

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Struggle for a Discourse Validator which Confirms his "True Christian Status" as *esclavo/cautivo* in his 1542 *La Relación*

por

Ramón Sánchez¹

Fresno State University

Based on Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 manuscript La Relación, this paper analyses how, in the context of his captivity, his discourse constructs two kinds of Christians: the false and the true ones. The paper utilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the superaddressee, which subordinates everything to its contextual definition in a dialogue.

KEY WORDS: superaddressee; utterance; Christian; slave/captive; redeemed; neo-feudal.

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In 1542, Cabeza de Vaca publishes *La Relación que dio Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca de lo acaescido en las Indias...* in Zamora, Spain. His account, which concerns the failed Pámfilo de Narváez Expedition (1527-1536), is in a significant manner a testimony presented as proof of merit (*probanza*), for he initially seeks the *adelantamiento* for Florida.² In April 1527, Governor

¹ ramons@csufresno.edu, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8963-1137>.

² Adorno and Pautz, 1999, vol. 1: 380, 379 and 381, and vol. 2: 395 and 402. Cabeza de Vaca hastens back to Spain to present his merit and request, and he has his cousin, Pedro Estopiñán, prepare in his name "a *probanza* about the services of Cabeza de Vaca's paternal grandfather". The appointment, though, was bestowed on Hernando de Soto. However, Cabeza de Vaca had been aware of situation in the Province of Río de la Plata to which he received the appointment of governor.

Narváez leads a military force to conquer land and people in the Americas. Cabeza de Vaca as treasurer of the Expedition represents the Spanish Crown's economic/political interests, which conflict with those of Governor Narváez's, and in *La Relación* their clash confirms the delineation of two different types of *cristianos*.³ Cabeza de Vaca is among the 300 armed men who enter inland into Florida in 1528 but end up unable to reconnect with the ships.⁴ Consequently, the stranded men construct barges and launch themselves into the sea and end up shipwrecked somewhere on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in present day northern Mexico or the state of Texas, U.S.A. From there, Cabeza de Vaca, along with three companions (Castillo, Dorantes, and Estevanico the African slave), journeys inland westward, trying to reach *tierra cristiana*.⁵ The castaways finally encounter a Spanish slave raiding party in 1536 near the Sinaloa River close to the Pacific Ocean. He then meets Melchior Díaz, Chief Justice of Culiacán, and joins him in subduing the natives of this region. In 1537, he leaves for Spain and reaches the port of Lisbon on August 9, 1537.

In *La Relación*, Álar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca acknowledges a miserable slave/captivity experience but declares solemnly his complete confidence in merciful God, who would deliver him ("*sacar de aquella catividad*" [*cautividad*]) from that servitude with the aim of serving "*Dios nuestro Señor*" and "*Vuestra Magestad*" [*Majestad*].⁶ At the start of his narrative, he states the castaways' enslavement/captivity is due to their sins (*nuestros pecados*) and is part of a divine plan for them as *cristianos*.⁷ Scholar Ralph Bauer points

³ Goodman, 2005: 235 and 236. While Narváez was "given a huge percentage of potential profits from the acquisition of land and gold, the only way Cabeza de Vaca could recover his initial outlay of money was to ensure the collection of royal revenues that would be possible only after a colony was established".

⁴ Adorno and Pautz, 1999, vol. 1: 374.

⁵ Juan Ortiz is a member of the Narváez Expedition, but he went back to Cuba with the ships after Narváez leads a group of expeditionaries into the interior of Florida. When Narváez' wife hears nothing of her husband, she sends Ortiz with 20 or 30 others in a small ship back to Florida to search for him. When the ship arrives at the bay (possibly Tampa Bay), the sailors see on the beach what appears to be a note attached to a stick or reed. Ortiz and several other men go to investigate, resulting in his capture by a large number of warriors. In 1539, Ortiz makes contact with Hernando de Soto's men, who almost kill him, thinking him a native. He then joins the De Soto Expedition as an interpreter.

⁶ I follow the original orthography in *La Relación*. *La Relación* English translations are my own. Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E5^v. We gave many thanks to our Lord and were more fully aware of His mercy, and we held firmly to the hope that He would liberate and bring us to where we could serve Him. So I say that I always had complete faith in His mercy that He would deliver me from that captivity.

⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. A2^r.

out that the “literary motif of ‘naufragios’ thus signals a general progression from loss to recovery, from perdition to salvation, from state of sin to an awareness and rejection of the sin of Odyssean pride”.⁸ As a humbling and self-surrendering servant, fulfilling his duty to convert the subjugated (regarding them as capable of becoming *cristianos*), his discourse sets-forth his God-given grace. This makes him a chosen *cristiano* who turns his slave/captive status into a redeeming one, exemplifying his deference to a higher listener (*cristiano* imperial superaddressee).⁹ However, his discourse struggles for validation because of opposing superaddressees and a *cristiano* imperial superaddressee in flux.

I utilize Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the superaddressee, who in a dialogue is taken to be the participant holding the authentic and unifying view of things, subordinating all to its contextual definition (“all existence exists in it and for it”).¹⁰ Though not physically present in a dialogue, each party involved in an exchange appeals to this listener as standing above and delimiting the responsive understanding to things. However, speakers can point to different superaddressees, who can be dissimilar to each other by degree or at times as a whole. A superaddressee is not static and does not exist outside the human sphere, for it is in the process of development as it contributes to a dialogue. It is a provisional arrangement, a human construct in progress with biases and limitations.

I focus mainly on Cabeza de Vaca’s castaway period in *La Relación* and address one discourse aspect of his “*esclavitud*”/“*catividad*” [*cautividad*] (enslavement/ captivity): the significance of Cabeza de Vaca’s superaddressee in confirming his *cristiano* status by validating his God-given grace and imperial commitment as a redeemer. This approach aims to expand on Ralph Bauer’s comments about Cabeza de Vaca’s fashioning of “two kinds of Christians: the false... and the true” ones.¹¹

Cabeza de Vaca’s discourse aims to convince others that his superaddressee is the judge of things and the template for any action. By examining his superaddressee, one can discern the narrative framework that Cabeza de Vaca

⁸ Bauer, 2003: 69.

⁹ Bakhtin, 1990: 90. The narrative relationship of transgredient [transgressive] aesthetic form to the hero and his life is “the relationship of a gift to a need; of an act of freely granted forgiveness to a transgression; of an act of grace to a sinner... it transposes the recipient of the gift to a new plane of existence. And what is transposed to a new plane, moreover, is not the material, not the object, but a *subiectum* [participative self], the hero”.

¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician and scholar. Bakhtin, 1986: 126 and 137.

¹¹ Bauer, 2003: 54.

utilizes, understand the imperial/political presuppositions this ultimate discourse validator contains (e.g., accepting without question the conquering enterprise and a hierarchy of different *cristianos*), as well as detect Cabeza de Vaca's superaddressee's dialogical relationships that generate apparent stability. The reinvention of his subservient role into a true *cristiano* slave/captive will be addressed through the following three aspects: (1) his difficulties in rearticulating his subjugation against hostile and/or shifting *cristiano* superaddressees, (2) his attempts to validate his true *cristiano* slave role, and (3) his struggle against the *principales*' superaddressee. Scrutinizing Cabeza de Vaca's slave/captive status transformation into that of redeemer, necessitating a particular supporting *cristiano* imperial superaddressee discourse—with its inevitable complications—reveals in *La Relación* discursive formations of a false and true *cristiano* identity and struggles for validation.

1. CABEZA DE VACA'S DIFFICULTIES IN REARTICULATING HIS SUBJUGATION AGAINST HOSTILE AND/OR SHIFTING CHRISTIAN SUPERADDRESSEES

In *La Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca and others appeal to some sort of authoritative referential listener through which they direct and order the way a dialogical relationship develops. Within this textual context, it is assumed that the speaker/listener understands and follows the superaddressee's concepts and values, accepting them as legitimate, infallible, and unchanging and as having been in existence from the beginning of an enterprise, e.g., the Spanish conquering endeavor. However, the above assumptions do not hold, because a superaddressee is not an autonomous entity but an agreed upon discourse validator. When people do not agree on the superaddressee, conflict and misunderstanding and sometimes re-evaluations are involved. Also an ultimate validator undergoes change, being affected by utterances that add or clash with it. Significantly, this results in endowing people's utterances with varying degrees and types of authority (which may not be to the speakers'/listeners' liking) and/or possibly leaving the participants in the exchanges unable to gauge changes in a superaddressee and respond accordingly.¹²

Cabeza de Vaca's *cristiano* and imperial superaddressee countenances and elevates his slave/captive status because in such a state he continues the conquering endeavor not to enrich himself but to serve loyally in establishing the

¹² Bakhtin, 1986: 127. Fluid relationships between people affect narrative demarcations, making them permeable and always contested, because all the participants seek a "responsive understanding".

emperor's universal *cristiano* empire. Accepting this discourse validator's sanctioned culturally meaningful contexts, Cabeza de Vaca as redeemer speaks and acts out the proper relationship between both *Dios* as well as with His Imperial Majesty.

Cabeza de Vaca begins and ends *La Relación* with the *cristiano* imperial superaddressee assumptions that his captive-redeemer's virtuous acts implement the imperial mandate and cement the Spanish Monarchy's legitimizing power. In large part, his redemptive virtue depends on the imperial expectation that the natives have the potential to become *cristianos*, making his duty of converting the conquered crucial.¹³ This is not an issue in relation to African subjugation, for the *cristiano* imperial superaddressee judges them pagans who reject Christian faith, legitimizing their enslavement because "suffering in bondage" will save their souls.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Cabeza de Vaca's ultimate discourse arbiter is not the only one in his narrative nor is it consistent.¹⁵ The neo-feudal (*encomendero*-oriented) Spanish conqueror's superaddressee supports the subjugation of the "other," elevating his prowess (superior strength, skill, and right). For the imperial enterprise, he sacrifices, conquers, and Christianizes, confirming his loyalty to the emperor. However, his superaddressee validates a neo-feudal relationship between him and His Imperial Majesty.

In *La Relación*, the neo-feudal Spanish conqueror claims a superaddressee who validates him within a *cristiano* imperial endeavor because he is the one who subdues the other. What is not acceptable for this conqueror is to be made slave/captive, which implies social death. Consequently, the neo-feudal (*encomendero*-oriented) conqueror discourse is hostile to Cabeza de Vaca who re-articulates the meaning of his subjugation through a different super-

¹³ In *La Relación*, the *cristiano*/Hispanic discourse about the indigenous people of the Americas being capable of becoming *cristianos* is crucial, for this grants the Spanish Crown the right to rule. Seed, 1993: 636, 637, 639 and 635. For Christianity, Augustine of Hippo establishes reason as the defining characteristic of humanity. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) presents the rational soul as distinguishing those who are Christian or potentially so. This Spaniards assume anyone who is rational will convert to the Catholic faith.

¹⁴ Hensel, 2007: 17. Elliott, 2006: 99 and 100. A slave shift in type and numbers of subjugated and productive focus in the Americas occurs in the beginning of the first half of the fifteenth century when (1) the plantation model of African slavery is defined and (2) the Spanish Monarchy permits through *asientos* (contracts, e.g. in 1518, 1530) the transportation of large numbers of slaves directly from Africa to the Americas. The *cristiano*/Hispanic perspective maintains that this is about God's just punishment of Africans and that the *cristiano* masters are there to nurture the Christian faith in them.

¹⁵ Bakhtin, 1986: 99. The speaker chooses "under varying degrees of *all* language from the addressee and his anticipated response".

addressee.¹⁶ In a conflicting situation, Cabeza de Vaca appropriates and adapts terms, such as true *cristiano* and virtue, within the frame of his superaddressee to validate his God-given gift of grace that allows him to become redeemer.¹⁷

Although on the surface, both the neo-feudal conqueror and Cabeza de Vaca's emperor-centered utterances apparently appeal to the same ultimate arbiter, they actually configure dissimilar authoritative discourse validators.¹⁸ The neo-feudal conqueror's utterances claim the emperor (as supreme discourse arbiter) shows understanding and approval of his favored status, anticipating the Crown rewarding him "for deeds rendered in the monarch's name".¹⁹ This, though, threatens the Crown's political authority, for the conqueror's control of subjugated labor can lead to his independence. This leads to different parties deriving dissimilar assumptions about who is worthy and who is not, who is subservient and who is not. Therefore, through his own imperial superaddressee, Cabeza de Vaca confronts the neo-feudal (*encomendero*-oriented) Spanish conqueror's discourse, which seeks a new feudalistic power relationship with the monarch.²⁰

The neo-feudal conqueror's discourse argues that his great sacrifices in the conquering enterprise guarantee his right to the reward of perpetual support of tribute or forced labor and/or slave labor (e.g., indios), while fulfilling the conversion of the conquered to Christianity. For instance, the Spanish conqueror Bernal Díaz del Castillo (as a virtuous true *cristiano*) identifies himself as one of the true conquerors (*verdaderos conquistadores*) who battles and leads the natives to pure ways and teaches them the holy doctrine.²¹ Likewise,

¹⁶ The *encomienda* is a grant by the Spanish Crown of the right of the grantee to receive the labor and tribute of indios within a certain territory. See the following landmark and fundamental works on the *encomienda* by Zavala and Simpson.

¹⁷ Bakhtin, 1981: 276: "The world, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile".

¹⁸ Bakhtin, 1990: 202. Here the unity of style communicates directness and an incontestable position.

¹⁹ Davis, 2000: 51.

²⁰ Bauer, 2003: 47, 48 and 51.

²¹ Díaz del Castillo, 1912: 693: "les pusimos en buena policía, y les enseñamos la santa dotrina". Wallerstein, 2006: 4 and 5. Spanish humanist, philosopher, and theologian Sepúlveda articulates some aspects of Just war discourse through utterances about *cristiano* evangelizers being obliged by divine rule to subjugate (enslave) and govern naturally inferior barbarians. Harrill, 2006: 21 and 33. The Roman notion that a slave anticipates the wishes of the master and takes the initiative (reinforcing social hierarchy and confirming stability) is ab-

conqueror Nuño de Guzmán, as Governor of Pánuco, New Spain (1526), sees his reward in the power to issue licenses for the branding and exportation of indigenous slaves from Pánuco to Hispanola.²² Pámfilo de Narváez holds a contract that sanctions his right to conquest: he will Christianize the natives and put to death or enslaved those who do not “recognize and accept the Church, the pope, and the king” and allow the “preaching of the gospel”.²³

Positing *cristiano* good intentions and imperial leadership, Cabeza de Vaca, like the neo-feudal conqueror, upholds a just war and/or the enslavement of natives as necessary to save them (“*les tratarían muy mal y se los llevarían por esclavos a otras tierras*”).²⁴ Despite this, both types of conquerors pursue dogmatic interpretations on the grounds that only one overall correct narrative conception is possible and that all others are *ipso facto* incorrect. The situation, though, gets complicated because both groups appear to defer to the same imperial discourse validator, who is in flux itself. As a result, depending through which perceived superaddressee a discourse is filtered through, mean-

sorbed into Christianity through Paul and Augustine, turning the metaphor *slave* into a slave for God.

²² As a counterweight to Cortés, in 1528, Charles V named Nuño de Guzmán president of the Primera Audencia of New Spain (1529-1533). Guzmán repeatedly clashed with Cortés and Juan de Zumárraga, first Bishop and Archbishop of New Spain (1527-1548), who headed the Mexican Inquisition from 1536 to 1543.

²³ Adorno and Pautz, 1999, vol. 2: 11, 12 and 14. Through the document, the required authorized procedure as well as the permission to seize indigenous slaves (e.g., *esclavos de guerra* and *esclavos de rescate*) is given. Seed, 1993: 629, 634 and 643. Within the expanding Spanish Empire, the criticisms of slavery are limited, e.g., the Spanish Dominican Friar Antonio Montesino's (1511) attack on the Franciscan friars' monopoly of the conversion process, arguing that the indios have the right to be converted, leads to questioning whether the Spanish Crown is fulfilling its conversion obligation. Baptiste, 1990: 9. Dominican Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas in 1516 defends indigenous people by seeking their relief through the importation of “*negros o otros esclavos*” [Negroes or other kinds of slaves], accepting slavery, echoing elements of Paul's rhetoric, and reinforcing the existing structures of servitude. Elliott, 2006: 279. Fredrickson, 2002: 36 and 37. Juan Ginés Sepúlveda, *Spanish humanist, philosopher, and theologian*, (c. 1489/90-1573 CE) states since “barbarous and inhuman peoples [abhor] all civil life, customs and virtue”, they can be enslaved. Sepúlveda argues that non-rational beings “could be made useful to the Spaniards and amenable to Christianity only by the application of force”, that is enslavement.

²⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. F3^v and H6^r. Salisbury, 2006: 210 and 211. Augustine articulates three criteria for a just war: (1) must have a just cause, (2) must be waged with good intentions, and (3) must be waged under the leadership of legitimate authority (Christian emperor). Bowden, 2005: 12: The natives “may possess the potential to be accepted into the” Spanish empire; however, they must accept or it will be imposed on them, “granting the Spanish ‘an extraordinary powerful right of intervention’”. Purdy, 2006: 263 and 264. Similar grounds for war are articulated by the Spanish scholastic Francisco de Vitoria (c. 1486-1546).

ing and outlook change or distort, pointing to problematic refractions in their dialogues.²⁵

As slave/captive, Cabeza de Vaca is open to the charges that he is not worthy and not fulfilling the conversion duty. Very much in need of a supreme utterance validating witness to his suffering, grace, and redemption, Cabeza de Vaca re-construes his slave/captive role against a neo-feudal discourse that negates his significance. He shifts his slave/captive status into the positive and special role of redeemer through oppositional terms. Reconfiguring his subservience leads to identifying the neo-feudal conqueror as the false *cristiano* and Cabeza de Vaca as the true one —whose virtue, service/merit, and worth confirm his faithfulness to God and the imperial endeavor.²⁶ He points out the neo-feudal conqueror's utterances conceive service as a means of personal gain, making his virtue ornamental.

In *La Relación*, there are examples of the false *cristiano*, who lacks humility and self-surrender. One occurs after the Florida stranded expeditionary members construct barges and launch themselves into the sea. At an estuary the "*christiano griego*" Dorotheo Theodoro and an unnamed African ("*un negro*") voluntarily join a tribe, abandoning the expedition and submitting to the non-*cristianos*, and Cabeza de Vaca asserts the expeditionary members are left confused and sad for having lost two Christians ("*aver perdido aquellos dos cristianos*").²⁷ There is also the occasion, when as castaways, Oviedo refuses to go with Cabeza de Vaca to the *tierra cristiana* and remains with the Deaguanes.²⁸ Unlike Cabeza de Vaca, these *cristianos*' subordination to the indigenous world categorizes them as irredeemable, for they are slaves to their fear and sin. And while in difficulties on their makeshift boats, Cabeza de Vaca requests Governor Narváez's help for the people in his boat. The Governor, who has the healthiest men on his raft, replies it is every man for himself, relinquishing his command and surrendering his moral and spiritual responsibilities by abandoning the *cristiano* imperial endeavor, which makes

²⁵ Roberts, 2012: 338 and 339. He observes the utterance refraction of capitalist contradiction of social relations is problematic for its functioning. This point can apply to *cristiano* imperial superaddressee, which is mediating the historical social system of the imperial enterprise. Voloshinov, 1973: 23. Refraction occurs by "an intersecting of differently oriented social interests".

²⁶ There arises an inconsistency in Cabeza de Vaca's discourse of merit and grace for the same acts, because grace as God's gift is not earned by he who gets it. Garnsey, 1996: 214 and 215. Augustine states God decides whom to bestow and to whom to withhold His grace and merit has no place in His decision.

²⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. C2^r.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, sig. D4^v.

him a false *cristiano*.²⁹ Contrary to Cabeza de Vaca, who continues to loyally adhere to the emperor-centered, “*Vuestra Magestad*” [*Majestad*], discourse, Narváez’s betrayal denies him any appeal to *Dios* and emperor.

However, Cabeza de Vaca is dealing with a changing *cristiano* imperial superaddressee, which creates problems for his legitimacy.³⁰ Some of the fluctuating and conflicting elements of the imperial superaddressee develop, for instance, in Charles V’s struggles with various political systems and economic and administrative obstructions, presenting disparate assumptions for different *cristianos* about which imperial superaddressee concepts and values to consent to.³¹ In addition, in the Americas, the emperor utilizes the *Reconquista Patronato Real* (1486), *Casa de Contratación*, *Consejo de Indias*, *audiencias* and viceroyalties, and other such tools in an attempt to enact and establish governing machinery against opposition.³²

The Crown’s push for “efficient acquisition, control and exploitation” is very much part of the shifting policies about forced labor.³³ For instance, between 1510 and 1542, the Spanish Monarchy first supports forced labor, e.g., issues the *requerimiento*, authorizes the importation of African slaves to the Americas (e.g., 1510, 1518, and 1530), and appears to accept the Aristotelian doctrine on natural slavery and African slavery.³⁴ Second, the Monarchy attempts to eliminate native slavery and the *encomienda* system (e.g., the 1530 royal decree and the 1542 *Leyes Nuevas*), for they threaten the Crown’s con-

²⁹ *Ibidem*, sigs. C3^v and C4^r: “Él me respondió que ya no era tiempo de mandar unos a otros, que cada uno hiziesse lo que mejor le pareciesse que era para salvar la vida, que él así lo entendía de hazer”. He replied to me that the time had passed for one man to rule another, that each one must do what he thought best to save his life. That was how he saw things. Garnsey, 1996: 210 and 215.

³⁰ Bakhtin, 1986: 127. The word “always wants to be heard, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)”.

³¹ Elliott, 2006: 118 and 119; 2009: 8 and 11.

³² Taboada, 2004: 43.

³³ Batchelder and Sánchez, 2013: 51, 58 and 59. Bakhtin, 1986: 89. The *cristiano* utterances are “shaped and developed in continuous and constant interactions with others’ individual utterances”.

³⁴ The *requerimiento* (1514) document was read by Spanish conquistadors to the natives of the Americas, explaining the Spanish Monarchy’s legal and moral right to rule over the inhabitants. If they did not submit, a just war was allowed and the natives could be legally enslaved. Yeager, 1995: 856. Natural slave doctrine claims “one part of mankind is set aside by nature to be slaves in the service of masters born for life of virtue free of manual labor”.

trol.³⁵ Such discourse disagreements and contradictions complicate and obfuscate the supposed *cristiano* imperial superaddressee consistency.

In conflict with the neo-feudal Spaniards, Cabeza de Vaca draws on his superaddressee, for support of his true *cristiano* designation. However, in *La Relación* are a variety of ideological languages whose superaddressees (with their standards of legitimacy) are competing with one another.³⁶ For instance, once the castaway Cabeza de Vaca reconnects with Spanish slave raiders—representatives of the neo-feudal conqueror—they reject his claim to authority and seek to enslave the natives who accompany him, labeling him not a true *cristiano*/conqueror.³⁷ Despite Cabeza de Vaca's objections, the slavers end up subjugating these natives anyway. Cabeza de Vaca denounces this slaving act. However, when journeying with Spanish forces from San Miguel to Compostela, he does not elaborate (is basically silent) about 500 indios in bondage, who are in tow with the convoy he is a part of. This is despite the possibility that some of them may be from the group he tried to protect from the slave raiders.³⁸ This is so because he is not really arguing against slavery with the neo-feudal conquerors. He is arguing for the Crown's control of subjugated labor and not for the neo-feudal lords. Their dialogic boundaries intersect and overlap at times but their superaddressees are irreconcilable on the issue of who has authority over forced labor.

Cabeza de Vaca does not consider his slave/captive status to be the same as that of indios, Africans, and even some other Spaniards (whose lack of virtue designates them as false *cristianos*). He is a true *cristiano* (slave to God and not to sin) whose redemptive virtue is indispensable to a unifying *cristiano* empire.³⁹ Cabeza de Vaca negates the scope and influence of the false *cristiano* and reduces that of the indigenous and African people within the imperial endeavor. A *cristiano* imperial superaddressee gives meaning to Cabeza de Vaca's transformation from slave/captive to redeemer by validating

³⁵ The 1530 royal decree prohibits future enslavement of indigenous people but is revoked under political pressure. The 1542 *Leyes Nuevas* places regulations to protect the Indians on the *encomiendas*. Elliott, 2006: 286. One needs to note also the economic pressures of "free" labor and other forms of unfree labor that interplay or compete with slavery.

³⁶ Bakhtin, 1986: 123: "Every utterance makes a claim to justice, sincerity, beauty, and truthfulness (a model utterance), and so forth. And these values of utterances are defined not by their relationship to language (as a purely linguistic system) but by various forms of relation to reality, to the speaking subject and to other (alien) utterances".

³⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. H3^v. Slave expeditions, whether legal or not, were a quick way make a profit.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, sig. H7^v.

³⁹ Garnsey, 1996: 183.

his compassionate, self-abandoning service, and his reverence and loyalty to *Dios* and emperor, which are fundamental to the well-being of the empire.⁴⁰

2. CABEZA DE VACA'S ATTEMPTS TO VALIDATE HIS TRUE CHRISTIAN SLAVE ROLE

When the Narváez Expedition members become stranded in the territory they call Florida, they construct boats and put out to sea, ending up shipwrecked somewhere on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in present day northern Mexico or the state of Texas, U.S.A., a region historiography designates as "*la frontera septentrional de Nueva España*" (the northern most frontier of New Spain).⁴¹ At this point, the expedition disintegrates, and the dire circumstances compel the castaway Cabeza de Vaca to seek accommodation with tribal people. Acting out of despair, a wretched Cabeza de Vaca pleads with the natives to save the castaways by taking them in ("*rogué a los indios que nos llevassen a sus casas*").⁴² The indigenous people assist them, admitting them to their shelters and caring for them.

From the neo-feudal perspective, they have led themselves into enslavement/captivity and come under the rule of non-*cristianos* indigenous masters, becoming powerless and rootless beings. Spaniards can accuse them of not only selling themselves into captivity but of betraying their Christianity (Christ being their true master) and losing all merit by becoming the other or ensnaring themselves in immoral practices.⁴³ Consequently, Cabeza de Vaca can be found to lack virtue and be designated the false *cristiano*, raising uncertainty about his merit and service to the emperor within the imperial narrative. Because of the dangers of assimilation into the indigenous world and effacement in the *cristiano* imperial context, he is forced to articulate an apology of his *esclavo/cautivo cristiano* status.⁴⁴

In *La Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca's superaddressee accommodates his redemptive virtue, leading to his redeemer status in the narrative, which confirms and justifies his actions as upholding and promoting the emperor's

⁴⁰ Rigby, 2002: 221. This appeal to transformation fits the Augustinian discourse on Christian suffering.

⁴¹ Roughly speaking, this region today encompasses Northern Mexico and the Southwest United States. For an insightful discussion on how historiography has approached the region see Jiménez Núñez, 2001: 737-755.

⁴² Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. C6^v.

⁴³ Glancy, 2002: 83 and 84.

⁴⁴ Lee, 1999: 242.

imperial policy. In the process of articulating the change from his slave/captive role to redeemer, Cabeza de Vaca draws upon three significant *cristiano* slave-concerning discourses: Apostle Paul's, Bishop of Milan Ambrose's, and Augustine of Hippo's.⁴⁵ Although Cabeza de Vaca does not give a direct quote from these Christian sources, they are embedded as contextual presuppositions in his imperial superaddressee, delineating the concept of a true *cristiano* slave. Cabeza de Vaca's slave/captive experience is sanctioned by an imperial superaddressee containing allusions to Lazarus, redeemer, burning bush, confronting evil (*mala cosa*), and lost in the wilderness (seeking *tierra cristiana*).⁴⁶ The presuppositions contribute to notions of privilege, non-privilege and high and low status.

For instance, Ambrose talks about the "liberty of being a slave", which accesses a "relationship of friendship with God".⁴⁷ Cabeza de Vaca's redeemer role marks his distinctive relation to God as true *cristiano*. Apostle Paul's utterances uphold legal slavery and call on all to be good slaves to God, serving Him as true *cristianos* because they are the "children of the promise".⁴⁸ For Cabeza de Vaca, Paul's and Ambrose's language formulates the acceptance of slavery but, as well, the special status of a true *cristiano* like him. As a "child of the promise", Cabeza de Vaca's bondage leads to true freedom. As a wandering, suffering, powerless, and alienated castaway, he communicates his sense of alienation and supplies examples portraying natives as unjust masters.⁴⁹ However, he accepts without resentment his subservient situation to the non-*cristiano*, serving willingly and patiently his enslavement/captivity, for the condemned slave has no grounds for finding fault with that condition.⁵⁰ As redeemer, he displays true virtue by serving the Spanish Monarch with integrity and devotion as well as promoting the cause of peaceful evangelization of the American indigenous population and aligns

⁴⁵ Paul (c. 4 BCE-c. 62-64 CE) was one of the leaders of the first generation of Christians, often considered to be the second most important person in the history of Christianity. Ambrose (c. 340-397 CE) was one of the most eminent fathers of the church in the 4th century. Augustine (354-430 CE) was an early Christian theologian and philosopher whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy.

⁴⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. E6^r, D5^r, E5^r, E5^v, E7^r and A2^r.

⁴⁷ Garnsey, 1996: 200 and 201.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*: 174 and 175.

⁴⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. D4^r, D4^v and D7^v. He informs that the natives killed Esquibel and Huelva and other *cristianos*. He notes how many times they were badly treated, e.g., at one point Cabeza de Vaca says that the enslaved castaways are treated worse than slaves or men in any condition ever were.

⁵⁰ Rigby, 2002: 219.

his utterances with the emperor-centered supperaddressee discourse, which claims authority over the control of the subjugated people.⁵¹ Blessed by providence under miserable conditions, his superaddressee acknowledges his transformation from slave/captive to redeemer, corroborating his self-sacrifice as the fulfillment of the divine *cristiano*/Hispanic imperial plan.

Christian theologian Augustine explains slavery by bringing several Christian discourse threads together. For him physical and spiritual slavery are a product of original sin, slavery being a punishment by God “in whom there is no unrighteousness”.⁵² He sees slaves as lawful property, a right “derived from and sanctioned by God”.⁵³ He urges that one emulate the Christ role as a slave, for the bondage will end and the good Christian will be rewarded on the second coming.

Cabeza de Vaca's supreme discourse arbiter recognizes that throughout the slave/captive hardship period, he always states his *cristiano* identity and emulates the Christ role as a slave, so he may make all men free, though some may remain in servitude.⁵⁴ His supersddressee facilitates a background capable of sustaining the redeemer values and testimony by doing away with the discontinuity and fragmentation of his enslavement/ captivity period. In *La Relación*, some intertextual utterances discern his bondage as one that brings him from death to life.⁵⁵ At least twice in the narrative, while seeking his fellow *cristianos*, Cabeza de Vaca is given up for dead and one time is saved during a cold night by a burning bush.⁵⁶ Because he serves the right masters

⁵¹ Reséndez, 2007: 49. Cabeza de Vaca supported the emperor by fighting against the *Comunros* (1520-1521). Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. A2^r. Cabeza de Vaca presents his ancestors (“*antepassados*”) as validating his commitment and loyalty to the imperial endeavor, clearly referring to his grandfather Pedro de Vera, who completed the conquest of Gran Canaria.

⁵² Garnsey, 1996: 213, 218, 231 and 217. Elliott, 2006: 71. One impact of the perspective is noticeable in the friars involved in the conquest of the Americas, who because of the Reformation and Counter Reformation were “deeply imbued with the Augustinian notions of ‘original sin’”.

⁵³ Garnsey, 1996: 207.

⁵⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E8^v: “No tenía, quando en estos trabajos me vía, otro remedio ni consuelo sino pensar en la Passión de nuestro Redemptor Jesuschristo y en la sangre que por mí derramo”. While in these difficulties, my only remedy and consolation was to think about the Passion of our Redeemer Jesus Christ and in the blood He shed for me. Garnsey, 1996: 198 and 200.

⁵⁵ Harrill, 2006: 30. There is an echo of Pauline and Roman discourse, connecting “slavery with the language of ‘death’ and ‘life’”.

⁵⁶ Bakhtin, 1981: 429. The Biblical associations are present in the speaker's ideology. Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. D5^r, E5^r and E4^v.

(God and emperor), he ceases to be “lost” and finds his *cristianos* in order to lead them to the *tierra cristiana*.

In *La Relación*, the Moorish (*Mora*) woman from Hornachos foretells *Dios* will work great wonders for him who survives the doomed Narváez Expedition.⁵⁷ Stating that everything the *Mora* prophesies occurs as she says (“*succedido todo*”), Cabeza de Vaca merges her utterances with his God-determined discourse that anoints him by divine intervention, his redemptive virtue offering others the opportunity for a higher good.⁵⁸ His enslavement to non-*cristiano* masters and his acknowledgement of sin (*pecado*) are presented as inevitable and required for him to reestablish the proper relationship to *Dios* as well as with His Imperial Majesty. Regardless of his inability to fathom the workings of divine providence, he submits to the will of God, who permits him to suffer in order for him to carry out his duty to convert the “other” and be the eye of the emperor.⁵⁹ His superaddressee designates a powerless and alienated enslaved/captive Cabeza de Vaca as *savoir*, making the liminal zone he inhabits meaningful.⁶⁰ As an agent of a divine plan, he accepts the charges imposed by *Dios* on him and works among the natives (e.g., as *físico*), commending them to *Dios*, who he thanks for His mercy (“*misericordia*”) and blessings (“*mercedes*”).⁶¹ In addition, in his redemptive role, he leads his fellow castaways to the *tierras cristianas*.⁶²

From the very beginning of *La Relación*, he says his narrative bears witness (“*testigo*”) to his effort to serve His Majesty.⁶³ The shipwrecked Cabeza

⁵⁷ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. I1^v and I2^r: “que si alguno saliese, que haría Dios por él muy grandes milagros”. (If someone made it out, God would work great wonders through him).

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, sig. I2^r. Adorno and Pautz, 1999, vol. 1: 275. The *Mora* fortune teller is from Hornachos (in Badajoz, Extremadura) a place “known throughout the sixteenth century for its almost exclusively Morisco population” (Muslims converted or coerced into converting to Christianity), which creates the discourse tension of whether to trust her as *cristiana* or as the “other” soothsayer.

⁵⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. A1^v and A2^r. Bauer, 2003: 74.

⁶⁰ Voloshinov, 1973: 21: “Every ideological sign—the verbal sign included—in coming about through the process of social intercourse, is defined by the *social purview* of the given time period and the given social group”.

⁶¹ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E4^r. This is one of several times he utters his submission to the *cristiano* imperial superaddressee as he works to fulfill a mission.

⁶² Garnsey, 1996: 231. This echoes Augustine’s declaration “the natural relationship of man to God is that of slave to master”.

⁶³ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. A3^r and A3^v. Cabeza de Vaca says he memorizes everything about the alien lands, so that if God brings him out of that dire slave/captive situation, his acquired knowledge will bear witness (“*testigo*”) to his effort to serve His Majesty as the

de Vaca details his loss of all material things (he ends up naked). He suffers from harsh weather and a difficult environment, as well as native maltreatment and his exile from *tierra cristiana*. In his oppressive and alienating situation, the words *esclavo* and *cautivo* communicate God's will and judgment (“*voluntad*” and “*juizio*”), which lead to his redemption.⁶⁴ A self-effacing Cabeza de Vaca states that if *Dios nuestro Señor* leads him out of the entrapping region and to the *tierra cristiana* he will inform (“*dar nuevas y relación*”) about the land to aid in expanding the empire.⁶⁵ As a true *cristiano* slave, he accepts and anticipates the imperial wishes, showing that despite the calamitous situation of his slave/captive status he reaffirms his providential commitment to the Spanish imperial endeavor, which includes the voluntary conversion of the “other”.⁶⁶ His slave/captive utterances manifest the value judgment of his Sacred, Caesarian (Imperial), Catholic Majesty, signifying his faithfulness to the Lord and service to His Majesty.

As slave/captive, Cabeza de Vaca is vulnerable to attacks, which undermine the legitimacy of his superaddressee, leaving him in the dreaded position of having no one of substance to acknowledge him.⁶⁷ For instance, when

account shows (“*pudiese dar testigo de me voluntad y server a Vuestra Magestad como la realción dello es aviso*”).

⁶⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. A1^v.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, sig. F7^v. Batchelder and Sánchez, 2013: 52 and 55. Information is crucial to the Spanish Crown's monitoring, controlling, and directing of the imperial enterprise.

⁶⁶ Harrill, 2006: 22 and 23. The Roman concept of *auctoritas* (“real power in the individual that colleagues and social lessers grant by willing compliance”) is applied in Cabeza de Vaca's narrative to the *Majestad* as ultimate guarantor. Agnew, 2003: 234. The “*misteriosa profecía*” of the *Mora de Hornachos* (who appears toward the end of *La Relación*) is conveyed by one of the women of the expedition, predicting that through the survivors of the ordeal God would perform great miracles. Agnew comments, this “*reafirma lo que era implícito en el resto de la narración, es decir, que Alvar Núñez había participado en un viaje supuestamente bendecido por la Providencia*” (reaffirms what is implicit in the rest of the narrative, that is that Álar Núñez has participated in a supposedly Providentially blessed journey). The English translation is my own. Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. H1^v, H7^r, A1^v and A2^r: “para ser atraídos a ser christianos y a obediencia de la Imperial Magestad, an de ser llevados con buen tratameitno” (for them to be brought to Christianity and serve the Imperial Majesty they must be treated well). Cabeza de Vaca's discourse is very much like Las Casas', concerning the conversion non-Christians through their own free will, declaring that the natives will voluntarily subject themselves to the true Lord. Also *La Relación*'s contains a strong *relación de méritos y servicios* (an account of merits and services) aspect to it. Wallerstein, 2006: 8. Voloshinov, 1973: 103: “Any word used in actual speech possesses not only theme and meaning in the referential, or content, sense of these words, but also value judgment: i.e., all referential contents produce in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent*. There is no such thing as a word without evaluative accent”.

⁶⁷ Bakhtin, 1986: 127.

after years in the indigenous world, he reconnects with Spanish slave raiders, they dispute his validity. What triggers the conflict is that Cabeza de Vaca and his companions argue against the Spanish slavers' desire to enslave the natives who arrive with the castaways.⁶⁸ In the process of this disagreement, the Spanish slavers convey their own oppositional categories. Through their interpreter, they address the natives, defining the castaways as being inconsequential and of little worth, while designating themselves as lords of the land who the natives must obey and serve.⁶⁹ The slave raiders' ultimate discourse arbiter affirms their true *cristiano*/conqueror claim, while evaluating Cabeza de Vaca and his companions as not the true *cristianos* of the *Reconquista*.⁷⁰

The slave raiders' superaddressee does not recognize Cabeza de Vaca's true *cristiano* status.⁷¹ However, in *La Relación*, the natives are brought into the argument between the *cristianos*, saying they do not believe Cabeza de Vaca and his companions are the same as the slaver raiders. Within the framework set by Cabeza de Vaca's superaddressee, the indigenous rejoinder shows the slavers as full of hubris and illusion (slaves to their sin). Also the natives' responses bear witness to Cabeza de Vaca's virtue, testifying to his service/merit to the emperor. Cabeza de Vaca comes across as a just man, who following Christ's humility in the form of a true *cristiano* rules without pride over subordinates, acknowledging the veracity of pacification and sacrifice in the imperial process.⁷² As redeemer, he gives authoritative Christian utterances, presenting himself as a true *cristiano* slave who has received grace, in contrast to the other *cristianos*, e.g., the false *cristiano* slave raiders, who cause harm to him and by extension the emperor.⁷³ As such, he endures his oppressive situation, because it is God's hidden justice and, as well, fulfills the *cristiano* imperial directive to convert the non-*cristianos*.⁷⁴ Therefore, he

⁶⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. H3^v and H4^r.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, sig. H3^v: "[Q]ue éramos gente de poca suerte y valor, ye que ellos eran los señores de la tierra a quien avían de obedesçer y servir". (That we were inconsequential people and of little worth, and that they are lords of the land who they must obey and serve).

⁷⁰ *La Reconquista* (718-1492) refers to the struggle between Christian forces and Moorish forces for the Iberian Peninsula that is crucial in the development of the Castilian ideological basis for what becomes the Spanish Empire.

⁷¹ Bauer, 2003: 54.

⁷² Markus, 1970: 93 and 94. Here is another echo of Augustine's discourse. Meeks, 1993: 86 and 87. One also notes a Paulist articulation.

⁷³ Meeks, 1993: 212, 213, 214 and 215. Augustine reinterprets the story of Jacob and Esau, becoming one about God choosing to give grace (an unmerited gift) to some and not to others as he desires before they are born; so God can save one from enslavement and others not.

⁷⁴ Rigby, 2002: 214. This is very much an Augustinian position.

incorporates the natives under the emperor's authority and not the slavers, who turn out to be the false *cristianos*.⁷⁵

3. CABEZA DE VACA'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE *PRINCIPALES* *SUPERADDRESSEE*

In the give-and-take of the exchanges between the natives and the castaways, an indigenous discourse validator (who actually directs the natives' comments about a situation and possible interpretations) can be heard.⁷⁶ In *La Relación*, the indigenous superaddressee is non-*cristiano* and not imperialistic. It countenances and facilitates native collective ritual acts and their symbols. Native *principales* (indigenous leaders and/or chiefs) tie their rights and obligations to that discourse validator, through which they speak and act within the cultural venues bound by their superaddressee, interpreting and giving meaning to events, e.g., in dealing with threats to the tribal community and ways an individual—as part of a community—can regenerate.

Within *La Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca struggles with the *principales* over who holds the center of the dialogue. He is caught up in centrifugal and centripetal forces of the natives' superaddressee, and his redemption-oriented language clashes with the indigenous discourse of regeneration.⁷⁷ During the enslavement/captivity castaway period, he minimizes the mention of the *principales*.⁷⁸ Yet they are there from the beginning of the Spaniards' contact with the natives, and Cabeza de Vaca's existence as slave/captive is profoundly affected by them, for the indigenous superaddressee negates in large part his *cristiano* imperial imports into the tribal dialogue, which threatens his ability to be heard and understood as a *cristiano*/Hispanic.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. H4^r, H4^v, H5^r, H5^v, H6^r, H6^v and H7^r.

⁷⁶ Bakhtin, 1981: 345: "When some else's ideological discourse is internally persuasive for us and acknowledged by us, entirely different possibilities open up".

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*: 272: "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)".

⁷⁸ Within the indigenous cultural context, a *principal* provides venues, ritual paraphernalia, ritual feasts, and speaks the authoritative narratives, sanctioned by the native superaddressee to whom he is answerable to.

⁷⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. H5^v, H6^r and H6^v. Once Cabeza de Vaca regains military power, he clearly subordinates *principales*, e.g., when he and Melchior Díaz pacify indigenous people.

In the interactions between Cabeza de Vaca and the natives, their superaddressees give their utterances a distinctive discourse background, meaning, and action evaluate. So Cabeza de Vaca's *cristiano* imperial discourse arbiter presupposes his redemption while the *principales*'s superaddressee presupposes the natives' regeneration. Because the *principales*' audience is the native community and Cabeza de Vaca's is a *cristiano*/Hispanic reader, each re-accents, reorients, and distorts utterances through their respective framing superaddressee.

In *La Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca's redemptive virtue gives a *cristiano* moral account that takes him beyond his slave/captive situation and complies with his obligation to the "*Sacra, Cesárea, Católica Magestad*" [*Majestad*] to nurture the *cristiano* faith in others.⁸⁰ However, as slave/captive, he acts within an indigenous cultural frame and needs to pay attention to a non-*cristiano* superaddressee, who sanctions a tribe's terms, concepts, distinctions, the range of discourse and activities: defining what is possible in that tribal environment. The subservient Cabeza de Vaca is obligated to react to indigenous events and cultural forces, such as the ritual that creates a pattern natives practice, which they take as confirming a type of truth and reality.

Cabeza de Vaca's account reveals instances of indigenous ritualized acts, e.g., repetitive ritual dancing and actions (*fiestas y areitos*), the deprivation of sleep, systematic observances that lead to states of exhaustion and/or the taking of substances, which aim to connect with another sense of being, such as a non-temporal world.⁸¹ For instance, the Avavares sing and dance for three days for the healing of the suffering and the Yguaces in the midst of hunger enact "*fiestas y areitos*".⁸² From their superaddressee, these dialogic tribal practices draw confirmation that the tribal members' existence has meaning.

As custodians and preservers of knowledge, indigenous leaders and/or chiefs interpret events, reconfigure narratives, alter customs, and establish rituals.⁸³ For a *principal* to remain a *principal*, he must make the survival of the tribe paramount. Consequently, when the group's existence is perceived as being at stake (e.g., by hunger, disease, or violent raids by attackers), the

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, sig. A1^v. Dandeleit, 2001: 31. Bauer, 2003: 44. Ferdinand's self-appointed role by 1514 as "the leader of Christendom" and Charles V fashioning of himself as the "new Augustus, emperor of peace" become self-validating references.

⁸¹ An *areito* is an indigenous collective ceremony that, for instance, commemorates past tribal events and recent victories. It is an important method of conserving and transmitting tribal customs. Despite there being two groups, the participants in the dance performance and the attending observers, they are all taking part as community members.

⁸² Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. E4^r and E1^r.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, sigs. E7^r and E7^v.

principal can implement a saving ritual, whose symbolic forms and social actions depend on the indigenous supreme discourse arbiter.

The main problem tribal groups have with the shipwrecked Cabeza de Vaca and his companions is that they have no useful role (they lack skills) to contribute to the survival of the community, but they must make them useful even if it means assigning them women's roles.⁸⁴ The indigenous people react to the castaways' tribal disruption by giving them tasks, one of which is that of "*físicos*" (healers). The castaways laugh at the designation and claim not to know how to cure. But the natives will not feed them until they do their work. In addition, a knowledge-holding native—which implies he is a *principal*—speaks to Cabeza de Vaca and his companions. He first tells Cabeza de Vaca he does not know what he is saying ("*yo no sabía lo que decía*"), rejecting their *cristiano* imperial superaddressee and in the process his *cristiano* redeemer role. He then proceeds to state that rocks and other things from the land have virtue ("*virtud*"), and if he with a rock can cure so can they who as men certainly have greater virtue and power.⁸⁵ Here, even though Cabeza de Vaca in his narrative filtered the indigenous discourse, he partially reveals utterances that do not correspond to the *cristiano* imperial cultural concepts. For instance, "virtue" is designated within a tribal ritualistic act, which orients suffering towards regeneration.

Although he is trapped in the indigenous world as *esclavo/cautivo* not only physically but also culturally, his effort to free himself, in part, involves breaking away from the directing discourse of the indigenous superaddressee as keeper of the last word.⁸⁶ The slave/captive Cabeza de Vaca makes himself answerable to his superaddressee by anticipating its response as he speaks to the native by changing the contextual references of the term "*virtud*". First, he points out he is forced by the natives to be a *físico*. Second, and more importantly, because of the coercion involved, he highlights that he remains a true *cristiano* in his enslavement/captivity, which signifies he has the real

⁸⁴ Wade, 1999: 333: "Cabeza de Vaca, a male, is compelled to perform native women's chores, and later he is allowed to become a trader, a role also within the purview of the native women of some groups".

⁸⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. D1v: "ca las piedras y otras cosas y otras cosas que se crían por los campos tienen virtud, y que él con una piedra caliente trayéndola por el estómago sanva y quitava el dolor, y que nosotros que éramos hombres cierto era que teníamos mayor virtud y poder". Stones and other things brought forth by the land have virtue. And if he by passes a hot rock over the stomach heals and takes away the pain, we who are men certainly have greater virtue and power.

⁸⁶ Bakhtin, 1981: 354. All utterances in an intense interacting struggle inspire mutually.

virtue of freedom.⁸⁷ In addition, he is on a mission to lead his fellow *cristianos* to the *tierra cristiana* (Christian land).⁸⁸

Under a non-*cristiano* master, the true *cristiano* Cabeza de Vaca accepts the transformation to redeemer that suffering brings about. However, in practical terms, his distressful process is guided by *principales*, who appeal to their superaddressee, which is very much evident, for instance, during the pillager/victim ritual episodes that the *principales* direct, using Cabeza de Vaca and his companions by designating them dangerous.⁸⁹ In this ritual, a tribal group escorts the castaways to another indigenous community, and once there, they take the wealth of those natives to whom they transfer Cabeza de Vaca and his companions to. Though the castaways do their best to have a say in their situation, they are under the control of the robbing indios and then are dominated by the former victimized ones who become new plunderers.⁹⁰ For the *principales*, ritual is sanctioned by their supreme discourse validator, while for Cabeza de Vaca divinely rooted percepts are ordained by *cristiano* imperial utterances. The native discourse context negates his appeal to his *cristiano*/Hispanic referential discourse arbiter, limiting his discourse sway and leaving him marked as a dangerous being.

The constraints the natives impose on the castaways, for they articulate Cabeza de Vaca and his companions as dangerous, appear to be due to negative news about Spaniards. Their reactions indicate they have heard about Spanish military assaults: their harshness, pillaging, and killing, mutilation, and enslavement of natives, and their connection to diseases that strike the natives. It appears news about Spaniards' harmful and associated calamities has spread through tribal network (e.g., seasonal gatherings for food and cer-

⁸⁷ Garnsey, 1996: 242.

⁸⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. D5^v.

⁸⁹ Voloshinov, 1973: 41: "Each word, as we know, is a little arena for the clash and crisscross of differently oriented social accents". Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. G3^r. The tribal group that steals always demands that the victimized natives hand over their wealth or they assure them that the Spaniards, who have the power to destroy or save, will be offended. The former victimized natives, who then become the new pillagers, repeat the process, utilizing the castaways also in the same manner so as to make up for their lost wealth ("*satisfazerse de su pérdida*").

⁹⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. F6^v, F7^r and F7^v. Cabeza de Vaca admits to not having the authority to stop the pillaging group of natives who arrive with him and are directed by the *principales* from taking the property of the other natives, stating, "*más no éramos parte para remediallo*" (we had no power to remedy it) and admits turning to the the plundering natives what is offered to him.

emonies, tribal members switching to another community, trade, and war).⁹¹ The tribal people associate Cabeza de Vaca and his companions with illnesses that afflict the natives, e.g., a stomach ailment that causes native fatalities (“*enfermedad de estómago*”), and willful acts that lead to deaths, e.g., an act of anger associated with native loss of life (“*tenían por muy cierto que nosotros los matávamos*”).⁹² Native accounts, as well, connect the castaways to cannibalistic acts.⁹³ In addition, no matter how un-*cristiano*/Hispanic Cabeza de Vaca and his companions physically look, the natives repeatedly relate to them to the “other”, never truly accepting them into an indigenous community. Indigenous utterances in *La Relación* many times express uneasiness about the castaways, which affect the meaning and evaluation of the indigenous relationships with them.⁹⁴

The *principales*’ discourse, buttressed by their superaddressee, apply negative categories to their relationship with the castaways. For example, the different indigenous groups, which follow the pillager/victim pattern, label the castaways as not simply healers but as potentially harmful and damaging people.⁹⁵ Mediated by an indigenous superaddressee, the *cristiano*/Hispanic *físicos*’ culturally contrary characteristics are overridden through a sacrifice/regenerative narrative structure that the native supreme discourse arbiter sanctions. The *principales* fit the castaways into their indigenous ideological framework and manipulate.

Though the castaway Cabeza de Vaca is in bondage, he emphasizes that he continues committed to the conversion of the natives, as well as showing that his necessary suffering makes him a true *cristiano* slave to God and emperor.⁹⁶ He distinguishes between him as true *cristiano* slave, accepting the punishment *Dios* dictates and His grace, (which contributes to his redemption) and those who control him as non-*cristianos* (slaves to sin). Therefore, draw-

⁹¹ Alcon, 2003: 94. Voight, 2009: 75. For instance, the Nuño de Guzmán’s violent campaigns (1529-1534) in the expanding northern *Nueva España*, including the Culiacán region, lead to enslavement, pillaging, killing, maiming, and the introduction European/African diseases that together depopulate large sections of the territory.

⁹² Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. C7^r and G4^r.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, sigs. C7^v, C8^r and D7^r.

⁹⁴ Bakhtin, 1986: 94: “[A]n utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication, and it cannot be broken off from the preceding links that determine it both from within and from without, giving rise within it to unmediated responsive reaction and dialogic reverberations”.

⁹⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. F6^v and F8^r: “[D]ezían que éramos hijos del sol y que teníamos poder para sanar los enfermos y para matarlos”. They said we were children of the sun and had the power to heal the sick and to kill them.

⁹⁶ Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative supports the imperial rationale of bringing Christianity to pagan peoples and incorporating them into Hispanic civilization.

ing on his superaddressee's conceptual links, Cabeza de Vaca transmits the formulation that where his redemptive virtue arises, there is *cristiano* truth and where *cristiano* truth stands in the narrative so does his redemptive virtue.

In *La Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca tells about the *mala cosa* (bad thing) incident, which exemplifies his claim of how he breaks out of the state of servitude by imposing the authoritative discourse recognized by the *cristiano* imperial superaddressee.⁹⁷ The challenge Cabeza de Vaca faces is that it is not just the Avavares who in awkward and anxious reactions engage them in an exchange about their intentions by relating the *mala cosa* tale. Other tribes the castaways have encounter along the way have do the same (“*Éstos y los demás atrás nos contaron una cosa muy estraña*”).⁹⁸ The *principales* confront Cabeza de Vaca and his companions in order to know who they are, what their intentions are, and what if any role they can play in the tribal context.

The tale of the *mala cosa* is of a disruptive being, who —especially— upsets their dance ceremonies, at times appearing dressed as a woman and at other times as a man.⁹⁹ The Spaniards' reaction is laughter at first. Cabeza de Vaca interprets the *mala cosa* situation as a confrontation with an evil being, and his remedy to the *mala cosa* is to get the natives to convert. Because of his utterances, he observes the Avavares lose much of their fear of the *cristianos*, strongly implying they convert to Christianity.¹⁰⁰ In accord with his *cristiano* imperial superaddressee, he brings the deluded rather than deficient natives into the true faith and civilization, opening the door for the preaching of the *cristiano* gospel and imperial rule.¹⁰¹ Cabeza de Vaca's redemptive virtue turns his interaction with the natives into an act of ministry through which the natives supposedly end up believing in *Dios* like the castaways (“*creyessen en Dios nuestro Señor y fuessen christianos como nosotros*”) and becoming members of the empire.¹⁰² As the chosen instrument of *Dios*, Cabeza de Vaca as the true *cristiano* slave offers the natives the chance to serve the Lord so that they will receive their Christian inheritance.

⁹⁷ Bakhtin, 1981: “Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another's utterance accurately quoted”.

⁹⁸ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E6v: “This tribe and other tribes we have encountered told us something very strange”.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, sig. E7r. Jáuregui, 2014: 430. Jáuregui notes this aspect of the tale echoes Cabeza de Vaca's female roles (“*un transformista que muda de apariencia de género e incuso, literalmente, de piel*”).

¹⁰⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E7v: “perdieron mucha parte del temor que tenían”.

¹⁰¹ Elliott, 1989: 60. Because the indigenous people could be presented as deluded and not deficient Christianity could dispel the darkness.

¹⁰² Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sig. E7v.

Both Cabeza de Vaca and the natives re-interpret their interactive situations because they do not agree with what each side expects as the usual points of agreement and their exchanges appear to lead to mostly incongruous exchanges. This reveals utterances derive from dissimilar legitimizing superaddressee discourse orientations.¹⁰³ Cabeza de Vaca's expectation that the natives will voluntarily accept Christianity is challenged by, first, the lack of influence on events—such as the pillage/victim ritual—and, second, the frustrating and ambiguous outcome of episodes like the *mala cosa* incident.¹⁰⁴ Cabeza de Vaca's account cannot completely push aside nor ignore a non-*cristiano* superaddressee who expresses indigenous concerns and their perception of his worth.

CONCLUSION

In *La Relación*, the crucial point for Cabeza de Vaca is that his true *cristiano* status is accepted by his *cristiano* imperial superaddressee, for then his utterances matter within the imperial endeavor.¹⁰⁵ Cabeza de Vaca's apology for his slave/captive status involves his superaddressee confirming that his slave/captive status does not mean the same when applied to indios, Africans, and even some other Spaniards: people who exist as non-*cristianos*, incomplete ones, and/or false *cristianos*.¹⁰⁶ He is answerable to a *cristiano* ultimate discourse validator, who always requires he answer for his acts and deeds by aligning them with the "*Sacra, Cesárea, Católica Magestad*" [*Majestad*] of *La Relación*, confirming Spanish imperial rule, practice, and ideology.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, despite being a *cristiano* slave/captive in the alien land, he shows he is not a slave to sin (one who does not serve *Dios*) but one who, as redeemer, performs imperial *cristiano* service to his fellow man, demonstrating

¹⁰³ Medvedev and Bakhtin, 1985: 121: "It is impossible to understand the concrete utterance without accustoming oneself to its values, without understanding the orientation of its evaluations in the ideological environment".

¹⁰⁴ Castillo, 2006: 8. Susan Castillo, the literature scholar of colonial America, makes the point that the "indigenous cultures of the Americas were anything but a *tabula rasa*" for the Europeans.

¹⁰⁵ Harrill, 2006: 153 and 157. The Roman and Christian discourse of the disloyal household slave member slave echoes here.

¹⁰⁶ Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, sigs. D5^v and E5^v.

¹⁰⁷ Bakhtin, 1986: 126. The superaddressee "assumes various ideological expressions"—in this case for Cabeza de Vaca it is the emperor-centered *cristiano* imperial superaddressee—whose authority is historically formed. Bakhtin, 1993: 3. Here is a textual recognition of responsibility: his individual "answerable act or deed".

the superiority of Christianity and, as well, the emperor as the authentic, unifier of the universal empire in the making.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, his redemptive virtue is presented as contributing to the proper relationship between him and both *Dios* and His Imperial Majesty.

Nevertheless, socially/politically his superaddressee is being built on shifting ground and is in constant interaction with contradictory and conflicting discourses.¹⁰⁹ The complex and historically evolving and changing political landscapes of the conquest enterprise complicate Cabeza de Vaca's attempts to validate his true *cristiano* slave role. In addition, Cabeza de Vaca's utterances conflict with indigenous and different Spanish ones that arise both from the center and periphery of the *cristiano*/Hispanic culture, as reflected by the *mala cosa* episode and his clash with the Spanish slave raiders.¹¹⁰

However, as wretched slave/captive castaway, Cabeza de Vaca's superaddressee affirms his re-articulation as a true *cristiano*, who persuades the conquered to take up Christianity and confronts false *cristianos* (e.g., Narváez and the slave raiders).¹¹¹ As slave/captive in non-*cristiano* lands, Cabeza de Vaca's word and deed orient his submission to the will of *Dios* and service to the emperor, demonstrating his redemptive virtue within the context of the *cristiano* imperial superaddressee, his highest point of reference that sets the validating rules.

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¹⁰⁸ Garnsey, 1996: 201 and 209. Ambrose says the higher good is grasped through the relationship of friendship with God. Augustine points to the duties and virtues of the "pilgrim in exile".

¹⁰⁹ Bakhtin, 1981: 272 and 273.

¹¹⁰ Jáuregui, 2014: 441. He notes that the *mala cosa* model is taken advantage of by Cabeza de Vaca and his companions to restore themselves as conquerors: "[U]n modelo colonial que Cabeza de Vaca y sus compañeros aprovechan para inspirar terror y, en últimas, para restituirse como conquistadores".

¹¹¹ Garnsey, 1996: 208 and 225.

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La lucha de Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca por un discurso validador que confirme su «estatus de cristiano verdadero» como esclavo/cautivo en *La Relación* (1542)

Basado en el manuscrito La Relación (1542) de Cabeza de Vaca, este artículo analiza cómo su discurso, durante el contexto en el que se encuentra cautivo, construye dos clases de cristianos: los falsos y los verdaderos. El trabajo utiliza el concepto de superaddressee de Mikhail Bakhtin, que en un diálogo subordina todo a su definición contextual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: superaddressee; declaración; cristiano; esclavo/cautivo; redimido; neo-feudal.
