to the New World shipped with certified genealogical records attesting to the purity of their lineage.<sup>52</sup> Those

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<sup>50</sup>See Kamen, 38 – 44. Also refer to Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

<sup>51</sup>Kamen, 44. He argues the Inquisition so thoroughly condemned *conversos* as being both religiously and culturally unclean that by the sixteenth century Spaniards took extraordinary measures to convince authorities of their untainted Spanish lineage.

<sup>52</sup>These *cartas de hidalguías* served also as passports, some of which have been preserved by the Museum of South Texas History, including one of Manuel Carlos Díaz de la Serna y Herrero, whose *cartas* indicated that he shipped to the

Spaniards enjoyed greater privileges in the American colonies than their *criollo* and *mestizo* cousins.

The Inquisition and its policing of faith spread across the Atlantic and transplanted Old World mores to the new. The captives and their chroniclers would have had no delusions of its extensive authority. Manuscripts from the Archivo de Indias de Seville and the Archivo de Nacional de México offer evidence of the trials and *autos de fe* held over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from Mexico to the South American provinces. As early as 1528, only five years after Cortés subjugated the Mexica and created the province of Nueva España, the Inquisition actively prosecuted heresy, as indicated in the transcripts of one colonist accused of indulging in Indian idolatry.<sup>53</sup> The *autos* continued throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries. Diego de Landa described one such *auto* where “a great number of [converted Indians were] placed upon the scaffold . . . scourged and shorn, while others were clothed with the *sanbenitos*. And some, deceived by the devil, hanged themselves for grief.”<sup>54</sup>

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New World in 1525. The colonial governments issued some *cartas* as late as 1772 in Ciudad de Mexico (Vargas family), which indicates that the idea of *limpieza de sangre* survived throughout the colonial era. Each government certified *carta de hidalguia* contained a family history that includes charts of the family tree to prove pure Spanish descent. Those colonists possessing such *cartas* enjoyed many privileges that included tax exemptions and elevated social status.

<sup>53</sup>Juan Fernandez del Castillo, “Confeso hazia idolatrar a los indios en Gran Ciudad de Tenustitlan desta Nueva España, 1528,” Archivo General Nacional de México, CSWR.

<sup>54</sup>Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, 79 – 80.

That the threat of heresy may have weighed heavy on some captives and defectors evidently was understood by some. The chronicle of Hernán de Soto's Floridian expedition, which was plagued by Christian runaways, relates one incident where De Soto reportedly used a promise of pardon to bribe one defector to return:

. . . he found some Indians deputed by the *Cacique*, to tell him that the Christian who had fled to his protection, would not come back. The Governour wrote to him, and sent him paper, pen, and ink, that he might give him an Answer. The Governour's Letter informed him of our resolution of leaving Florida; that therefore as he was a Christian, he ought not to trust himself in the power of the Indians, men without Faith and Religion; that he heartily pardoned the fault which he had committed, provided he returned to the Army, or signified in writing whether or not he was detained by force. An Indian carried the letter to him, and came back again without other answer but the name Guzman written on the margin of it, to let us know he was alive.<sup>55</sup>

The captives obviously knew well the risks incurred by their return, and those who opted to relate their experience afterwards also understood that the Inquisition's control extended to the literary world as well. Sixteenth-century Inquisition manuscripts are filled with voluminous lists of prohibited literature that included popular romances, Jewish religious works, and most any book written in Spanish that had not been licensed by the Crown or tribunal.<sup>56</sup> Only those works either licensed by the Crown or approved by the Inquisition had distribution rights.<sup>57</sup> Had any

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<sup>55</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, *A Relation of the Invasion and Conquest of Florida by the Spaniards under the Command of Fernando de Soto* (London: John Lawrence, 1686), 180.

<sup>56</sup>“Libros prohibidos por el Sancto officio, 1587,” Archivo General Nacional de México, CSWR.

<sup>57</sup>Those works approved by the Inquisitional censor carried with them stamps of approval with wording to the effect that “it is a pious and Catholic treatise which



captive or chronicler hoped to have his narrative published, either for monetary incentive or as an exercise to win acceptance, it had to be written in a manner to support the existing mythos of the time to secure necessary approval.

Although the Inquisition acquired a notorious reputation over the course of its history, it was nonetheless the guardian and enforcer of the mythos of that age. Every society in history has constructed similar bulwarks that supported the innate philosophies that helped the individuals and their collective culture to rationalize the tenuous relationship between the human psycho-spiritual essence and nature. The modern intelligentsia, for example, has erected the edifice of science that serves as the new myth of the ages. Those who step outside of the acceptable scientific conventions defined by the gatekeepers (e.g. peer-reviewed scholars) are often marginalized and ridiculed as was Galileo when he proposed the new method of envisioning the heliocentric relationship between the earth and the sun that radically contradicted the T – O mentality. It was this mentality that the returning captive, no doubt enlightened by the experience, had to negotiate and to which he had to conform if in fact he was to successfully reintegrate to Christendom. The narratives

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contains nothing offensive to Christian ears.” See Jorge d’Albuquerque, “Shipwreck suffered by Jorge d’Albuquerque, Captain and Governor of Pernambuco,” in C. R. Boxer, ed., *The Tragic History of the Sea, 1559 – 1565* (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1968), 108. Cabeza de Vaca’s *La Relación*, for example, had been licensed by the Crown “considering the benefits and utility that would come from it.” Cabeza de Vaca, *The Account: Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s Relación*, trans. Martin A. Favata and José B. Fernández (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 26. Henry Charles Lea offers a thorough study of Inquisitorial censorship and noted that it increasingly assumed greater authority over printed matter after the 1517 Reformation. See Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in Spain*, vol. 3 (New York: McMillan, 1907), 480 – 549.

served as evidence of this attempt at conformity—at submission—to the prevailing mythos of the Western world.

The Inquisition, however, was not the ultimate impetus. It was, in both Spain and Spanish America, a very visible thus very real reminder of intolerance of those who exhibited attitudes contrary to the prevailing Catholic faith. The Inquisition was only an agency of the Church and Crown that wielded control over a bureaucracy of secular and ecclesiastical officials and multitudes of faithful subjects. Together, these components formed a complex that defined and articulated a mythos that suffused the transatlantic world. Those captives who authored narratives had to confront this complex of beliefs and institutions in order to have their narratives licensed and circulated without fear of retribution.<sup>58</sup> Other writers who incorporated captivity tales into larger works did so in an effort to justify imperial prerogatives by casting the returned captives as Christian heroes favored by God.<sup>59</sup>

The necessity of literary conformity thus stemmed from a combination of vigilant Inquisitors, prevailing literary currents, and a population already cognizant of the effects of captivity. Those more willing to come to terms with the American realities and those who understood the ultimate meanings of captivity, as did

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<sup>58</sup>Other scholars have recognized that captives like Cabeza de Vaca “engaged in self-conscious scripting . . . to avoid [among other things] problems with the Inquisition.” Reséndez, 7.

<sup>59</sup>Contemporary chroniclers often considered the conquistadores as heroic figures. For example, Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, who included Juan Ortiz’s tale in his history of the De Soto expedition, described his characters as “heroicos caballeros Españoles” (heroic Spanish cavaliers). See *La Florida del Inca*, title page.

Bartolomé de las Casas, showed reluctance to embrace the prevailing myths and thus began the slow agonizing break. In the meantime, though, the captives' society reveled in heroic fiction patterned on what is now recognized by scholars as a universal archetype. The biblical and medieval hero sagas served as a model for those chroniclers who sought to record and relay the harrowing experiences in an exotic world where myth and reality converged. Despite the critiques of contemporaries such as Las Casas, it would require centuries for Spaniards and the western world to contemplate that the antagonists were in fact the Spaniards who encroached on sovereign territory.<sup>60</sup> The captives, more than Las Casas or anyone, had already grasped this realization because they negotiated two mythical complexes and, in the end, found neither to be superior to the other.

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<sup>60</sup>Las Casas, a Dominican monk, became the leading advocate for the Native American populations and railed against the abuses committed by his fellow Spaniards. His legal and philosophical extirpations are presented in *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Stafford Poole (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CAPTIVITY RITUAL

The captivity narratives contain patterns in their relation of the experiences of Jerónimo de Aguilar, Gonzalo Guerrero, Juan Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade, Fray Francisco de Avila, Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, and the few other captives whose experiences found expression via print. The patterns closely mimic that archetypal motif easily discernible in the myriad heroic sagas of classical and world mythology where the protagonist undergoes a traumatic separation from the comfortable familiarity of his known world and then is initiated through trials and tribulations into the often exotic world of the other, only to return to his point of origin often wiser than before. The pattern is indicative of a cyclical journey through space and time and is a ritual component of mythology, which, as one scholar argues, represents rites of passage where, through isolation and mental and physical torture, individuals psychologically revert to their primal instincts in order to survive.<sup>1</sup>

Identifying this element of the captivity narratives is the first requirement for historical interpretation. We want to know what these first-person narrators and

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<sup>1</sup>G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 19. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs best explains the concept in that when humans, despite their class or social status, are denied their socio-affectionate and self-esteem needs, they revert to the basic instincts of survival and thus forego their cultural norms. See also Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* and Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

chroniclers attempted to convey to the contemporary reader and what meanings may have been gleaned from them through the ritualizing of the tale. Muir suggests that “rituals give access to emotional states that resist expression in language.”<sup>2</sup> Demonstrably, the captivity narratives are not entirely about individual captives or even captivity itself; rather, the narratives are about the meaning of the experience and its implications for the larger society. One scholar has argued that priests, medicine men, and shamans who convey myths are the “lightning conductors of common anxiety.”<sup>3</sup> So too were the European chroniclers of captivity. Through their ritualized narratives they communicated to their readers the unease that the experiences evoked. The rites around which the narratives are structured indicate movements not only across territorial distances and cultural thresholds, but also through spiritual spaces perceivable only through personal experience.<sup>4</sup> In the following passage, I will substantiate this ritualized structure through comparisons of the texts in which we find the unifying separation-initiation-return sequence of the traumatic rites of passage that each captive endured.

#### 4.1 The Separation

Although arriving in the New World at different times, the captives began their journeys from a common point of origin—the ports of Andalusia in southern

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<sup>2</sup>Muir, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Géza Róheim, *The Origin and Function of Culture* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1943), 51.

<sup>4</sup>For discussion of the spiritual essence of the literary journey, see De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 280 – 282.

Spain. Arriving in the Americas after a long and arduous transatlantic crossing, the captives experienced ordeals at different locales at the hands of captors who demonstrated such variance in their cultures as to defy the single categorization of *Indian*. Some narratives, like that of Cabeza de Vaca and Hans Stade, offer more detail of the departure from Europe; thus they arguably describe two separations—one from the European homeland, the other from the cadre of companions that reinforced cultural solidarity. Others open at the point of captivity. Regardless of the introduction, the narratives rapidly move to the separation, which describes the violent kidnapping of the characters. Juan Ortiz's separation is a useful example.

Sometime during the early summer of 1528, Juan Ortiz was among a company of men who set sail from Cuba and headed north toward Florida in search of Pánfilo de Narváez, who in 1527 received permission from Emperor Carlos V to conquer and settle Florida.<sup>5</sup> Ortiz and the crew were among Narváez's original cadre, but when Narváez disembarked to explore the land and never returned, Ortiz and the others who remained on the ships returned to Cuba. Under orders, the crew returned to Florida in search of the missing captain. Unbeknown to the searchers, the Narváez expedition had met with disaster, and of the 300 men reportedly to have

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<sup>5</sup>The land of Florida extended from the southeastern quadrant of North America to the boundaries of New Spain in the southwestern quadrant, and northward to the region of Nova Scotia.

accompanied him on land, only four would return eight years later; among them was Cabeza de Vaca.<sup>6</sup>

When the ship reentered the bay where Narváez's party had disembarked, some natives of the area, possibly the Tocobagos, greeted the crew with news that Narváez had left written instructions should the ship return. The Indian cacique persuaded the ship's captain to send some crew members ashore to retrieve the letters. Little did the ship's captain realize that this particular cacique, Hirrihigua, had supposedly suffered cruel abuse at the hands of Narváez. The cacique desired revenge, and the alleged letters were a ruse to further secure his cause.

Confident of the advantage, and that Hirrihigua had turned over four of his own Indians to the captain in good faith, the ship's captain dispatched four men to obtain the letters. Juan Ortiz, a young man of eighteen from Seville, was one. As soon as the four-man contingent reached the shore, the Indians on board the ship leaped into the water and the Indians on land ferociously assailed the four Spaniards. Fearing for the ultimate safety of his ship and crew, the captain abandoned those on shore, "very much grieved . . . at having lost their four companions so indiscreetly."<sup>7</sup> It was at this moment that Ortiz and his three companions experienced the separation and the beginning of the transformative journey.

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<sup>6</sup>Details of this account are collected from three sources: Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida del Inca*; Gentleman of Elvas, *The Narrative of the Expedition of Hernando De Soto, By the Gentleman of Elvas*; and Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación y comentarios del gounerador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*.

<sup>7</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, 39.

Ortiz's separation is typical of the other captivities. The narratives all actually present the idea of dual separation—first, the separation from home when the main character embarks for the New World; second, the separation from his companions and familiar culture. This duality is present in many of the narratives. For example, Cabeza de Vaca describes the separation from home as well as the more violent one where he separates from the familiar to be initiated to the other. An environmental dimension of the separation is also presented in the narratives of Cabeza de Vaca and the others. The captivities, with the exception of Juan Ortiz and Francisco Núñez, resulted from a violent storm that sank the ships and left the survivors geographically isolated and subject to nature. Although the imagery of tempestuous oceans are absent in the narratives of Ortiz and Francisco Núñez, they nonetheless contain symbolic images of water (the imagery of stormy seas and geographical isolation is further explored in *Chapter Five*).

The importance placed on this separation is further manifested by the fact that readers are given little to no insight regarding the background of the central character. It is as if life was meaningless prior to the captivity. Hans Stade's tale, similar to the rest, simply begins: "I, Hans Stade from Homberg in Hesse, resolving, if it so please God, to visit India, traveled with that intention. . ."<sup>8</sup> Hans Stade, writing for his German audience, goes on to describe both separations in some detail.

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<sup>8</sup>Hans Stade, *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1547 – 1555 Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil*, 15.



As a Hessian, his first separation occurred in 1547 when he departed his home for Lisbon to undertake a journey to India.<sup>9</sup> Although politically united at the time under Carlos V, who was both Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain, German culture nonetheless differed greatly from that of Iberia and would perhaps leave a German traveler longing for the similarities of home. In fact, the narrative explains that Stade sought the companionship of other Germans once he arrived in Lisbon.<sup>10</sup> Stade then described his second, and extremely violent, separation at the hands of the Tupinambás in Brazil where he was beaten, stripped naked, bound, and threatened with cannibalistic consumption.<sup>11</sup> This follows a shipwreck that left Hans Stade a castaway and an eventual colonist in a Portuguese settlement at São Vicente, which was near São Paulo in Brazil. The connotations conjured by such predicament

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<sup>9</sup>Stade, 15.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>While Hans Stade stigmatized the natives with the label of “cannibal,” some scholars have debated the categorization. Some question Stade’s motives and suggests that the cannibalistic literary contrivance was perhaps used to “enliven” the narrative, and that “real or not, the cannibal took a charismatic and leading role in the theater of imperial violence and was used by all sides in the conflict. In addition to representing the politics of early modern imperialism, the coercion to which cannibals subjected their victims as they violently and forcefully condemned them to incorporation into a new culture and body politic was a powerful metaphor for the extreme lack of free will in the experience of identity and cultural affinity for sixteenth-century Christians torn apart by Reformation controversies. As the vessel of the soul, each individual body became a center on which to lay siege, in cannibal feast or Christian battle.” H. E. Martel, “Hans Staden's Captive Soul: Identity, Imperialism, and Rumors of Cannibalism in Sixteenth-Century Brazil,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 1, (March 2006), 51.

was not lost on Stade, who opened his narrative with a lengthy reference to Psalms 107:

So speaks the holy and kingly prophet David . . . : ‘They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. . . . Their soul is melted because of trouble. . . . Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he bringeth them out of their distress.’<sup>12</sup>

By extension to larger literary currents, the separation ritual and the connotations it evokes is common to mythological lore relative to the hero’s journey. The parallels are undeniable. In nearly every heroic drama, the potential hero confronts a violent separation, and often with utter reluctance. Classical and Biblical literature, most familiar to the sixteenth-century Europeans, is rife with examples, such as the case of the hero-prophet Jonah. The Hebrew God called Jonah to leave his home, venture to the heathen city of Nineveh, and prophesy of God’s judgment. Jonah at first refused the call, fled to sea aboard a vessel, and was cast overboard by his shipmates when a whale swallowed the prophet, who then completed the ritualistic cycle.<sup>13</sup> Christ, too, showed reluctance to venture into his ordeal when he prayed, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.”<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Ortiz demonstrated reluctance to embark upon his journey when, given the opportunity to either enter the Floridian wilderness with Narváez or return to the safety of the ships,

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<sup>12</sup>Stade, 3.

<sup>13</sup>Jonah 1: 1 – 17; See also Northrop Frye and Jay Macpherson, *Biblical and Classical Myths: The Mythological Framework of Western Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 86.

<sup>14</sup>Luke 22: 42.

he opted for the ships.<sup>15</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, too, proved unwilling to risk the separation. He records his insistent objections to Narváez's plan to leave the safety of the ships to reconnoiter the interior of Florida, and affirms that "I was opposed to entering."<sup>16</sup>

Fear of the unknown was at the root of the separation motif. The motif has been described by one scholar as the beginning of the "perpetual conflict" of the human experience.<sup>17</sup> The separation communicated terror to the reader. When coupled with certain repetitious imagery, like that of nakedness, the underlying anxiety became more profound by the thought of Christians subjected to pagan authority. Nakedness connoted the divestment of one's "European-ness." It also carried with it ideas of shame and dishonor. In describing his separation, Hans Stade related how the Indians "[tore] the clothes off my body. . . . [and] raised me from the ground where I lay naked."<sup>18</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega tells how the Indians of Florida carried Juan Ortiz "naked to the plaza."<sup>19</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, recounting his separation, described how "those . . . who survived were as naked as the day we were born."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, 37 – 8.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 36 – 7.

<sup>17</sup>Andrew Lytle, "The Working Novelist and the Mythmaking Process," in Henry A. Murray, ed., *Myth and Mythmaking* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 150.

<sup>18</sup>Stade, 52.

<sup>19</sup>" . . . defnudos a la plaza." Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 63.

<sup>20</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Capítulo doze*.

The narrative of Francisco Núñez deviates only slightly when describing how the Indians “started to strip [Núñez] of clothing” but left it intact out of respect for Núñez’s reputation—his honor preserved.<sup>21</sup> Collective unease resulted from the idea of a violent kidnapping of a Christian followed by the violation of his sanctity by those considered inferior to Christians. It was as if the captive would forever be tainted or polluted by the experience and thereby less honorable.

#### 4.2 The Initiation

The second structural pattern of the captivity ritual is the *initiation*, which left the deepest and most enduring effects on the individuals. In mythology, the initiation is a period of extreme psychological and/or physical duress that can either kill or can, as in the case of the surviving captives, have life-altering effects such as acculturation. In the archetypal pattern there are the tortuous trials followed by a meeting with the god or goddess, then atonement with the father or the antagonistic male usually brought about by a helpful female figure. Once having advanced through these stages, glorification comes to the hero who, in the end, acquires what Joseph Campbell described as the “ultimate boon” or spiritual enlightenment.<sup>22</sup> Richard Vanderbeets argued that this ritualistic pattern is so pervasive in the English colonial captivity narratives that it

renders this configuration an essential structuring device of the tales. This basic pattern . . . demonstrates the degree to which elements of strictly archetypal nature have pervaded and informed the development of the captivity narrative. Further, these elements

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<sup>21</sup>Francisco Núñez, *Cautiverio Feliz*, 31.

<sup>22</sup>Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 190.

account in large measure for the remarkable pull the captivities have exercised upon readers. . . . The narratives of Indian captivity are more than cultural indices or curiosities; they touch on the fundamental truths of experience.<sup>23</sup>

These “fundamental truths” are what we attempt to discern from the mythical patterns exhibited in the captivity narratives. As related by the chroniclers, the initiations of Hans Stade and Juan Ortiz resonate with the universal pattern of (a) torture, (b) entreaty to the deity, (c) atonement and assistance, and (d) glorification.

Hans Stade’s initiation occurred during and immediately following his separation from the Portuguese colony at São Vicente sometime in late December 1553 or early January 1554. First, he related the (a) tortuous experience. When the Tupi descended upon him, they wounded his leg with an arrow to prevent his escape. They stripped and kept him naked while continually beating him with their fists and celebrated with chants of how they had “captured me their slave from the Perot [Portuguese].”<sup>24</sup> Once at the Tupi village, the women further abused Stade while taunting him psychologically. They repeatedly referred to him as their “bound beast,” mocked his god, and told of how he was to be their next meal.<sup>25</sup> They even forced him to chant that “I, your food, have come.”<sup>26</sup> The psychological terror grew

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<sup>23</sup>Richard Vanderbeets, “The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual,” *American Literature* 43, no. 4 (Jan., 1972): 562.

<sup>24</sup>Stade, 52. Stade explained that the tribe had long desired revenge against the Portuguese because the latter had killed several Tupi tribesmen.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 52 – 75.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

as he was paraded from one village to another where he witnessed cannibalistic feasts and the display of victims' heads.<sup>27</sup>

Stade recounted how, throughout this ordeal, he (b) called out to God for deliverance. In one instance, Stade claimed that, in the midst of a storm while in a canoe with the Tupi, he beseeched God to calm the weather and then the storm miraculously abated.<sup>28</sup> In other instances, Stade won acclaim for his ability to heal the sick as a result of his supplications. Second, and in addition to his abilities as healer, Stade acquired status as a prophet possessing the ability to read dreams and natural omens, which the Tupi respected, valued, and also feared—"They marveled all, and thought that my God did whatever I wished."<sup>29</sup> In one instance, Stade reported that the Tupi called him "the bad man, the wizard now makes the wind to come," but eventually admitted that he was a "better prophet than their Miraka."<sup>30</sup>

Over the course of a few months, Stade cleverly won the favor of his captors by these various means to the point of (c) atonement. Stade relates how, after being abused by the tribe, "my master always comforted me."<sup>31</sup> He described how, eventually, the "king called me (his) son, and I went out hunting with his sons."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Stade, 70 – 71.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 76, 80, 85, 97 – 98, 102.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 108.

Finally Stade arrived at the (d) glorification, where he became a self-proclaimed apostle to the Indians, that through him, God would “show his might.”<sup>33</sup> Stade described that his stature continued to improve when his captors realized his potential as a warrior after he assisted the Tupinambas in battle against their enemies, the Tuppin Ikins.<sup>34</sup> Their respect for Stade grew to such extent that he refused to escape even when given ample opportunity to do so.<sup>35</sup> The tribe’s acceptance of Stade was such that the old women, who once tortured him, called him “Scheraeire, that is ‘my son.’”<sup>36</sup>

The pattern is again demonstrated in Garcilaso de la Vega’s narrative of Juan Ortiz’s captivity. First came the (a) tortures where Ortiz endured the gauntlet, strenuous work, sleeplessness, and physical beatings that proved so cruel that . . . he would have sought relief in suicide had he not been a Christian.”<sup>37</sup> Garcilaso informs the reader that Ortiz (b) called upon God, thanking him for deliverance. At one point God responded by allowing Ortiz the ability to kill a lion with a single dart at night, which Indians “generally considered miraculous.”<sup>38</sup> Ortiz, according to Garcilaso,

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<sup>33</sup>Stade, 107.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>37</sup>“ . . .fino fuera Chriftiano, tomara por remedio la muerte colus manos.” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 32.

<sup>38</sup>“ . . . fe tiene por cofa de mi largo matar vn hombre a vn leon.” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 33.

received (c) assistance from the cacique's wife and daughters, who intervened to spare his life on several occasions, evening aiding his escape to another tribe where he found atonement with a new master. At this point in the narrative, (d) glorification occurred as the new master "bestowed many honors upon him and increased these honors exceedingly when he learned that Juan Ortiz had killed a lion with a single dart."<sup>39</sup>

The repetition of this pattern throughout the narratives demonstrates the genre's parallels to more common mythic structures found in contemporary popular and biblical literature. It connotes transformation and change on the part of the captive, but the imagery employed is deceptive. The narrators attempted to conceal the full extent of the metamorphosis by clinging to Christian signifiers. It was God who preserved the captives and through them glorified the Christian religion. The captive therefore remained faithful throughout the ordeal and proved worthy to embrace Christendom. A more deliberate reading, however, forces reassessment of these assumptions.

In each narrative, the reader confronted characters who underwent such drastic change that they emerged from the ordeal unrecognizable by their Christian kin. The idea of conformity—prompted by survival instincts—pervades the texts. For example, Stade's narrative revealed a highly conformist character. When first shipwrecked near the Portuguese colony of São Paulo, Stade, the German so conformed to that society that he acquired some prestige in his position and went on

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<sup>39</sup>“ . . . configo haziendole mucha honra y muy mucha mas, despues que fupo, que auia muerto al leon con el dardo. . .” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 34 – 35.



be the master of his own Indian slave. In a matter of a few moments at the point of separation, he went from slave-owner to slave, human to “bound beast.” In his attempts to win over the Tupi captors so as to prevent his death, Stade negotiated their world and in the process became assimilated. As he progressed through his initiation into the world of the other, though, Stade’s relationship to his captors evolved. Stade provided clues to this psychological development—he accepted his “savage” captor as “master.” He confessed some endearment when he confided that “my master always comforted me.”<sup>40</sup> The Tupi also acquired a fondness for Stade and adopted him as one of their own. Stade’s Tupi master further expressed endearment when confronted with Stade’s inevitable return to his native culture. The Tupi master, according to Stade, “went weeping about the ship . . . for he had considered me as his son.” Stade confessed that “I also cried according to their usage.”<sup>41</sup>

This tendency toward emotional attachment between captives and captors would appear problematic for various reasons. First, the captives entered their ordeals carrying with them the culturally superior attitudes of the West. Second, considering that the Catholic faith demanded rejection of pagan society, martyrdom seemingly would have been preferable. Third, the sheer physical and psychological torture inflicted by the Indian captors in the initiation processes seemingly would have bred ill will and contempt. Stade’s narrative and that of Garcilaso, el Inca, as

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<sup>40</sup>Stade, 75.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 111 – 112.

regards the captivity of Ortiz are quite specific as to the violent manner of their captors' treatment. Cabeza de Vaca and Aguilar, however, only recount how they were rigorously worked as slaves, which leads the reader to conclude that their captors proved more benevolent. Stade and Ortiz found themselves at the mercy of Indians who sought revenge for previous injustices visited on them by the Portuguese and Spaniards. For this reason, their initiations into their respective captor societies were especially brutal. Stade tells of how he was beaten and clubbed. The Tupi also shot his leg with an arrow to prevent escape while at the same time they tied ropes about his neck to drag him around. They paraded him through the woods from one village to the next, where men, women, and children spat upon him, ridiculed him, and beat him.<sup>42</sup> Juan Ortiz's misery was no less severe:

The Cacique . . . tortured him so grievously and bitterly that the boy frequently came to envy his three dead companions. The ceaseless labor of carrying firewood and water was so strenuous, the eating and sleeping so infrequent, and the daily slaps, blows, and lashes as well as other torments given him on feast days were so cruel that he many times would have sought relief in suicide had he not been a Christian. For in addition . . . the boy [had] to run continuously the entire day. . . . Then when the day was over, this sad boy lay extended on the ground, more dead than alive, as one can imagine.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Stade, 52 – 53.

<sup>43</sup>“El cacique . . . aunque despues fe la dio tan trifte, yamarga, que muchas vezes vuo embidia a fus tres compañeros muertos: porque el trabajo continuo fin ceffar de acarrear leña y aqua era tato y el comer y dermir ta poco, los palos, bofetadas, y acotes de todas los dias tan crueles, fin los demas tormentos, que a fus tiépos en particulares fieftas le dauan, que muchas veces, fino fuera Chriftianos, tomara por remedio la muerte colus manos. . . . corrieffe todo al dia fin patar (de Sol a fombra) en vna plaza larga . . .” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 64.

Indian torture of captives was a well-documented phenomenon, so there is little doubt that the captives indeed experienced these ordeals. In those chronicles where few details are recorded of the actual captivity or initiation experience, the reader cannot assume that those captives endured the same degree of physical abuse. Based on the reports amassed over four centuries, it is not altogether certain that torture of captives permeated every Indian society. In one study of the phenomenon regarding eastern North American tribes, Nathaniel Knowles concludes that the Indians “evinced great emotional satisfactions from the prolonged torture often inflicted upon war captives. . . . [and that] the analysis suggests that many groups tortured primarily in retaliation against the whites.”<sup>44</sup> This assessment certainly holds true for the experiences of Juan Ortiz and Hans Stade, who endured Indian style eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth justice, but regardless of whether it was torture based on revenge or on ritual, it was torture nonetheless. It left indelible scars not only on the bodies, but very likely on the minds of the initiated captives, who came away from the experience psychologically altered as evidenced by the change in their disposition. For these reasons, their conformity becomes ever more mysterious, but modern psychology provides possible answers.

The captivity narratives reveal hints as to the stages of psychological progression through the ordeals. At first there was terror and passive resistance

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<sup>44</sup>Nathaniel Knowles, “The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,” 151. Although torture was used in retaliation for white atrocities, scholars also recognize its prevalence between Indian groups as well.

followed by a sense of hopelessness.<sup>45</sup> As the captive struggled with his situation, he turned to the Christian deity and pled for deliverance. As he mustered strength from his spiritual awakening, the captive found renewed power over his situation and he slowly began to use his spirituality to win influence with his captors. As captive/captor relationships matured, the captive evinced increasing acceptance of both his situation and of his captor's culture. By the time of the rescue, captive and captor had become indistinguishable, not only in appearance, but in language and customs as well, signifying complete cultural assimilation into the world of the other.

Modern psychology has ascribed this process, where the captive comes to identify with the captor and sometimes even adopts the captor mentality, to the *Stockholm syndrome*, identified after a bank take-over in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973.<sup>46</sup> The perpetrators of the heist held several bank employees as hostages for five days, and once the ordeal ended, the hostages demonstrated emotional attachments to the hostage takers. Numerous examples of the syndrome materialized

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<sup>45</sup>For example, Stade details his struggle to resist in an otherwise powerless situation. He refused to allow them to shave his beard in some ceremony that was to prepare him for consumption by the tribal group. Despair is demonstrated as he recounts how he obtained a piece of linen to wear about his shoulders, but when a Frenchman refused to assist him, Stade ripped the linen from his body: "although the sun scorched me severely, and I said to myself, 'If I am to die, why should I preserve my flesh for another?'" Stade even attempted starvation to emaciate his body to the point that the Tupi would no longer desire to eat him, and as proof of his defiance "that they might not work their will upon me," Stade, 68 – 70.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur A. Slotkin defines Stockholm syndrome in its modern usage as "an unconscious and paradoxical psychological phenomenon by which hostages express or demonstrate positive feelings toward their captors and negative feelings toward the authorities," in "The Stockholm Syndrome and Situational Factors Related to Its Development" (Ph.D. diss., University of Louisville, 1997), 14.

during the last half of the twentieth-century, the most famous being that of heiress Patricia Hearst. The Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) kidnapped Hearst in 1974 and after only two months in captivity, Hearst reemerged, willingly taking part in a bank robbery with her SLA captors. In an attempt to explain this process and why it occurred, a new school of psychology materialized in the 1980s that studied the phenomenon of “capture-bonding.” Several theories emerged, all basically concluding, that it is an innate survival mechanism not only seen in humans, but in the animal kingdom as well. The violent kidnapping convinces the hostage that life is in peril. In an attempt to survive, the hostage attempts to mimic the captors so completely that the two actually become one and the same.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>One psychologist explains that the “hostage adapts to this situation by subconsciously seeing the captor as someone who is misunderstood and who is not the ruthless criminal he appears.” Irka Kuleshnyk, “The Stockholm Syndrome: Toward an Understanding,” *Social Action and the Law* 10, no.2 (1984): 39. In many cases, the end result demonstrated by the syndrome is that “there may be a relinquishing of the guiding principles and values of the old personality, and, more than that, there may be a predisposition toward doing anything in order to survive. In this process of resocialization, one may not only give deference to the master’s or captor’s value system, but one may embrace such a value system as one’s own. . . . [There is] identification with the person who was viewed as powerful and in control of one’s fate.” Barbara A. Huddleston-Mattai and P. Rudy Mattai, “The Sambo Mentality and the Stockholm Syndrome Revisited: Another Dimension to the Examination of the Plight of the African American,” *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 3 (March 1993): 347. The studies also suggest that the captor may reciprocate similar feelings toward the captive. Theresa Mackey goes so far as to argue that many Latin American societies undergo frequent revolutions thanks in part to reverse Stockholm syndrome where the “oppressor imitates the oppressed rebel. This is a syndrome to which machista cultures are especially vulnerable, since the resistor is likely to be the admired individual strongman.” “Reverse Stockholm Syndrome in *Pedro y el capitán*: Paradigm for the Cycle of Authoritarianism in Latin America.” *Literature and Psychology* 43, no. 4 (1997), 14.

This modern psychoanalytic perspective offers deeper insight to the sixteenth-century captives' dilemma and the resulting psychological trauma. It further drives home the point Carl Jung and his followers have long argued—myth is but a revelation of human psychology which, as Lévi-Strauss concluded, “is everywhere one and the same.”<sup>48</sup> Joseph Campbell drives home the point—“mythology, in other words, is psychology misread as biography, history, and cosmology.”<sup>49</sup> Ergo, these captive initiation sagas offer psychological insights to the sixteenth-century mind more so than a verifiable record of captivity. Their relation was as much a literary contrivance as it was historical. Because the long-term effects of captivity were largely subliminal, could only relate the ordeal in contemporary jargon related to spiritual matters. Consequently, they signified the ordeal as a Christian journey, as a literary drama that moves across space and time from point A to point B and then back to point A. When put to paper, no other literary convention other than heroic prose could suffice to relate that which was essentially indescribable. Once written and published for popular and/or private consumption, however, the individual experiences were understood as heroic exploits. These captives, although thought lost to the pagan world, returned as Christian heroes who championed the faith and thereby retained their cultural identity, which fostered their return to Christendom.

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<sup>48</sup>Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 19.

<sup>49</sup>Campbell, 256.

### 4.3 The Return

The narratives conclude at the point of rescue and reunification with the society from which the captive had been long estranged. This is the final stage of the ritualistic pattern common to mythology that brings the hero archetype full circle. Although most people would assume that the captive would greet the rescue with much joy, the narratives demonstrate that it was usually met with ambivalence and the confrontation with yet another crisis—reacceptance.<sup>50</sup> Couched within the descriptions of the return are the negotiations that the captives underwent to reenter their once familiar society that by time of rescue appeared foreign. As with the captivity initiation, the return, too, unfolded in stages characterized by: (a) joy of the reunion that turns to (b) sadness for departing the captors, followed by (c) mutual ambivalence, repulsion, pity, and possibly rejection on the part of both the captive and the rescuers.

Díaz's description of Jerónimo de Aguilar's return demonstrates shock and repulsion. Although Aguilar shouted with joy upon his return, the Spaniards scarcely recognized him as one of their own. When brought to Cortés's men, Aguilar could not be distinguished from an Indian. He had tanned dark brown, and had his hair

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<sup>50</sup>In his synopsis of the various tales of the return displayed throughout world mythology, Joseph Campbell describes how this "final crisis" is perhaps the most difficult of the hero journey: "whether rescued from without, driven from within, or gently carried along by the guiding divinities, he has yet to re-enter with his boon the long forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete. He has yet to confront society . . . and take the return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend." *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 216.

shorn in the manner of an Indian slave. He wore one old sandal, a ragged cloak, and a loin cloth. The only item that suggested his Christian heritage was his *Book of Hours* (Catholic liturgy) bundled in a bag. When presented to Cortés, he too could not distinguish Aguilar and asked, “‘Where is the Spaniard?’ On hearing this, the Spaniard squatted down on his haunches as the Indians do and said ‘I am he.’”<sup>51</sup> Cortés then ordered Aguilar to be properly clothed. According to the narratives, Aguilar departed his Indian master only after much consternation.

A similar scenario unfolds in one narrative of Juan Ortiz’s return. Ortiz, however, greeted the news of Spanish rescue with ambivalence. Having been told that scouts sighted Spaniards in the region Ortiz, “‘thinking himself jested with, as he had supposed himself to be before, said that his thoughts no longer dwelt on his people, and that his only wish now was to serve [his Indian master].”<sup>52</sup> Forced by his master to find the Spaniards, Ortiz appeared in the midst of a skirmish between Indians and De Soto’s scouts, who nearly killed him because he was no longer recognizable as a Christian. He had lost his native language (Spanish), was naked, and could only communicate his Christian origins by making the sign of the cross

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<sup>51</sup>“¿Qué es el español? . . . Y el español como lo entendió se puso en cuclillas, como hacen los indios, e dijo: ‘Yo soy.’” Díaz, *La Conquista de Mexico*, Capítulo XVIII.

<sup>52</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, 152. Garcilaso’s version is somewhat different in that “Ortiz rejoiced over the fortunate news” of his rescue. “Juan Ortiz con regozijo de la Buena nueve, dando interiormente gracias a Dios por ella.” Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 38.



with his hands.<sup>53</sup> De Soto and his men reacted to Ortiz with shock and awe—they showed “pity and sorrow at being reminded of so many hardships and martyrdoms . . . [for Ortiz’s] burns received while being roasted were so extensive that one entire side was a solid scar.”<sup>54</sup>

Hans Stade’s return also repeated the ritual drama. Once he met with a French captain and crew, he became “overjoyed, and went to them and bade them welcome in the savage tongue.”<sup>55</sup> The French reaction, based on a reading of the narrative, resembled that displayed by the Spaniards at finding Aguilar and Ortiz: “when they saw me in such wretched plight, they had pity upon me, and divided their garments with me.”<sup>56</sup> Once securing release from captivity, Stade and his Indian master displayed much sadness at their parting. According to Stade, the Indian “went weeping about the ship . . . for he had considered me as his son. . . . And one of his wives . . . had to cry over me after their custom, and I also cried according to their usage.”<sup>57</sup>

Similar rituals are detailed in the narratives of Cabeza de Vaca and Francisco Núñez. All portray individuals who had undergone such immense physical and psychological transformations that they could no longer be recognized as Europeans.

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<sup>53</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 39.

<sup>54</sup>Stade, 82.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 111 – 12.

While the narratives' emphasis on bodily scarifications evidence physical duress, the linguistic allusions bring attention to much more profound transformations. Garcilaso, el Inca, more than any other chronicler, placed some emphasis on Ortiz's linguistic change, which rendered him unable to "even so much pronounce the name of his native land."<sup>58</sup> Although Garcilaso explains this away as symptomatic of someone who no longer practices a specific language, it has further significance.

The complete loss of one language followed by the acquisition of another suggests a restructuring of an individual's symbolic framework that defines the psycho-social complex. The structuralist concept that a group's language system—its symbolic codes—reflects its unconscious mentalities provides the key to moving these captivity narratives beyond their literary element to more psycho-historical significance.<sup>59</sup> When these ritualized and highly symbolic narratives are deciphered, they reveal life and death struggles of individuals filled with fear and uncertainty in the face of terrific experiences that required constant negotiations of seemingly diametric mythological systems. Through the exchange, the captives came away less convinced of the differences and more uncertain of their future in the society to

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<sup>58</sup>“ . . . fe le auia olvidado hafta el pronunciar el nobre de la propria tierra.” Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, 40.

<sup>59</sup>Jacques Lacan and Ferdinand de Saussure laid the structuralist concepts of psychology and semiology, respectively. Lacan, working from Sigmund Freud's ideas of the unconscious, argued that linguistics is the key to analyzing the subconscious mind while Saussure developed the methodology whereby language is treated as a system of signs, composed of the concept (signified) and the sound-image (signifier). See Richard T. De George and Fernande M., eds., *The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972).

which they returned. They had to traverse another frontier, undergo another rite of passage, to gain way back home once again.

Such passage is illustrated by the captivity memoir of Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda published in Spain about 1575. In the absence of ritual structure possibly owing to the author's lack of formal education and in its de-emphasis of the captivity experience, the dissimilarities with the other captivity narratives are apparent. Fontaneda's narrative nonetheless has its parallel to the others.<sup>60</sup> It may be considered a *résumé* of sorts, and as such, it evidences Fontaneda's attempt to pass back over to Christendom. Fontaneda most likely intended his narrative as advertisement for his qualifications as a frontier guide and interpreter for the Spanish. He emphasized his ability to translate several native languages, navigate the terrain, and he expressed his loyalty to Spanish imperial policies concerning Florida—"its subjugation befitting His Majesty"—while deriding the Indians as "those brutes."<sup>61</sup> His narrative, therefore, demonstrated the effort to negotiate his reentry to and acceptance by the society from which he had been torn as a young lad.

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<sup>60</sup>Other similarities include common imagery associated with captivity (i.e. nakedness, heresy, etc.). Furthermore, and although Fontaneda derided his Indian captors, there are clues that suggest the author had a more endearing relationship with his captors than what he revealed. He noted (p. 33) that the Indian captors had fondness for and trust in him. This trust would have never been extended had Fontaneda not earned it through his actions.

<sup>61</sup>Fontaneda, *Memoir of Do. d'Escalante Fontaneda Respecting Florida*, 33, 36.

#### 4.4 The Negotiation of Divergent Mythologies

The captivity ritual illustrates a metamorphosis of sorts as the captive sheds one skin for another.<sup>62</sup> Through these narratives, the reader confronts individuals who progressed through transformative stages. As Europeans who shipped to the Americas with all the cultural accoutrements, they soon underwent a violent separation/kidnapping that rendered them powerless and valueless in an exotic captor society. Owing much to a combination of luck (often described as divine intervention in the narratives) and survivalist instincts that may best be explained by the Stockholm syndrome, the captives displayed manipulative prowess in winning over their captors during a traumatic initiation/assimilation process. Many became powerful and respected shamans, which allowed for their adoption by the tribe, but only after having been stripped of their European signifiers of clothes, hair, and other cultural accoutrements. At the point of return/rescue, the captives had then to negotiate two cultural edifices built of myth and symbol in an effort to regain entrance to the one from which they separated. The manipulation required to win entrance to Indian society was again employed to regain acceptance into European society. The narratives thus evidence complex purposes—superficially they appear as simple accounts of captivity; in actuality, they are the products of fear and anxiety produced by the return.

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<sup>62</sup>Cabeza de Vaca's lamentation that because of their nakedness and constant exposure to the sun, he and his companions "shed [their] skins twice a year like serpents" ("a manera defer pientes mudauamos los cueros dos veces enel año") may be read both literally and figuratively. Cabeza de Vaca, *Capitulo veynta y dos*.

#### 4.4.1 *Negotiating Indian Myth*

In each captivity ritual, the captive progresses from slave to shaman, or to some other respectable stature, such as warrior. The narrators credit the change to divine intervention—the Christian captive cried out to God, who responded by enabling his servant to perform miracles in the sight of the pagans. In the face of such power, the captors responded positively to the captive-shaman, and thus spared his life. Although the pattern parallels mythical lore of the hero to which contemporaries responded positively, it masks the most probable reality. Undoubtedly, the captives called upon their faith at that point of separation when death appeared imminent. As time passed, however, the captives had to increasingly negotiate between Indian mysticism and Christianity. If in fact they lost their native language, then it is reasonable to question to what extent they retained their Christian faith. The *Stockholm syndrome* demonstrates that captives, most likely out of survival instinct, often mimic the attitudes and manners of their captors to the point that the two are indistinguishable. This most likely was the case with the captives.

All the narratives, with the exception of Fontaneda's, indicate that the Indians considered their white captives as having possessed shaman-like and even superhuman qualities. If the testimony is reliable, we can postulate that the Indians, therefore, permitted adoption into the tribe since their captives possessed abilities that were considered essential for the maintenance of tribal life. Unfortunately, no eye-witness corroboration exists. The Indian perspective remains silent and can only speak through the European narrators' pens. The narratives are based on the

captives' own observations and depictions of the Indians largely recounted from memory. For this lack of reliable reports, scholars have little choice but to rely on what James Axtell called "exact imagining," or that interpretative ability derived from precise historical facts combined with artistic translation of secondary information to render meaning of obscure historical events for modern readers.<sup>63</sup>

Several factors contribute to this lack of primary sources. First, few native groups employed a system of record keeping. Although a very few groups like the Maya and Inca utilized glyphs or pictographs, no tribe possessed an alphabet.<sup>64</sup> Second, even when the Spaniards discovered Indian records, like the Mayan codices, most were considered inconsequential and so destroyed. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who accompanied Cortés during his conquest of Tenochtitlan (modern Mexico City), described how the Spaniards used various Mayan artifacts and vellum to fuel their campfires.<sup>65</sup> Third, few Spaniards ever consulted with the Indians because Europeans questioned the native "rationality." As late as 1590 the Jesuit historian, José de Acosta, informed the Iberians that "it is not very important to know what the Indians themselves are wont to tell of their beginnings and origins."<sup>66</sup> Despite the disregard, enough historical, archaeological, and anthropological evidence survives

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<sup>63</sup>Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, 7.

<sup>64</sup>Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Indian Heritage of America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 13.

<sup>65</sup>Díaz, Capítulo CXV.

<sup>66</sup>José de Acosta, *Natural and Moral Histories of the Indies* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), 72.

so that scholars are able to “exactly imagine” the attitudes, traditions, and myths of the Native Americans.

When Columbus and those who followed explored and colonized the Americas, they encountered diverse cultures as complex as any found in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Scholars estimate that some 2,200 different language groups and dialects predominated from North to South America.<sup>67</sup> Each society developed its own unique culture largely revolving around its primary mode of subsistence—agricultural, hunter-gatherer, etc. The societal complexities, however, became lost on the European colonizers, the majority of whom disdained aboriginal peoples. At the very beginning, Columbus reported to the Spanish crown that the Indians “should be good servants” and that “they would easily be made Christians, for they appeared . . . to have no religion.”<sup>68</sup>

In many respects, Columbus was correct in his observation regarding Indians’ lack of “religion,” but only when applying the European ideal of a hierarchical institution comprised of dogmatic ritual and ceremony built around a canon of belief. For Spain and much of early-modern Europe, Christianity as defined by Roman Catholicism was the only true religion. It was a religion not only of faith, but also one organized around a powerful and very visible Church edifice entrenched in the

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<sup>67</sup>Josephy, 12.

<sup>68</sup>Hernando Colon, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus, Being his own log-book, letters and dispatches with connecting narrative drawn from the Life of the Admiral by his son Hernando Colon and other contemporary historians*, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 56.

politics of Medieval Europe. When faith wavered, one had only to look to the Pope or parish priest as affirmation of God, or to participate in a liturgical ceremony.<sup>69</sup>

European concepts of religion, salvation, and property had no equivalent in Indian frames of reference. In fact, Europeans had special difficulties in explaining European religious concepts since most Indian groups had no word for “religion” in their vocabulary.<sup>70</sup> Contrary to Christian principles of land possession, American Indians took a holistic attitude toward nature and geography. The goal was harmony and balance between all things, not possession.<sup>71</sup> To achieve this, the American Indians turned to mysticism and valued those who demonstrated the ability to achieve communion with the spiritual forces, which in turn could reveal how best to effect the harmonic balance.<sup>72</sup> The shaman, then, was essential to tribal life, and as

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<sup>69</sup>See Muir, 7. Roman Catholicism preserved patriarchal and hierarchal systems whose economic powerbase depended on acquisition and possession of real and chattel property while preparing for what many hoped to be the Messianic return. An excellent examination of Christian dogma and a comparative analysis of Western and Native American *mentalités* is offered by Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: the Western Spirit against the Wilderness*.

<sup>70</sup>Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *Native American Religions: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 6. Daniel G. Brinton further scrutinizes the polysynthetic structures of Indian dialects, which he asserts hinders abstractions and generalizations. *Myths of the Americas: Symbolism and Mythology of the Indians of the Americas* (Blauvelt, N.Y.: Multimedia Publishing Corp., 1976), 7 – 8.

<sup>71</sup>The Indians had no concept of land ownership, but they considered the tribe as occupying a territorial space limited by natural boundaries that separate the space of others. By necessity, hunter-gatherer societies had to continuously cross territorial spaces for sustenance. See Van Gennep, 15 – 25.

<sup>72</sup>Carmody, 8 – 14.



the captives demonstrated and modern scholars reaffirm, the shamans commanded the greatest respect.

Despite the obvious incongruence between Western religion and Indian mysticism, the Iberians were shocked to find Christian-like practices and beliefs among the pagan aboriginals. Spanish priests observed in Peru and northern Mexico ritual cleansing, similar to baptism. The “deluge tradition,” pervasive throughout American societies, was strikingly similar to the Genesis narrative of Noah and the flood.<sup>73</sup> The Indian trickster fables had parallels to the Biblical serpent that tricked Eve into tasting of that which had been forbidden.<sup>74</sup> Because of these and other recognizable myths, the Iberians rationalized that Indians obviously fit into some Biblical frame of reference. Sixteenth-century commentaries seemingly accepted the idea that Indians must somehow have descended from Adam, so they were capable of receiving the Gospel.<sup>75</sup> Some, like Pedro Martir de Anglería (Peter Matyr) in 1511, went so far as to speculate that Indians were descendants of King Solomon or

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<sup>73</sup>Brinton, 213 – 228.

<sup>74</sup>Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). The trickster was represented in various forms, sometimes half human, half animal and could often metamorphose between the two. In Western lore, one trickster parallel is the serpent of Genesis who tempts Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of good and evil.

<sup>75</sup>Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdéz, *Historia general y natural de la Indias* (Madrid, Ediciones Atlas, 1959), Tomo 1, Capítulo III.

perhaps even one of the lost tribes of Israel.<sup>76</sup> Still others like Oviedo and Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa weighed Greek myths, such as the lost continent of Atlantis, as a possible explanation for Indian origins.<sup>77</sup>

While the myriad debates over Indian origins persisted for two centuries, the Iberians and other Europeans failed to recognize that the similarities derived from what Carl Jung called “the psychic life of the primitive tribe” from which all cultural beliefs—Old World and New—possibly emerged.<sup>78</sup> This concept commands attention when Indian myth patterns are juxtaposed and situated within the milieu of world mythologies. Despite cultural nuances, a recognizable myth pattern emerges. In the various Indian hero traditions, the common ritual motif of separation, initiation, return is again repeated. For example, the Toltec deity, Quetzalcoatl, was of virgin birth and dwelt in a distant land where he served as high priest. He gave mankind time and the calendar, and was tricked into a journey by the spirit of night when Quetzalcoatl set out to return to the east. While belaboring his journey, night

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<sup>76</sup>A survey of sixteenth-century thought concerning the Indians is offered by Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492 – 1729* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 1967).

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>78</sup>C. G. Jung, “The Psychology of the Child Archetype,” in C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, eds., *Essays on Science and Mythology: The Myths of the Divine Child and the Divine Maiden* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 73.

descended on the earth until the hero-god returned as daylight from the east, bringing with him the boon.<sup>79</sup>

Among many beliefs, the one that proved fateful was the Indian legend that prophesied the return of the “dawn heroes,” who were described as “fair complexioned, mighty warriors, and destined to return from the east to claim their ancient power.”<sup>80</sup> When Montezuma first met Cortés, the Aztec king explained:

Some have affirmed that you are gods that grasp the thunder, command the elements, and compel the wild beasts to obey your directions, [but now we know] you are made like other men. . . . In a word we believe that the great prince you obey is descended from Quezalcoal, lord of the seven caves of the Navatlaques, and lawful king of those seven nations that gave rise to the Mexican empire: for, from the tradition of many ages, we know that he departed from these countries, to conquer new regions in the east, leaving a promise that in process of time his descendants should return, to model our laws and reform our government.<sup>81</sup>

Similar ideas seemingly permeated the various Indian beliefs throughout the American continents. In Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, he recounts how the Indians marveled at his and his companions’ curative powers by reveling that they “were truly children of the sun.”<sup>82</sup> It did not take long, however, for the Indians to realize

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<sup>79</sup>Brinton, 195 – 197. See also Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 358 – 359.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>81</sup>As reported by Antonio de Solís, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico, by the Celebrated Hernán Cortes*. Vol. 1. (London, 1759), 67 – 68. For a general survey of Mexican mythical concepts, refer to Kay Almere Read and Jason J. González, *Handbook of Mesoamerican Mythology* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000).

<sup>82</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo veynte y dos. The phrase *hijos del sol* (children of the sun) as used in the tales of Ortiz and Cabeza de Vaca, was repeated in the

that their supposed heroes were mortal and perhaps even evil. A cacique of a Floridian tribe urged his Spanish captive, Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda, to admonish the other Spanish captives "who for their own fault are captives now, a people whom once we held to be gods come down from the sky."<sup>83</sup>

Although the Iberians' overall reputation suffered a decline amongst the Indians, those captives who returned (except Fontaneda) to relate their tale insisted that they, with the help of God, were able to work miracles that elevated their status with the Indians. Although there are variances in the stories, a common pattern is evident. Cabeza de Vaca related how he became a respected medicine man following many miraculous cures. He went so far as to claim that he resurrected the dead.<sup>84</sup> Hans Stade claimed that through supplication, God responded by allowing Stade to command the weather, divine signs of nature, heal the sick, and interpret dreams. Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, described how the captive Juan Ortiz survived his

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account of Aguilar and Guerrero, and referenced North American folk tales that prophesied bearded gods would arrive from the direction of the sunrise to conquer and rule, and thus must be the children of the great sun god. According to Cabeza de Vaca's account, the Indians first applied the term to his party when the Indians discovered that the Christians had an uncanny ability to heal the sick: "En todo este tiempo nos venían de muchas parte a buscar, y decían que verdaderamente nosotros éramos hijos del sol." Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo diez y fiete. Generally, most all North American tribes, like the peoples of the ancient Levant, personified the sun, according to one scholar, "as the fecundator of the female earth. . . .He leaves his house in the east each morning. . . .During the day he passes across the sky to his western house. His path is analogous to the true path each individual hopes for in his or her life." David Leeming and Jake Page, *The Mythology of Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>83</sup>Fontaneda, 34.

<sup>84</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo veynte y dos.

ordeal by performing a seemingly miraculous feat by killing a cougar, an animal associated with the Indian sun god, with one arrow shot in the blackness of night.<sup>85</sup> According to one of Jerónimo de Aguilar's chroniclers, Aguilar gained similar respect by refusing the advances of Indian women. His abstinence proved to the captors that "he was not a man," thus worthy of "great esteem" by his Indian cacique, who "entrusted his wife and household to [Aguilar's] care."<sup>86</sup> A century later, Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, the "happy captive," imitated Aguilar's chastity, which also won similar respect from his Araucanian captors in Chile.<sup>87</sup>

Miracles aside, it is plausible that the captives won from their captors some form of respect and admiration that assured the individual's survival. Whereas European attitudes and prejudices may have prevented wholehearted acceptance of foreigners, the same was not inherently true of most American Indian cultures. The

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<sup>85</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, Capítulo III; Garcilaso refers to the animal as "león" (lion), but most likely it was a North American cougar which once populated the southeast. The jaguar is the only other large cat known to have roamed North America, but its range was limited to the southwest. Predatory creatures such as large cats had significance in Indian folklore as described by Read and González, *Handbook of Mesoamerican Mythology*, 247. Garcilaso's depiction of the animal as a "lion" would have prompted comparison with the African variety, although the author explained that the American "lion" was not as large. Nonetheless, Garcilaso surmised that "after all they are lions and the name is enough" (*al fin son leones y el nombre les basta*). Those readers familiar with scripture and/or biblical tales would have also drawn parallels between Ortiz and Daniel in the lions' den, Daniel 6.

<sup>86</sup>"... el señor de ahí adelante tuvo en mucho a Aguilar, confiándole su mujer y casa;" Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, *Crónica de la Nueva España*, 192.

<sup>87</sup>Francisco Núñez, *Cautiverio feliz*, 112 – 14.

adoption of outsiders was a common practice and served various purposes. Indians often took captives to replenish the tribe's population when a number of its warriors died in battle. Some were adopted if they possessed certain skills essential for the tribe's survival. The captives must have contributed something of importance to tribal life considering the Indians preserved their life. The narratives hint that some emotional bonding occurred. Stade, Aguilar, Ortiz, and Cabeza de Vaca reported that their Indian masters actually wept when the captives rejoined their brethren, so obviously some affection had developed. The evidentiary void prompted one captivity chronicler to lament that "these and many other things are said . . . which I omit to write because they are not so well verified."<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, none of the captivity rituals can be substantiated either by Indian or Iberian testimony. The narrators instead relied on European contrivances and testimonies of those who purported to have first-hand knowledge so as to assure the reader that they had related "true histories." Hans Stade recruited a renowned professor to lend credibility to his narrative, which opens with the professor's lengthy argument as to why he "believe[d] that Hans Stade has faithfully reported his history and adventures."<sup>89</sup> The contemporary reader of these narratives had only to rely on the truthfulness of the narrators, each of whom had ulterior motives for publishing their story, the most common being that each sought acceptance by the

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<sup>88</sup>" . . . y estas y otras muchas cosas se dicen de Aquilar, que por no ser tan averiguadas dexo de escribir;" Cervantes de Salazar, 194.

<sup>89</sup>Stade, 21.

European community following interaction with what Christians considered savage and perhaps demonic.

#### 4.4.2 *Negotiating Re-entry*

Underneath the ritualized structure and symbolisms was fear and dread—the captives confronted the possibility of death at the separation. Also there existed the physical and spiritual passage across territorial and sacred spaces. Throughout the initiation, the threat of death constantly loomed until the captive won acceptance into the society. When the captive returned, however, he again confronted fear, both of rejection and of death, and he confronted another passage across a cultural and territorial threshold. In the conversation between Aguilar and Guerrero, the latter explains that he cannot return with Aguilar because the Spaniards will not accept the fact that Guerrero has taken on the appearance of the Indians, nor will they accept his Indian family. Aguilar confronts this reality himself when the Spaniards exhibit revulsion at his *Indianized* appearance.<sup>90</sup> Aguilar's and Guerrero's tale exemplifies the challenges that all captives faced when offered the opportunity to return. To be accepted, they would have had to prove their loyalty to the Christian faith despite their obvious assimilation into Indian society. Furthermore, failure to reassert their faith would have risked heresy, which carried with it the threat of retribution (this will be further discussed in *Chapter Five*). For this reason, the captivity narratives would serve as testaments of faith which, to sixteenth-century logic, was affirmed given the assumption that God allowed these captives to survive.

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<sup>90</sup>Díaz, Capítulo XVIII.

Contemporaries would have had little reason to doubt that the captives who returned and related their ordeals affirmed Christian beliefs because it became clear from the language used to relay the literary sagas that the individual's survival and eventual return was nothing less than miraculous. The narratives emphasize how the captives repeatedly called out to God, who responded by working signs and wonders through them so that the pagan captors could see manifested the glory and power of the Christian deity. By comparison, this theme of supplication runs throughout the milieu of mythic prose. Campbell asserts that it "is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world of literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by . . . the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region."<sup>91</sup> Contemporaries familiar with Biblical heroes would have had little trouble drawing comparisons that would support the idea that the captives returned as Christian heroes.

The narratives emphasized that the captives called upon their faith repeatedly and even to the moment of rescue. In his moments of peril, Stade recounts how he "remembered the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and how he suffered innocently . . . whereby I consoled myself and became more resigned."<sup>92</sup> When a Frenchman, who was trading with his captors, refused assistance, Stade claims he "tearfully began to sing [a] hymn."<sup>93</sup> In Garcilaso's account of Ortiz's initiation, Ortiz was

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<sup>91</sup>Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 97.

<sup>92</sup>Stade, 63.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 68.



reported to have repeatedly thanked “God for having delivered him,” and that Ortiz “commended himself to God, invoking his name and making his confessions” once death became certain.<sup>94</sup> Throughout Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, he too confesses that “we . . . never lost confidence in the idea that God our Lord would provide the surest relief.”<sup>95</sup>

Much more than relief, the captives’ deity, according to the narratives, provided something more useful—miracles. Stade’s account is filled with descriptions of seemingly supernatural abilities that allow the captive to affect the environment, divine astrological signs, interpret dreams, heal the sick, and even bring abundant food:

. . . I begged the Lord from the depth of my heart that he would, through me, show his might. . . . When I had ended the prayer, the wind and rain came rushing on, and rained within six paces from us, and at the spot whereon we stood, we felt none. So the savage, Parwaa, said, ‘Now I see you have spoken with thy God,’ and we caught several fishes. . . . [It] was told to the other savages that I had spoken with my God, and that such and such things had come to pass, whereat the others wondered.<sup>96</sup>

Also through supplication, Juan Ortiz reportedly killed a cougar; a feat which the Indians considered as “something sacred and even superhuman.”<sup>97</sup> Cabeza de Vaca

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<sup>94</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 66.

<sup>95</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Capítulo ocho*.

<sup>96</sup>Stade, 106 – 107.

<sup>97</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 68.

went so far as to claim the ability to even resurrect the dead.<sup>98</sup> The narratives point out that it is because of such miracles that the captive/captor relationship underwent a change that insured the captive's survival. The texts reveal how the captives found increasing acceptance into the captor society as they took on shaman-like qualities thanks to supplications to the Christian deity. Stade's captors reportedly told him that "he was a better prophet than their Miraka."<sup>99</sup> Because of the curative abilities of Cabeza de Vaca and his companions, the Indians along Cabeza de Vaca's route openly welcomed the self-anointed healers. Undoubtedly, Cabeza de Vaca embraced and perhaps paraded his reputation since, as he observes, "the medicine men have the greatest freedom."<sup>100</sup>

Although the profuseness of Christian symbolism played to the prejudices of a European audience, the imagery nonetheless obfuscated the realities. It concealed how the captives themselves actually won over their captors through a negotiation with Indian mysticism. The captives won assurance of their survival only after convincing the Indians of their indispensable assistance. At this point, the Indians adopted those captives, most likely, considering that the captives offered something

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<sup>98</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo veynte y dos.

<sup>99</sup>Stade, 102.

<sup>100</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo catorce. Joseph Campbell's comparative analysis of world mythology supports the captive's observation: In every primitive tribe . . . we find the medicine [men] in the center of society. . . . [They] make both visible and public the systems of symbolic fantasy that are present in the psyche of every adult member of their society. They are the leaders in this infantile game and the lightning conductors of common anxiety. They fight the demons . . ." Campbell, 100 – 101.

of value to the tribe. This allowed a shift in the power relationship when the captive went from fearing to being feared. Hans Stade's narrative related how after his incantations and signs that summoned God's curative powers, his interpretation of dreams and natural omens, and his uncanny ability to command the environment, the Tupi women who once tortured him now showed fear and even reverence. He describes how they went from abusing him to pleading for their life: "My son—thou wilt surely not let us die'. . . . Thus they left me alone for awhile, not knowing quite what to make of me."<sup>101</sup> The Tupi eventually called him a wizard, and his Tupi master adopted Stade as a son.<sup>102</sup> This same dynamic runs through the narratives of Ortiz and Cabeza de Vaca. Following Ortiz's "miraculous" slaughter of the lion (cougar) with "a single dart," the Indians "bestowed many honors upon him and increased these honors exceedingly."<sup>103</sup> When Indians learned of Cabeza de Vaca's curative powers, he noted how "they treated us well, and refrained from eating to give us food. They also gave us hides and other small things."<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, when Cabeza de Vaca demonstrated that he was a shrewd trader, thanks to his intertribal connections brought about by his reputation as a shaman, the Indians revered him even more. He boasted, "I liked this trade, because it gave me the freedom to go

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<sup>101</sup>Stade, 81.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>103</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 72.

<sup>104</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Capítulo quince*.

wherever I wanted. I was obligated to nothing and was not a slave.”<sup>105</sup> Once a powerbroker, the captive assumed a newfound status never before realized.

The return to Christendom thus became problematic and uncertain. In his adopted culture, the captive-turned-shaman/hero was much respected, even revered. He found that the Indians bestowed more respect and dignity than had the Spaniards before the separation since class ascendancy proved near impossible in feudal Europe. If the return was to prove successful, the captive would have to obtain re-acceptance from his European kin, many of whom may have questioned the captive’s loyalty and Christian faith. How better than to transform himself (consciously or unconsciously) into a Christian hero via the captivity narrative?

At a personal level, the individual captives most likely underwent a spiritual awakening of sorts as a result of the ritual process of separation, initiation, return. They discovered that the people they once arrogantly considered slaves and “savages” could become “masters.” Joseph Campbell explained that this is the universal message of the hero-myth:

The agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth. Art, literature, myth and cult, philosophy, and ascetic disciplines are instruments to help the individual past his limiting horizons . . . . to a realization transcending all experiences of form.<sup>106</sup>

When they crossed the cultural threshold, they became New World *entities*—syntheses of Indian and European cultures—who could serve as its emissaries. The

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<sup>105</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo diez y seis.

<sup>106</sup>Campbell, 190.

transformation resulted from captive negotiation of seemingly divergent mythologies. As acculturated beings convinced of Indian humanity, the captives became “cultural brokers” who would entreat their compatriots to show kindness and mercy to the Indians rather than subject them to wholesale enslavement on the encomiendas. Cabeza de Vaca tells how he had “many quarrels with the Christians because they wanted to enslave the Indians.”<sup>107</sup> Jerónimo de Aguilar convinced Cortés to give letters of safe passage to Aguilar’s captors “so that if any other Spaniard came to that port they would treat the Indians well and do them no harm.”<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Juan Ortiz convinced Hernando De Soto to show mercy to the Indian cacique, whom Ortiz came to consider as kin.<sup>109</sup> While contemporary ecclesiastic and secular scholars debated the nature of the Indians—devils or animals, Israel’s lost tribes or the forgotten inhabitants of Atlantis, people of the Greek myths or Chinese descendants—the captives were certain only of their humanity.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *The Account*, 109. I borrowed the term “cultural brokers” from Margaret Connell Szasz, ed. *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Brokers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

<sup>108</sup>Díaz, Capítulo XVIII.

<sup>109</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, *The Narrative of the Expedition of Hernando De Soto, By the Gentleman of Elvas*, 152.

<sup>110</sup>For a comparison of the various European attitudes as regards the American Indians, see Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492 – 1729*; also refer to Robert Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Myth and Method in the Study of American Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

More than any other person, the captive best understood the Indian worldview and learned that in their humanity they possessed wants and needs similar to that of the Europeans. The Indians struggled against sickness and death; they sought comfort through their spirituality and turned to the shamans as Europeans turned to their priests for answers; they respected the strong, ridiculed the weak; they sought power over their fate through sacred rituals and through complex inter/intra-tribal politico-economic exchanges. Also, the physical markers separating the captive European from the savage Indian became obscured to the point where the captive himself could no longer differentiate—his body and dress signified Indian. Language, perhaps the most durable signifier of culture, also underwent such transformation that most captives so forgot their native language that communication with kin proved difficult.<sup>111</sup> The manifold effects of the initiation were thus profound and led the captive hero to his ultimate boon of the deeper appreciation for the unfamiliar other. In the end, the *other* became the *familiar* and the once *familiar*, the *other*.

This ultimate meaning of the narratives became obfuscated by the deeply embedded rituals and symbols used to cast the ordeals as Christian sagas. Also lost in

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<sup>111</sup>The loss of the captive's native language in a relatively short period of time is one of the phenomenal aspects of all the sagas. The eye-witnesses to the return of Jerónimo de Aguilar and Juan Ortiz noted how they could barely pronounce Spanish words. Hans Stade, who was held captive the least amount of time (about eight months), alludes that he, too, lost the ability to communicate in European languages. He commented that once he reunited with a French rescue party, he "bade them welcome in the savage tongue." Considering he conversed with a Frenchman relatively soon after his capture, one must conclude that he lost this communicative signifier. Stade, 110.

these intricacies and double entendres were the individual captives, who came away from their ordeal psychologically marred. Buried, too, were the Indians, who could only speak through the narrators. The narratives instead mirror only that which was important to the Europeans; acceptance of the rescued captive depended on it. Although the narratives purported to be “true histories,” in the process of telling and retelling the sagas, the facts became less and less important. Substantiation of the superiority of Christianity and the savagery of the Indian was of imminent concern to those who penned the tales. They had to magnify the idea that the hostages’ survival resulted from God’s mercy. Through these captives, God demonstrated that the Christians would prevail even in a godless land. Stade emphasized the point by quoting Psalm 107 at length: “. . . they go down again to the depths. . . . Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress.”<sup>112</sup>

As stories, the narratives each afforded the reader a glimpse into an unimaginable world. The contemporary audience, however, was not drawn to the narratives simply for the historicity, but rather for entertainment. Jerónimo de Aguilar’s chroniclers, for example, noted how Cortés’s men took pleasure in hearing Aguilar recount his saga around campfires.<sup>113</sup> With each retelling, patterns began to emerge that emphasized heroic journeys and cultural edification, thus the narratives acquired a new dimension of meaning through the ritual and accompanying imagery.

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<sup>112</sup>Stade, 3.

<sup>113</sup>Cervantes de Salazar, *Cronica de la Nueva España*, 191.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CAPTIVITY IMAGERY: IDENTIFYING SELF AND SOCIETY

The ritualized structure of captivity narratives is only one element that offers insight into the deeper historical meanings of highly subjective texts. Suffused within the ritual is certain imagery that, like the ritual component, is trans-textual and is thus repeated throughout the captivity narratives of Aguilar, Guerrero, Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca, Stade, d'Escalante, Francisco Núñez, and others. Their narratives place much emphasis on physical and religious symbolism that, when situated within the historical context, reveals an intense concern with identity. Its importance is manifested through various signifiers with the physical appearance of the captive being most evident. All of the captivity narratives emphasize external transformation during the ritual process of separation, initiation, and return. The captives entered the exotic world in one guise but returned from it in another. They each shed the very physical traits that identified the subject as a civilized Christian—hair, clothes, language; they traded the civilized garb for that of the uncivilized “other.”

The emphasis afforded certain imagery by all of the narratives communicates a common affinity for a nominative form. The imagery employed in the narratives may be considered codes that revealed deeper meanings to sixteenth-century society. The task, then, is to decipher the codes—the imagery—that the chroniclers employed in relating the meanings of captivity. In so doing, sixteenth-century attitudes become



more evident, especially as they relate to American captivity and its larger implication to that society.<sup>1</sup> Deciphering these codes requires 1) a description of the specific signifiers (images) related to the body and religion, and then 2) a cross-cultural comparison of those signifiers as understood by sixteenth-century colonizers and, eventually, their post-colonial descendants.

### 5.1 The Body and Religion in Captivity Imagery

The captivity narratives present several images related to external physical markers and religious themes. Most prevalent are the ideas of nakedness, bodily markings (tattoos and hair styles), language, and chastity. These images had religious significance to contemporaries, but ultimately they addressed a more immediate concern of the identity of self and its place in the larger society. The New World discoveries, their revelations, and potential meanings imparted a collective unease in the minds of most Europeans that reflected in the narrative language.

Throughout the captivity narratives, the chroniclers stressed the imagery of nakedness. Stade repeatedly reminded the reader that he went perpetually naked: “. . . they carried me . . . naked, as I always went among them.”<sup>2</sup> During eight months of captivity, Stade indicated that his skin was severely sun-burnt, and his color went from white to dark brown. Cabeza de Vaca opens his narrative by lamenting how he

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<sup>1</sup>Several scholars support the theoretical validity and dissect the historical application of Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist approach. See Lawrence Rosen, “Language, History, and the Logic of Inquiry in the Works of Lévi-Strauss and Sartre,” in Ino Rossi, ed., *The Unconscious in Culture*, 389 – 423; and Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*.

<sup>2</sup>Stade, 89.

“wandered lost and naked through many and very strange lands.”<sup>3</sup> The lament repeated throughout the narrative: “Those of us who survived were as naked as the day we were born and had lost everything we had. . . . We were in such a state that . . . we looked like the picture of death.”<sup>4</sup> The chronicler of the De Soto expedition through Florida recorded that a cadre of De Soto’s soldiers came across the captive, Juan Ortiz, “naked and sun-burnt.”<sup>5</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega described how the Indians immediately stripped Ortiz naked and forced him to run the gauntlet.<sup>6</sup>

This imagery of nakedness runs through the narratives of Aguilar, Fontaneda, Falcón, and Francisco Núñez as well. Its biblical connotation evokes the idea of shame. Fontaneda described that the Indians “go naked, except some used deer-skins . . . to cover their shame.”<sup>7</sup> The Book of Genesis records that when Adam and Eve tasted of the forbidden fruit, they hid themselves because of their nakedness, and thus God clothed them.<sup>8</sup> After the emancipated Israelites gathered at Sinai, they fashioned an idol that brought about Moses’s wrath when he saw that “the people were naked; for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their

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<sup>3</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, Proem.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>5</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, 149.

<sup>6</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 39.

<sup>7</sup>“Andan desnudos . . . que se cubren solamente sus berguensas.” Fontaneda. *Memoir of Do. d’Escalante Fontaneda Respecting Florida*, 70.

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 3: 10, 21.

enemies.”<sup>9</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, nakedness had also been associated with evil and witchcraft as described by the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>10</sup> Whether its association was shameful or evil, ultimately, nakedness denoted savagery, or a condition opposite of civilized. One removed of one’s clothing was one stripped of the cultural accoutrements of civilization and the idea of self.

Perhaps more repugnant to European sensibilities were indelible markings such as tattoos. The chroniclers relate that Juan Ortiz, besides being naked and sun-burnt, had “his arms tattooed after their manner, and he in no respect differing from them [the Indians].”<sup>11</sup> According to Jerónimo de Aguilar’s chroniclers, Gonzalo Guerrero refused to rejoin the Spaniards because, among other reasons, he indicated that he had his “face tattooed and . . . ears pierced, what would the Spaniards say should they see me in this guise?”<sup>12</sup> Tattoos, like nakedness, carried biblical connotations. The Mosaic laws expressly condemned bodily scarifications: “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh . . . nor print any marks upon you.”<sup>13</sup>

Like nakedness and tattoos, hair, too, is a common image repeated throughout the captivity narratives. Díaz explains how Aguilar “had his hair shorn

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<sup>9</sup>Exodus 33: 25.

<sup>10</sup>Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487).

<sup>11</sup>Gentleman of Elvas, 149.

<sup>12</sup>“¿que yo tengo labrada la cara e horadas las orejas; qué dirán de mí desque me vean esos españoles, ir desta manera?” Díaz, *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de Mexico*, 121.

<sup>13</sup>Leviticus 19: 28.

like an Indian slave.”<sup>14</sup> Stade recounts how the Indian women shaved his eyebrows with a rudimentary shard of crystal.<sup>15</sup> Hair, like the other images, is again accorded significance in biblical laws, which were designed to separate God’s chosen from the heathen. Moses instructed the Hebrews to “not mar the corners of thy beard. . . . nor make any baldness between your eyes.”<sup>16</sup> Columbus took note of the native hair styles:

They shave some parts of their heads, and in others wear long tufts of matted hair, which have an indescribably ridiculous appearance: in short, whatever would be looked upon in our country as characteristic of a madman, is here regarded by the highest of the Indians as a mark of distinction.<sup>17</sup>

Hair has an added symbolic element representative of power. Although the Tupi women shaved his eyebrows, Stade resisted when they attempted to shave his beard: “This I would not suffer, and said, that they should kill me with my beard.”<sup>18</sup> Obviously, Stade struggled to maintain those signifiers that identified him as a European Christian. Despite his protests, the Indians finally had their way and cut it

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<sup>14</sup>“ . . . tresquilado a manera de indio esclavos.” Díaz, 123.

<sup>15</sup>Stade, 63.

<sup>16</sup>Leviticus 19: 27 and Deuteronomy 14: 1. While all of Catholic Europe did not always follow certain Mosaic laws, they understood that hair had cultural significance, and could even distinguish individual status. The lay could easily recognize monks because of the manner in which they shaved their hair.

<sup>17</sup>Christopher Columbus, *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus with Other Original Documents, Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, trans. R. J. Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1847), 62.

<sup>18</sup>Stade, 63.

off, thus further debasing Stade by rendering him powerless even over his own body and appearance. For any Christian to undergo the physical debasement from that of civilized Christian to pagan savage no doubt took deep psychological tolls. Furthermore, the biblical idea that hair equates with power was certainly not lost on Stade, whose profuse references to scripture clearly demonstrated his knowledge of the Bible. No where is the theme of hair more prominent in the Bible than in the tale of Samson, who tells Delilah that “if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”<sup>19</sup> For Stade, his hair symbolized the last vestige of power stripped from him by his Indian captors.

The captives lost their language, too, and language also had symbolic value to contemporaries. The emphasis given it by the captivity narrators suggests that language had tremendous significance. In his prologue to the first published Spanish grammar text (1492), Antonio de Nebrija, Bishop of Avila, stated the Spanish concept of language: “Among all the arts, foremost are those of language, which sets us apart from the wild animals.”<sup>20</sup> The captivity chroniclers seemingly agreed. Garcilaso dwells on the fact that Ortiz “had forgotten even so much as to how to pronounce the name of his native land.”<sup>21</sup> The narratives of Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade, Fontaneda, and others indicate that, once rescued, the captives had to resort to

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<sup>19</sup>Judges 16: 17.

<sup>20</sup>“Entre todos los artes, primeros están los de la lengua, que nos fija aparte de los animals salvajes.” Elio Antonio de Nebrija, *Gramática de las lengua castellana* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), Prólogo.

<sup>21</sup>Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, 79.

sign language in order to communicate. When the captives lost their ability to communicate in their native language they also lost, in the eyes of their peers, the last vestige of civility.

By use of the idea (image) of what I refer to as chastity, many narrators attempted to convince their readers that they maintained their sanctity through refusal to cohabit with the Indians despite the lengthy sojourn. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, a secondary chronicler of Jerónimo de Aguilar's captivity, points out that Aguilar:

. . . lived so chastely that he did not even raise his eyes to the women. . . others told him he was not a man because he preferred to be in the cold to being embraced and warmed by [the Indian girl]. He, although he was vacillating many times, finally determined to conquer his sensuality and fulfill what he promised God, which was not to approach an infidel woman, in order that He might free him from the captivity in which he was.<sup>22</sup>

Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, the happy captive, also devoted much ink assuring the reader that he had resisted the charms of the young Indian girls. He affirmed "that we Christians may not cohabit with women who are neither our wives nor of our faith."<sup>23</sup> Interestingly the other narratives tend to avoid the issue, although

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<sup>22</sup>Como después hizo, en cosas de mucho tomo viendo que vivía tan castamente que aun los ojos no alzaba a las mujeres . . . otras le decía que no era hombre, porque quería más estar al frío que abrazado y abrigado con ella; él aunque estuvo vacilando muchas veces, al cabo se determine de vencer a su sensualidad y cumplir lo que a Dios había prometido, quele librase del captiverio en que estaba." Cervantes de Salazar, *Cronica de la Nueva España*, Capítulo XXVIII.

<sup>23</sup>Francisco Núñez, *Cautiverio feliz*, 115.

Garcilaso hints at some relationship that may have developed between Ortiz and his master's daughter.

The Spanish concept of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) underlies the chastity imagery. Having slowly evolved during centuries of Christian struggles with the Moors in Iberia and then invoked by Isabella in her attempt to rid her realm of Jews, the idea of Spanish purity not only defined racial attitudes but also determined one's legal status. It formed the core concept of identity and what it meant to be Spanish. Those captives, therefore, who cohabited with Indian women and fathered children of mixed blood somehow polluted the blood and blurred the distinction between Christians and pagans. Aguilar's narrative demonstrates the point. According to Díaz, Aguilar described how Guerrero could not return because he had cohabited with Indian women and had mestizo children who would not be accepted in the Spanish world.<sup>24</sup> Cervantes de Salazar's chronicle, however, juxtaposed Aguilar as the one who maintained his purity, thus proved worthy to rejoin a society that recognized the sanctity of *limpieza de sangre*.<sup>25</sup>

Considered altogether, the imagery that suffused the captivity narratives signified the chronicler's concept of meaning as related to the cross-cultural exchanges having occurred during captivity. The implications proved immense for

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<sup>24</sup>“Hermano Aguilar, yo soy casado, y tengo tres hijos, y tiénneme por cacique y capitán cuando hay guerras; íos vos con Dios; ¿que yo tengo labrada la cara e horadadas las orejas; qué dirán de mí desque me vean esos españoles, ir desta manera? E ya veis estos mis treshijos cuán boinicos son. Por vida vuestra, que me deis desas cuentas verdes que traéis, para ellos, y dire que mis hermanos me las dieron de mi tierra.” Díaz, Capítulo XVII.

<sup>25</sup>Cervantes de Salazar, Capítulo XXVIII.

sixteenth-century thinkers: What were the implications arising from the fact that Christians could be stripped of their Western accoutrements and subjected to savagery? Are the captives who returned Spaniards or Indians, Christians or pagans, heretics or heroes? Should they be rejected or embraced? No one could adequately address the collective unease produced by these questions. Although the answers proved ambiguous, the captivity narratives attempted to provide some reassurances in that these captives returned thanks to their faith in God, who miraculously preserved His Christian servants; all was thus right. There remained, however, those like Gonzalo Guerrero who refused to return, which caused considerable consternation. What does it mean when a Christian rejects civilization in order to embrace savagery? Contemporaries like Francisco Nuñez, the “happy captive,” answered heresy, but the captives and their mestizo descendants rejected the charge as would later generations who hailed the defectors as heroes.

## 5.2 Identity and Captivity: Then and Now

The first notable defection of Christians to native realms occurred as early as 1494 when a member of Columbus’s crew, Miguel Díaz, attempted to avoid punishment by escaping to the nearest Indian village.<sup>26</sup> Over the course of the next century, hundreds of similar incidents occurred. The captivity narratives make references to some willful defections. When Bernal Díaz del Castillo recorded Jerónimo de Aguilar’s captivity tale, he emphasized that Aguilar’s companion,

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<sup>26</sup>Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus and the Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus*, 59.



Gonzalo Guerrero, refused to return. He had been *indianized*. Years later, some survivors of Cabeza de Vaca's party also opted to join the Indians rather than risk the perils in search of a Spanish colony; they, too, never returned.<sup>27</sup> Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán made reference to the fact that many Spaniards, who were captured during the protracted Araucanian Wars (c. 1550 – 1650) along the southern frontier in Chile, also chose to join the Indians rather than return home.<sup>28</sup>

These examples point to one of the more intriguing aspects of the earliest cultural contacts regarding those American colonizers and explorers who, once carried away by the Indians, refused to rejoin the society of their birth when given the opportunity to do so. This phenomenon prevailed in some American colonial societies—Spain, England, France, Portugal—and posed serious psycho-social difficulties for the European colonizers. The English proved most vulnerable to captivity, and displayed especial abhorrence of white defection to the Indians.<sup>29</sup> This theme persisted in the English colonial and U. S. literary traditions well into the twentieth century.

Theories regarding *Stockholm syndrome* may offer some explanation, from a psychological perspective, for the phenomenon of white assimilation. In an attempt to survive, the captive sought acceptance by his captors. To do this, the captive so thoroughly mimicked the captor society that he seemingly lost all vestiges of

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<sup>27</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo nueve.

<sup>28</sup>Francisco Núñez, 97 – 98.

<sup>29</sup>Refer to Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive*.

Christian culture. Captive and captor became one. The *Stockholm syndrome* does not, however, address why some Europeans, never having been captured, willfully defected. Frederick Turner argues that these defections are understandable from a cultural standpoint. Those who fled the very rigid Western society governed by arbitrary rules favoring the elite no doubt found more satisfying a life among people less precocious and guided by a mysticism that nurtured harmony between humans and nature.<sup>30</sup> Others may cite the psychological effect of the initiation rite that fosters incorporation to the new society.<sup>31</sup>

Regardless of the exact reasons, contemporary Western perceptions of captivity and defection mandated the reality. Each colonial society placed different emphasis on captivity. The French considered defection “a descent into libertarianism through a lack of control over one’s self and one’s desires.”<sup>32</sup> To the English Puritans there existed a spiritual dimension that made the Indian threat even more terrorizing. They considered their lost captives and willful defectors “unredeemed” and thus lost to eternal salvation given that Indians had long been branded “red devils” by the Puritans.<sup>33</sup> To live among the Indians was synonymous

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<sup>30</sup>See Turner, 240 – 254.

<sup>31</sup>See Muir, 19 – 20.

<sup>32</sup>Gilmour, “‘Imagined Bodies and Imagined Selves’,” 237. Gilmour offers an excellent analysis of the various colonial societies perceived “redemption.”

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

to living in hell.<sup>34</sup> Although odious to the Spanish colonizers, they did not attach the same degree of spiritual connotations to their defectors. With the desire to situate the Americas in some sort of Christian context, the leading Spanish thinkers generally agreed that the Indians were human and not devils, certainly the descendants of Adam or perhaps remnants of the lost ten tribes of Israel; therefore, they were capable of salvation, even if it had to be forced.<sup>35</sup> Although deemed human, Indian status suffered thanks to predominant European perceptions of the “savage” and of a supposedly backward culture. When a “civilized” Iberian assimilated to Indian life, it signified a rejection of a superior culture and religion. Francisco Núñez described it as heresy.<sup>36</sup> Gonzalo Guerrero, according to Díaz, understood this early on and cited it as his excuse for not returning with Aguilar. Because that Guerrero fathered mestizo children, tattooed and pierced his body, and accepted the customs of his

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<sup>34</sup>For a primary account where English sensibilities are pronounced, see Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed, Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Neals Salisbury, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997).

<sup>35</sup>Pietro Martire (Pedro Martir in Spanish and Peter Martyr in English) in 1511 was among the first to initiate the debate regarding the “humanness” of the Native Americans. He speculated that they were “sons of Adam, so long kept under Satan’s captivity” and that God intended Columbus to find them so as to effect salvation. See Pietro Martire d’ Anghiera, *De nouo orbe, or, The historie of the West Indies, contayning the actes and aduentures of the Spanyardes, which haue conquered and peopled those countries, inriched with varietie of pleasant relation of the manners, ceremonies, lawes, gouernments, and warres of the Indians: comprised in eight decadés*. (London, 1612), 2. For a survey of Spanish perceptions of the Indians, Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians*, and Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents*.

<sup>36</sup>Francisco Núñez, 98.

adopted people, neither he nor his Indian family would ever be accepted by the Spanish.<sup>37</sup>

Guerrero perhaps understood that it was a matter of identity. The Iberians had spent centuries defining themselves in terms of the “other,” comprised mostly of Moors and Jews until 1492. The attempt to rid the peninsula of those infidels who contaminated and threatened Christianity and its Catholic practitioners contributed to the uniqueness of Iberian culture exhibited in its language, literature, and militarism. The intense desire to infuse the region with Catholicism at the expense of the other was further demonstrated when the Crown set about to exile or to threaten with execution all Jews who would not convert. Cultural and religious diversity posed a threat to an emerging nation-state bent on political solidarity. The Spanish monarchs thus turned to the Inquisition, which became the “identity police,” and all who exhibited signs and manners unbecoming a loyal Spanish and Catholic subject risked heresy.

The fear of being labeled a heretic must have weighed heavy on the minds of all captives. Those who returned to recount their experiences labored to demonstrate that they remained faithful and loyal subjects despite their connections to the non-Christians. When Aguilar first appeared to Cortés’s men, Díaz’s initial observation was that Aguilar carried with him an old *Book of Hours*, a compilation of the Catholic liturgy quite common in the medieval Catholic world.<sup>38</sup> It signified that

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<sup>37</sup>Díaz, Capítulo XVII.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Capítulo XVIII.

Aguilar, despite his manner of dress and speech that mimicked that of his captors, was still Catholic and thus worthy to rejoin his Christian countrymen. The narrative language stems from this intense desire to convince compatriots that, despite the captive's journey through hell, he returned pure in blood and faith.

Considering these sixteenth-century attitudes, Spanish disregard for the defectors, as evidenced by their scant mention in the records, is more understandable.<sup>39</sup> Given the importance of maintaining cultural integrity and Christian ideology demonstrated by the captivity narratives, it was necessary for contemporaries to disavow those who chose savagery. Their numbers proved significant even if unknowable. The white captive population possibly exceeded several hundred persons in the first century of New World colonization, of which most occurred in South America thanks in part to the Araucanian wars. The numbers possibly influenced the establishment of Mercedarian missions, which first arrived in Santo Domingo in 1514 and then spread to South America by mid-century.<sup>40</sup> Only during the eighteenth century did colonial governments dedicate substantial resources to record and track Spanish captives for the purpose of barter and to

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<sup>39</sup>Susan Socolow addresses this issue in "Spanish Captives in Indian Societies: Cultural Contact along the Argentinean Frontier, 1600-1835," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72:1 (Feb. 1992): 73-99.

<sup>40</sup>Ecclesiasts had established the Mercedarian order in the twelfth century to ransom and rescue Spanish captives in Muslim territory. Taylor in *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age* argues (p. 54) that the order established itself in the New World more for the purpose of raising money for the ransoming of captives in North Africa and less for those in America. Over time, however, the order did assume a greater role in the frontier regions of South America.

improve colonial relations with the Indians, and usually only in those regions where the number of captives proved excessive.<sup>41</sup> Practical reasons existed for the lack of effort to track those earliest captives, including that Spain and the other European powers lacked sufficient bureaucracies for such undertaking. Furthermore, Spanish hegemony had limits. Captives taken beyond the border regions would have been out of reach for much of the sixteenth century.

When compared with the importance Spain placed on the rescue of citizens captured by North African Muslims, Spain's effort in its American empire pales. One scholar has located meticulous records maintained by Spain's redemptionist orders that ransomed some 9500 captives from the North African Muslims. Of these some 450 occurred between 1572 and 1589.<sup>42</sup> Given the lack of similar diligence in the Americas, scholars are relegated to lifting names and references to the captives from a broad array of primary and secondary accounts of the *entrada*. Only when the frequency of American captivity began to escalate was greater effort made to rescue the captives. In Chile, for example, the Titular Real y Militar Orden de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes Redención de Cautivos, a Jesuit order, established itself in

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<sup>41</sup>Socolow, 76. The greatest occurrence of captivity was along Spain's Chilean frontier during the intense struggle to subdue the Araucanian Indians. Gabriel Guarda Geywitz cites primary records detailing at least 300 white captives taken between 1599 and 1640. "Los cautivos en la Guerra de Arauco," *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de la Historia* 54: 98 (1987): 117.

<sup>42</sup>Ellen Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age*, 3.

1598 for the purpose of rescuing colonial captives.<sup>43</sup> Even then there are only scant references. Only a select few captives who returned, like Cabeza de Vaca or Hans Stade, recorded their experiences while the vast majority faded into the New World wilderness.

If the act of naming signifies possession, then erasing that name from historical memory signifies dispossession. Cabeza de Vaca, Jerónimo de Aguilar, Hans Stade, Juan Ortiz, and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán all returned to embrace and serve Christendom. Their exploits became etched on the historical record as among the heroic deeds that glorified the Christian cause of colonization. The large numbers who refused to return, however, signified rejection of reason and civilization, as did Gonzalo Guerrero, who went so far as to organize military resistance to Cortés's army.<sup>44</sup> The sooner these defectors and traitors could be forgotten the better.

Despite this effort to forget, the memory of those captives who adopted Indian life survived in colonial legends, folktales, theatre, and in the dispersed records of colonial archives.<sup>45</sup> These fragments served to ignite the imaginations of

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<sup>43</sup>Geywitz, 120. This order was already active in the Rio de la Plate as early as 1545, and is referenced in Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación y comentarios of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, Capítulo Ochenta y cuatro.

<sup>44</sup>Diego de Landa, in *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, recorded one version Guerrero's resistance to Cortés's army.

<sup>45</sup>Cristina Iglesia and Julio Schwartzman offer a succinct survey of Argentinean female captivity legends transformed to popular literature and theatre in *Cautivas y Misioneros: Mitos blancos de la conquista* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos Editora, 1987).

the post-colonial societies that sought an identity beyond what Spain imparted. Whereas Spain considered its defectors as heretics, certain colonial and post-colonial authors resurrected them as heroes—the mythic progenitors of Latin American culture. Of the sixteenth-century captives, Gonzalo Guerrero stands out as one of the more celebrated transformative figures who came to symbolize Mexican nationality in the twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> In Argentina, legends of assimilated captives served both colonial and post-colonial authors who sought to define their own identity apart from Spain.<sup>47</sup> The obscure history of two sixteenth-century captives—Francisco del Puerto and Lucía Miranda—would form a nucleus around which legends would form in Argentinean memory.

While the post-colonial writers placed much emphasis on captivity themes in a search for identity, they were by no means the first to do so. Two early colonialists—Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán—top the list of those who used captivity tales to explore identity. As first and second generation *criollos* (creoles), respectively, their subjective histories of the De Soto expedition and the Araucanian revolt in Chile revealed their unique

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<sup>46</sup>See Roseanna Mueller, “From Cult to Comics: The Representation of Gonzalo Guerrero as a Cultural Hero in Mexican Popular Culture,” in *A Twice-Told Tale: Reinventing the Encounter in Iberian/Iberian American Literature and Film*, Santiago Juan-Navarro and Theodore Robert Young, eds. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 137 – 148.

<sup>47</sup>See Willis Knapp Jones, “Beginning of River Plate Drama,” *Hispania* 24, no. 1 (February 1941): 79 – 90.



struggles with mestizo identity in a world dominated by Spain.<sup>48</sup> Garcilaso's *La Florida del Inca*, in which he narrated Juan Ortiz's captivity, and Francisco Núñez's *Cautiverio Feliz (The Happy Captive)* demonstrate the authors' negotiation between self-awareness as a *mestizo* and *criollo*, respectively, and a Spanish literary tradition that attempted to redefine the Americas as colonial entities where European tradition predominated.<sup>49</sup> Their solutions to their criollo dilemma were at best ambivalent as they sought to magnify their "Spanish-ness" while down playing their "Indian-ness."

Although the post-colonial nationalist writers of the twentieth century shared little of the sentiment as expressed by Garcilaso and Pineda, the struggle for identity continued in more recent Latin American literature and film.<sup>50</sup> Like their earlier counterparts, some later authors turned to the captivity genre in search of identity. Rather than dwell on the captives who returned, however, the modern writers instead focused on the captives who did not. Because the historical record revealed so little as regards these defectors, the writers employed artistic license in recreating and

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<sup>48</sup>A *criollo* was a Spanish subject born in the Americas. His blood was pure because both mother and father were of Iberian ancestry. A child of mixed blood where one parent was Iberian and the other Indian would have been considered a *mestizo*.

<sup>49</sup>Ralph Bauer's comparative analysis demonstrates the nuances of *criollo* thought in "Creole Identities in Colonial Space: The Narratives of Mary White Rowlandson and Francisco Núñez de Pineda Buscañán," *American Literature* 69: 4 (December 1997): 665 – 695.

<sup>50</sup>See Santiago Juan-Navarro and Theodore Young, eds., *A Twice-Told Tale: Reinventing the Encounter in Iberian/Iberian American Literature and Film* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001).

reshaping these sixteenth-century captives into modern heroes to define present realities of *mestizaje*, or the idea of multicultural identity and its historical context.

### 5.2.1 *La Florida del Inca and Cautiverio Feliz*

It was Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, a first generation *mestizo*, who rescued Juan Ortiz's captivity tale (c.1530s) from obscurity and incorporated it into his larger history of Hernán De Sotó's exploration of the southeastern quadrant of North America. Garcilaso credits his "true history" of Ortiz's return, written decades after the event, to two eye-witnesses who were among De Sotó's cadre. Considering that his two witnesses related memories from several years prior to their conversation with Garcilaso, factual reliability is suspect. Furthermore, Garcilaso's subjective relation of events makes *La Florida del Inca* as much a study of his life as it is of Ortiz and the DeSotó expedition.

Garcilaso was born in 1539 in Cuzco, capital of the Inca state in Perú. His birth resulted from an illicit relationship between his father, Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega, a Spanish captain of noble lineage, and an Incan princess, Chimpu Ocllo. Garcilaso was christened as Gómez Suárez de Figueroa and raised by his mother in the language and traditions of the Incas. At the age of twenty, Garcilaso traveled to Spain with his father and never returned to Perú. There can be little doubt that Garcilaso's marginal status as a *mestizo* and illegitimate child resulted in a troubled life. Following his father's death, Garcilaso's inheritance was denied. At twenty

four years of age, he officially changed his name.<sup>51</sup> His biographers have further pointed out that, thanks to his dual education, dual traditions, and dual bloodlines, he never felt either entirely Spanish or Incan. He lived astride two contradictory worlds.

The very act of changing his name signifies that Garcilaso struggled with his identity. Denied his inheritance, he sought honor through military service to the crown, which in turn rewarded him with some legitimacy and the rank of captain. Cognizant of his marginality, Garcilaso struggled for acceptance by Spanish society, and what better way than to chronicle its history of the *entrada* to the New World. Although he participated in Phillip II's failed invasion of England (1588), Garcilaso opted to chronicle only those events that glorified Spain and, by proxy, himself.<sup>52</sup>

In his role as secondary chronicler of the De Sotó expedition, Garcilaso capitalized on the captivity tale of Juan Ortiz, which had been trivialized in the eyewitness account of the Gentleman of Elvas. Garcilaso might have found in Ortiz a kindred spirit. Ortiz was taken captive in 1528 as a young man of about the same age as Garcilaso when he left his Incan relatives for a new life in Spain. In my analysis, the dualities are apparent—whereas it was the marginal Garcilaso, the Inca, in the land of Spain, it was Juan Ortiz the Spaniard in the land of the Inca. Ortiz was

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<sup>51</sup>Garcilaso's marginality and its role in his development as a historian is further explored by Max Hernández, "A Childhood Memory: Time, Place and Subjective Experience," *MLN* 105: 2 Hispanic Issue (March 1990): 316 – 330.

<sup>52</sup>Garcilaso's role in the 1588 attempted invasion of England that resulted in Spain's decline as an imperial power is discussed by F. G. Crowley, "New Information on the Biography of Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca." *Hispania* 48: 3 (September 1965): 481 – 483.

the marginal figure who suffered injustice at the hands of his Indian captives because of his cultural associations just as his marginalized narrator experienced injustice in Spain.

By relating Ortiz's saga in traditional heroic prose with clear delineation of the separation, initiation, and return, Garcilaso elevated his own status as marginal character. Both men typified a new cultural entity that evolved in the New World—a transculturated figure neither entirely European nor entirely American. Because of his acculturation, Ortiz would serve the De Soto expedition as frontier interpreter and liaison. Similarly, El Inca would serve Spain as its historian with a unique insight to write a "history . . . of heroic Spanish and Indian cavaliers."<sup>53</sup> While Ortiz had an opportunity to complete his heroic journey and return, Garcilaso would die without a reunion with his Inca kin. Interestingly, Garcilaso concludes his narrative of De Soto's incursion in Florida with an account of Indians who were brought to Spain—a clear allusion to his own situation.<sup>54</sup>

Garcilaso's social tensions and ambivalence of belonging was shared by the *criollo*, Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán (1608-1680), who was also a captain in Spain's army in Chile. Núñez's participation in the Araucanian wars resulted in his seven-month captivity with several Araucanian caciques during the battle at Las

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<sup>53</sup>"Historia . . . de otros heroicos caualleros Epañoles é Indios." Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida del Inca*, title page.

<sup>54</sup>Lisa Voigt offers an insightful interpretative analysis in "Captivity Exile and Interpretation in *La Florida del Inca*," *Colonial Latin American Review* 11: 2 (2002): 251-273.

Cangrejas, Chile, in May 1629. Many years after his release, Núñez recorded his adventure in what he titled *Cautiverio feliz y razón individual de las guerras dilatadas del reino de Chile* (*The Happy Captive, and Peculiar Reasons for the Protracted Wars in the Chilean Regions*), which he completed in 1673.

Núñez's attempt to reveal the "historia verdadera" (true history) of the causes of Chile's long wars with the Araucanian Indians digressed to an autobiographical account of his captivity mixed with a subjective analysis regarding Spain's inability to quell the region.<sup>55</sup> Considering that Núñez only began to compile his narrative twenty years after his captivity, his ability to recall minutiae is astounding. As one scholar has pointed out, Núñez's narrative is more a treatise concerning the social and political issues of colonial Chile during the 1650's than it was of his own captivity or of the history of the Araucanian wars.<sup>56</sup> Núñez had, however, a more immediate purpose of finding favor with the Crown in hopes of receiving substantial compensation and reimbursement for having used his own wealth to support his soldiers. His narrative, like that of Garcilaso's *La Florida*, was foremost a plea for

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<sup>55</sup>Spanish expansion in the New World halted when conquistadores first encountered the Araucanian Indians in the South American region of Chile. Fierce resistance to Spain's rule erupted in the 1560s and lasted for the next two centuries. During the incessant warfare, hundreds of soldiers and colonists were taken capture by the Araucanians. See Gabriel Guarda Geywitz, "Los Cautivos en la Guerra de Arauco."

<sup>56</sup>Ralph Bauer, 670.

mercy for a loyal Spaniard and Christian subject who rejected the Indians and therefore deserved more than poverty.<sup>57</sup>

While Núñez's alleged purpose was to narrate his captivity and his analysis of Spain's failure at pacifying the Araucanians, the text betrays his mestizo insecurity. Throughout the narrative, Núñez labors to manifest his "Spanish-ness." At every opportunity, he justifies his observations by citing Greek, Roman, and Catholic authorities—the compendium of his Jesuit education. The mass of citations prompted one scholar to call Núñez's work "a manual of political theory, a guide to right thinking in the Spain of the late seventeenth century."<sup>58</sup> This reliance on traditional Spanish authorities was one method to prove his "Spanish-ness" despite his seven-month captivity among the Araucanians. Núñez wanted the reader to know that he remained uncontaminated by his captors, therefore his observations remained noteworthy. He contrasted himself with the countless Spaniards who had defected and "gone native." Regarding these who never returned, Pineda expressed disdain:

. . . I discovered that in some [regions] there were Spaniards who had been living there for many years but had never sought to lead anyone to baptism. . . . These Spaniards . . . were not captives but lived among the Indians by choice, following their ways and abandoning themselves to the same vices and sloth . . . forgetting . . . their Christian upbringing. . . . It was only heretics who would choose so to live among them . . .<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>William C. Atkinson, ed., *The Happy Captive* (London: The Folio Society, 1977), 153 - 154.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>59</sup>“Ocurrían a mí para el efecto de muchas parcialidades, y reparé con cuidado que en algunas había españoles antiquísimo entre ellos y no los solicitaban para este sacramento . . . . Me dijo que los españoles que habían quedado entre ellos no eran

Although Núñez's discourse reflected a desire to distance himself from his Indian captors, Núñez nonetheless described a mutual affection that developed between captive and captor. He confessed that the Indian caciques expressed some compassion toward him once they learned that his father was Alvaro Núñez de Pineda. The elder Núñez had fought many battles along the Chilean frontier and had a reputation among the Araucanians as fierce warrior, but one who also demonstrated compassion toward his enemies. As a mutual fondness matured between Núñez the captive and his Araucanian masters, some caciques offered their daughters as wives for Núñez. Had he accepted their advances, Núñez would have been ceremonially adopted into the Indian society. He admitted that "never before had I found myself so harassed and pursued by the devil.... [or] in greater danger of temptation by the evil one."<sup>60</sup> Núñez lamented that his immortal soul was in peril, and that he avoided the temptation by explaining to his potential mates that "we Christians may not cohabit with women who are neither our wives nor of our faith."<sup>61</sup> When he learned that one daughter was in fact *mestizo*, Núñez still resisted by expressing his desire to

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cautivos, sino de los que por su gusto entre ellos estaban viviendo a su usanza, y no como cristianos, gozando del vicio y del ocio como los demás infieles. Por esta causa no querían ser bautizados por sus manos, y por haber dicho algunos cautivos españoles que eran herejes los que asistían por su gusto entre ellos y que no éstos podían bautizar a ninguno. Y juzgaban bien estos naturales, que aquellos apóstatas de nuestra religión cristiana no podían hacer cosa bien encaminada a ella." Francisco Núñez, 98.

<sup>60</sup>Francisco Núñez, 111, 113.

<sup>61</sup>"...que no podíamos los cristianos tener cohabitación con las mujeres que no lo eran nuestras y profesaban diferente ley." Francisco Núñez, 115.

return to the Spanish realm and that because she was more Indian than Spanish, then she would not be welcomed into his society.<sup>62</sup> Cultural contamination was not an option for one whose identity depended on the acceptance of his Christian kin. Núñez wanted the reader to know without doubt that he returned from his captivity in both body and spirit. His “Spanish-ness” was preserved, which made him a credentialed and authoritative source to point out the reasons for Spain’s failures in Chile.

Both authors—Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca and Francisco Núñez —wrote their respective treatises nearly a century apart, confronted by different social and political realities. Although separated by historical circumstance, their motivations seemingly coincided. Garcilaso, having been denied his inheritance and complete acceptance into Spanish society, felt compelled to leave behind an interpretation of its history. Francisco Núñez, too, described how he became “an exile in a foreign land, seeking solace where there is none to be found.”<sup>63</sup> His relation of his captivity was thus intended to demonstrate his loyalty to Spain’s Carlos II in hopes of some recompense. No one is certain, however, that the work ever arrived in Madrid and it was not even published until 1863.<sup>64</sup> Despite their original intentions and unintended results, the authors left behind rich narratives whereby scholars may view the past

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<sup>62</sup>Francisco Núñez, 112.

<sup>63</sup>Atkinson, 154.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 9.



through the eyes of authors who used captivity subjects to project their own subjective identities.

### *5.2.2 Identity in Post-Colonial Latin America*

While captivity sagas proved useful to Garcilaso and Francisco Núñez as they explored criollo identity in the context of Spanish colonialism, a much later group of Latino authors would again turn to the sixteenth-century captives to explore the meaning of identities for post-colonial societies. This time, however, more attention would be rendered to those captives who turned their backs on Spanish society by assimilating to the culture of their captors. Many of these unreturned captives would be memorialized by revisionists who hoped to define new heroes for a mestizo population seeking to contrast itself with its onetime Spanish colonizers.

Because the historical sources reveal so little information about the defectors, it fell to the poets, playwrights, and novelists to translate memories into popular legend. The Latino authors who capitalized on captive-gone-native lore included Hugo Wast (*Lucía Miranda*), Juan José Saér (*El entenado*), and Eugenio Aguirre (*Gonzalo Guerrero: Novela histórica*). Unrestrained by the historian's methodology, these artists would use literary license to extract the potential meanings of and motivations for defection. They rescued from oblivion those captives and defectors whom the Spanish colonizers hoped to erase from memory. Wast, Saér, and the others thus became modern mythmakers for cultures that had too few heroes of their own. They responded to a yearning among the mestizo populations that needed memories besides those imparted by the Spanish imperialists.

The characters created by the modern Latino novelists served the same purposes as those that emerged from the pens of the sixteenth-century writers. Both used familiar literary conventions to create new mythologies that spoke to, what Lévi-Strauss called the “collective unconscious.” The sixteenth-century authors of captivity narratives capitalized upon the fantastic sagas to redefine and bolster Spanish identity against new worlds and alien cultures that nowhere fit into the European schematic. A captive who returned thus demonstrated to the Spanish world that all was right. God delivered his Christian subjects and used them in the process to glorify Christianity to pagans. Similarly, the post-colonial writers used the memory of those who refused to return to validate the mestizo race—that many considered life in the Americas preferable to life as a Spaniard. Although separated by nearly four centuries, the methodology of both groups—colonial and post-colonial—was identical. Their subjectivity revealed a struggle for identity across time and place. Such struggle transformed history and memory into mythology, helped along by Argentine and Mexican novelists who were among the first to represent those captives who never returned and secured for the one-time defectors a new status in the popular imaginations.

The captivity genre has appeared with greatest frequency in Argentine literary currents. The Spanish experience in the region of the Rio de la Plata had similarities to that of Chile. Spain’s hegemony in these parts proved fragile given the fierce Indian resistance to colonization made more effective by environmental

extremes.<sup>65</sup> Because of the protracted struggles along these southern frontier regions, the frequency of captivity was much greater than in other areas of the empire. Colonial apprehension, therefore, was more pronounced than in other parts of the Americas and would find expression in the literature.<sup>66</sup>

The legend of Lucía Miranda is among the more notable of the reinvented captivity sagas, as related by a criollo historian, Ruy Díaz de Guzman in his chronicle, *La Argentina* (1612) that would evolve into a popular lore. Guzman's account describes Lucía Miranda and her husband, Sebastián Hurtado of Ecija, as among the first colonists who accompanied Sebastian Cabot to the Rio de la Plata (about 1528). When Cabot established and then departed the fort of Sancti Spiritu, located at the convergence of the Paraña and Carcaraña rivers, Lucía, her mate, and the other colonists suffered captivity by the Timbú Indians. When two Indian caciques, Mungoré and Siripó, began to covet the affections of Lucía, she spurned their advances out of love for her husband while the other captives, both male and female, forsook their Christian vows and intermarried with their captors.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Lyle N. McAlister offers a very informative overview of the various colonization efforts in *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492 – 1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984).

<sup>66</sup>A comparison may be drawn between the Spanish colonists in Argentina and the Puritan colonists of North America. During the first several decades of colonization, the Indian nemesis showed with frequency in the literature, which gave expression to colonial apprehensions regarding Indian captivity.

<sup>67</sup>Ruy Diaz De Guzman, *La Argentina* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1986), 95 – 101.

The story was among the first tapped by Argentinean colonists as an expression of *criollo* identity and *mestizaje* that originated in miscegenation between Spaniards and Indians. In 1789, an Argentinean playwright, Manuel José Lavardín brought it to the stage in a play titled “Siripó.” Lavardín’s adaptation deviated from earlier colonial stage plays that projected largely popular Catholic and Iberian themes. For the first time, with Lavardín’s introduction of “Siripó,” a thoroughly New World drama unfolded before the eyes of a colonial population in Buenos Aires.<sup>68</sup> In it he explored the interaction of love and honor and its variances between Christian and non-Christian cultures. Its popularity echoed through successive decades and would be explored by later writers.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Argentinean novelist, Adolfo Martínez Zuviría, who published under the pseudonym Hugo Wast (1883 – 1955), further explored Lucía Miranda’s captivity legend. Wast served as the director of Argentina’s national archives and gained notoriety for his strong nationalist sentiment heavily influenced by European fascism.<sup>69</sup> A few years before fascism gained its deplorable reputation internationally, and before Wast published the anti-Semitic work *El Kahal/Oro* (1935), which forever soured his international standing, Wast contributed his interpretation of *Lucía Miranda*.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Willis Knapp Jones, “Beginning of River Plate Drama,” *Hispania* 24: 1 (Feb. 1941): 79:90.

<sup>69</sup>Allan Metz, “Hugo Wast: The Anti-Semitic Director of Argentina’s National Library, 1931-1955,” *Libraries and Culture* 27:1 (Winter 1992): 36-42.

<sup>70</sup>Hugo Wast, *Lucía Miranda* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1936).

Although Guzman's chronicle of the captivity spanned six pages, Wast expanded it to a 248-page tragic drama whose heroine, Lucía, sacrificed the lives of herself and her husband for their love, which had been sanctified through Christian matrimony. Preferring death to adultery, Lucía ended her drama as a Christ-like figure – as the sacrificial fires consumed her, she cried out, “Lord, help me! My God, forgive my sins, even as I forgive those who torment me!”<sup>71</sup> Once the fires consumed Lucía, Wast concluded the novel with a narration of how Spanish soldiers pursued Lucía's killers into the jungle. The tribe by this time, however, was no longer culturally pure. There was no longer an “us” versus “them” since the remaining captives were by then the husbands and wives of the Indians. They fled toward the interior with their adopted people, thus lending moral acceptance of Lucía's fate. Wast concluded the novel with a lament:

Since the first years of the conquest of America, the Spanish lineage mixed with the native races, considering that the Spaniards married the daughters of Indian caciques or other relatives of the conquered chiefs; some Spanish women even became captives of the Indians and accepted servitude, finding life among the Indians preferable. The green fresh banks of the Pasaná were, therefore, the theater of the first drama of love of the New World; from the ashes of that unforgettable tragedy, which added one of the most poetic pages to our history, was born the red and ardent flower of a new idyll.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>“¡Señor, apresúrate a ayudarme! ¡Señor perdona mis pecados, como yo perdono a este mi suplico!” Wast, 246.

<sup>72</sup>“Desde los primeros años de la conquista de America, la estirpe castellana se mezcló con las razas indígenas, sea que los españoles se desposaran con las Indios principales, hijas o damas de los reyezuelos vencidos; o que algunas españoles cayeran cautivas de los indios y nunca más quisieran renegar de una servidumbre que se les había hecho amable. Las verdes orillas del Pasaná fueron, pues, el teatro del primer drama de amor del nuevo mundo; y sobre las cenizas de aquella inolvidable

For Wast, the captivity of Lucía Miranda and her companions initiated the creation of mestizo culture. Modern Argentine identity could only emerge following the consummation of Lucía and her husband, who willingly died rather than part with the matrimonial love and Christian ideals they carried from the Old World. Those relationships between the other Christian women and their Indian captors gave birth to a new culture with its own distinct consciousness of identity. As Wast concluded for his Argentine audience, Lucía's saga was "our history."

While Wast lifted such themes from Guzman's Lucía Miranda legend, another Argentine writer, Juan José Saér capitalized on another captivity that had preceded that of Lucía Miranda. Saér's 1983 novel, *El entenado* (*The Witness*, 1983), was a fictional, first-person narrative of Francisco del Puerto's captivity amongst the Timbú of the Rio de la Plata.<sup>73</sup> Francisco was, according to what can be gleaned from the sources, a very young cabin boy who served Juan Díaz de Solís, one of the first Spanish explorers of the Rio de la Plata (1515). During an attempt to reconnoiter a site for a fortification, Solís and his scouting party encountered hostile Indians who easily seized the small cadre of conquistadores. Those who remained aboard Solís's main vessel retreated to open waters, leaving behind the young Francisco and other victims. The Indians spared the lad, and forced him into

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tragedia, que es una de las más poéticas páginas de nuestra historia, nació la roja y ardiente flor de un nuevo idilio." Wast, 248.

<sup>73</sup>Juan José Saér, *El entenado* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Seix Barriel, 2000). A translation is offered by Margaret Jull Costa, *The Witness* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1990).

servitude. Then about 1528, when Sebastian Cabot arrived in the region with a new group of colonists (Lucía Miranda supposedly among them), the Indians returned Francisco del Puerto to the Spanish.<sup>74</sup>

Saér conjectured Francisco's story into what one critic called "historiographic metafiction" infused with paratextuality.<sup>75</sup> In other words, Saér gave an obscure sixteenth-century subject a twentieth-century voice. In a lengthy narrative, Saér allowed his subject to explore existential themes of identity, belonging, and otherness as the character recounted a harrowing adventure. Saér, in essence, resurrected Francisco and allowed him to speak directly to a modern sympathetic audience. As Saér's character observed, the Spain to which he returned "would have been more at ease with me had I been a leper." It was as if his "very survival . . . constituted some secret crime."<sup>76</sup>

Saér described a character that endured a life of psychological torment that began when a young boy was separated from his compatriots and then initiated into an alien society that practiced cannibalistic orgies. Despite his initial repulsion, he was "changed and shaped by the flow of time, [and] what had seemed

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<sup>74</sup>Confirmation of Francisco's historicity is problematic. He is not mentioned by name in contemporary chronicles, and I have found only indirect references to those captives discovered by Sebastian Cabot's expedition.

<sup>75</sup>Rita de Grandis, "The First Colonial Encounter in El Entenado by Juan Jose Saer: Paratextuality and History in Postmodern Fiction," *Latin American Literary Review* 21, (January/June 1993): 30.

<sup>76</sup>Saér, *The Witness*, 102.

strange....became familiar.”<sup>77</sup> Then, after living among the Indians for ten years, Francisco told how he came to feel compassion rather than repugnance. Upon his return to Spain, for what once had been familiar, he only “felt a kind of revulsion.”<sup>78</sup> As he drifted between these worlds, he was a “man half-dead [who] wandered through an indiscriminate jumble of worlds.”<sup>79</sup> His loss of identity left a spiritual void.

Saér projected this sense of void onto the larger world. With Francisco’s voice Saér explained that when the Spanish “soldiers advanced up the great river (Rio de la Plata) with their firearms at the ready, it was not death they brought but the unnamable.”<sup>80</sup> The unnamable was the destruction and convolution of identity. It was something that could only be given a name through the use of twentieth-century language. To Saér, there was complicity, a mutual unraveling of the *other* that created a self-identity for each participant. As the Indians succumbed to the force of the Spaniards, Saér explained to the reader his belief that the former “dragged their destroyers down with them . . . . What the soldiers who killed them would never manage to understand was that they too were leaving this world together with their victims. You could say that since the destruction of the Indians the whole universe

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<sup>77</sup>Saér, 88.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 133.



has been left drifting in the void.”<sup>81</sup> It was this vacuum that many Latin American authors sought to fill by defining a new identity for a culture struggling with its troubled, colonial past.

Of all the captivity tales used to express Latin American identity, none surpassed the popularity of Gonzalo Guerrero, whose notoriety underwent revision in 1980 by the Mexican novelist, Eugenio Aguirre. Bernal Díaz del Castillo first recorded Guerrero’s story as told by Jerónimo de Aguilar, the eyewitness chronicler of Hernán Cortés’s expedition through México. Guerrero was among a small group of naufragios (castaways) washed upon the shores of Yucatán and then taken captive by the Indians in 1511. By the time of Cortés’s arrival in 1519, only Guerrero and one other, Jerónimo de Aguilar, had survived and only the latter opted to rejoin Spanish society. According to Aguilar, as recorded by Díaz, Guerrero had completely integrated into their captor’s society through marriage and by adopting native manners and customs.

Fray Diego de Landa again cited Guerrero by crediting him with organizing effective resistance against Cortés’s conquistadors. According to Landa, Guerrero had already achieved status as a warrior before Cortés’s landfall.<sup>82</sup> Considering this, there can be little certainty of whether or not “Guerrero” was Gonzalo’s actual birth name given its translation of “warrior.” Other than what Díaz and Landa related, little more was known of the defector. Like so many captives who never returned,

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<sup>81</sup>Saér, 133 – 134.

<sup>82</sup>Diego de Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, 8.

Guerrero's life went uncelebrated in the Spanish records, yet would emerge in the memory of the Mexican people who sought their own heroes from the ashes of Spanish colonialism.

Where the record fell silent, folk legends emerged, and the memory of Gonzalo became woven into Mexican history. During the colonial period, Guerrero's image was that of traitor and renegade, but during the twentieth century as Mexico moved beyond its colonial past, Mexican revisionists reassessed the classical figure.<sup>83</sup> They considered Gonzalo as an embodiment of Mexican *mestizaje* and symbolic resistor of Spanish colonialism. When México entered its decade of intense nationalism during the 1970s, Guerrero's image validated an intensifying sense of *mexicanidad*. It was at this time when popular culture memorialized Guerrero through comic books, government sanctioned paintings and murals, statues, and books.<sup>84</sup>

Mexican novelist Eugenio Aguirre tapped this revisionist trend by accumulating what was known of Guerrero from the primary sources, and then allowing him a first-person voice that spoke across time.<sup>85</sup> Aguirre, similar to Saér, licensed his character to speak from the sixteenth and to the twentieth century. In so

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<sup>83</sup>Mueller, 138.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 139 – 143.

<sup>85</sup>Eugenio Aguirre, *Gonzalo Guerrero: Novela histórica* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Ciudad Universitaria, 1980).

doing, Aguirre, via Guerrero, salvaged his subject's image by correcting what Aguirre considered the misinterpretation of the original chronicles.<sup>86</sup>

A few years following the publication of Aguirre's novel, Carlos Villa Roiz introduced his interpretation of Guerrero's saga in *Gonzalo Guerrero: Memoria olvidada, trauma de México*.<sup>87</sup> Villa Roiz deviated from Aguirre and gave voice to Guerrero's mestiza daughter who, in the novel, railed against the contemporary histories that demonized her father. Villa Roiz's character proudly identified with the mestiza race while she expressed sympathy toward the Indians because Spanish colonizers had erased the legacy of her people. The works of Aguirre and Villa Roiz rescued this legacy with the introduction of a new myth tailored for the Mexican "collective conscious" that, like its Argentinean counterpart, yearned for renewed expression of its identity. Gonzalo, through Aguirre's pen, proclaimed with pride:

I am Gonzalo Guerrero, native of Palos, and I am not a literary invention, nor a demon, and certainly not as stupid as the establishment thinks. I am as Spanish as you, but different because my soul is void of the greed and wickedness that dwells in you cowards who by use of force plunder, abuse, and subjugate these races, these children of the Sun who have asked nothing of you and need nothing from you.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Alice Reckley offers a comparative analysis of Aguirre's novel in "The Historical Referent as Metaphor," *Hispania* 71: 3 (Sep. 1988): 713-716.

<sup>87</sup>Carlos Villa Roiz, *Gonzalo Guerrero: Memoria olvidada, trauma de México* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Ciudad Universitaria 1995).

<sup>88</sup>"Soy Gonzalo Guerrero, natural de Palos, y no soy ningún engendro, ni demonio, ni ninguna de las estupideces que podéis estar pensando. Soy tan español como vos, sólo que en mi alma no habita la codicia ni la maldad que moran en la tuya, pícaro, ladrón, cobarde que abusáis de nuestros adelantos bélicos para sojuzgar

Aguirre concluded with the affirmation to Gonzalo that despite the reputation rendered him by the Old World, his name has now been “engraved . . . with profound pride on the parchment of their conscience.”<sup>89</sup>

Aguirre referred to both the Old and New World consciences that spanned four centuries and that had attempted to deny an entire race the memory of Guerrero and those like him who willfully chose to live with the Indians rather than with the Spaniards. The possible motivations behind the defections had been ignored by Iberians and colonials alike. The incomprehensible was thus labeled heretical and condemned in contemporary chronicles. Even those early Spanish writers—Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, two who could best sympathize with their Indian heritage and who could possibly give a voice to that which was “unnamable”—attempted to avoid heretical labels by glorifying those captives who returned while condemning those who did not. In this manner, captivity became the focus of an identity struggle around which new cultural myths evolved that spanned not only two continents but also five centuries.

### 5.3 Cabeza de Vaca

No captivity narrative better evinces both the historical and literary elements than that of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s *La relación y comentarios*, which exhibits the mythical structure and imagery that carries themes of *mestizaje*,

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a estas razas, a estos hijos del Sol que nada os piden y para nada os necesitan.” Aguirre, 211.

<sup>89</sup>“ . . . graban tu nombre . . . con profundo orgullo en el pergamino de su conciencia.” Aguirre, 224.

acculturation, identity, and fear.<sup>90</sup> It is the one narrative that bridges the gulf between the sixteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations of captivity and thus serves dual functions—Cabeza de Vaca became the only sixteenth-century redeemed captive to emerge heroic in both colonial and post-colonial societies. Because the narrative received an abundance of scholarly attention over the years, I have afforded it less emphasis. It is nonetheless an important element that helps illustrate the functions of the early captivity narratives. As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, its structure and motifs serve as a useful foil against which can be compared the other captivity narratives so as to identify the common patterns and themes for interpretive use.

First published in Spain in 1542, *La relación* went on to become the most popular American captivity story that has survived through numerous editions and translations. In 1990, the literary account was further popularized with a translation to film. Several factors may account for this continuing appeal among scholars and lay. Historically, Cabeza de Vaca's narrative gave the first European description of the interiors of North America. It rendered some insight to the manners, customs,

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<sup>90</sup>Cabeza de Vaca's original 1542 edition contained only the account of Núñez's captivity. The second edition published in 1555 was inclusive of the commentaries regarding his failed governorship in the Rio de la Plata. This study references Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relacion y comentarios del gouernadoz Alvar nuñez cabeca de vaca, de lo acaefcido en las dos jornadas que hizo a las Indias*, 1555. Various translations include: *Cabeza de Vaca's Relación*, trans. Martin A. Favata and José B. Fernández (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993) and *The Commentaries of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca by Pedro Hernandez* in Luis L. Dominguez, ed., *The Conquest of the River Plate: 1535 – 1555* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1890).

and social structures of some native peoples and their geographical environment. The tale prompted further explorations of North America, like that of Fray Marcos de Niza, another who went in search of the mythical Seven Cities of Cíbola that had been founded, according to legend, by seven bishops as early as the twelfth century.<sup>91</sup> The account continues to fascinate scholars and many have engaged in debates over the exact route and points of landfall along Cabeza de Vaca's journey, although Núñez himself emphasized to Narváez that, at the time, even the "pilots were uncertain . . . nor did they know where they were."<sup>92</sup> Cabeza de Vaca's uncertainty limits the narrative's accuracy regarding places and events. The most important aspect, however, is the journey itself and the imagery it conjured for the contemporary observers.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>According to the medieval legend, after the Moors conquered Merida in Spain, seven Christian bishops and their followers fled to Lisbon and sailed westward in search of a legendary group of islands ("The Blessed Isles"). Having been blown off course, they landed on one large island that they named "Antilia." With time their settlements grew to be seven great cities known as the "Cities of the Seven Bishops" or "The Seven Cities of Antilia." With Columbus's discovery in 1492, many believed he had found in the legendary islands of Antilia; hence the West Indies became known also as the Antilles. When Cabeza de Vaca reunited with the Spanish in northern Mexico, he seemingly confirmed the suspicion when he related the Indian tales of seven great cities farther north. These would eventually prove to be the Zuni Pueblos. See Cleve Hallenbeck, *The Journey of fray Marcos de Niza* (Dallas: University Press, 1949).

<sup>92</sup>“. . . que los pilotos andauan ciertos . . . ni fabian a que parte eftauan." Cabeza de Vaca, Capitulo quarto.

<sup>93</sup>Reséndez's *A Land So Strange* (2006) is among the more recent attempts to construct an event history based on the narrative. The author admits, however, that Cabeza de Vaca's narrative has with time become "increasingly difficult to read. Many passages . . . are downright perplexing to modern readers. Since they were written for sixteenth-century Spaniards, they offer little by way of context"(6 – 7).

Beyond its historical elements, *La relación* commanded the attention of broad audiences across time and place because of its fascinating drama complete with all elements of mythology and the hero archetype. Literary scholars have demonstrated how the narrative structure was influenced by contemporary heroic romances where there is the cyclic journey of separation, initiation, return.<sup>94</sup> This fundamental motif makes the narrative as much a novel as it is a history, but as Van Gennep has argued, the ritual pattern is also imitative of reality. Because Cabeza de Vaca wrote his narrative a few years after his rescue, imagination and artistic license crept into what was purported as a historical work—“Although one may read some novel things, very hard to believe for some, they can believe them without a doubt and accept them as very true.”<sup>95</sup>

Whereas a “true history” would more accurately explain complex events, instead Cabeza de Vaca reduced the events into subjective summaries and organized them in a cyclic pattern connotative of the contemporary romances. He even employed a prophetic device which was common among the heroic epics. Núñez told

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<sup>94</sup>Literary studies of Núñez’s account abound, most which support the conclusions of three works—David Herbert Bost, “The *Naufragios* of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: A Case of Historical Romance,” *Southeastern Latin Americanist* 27 (December 1983): 3 – 12; Bost, “History and Fiction: The Presence of Imaginative Discourse in some Historical Narratives of Colonial Spanish America,” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1982); Billy Thurman Hart, “A Critical Edition of the Style of *La Relación* by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1974).

<sup>95</sup>“ . . . que aunque en ella fe lean algunas cofas muy nueuas, y para algunos muy difficiles de creer, pueden fin dubda creer las: y creer por muy cierto . . .” Cabeza de Vaca, prohemío.

that, prior to the expedition's embarkation toward Florida, there "were bad signs in the weather" accompanied by "a great uproar and noise of voices" that proved a "fearsome thing."<sup>96</sup> He also inserted the story of a Spanish woman, who had apparently prophesied the calamities that would befall the crew. Again, this device parallels that of the most popular novel of his day, *Amadís*, in which the heroic adventure follows the priestess's portent.<sup>97</sup>

The common mythical motif of metamorphosis is yet another current that runs throughout Cabeza de Vaca's narrative. This idea of change has both physical and psychological components, although he emphasized the former while the latter was made less apparent in the narrative. Physically, Cabeza de Vaca entered his journey adorned in the garb and manners of his day; he returned naked and so altered that the first Spaniards to see him stared "for a long time, so astonished that they were not able to speak or ask [him] questions."<sup>98</sup> Cabeza de Vaca commented that the Indians also "could not be persuaded to believe that we were the same as the

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<sup>96</sup>“. . . comeco el tiépo a dar no buena feffal. . . . mucho efruyendo y grande ruydo de bozes . . . . nunca otras cofa tan medrofa fe vio." Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo primero.

<sup>97</sup>Compare Cabeza de Vaca's prophetic device in Capítulo treynta y ocho (Chapter 38) with that of *Amadís de Gaula*, Chapter 5. This portent is common throughout mythical literature. As late as the nineteenth century, we find it repeated in classics such as *Moby Dick*, where in Chapter 19 the hero, Ishmael, who is departing on his first voyage at sea, is forewarned of impending doom by a stranger aptly named Elijah. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1992), 94 – 98.

<sup>98</sup>“Vieron me mirando mucho efpacio de tiempo tan antonitos que ní me bablauan ni acertauan a preguntarme nada.” Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo treynta y cuatro.



other Christians.”<sup>99</sup> The Indian disbelief, however, stemmed less from physicality and more from attitudinal disposition. He described that

. . . the Indians believed very little or nothing of what they [the Spaniards] were saying. . . they said instead that the Christians were lying, because we had come from the East and they had come from the west; that we healed the sick and they killed the healthy; that we were naked and barefooted and they were dressed and on horseback, with lances; that we coveted nothing but instead gave away everything. . . while the sole purpose of the others was to steal everything they found.<sup>100</sup>

Further psychological change was evidenced through Cabeza de Vaca’s conflict with the Spaniards. According to the narrative, he “had many great quarrels with the Christians because they wanted to enslave the Indians” whereas Cabeza de Vaca sought a conciliatory policy predicated on humane treatment.<sup>101</sup>

This psychological transformation, as recognized by other scholars, makes Cabeza de Vaca’s journey as much spiritual as it is physical.<sup>102</sup> Undeniably, Cabeza

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<sup>99</sup>“Finalmente nunca pudo acabar co los indios creer que eramos a los otros chriftianos.” Cabeza de Vaca, Capitulo treynta y quatro.

<sup>100</sup>“ . . . los indios tenían en muy poco o no nadadelo que les vezian: antes vnos con otros con entrefiaticauan viziendo que los christianos mentían porque nofotros veniamos de donde fe pone: y que nofotros fanauamos los enfermos, y ellos matauan los que eftauan fanos: y que nofotros veníamos defnudos y defcalzos y ellos veftidos y en cauallos y con lanzas: y que nofotros no teníamos cobdicia de ninguna cofa antes todo quanto nos daua tornauamos luego a var y con nada nos que dauamos, y los otros no tenían otro fin fino robar todo quanto ballauan y nunca dauan nada y nadie.” Cabeza de Vaca, *Capítulo treynta y quatro*.

<sup>101</sup>“y despues delto paffamos muchas y grades pen decias con ellos, porque nos queria hazer los indios que ira y amos efclavos.” Cabeza de Vaca, Capitulo treynta y quatro.

<sup>102</sup>See Reséndez, 10.

de Vaca relates a spiritual awakening that results from a fantastic journey. In this manner, the heroics of Cabeza de Vaca are more fully developed in that he returns with an enlightened message regarding the humanity of the Indians. This spiritual aspect of the journey is couched in Christian imagery. Cabeza de Vaca credits God with healing the sick Indians, which boosted Cabeza de Vaca's reputation. He further compared his situation to Christian suffering, and considered that through his example the Indians would be brought to conversion.<sup>103</sup> Here again, though, the reader must use caution when interpreting the text. We do not know if Cabeza de Vaca and his companions remained faithful to Christianity or mimicked the mystical practices of their captors. Understandably, Cabeza de Vaca would use Christian allusions to regain acceptance and trust from Iberian peoples and to navigate prescriptions regarding acceptable literature.<sup>104</sup> It is also plausible, based on what we know of captive-bonding, that he and his companions would emulate Indian practices in order to survive. We simply cannot know given the factual limitations of the narrative.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo treynta y dos.

<sup>104</sup>Reséndez recognizes that Cabeza de Vaca sought "to avoid problems with the Inquisition" by "refrain[ing] from using the word 'miracle' to describe his incredible healings"(7). Furthermore, the author points out that the narrative avoids mention of any sexual encounter with Indian women, although we know from other sources that the captives most probably took advantage of Indian sexual customs. See p. 183.

<sup>105</sup>Reséndez makes a similar observation on p. 178 but nonetheless attempts to construct an event history.

We do know that Cabeza de Vaca won enough recognition to secure in 1541 an appointment as *adelantado* (governor) of the province of Rio de la Plata where he carried his enlightened attitudes. There Núñez implemented a progressive policy of pacification toward the Indians of the region. According to his *Comentarios* (*Commentaries*), the governor “did [the Indians] many favors and treated them so well that the fame went through the land.”<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, he “punished everyone who offended” the Indians.<sup>107</sup> This policy eventually won enemies among the Spanish colonists, who eventually rebelled against the governor when he ordered that they resist the sexual favors of Indian women.<sup>108</sup> Following the *coup d’etat*, the governor was imprisoned and eventually returned to Spain where he remained incarcerated for eight years. In a tragic twist of fate, the man who had survived eight years of quasi-captivity amongst the Indians of North America suffered another eight years of captivity by the Spaniards. He had advanced from a respected Spaniard, to a captive, to shaman, to governor, to prisoner.

A comparison between the *Comentarios* and the *Relación* further accentuates the gulf between imaginative narrative and an historical account. Whereas the *Relación* was more romanticized, the *Comentarios* achieved a greater degree of factuality, although it gave deference to the actions of Cabeza de Vaca. The author, Pero Hernandez, Cabeza de Vaca’s secretary, dispensed with the allusions of divine

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<sup>106</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, *Comentarios*, Capítulo siete.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., Capítulo Setenta y uno.

intervention and miracles which characterized much of the *Relación*, as well as the other captivity narratives. Hernandez, for example, related how at the colony of Los Reyes, several members of Cabeza de Vaca's cadre fell ill with fever for three months, but he never suggested that Cabeza de Vaca attempted the same miraculous cures performed as an Indian captive.<sup>109</sup> When considered as a whole, however, and despite the obvious differences, *La relación* and *Comentarios* complement one another as a tragedy resulting from a fantastic journey through the unknown interiors of the Americas.

The immediate and sustained influence of Cabeza de Vaca's narratives proved more obvious than that of the other captivity narratives. The Dominican monk, Bartolomé de las Casas, relied on *La relación* when drafting *Apologética historia sumaria* and both shared similar sympathies toward the Indians.<sup>110</sup> Other sixteenth-century writers would cite Cabeza de Vaca's travails as proof of God's providence for Spanish goals in the New World.<sup>111</sup> Cabeza de Vaca's tales of fabled cities prompted further exploration of northern Mexico by Fray Marcos de Niza and Coronado. There is some indication that captivity narratives like that of Cabeza de Vaca may have led to Cervantes' invention of the modern novel.

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<sup>109</sup>Cabeza de Vaca, Capítulo Setenta y uno.

<sup>110</sup>See Las Casas, *Apologética historia sumaria*, Libro II, Capítulo CLXVIII, CCV, CCVI, and CCX.

<sup>111</sup>“To these God gave such aid that among those infidels, they worked miracles in the name of Christ.” Luis Geronimo de Oré, *The Martyrs of Florida, 1513-1616*, 5.

*La relación's* influence continued to modern times. Latin American revisionists during the post-colonial era found significance in Cabeza de Vaca's sympathetic overtones toward the Indians. The revisionists thus offered a reinterpretation of the narrative by portraying him as a transitional character who, although Spanish by blood, became a mestizo psychologically. Mexican film-maker Nicolás Echevarría best expressed this idea and further popularized the narrative by translating it for the screen, which only accentuated its mythological qualities. Echevarría's production of *Cabeza de Vaca* responded to the resurgence of interests in the sixteenth-century contacts that had been somewhat sanctioned by the 1992 Columbus quincentennial.<sup>112</sup> By this time the exploration of captivity themes could no longer be confined to printed media but also found expression in popular film and on stage. Although Cabeza de Vaca couched his narrative in sixteenth-century myth, its interpretation by a twentieth-century Mexican revisionist further demonstrated how Latin American writers transformed many of the captivity experiences by projecting them as heroes for the modern Latino world.

Echevarría employed artistic license and often deviated from the account in *La relación*. The film portrayed Cabeza de Vaca as a wise and sincere explorer who was often at odds with his Spanish compatriots, especially at the film's conclusion

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<sup>112</sup>*Cabeza de Vaca*, directed by Nicolas Echevarría, 108 min (Producciones Iguana-Television Española, 1992); Santiago Juan-Navarro, "Constructing Cultural Myths: Cabeza de Vaca in Contemporary Hispanic Criticism, Theater, and Film," in Santiago Juan-Navarro and Theodore Robert Young, eds., *A Twice-Told Tale: Reinventing the Encounter in Iberian/Iberian American Literature and Film*, 190. Similarly, Chilean director Cristián Sánchez brought *Cautiverio feliz* to the screen in 1998.

where Cabeza de Vaca rejoined the colonizers, only to find that the Spaniards had slaughtered or enslaved the people he had come to love. Throughout the film the fulcrum of power was ever shifting. In the first few minutes, the characters were tossed around on a stormy sea completely at the mercy of the elements. Once on land, they became slaves of the local Indians, who exercised the power of life and death over the lost Spaniards. While depicting his servitude, the film attempted to portray Cabeza de Vaca's transformation and initiation into native society. Only when he demonstrated his curative abilities was he transformed from a powerless slave to a powerful shaman, respected and revered by his one-time captors. Once reunited with the Spaniards, Cabeza de Vaca's reputation plummeted and his advocacy for the Indians resulted in conflict. Echavarría's interpretation was clear—as a Spaniard, Cabeza de Vaca was powerless and was viewed as insignificant in the great scheme of European hierarchy; as an adopted Indian, he commanded respect and admiration as a healer and shaman.

At one point in the film when Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions prepared to rejoin the Spanish after an eight-year sojourn, Echevarría inserted an extraneous dialogue between the four men. In it, they agreed that, if they related nothing but the facts of the experience, Spanish society would reject them as heretics. The only alternative was to lie by concocting a story that would better complement the Spanish attitudes. Through this dialogue Echavarría offered a veiled commentary supporting the Indian supposition that Spaniards were to be distrusted;

that they did not deal in truth. As a Spaniard, Cabeza de Vaca would be forced to deal in lies, but as an Indian he could embrace the truth and virtuosity.

Although he portrayed Cabeza de Vaca as a character embraceable by a modern Latin American audience, Echevarría's revisionism is also guilty of borrowing mythical images of the hero from its classical European roots. Rather than deviate from the mythical aspect of the narrative, Echevarría only translated the myth for a modern audience. The film followed the narrative's archetypal pattern of separation, initiation and transformation, and return. Many images depicted on screen seemingly had been borrowed from European painters of classical and religious subjects. One scene, for example, with Cabeza de Vaca and his companions stranded on a raft adrift in a raging sea reminds of Théodore Géricault's 1819 Romantic painting of "The Raft of the Medusa." In the portrayal of the miraculous revival of an apparently deceased Indian woman, Echevarría borrowed heavily from the medieval representations of Lazarus's resurrection.<sup>113</sup> Such theatrics further manifested Cabeza de Vaca as the triumphant hero, a Christ-like shaman embraceable by both the Latino and Spanish worlds.

Cabeza de Vaca's narrative has proven to be a viable myth for two cultures separated by five centuries. It is at once history, literature, and drama. It communicates a perilous struggle of both physical and spiritual dimensions. Through its use of symbolic imagery and language, it tapped the existing cultural anxieties

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<sup>113</sup>The scenes remind of the medieval paintings of Byzagios, "The Raising of Lazarus" (early fifteenth century) and Duccio di Buoninsegna, "The Raising of Lazarus" (1308).

produced from the constant struggle for identity and meaning which fluctuates across time and place. Cabeza de Vaca became the hero, the transformational figure, who survived the journey to relate its lessons to an audience thirsty for other-worldly knowledge. In this manner, like so many captivity narratives, it joins the mythical complex that elicits the *histoire des mentalités* of an age.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Along the vast frontiers of Spain's incursion in the New World, captivity was a reality that could not be ignored and that eventually altered the socio-cultural landscape of the Americas by means of miscegenation. The exact number of those taken captive may never be known, and because the vast majority of those who escaped remained silent, a full appraisal of early captivity may never be possible. Nonetheless, and thanks to the few surviving narratives, we are afforded a glimpse of how a small number of those captives and their contemporary chroniclers gave meaning to the experiences. The early modern captivity narratives, although intended as history, are in fact heroic mythologies that reveal less about the actual events and more about the authors' attempts to assuage subconscious anxieties shared with a Christian society struggling to come to terms with its rapidly changing world.

When considered as cultural artifacts, their mythical nature does not negate the historical value. To the contrary, the narratives provide historians insight to the psycho-social complex—the *mentalités*—of the sixteenth-century transatlantic world. Structural, functional, and psychoanalytic contributions to anthropological and social research have legitimized the idea that myth and its symbols are tools that assist in understanding the behavior of societies and individuals. Social phenomena may be understood by reducing the complexity of empirical data to its most

elementary structures which are the mental forms (“objectivated systems of ideas”) that make social life possible and necessary.<sup>1</sup> The concept is closely related to the psychoanalytic concept of the collective unconscious that, some argue, is discernable from its symbolic representation in social life.

This analysis reveals that the narratives, although serving various authorial purposes, evidences attempts to either negotiate re-entry to and acceptance by Christendom or to justify the larger imperial goals of Spain. Their superficial function, however, served as entertainment for readers who most likely enjoyed them simply for the “pleasure of the story.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the tales assisted in attempts to reconcile the existential quandaries brought about by contact with the New World and its native peoples. In the process, the chroniclers penned narratives suffused with contemporary mythological conventions that aided early modern Europeans in a reaffirmation of their understanding of the universe and their place in it.

In order to develop the thesis, I opted to analyze the early modern captivity sagas of Jerónimo de Aguilar, Gonzalo Guerrero, Juan Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca, Hans Stade, Hernando d’Escalante Fontaneda, Fray Francisco de Avila, and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán. Each captivity experience occurred at various sites in the western hemisphere and at various times over a period of approximately one hundred fifty years. Considering the circumstantial and authorial variances, it

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<sup>1</sup>Ino Rossi, “Structure and History in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*,” 108.

<sup>2</sup>“ . . . gusto de la historia.” Cervantes de Salazar, *Cronica de la Nueva España*, Capítulo XXVII.

follows that each narrative would exhibit its own unique prose to relate the historical event. Instead, the narratives reveal similar literary structures rife with highly symbolic ritual and imagery reminiscent of archetypal mythologies, especially of the hero's journey.

To best understand the mythical symbolisms and how they relate to the individual and the larger culture, I synthesized structural, functional, and psychoanalytic schools of myth which all proceed from similar assumptions. At the basic level, the human psyche is universally motivated by the same stimuli. Regardless of language or culture, the individual mind seeks to understand itself and its relation to the world around it. It instinctually attempts to give meaning to that which appears incomprehensible. In the process, the individual mentalities form a collective subconscious that creates awareness based on shared concepts that provide means of explanation for the seemingly irrational; the cultural myths that result offer the "illusion that [man] can understand the universe."<sup>3</sup> These myths that spring from the unconscious and that evolve over time acquire culturally unique signifiers that can be communicated to the collective conscious via linguistics, writing, art, literature, and other communicative devices. It then becomes the task of the modern scholar to decode what the mythic images communicate. The scholar, according to Lévy-Strauss, must "play the part of conceptual thinking" to determine what

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<sup>3</sup>Lévy-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 17.

problems the myth seeks to resolve regarding the “needs of mankind and the conditions prevailing in the natural world.”<sup>4</sup>

To revitalize the historical usefulness of these narratives, I employed an interdisciplinary approach predicated on a type of structuralist methodology, but one more refined by Todorov and Febvre that explores both the textual and contextual dimensions. Michel de Certeau, Hayden White, and others have posited discourse analysis as a viable method of historical interpretation. It is perhaps among the very limited number of analytical tools applicable to the captivity genre given that the actual captivity experiences as related in the narratives had no eye-witness corroboration necessary to accurately reconstruct the event history. Through translation of the inherent mythical formulae in the context of sixteenth-century society, however, the narratives offer fertile territory for cultural analysis.

Contextually, the captivities occurred during a period when Spain and its European neighbors experienced a revolution of sorts in political, religious, and economic affairs. As the Spanish monarchs forged a nation-state in the midst of religious war (the *Reconquista*), mercantilist pursuits led them to the American discoveries that prompted even more change in attitudes and beliefs. Throughout the early modern era, Spain struggled to keep pace while clinging to its medieval heritage. In the process, the Crown established institutions such as the Inquisition to police attitudes of faith and to rid Spanish society of those considered spiritually impure, especially Jews and Muslims. A cult developed around the notion of

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<sup>4</sup>Lévy-Strauss, 22 – 23.

*limpieza de sangre* that mandated societal cohesion and acceptance based on cultural purity.

The captives discovered that their captors did not place the same importance on blood purity, faith, and religion. An individual's worth was measured by the contribution a person could make toward the survival of the tribe. Adoption by Indian society depended on necessity rather than on blood. As Garcilaso, el Inca, came to discover, regardless of individual merit, Spanish society could never welcome someone with tainted blood considering that it possibly equated to tainted faith. For this reason, the returning captives must have realized that the rescue could prove as risky as captivity. As they had negotiated entry into Indian society, the captives now had to negotiate re-entry to Christendom and convince their compatriots of sincerity and faithfulness. A narrative that romanticized the ordeal in terms of Christian suffering and deliverance offered the most expedient solution to the dilemma.

The first-person narratives further served as a cathartic exercise that may have helped the returning captives cope. Both crossings (the separation and return) of the cultural threshold required what Van Gennep described as a rite of passage. During the separation sequence, the rite required endurance of violent capture where the Indians stripped the captives of their cultural manifestations of clothing, hair, and personal dignity. Following the return, the narratives allude to more subtle rites. The returning captives were "re clothed" in Western garments although the texts point out that the captives had to slowly readjust to wearing cloth. The narratives of Aguilar,

Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca and others indicate that ceremonies surrounded their return as soldiers wished to be entertained by the fantastic stories. Participation in these ceremonies and rites evoke comparison to similar celebrations experienced by captives who returned from Muslim enslavement in North Africa. As had the oral narration of the experience, the literary narration also served as a rite of passage that allowed the captive a psychological readjustment to the life-altering journey.

This ritual component of the captivity narratives offers clues to how the literary tales are grounded in real experiences. That the narratives, excepting that of Fontaneda, similarly unfold in the archetypal pattern of the hero's journey suggests the play of unconscious structures. Superficially, the narratives mimic, to a degree, the popular hero epics of the age, like *Amadís de Gaula*. Furthermore, the captivity ritual made use of highly symbolic imagery that included nakedness, cannibalism, and demonism. These non-Western conditions that supposedly existed in the mythic zones lying outside of Christendom drew a stark contrast for the Iberians attempting to reconcile their world with the other half that happened to be pagan. The imagery hinted at the intense anxiety prompted by the realization that the Bible, the long honored source of truth, made no mention of this other half—a culture's worldview had fissured.

The ritual and imagery further hinted of the individual and societal struggles that revolved around identity. Having been practically assimilated into the captor cultures, those captives who returned did so as psychologically marginal characters that were no longer entirely Spanish in their worldview. Modern studies of the

Stockholm syndrome help explain how and why the captives could so thoroughly conform to their Indian captors as to be unrecognizable as Westerners. When the captives reunited with Christendom, this identity change became seriously problematic given the societal imperative toward conformity to existing ideology. The captives and their chroniclers partly resolved the identity crisis through introduction of the narratives themselves. They romanticized the accounts to demonstrate that the Christian God preserved those servants who remained faithful despite their sojourn in the bowels of paganism, and as Christian heroes, they accounted as worthy of rejoining civilized society.

Because identity proved such an integral component of the captivity experience, its relation devolved to mythology. How else could someone explain a surrealistic experience that transformed personal identity at the psychological core? Myth offered the only manner of symbolic expression that allowed the captives and their chroniclers to communicate the intensity of the experience and then explain how they salvaged their Christianity despite it. That the concept of identity proved such an integral theme of the captivity experience, Latin American authors would tap the narratives in search of new meaning for post-colonial societies.

Beyond the narratives, the captives and their chroniclers left behind very few clues from what to reconstruct accurate historical reconstructions of the captivity experience. As Fernando Operé observed, this lack of evidence is intriguing especially when compared to the English counterparts where primary sources

abound.<sup>5</sup> He speculated that Spanish society equated captivity with failure, and since the impetus for colonization was the subjugation and conversion of the Indians, then those stories of failures elicited little interests.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps, but then this does not entirely explain why those secondary chroniclers like Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, opted to incorporate captivity narratives in their favorable histories that supported Spanish goals. They successfully did so, however, only by converting the narratives to heroic tales that supported the prevailing mythological conventions of the day.

Although we can only speculate as to the general lack of interests regarding Spanish captivity and as to what actually occurred during the experience, we have sufficient clues concerning individual motivations for writing the narratives. Some like Cabeza de Vaca and Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascañán hoped for monetary and professional gain.<sup>7</sup> All the narratives exhibited some effort at negotiating re-entry to and acceptance by Christendom through demonstration of faith and support of imperial prerogatives even if some, like Cabeza de Vaca, disagreed over the methods used to achieve the goals. I also argue that the writing of the first-person narratives served as a rite of passage back to Christendom in a similar manner as the violent initiation into Indian society.

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<sup>5</sup>Operé, *Historias de la frontera*, 23.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>7</sup>The Crown licensed Cabeza de Vaca's narrative for the purpose of profit. See Favata and Fernández, eds., *The Account*, 26.



The rites of passage were mandated by the interaction with two diametrical mythologies. The ritual and imagery employed to relate the captivity experiences tells of the psychological strain placed upon the unwitting individuals who had to negotiate two very different societies. The captives came from a society where Catholic dogma suffused the European intellectual landscape and transformed Christian mysticism to a historicized religion that established a hierarchy where the elite few had secular and spiritual power over the vast hordes. It resulted in a Eurocentric worldview that resisted other worldviews and any attempt to alter the prevailing myth. When removed from this rigidity, the captives came face to face with alternate concepts imbued with Indian mysticism suited for the communal realities of the hunter/gather societies. The Indian mythologies proved less rigid, less hierarchical than the European counterparts. Once acclimated, the captives experienced freedoms and an elevation of status unrivaled in Europe. For this reason, there may be little wonder why some captives opted to remain with the Indians. From a psychological perspective, the Stockholm syndrome helps explain why many captives assimilated to Indian society. It fails, however, to offer adequate answers regarding why white captives more readily adopted Indian culture than their Indian counterparts who seldom assimilated to Western culture. I agree with Frederick Turner that the answer may lie within the mythical complexities of culture more than with the individual psyche.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Turner, *Beyond Geography*, 234 – 240.

Because of their imitation of popular heroic lore, the narrators unwittingly contributed to an existing mythology that stemmed from unique cultural experiences (i.e. the Spanish *Reconquista*) and in part from the Christian and classical heritage common to Europe. Although helping to perpetuate existing bias, the texts suggests that many captives came away from their ordeals transformed. They entered their journey believing the Indians to be backward and savage but returned convinced of the humanity of New World peoples. When presented with an opportunity to better inform Old World attitudes and prejudices, they had little choice other than rely on convention to communicate an unparalleled experience. Had they defied convention, the narratives would never have passed Inquisitorial censors who determined the acceptability of texts based on their adherence to or deviation from religious and secular rules.

This effort evidenced a society struggling to come to terms with rapid changes resulting from religious, intellectual, and socio-economic upheavals. While the Protestant Reformation (1517) threatened the Church's power, the New World discoveries forced the realization that Christendom may not reside at the center of the known world as the medievalists had imagined it. Old ideas died hard, however. As cadres of explorers and colonizers unveiled new continents, animals, fauna, and peoples, a massive effort got underway to situate the unknown regions into the known to at least lend some stability to an already shaky society. Pedro Mártir de Anghiera posited that the Americas had been referenced by Plato in his descriptions of Atlantis and that the Indians were possibly deposited there by the biblical King

Solomon. Oviedo suggested that the Americas were populated by the descendants of Noah and as late as 1580 Juan Suárez de Peralta claimed they had to be among the lost ten tribes of ancient Israel.<sup>9</sup>

As this climate of speculation mounted among scholars, the less erudite showed even less certainty and set out to prove that the New World hosted sites referenced in popular fiction and traditional legends. Juan Ponce de Leon went to Florida in 1510 in search for the source of renewable life. Coronado sought the Seven Cities of Cibola that supposedly existed in the extreme northerly regions of Nueva España and that supposedly hosted the treasure of King Solomon's Temple brought to America by remnants of the lost tribes of Israel. For many, the idea that the New World hosted the Garden of Eden was as real as Spain itself. In addition to the Bible, secular literature also fired the popular imagination. Chivalric sagas, like the heroic epic *Amadís de Gaula*, as well as classical epics such as Homer's *Odyssey*, emphasized bravery and honor in the face of Herculean trials—traits considered sacrosanct in a society that glorified their Christian warriors. This highly speculative environment derived not from New World realities, but rather from medieval scholarship that relied less on empiricism and more on divine revelation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>See Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492 – 1729*. Austin: University of Austin Press, 1967.

<sup>10</sup>The early medieval sage, Saint Augustine (354 - 430) laid the foundations for Catholic thought and defined a world divided into the realm of God (*civitas Dei*) and the realm of the earth (*civitas terrene*), the former of the saved and the latter for the damned. Augustine argued that no lands existed on the other side of the world. See Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 664.

Summarily, the warrior cult born of the Reconquista, the Catholic dogma, heroic epics, and a scholastic tradition grounded in Augustinian logic all constituted a unique cultural mythology. This mythology had not prepared its adherents for the ramifications of Columbus's discoveries that to him and his contemporaries comprised a new world that had long existed only in mental realms. Christendom spent centuries coming to terms with the profound realities. In its persistence to reconcile the new with the old, dialectics occurred that resulted in a revitalized mythology communicated in scholastic and popular literature, as well as around campfires. The evolving myth had as one component the few captivity narratives that complemented an existing fixation with heroic themes.

It is somewhat logical that the narration would devolve to myth as all the authors had advanced through an educational complex informed by Biblical and medieval concepts. Each narrator further possessed ulterior motives for relating their tales, thus a certain degree of embellishment occurred. In doing so, the captives presented themselves in a manner that conjured images of other heroic sagas most familiar to a European audience. Indeed, the New World explorers collectively had been anointed as heroes by Spain's premier historian, Pedro Martír:

It was a gentle custom of the ancients to number amongst the gods those heroes by whose genius and greatness of soul unknown lands were discovered. Since we, however, only render homage to one God in Three Persons, and consequently may not adore the discoverers of new lands, it remains for us to offer them our admiration. Likewise should we admire the sovereigns under whose inspiration and auspices the intentions of the discoverers were realized; let us praise the one and the other, and exalt them according to their merits.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Pedro Mártir de Anghiera, Book I.

Others such as Cortés's chronicler, Díaz, Garcilaso, el Inca, and many more characterized New World exploits as "heroicos hechos" (heroic deeds) and the Spanish adventurers as "heroicos caballeros Españoles" (heroic Spanish cavaliers) comparable to those of legend.

When the chroniclers of New World captivity published their various accounts, they thus tapped an existing vein. Although a microcosmic component of the whole, the American captivity narratives contributed in a manner that at once complemented and strengthened an existing cultural mentality despite the fact that many captives came to refute commonly held beliefs regarding the nature of Indians. In an effort to reclaim their Christian identities, however, most of the captivity narrators suppressed the obvious lessons. With the exception of Cabeza de Vaca, the first-person narratives offered their reader only an occasional hint of their concealed emotions.

The sympathetic insight afforded by the narratives gives clues as to why so many captives opted to remain with the Indians even when presented the opportunity to return—they found life with the Indian and the freedom offered by the wilderness preferable to regimented and intolerant "civilization." Regardless of the potential motivations for defection, however, a society that could understand only in terms of Christian versus non-Christian had no choice but to condemn its defectors as heretics. The same was not true for later generations. As Spanish hegemony in the Americas eroded and as more societies broke free of colonial shackles, the independent Latin American cultures began to search for their own identity. For

centuries, Latin America had been defined by its Spanish-ness while the Indian half (sometimes Indian majority) had been subdued to the point of insignificance. With Spain's ouster in the nineteenth century, the *mestizo* and *criollo* populations began to openly explore and celebrate their unique heritage. During the twentieth century, Mexican and Argentinean writers turned to sixteenth-century captivity legends in order to examine the implications of *mestizaje*. With sympathetic pens, Latino authors like Wast and Aguirre more fully developed the long-silenced message of those captive defectors who, though once condemned, became celebrated as cultural heroes. Modern Latino writers hailed them up as the fathers of mestizo ethnicities who rejected the hypocrisy of the Christian world while embracing that which appeared more virtuous. In effect, the defectors emerged in Latino literature as mythological characters that helped define an identity for post-colonial peoples in search of meaning from a heritage that included a people who could never speak.<sup>12</sup>

In the final analysis, the first-person narratives demonstrate an effort whereby the captives set about to negotiate two mythical systems in order to survive and find meaning. Their ultimate quest was twofold—first, to survive captivity by obtaining acceptance from the Indian captors, and second, to regain trust by their Christian brethren who may have questioned the loyalties of those who returned in the guise of a pagan Indian. Those chronicled in works by contemporary narrators served to justify larger imperial prerogatives by couching New World experiences in terms of

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<sup>12</sup>For more development of this theme, refer to Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

Christian heroics that demonstrated Spaniards served a higher purpose in their imperial exploits. Regardless of their literary nature, though, the captives narrative had basis in fact. We know from other sources that they did in fact endure some harrowing experience that forever marred their consciences. Considering that it is impossible to completely return from the other side unchanged, the captives must have spent their remaining lives as if walking a tightrope between two diametrically opposed cultures.

In reality, the captives themselves underwent harrowing rites of passage just as significant as any recorded in the mythological literature. This metaphysical dimension is best described by Campbell:

The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. . . . The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man . . . he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore . . . is to return to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed.<sup>13</sup>

As such, the captivity journeys led the subjects toward new realizations regarding the exotic cultures in the New World that may have been lost on their Spanish contemporaries. These captives became cultural bridges, and even achieved heroic status on both sides of the cultural rift—the Native Americans christened some captives as *los hijos del sol* (children of the sun). Consequently, the captives never were quite able to return to the normality of their previous existence even after returning home. The captives' return to Christendom connotes that of Odysseus,

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<sup>13</sup>Campbell, 19 – 20.

when his own son, Telemachus, remarked: “Stranger, you seem a different person now . . . Your clothes are different and your flesh is not the same. You surely are one of the gods.”<sup>14</sup>

Once repatriated, the former captives proved beneficial to Spain’s imperial goals. With the exception of Hans Stade, the Spanish captives went on to serve as frontier interpreters, intermediaries, guides and, in the case of Cabeza de Vaca, a colonial frontier governor. Both explorers and scholars appreciated the detailed, first-hand insight into the other-worldly cultures that had once only existed in the margins of Iberian imagination. Although some demonstrated compassion and admiration for their captors, they failed to convince others of the humanness inherent in Native American people. This failure is mostly owed to the delivery of the captivity message, which relied heavily on Western literary symbolisms to make sense of a non-western world and that, in the end, obfuscated the real history.

The narratives are indeed something more than a factual journal. They resulted from a quest for meaning and out of a need to rationalize an irrational experience for both author and audience. The narrators suffered from some degree of identity crisis that they sought to resolve by using artistic devices that organized and simplified the chaos and confusion. As one scholar surmised of the sixteenth-century novelists in general, “It is though these writers imposed their orderly artistic

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<sup>14</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. George Herbert Palmer (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999), 156.



solution on an existential quandary.”<sup>15</sup> In such a manner, the narrators invented meaning and defined extraordinary experiences in their own terms—as captives and voiceless survivors, they were powerless; but through narrating the experience, the captive exerted power. This offered reassurance to a European audience unsure of the ultimate ramifications of the American discoveries. Although once barefoot and naked in a savage land, the Christian captive returned triumphant with a tale of heroics which, as Cabeza de Vaca lamented, “is the only thing that a man who returned naked could bring back.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Bruce W. Wardropper, “Don Quixote: Story or History?” *Modern Philology* 63, no. 1 (August 1965): 5.

<sup>16</sup>“ . . . pues este folo es el que vn hombre que falio vef nudo pudo facar configo.” Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, Prohemio.

APPENDIX A  
CHRONOLOGY

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
c. 1200	“The Poem of the Cid” introduced anonymously and among first work written in the Spanish language.
c. 1238	First Mercedarian Order established in Aragon for the ransoming of Christians from Muslims; later christened <i>Ordo Sancte Mariae Mercedis Redemptionis Captivorum</i> .
c. 1250	Gonzalo de Berceo compiles <i>Vida de Santo Domingo</i> about the eleventh-century saint, Dominick of Silos, who gained a mythical reputation for his effort to rescue Christian captives from the Muslims.
1272	Alfonso X’s <i>Grande e general estoria</i> offers first Spanish translation of Ovid’s <i>Metamorphoses</i> , which introduces classical mythology to Iberia.
1469	Marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, thus creating the rudiments of the Spanish nation-state.
1478	Catholic monarchs and Pope Sixtus IV institute the Inquisition to root out the false <i>conversos</i> and <i>moriscos</i> , and to guard against heresy.
1492	Last Moorish stronghold of Granada capitulates, thereby ending the <i>Reconquista</i> ; Christopher Columbus discovers the New World; Antonio de Nebrija publishes first grammatical text for Castilian Spanish.
1493	First European defections to Indian society by Miguel Díaz and several other who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage.
c. 1508	<i>Amadís de Gaula</i> compiled and translated for Spanish readers by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo.
1511	Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero shipwrecked on Yucatán peninsula; taken captive by Maya.
1514	Mercedarian Order establishes first American mission at Santo Domingo.
1516	Juan de Solis’s expedition to the Rio de la Plata resulting in his death and captivity for several survivors, supposedly including Francisco del Puerto.

- 1519        Hernán Cortés begins expedition to subjugate the Mexica and discovers Jerónimo de Aguilar.
- c. 1527        Sebastian Cabot's explores the Rio de la Plata and reportedly discovers survivors of Solis's failed expedition; Cabot's colonists fell prey to Guarani Indians, among them Lucía Miranda.
- 1528        Cabeza de Vaca and companions enter unknown parts of North America and suffer captivity; Juan Ortiz is taken captive in Florida while searching for Cabeza de Vaca and the rest of the Pánfilo Narváez expedition.
- 1536        Cabeza de Vaca and companions reunite with Spanish soldiers in northern Nueva España.
- 1539        Juan Ortiz discovered and rescued by expedition of Hernán De Soto.
- 1540        Cabeza de Vaca appointed adelantado of the Rio de la Plata by Carlos V.
- 1542        Cabeza de Vaca publishes first edition of his *Relación*.
- 1550        Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda shipwrecked off Atlantic coast of Florida and taken captive.
- 1554        Hans Stade captured by Tupinamba in Brazil.
- 1557        Hans Stade publishes *The True History of His Captivity* in Hesse.
- 1560        Cervantes de Salazar publishes *Cronica de la Nueva España*, which contains the first secondary account of Jerónimo de Aguilar's captivity.
- 1566        Diego de Landa publishes *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* that gives further secondary accounts of Aguilar and his companion, Gonzalo Guerrero.
- 1568        Bernal Díaz del Castillo publishes primary account of Juan Ortiz's rescue in the larger memoir of Hernán De Soto's expedition through Florida titled *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*.
- 1575        Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda rescued.

- c. 1596 Fray Francisco de Avila taken captive in Florida.
- 1605 Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, publishes *La Florida del Inca*, which offers the most popular secondary account of Juan Ortiz's captivity.
- 1612 Ruy Díaz de Guzman publishes the chronicle *La Argentina* which enshrines the legend of Lucía Miranda.
- 1629 Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán begins his "happy captivity."
- 1663 Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán compiles *Cautiverio feliz y razón individual de las guerras dilatadas del Reino de Chile*.
- 1789 Manuel José Lavardín brings the Lucía Miranda to the Argentinean stage in the play "Siripó."
- 1936 Hugo Wast published his interpretation of the Lucía Miranda legend.
- 1980 Eugenio Aguirre publishes *Gonzalo Guerrero: Novela histórica*.
- 1983 Juan José Saér publishes *El entonado*, a conceptualization of Francisco del Puerto's captivity.
- 1992 Nicolas Echevarría directs "Cabeza de Vaca," a first translation to film.
- 1995 Carlos Villa Roiz publishes *Gonzalo Guerrero: Memoria olvidada, trauma de México*.
- 1998 Cristián Sánchez translates "Cautiverio Feliz" for film in Chile.

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