Beaux Gestes: The Indian and the European in Pre-Colonial North America

Philip Drover Burnham

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BEAUX GESTES: THE INDIAN AND THE EUROPEAN
IN PRE-COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA

BY

PHILIP DROVER BURNHAM

B.A. English Composition, Beloit College, 1974
M.F.A. Creative Writing, University of Massachusetts, 1979

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 1987
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Further from home, my research was made easier by the kind help extended to me by the staffs of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Library in London, the National Archives in Ottawa, the Municipal Library and the Museum of Antiquities in Rouen, and the Newberry Library in Chicago. Of the latter, I would especially like to recognize the kind assistance of John Aubrey. Obviously, research such as mine is built upon the foundation of the work done by hundreds of other people too often taken for granted and, unfortunately, too numerous to name. I thank them all, not forgetting the staff of the Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico.

My scholarly debt is a great one. Without the immense labor of D.B. Quinn, the careful research of Carolyn Poreman and Olive Patricia Dickason, the provocative ideas of
Tzvetan Todorov, the skillful overview of Frederick Turner, and many, many others, these pages would have amounted to a meager essay, not a dissertation. I hope that my notes and bibliography convey their important contributions.

Such an endeavor is not accomplished, however, by books alone. I owe a tremendous thanks to people who supported me with their encouragement and affection over a time too long for me to remember. Without them I would never have undertaken such a project, much less seen it through to completion. These people include my family in Illinois for their patience and enthusiasm; my adopted family in Paris; Sheila for her comfort and ideas; Beth for her assistance with translations; and all of those friends, particularly in Albuquerque, who saw to it that I was well-fed after once visiting my forbidding kitchen. And lest we forget, my thanks to Emily for typing.

One more acknowledgment is in order. This book could never have been conceived if it had not been for the generosity, the experience, and the compassion of the people who live and have lived on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. Any insight I have on the meaning of contact between different peoples comes in large part from them.
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Early contact between AmerIndian and European cultures in pre-colonial North America (1492-1620) has never before been submitted to systematic analysis on the basis of a close reading of primary source material. Beaux Gestes examines the early literature on cultural exchange in the context of emerging European expansion, and how the image of the American Indian was used to rationalize the colonization of the northern half of the New World.

The methodology of Beaux Gestes is thematic—various aspects of early exploration are examined before submitting a few narratives of an archetypal character to closer scrutiny. The texts are read with an eye to understanding unconscious cultural assumptions rather than the stylistic idiosyncrasies of particular individuals.

Integral to the study is an appraisal of how national or racial stereotypes are manipulated through the printed word to justify territorial expansion, whether practiced by the Church or the modern nation-state. Familiar stereotypes
of Spaniard, Frenchman, Englishman and Indian are reconsidered as the fabricated models of particular historical schools with clear ideological agendas in the way they would tell early American history. *Beaux Gestes* examines not only the sources of such image-making, but also the historiographical issue of how much they have been tempered--or turned topsy-turvy--in the contemporary literature.

Finally, the study is placed in the context of America as an ideological creation--Columbus' discovery, the creation of the Republic, Manifest Destiny. It is only by perceiving the myth of America as the last, best hope for human Progress that the role of the AmerIndian in the early promotional literature and explorers' tracts can be fully understood. Whether as "diabolical savage" or "trustworthy guide," the Indian, it is still thought, must either be conquered or educated to play an acceptable role in the inexorable pageant of the American Dream.
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INTRODUCTION
This is a book about first contact between the Native American and the European. In undertaking such a study, I have felt obliged to delineate the historical and geographical boundaries of my research with an eye to avoiding purely arbitrary conventions, without, at the same time, forfeiting a sense of continuity and integrity that is essential to any successful research.

I take as my subject in these pages a duration of time that roughly corresponds with the era of European pre-settlement and discovery in the north: from Columbus' first voyage (1492) to the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth (1620). This is, to be sure, a most generous slice of history. But the era remains, for many readers, an obscure period of pre-colonial skirmishing that acts as little more than a prelude to the founding of the English seacoast colonies in the early seventeenth century. What most interests me is pre-settlement contact and exchange, that stage of relations between Indian and European when the two sides had not yet become entrenched in hostilities, when they maintained a roughly equal footing in their claims on the land, when barter and appeasement were more likely policies to pursue than extermination and war. Of course, there were successful European settlements in the north that preceded Plymouth—St. Augustine, Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe. But like so many of their predecessors, these faced the continual threat of imminent collapse well into the seventeenth century. And just as assuredly, there were
Indeed hostilities during the time in question between Indian and European that ended in destruction and death. This was no American Golden Age, as much as one is tempted to make of it a colonial Arcadia. But before the massive English migration to America in the early seventeenth century began, the political balance of power between the two sides was still in doubt, this largely due to a singular demographic fact. As D.B. Quinn has noted, the number of Europeans residing in North America (north of the Rio Grande) in 1612 was no more than 1500, and "The influence and orbit of each of them was extremely limited." By the end of the century, Boston alone would have a population of 7,000 inhabitants.

The geographical boundaries of this study are equally ambitious, but, I hope, consistent. I am concerned with the contact narratives (and maps) of voyages to North America during the period cited. For the purposes of this study, the area includes present-day Canada, the continental United States, Mexico as far as the southern edge of the Sonoran desert, and the Caribbean isles. Geographically, this is an immense expanse, but it is well to note that most of the mainland European narratives were confined to just a few areas: the St. Lawrence Valley; the coast of Cape Cod and Newfoundland; the islands of North Carolina and the Chesapeake Bay; the Florida coast; and the southwest area that today comprises the Rio Grande and western Pueblo peoples. These are divergent areas, but the Europeans who visited them displayed any number of consistent attitudes.
toward the land and its inhabitants. Of course some journeys were made elsewhere, but I hope to demonstrate that these too share much with the expeditions made to the main contact areas.

Depending on the scholar, North America is variously defined, sometimes extending south to the Rio Grande River, at others comprising all of Mexico or even Central America. In the former case, I have wanted to avoid superimposing current national boundaries (the Rio Grande River) on cultural identities that long prefigure them (the tribes of the Sonoran Desert, whether in the U.S. or Mexico). Secondly, it is clear that from the Valley of Mexico south and eastward, the demographic density and cultural organization of native societies at the time of contact differed greatly from those of their neighbors to the north. I am basically concerned with what an anthropologist would describe as horticultural and hunter-gatherer peoples north of the Valley of Mexico, and not the so-called "advanced civilizations" of MesoAmerica. My definition of North America is therefore cultural as well as geographical. To the question, "Why include the Caribbean Isles?", my decision to do so was motivated more by historical circumstance than any irreproachable logic. As I discuss in Chapter 1, the European "discovered" the islands of the West Indies before the North American mainland; this fact helped to shape the insular identity of the continent in later Western consciousness. As a result, I felt it was impossible to ignore the prominent role of the Caribbean and
some of the early European accounts of it by Columbus, Vespucci, and Las Casas.

These are the abstract parameters of space and time. But who are the people who inhabit them? Throughout this study I commonly use the generic term "European" to refer to Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, English and French explorers in the New World. For those of us accustomed to making convenient judgments on the basis of national character (the "stolid" British, the "passionate" French, the "violent" Spanish) this terminology, at first glance, may seem vague and even disconcerting. But I essentially agree with the thesis laid out by Herbert Bolton in the early twentieth century: that the colonial empires of France, England and Spain shared several assumptions and even ideologies (religious, political and economic) that characterized their treatment of the American Indian as well as their own supposedly "national" institutions. Whether he hailed from East Anglia, Andalucía, or Brittany, the European acted according to a few widespread cultural principles: 1) that the word of God as revealed by Jesus Christ must be brought to the unbeliever by peaceful methods or strong-arm persuasion; 2) that the economic "development" of America was a thing naturally good for the Christian kingdoms of Europe and usually necessitated the use of forced labor, whether native or emigrant in nature; and 3) that the core of European civilization—clothing, diet, law, the growth of cities—represented a superior state of cultural achievement that was not only defended but symbolized by its
technological prowess. Add to these assumptions the
prominence of Latin as a "universal" tongue for the
educated, and one is reminded of the many ties (spiritual,
economic, linguistic) that bound together the West that
claimed the glory of Rome as its common ancestor.

Of course, Protestants massacred Catholics and
Catholics Protestants all over Europe. Of course the
Italian Renaissance was felt much more readily in France
than in the Iberian peninsula. And of course the ruthless
competition between England and Spain that would express
itself in profound enmity was as bitter a conflict as the
dictates of religion, economics and geography could create.
But it has long been a weakness of our history that we have
been too fond of relating it as a vast drama peopled with
caricatures more worthy of a Hollywood script than any
analytical endeavor.

We are, all of us, familiar with the gallery of
American colonial faces. First comes the Spaniard, an agent
of the devil in armor—violent, ruthless, insatiable, his
profile darkly etched like an inverted silhouette of Don
Quixote and the knightly ideal of European romance. Then
come the French. Lacking the material opulence of their
Latin cousins, they are not so much cruel exploiters of the
Indian as they are willing collaborators in wilderness
rituals and heathen rites of passage. While the Spanish
succumbed to Mammon in their quest for the Seven Cities, the
French gave themselves over to the equally disastrous
temptation of "going wild." Such was the Black Legend of

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the Spanish Don and the "Red" one of the portaging voyageurs.

Sandwiched somewhere between these extremes—that of civilized man corrupted by the hubris of empire and savage man tempted by the desires of nature—the Englishman was to command the American middle ground as the new Yeoman Farmer, hawking the virtues of modesty, frugality, and self-determination in the bitter war to win the hearts of posterity. The symbol of this middle terrain was perfected in the form of a non-authoritarian figure—neither knight, noble, nor priest—who would, by the dictates of his own conscience, defend the frontier against Indian attack, dispense a humane justice, and practice a homespun brand of piety in the gathering shadows of a new national character. In the mythos of the Yeoman Farmer, the family was its crucial virtue. Next to the small homesteader stood a charge of children and a silently suffering wife, their principles upright and monogamous. This was in stark contrast to the Castilian who had taken on Indian concubines and fathered a race of poor mestizos, or the French coureurs de bois, confirmed bigamists who kept white wives in Montreal while enjoying the favors of native ones in the Canadian outback. The little house on the frontier was a virtual shrine.

All of these faces were poor attempts to codify our history, its heroes and its villains. Of course, we are "wiser" today. These stereotypes have been eschewed to make room for a thoroughgoing reappraisal of the past. So the
portraits of our historical tintypes have changed, and the
gallery is hung with different faces. And in the course of
this revision what have we learned? The faultless Yeoman is
replaced by the sneer of the stingy-spirited English
Puritan. The "immoral" Frenchman is now a man of savvy, the
friend and equal of the Indian who carves out an empire
respectful of native hunting and spiritual rights. The
Spaniard is the conquistador of the Black Legend turned
White--ambitious, bold and visionary, he was outnumbered in
the north, and too free-spirited, too generous of will, too
civilized in an older sense to submit fully to the fray
inspired by his mean-spirited rivals. The story has been
turned on its head in the twentieth century as a way to

Our revisions are, in large part, without substance.
This is yet another reason why I include Spaniard, Frenchman
and Englishman under the rubric of "European" in the
chapters to follow. There is much more they share in their
behavior than any unique traits we might be able to single
out. Gary Nash has stated this position very succinctly:

***

Whether the zone of interaction was in the
St. Lawrence River valley, the Hudson River
valley, the southeastern coastal sea
islands and marshlands, the lower
Mississippi River Valley, Florida, or New
Mexico; whether the Europeans involved were
French, Dutch, Spanish, or English...In the
zones of interaction where Europeans came
in small numbers to pursue trade and did
not threaten the Indian land base,
relations were generally amicable...But in
areas where Indian land, political
autonomy, or way of life was at stake or where an Indian slave trade was desired, widespread conflict occurred irrespective of the national origins of the Europeans involved.

Certainly the Spanish, English and French empires in America were possessed of far-reaching differences. But after examining a wide range of exploratory accounts that issued from all three, I am convinced that contrasts between them are due more to the geographic and demographic circumstances each encountered in its particular sphere than to any model we might construct based on the putative fictions of national character. Had the English arrived first in America and found massive veins of silver at the outset, it is anyone's guess whether our history might have been marked instead by the Black Legend of Elizabethan Cruelty. Similarly, had the Spanish been the first to enter the St. Lawrence Valley (or the Hudson) and their rich fur-bearing regions, it is worth wondering whether they might have been likely to develop a thinly-manned commercial empire (as did the French) rather than an intensive mining and agricultural one that was highly exploitative even in the short-run.

To refer to a Bristol sailor or a Rouen cloth merchant as anything other than a "European," would, finally, be patently unfair in light of the terminology we have adopted to describe his American rival. "Indian" and "Native American" are not exactly useful for the fine distinctions they render, yet American historians have long found them adequate to the task of analyzing the contact and colonial periods. No terminology will leave everyone content. It is
my hope that larger terms ("Indian" and "European") will, rather than obscuring internal differences within each, illustrate in greater relief the confrontation between them. This will better go to the essence of intractable differences as well as larger characteristics they may have shared.

Let us remember that the image of the Native American has also undergone a serious "revision." The "savage" of yesterday has likely become the "victim" of today's popular culture, and even scholarship. But both images, I am afraid, are incapable of rendering the complexity of the Indian role in America, past and present. To ignore the demographic disaster that descended on American Indians with the European invasion, and the often cynical appropriation of their lives, liberties and lands in the centuries that followed is not only dishonest history, but dangerous in what it tells us of our capacity to rationalize and forget past miseries as well as present ones. But to reduce the Native Americans to being sacrificial victims before the evil onslaught of Western technology is to make them equally helpless in the face of finding a potential solution to their dilemma. I will not say what Indians are any more than I will Frenchmen or Spaniards. But they are more than victims. It is within the traditional mission of America to make future victims as a way of atoning for the old.
The documents here considered—journals, chronicles, maps, illustrations, promotional tracts—are almost completely of European origin. Unfortunately, this is as it can only be. The extant and verifiable Indian accounts describing first contact in North America are extremely rare and difficult to decipher. Ranging from birchbark carvings to scattered petroglyphs, most of them contain a set of symbols wildly open to interpretation. As a result, our understanding of the Indian reaction to contact is almost entirely based on what European observers tell us. This is not the most judicious manner by which to form historical judgments—particularly when the parties in question were often combatants.

The imbalanced nature of the record has forced me to examine the cultural exchange by two distinct methods: 1) to consider at face value what the European says about his experience in America, and 2) to infer what the given documents say about that exchange without the writer necessarily being aware of it. The first method requires a diligent attention to the mysteries of human motive and the demands of literary genre. The second demands a comprehensive grasp of the narratives as a whole so as to recognize the themes, conflicts and assumptions that many of them share. In terms of presenting a "balanced" picture of first contact, it is therefore necessary to do more than
merely take the European at his word. I have thus sought
out the themes or archetypes that recur in the
journals—whether French, Spanish, English or Dutch—and
interpreted them as symbols or ciphers of the larger culture
whence they come. My assumption is that human language
conceals almost as much as it reveals about its user. In
the syntax, diction, structure and tone of the accounts, I
have tried to unravel unspoken assumptions that comprise a
kind of "semantic unconscious" in the culture that adopted
them. I admit this is difficult terrain, for it requires a
bold though judicious use of inference throughout.

Because I deal almost entirely with printed rather
than manuscript sources, I am more engaged in a study of
broad cultural perception than individual eccentricity or
personality. Certainly the early European accounts of
America were anything but documents of popular culture as we
understand that medium today. However, there was a sizable
reading public for the American chronicles by the beginning
of the seventeenth century, largely because of the new
histories compiled by men such as Oviedo and Lescarbot, and
the primary source anthologies such as The Principal
Navigations of Richard Hakluyt. I am therefore interested
in how the individual mind reflects larger cultural beliefs
at the same time it re-inforces them through the medium of
print. Where there is a large gap in time between the
writing of a chronicle and its first publication, I have
tried to acknowledge the difference so as not to imply there
was an unbroken road between personal perception and a more
or less "public" airing. In my opinion, we cannot examine the reports of Columbus or Cartier as being simply eccentric versions of the American experience or, at the other end of the scale, infallible ciphers for deep-rooted assumptions held by the West. Some kind of middle course must be steered where one can acknowledge the existence of human diversity that is set within the context of recognizable cultural bounds.

I examine in greatest detail the primary sources. More often than not I have read them in the original language in which they appeared to minimize the role of translation. As I do not read Latin or Dutch, this was not always within my capabilities. However, in quoting directly from the texts, I have commonly used the English translations that are most respected and reliable. In cases where a close analysis of diction was necessary, I have translated directly into English from an authoritative edition in the original language. In the chapters to follow, I include as wide a range of the exploratory narratives as is possible—geographically, chronologically, generically, ethnically—without scattering the focus of my own commentary.

My familiarity with the primary sources is extensive though not exhaustive. My knowledge of Champlain, for instance, is largely limited to his earlier writings; I have a passing acquaintance with the Spanish historians like Oviedo and Gómara; furthermore, I am sure there are a few narratives of which I am not even yet aware. These are all
gaps I hope to fill in time. In these pages I have attempted to quote from as wide a spectrum as possible nevertheless, using some of the names that might be most familiar to the general reader—Columbus, Cartier, Coronado, Drake, John Smith.

The issue of whether or not certain voyages to America ever took place or whether particular accounts can be accepted at face value is almost as old as the "discovery" of the New World itself. Some of Vespucci's voyages are still hotly alleged by critics to have never taken place. Certain details in David Ingram's narrative of his journey across North America do not seem, to put it gently, ethnologically accurate. As interesting as these debates are, my task has not included arbitrating them. By including certain narratives within my scope of study, I have chosen to use another measuring stick than scholarly notions of veracity. If a particular chronicle was printed and entertained some kind of contemporary audience—public or private—its potential influence justifies its appearance in this study. Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* had a wide audience in Europe, while his letter to Soderini was translated several times in the sixteenth century and appeared in a number of editions. And whatever we might say of Ingram, Hakluyt willingly printed his narrative in *The Principal Navigations* of 1589. Fictional or real, such experiences became a part of European expectations regarding America.

As important as the primary sources are, to have limited myself to them would have been a methodological
error. First, many scholars have long preceded me in the general field of American exploration, not a few of them having submitted cogent and brilliant theses about cultural contact from which I have clearly profited: Tzvetan Todorov, Frederick Turner, Carl Sauer, Anthony Pagden, Bernadette Bucher, Olive Patricia Dickason and many others. But the secondary documents are also crucial for another reason. Not only do I contend that the Renaissance European molded and shaped his observation of the Indian according to a rather rigid set of cultural principles, but I also believe that such stereotypes as resulted are still with us four hundred years later. Thus, an occasional reference to our own popular culture is a way of conveying in the work that follows the conceptual link that persists between primary documents and the secondary ones that are clearly their legacy. Implicit in my discussion is the belief that knowledge is not merely "gathered" or "discovered," but "manufactured," and sometimes manufactured without interruption over an immense span of time.

A brief summary of the chapters is in order. The first four are primarily thematic and analytical in content, a necessary strategy in order to identify and organize the basic terms of cultural contact. In Chapters 5 and 6 I use the analytical themes thus developed to explore a few selected narratives in depth. In the concluding chapter, I invert the assumptions of the European narrative by examining it "inside-out" from an Indian perspective. More specific details of the chapters follow.
"The Island of America" (Chapter 1) is an overview of European geography from classical Antiquity to the Renaissance. Such a span of time is difficult to bridge without a controlling theme; I have chosen as mine the image of the island and its importance as an insular garden preserve in the cultural unconscious of Europe. Columbus did not sail in 1492 without some preconceptions, and by examining the cartographical spirit of the Old World I try to elicit what some of them were. By the time of the Renaissance, cartography is an ambiguous pursuit, requiring the analytical skills of the scientist as well as the expressive ones of the visual artist.

In "The Alembic of Analogy" (Chapter 2) I move from pictorial to narrative sources as a way to gauge the impact of America's "discovery." The chapter is primarily concerned with how different semantic modes of comparison--analogy, simile and metaphor--translate the inexpressibly strange into the comforting and familiar images of the exploring culture, often with pejorative connotations. In addition, I contrast the logic of similitude (simile) and the act of transformation (metaphor) in examining the role of America in Renaissance thought as a symbol for both the beginning and the end of the world.

Chapter 3, "Beaux Gestes," attempts to highlight the broad range of physical and verbal communication between Indian and European in the early years of contact. From smoke signals and body painting to symbolic postures and broken speech, the European perception of the Indian as a
creature incapable of fully human expression is examined in the narratives. Also considered is the compensatory role granted the Native American of mutely interpreting the land once it was decided to deny him a more conventional eloquence.

"Tribute and Trade" (Chapter 4) is a study of the material objects that changed hands during early contact: trinkets, domesticated manufactures, weapons, alcohol, tobacco, food. Special attention is focused on the difference between ceremonial exchange, commercial trade between equals, and military tribute. The theoretical work of jurist Francisco de Vitoria and his argument for a new theory of "just war" provides a theoretical framework for the chapter.

Having traced a variety of thematic ideas in the opening chapters, with "The Bow and the Liar" (Chapter 5) I begin to assemble these themes by considering selected texts in greater depth. Two cases of Native-European contact are examined: The Spanish off the coast of Mexico in 1519 and the French in Florida in 1564. I examine both cases through the lens of a contemporary eyewitness account and a later historical one. The thrust of this chapter is historiographical—the inevitable exchange that occurs between a primary and secondary source in fashioning out of observation and inference a convenient stereotype of the AmerIndian.

In "'I'd Walk Across Texas With You'" (Chapter 6), I devote an entire chapter to the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca.
and various contemporary editions of it. The mystical story of the Spaniard who crossed America on foot symbolizes in its potential the most thoroughgoing of all forms of exchange—spiritual metamorphosis. Is this truly what the errant Spaniard undergoes, or is he one of the earliest adepts for the stereotype of the "white Indian" shaman who appropriates Native American knowledge only to use it in the European subjugation of the continent? A variety of perspectives on Cabeza de Vaca are examined, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.

"The Wampanoag Discovery of Europe" (Chapter 7) turns from the captivity of the European in America to that of the Indian in Europe. Complementing the previous chapter, this one details the legacy of human exchange in its deepest repercussions—the captivity of the human being and his removal to the other side of the world to perform as a curiosity, a natural specimen, or an actor in a symbolic pageant. The "other captivity narrative" takes as its subject not only the fragmentary evidence that endures about these captives, but why it is so fragmentary in the first place. One of the later captives, Pocahontas, plays a pivotal role in our understanding of the Wampanoag discovery.

In terms of the study as a whole, I must confess on occasion to having violated the same temporal and geographical boundaries I earlier laid out. I have quoted from some sources (e.g. De Laet) that are slightly later than 1620, only because they were concise and excellent
examples of earlier trends. I have, on occasion, used material from South America, particularly the Soderini Letter of Vespucci. This may seem an indefensible breach in a study that purports to be about North American narratives, but Vespucci's role in determining the continental expanse of America and eventually lending his name to it justified in my own mind his limited inclusion. I must also admit that the sheer literary verve of the letter made it a continual temptation to quote from. Perhaps the most significant exception of all was my decision to use two narratives from the area of Mexico City in Chapter 5, in spite of my stated refusal elsewhere to consider contact in MesoAmerica. My reason for this, though considered, was simple: nowhere in North America do we have any native (or quasi-native) document that describes first contact from an Indian perspective with the same range, depth, and decipherability as in The Codex Florentino. In order to accomplish a truly historiographical comparison between the two culture groups, I took the liberty of temporarily descending into the region of the Valley of Mexico. I trust that these exceptions will not undermine the original integrity of the study I intended. If anything, I believe they demonstrate connections between North, Meso and South America that may one day be worthy of further development.
NOTES


4 See William Carlos Williams, In the American Grain; D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature; and Howard Mumford Jones, O Strange New World for popular examples of this revision.

CHAPTER 1: 

THE ISLAND OF AMERICA

"We gave up sun worship a long time ago and we have lost the habit of associating the points of the compass with magic qualities, colours, and virtues. But however hostile our Euclidean minds may have become to the qualitative conception of space, we cannot prevent the major astronomical and meteorological phenomena conferring almost imperceptible but ineradicable properties on certain areas. Nor can we alter the fact that, for all men, the east-west direction denotes achievement..."

Claude Lévi-Strauss
Tristes Tropiques
The island has long been accorded a special province in the Western imagination. It has partaken of two supposedly exclusive worlds—the plotted, "objective" locus of geography and the more exotic terrain of the poetic unconscious. The isle is both real and imagined, neither entirely believable in its location, nor completely fabricated in the monsters and myths it harbors. Odysseus undertook the archetypal journey to the West 3000 years ago to encounter island-dwelling Laestrygonians and Cyclops, all to arrive in the end at Ithaca, an island perfectly recognizable today and part of any self-respecting map of the Mediterranean. Jonathan Swift labored to locate the fictional Lilliput southwest of Sumatra, while inserting Balnibarbi, Luggnag and Glubbdubdribb in the north Pacific between Japan (formerly the fabled Cipangu) and California, the latter long supposed by Europeans to have been separate from the North American mainland. That untiring builder of an earthly Paradise, Robinson Crusoe, is never permitted to be a mere fictional device by his author: Defoe tells us the Isle of Despair could be found only 20 leagues from the mouth of the Orinoco River. And Miguel de Cervantes locates the Baratarian kingdom of Sancho Panza (the only island in the world surrounded by land) in the verifiable province of La Mancha, another region suspected of harboring more romantic heroes than historical ones. The exotic island is not simply a fantasy world, but exists as an independent realm of the "real" one we inhabit. Perhaps it is elusive because of its insular nature—it is part of the world, but
separate and sovereign. Some have claimed it is only a
dream, but if so, it is one our culture cannot stop itself
from dreaming.

When Columbus sailed, America was an island. But there
is another place to begin than in 1492. We must go back to
Antiquity, when the ancients "dreamed" us--there is no other
word to describe it. The pagan vision of faraway western
lands was vague and shifting, but it still encompassed the
fantastic idea of an insular world possessed of great wealth
and mystery that lay somewhere beyond the Pillars of
Hercules. The most celebrated example is Plato's
Atlantis--a technologically advanced realm of enormous power
and an impressive administrative state. Howard Mumford
Jones catalogues other isles dear to the imagination of the
anceints:

The sunset marks the end of day and,
symbolically, the end of life; wherefore
Homer's Elysian Fields lie vaguely in that
direction, and Hesiod's Hesperides more
decisively so. The Greek dramatists
occasionally hint at a western paradise of
some sort either for men or for their
ghosts, and in Plutarch's life of Sertorius
we read of Spanish sailors who had been to
the Isles of the Blest. Seneca in a famous
passage prophesied that mankind would one
day discover a distant Western World.2

When the Canary and Madeira island groups were "discovered"
by Roman seamen, they were associated by some with the same
mythical Hesperides of Hesiod.

The dream was more than the fulfillment of puerile
longing. Closer to home, the isle could be a place of
unmitigated horror. In The Odyssey, the one-eyed Polyphemus

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is believable only because he inhabits a land far from the
domain of the Greek polis, a monster confined to the "cage"
of an insular Mediterranean bestiary (Sicily). In Pliny,
the most celebrated of natural historians, the terrible
anthropophagi reappear, this time bounded by the Alps, a
colder natural barrier by which to cage a beast from the
poetic unconscious. Such nightmares were common in the
bestiaries of antiquity.

The ancestor-lands of America were profuse and
contradictory; they symbolize a Mediterranean psyche that is
decidedly ambivalent. Whether nightmare or fantasy, they
are the fierce images of a civilization grown restive, a
heritage we call our own that had long clung to the edges
along the Mediterranean Sea, all the while nourishing the
dream of a prophetic and profitable odyssey that would one
day traverse it. The Mediterranean ("middle of the earth")
is a circumscribed world, bounded by the continents of
Europe, Asia and Africa to the north, east and south, and
the prominent Pillars of Hercules to the West. As a
seasonally-navigable waterway, it had succeeded in helping
to unify and coalesce the imperialistic ambitions of Sparta,
Carthage and Rome; at the same time, as a seasonal barrier
to communication (August-April), it had confined their
administrative centers to its perimeter.

The Mediterranean is a sea, but an "island sea," not
merely the waters of Sicily or Crete, but the center of a
water-borne commercial culture that the hazards of
continental drift had insulated from the more earthly
barriers of desert, forest and trackless steppe. Imagine looking at a map of the Old World as one would read a photographic negative. The Mediterranean, if one shifts perspective, is an "isle" of water that is surrounded by land. And the ages-old civilization that the "Interior Sea" spawned is evidence of its maritime orientation. Even empires of consistent warring design have never for long prevented the development of entrepreneurial trade between coastal cities, partly due to the many fine harbors along its perimeter. The warlike archetypal hero Odysseus is the alter ego of the Mediterranean merchant (Greek, Phoenician) who gambles everything on a daring voyage of distant profiteering, only to return home after being given up for lost to the sullen surprise of his evil suitors or creditors. Magellan (or his men) would accomplish this feat two millenia later. Somewhere along the line, the "raider of cities" merged with the trader.

The coming of Christianity converted the mask of Mediterranean ideology, but did not change the appetite for the exotic that had driven Plato and Homer. With the institutionalization of the Roman Catholic Church, the format of geography changed from the speculative to the sacred, its scope from the local to the universal. But the new geography was no less imaginative for it. On the T-O maps of early Christendom (the O represented the Ocean Sea which encompassed the three known continents that were roughly posed in a T formation), Jerusalem was crowned the center of the earth, surrounded by Europe, Asia and Africa.
According to Church doctrine, each of the continents had been peopled by one of Noah's sons after the Deluge, and each was duly symbolized by one of the points on the tripartite mitre of the Pope. Separated by the Euphrates and Nile Rivers, the three continents comprised the "Orbis Terrarum" (round earth) of medieval maps, the island world encircled by the forbidding and impenetrable Ocean Sea that only the most foolish heretic would have ever dared challenge. On Christian maps until the time of the Renaissance the known world is perceived as an insular mass.

In light of this projected enclosure, it is no surprise that the Christian Paradise is also portrayed as insular. In the Bible, Eden is isolated, arboried, well-watered and peaceful, not the wilderness of men marooned beyond redemption, but the cultivated refuge of the first Elect. At first glance it resembles one of the walled oases that were built to protect the agricultural settlements of the Near East against nomadic incursions, the same desert area where Judaism and Christianity had their beginnings. At second glance, it resembles many of the early promotional reports of America. It is bounded by water, self-sufficient, insulated from the wild and barren—a land that partakes of a geographical dream as well as a religious compulsion. The preserve of Adam and Eve exists somewhere to the east, bounded by the rivers Gihon, Pishon, Hiddekel and Euphrates. When, in 1501, Columbus claimed to have found indisputable signs of the Earthly Paradise on the Venezuelan coast after sailing west from Lisbon, it was
incumbent on the Church to resolve whether this was a pious pilgrimage or an open invitation to heresy. It was uncomfortable with such a paradox.

But paradox characterized much of Christian theology. Though a religion born of the desert, Christianity established its holy center nearby the "Interior Sea." The medieval church was not able to confirm the precise location of Genesis, but it selected in its stead another holy isle that was the meeting place of three continents: Jerusalem. John Mandeville said of the Holy Land that it was "the herte and the myddes of all the world." Jerusalem, this place where legend had it that the children of Adam found refuge after the Fall, was not the same as Paradise. But in a symbolic sense it was another Garden, surrounded not by wilderness but the threat of the invading Moslem. The city is nailed to the center of medieval maps, an earthly refuge as well as the sign of an otherworldly conviction. The Garden of Gethsemane replaced the Garden of Eden in the Christian mythos of divine innocence and betrayal. But the city was not accessible to all. As Henri Baudet writes of the European vision of Paradise:

It was removed from a distant past to a distant present. Where at first it had been characterized by the distance in time, it now became increasingly invested with a contemporary character. The distance became a matter of geography.

The Church, however, did not "discover" America. If anything, it discouraged such heresy. But the classical world it succeeded did not simply disappear. The counterweight of the pagan tradition, drawing as it did from
the Greek ethos of balance and dialectic, eventually led to
the revival of an old theory that postulated an "Antipodes"
(opposite feet), a contrary land on the far side of the
earth where people walked upside down in continual danger of
falling headfirst into the Ocean Sea. J.K. Wright traces
the development of this notion: "The idea of antipodes in
our modern sense of the term, as referring to regions on the
opposite side of a spherical earth, came from the Greeks.
Notably the doctrine of Crates of Mallos, it was adopted by
Martianus Capella and Macrobius, who passed it on to the
medieval West." Zeno himself could not have fashioned a
more diabolical paradox: the Antipodes were a kind of
geographical exercise in the Socratic method, and, not
coincidentally, an intellectual invention branded as
sophistry by the Church.

The notion of these Antipodes—a fourth continent—was
suppressed by the religious authorities. When several
twelfth-century cosmographers, Vincent de Beauvais among
them, argued that the existence of Africa must be weighted
by a corresponding continental mass in the Southern
Hemisphere, the old ideas of Antiquity gained a new
currency. Whether by idle wish or analogical proof,
Plato's fantasy had found sympathizers in Catholic Europe.
Indeed, it was becoming more common to argue that the earth
was a spherical surface. Though the idea was not
widespread, several arguments by respected geographers had
been advanced by the time of the Crusades to make highly
suspect the notion of a flat earth; the variable

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position of stars in the night sky was often presented as evidence of sphericity, a common assumption among mariners by the time of Columbus. The thought of reaching these Antipodes and gaining the fabled wealth of the East--but by sailing west--was an inviting paradox to a civilization on the verge of resurrecting the rational dialectic of antiquity.

The "oikumene," or world-island, of the Christian T-O maps thus underwent a gradual change in orientation. Eden had existed somewhere east of the Euphrates; Jerusalem then became the place of holy pilgrimage; finally, the Roman papacy symbolized the movement of Christendom further westward. As a legion of writers would later remark, the movement of the West coincided with the course of the sun across the heavenly sphere. But there existed a great barrier to further expansion. The constricted world of the Mediterranean now came face to face with the ocean expanse. While the Church could swear its rank and file to orthodoxy, it could not prevent the Mediterranean imagination from filling the Ocean Sea with islands of shifting and legendary latitude. It was here that the mythic voyages of St. Brendan and Madoc were said to have happened, and, as J.K. Wright notes, the islands they discovered were not alone:

Until modern times the Atlantic has been an ocean filled by the imaginations of the coast-dwelling peoples of the Old World with fabulous and fantastic isles. In the De Imagine Mundi we read of the isle of the Gorgons and of the Hesperides... then goes on to speak of 'Perdita,'
or the Lost Island, which far exceeded all the surrounding countries in the delightfulness and fertility of all things to be found therein.

The Atlantic became a breeding-ground for the European unconscious, a sea of jetsam left to a civilization torn between its pagan and Christian pasts. A place of paradise and monstrosity, it was the bottomless reliquary of a Mediterranean culture made insular by geography but expansive by the dictates of a universalist faith.

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So America was anticipated...expected...even, to push a word, "prophesied." But there was nothing of the inevitable in its "discovery," though one may be tempted to call its invention pre-determined because of the sheer convenience it offered. Its rumor presented a splendid dream to a maritime culture that had gradually broached the Pillars of Hercules. Of the Greeks it would make veritable prophets. For the cartographers who held the weight of worlds in the balance, it rescued the dream of a bipolar terrarum. Only the Church needed regain its sense of balance, but did so when it saw the wealth of souls it might convert in the faraway lands.

America was not inevitable, but that did not prevent European authorities from advancing the cause of colonizing the island peoples of the Atlantic by an argument from inevitability. The Canary Islands were visited in 1340 by the Portuguese; a century later the Pope granted approval to
a Portuguese request for their full-scale occupation, hoping that settlement by "good" Catholics would insure the well-being of the natives in case of attack by pirates or other undesirables. Well aware that a Mediterranean bent toward adventurism was quickly transforming itself into full-scale colonial endeavors, the Papacy struck a bargain between the principles of the Holy See and the ambitions of unbridled entrepreneurship. Henceforth it would attempt to ally itself with "first arrivals" in order to prevent the eruption of large-scale colonial wars.

The Atlantic Ocean was not empty. The Great Man School of History has projected it as a kind of vacuum (and the Church forbade the existence of a vacuum) as a way to celebrate the unique gesture of Columbus. But the Mediterranean peoples, once they had achieved the technology to undertake open-sea exploring rather than coastal navigating (largely through the Portuguese caravel and the Arabic lateen sail), had crept beyond Gibraltar to "discover" and "pacify" the Canaries, the Madeiras and the Azores, scattered as far as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Here they tested proto-colonial methods. A primitive kind of mercantile exchange developed the production of raw materials. The Atlantic archipelagoes became colonial laboratories (a metaphor permitted by hindsight) for the expansive ventures of southern Europe: isolate, distant, plural, enclosed, they were islands where successes and failures might be measured in terms that were both limited and private.
Like the Greek argument for the Antipodes resurrected in the Middle Ages, this Atlantic colonialism was nothing new. Crete, Cyprus and Sicily had all been colonized during the Crusades to grow sugar, largely for its medicinal uses around the Mediterranean. The land was commonly administered by knights who were granted select fiefdoms for services rendered in advancing the cause of the Church. The familiar islands of the Old World had already long ago succumbed to the half-conscious vision of what we call a "new order."

This order demanded that the men probing the Atlantic be merchants in quest of a quick profit more than itinerant prophets on the order of the early Church fathers. But there can be no easy ranking of the Mediterranean motive—economic, mythic, spiritual or political. The dream of Atlantis endured, if only among a handful of outcasts—but it could not rig ships and victual crews by itself. Fernand Braudel has pointed out the endemic poverty of the Mediterranean catch and the lure the Atlantic must have held for enterprising fishermen, adding that the deforestation of North Africa had so crippled the Moslem navy that Christian ships were able to ply the Interior Sea and round the coast of Africa with relative safety.

When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, the reorientation of the West was complete—the fear of treading inland to find the spice trade of Asia was replaced by the dangerous though exhilarating prospect of sailing the Atlantic. Then, too, Christianity found itself nearly
encircled by heathen: Lithuanians to the northeast, Mongols to the far east, the powerful Saracen in the south. The Church could not long tolerate the paradox of being a universalist faith surrounded by unbelievers, a proselytizing religion confined to an island sea.

Pressure for expansion was therefore great. It moved even the hand of the most skilled cartographers to imagine unlikely entities in the ocean beyond, as Wright describes:

On most maps of the world of our period [Crusades] the islands are arbitrarily squeezed within narrow confines of the encircling ocean, and no attempt is made to represent them in their relative positions or to indicate their distinctive shapes. On the St. Sever Beatus map [c. 1050] all islands are shaped like sausages...whether in the Mediterranean or in the ocean.21

A later pilot, Ian Alphonse, would put it well: "It is as if the seas are inhabited by islands as the earth is inhabited by people. It is a question of filling the abyss with what is known."22 By the fifteenth century, cartographers commonly placed unexplored islands just beyond reach of the Atlantic coast. Some of them, Brazil and Antilia among the most elusive, seemed to change latitudes with the frightening regularity of Gulliver's Laputa. The story of Antilia indeed is a lesson in tenacious thinking in the service of a mystical geography. Following the Moorish conquest of southern Spain, it was said that seven Christian bishops fled westward and made their home on this peaceful Atlantic isle. Long sought after, when the island wasn't discovered in the first trans-Atlantic voyages, it was mysteriously uprooted on many sixteenth-century maps and

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reappeared along 35 degrees latitude in northern New Mexico under the enchanting name of "The Seven Cities of Cíbola." This would later become, particularly for the Spanish, a mythical seat of great wealth and splendor. The peoples of the Interior Sea (Mediterranean) had transposed an island oasis from the Atlantic Ocean to the interior of an unknown continent. This was a kind of reverse-image geography where a place of spiritual refuge would later become the object of a magical quest for wealth, an antipodal negative on which were printed the commercial motives of an expansive civilization that still carried with it the liturgy of God. Neither Antilia nor the mythical Seven Cities were found. All that remains of the former today is an echo—the Greater and Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean, a fanciful rubric for islands too numerous for the average traveller to name.

A map is a cultural document, a way of "seeing" the world by miniaturizing its dimensions according to a shared vision. What happened next in the history of the West was less a revolt against this vision than part of an ancient tradition that encompassed Plato, Ptolemy, John Mandeville, Henry the Navigator, and every Roman bark that ever plied beyond the Pillars of Hercules: Columbus "discovered" America. An enchanting idea, this. One fine summer day the great Genoan mariner sails forth to enrich the new kingdom of Aragon/Castile as well as to announce the modern Age of Exploration. But there is a problem with this singular "discovery." Never mind for a moment the Vikings, whose American sagas had been largely forgotten. But what is
more, the evidence is good that anonymous fishing fleets from European ports had probably been dragging the Newfoundland Banks for a decade before the flagship Santa Maria arrived in the Caribbean. Why is it we give such credit to Columbus? Why do we choose to make of him the ambitious but fallen dreamer, a rags to riches visionary who proves all the crowned heads of Europe to have been a crew of timid, short-sighted conformists?

To make the age-old dream of America more dramatic, it seems that we needed a Hero—a Tragic Hero—who was unmistakeably courageous at the same time he was badly mistaken. Columbus fills this role perfectly. He is the technician and the dreamer. He did, after all, maintain to his dying day that America was only an eastern projection of Asia, thus the name "Indies." By this misconception (near-legendary today) he is rendered a kind of Promethean curiosity, a man so blinded by his ambition that he could even trace the coastline of Cuba onto an existing map of Cathay (China) and believe that the two were one and the same. His very blunder has become larger than life, a symbol of romantic wrongheadedness. But his blunder (like his prescience) is something difficult for us to confine to the sanctity of individual genius. John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real were also convinced they had sailed to the Indies in the decade following the first voyage of Columbus, and maps and narratives continued to link America and Asia until a century after the Genoan sailed. What Columbus found was an island—several islands. His belief that San
Salvador was a part of the Indies, though now a much-ballyhooed mistake, was a logical projection of existing knowledge. The western dream of wealth that awaited the spiritually ambitious on a faraway isle was as old as Plato and as current as Henry the Navigator. In a way, we have insisted that Columbus bear the symbol of an entire culture's misconception, only because he insisted on his error until death and was incapable of recanting it before evidence to the contrary became widespread. In our History we enshrine him, a saintly and noble figure who embodies confidence, fortitude, courage and risk-taking romance, all the virtues that will one day make America "great." It is no surprise we claim Columbus as a father.

By a single stroke then (that is to say, through the complex machinations of millions of men and women over several centuries around the globe), European maps began to show the existence of various islands in what today is called the Caribbean Sea. And they were islands: San Salvador, Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico...Coincidentally, they were a mirror image of the Spice Islands (the Moluccas) to the east (or was it west?), no doubt contributing to the confusion over their identity. Even today one notes that Columbus' misnomer was not onerous enough to prevent the adoption of "West Indies" as a name for the balmy isles of the Caribbean, a blunder in the service of a nobler geography that proposed duality and balance as its ideal. That these lands were islands is no surprise, for the Atlantic had long been filled with them,
many of a dubious nature. As Carl Sauer has pointed out, the fictional islands of the Atlantic began to be replaced with real ones, even in northern waters, where fishing fleets had found Newfoundland, Cape Breton and the smaller isles of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The first vision of America—from the Caribbean north—was of the isle.

Henceforth the occidental (Europe) made a necessity of the accidental (America). But whatever the West had found, it did not fall into step very quickly. The geographical knowledge of the period is not merely incremental, but proceeds by fits and starts, a map of 1520 not necessarily more accurate than one drawn a decade before. The early cartographical heart of the Americas (the area most extensively explored and settled by the Europeans) was the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, largely due to their importance as Spanish military bases for the eventual exploration of the mainland. Yet even Guillaume Le Testu's Cosmographie Universelle of 1555 projects many of the Caribbean islands as parallelograms—stiff, mathematical contrivances to the modern eye that perhaps were an authoritative way of admitting complete ignorance in the Age of Discovery. By 1600, the Western Sea would be called in English the "Atlantic," a dim though coincidental echo of Atlantis persisting in the vision of sixteenth and seventeenth-century mapmakers. Curiously, an insular dream of mythic wealth (Plato) nearly merged with the name for a transitive waterway to the new American isles.

Even where men did not find islands they believed they
had. Ponce de León named Florida fully believing it was insular, as John Hawkins would fifty years later. The Yucatán peninsula was thought by many explorers to have been completely distinct from the mainland. Early Portuguese correspondence on the New World commonly referred to the "island of Brazil"; the idea that California was an island persisted well into the seventeenth century; Marguerite of Navarre confidently referred to "the island of Canada"; and as late as 1613 it was necessary for the itinerant John Smith to remind his readers that "Virginia is no isle (as many do imagine)." There is something compelling in these mistakes, the urge of the first Europeans to comprehend the strangeness of the new lands by making them insular— in the original sense of the word, "comprehensible." Leonardo Olschki has outlined this process in detail:

This decisive transfer of the fountain of youth from its original continental situation into an island corresponds with a general tendency of geography and romance prevailing in those days [late Middle Ages], which, as we have said, was to locate in an insular landscape the scene of adventures and the place of wonders and marvels. The development of this insular romanticism follows in uninterrupted succession from the romances of the 'Table Ronde' until the Spanish Amadis, the scene of which is an archipelago of more or less fantastic islands.

For the first twenty years, continental exploration was almost completely confined to sailing and mapping the coastline, with only brief incursions along the littoral. Rather than drive to the heart of the land, the European
plotted its edge. Fear of the American interior was fed more by superstition (the story of the Amazons) and preconceived notions of the wilderness than it was by any hostilities fostered by the indigenous tribes. This insistence on the insular would allow the geographer, La Popellinière, to describe the Americas as late as 1582 as "the two largest islands in the world." Sir Humphrey Gilbert, an avid advocate of English expansion, could be even more emphatic on the point: "Which thing proveth America, not onley to be one Island, and in no part adjoyning to Asia: But also that the people of those Countreys, have not had any traffique with each other."

In French, "le terreur de la terre": terror of the land. And the men were deathly afraid of the land. The early expeditions were conducted along navigable waterways from which the traders and soldiers sally forth on occasion to engage in a complex mixture of plunder and negotiations. A foraging party on Hispaniola (Haiti) during Columbus' first voyage became lost in the island interior and was sought for in vain by the main group. After being given up for lost, they suddenly reappeared four days later with an enchanting account of how they navigated inland by the stars until the trees grew so thick they could no longer see the sky. It was only by discovering the coastline that they were able, finally, to find their way back to camp. The lesson was unspoken but simple: on a continent they might never have returned. But this was the appeal of the island—open and defensible—over the dreaded "terra ferme"
(solid land), a place enclosed not so much by the ocean but an expansive continental unknown.

The first Europeans reacted to the paradoxes of the New World—the "poverty" of its people surrounded by limitless abundance, the treachery of ambush lurking in an expanse of Arcadian delight—by enclosing themselves within a wilderness that would not at first be enclosed, by erecting islands of human dimension. First they fortified themselves in island or peninsular garrisons: the French at Charlesfort (Florida), Montreal and Sable Island (Canada); the English at Roanoke and Jamestown; the Dutch at Manhattan; the Spanish at Navidad del Señor (Hispaniola). Here they barricaded themselves from both beasts and "savages," but also the bounty of the land that was barely within their grasp. They claimed possession. They planted flags, columns, pillars. At the same time they walled themselves off from the land, they announced to all who would listen they owned a private parcel of it, an "island." The segregation they now enforced upon themselves was later to manifest itself over the entire continent in the segregation of the Other (the Indian) to small, exclusive communities. Part of their rejection of an endless wilderness was their obsessive reclamation of one of its plots.

Anticipating later settlers, a few of them planted: Indian corn, wheat, tobacco. There was little success. Such islands were a scratch on the earth. To "colonize," from the Latin colere, meant to "cultivate" or "give worth
to." And so they tried. The early struggle with the land, even as it failed time and again, was something "worthy." They hailed their labors as providential when some of the cultivated pockets grew, miniature Arcadias scatter-sown in the wilderness. But some of the attempts, for reasons never clearly understood, became as lost to them as those of a Golden Age, mysteries appointed the first names in an American mythology: the English Roanoke, the Portuguese settlement founded by Fagundes, the Spanish Navidad del Señor, vanished "civilized" islands at the edge of a new world.

The early dream of colonizing the land had already led to a decisive mastery of the sea—perhaps this was a necessary step before the earth itself could be surveyed and measured with mathematical precision. On the sixteenth century portolan charts (seagoing atlases) geometrical compass roses divided the sea into a latticework of triangles worthy of a Renaissance Pythagoras. The globe itself was being squared through the cylindrical projections of Mercator; if contemporary experience denied that the earth was flat, this Flemish cartographer remade it so from the abstract art of navigation. European travellers had come to locate themselves through geographical and temporal quadrants, as in this passage from Christopher Hall on Frobisher's first voyage (1576):

The first of July, from 4 o'clock to 8 o'clock, we sailed west 4 glasses, and at that present we had so much wind that we spooned afore the sea south-west 2 leagues. The 3rd day we found our compass to be varied one point to the westwards. This
day from 4 to 8 o'clock we sailed west and north 6 leagues, from 8 to 12 o'clock at noon west and by north 4 leagues. At that present I found our compass to be varied 11 degrees and one fourth part to the westwards, which is one point.39

Here is a mathematical ritual, a liturgy in a foreign tongue. The voyage is planed into geographical islands that consist of coordinates in three, and, in some accounts, four dimensions: longitude, latitude, depth and time. Through the arcane art of mathematics, the European was "finding a center."

The relentless logic inherent in mapping the globe had enormous consequences for the Renaissance perception of the New World. In a 1532 map by Simon Gynaeus, the western boundary of North America ends precisely with a line of longitude--a most convenient continental edge--as though decreed by a Creator versed in the higher mysteries of plane geometry. If the system of mathematical triangulation was employed to define location at sea, it was also capable of determining how the European conceived of the American continental expanse. With the granting of several colonial charters in the seventeenth century, the narrow, limiting vision of North America turned to one that was wildly speculative: on these charters, among our earliest documents of "American history," often the colonial boundaries coincide with projections of latitude from the east coast to the west. Thus the Massachusetts charter extends from "sea to sea." Indeed this was the first appropriation of land--a cartographical one--that was later
to be rationalized by a grand appeal to Manifest Destiny. Abstract musings would eventually give way to an ambitious parcelling of the land.

Sometimes from nothing more than utter confusion, empirical knowledge of the new-found lands advanced. One might claim that the nature of America as a continental mass was revealed on the famous 1507 globe of Martin Waldseemuller. But this is to seize on a cartographical exception (as some historians have done), as though the idea was fully recognized as a landmark by its contemporaries. In 1513 Waldseemuller printed another map which makes the unknown lands more a projection of Asia than an independent mass. This misconception would persist on European maps until late in the century. Well after the major inland expeditions of De Soto and Coronado in the 1540's, the interior of North America was as much the child of invention as part of the observable charge of empirical science.

To regard the image of the northern continent on European maps during the whole of the century is something akin to taking a Rorschach test from the great Renaissance cartographers. This is precisely what Wayne Franklin means in characterizing these early maps as "spatial ideograms." First, in the sea to the west (Atlantic), there is nothing but Cipangu (Japan). After Columbus, a host of islands sprout, the largest of them Cuba. Newfoundland appears as a cape of northern Asia jutting from the mythical land of Gog and Magog (1508). In Schoner, the continent becomes full-fledged, but is separated from
South America and called "the land of Cuba." Johann Huttich joins South America to a northern continent by squeezing it at the waist until the land north of the Panamanian isthmus resembles a primitively-endowed can opener, (1532). Sebastian Cabot captures the broad thrust of the continent by allowing the unknown northwest expanse to blend indistinguishably with the Pacific Ocean, (1544). The America of Nicolas Desliens (the map captions must be read upside down in true antipodal fashion) looks like a hungry rat poised to pounce at any minute on the unimpressive prey represented by the British Isles, (1566). Returning to an older tradition, Paolo Forloni depicts America and Asia locked in Siamese embrace (1570), while Ortelius raises the back of the North American land until it resembles an amorphous dromedary balancing its hooves at the tip of Panama on the verge of a catastrophic fall. Cartography was a discipline, though an imaginative one.

More than its southern neighbor, North America was plagued with the problem of blank space, an admission of defeat for a Renaissance cartographer anxious to provide details of discovery. But the well-chosen illustration or cartouche was usually enough to keep the eye from noticing. The legend "Terra Incognita" (Unknown Land) was a confession of ignorance at the same time it filled an embarrassing space on the map. Savages, sea monsters, lateen-rigged caravels and personified, cherubic winds decorate darkened borders of these maps and the shifting
interiors they enclose. It comes as no surprise that Gerald Mercator's artistic reputation as a calligrapher virtually equalled his renown as a master geographer, the twin achievements making of him the foremost cartographer of his time.

The gap between north and south widened. In contrast to the early Spanish excursions into Central and South America (1520's-30's), the land north of the Valley of Mexico remained, even until the seventeenth century, virtually aloof from the permanent establishment of European settlements. As such, the north was a shifting land of dubious borders, as Leonardo Olschki notes:

Not all cosmographers were as daring as Waldseemuller in recognizing and naming, without a respect for the general belief, the regions recently discovered as a new world. The voyagers were far more reluctant to abandon the old traditions of learning and poetry, and they hesitated to free themselves from their first and decisive impressions. That is borne out by the fact that the belief that the new world was a part of Asia 'extra Gangem' continued into the middle of the sixteenth century.52

In studying these maps, one is struck by how much more quickly the South American interior was renamed by the European (though on a superficial basis), formidable natural obstacles notwithstanding. The draw of AmerIndian empires, the charting of navigable river systems, and the establishment of mining colonies made South America seem pacified—in cartographic terms—by comparison with its northern neighbor at the end of the sixteenth century.

Yet there was another reason information was wanting
about the north: a passage through it was still to be
discovered. In 1520, Ferdinand Magellan found the strait
now bearing his name that linked the Atlantic and Pacific
Oceans. The "discovery" of the Magellan Strait convinced
many Europeans that a similar passageway must exist in the
north. The dictates of analogical thinking even demanded
its appearance, as Joseph de Acosta argued:

...other things indicate that the wisdom of
the Maker and the good order of Nature's
domains conclude that if there exists
communication and passage between these two
seas at the Antarctic Pole, this should
also be true of the Arctic, which is more
essential.53

After Magellan, the dream of a Northwest Passage was stirred
by a conviction in Nature's balance, a passage that would
insulate America from the barren Arctic and connect it to
Cathay. Ultimately there did prove to be one--as the
twentieth century has borne out--though not as fortuitously
as Acosta would have imagined.

The device of analogy was powerful. The Greeks had
posited five geographical zones, two each above and below
the equator. Ptolemy had argued that the respective
land masses north and south of the equator must be roughly
equal. Such thinking was not lost on the Renaissance.
Though cartographical knowledge of the new lands altered
with every voyage, in the latter half of the century a clear
line of demarcation begins to appear between the Old World
and the New. Perhaps this was nothing more than a logical
extension of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1493), which
effectively divided the non-European world between the
Spanish and Portuguese empires. In 1561, Ruscelli's hemispheric projection of the globe portrayed its two halves as though inhabiting completely different worlds. The east/west hemispheric division was to have a powerful say in how the people of Europe interpreted America. For political opportunists, religious fanatics, and even the small but growing educated public, this was to be a different, an antithetical, a New World. Such a contrast symbolized the internal conflict of a civilization now painfully aware of the gulf in its own past between the pagan cultures being revived in the Renaissance and the monastic tradition of the Church that had, however unwittingly, helped to preserve them. In the sixteenth century, an unfolding recognition of an antipodal, outward Other (the Indian) is born in the European at the same time a forgotten, historical one is confirmed in the ancient manuscripts resurrected and blocked on the movable type of Gutenberg.

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Cartography is an enormous abstraction, however we may interpret it. From the maps that represented the lay of the land, we move to the European perception of the earth in a semantic sense. Here too we will note that a powerful cultural unconscious is at work in all of us, as Octavio Paz has written:

Geographies, too, are symbolic: physical spaces turn into geometric archetypes that are emissive forms of symbols. Plains, valleys, mountains: the accidents of
...
terrain become meaningful as soon as they enter history. Landscape is historical, and thus becomes a document in a cipher, a hieroglyphic text.57

If indeed we are dealing with hieroglyphics, it is best to come to terms immediately about the meaning of our symbols or terminology. What, for example, do the phrases "Old World" and "New World" reveal about our unspoken assumptions? First, they are not literal names but metaphorical ones. The difficulty in remembering this lies in their long and commonplace usage, something that tends to deaden any figure of speech. To go a step further, "old" and "new" suggest processes such as decay or rejuvenation that are organic by nature. Of course, many inorganic objects are assigned properties of age (a limestone deposit or the stages of a civilization), but the terms together betray a distinctly metaphorical way of speaking. Implicit in the tandem usage of "old" and "new" is the powerful implication of a variable life-span, especially because, as in our case, the "New World" was something that followed consciousness of the "Old" in European thinking. A sense of vitality and rebirth is quite explicit in the way we talk about America--the old "gave birth" to the new.

To talk of "birth" as such is also a kind of metaphor, and one of great significance to the Church after the "discovery" of the Indies. The question that plagued Christian theologians for the century following Columbus was solved only after extended and acrimonious debate: of what Genesis sprang the AmerIndian if he was nothing but an
irredeemable savage? Where was his link to the Church fathers if he did not derive from one of the three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) that had been peopled by the sons of Noah? The alchemist Paracelsus suggested the existence of a second Adam, but it was in fact inconceivable to the Church (purportedly catholic in its mission) that a race of people might have been the issue of any paradise other than Eden.

To the difficult question, "Where were the people of the New World born?", came what was both an expedient and clever response: somewhere in the Old. The theories ranged from, on the one hand, lost Phoenician vessels that had been marooned in America to, on the other, the mysterious election of the "redman" as the descendant of the lost tribes of Israel, the latter a theological missing link that sought to explain the legacy of the Diaspora. Finally, in 1590, Joseph de Acosta proposed that the Indian came to America by way of a mass migration across the Bering Strait, a theory that Western science still endorses today and yet another explanation of the Indian that stressed his supposedly migratory, nomadic nature. Whether outlandish or more or less accurate, virtually every Renaissance theory stressed the genesis of the Old World in giving birth to the New. At first glance this was only sensible, as Montaigne pointed out:

Our world has just discovered another world...no less great, full, and well-limbed than itself, yet so new and so infantile that it is still being taught its A B C; not fifty years ago it knew neither letters, nor weights and measures, nor
clothes, nor wheat, nor vines. It was still quite naked at the breast, and lived only on what its nursing mother provided. If we are right to infer the end of the world, and that poet is right about the youth of his own age, this other world will be coming into the light when ours is leaving it. The universe will fall into paralysis; one member will be crippled, the other in full vigor.

Montaigne's babe in swaddling clothes is convincing. But how meaningful is such a metaphor ("naked at the breast") to a geologist bent on studying the age of the earth? Is the molten core of the New World any younger than the Old? Such is a reminder that Montaigne's figure of speech is only the personification of a powerful historical conceit that has long made America the youthful ward of Europe—brash, immature, half-naked, impressionable, and, as we are about to see, enviably fertile.

America was an adolescent. Even today we characterize it as a "young republic."

The pathetic fallacy is busy at work, ascribing to America a vision of the future that will propagate the parental seed of the Western powers that "discovered" it. The metaphor has become so commonplace we hardly notice it any longer. This idea is seductive—that America (and by analogy, other parts of the world) can be construed as an organic body (most often human) that undergoes a natural cycle of birth, maturity and senescence.

Period pictorial representations of this organic metaphor are not wanting. Heinrich Bunting symbolizes Asia in a 1581 engraving as the Greek Pegasus in flight; Claes Visscher imagines the early seventeenth century Low
Countries as a lion, its formidable, arching back forming
the coast along the North Sea; An anonymous engraving
from 1598 construed Western Europe in the shape of a
valorous female warrior—her head imposed on the Iberian
peninsula, with left arm holding a sword (England), the
right one drooping eastward with royal orb in hand
(Italy). To a contemporary, these were acceptable ways
of allegorizing the violence of the religious wars. Bunting
also projects onto Europe a female form, this one wearing
the crown of Spain and pointing allusively westward to the
new lands. (1581).

America too is symbolized as a woman, but neither a
violent nor vengeful one. Engraver Jan Van der Strait
(1575) allegorizes the first meeting of Europe and America:
significantly, it is the former (embodied by Vespucci) who
is loaded with the accoutrements of conquest (armor, flag,
astrolabe), while America, a fleshy nymph with open legs
astride a hammock, signals with becoming generosity to the
man who has "discovered" her. From this time
forward—at least until the nineteenth century—America will
be perceived by visual allegorists to be a woman, as richly
endowed in her physical attributes as the first Europeans
had found her fecund soil. She will be accompanied by what
become familiar iconographic trappings: bright plumage,
alligators, armadillos. She is most often nude, and, as
with the Van der Strait drawing, lounges in a sexually
inviting posture that renders her to the agricultural
civilization of Europe as a passive and pliant symbol of the
earth she personifies. This is an ancestor image of our Lady Liberty, one which becomes overtly erotic in the eighteenth century. The New World child was blossoming into a woman—a sexually promising reward at the end of a long, dismal transAtlantic voyage.

Such examples notwithstanding, the overt projection of the human allegorical form onto European maps and engravings was not the only image of a "feminized" America. The written documents of the period provide further clues to this theme, particularly in the vocabulary of exploration. In the end, the words of the European were every bit as revealing as his sexually-charged iconography.

We say America was "discovered." What, literally, do we mean by that? Hiding beneath the conventional meaning of "discovery" is another of powerful connotations: "to disclose or expose to view (anything covered up or previously unseen) to reveal, show." (1450) By the 1570's, the word primarily denoted the acquisition of new knowledge in English. But in the Romance languages, the allusion of "discovery" had not yet displaced its original literal meaning. This is what allows Jean de Léry to describe the condition of naked Brazilians in 1580 as, "le corps entièrement découvert,"—"the body entirely discovered." A Spanish translation of Peter Martyr's Latin account of the inhabitants of Newfoundland is equally suggestive: "Los hombres de las regiones en question iban cubiertos de pieles, pero desnudos de inteligencia, de raciocinio." ("The men of the region in question go
covered in skins, but are denued of intelligence and reason." In Martyr, the literal denotation of "uncovered" persists, though curiously it describes a mental rather than a physical state.

Romance language words for "discover" have retained to this day a semblance of their Renaissance meaning: the Spanish "descubierto" is an adjective ("exposed," "uncovered") as well as the past participle of the verb "descubrir" (to "discover" or "find"); in French, "découvert" is an adjective denoting "bald" or "uncovered," as well as being the past participle of "découvrir," also meaning "to discover." When we consider that Columbus once had the fantastic notion that the earth was at one end shaped in "the form of a stalk of a pear" --an apparent reference to a female breast--such a description no longer seems like the rambling of a confused prophet, but the extension of a culturally-acceptable form of discourse. We say America was "discovered" (exposed), but this is to suggest the planting of something more than a Spanish blazon. It is to stress as well the vulnerability of a continent portrayed in our iconography, as well as our written narratives, as a sensual, welcoming woman.

This is not a new idea. Annette Kolodny has explored in detail the theme of sexual conquest in American ideology:

...what is probably America's oldest and most cherished fantasy: a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine, that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification.72
It may only be coincidence that words for the earth in French and Spanish ("terre" and "tierra") are feminine in gender. But part of the exchange between European and Indian during the first century of contact was indeed sexual—or expressed in a sexual terminology—and was marked by the symbolic disrobing of the earth, now the willing servant of the West. This metaphor permits one of Frobisher's chroniclers to lament over "the bowels of the earth" when gold is found wanting; it guides Columbus to speak of "penetrating into the interior"; permits the French cosmographer Thevet to speak of the earth as "fertile in silver" and compare its interior to the entrails of a human body; provides John Donne with the poetic license to say to his "mistress" America, "License my roving hands and let them go." It is this metaphor that makes the land alive (or dead) in a way we cannot precisely control: we speak unthinkingly of "Virginia," of the "Grand Tetons" ("big breasts"), the "spines" of mountains, the "mouths" of rivers, "barren" deserts, the "Passage" by which one "penetrates" a continent, all of them metaphors suggesting an ancient animism in our unconscious. Waldseemuller acknowledged this (however unawares) when he made feminine an island named for a Florentine male with a lusty imagination, as George Stewart relates:

The other suggestion is America—a name destined for greatness far beyond any imagining of its creator. Its origin is simple, since it is merely a Latin feminine form, derived from the already established Amerigus. By analogy with the other continents, as also from the usual Latin
practice of having names of islands and countries in the feminine, that gender was the natural one.77

Its gender (feminine) and its separateness (chastity) made it something desirable to possess. Even today, America carries an overt invitation to the doughty explorer. On a recent television mini-series about the life of Columbus, the great mariner returns home after passing another futile day trying to convince Ferdinand and Isabella that his crackpot scheme is the stuff of true genius. No sooner has he entered the bedroom door than he is greeted by his beautiful common-law wife, sprawled provocatively on their bed, who teases him, "You've found Cathay." As Kolodny notes, "Perhaps, after all, the world is really gendered, in some subtle way we have not quite yet understood."78

The metaphor of fecundity is not limited to the American earth. As Kolodny herself points out, a pastoral principle of feminine gratification is a commonplace figure of speech in a striking variety of cultures. Mircea Eliade has "unearthed" even ancient examples:

In Babylonian the term pu signifies both 'source of a river' and 'vagina.' The Sumerian buru means both 'vagina' and 'river.' The Babylonian nagbu, 'stream,' is related to the Hebrew negeba, 'female.' In Hebrew the word 'well' is also used with the meaning of 'woman,' 'spouse.' In Egyptian the word bi means 'uterus' and 'gallery of a mine.'79

Thus the feminine personification of "Mother Earth" in many tribal cultures, including AmerIndian ones, is a fallacy that seems to us not nearly so "pathetic" today. What this vision of the land leads us to is the point of commonality
and exchange between Native American and European that is the subject of this book.

Our subject is the exchange between Indian cultures that had imbued the earth with a spiritual force deriving its authority from a holy power, and European ones that consciously assigned to the land a sexual conceit so profound as to become a manifest animism pledged to uphold the principles of economic development. It is the exchange between peoples who had long imagined the continent (even the world) as an island borne on the back of a turtle, and their rivals, equally convinced of the insular refuge promised by America. It is the relationship between semi-sedentary tribal groups and the expanding nation states of the Renaissance, the latter on the verge of discovering the immense power of a "migratory capital" that would cross the Atlantic Ocean and back again with the predictable regularity of the most confirmed nomadic wanderer. Last, it is the meeting of Indian groups who often explained their creation by allusion to a ritualized series of parallel worlds, and European ones that sought to define their re-creation by the employment of mathematical quadrants, the signposts not of Genesis but a human renaissance. Their encounter is rife with many ironies.
A map is a pictorial polemic. It advances certain assumptions about the way the world is made in our own image. We have gone from the Old World T-O map as the vision of a confined, universalist world to the notion of America as a Renaissance metaphor for the human body. Both of these concepts, while broadly representational, reveal a clear psychological orientation in our projection of America, including the names we use to describe "her." The idea of a "continental unconscious" is not incompatible with an empirical pursuit such as geography, particularly Renaissance geography. One notes that the interior of North America began to be mapped and explored at the same time that the human circulatory system was envisioned by William Harvey, together with the first credible experiments in comparative anatomy. None of this is even to mention the Renaissance fascination with human nudity and anatomical proportion epitomized in the work of Da Vinci. Thus the "body" of Western science and art expanded to include what had been, until then, clothed or invisible, as America had once been undiscovered and invisible in the vision of the Church fathers.

Finally, a map is a miniaturization. In reducing existing knowledge to a limited format, it permits the most intrepid armchair traveller the glory of voyaging without the myriad mishaps of discovery. As such, the narratives we
will examine in the following chapters are also maps. Construed in words rather than topographic projections, they are perhaps more open to interpretation, but no less important for what they imply. Like the map, the written narrative permits the reader unencumbered access to a faraway place without having to endure the privations of a journey. In a sense the narrative is a "northwest passage," a shortcut to a distant goal.

The quotations that follow will not completely convey the spatial organization and layout of the original narratives, something that is worth at least a passing note. Chapter headings summarize for the reader the events deemed of particular importance by the writer, editor or publisher. Some even go so far as to include marginal pointers which direct us toward specific themes: "their manner of religion," "musical instruments," "adultery punished with death," etc. There exists, as a result, a series of diminishing mirrors--the Voyage is represented by the Narrative which is summarized by the Chapters and on occasion further reduced to thematic reminders in the left-hand margin. The Renaissance narrative method is at once reductive and telescopic, attempting to summarize at the same time it crosses vast distances. The journey is not conceived in a comprehensive glance, like a painting, but must be brought progressively into focus by stages. Thus is the exchange, through European eyes, finally revealed or "discovered."
NOTES


2 Ibid., p. 4.


13 Wright, _Geographical Lore of the Crusades_, p.152.

14 Ibid., pp.350-351.

15 See Edmundo O'Gorman, _The Invention of America_ (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) for a fascinating discussion of this subject.

16 James Muldoon, _Popes, Lawyers and Infidels_ (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), p.120.


18 Ibid., pp. 12-20.
19 Braudel, La Méditerranée, pp.49-50.
20 Ibid., p.76.
21 Wright, Geographical Lore of the Crusades, p.335.
23 Jones, O Strange New World, pp.6-7.
25 O'Gorman, The Invention of America, see plates.
26 Honour, The New Golden Land, p.84.
35 Sauer, Sixteenth Century North America, p.28.

38 Columbus, Pour Voyages, p. 32.


46 Ibid.


48 Nicolas Desliens, Monde, Bibliothèque Nationale, 81-C-104611, 1566.

49 Paolo Forloni, Monde, Bibliothèque Nationale, 72-C-57192, 1570.

50 Abraham Ortelius, Monde, Bibliothèque Nationale, 76-C-76826, 1571.


53 Joseph de Acosta, Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias (Mexico: Fondo Cultura Económica, 1940), p.111.


55 Ibid., p.13.


59 See Marc Lescarbot, The History of New France, Trans., W.L. Grant (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1907), pp.43-50 for a sampling of such theories.

60 Acosta, Historia Natural y Moral, pp.55-56.


62 La Découverte du Monde: Cartographes et Cosmographes, p.48.

63 Ibid., p.54.

64 Ibid., p.49.

65 Ibid., p.48.


70 Pedro Martir de Anglería, Décadas del Nuevo Mundo (Mexico: Jose Porrúa e Hijos, 1964), I: 340.

71 Columbus, Pour Voyages, p.137.


74 Columbus, Pour Voyages, p.181.


CHAPTER 2:

THE ALEMBIC OF ANALOGY

"Under the banke or hill, whereon we stoode, we beheld the vallies replenished with goodly Cedar trees, and having discharged our harquebushot, such a flocke of Cranes (the most part white) arose under us, with such a crye redoubled by many Ecchoes, as if an armie of men had showted all together."

Arthur Barlowe
Narrative of the 1584 Voyage
To us Columbus seems like a medieval extravagance, someone born with one leg in the Levant who could only have imagined Asia from having been at the Genoan docks as a boy, listening to the stories of wealth told by mariners who made it their business to seek it, and failing that, to boast of their exploits to impressionable, dreaming youngsters. He is someone from another world than ours, the same one as Vasco da Gama, who rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 carrying letters for the mythical African monarch, Prester John. That Columbus thought six-sevenths of the globe to be comprised of land is forgivable now; that a voice told him his tribulations were to be "recorded on marble" for which God had made him "the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth of which He spoke in the Apocalypse," can perhaps be explained by a piety beyond our sympathies to measure. What should we think of his belief that he had found the earthly Paradise in Venezuela? Our long romance with the Tropics reminds us we are still not immune to their lure. And yet what does seem to be engraved—whether on marble or on our own memories—is the persistent and fascinating refusal on his part to recognize what it was he had "discovered" for the West, and to insist he had reached the exotic realm of the "Indies" instead.

"The Indies"—a toponymic mistake so grave it has something of the pre-ordained about it, something tragic and inevitable in its complete disorientation. Yet Columbus was not the first to employ the name carelessly:
Indeed the word 'India' had for a long time been common to several countries. Notably those to the south and those of the Orient. For the geographers and historians, Greek as well as Latin, placed a country called "India" in Ethiopia. Even Pliny mentioned gold mines in the northern Indies and the Asian Indies other than those of the Ganges.4

This was not the mistake of a singular individual, as much as we treasure the patented blunders of our visionaries. For several decades after his arrival, there was no clear perception on the part of the educated European public that America and Asia were separate continents. And not until the end of the sixteenth century would the realization of their distinctness be widespread. At first, America and Asia were literally one.

North America remained a cartographic mystery until the voyages of Gomes (1525), and Ayllón (1526), but in particular that of Giovanni da Verrazzano, who charted its eastern coast in 1524. Verrazzano was not immune to the Renaissance convention of inspired guessing. He assumed that a strip of land near the Pamlico Sound (North Carolina) was an isthmus leading to a western ocean (later called the Sea of Verrazzano) that would perhaps provide a short-cut to the Indies. No doubt he had heard that Magellan's crew returned in 1522 after finding the narrow strait in South America that linked the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. By the time of Verrazzano, the idea of simply landing in the Indies after a voyage of six weeks had been replaced by the more realistic objective of finding a passageway to them.
Here was an early stage in the theory of continental drift—with Magellan's Pacific Ocean so immense, America and Asia could no longer be perceived as identical.

Verrazzano's important narrative is marked, among other things, by a reliance on descriptive analogy. The natives have black skin "not unlike the Ethiopians"; they are of mediocre strength but nimble spirit in which "they resemble the Orientals."; the local grapevines grow around the trunks of trees "as they do in Cisalpine Gaul"; they discover an island "similar in size to the island of Rhodes"; along the northern coast some of the women wear their hair like those "of Egypt and Syria"; and "Both men and women have various trinkets hanging from their ears as the Orientals do." The comparative device persists; almost everything the explorer encounters reminds him of the Old World—harbors, islands, customs, gestures, even latitudinal measurements. The isthmus to the Sea of Verrazzano was little more than a mirage, but in the course of composing his narrative, Verrazzano found another kind of passage to link the two worlds, this one linguistic: the common, everyday simile.

As Marcel Trudel has pointed out, what had been a geographical misnomer by Columbus ("the Indies") was merely a figure of speech ("like the Orientals") for Verrazzano some thirty years later. In the act of being disproven, a mistaken idea had given way to an analogical description of North America's inhabitants. Thus we find a shift in emphasis from describing what had long been known to exist (the Indies) to evoking an image of what it now loosely
resembled—from the measurably definitive to what might become wildly allusive. When Verrazzano compares the black skins of these people to those of the Ethiopians, a twentieth-century reader can only guess at its marginal associations for a European contemporary. Is it to say the Ethiopians—like their legendary ancestors—are already converts to Christianity? Is it to say—like the myth of Prester John—they guard an immense cache of wealth somewhere inland? Is it to say—like the blacks already being sold by the Iberians—that they can be converted into ready slaves at a nod from the throne? Nowhere do we have an answer. Verrazzano's narrative is one of the more polished from the era, so it comes as no surprise that he commonly uses the simile as a literary weapon. Less dramatic than an overt metaphor, the analogy was a figure of speech perhaps more becoming to a Florentine navigator with substantial banking investments. His comparisons are rife with innuendo rather than any magisterial claims to a new identity.

What does all of this imply? First, that the developing division of the world into hemispheric halves made the analogy (or simile) an ideal linguistic device for the early American explorers. Second, the basis for comparison would, for a time, rest in the objects, the places and the peoples of the Old World. Anthony Pagden argues that it was not "otherness" the Renaissance voyager sought:

The sixteenth and seventeenth century observer also lived in a society which
believed firmly in the universality of most social norms and in a high degree of cultural unity between the various races of man. For such a person the kind of pain-
staking description, and the recognition of the 'otherness' of the 'other', which are the goal of the modern ethnologist, would have been unthinkable....Most men, and in particular theologians and historians.... went on searching in human behavior for the 'restrictive figures of similitude.'

The narratives are replete with such figures of speech, recalling as much the homesickness of weary men as the romantic images they enlisted to justify their plunder. The cannibals of the Carib "wear their hair long, like women." The land is "as beautiful as the gardens of Valencia in April." Vespucci's men see a town "built over the water like Venice." The crocodiles of Florida "surpassed in size those of the Nile River." A Virginia River "groweth to be as narrow as the Thames between Westminster, and Lambeth." The Eskimos of the north "be like to Tartars with long, black hair, broad faces and flat noses, and tawny in color," and of their boats, "The proportion of them is like a Spanish shallop." But all is not innocent in the balance. When the Indians of Hispaniola first sight Columbus, they run into the forest "like hares fleeing greyhounds." The Spanish fire a cannon and note that the natives jump into the ocean like "frogs on a bank." In the Caribbean the sky "burned like a furnace." Some of the Brazilian Tupinambas are "black like enemies from hell," and Vespucci remarks of a promising tribe, "if they went clothed, they would be white like ourselves." How much is "observation" and how much
wishful thinking is decidedly unclear.

Sometimes the wish is inextricable from the figure of speech. In a narrative of a journey across North America whose accuracy has been challenged by many scholars, David Ingram seems to have seen a herd of elephants and a beast with eyes in its breast, a kind of hallucinatory rehash of John Mandeville's fourteenth-century Travels. Ingram describes "great rivers...whereof this Ingram and his companions did find sundry pieces of golde, some as big as a man's fist." One is hard put to decide whether the comparison ("as big as a man's fist") more suggests a grasping imagination or a playful attempt to shut the analogy like a trap on the poor Renaissance voyeur. Ingram would make us hold the gold, not just look at it. Later, when he imaginatively describes the "great plaines" as being "as plaine as a board," it is hard to tell the difference between a figure of speech and a figure of the landscape. The New World, apparently, did that to people. Sometimes the terms of the analogy and its apparent motive are mysteriously blurred.

The simile was the most convenient analogical form—balanced, brief, and, one would hope, precise. But on occasion the powers of observation simply overpowered the faculties of logic; at times there was no easy way to render the exotic familiar. Here Ingram tries his hand again, this time to extoll the wonders of a strange quadruped as though inventing a Renaissance riddle:
This examine did also see in those Countries a monstrous beast twice as big as an Horse, and in proportion like to an Horse, both in maine, hoofe, haire and neathing, saving it was small towards the hinder partes like a Greyhound. These Beasts hath two teeth or hornes of a foote long growing straight foorth by their nosethrills: They are naturall enemies to the Horse.22

It might be a woolly mammoth that escaped the Pleistocene overkill, or an elephant that inspired Ingram to one of the first recorded attempts at unabashed exaggeration within the state of Texas.

As he continues across the North American continent with two companions (1568-9), reputedly walking from the Gulf of Mexico to Nova Scotia, the natural inhabitants of his brave new world become increasingly difficult to define:

There is also a very strange Bird, thrice as big as an Eagle, very beautifull to beholde, his feathers are more orient then a Peacockes feathers, his eyes are glittering as an Hawkes eyes, but as great as a mans eyes, his head and thigh as big as a mans head and thigh: It hath a crest and tufte of feathers of sundry colours on the top of the head like a Lapwing hanging backwards; his beake and talents in proportion like Eagles, but very huge and large.23

What Ingram is describing an experienced ornithologist might know; it rather resembles the confession of a man who has just burgled an aviary. Nevertheless, the more familiar he tries to make the "strange bird", the more he makes of it an insolvable puzzle. Perhaps, after all, this is his point: a new bird for a new world. And only a new man could have imagined it.
It might be said that Ingram is an unreliable observer—and so he is. Though the chronicle was printed by Hakluyt in *The Principal Navigations*, historians still question the veracity of many of its details. But for a better example of the "grapeshot simile" we can turn to a more reliable witness, Pedro de Castañeda, who chronicled the expedition of Francisco de Coronado across the American Southwest (1540-42). By way of analogy we encounter another American beast:

They are bearded like very large he-goats. When they run they carry their heads low, their beards touching the ground. From the middle of the body back they are covered with very woolly hair like that of fine sheep. From the belly to the front they have very heavy hair like the mane of a wild lion. They have a hump larger than that of a camel....They have short tails with a small bunch of hair at the end. When they run they carry their tails erect like the scorpion.24

A scorpion?! Comparisons aside, let us note this is the American bison, one of the earliest European descriptions of it we have. And yet the author's attempt to help us visualize it through a storm of similes is nothing if not distracting. It is like a goat. It is like a camel. It is like a lion. Each observation is accurate enough in itself, but Castañeda, in reporting the new, can only make it a composite of the old. He must present the beast piecemeal (as though it were going to be devoured), so as to examine it with a poetic eye that has something of the scientific in its glimmer. On one hand he excites his audience with a throng of exotic similes; on the other, he conventionalizes
the unknown through an incessant procedure of "revision." However unexpected it may be, the New World can still be contained in the Old. It is worth noting that "buffalo" (from "bufalas") derives from the Vulgar Latin, the bison having long-existed in remote parts of Europe. A native word, then, was not adopted to describe it, though "Cíbola"--the name of the richest of the Seven Cities sought by Coronado--was a Mexican Indian word for the same animal.

The simile possessed powers of location but lacked the authority to confer a new identity. A buffalo could be said to resemble a lion, but the lamb would not lie down with it. The simile could suggest, not name. A cumbersome portrait such as Castañeda's could no more be incorporated into the language--even as a terrifying portmanteau--than could Coronado have condoned the presence of twenty lion-tamers on the muster rolls of the expedition. As an identifier, language is too frugal to afford such luxuries, even when confronted by the exotic.

Jacques Cartier, however, in a 1534 voyage to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, betrayed a more facile style in another encounter with the unrecognizable. Off the coast of Brion Island he describes a fearsome beast:

There are around this island, many large beasts, like large oxen, which have two tusks in the mouth like an elephant and who swim in the sea. There was one who slept on land at the water's edge, and we went with our ships to take it. But when we drew close to it, it dove into the sea.

On his second voyage, the following year, Cartier describes
the same animal, but chooses a less threatening analogy:

There are in the river many fish that have the shape of horses which travel on land by night and during the day by water, this is what we were told by our two savages, and we saw many of these fish in the river.28

Later on the same voyage he again refers to the creature:

At the mouth of the rivers, we saw a large number of whales and sea horses.29

One cannot help but notice that Cartier's description grows progressively glib. He begins by stressing the size and strangeness ("like large oxen") of the creature. The next year he has become more sparing in his choice of analogy--"shaped like a horse." Finally, in the third case, he has succeeded in identifying what is a creature new to his experience through a portmanteau metaphor ("sea horse"); like any good Malouin mariner in difficult seas, he throws everything overboard but what is essential. By successive stages he domesticates the exotic into what would have almost seemed like a familiar beast. The present-day "morse", walrus, is thus resolved through Cartier's eyes until captured by a pair of words deftly clamped together, a linguistic specimen-cage for the "amphibious equus" to be displayed before the readers of Europe. In a voyage to Newfoundland in 1583, Edward Haies, chronicler for the Humphrey Gilbert expedition, describes a similar animal:

...at which very instant, even in winding about, there passed along betwenee us and towards the land which we now forsooke a very lion to our seeming, in shape, hair, and colour, not swimming after the manner of a beast by mouving of his feet, but rather sliding upon the water with his whole body...Thus he passed along turning

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his head to and fro, yawning and gaping wide, with ougly demonstration of long teeth, and glaring eies, and to bidde us a farewell (comming right against the Hinde he sent forth a horrible voyce, roaring or bellowing as doeth a lion, which spectacle wee all beheld so farre as we were able to discerne the same, as men prone to wonder at every strange thing, as this doubtlesse was, to see a lion in the Ocean sea, or fish in shape of a lion.30

Here, unlike Cartier, the intricacy of the analogy only increases. But the principle of the two passages is remarkably similar. In Haies, what begins as a ferocious predator ends as a masquerading fish. In the hands of the chronicler the beast is tamed—from being literally mistaken for another animal ("a very lion"), it becomes analogous to the animal ("as doeth a lion"), and in turn is endowed with a similar appearance but a distinct identity ("a fish in the shape of a lion"). In both passages (Cartier and Haies) the exotic point of reference from the Old World is at once subverted and glorified in the act of naming a new beast. Like the "sea horse," the "sea lion" that Haies describes is visualized in terms of animals that would have belonged to an Old World bestiary. As the creature becomes more recognizable, it is incorporated into the taxonomy of the European reader ("lion", "horse") who may now participate in the cultural assumptions inherent in the name. It is interesting to note that Haies is likely describing the same animal as Cartier--the walrus--rather than the seal-like "sea lion" of our own century.

The entire process of analogy comes as no surprise in light of the growing Renaissance presumption that America
was innocent, youthful, and undeveloped by comparison with
the other known continents. The American past and present
were contingent on the authority and example provided by
Europe. "Sea horse" and "sea lion" were small but
representative examples of this dependency, a mentality that
would later go so far as to account for the physical origins
of the AmerIndian in the Old World, from highly imaginative
guesswork (the Lost Tribes of Israel) to empirically
"confirmed" theory (Bering Strait). Joseph de Acosta is
given credit for first pronouncing the Bering theory of
migration in 1590, but it is clear that a semantic
migration ("the sea horse") had begun long before he wrote
his Natural and Moral History of the Indies. The reverse
process, however, was rarely deemed worthy of mention, if
even realized. Maize and turkeys, for instance, were
transplanted from America to Europe so quickly that
contemporary observers considered them to have been of
oriental origin.

As one guesses from the conventional similes of
Castañeda, Cartier and Haies, the Orient was a rich mine in
the European unconscious for the production of exotic and
even mythical figures of speech. John Hawkins notes in a
voyage to Florida in 1565:

The Floridians have pieces of unicornes
horne which they weare about their necks,
whereof the Frenchmen obtaine many
pieces. Of those unicornes they have
many: for that they doe affirme it to be a
beast with one horne, which comming to the
river to drinke, putteth the same into the
water before he drinketh.
George Best mentions a "sea unicorn" in the course of 34
Frobisher's voyage of 1577. When the Sieur de
Rochefort, in his *Natural and Moral History of the American
Indies* (1658), included a reproduction of a swordfish
entitled "The Unicorn of the North Sea," it was evident that
even as late as the mid-seventeenth century the mythic
imagery of the East possessed an enchanting power over the
natural historian as well as the historical chronicler.
The unicorn had been long associated with America. Jean
Alphonse de Xanctoine, pilot for the Roberval expedition in
1541, was told by savages that unicorns were found in a
remote area of their country. The royal procession for
King Charles IX through the French city of Troyes in 1564
included "a large number of savages [Indian] properly
dressed, their captain seated on a unicorn trimmed in
ivy..." One presumes this was a horse--if not a "sea
horse"--agreeably disguised for the special occasion. In
his *Cosmographie Universelle*, Guillaume le Testu was to move
the one-horned mammal to the unknown continent of Terra
Australis, as though confiding it to a preserve still safe
from intrusion.

None of this is to forget there had been a verified
sighting of the unicorn two centuries before Columbus even
imagined sailing west. On the island of Java, Marco Polo
exercised his own legendary powers of observation:

They have wild elephants and plenty of
unicorns, which are scarcely smaller than
elephants. They have the hair of a buffalo
and feet like an elephant's. They have a
single, large, black horn in the middle of
the forehead. They do not attack with
their horn, but only with their tongue and their knees; for their tongues are furnished with long, sharp spines, so that when they want to do any harm to anyone they first crush him by kneeling upon him and then lacerate him with their tongues... They spend their time by preference wallowing in mud and slime. They are very ugly brutes to look at. 39

With such pitfalls the act of naming is replete. Rarely do we accord today the *Rhinoceros Unicornis* such a wondrous pedigree. No doubt Polo's observations are attentive and precise, even scientific by comparison with that other celebrated traveller of his age, John Mandeville. Still, the celebrated Venetian is a victim: not of his own considerable powers of observation, but of the taxonomy he presumes by which to organize them. The issue is not whether the European uniquely possesses (or possessed) such a "prejudicial structure"--one must presume that every culture dictates a similar process (whether by analogy, metaphor, or a completely different method) in order to render the mysterious as something functional and conceivable to a sympathetic audience. The irony of Polo's "mistake" is that it is deliberate and excessive at the same time--deliberate in observing that the rhinoceros belongs to a category consisting of one-horned mammals; excessive in implying that the legendary beast was a verifiable fact to which a Venetian entrepreneur of good sense would heartily attest. The same is true of "sea horse" and "sea lion." While perfectly accurate within the bounds of analogous discourse, each is a hybrid that stresses a characteristic monstrous in its dislocation; at the same time, it derives
no small dramatic effect by its allusion to a beast believed
to be indigenous to the Old World. The message is this:
"America is like our world, but it is a distortion, at times
a terrifying one." This is the European transformation of
America that Eduardo Galeano calls the "Old New World."

We cannot dismiss Polo, Cartier, or Castañeda without
admiring their facility for making apt comparisons. The
hybrid monsters they "invent" are the progeny of the new
empirical movement to classify the world through contiguous
categories on the one hand, and the medieval inclination
(inherited from Antiquity) to construct a bestiary of hybrid
wonders that refuses any systematical attempt at
classification. During the Renaissance the West is in a
state of transition between the two. Consider Polo's
unicorn: however wondrous, it is a pale sight compared with
the accounts of his contemporary, John Mandeville. In the
latter's Travels (1356) the reader finds no end of amazing
stories detailing hermaphroditic Amazons, pygmies without
mouths, people with horses' feet, an island where the sick
are hanged as food for angels, the hippopotamus ("river
horse")--a hybrid of man and horse, and Nacumera, "a gret
ty le good and fayr" where the people go naked, have heads
like dogs and worship the image of an ox. Many of the
horrors and wonders recall early descriptions of the New
World--Orellana battling Amazons in South America, Columbus
sighting mermaids in the Caribbean, Coronado marching for
weeks to gain the threshold of the fabled Quivira where the
rivers were filled "with fish as large as horses."
These hybrid beasts—the unicorn, the sea horse, the Amazon, the composite buffalo—are important for the miscegenous vision they represent, the vision of a culture with priorities in flux, and what that implied about changing priorities in the West. As Olive Patricia Dickason describes it,

The Medieval and Renaissance tendency was to transform these animals [apes] into quasi-human beings by exaggerating their human aspects. The Spanish, for instance, were reported to regard baboons as a race of people who refused to speak so that they would not be forced to live in subjection...From such hesitations and confusions, it had not been a long step to the idea of dual creation, of the Devil acting in competition with God but being capable only of producing a distorted version of the original being that had been divinely created. This concept was firmly established in Christian folklore: horse and ass, lion and cat, sun and moon, day and night.43

The hybrid is a metaphor itself, an animal frozen in the act of being transformed, of achieving what science would consider a "verifiable" identity. The sea lion is not a "lion." The rhinoceros is not a unicorn. The people with horses' feet have not yet been reported with sufficient accuracy—this is the argument of science. Indeed, apes were not people, though they would eventually come to be linked with certain races. The categories of the medieval European mind were shifting.

In Mandeville, the wondrous species of the world are scattered far and wide on distant islands. In Cartier or Columbus, they are verified to exist (at least semantically)
on the isle of America. This is a major difference between the medieval and Renaissance travelogue. For the medieval unconscious, the islands provide a primitive zoological structure for the traveller, a Christian pilgrimage cataloguing the Fantastic. Mandeville's archipelago is static, "undeveloped," impenetrable, situated somewhere in the faraway East. However "primitive," it contains a system of species variation that uses geographical distance rather than temporal mutation as a rule of order. Mandeville reveals to us a world of unsettling strangeness and diversity, but each deformity is confined to a distant isle.

But once Columbus sails, such fantasies are henceforth subject to observation. Mandeville's (and Polo's) system of insular variation on a series of scattered islands is no longer possible, for the gradual European exploration of the Americas would reveal that even the two continental masses were connected by an isthmus. No longer could the unverifiable be relegated to the mysterious Antipodes, because the Antipodes had been found. Once it was generally determined that North America was more vast than a large island but clearly unconnected to Asia (c. 1580), the isolation of hybrids that characterized Mandeville's taxonomy began to undergo a painful and rigorous process of re-examination, whereby the fabulous would part company with the observable—perhaps forever—in the West.

At the same time, the idea of the "specimen" was integrated into a body of human knowledge using a proto-scientific method of classification that was based, not on a
travelogue with an aimless and pluralistic itinerary, but the notion of hierarchical gradation that was to become the password of the natural and, eventually, the social sciences. Tzvetan Todorov has marked this transition well:

One of the things that most strikes the conquistador's imagination, upon their entrance into Mexico, is what we might call Montezuma's zoo. The subject peoples offered various specimens of flora and fauna as tribute to the Aztecs, who had established places where these collections of plants, birds, serpents, and wild beasts could be observed...Again this reminds us of Columbus's activity as a naturalist and an amateur who wanted samples of all that he encountered.

This institution, which the Spaniards admire in their turn (zoos do not yet exist in Europe), can be both related to and contrasted with another, which is virtually contemporary with it: the first museums. Men have always collected curiosities, natural or cultural; but it is only in the fifteenth century that the popes begin accumulating and exhibiting ancient remains as traces of another culture; this is also the period of the first works on the 'life and manners' of remote peoples.44

The difference is that between the static bestiary of Mandeville on the one hand, and the developing belief in a kinetic, evolutionary hierarchy that was to be intimated by men such as Buffon and proclaimed by others to follow, (Darwin). Renaissance writers like Acosta, Montaigne and Las Casas suggest an early period of transition between these worlds, writers who were part of an incipient movement toward comprehending the Other by noting his contiguous similarity rather than rejecting him for an irreconcilable difference. It is too easy to say this represents a

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movement from absolute terms to relative, from the imaginary to the real, from the Dark Ages to the Enlightenment and all that those loaded oppositions imply to the secular society of a nation-state. But it is a change of worlds, a metaphor that transforms the empire of faith into the new realm of the empirical. Before the rhinoceros ever became an endangered species, the unicorn had long since disappeared.

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For the European observer, a more powerful tool of discourse was still available. Though analogy (i.e. simile) was a useful means by which to compare the identity of America to a European past, a related but more magisterial device would come to evoke the transcendental promise that America offered. As Bernadette Bucher has argued, this second method was inevitable when transferring an analogy from a written document to an engraved image:

If, for example, the Indians of Virginia are compared to Picts because, like them, they decorate their bodies with designs and paintings, the only way to preserve the relation of comparison between the two is to tell in a caption why portraits of Picts should appear among engravings of AmerIndians. ...As long as the textual commentary remains with the picture and is read, the juxtaposition of the two different peoples is metonymical, like the comparison in the text (they are partially comparable, from a certain aspect). But, if the explanatory text is omitted, the portraits of Picts become another way of portraying Indians. Thus a simple comparison becomes a substitution, pure and simple. This is what happened in other editions of texts that copied the de Bry's engravings; Pict figures are again seen among the Indians; this example illustrates how a
verbal comparison is transcribed directly as a metaphor (complete assimilation of the compared term with the comparable terms) ... 45

Of course, the metaphor was not limited to pictorial representation, but was often employed in the written narratives themselves. Consider, for a moment, the difference between them: like the simile, the metaphor is a comparison, but more than an ornamental one. Both achieve a surprising revelation of compatibility between otherwise unassociated objects, i.e. a peal of thunder and a gunshot, the coastline of Africa and South America, a gray beast that wallows in mud and a white one that is the trusted companion of virgins. But a metaphor does not hold out two hands to make its comparison, as the simile does. In effect, it melds one identity into another until the original referent is altered. To write that a rhinoceros resembles a unicorn is far different than suggesting it is one, whether by a mistake of observation or poetic license. Roger Tourangeau summarizes the characteristics of metaphor:

Metaphors join two incompatible subjects. We use our beliefs about the one subject as a model to construct parallel beliefs about the other, hindered by incongruities between the domains of the two subjects. We don't always recognize metaphors, but when we do it is generally because of the clash between separate domains, a clash which can make itself felt as a semantic or pragmatic anomaly. Understanding a metaphor requires several steps: during the main ones, we recognize the metaphor, infer its subjects, create parallel beliefs about the principal subject, and compare these beliefs to our old beliefs. The results of an informal study suggest that part of filling out a metaphor consists of viewing a subject from the vantage point of a particular domain; they also suggest that beliefs about the one subject must be
altered in several ways to fit the other.46

From Tourangeau's definition it is worth noting that the subjects of metaphor are "incompatible," that understanding a metaphor is not a single leap but a continuing process, and most importantly, that we do not always recognize metaphors when we encounter them. Let us see how this characterization is applicable to the European description of the New World.

In Chapter 1 we considered the mythical figure of the feminine America and certain masculine identities that perpetrated it. This myth is created, in part, by an unconscious process that employs the pathetic fallacy (a metaphor) out of sheer convenience. Janet Soskice notes:

Catachresis is the supplying of a term where one is lacking in the vocabulary; it took place when the lower part of a mountain came to be called its 'foot,' or the bounding line of an angle its 'leg,' or the narrow base of a wine glass its 'stem,' because no straightforward term was extant in our vocabulary (or lexicon) for this purpose. In the language of the linguists, catachresis is the activity of filling lexical gaps.47

But there is another realm in which the metaphor is—though of a more deliberate nature—no less allusive. While it may not have overtly characterized the observations of Cartier, Verrazzano or Castañeda, it was the rhetoric of the Christian church that provided an alternative context in which to understand the New World. As Soskice points out, a particular brand of Christian found the metaphor an
invaluable device:

We discover perhaps to our surprise that the Christian mystic is of all theists the most likely to be a realist, aware of the presence and reality of God, yet aware at the same time of the inability of human speech and thought to contain Him. To make sense of his experience the mystic has recourse to figures and images. Compelled by the strength of experience (or by religious superiors) to give account of it, he does so in the language of his time and tradition... The great divine and the great poet have one thing in common: both use metaphor to say that which can be said in no other way but which, once said, can be recognized by many.48

Perhaps the most prominent example of this self-ordained American mystic is Columbus, a fervid believer in "the new heaven and the new earth," even if he remained convinced he had not discovered a new world. But Columbus was not alone.

Two Catholic orders promptly arrived in America after its "discovery" with the clear mission of converting the Indian: "Every Hispanist would know that the first Franciscan and Dominican missions to arrive in Española (1500 and 1510) and in New Spain (1524 and 1526) were composed of twelve friars; for as one contemporary account put it, 'this was the number of the disciples of Christ.'" In particular it was the mendicant Franciscans, foremost among them Gerónimo de Mendieta, who advocated a mystical vision of an American apocalypse that recalled the early apostolic tenets of the Christian Church. As John Phelan writes, "The mendicant program was also nourished by the conviction that after the friars had experienced three hundred years of frustration in Europe,
the Indians presented them with the unique opportunity of applying on a large scale the doctrine of evangelical poverty." Let us consider a specific example of how metaphor was used in a religious context by a member of one of these orders. A Franciscan who was to have a great influence on one of the best-known overland expeditions was Fray Marcos de Niza, a man made immensely popular in New Spain by his report in 1539 of having seen—with his very own eyes—the fabled city of Cíbola.

The Coronado expedition (1540-42) is a well-documented journey into the American west with an immediate goal as fanciful as any of David Ingram's: the Seven Cities of gold, the reincarnation of the magical isle of Antilia. The expedition was mobilized after the sworn account given by Marcos of a reconnaissance trip he made in 1539 to the area of present-day northern New Mexico; there, he adamantly claimed, he had seen the seven cities from the vantage point of a nearby hill. Before reaching them, Marcos tells us he gains his information from a series of native informants:

"...Cíbola was a big city in which there are many people, streets, and plazas, that in some sections of the city there are some very large houses ten stories high." To a Renaissance European this was no doubt impressive—a prospering urban settlement was a critical characteristic of a civilized people.

The narrative continues: "He [the informant] told me that the other seven cities are like this one, some even
larger, and that the principal one is Ahacus." The cities increase in number ("the other seven") and size ("some even larger...Ahacus"), no doubt entrancing the friar. Gradually he draws closer to the settlement:

I saw a much larger quantity of turquoise and strings of them in this valley than in all the country I had traversed before. The natives all say that it comes from the city of Cíbola...54

The stakes escalate; the numbers to be imagined increase; the wealth of the new territory is contrasted with the relative poverty of the old.

Finally, after receiving news that his companion Esteban had been killed several days earlier trying to enter the city, Fray Marcos climbs a hill to gaze down at last on that mythical objective that had so long eluded the European:

...I proceeded on my journey until coming within view of Cíbola, which is situated in a plain, at the base of a round hill. The pueblo has a fine appearance, the best I have seen in these regions. The houses are as they had been described to me by the Indians, all of stone, with terraces and flat roofs, as it seemed to me from a hill where I stood to view it. The city is larger than the city of Mexico... this land, which in my opinion is the greatest and best of all that have been discovered.55

The city is not merely "like" Mexico, but "larger." Resemblance is not so much suggested as increase. In Marcos' hands, the analogy becomes a superlative: "the greatest and best of all that have been discovered."

Significantly, the basis for comparison is no longer the Old World (Rome), but the New (Mexico). To realize how far the
Spanish have come in repressing the temptation to exaggerate, one need only remember the allusions of Bernal Díaz to the genre of the knightly romance when he entered Tenochtitlán (Mexico) in 1519. We can admire the relative restraint of Marcos, but his is a restraint fashioned of inference, not experience. He never descends the hill to enter "the city on the plain" for fear, like Esteban, of being killed. A year later, when Coronado's army found a modest pueblo instead of a desert metropolis, Castañeda wrote, "When they got within sight of the first pueblo, which was Cipola, the curses that some hurled at Fray Marcos were such that God forbid they may befall him."

There is something in Marcos' journey that resembles the children's game of "telephone"--a message is repeated (from the informants to Marcos to Coronado) until it is distorted beyond all recognition to the person who began it. The friar bends the testimony of his informants into something so grandiose ("larger than the city of Mexico") that an army of several hundred men will hurriedly assemble the next year in the hopes of bearing out his discovery. The closer Marcos gets to Cipola, the more inflated his rhetoric becomes. He magnifies what is there into what he believes is there. Through a few well-selected analogies, the friar from Niza has at last attained not only the Antipodes of America, but stranger still in his wandering, the "antipodes of truth." As Coronado relates in a letter to the Viceroy, "Not to be too verbose, I can assure you that he has not told the truth in a single thing that he
said, but everything is the opposite of what he related, except the name of the cities and the large stone houses." Marcos, in a sense, is an eyewitness "liar." But if he is so completely misinformed, is there not some truth to be gained from his very consistency? And is it perhaps even possible that Marcos was misunderstood?

For a man of the Church, the comparative nature of analogy may not have been as useful as an idea more readily embodied in "metaphor," from the Greek to "transfer" or to "carry." Certainly the Church had carried with it a chest of Biblical metaphors to help comprehend and Christianize America—a reflex long-conditioned in meetings with the infidel. In the fourteenth century, the lawyer Oldratus de Ponte, to cite only one example, had compared infidels to beasts of the field and Christians to the sheep of God, imitating the instructions of the Christian parable. With time, the papacy came to perceive the people living outside of Europe also as a part of its "flock," a metaphor that argued conquest as much as benign protection. By 1454, the traditional theory of just war which permitted Christians the right of conquest if a missionary had been attacked was broadened by Pope Nicholas V in the Bull Romanus Pontifex to justify the colonization of the Canary Islands so that "the sheep divinely committed to Us might be brought to the Lord's one fold."

The description by Columbus of the natives he met on his first voyage reflects the currency and the power of this metaphor in European thinking, even if the comparison was
The people of this island, and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, although some women cover a single place with a leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them, not because they are not well built men and of handsome stature, but because they are marvellously timorous.62

Though Columbus does not precisely say it, these are "sheep." The Dominican friar Las Casas is more to the point: "Those merchants, upon entering the land with three hundred or more men, encountered people as tame as sheep, as were all the native people in the Indies everywhere, until they suffered injury at the hands of the Spaniards." When viewing the settlement of Cítoba from a nearby hill, this might well have been the same assumption of Fray Marcos—that the redemption of its inhabitants was within the mission of the Church, that the Indians were not to be destroyed as the idolatrous Mexica were, but absolved of sin by their total submission to God. What Marcos saw was not a city, but the future City of God. He yearned for this like something long-promised: "...each day seemed a year to me, such was my desire to see Cítoba." He even chose the patron saint of poverty as an inspiration in naming the region, recounting in his report, "...it seemed to me appropriate to name that land the new kingdom of St. Francis." Cítoba was not simply what it appeared in the eyes of mortal man, but what it would become in the future,
a symbol of the metaphorical Christian mission in the New World. This, after all, is the meaning of "metaphor": "meta" (change) + "pherein" (to bear). Thus is the pueblo of Zuni magically borne away in one man's imagination to rival Mexico City.

To consider the observations of a sailor like Jacques Cartier during his 1535 voyage to Canada, however, we find that such thinking was not limited to men of the robe:

They eat their meat quite raw, merely smoking it, and the same with their fish. From what we have seen and been able to learn of these people, I am of opinion that they could easily be moulded...66

In his English translation, H.P. Biggar uses "moulded", recalling the familiar Biblical metaphor of God as an artisan or potter. The original French, however, is "dompter," "to tame," suggesting a different though no less allusive Biblical image, this one deriving from a pastoralist tradition bent on domesticating animals for nourishment and clothing on the one hand, while "taming" the men and women who would owe allegiance to its proselytizing faith on the other. Both are metaphors of passivity—whether molded or tamed, the "savage" cannot help but be altered. Yet they are also figures of transformation whereby the "indigènes" can be changed in their outward appearance as well as their state of mind. What is implied in their passivity is the spiritual passage of enlightenment, a voyage that parallels the physical journey of the priest from the Old World to the New. This complex process is symbolized by the type/antitype theory of
Biblical exegesis as dear to some of the Spanish Franciscans as it was later to the Puritans of New England:

The method of discerning how ancient events in history had forecast succeeding ones was called 'typology.' A 'type,' as the eminent Puritan divine Samuel Mather explained, is some outward or sensible thing, some event in history, ordained by God and recorded in the Old Testament to foreshadow something about Christ in the New. Christ's actions in the New Testament fulfill and thus abrogate the events of the Old Testament and announce the New Dispensation. These New Testament actions are therefore styled 'antitypes,' and the study of typology revealed to these English that God's workings were logical, progressive, continuous, and linear.67

Having already consummated one voyage across the Ocean of Atlas (named for the pagan), the men of God will carry the unknowing "savage" into another world of enlightenment through the Christian journey of salvation.

For Cartier, one of the remarkable traits of the 68 natives is that "they eat their meat quite raw." Not only are their souls unprepared, but so too is their food, an observation shared by many early European visitors to America, as Anthony Pagden has noted:

The preparation of food possesses great social significance for most, if not all, cultures. But the Christian case is a special one, since the preparation of 'food' lies at the very heart of the Christian mystery. At the most elementary level transubstantiation was a miracle which involved the transformation of one kind of food—a wafer—into another—the flesh of Christ himself. Christian theologians were, therefore, very sensitive to the possible spiritual implications that could be attached to the preparation of foods... In the Mass the 'preparation' is a ritual one; but in everyday life it consists of cooking. The consumption of raw things—especially of raw living
things--was, like nudity, a sign of technological inadequacy, of the barbarian's inability to modify significantly his environment. 69

Not only did the Indian often fail to properly prepare his food, but even worse, he was known to eat directly from the ground and at unpredictable hours, much as an animal would. Furthermore, in the eyes of Christian adherents, the rite of the Eucharist was a symbolic ritual in stark contrast to the alleged cannibalism of many Indian tribes. In fact, the Christian rite of communion was the inverse of the pagan one: the wafer was consumed as symbolic flesh, not literally devoured as a symbol of victory over a defeated rival.

The later Protestant strategy of the "conversion experience," an act which communally demonstrated the election of an individual to everlasting grace, was influenced by this same Christian theme of metamorphosis. Though simile and metaphor are often grouped under the rubric of the latter, the underlying difference between them is critical to understanding the transforming rhetoric of the Church, whether Protestant or Catholic. The simile suggested likeness, a tolerant state of co-existence between equals; the crucial characteristic of the metaphor was its ability to obliterate a former identity in the act of transforming it, in effect to undertake an act of linguistic "conversion." The simile compared identities while the metaphor appropriated one in fashioning a new image or self.

The Spanish historian Joseph de Acosta, for example,
called America a "forest of language," ("selva de idiomas"). First, America is imagined as a "forest," a subversive image to a culture that had already spent centuries clearing European land to feed what was a rapidly growing population. Second, Acosta's figure of speech is a forest comprised of language, a verifiable Babel that has the curious potential of being razed by man rather than God. An imperial order or tongue is to be imposed on this chorus of voices in the name of moral development. In this way the universalist Christian will make the Other monolithic in his own image. The singularity of the Christian mission would somehow harmonize and transport the incomprehensible sounds of the "savage." Perhaps this is what Dionyse Settle meant when he wrote of Probysher's second voyage (1577), "that by our Christian study and endeavor those barbarous people, trained up in paganism and infidelity, might be reduced to the knowledge of true religion and to the hope of salvation in Christ." Settle writes, "reduced to the knowledge"--for the Renaissance Christian, more was not always better. In America, the forest or the "savage" might be razed or reduced to a higher state.

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Metaphor and simile were different forms of discourse that permitted the European observer to perform a variety of semantic feats: to make the unknown a part of the known, to
render of the monstrous something recognizable, to demonstrate a proven superiority through the dialectic of analogy, to invoke the city of God out of "the small, rocky pueblo" of Cibola. But sometimes these very categories—metaphor, simile, analogy, even scientific model—are only implied. On occasion a comparison is used in the narratives without an overt acknowledgment it is being made. Consider Peter Martyr's passing account of Newfoundland:

Cabot called these lands "Bacalaos" because so many large fish of this name so-called by the natives are found in the sea. The Indians called the lands thusly—because the fish sometimes even slowed down their boats. The people in these lands were covered with skins, though stripped of reason and intelligence. It has been mentioned that there are a lot of bears here, who feed on the fish. They hide themselves in the thick flocks of birds and each one grabs some fish...75

Consider also Cartier, in what we might call a struggling attempt at Renaissance ethnography:

There is not the smallest plot of ground bare of wood, and even on sandy soil, but is full of wild wheat, that has an ear like barley and the grain like oats, as well as of pease, as thick as if they had been sown and hoed....Likewise there are many fine meadows with useful herbs, and a pond where there are many salmon. I am more than ever of opinion that these people would be easy to convert to our holy faith. They call a hatchet in their language cochy, and a knife, bacan. We named this bay Chaleur Bay, (i.e, the Bay of Heat.)76

From the complete lack of transition between topics in Martyr's passage, we might presume that the Newfoundland natives have much in common with bears. Cartier, on the
other hand, implies the wild though cultivable nature of the 
locals--they are candidates for "conversion" in the same way 
the land is. These are "metaphors of proximity," dependent 
for their effect on the reader's ability to make a 
connection that is not made explicit in the narrative. This 
is a more powerful rhetorical weapon than it would be to 
write, "they are like bears" or "their souls are like wild 
wheat"--the reader will link the inevitable metaphor 
himself, and as it is unspoken, the artifice of the 
comparison goes unchallenged. The ornament of an explicit 
figure of speech is abandoned in favor of a taxonomic 
assumption with more profound implications: the nature of 
the Indian is beastly, though his condition is doubtless 
cultivable. The Indian, in effect, becomes a part of the 
landscape. At the same time they defer from making overt 
comparisons, Martyr and Cartier (as did many of their 
contemporaries) condemn the "savage" to inhabit the "natural 
world" of the European, a fact that could not help but have 
dire consequences for the native inhabitants.

The narratives are filled with speculations that 
confuse the "natural world" with the "savage people." In 
the Norse saga of "Eirik the Red," we read how the Vikings 
captured two young Indian boys, only to watch as the others 
"escaped, and...sank down into the earth." During his 
Florida sojourn, Laudonnière describes the local natives as 
watching him from a distance, "half-covered in the 
woods." Ralph Lane (1585), in describing an English 
foray near the Chesapeake Bay, notes with chagrin that he
cannot make contact with the locals: "and that we were then 160 miles from home....seeing all the Countrey fledde before us." Here the fit of the metaphor is exact—the people and the land become one. We imagine the tribe rolling up the banks of the Roanoke River before they flee into the forest. Lane equates the land with the people in an archaic sense of "country" that was popular in the Middle Ages and which carried a strong Biblical echo: "And all the countreyes came into Egypt to Joseph, for to buy corn."

Ironically, while Lane was displeased by such a retiring welcome in 1585, his countrymen would later encourage the same strategy when they began to colonize some twenty years later. After they had learned to live off the country, the "countrey" was no longer needed.

The earth underwent a conceptual transformation with the coming of the European, one that was visualized in the highly potent language of "market metaphors." In Rosier's relation of Waymouth's voyage (1605), we read of "some small Birch, Hazle, and Brake, which might in small time with few men be cleansed and made good arable land." Gabriel Archer, reporting on Gosnold's voyage of 1602, is verily agape at the wealth of New England, "for it is replenished with faire fields, and in them fragrant Flowers,....and beautified with two maine Rivers that (as wee judge) may haply become good Harbours, and conduct us to the hopes men so greedily doe thirst after." Here are Englishmen who thirst, not for mere water, but "grander hopes." In his Report on the New Found Land of Virginia (1588), Thomas
Harriott visualizes a more Bacchanalian metamorphosis:

There are two kindes of grapes that the soile doeth yeild naturally, the one is small and soure of the ordinarie bignesse as ours in England, the other farre greater and of himselfe lushious sweete. When they are planted and husbanded as they ought, a principal commoditie of wines by them may be raised.83

It is this imaginative concern for the country's conversion to more useful activities that allows Laudonnière to speak of a river in Florida as a place where "the galleons of Venice could enter," and that inspires Verrazzano to a near state of mystical transport: "We frequently went five to six leagues into the interior, and found it as pleasant as I can possibly describe and suitable for every kind of cultivation...Then we entered the forests, which could be penetrated even by a large army."

By examining a single passage in greater detail we can better understand the far-reaching assumptions of such language. The following selection from Johann De Laet's New World, a representative example of the early Arcadian paeans written to America, reveals the languishing abundance to be found along the Hudson River c. 1625:

The forests everywhere contain a great variety of wild animals, especially of the deer kind, and other quadrupeds that are indigenous to this part of North America. Innumerable birds are also found here, both large and small, those that frequent the rivers and lakes, as well as the forests, and possess plumage of great elegance and variety of colors. In winter superior turkey cocks are taken, very fat, and with flesh of the best quality. The rivers produce excellent fish, such as the salmon, sturgeon, and many others.86
The first verb ("contain") denotes enclosure, though the
passage eventually leads to an animate state of nourishment
("frequent", "produce") that mysteriously results in a
landscape of unbounded plenty. The land nourishes but
"contains" its wildness: it is at once a passive receptacle
as well as a generative force, a kind of American alembic in
which an elixir is distilled to generate "innumerable
birds," "a great variety of wild animals," and "fish, such
as the salmon, sturgeon and many others." To name the
species will not exhaust them, for the forest holds within
it a progeny whose numbers are inextinguishable. A
singularly odd principle is at work--as the forest breeds a
wealth beyond the talents of the observer to describe, it
becomes the passive prey of the men who would enter there:
"numerous birds are also found," "superior turkey cocks are
taken." The moment life is generated within the forest, it
becomes the lifeless objective of those who would either
hunt or observe it.

By the end of the passage, the living reaches the
status of a commodity ("the rivers produce excellent fish"),
by which the passive though prolific nature of the land
fully unveils itself. Here is the feminine America in all
her splendor and her servitude, a model of pliable passivity
who holds within her "forest" a treasure of riches which, of
course, she will surrender to the European on demand. De
Laet's passage shares several assumptions about the nature
of America with many exploratory tracts of the period: 1)
her uncountable and inestimable fertility; 2) her state of
natural purity as an untouched Arcadian preserve; and 3) the potential for her transformation from a natural to a manufactured state, from "containing" wild animals to "producing" a variety of fish. This is an unspoken act of personification—the writer endows the land with generative powers that give birth to passive, delectable, even erotic products ("with flesh of the best quality") for wholesale consumption at their genesis. From the unseen womb proceeds visible wealth; from infinite generation comes the serial production of the early mercantile mind. This is a metaphor the European presumes without conscious recourse to figures of speech; nonetheless, as we watch enamored of the landscape, De Laet announces the birth of commodities. William Cronon has pointed out that this sense of "commodity" (a word commonly encountered in the narratives) derives from an earlier meaning similar to commodious or useful." "Commodious" now denotes a state of spaciousness, "convenient for shelter," a meaning established during the sixteenth century which suggests a provocative link between material usefulness and geographical expansion in the Western mind.

There is something of the mysterious in this transformation of America, something medieval yet modern that strikes of primitive science. The earth is "planted" with Edenic images to achieve an idyllic Golden Age of abundance. The land is transformed from the uncountable and the wild to the estimable products of a mercantile market. The rivers are now "harbors," the trees "masts"; the rivers
"produce" fish, the forest "contains" deer, the vines hold the promise of wine, the land becomes the cornucopia of the harvest. The vessel that cannot be emptied to its dregs is America. The alchemy of the New World is here at work. Again we recall the image of "America," the fecund woman named for the probing Florentine (Vespucci) who "named" her—at least this is the accepted etymology. Marcel Trudel has offered the alternative that "America" may just as well derive from a Nicaraguan Indian word, "amerrique," ("rich in gold") and that Vespucci himself may have slightly altered his own name to subsequently profit. By this theory, the land was named for the gold that lay within it, a mother vein that represented the most perfect substance of nature.

However suspect as etymology, Trudel's idea is nonetheless enlightening as a symbol for what inspired the mercantile or market metaphor. Mircea Eliade recounts in The Forge and the Crucible the sacred idea of trans-substantiation that is a critical assumption of the alchemical method; we have already seen its central importance in the Christian rite. What is more, the ultimate goal of alchemy, like commerce, is the production of gold. Whether as a holy substance composed of Nature's essence or mineral specie extracted from "the bowels of the earth," the objective of each is a "progress" manifested in the material realm. Ages-old was the link in the European mind between the fabled wealth of the East and its simultaneous claim to be the place of human genesis. It is no surprise, then, to observe that the mercantile metaphor
becomes a commercial rite by which to distill the essence of the material from the immaterial. It has as its object, in the words of the chronicler for one of the most renowned salesmen of North America, Humphrey Gilbert, "to discover, possess, and to reduce unto the service of God, and Christian pietie, those remote and heathen Countreys of America..." The complex mission of Europe is here ordered with striking clarity. It is, first, to "discover"—a sexual metaphor that grows out of an ethnocentric assumption. Then to "possess" her—an image connoting seduction as well as private ownership. Finally she is to be "reduced" to the service of God—a curious figure of speech, as James Axtell has recently noted, to those of us who live in an age when an irresistible vocabulary daily extolls the virtues of development and increase. And yet "reduce" would finally seem a fitting image for the alchemy of transformation—"reducing" the imperfect substance to gold, clearing Acosta's "forest of language," converting the heathen to the pure light of Christ.

The compass that oriented the trans-Atlantic voyager pointed to the base metal hidden mysteriously within the pole that also possessed magical qualities. The lodestone was the Philosopher's Stone of Columbus and those who followed, as the Englishman Rosier relates:

Our Captaine shewed them a strange thing which they woondered at. His sword and mine having beene touched with the Loadstone, tooke up a knife, and held it fast when they plucked it away, made the knife turne, being laid on a blocke, and touching it with his sword, made that take up a needle, whereat they much marvelled.
Thus we did to cause them to imagine some great power in us: and for that to love and feare us.93

John Smith recalls his captivity in a similar vein:

Notwithstanding, within an houre after they tyed him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him, but the king holding up the Compass in his hand, they all laid downe their Bowes and Arrowes, and in a triumphant manner led him to Oropaks, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used."94

If the alchemists were finally unable to transmute base metals into gold, the navigators and merchants of Europe were brilliantly successful in parlaying the knowledge of the East (whence came the occult compass) into the commercial technology that made of the Antipodes a place of fabled, unlimited wealth. Eliade notes:

We must not believe that the triumph of experimental science reduced to nought the dreams and ideals of the alchemist. On the contrary, the ideology of the new epoch, crystallized around the myth of infinite progress and boosted by the experimental sciences....takes up and carries forward--despite its radical secularization--the milennewry dream of the alchemist. It is in the specific dogma of the nineteenth century, according to which man's true mission is to transform and improve upon nature and become her master, that we must look for the authentic continuation of the alchemist's dream.95

With its relegation to the ranks of pseudo-science, alchemy has been nearly forgotten. The mystical idea of the soul's conversion was, in alchemical theory, a precise parallel to the mutation metals underwent before achieving the "enlightened" state of gold. But the theme of
rejuvenation still resounds in the myth of the New World. Columbus came to the Indies a dreamer and left as a self-styled visionary; Las Casas arrived a soldier of fortune and died a "soldier of Christ"; Ponce de León gave his life searching for the island fountain that would restore to man his lost youth; Cabeza de Vaca found a burning bush while crossing the Sonoran Desert; the Franciscan Mendieta nominated Cortez as a New World Moses; John Smith vowed that the catch of New England fish would bring its investors everything, even gold.

But there was another side of the myth, one of complete disintegration, as John Phelan has written:

Gerónimo de Mendieta was not the first to interpret the discovery of the New World apocalyptically. In fact, he shared with many others an apocalyptical point of view which is one of the least studied features of the Age of Discovery. Navigators like Columbus and missionaries like Mendieta viewed the events of geographical exploration and colonization as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the apocalypse.

Columbus and Cabeza de Vaca in chains. Coronado brought to trial. Gilbert, Corte Real and Hudson lost at sea. Verrazzano cannibalized by Caribbean natives. The Myth of a New Beginning was shadowed by an antipodal one—the reversal of good fortune, perhaps even the imminent occasion of the Apocalypse. What limits were there to the transformative wonders that could be worked in America? The Conquista came to be called the "pacificación." As the jurist Francisco de Vitoria put it, "As has already been noted, the end of war is peace. Consequently, everything in war that
is necessary to achieve security and peace, is legal."

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The first Europeans to arrive in the New World engaged in a metaphorical pursuit: rather than grain, they planted monuments and crosses. Ribault left a stone pillar in Florida in 1562, and, after he deserted the fort his men had built, Laudonnière returned some years later to find the local Indians worshipping the mysterious standard. In a contemporary engraving, Le Moyne de Morgues shows them genuflecting to the pillar like the awe-stricken apes before the monolith in Stanley Kubrick's "2001." These, in a sense, are the symbols of a European superstition. The markers are "planted" from Canada to the Caribbean as a gesture of Christian piety, a landmark to future navigators, and clear evidence that one had already established the right of exploration and domain. For them, the earliest gesture toward the land was a symbolic one, even sterile—the planting of stone that would, over time, disappear without bearing fruit. At the same time the Europeans thus symbolized an act of appropriation, many of them went hungry and would even starve.

The names they gave to the land were more monumental than practical. The strategy of naming changed little with each succeeding nationality, but all were imposed upon the tribal names that had usually preceded their arrival. Some
of the Indian toponymy was to remain—"Massachusetts," "Apalachee," "Allegheny"—but just as the French cosmographer André Thevet could barely hide his scorn for a tribe that named a river simply for a species of fish that was found in it, the European consistently employed a commemorative strategy of naming with overtones of the grand and immortal. "River Seine," "St. Lawrence," "Florida," "New England," "Acadia"—when the newcomer did not choose to commemorate a place from the Old World, as often as not he chose a classical allusion or a saint's name from the Catholic calendar to epiphänize the day of discovery. This new Genesis invoked a symbolic toponymy more often than a literal or descriptive rite of naming. The metaphor of the land was simple...New France, New Spain, New Mexico. With a stroke of memory the land became old.

The Indian names they retained were kept at the cost of forgetting—or never having known in the first place—what they originally signified. Sometimes the name was kept even when the European defaced the very feature it described. Samuel de Champlain knew that "Quebec" was so-called by the Iroquois for its nut trees which the French then proceeded to cut down when they built their settlement. Thus the literal was made allusive in the toponymy of the newcomers, a kind of unseen shadow that has long lingered above the land.

The European remade the New World in his own image, a vision born of both the natural desire to make the unknown more familiar, and an impulse—whether conscious or not—to
experience the conversion (the enlightenment or the horror) that the passage to American implied. The "myth" of America and all that it suggested was inextricably bound up with allegorical images that were difficult to distinguish from the literal facts they represented. Was the sea lion really a lion? What did it mean in the iconography of the Church that the natives of Hispaniola were naked, save for a leaf covering their private parts? If there were unicorns in America, did that mean Marco Polo had already been there? Was Tenochtitlan greater than Constantinople, as Bernal Diaz claimed, or was it nothing more than the rocky pueblo to which Fray Marcos compared it?

The most convenient vehicle by which to express this movement between worlds was the written word. Of language, analogical devices were decisive in communicating the observations, the inferences, the hallucinations and the lies of the earliest European visitors.

Our own age is given over to a faith in the literal progress of empirical science. But we should not forget the figure of ultimate foreboding and promise—the grand figure of speech—that was once America. Whether in De Laet, Verrazzano, Harriot, or Marcos, the New World inspired a great eloquence. But this articulation of plenty was, as we shall see, in sharp contrast to the rhetorical eloquence that later became emblematic of their rival. "The Great White Father," "the iron horse," "the sacred hills," "Mother Earth," the rivers "alive with fish"—all were to become the quaint metaphors of an Indian people said to be incapable of
mastering the rules of higher discourse. Once the "savage" was granted the powers of intelligible speech by the European, he would only be endowed with oratorical skills after he was safely removed from the land, too far and too distant to reclaim it. In the next chapter we will note that one of the gestures he was permitted was a formal eloquence far different than the scattered and unmethodical insights of the European narratives. He will be thus empowered to speak of his powerlessness only when the land is removed from his grasp and the tragedy of his loss can be rendered in a comfortably rhetorical pose.
NOTES


3 Ibid., p.148.


11 Ibid., p.133.


16 Ibid.

19 Columbus, *Four Voyages*, p.179.
22 Ibid., p.560.
23 Ibid.
28 Ibid., p.173.
29 Ibid., p.219.


42 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, Ed., Hammond and Rey, p.221.


48 Ibid., pp.152-53.


50 Ibid., p.49.

51 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, Hammond and Rey, p.72.

52 Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, p.69.

53 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p.72.

54 Ibid., p.73.

55 Ibid., pp.78-79.
56 Ibid., p.208.
57 Ibid., p.170.
60 Ibid., p.76.
61 Ibid., p.134.
64 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, Hammond and Rey, p.74.
65 Ibid., p.79.
69 Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, pp.88-89.
73 Hakluyt's Voyages, David, p.282.
74 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p.208.
75 Martir de Angleria, Decadas, I: 340.
76 The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, Biggar, p.57.


83 *Virginia Voyages from Hakluyt*, Ed., Quinn, p.51.

84 Laudonnière, *Three Voyages*, p.23.

85 *The Voyages of Verrazzano*, Ed., Wroth, p.139.


88 *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "commodious."


100 Laudonnière, *Three Voyages*, p.61.


"A beautiful young girl came one day on board our captain's ship, in which I was, and for no purpose than to see her fortune. Meanwhile she raised her eyes to the master's cabin, where she saw a nail of a finger's length, which she took and merrily hid it, as something great and new, within her nature, and straightaway ran off bending forward. And the captain and I saw this mystery."

Antonio Pigafetta

Magellan's Voyage
One of the most profound literary and iconographic images of America is the "pointing Indian." From Van der Strait's drawing of the allegorical meeting between Europe and the New World (1575) to the nineteenth century portrait of Joseph Brandt by William von Moll Berczy, the stately, Augustinian character of the American "savage" is thus symbolized by this most ambivalent of gestures. At times the Indian points to the earth, as though to suggest an inexpressible bond; at others, on a more symbolic level, he alludes to something beyond the page or canvass, a faraway place invisible to the observer and, for all that, profoundly mythic. His classic stance betrays an innocent air that borders on defiance. While he directs attention to the horizon, he freezes all motion by his riveting stare. We hardly know from the stoic face whether the finger will lead to a promised land, or a bitter, disinherited one. This is the ambiguous gesture of the Indian scout.

That such a pose was commonplace in European art as a symbol of noble-bearing—be it an Iroquois warrior or Julius Caesar—does not entirely explain the frequency with which it occurs or the subtle influence it exercises on our understanding (and our misunderstanding) of the American past. As an archetypal image it has many equivalents in the printed narratives, which were more widespread in the sixteenth century than visual representations of North America. The image of the pointing Indian is deeply engraved in our minds as a symbol: a token of the beckoning
land; the welcome reception accorded to the fearless
explorers who "discovered" it; the destiny made manifest to
the settler who would only "know" the earth by crossing an
unimaginable expanse. Even if we presume the accusing
finger points to the land, a troubling question remains.
Does the Indian tell us to go forward, or forever back?

To the European explorer, the "wilderness" of America
was a frightening prospect. Fulfilling even the most
fundamental of needs forced him to coerce, solicit, and, on
occasion, beg for the help of the American Indian. In spite
of the literary flourish found in some of the narratives,
the question "Where can we find fresh water?" was no mere
rhetorical one, and the response, delivered in an
incomprehensible language, was probably accompanied by the
simplest and most dramatic of gestures. When the Indian
pointed inland, the European usually followed, as Carl Sauer
describes:

These were not expeditions into the 'wilds
of North America' as the Congressional
Resolution of 1937 declared but first
experiences of lands occupied and modified
by Indian peoples of different cultures.
The European parties went by Indian trails,
commonly with Indian guides, from one
settlement to another, and usually depended
on food grown, collected, fished, or hunted
by the natives.3

We are hard pressed to imagine these men struggling
with difficulty to survive. They were, after all, people of
great conviction (religious refugees as well as tried
criminals) who had undertaken a trans-Atlantic voyage that
would have been unimaginable a century before. We revere

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their personal sacrifices in enshrining them as examples of America's pioneering spirit: Columbus, Champlain, Miles Standish...later Daniel Boone and Lewis & Clark. What we stress in the iconography of the pioneer are the individualism and independence of spirit that would conquer the American West.

But what can we say of the American East? Our "national character" could only have been earned, as Howard Russell reminds us, after the wilderness had been altered from an impassable forest into a native "highway":

It was by use of these immemorial ways, not, as some historians have imagined, by trail-blazing, that English colonists from Massachusetts Bay reached and founded Hartford, Springfield, Providence, Lancaster, Concord and Wolfeboro in New Hampshire, and many another promising spot for settlement. As one result, Indian village sites and cornfields frequently became the seats of their colonial successors. The landmarks of the aborigine turned into roadmarks for the succeeding English. 4

Thus, in our mythology, the land was "virgin"—though Indian agricultural settlements were commonplace along the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to Florida at the time of first contact. Thus the continent was "empty"—though estimates for the pre-Columbian population of North America range from two to as high as eighteen million people. Thus the land was there to be "settled"—though "resettled", as Francis Jennings has pointed out, would be a more accurate description of what happened in light of the myriad permanent settlements that existed in places as varied as
the Rio Grande Valley, the Great Lakes, the east coast and
the Mississippi watershed, all of them long under the
capable hand of tribal cultivators. It is ironic to note
that the European narratives during the first century of
contact—from Florida and Virginia to New Mexico and
Massachusetts—reveal unmistakably the vulnerable
participation of these intrepid colonists in what could best
be described as the "first American welfare state." While
the European offered trade goods in exchange for native
food, these were oftentimes given—when circumstances were
dire enough—as little more than token symbols of barter.
The first Thanksgiving (and the second) in Massachusetts (as
well as Florida) was made possible by the open acceptance of
the stranger on the part of the aboriginal settlers. There
is little room for doubt in Fernand Braudel's contention
that Europeans "very often rediscovered the world using
other people's eyes, legs and brains."

We have our own pantheon of the "welcoming Indian,"
well-stocked with the admirable figures of Squanto,
Pocahontas, Massasoit and Sacajawea. All of them point
inland, willing messengers of the "virgin" earth and its
inextinguishable prize. Yet in spite of the domesticated
pose, there is still something ambivalent about them. It
goes unsaid of Squanto that he was the sole survivor of a
village wiped out by disease and was later sold as a slave
in Lisbon, or that Pocahontas was kidnapped from her people
before becoming the loving bride of John Rolfe. In our
iconography they gesture toward the land with generosity.
But as many of the narratives reveal, there is something still more complex and ineffable to fathom in this pose.

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The Frenchman Jean Ribault lamented of the Indians of Florida in 1565, "They don't understand our intention at all." But before gesture and language could even be employed as a means to communicate, there were other modes of perception that preceded them. Fernando de Ulloa, in this example, describes a human signal—at least what he mistakes for one—during his journey to lower California in 1540:

I entered between the islet and the bay in a boat and went to the place where we had located the smoke signal. While we were in the bay we saw another smoke signal where the first had been, and very near to us, on the same hill which was at the mouth of the bay. We were all astounded to see the smoke and not to see fire nor people who had made it. We thought it must be some volcano and I wanted to go up to it to see. While we were looking over the bay and reconnoitering to see if there were any people who might do me damage, I saw in my presence and in that of all those who were with me a great lot of sand fall from the hill at the mouth of the bay. The dust it raised ascended so high and so dark that truly it looked like smoke.

At other times Ulloa sees fires that he can verify were set by the locals, a reminder of what Magellan saw on the South American mainland in 1520 which caused him to christen the land north of the now-famous strait, "tierra del fuego" ("land of fire"). Many tribes used signal fires to note
the approach of strangers, particularly, one would assume, white ones in lateen-rigged caravels. Even if these are the ancestors of Hollywood's smoke signals, what they might have inspired in the Renaissance mind is difficult to imagine; whether suggesting a primitive purgatory or the even less appetizing alternative of "boiled Jesuit," the fires must have seemed a hellish and foreboding way of announcing the arrival of storm-weary guests. As Ulloa says, the smoke causes him to look for "people who might do me damage." 

Before words or gestures were ever exchanged, other signs, such as fire, often conditioned the experience known as "first contact."

We should next note that the physical appearance of the native deeply affected the European before a hand could be lifted—whether in aggression or in greeting. Vespucci wrote, "And we found them to be a naked race." Whether such an undressed state connoted the happiness of the original Garden or the wanton failure to recognize the shame that befell mankind after the Fall depended on the particular observer. More often than not, however, the nakedness of the AmerIndian symbolized a lack of intelligence or civilization for his European observer, as Coronado notes: "The people of these towns seem to me to be fairly large, and intelligent, although I do not think that they have the judgment and intelligence needed to be able to build these houses in the way in which they are built, for most of them are entirely naked except for the covering of their privy parts." As Castañeda describes,
intelligence might be directly inferred from how much of the
body was covered:

The natives here are intelligent people. They cover the privy and immodest parts of
their bodies with clothes resembling table
napkins, with fringes and a tassel at each
corner, tying them around the hips. They
wear cloaks made with feathers and rabbit
skins, and cotton blankets. The women wear
blankets wrapped tightly around their
bodies, and fastened or tied over the left
shoulder, drawing the right arm over
them.12

The long-standing, iconographic representation of the Devil
as a naked beast from the steamy climes of purgatory
doubtless had its influence on the European reception of the
native.

But nakedness was not merely perceived as an absence of
clothing. As with the Christian allegory of Satan, the
native had to be "clothed" in something—an idea or a symbol
if not hose and a doublet—in order to be understood by the
newcomer and fitted into a pre-existing category. Columbus
writes, "You see they are naked but they are clothed in
innocence." Vespucci says in a similar vein, "Many
races came to see us, and they marvelled at our
complexion." Thus the nakedness of the "savage" (or the
European) was dressed with some meaning, or at the very
least, a genuine curiosity that proceeded from the most
unconscious of cultural assumptions. One was not merely
naked, but colored. During his 1541 expedition to Canada,
Roberval hints at the relation between color and culture
that would begin to dominate European thinking in the next
century: "They are white, but they go naked. If they

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dressed in the manner of the French, they would be just as white and have just as good an air. But they paint themselves with various colors because of the heat and ardor of the sun." Though the trappings of fashion will "improve" them, Roberval implies this is only because they are white to begin with. As Gilbert Chinard has noted, "It is a natural and popular idea among us though partly obliterated by Christianity and even more by Romanticism that has not been completely suppressed: the body is the clothing of the soul and embraces all its forms."

Of course many tribes were not naked. The choice of clothing, however, might well re-inforce the European prejudice of perceiving the native as a scion of nature. Here Jean de Léry describes the Tupinambas of Brazil: "...they rub themselves down with a gum-like substance, covering their arms and legs and whole bodies with it: in this state they bedecked themselves with feathers such that they resembled pigeons and other birds." It is incumbent on de Léry to "read" such dress for us and make clear the Tupi resemblance to fowl. It is no coincidence that most early pictorial representations that allegorized America (both North and South) portrayed the New World as a woman with a lavish coiffure of plumes, usually attended by lush vegetation and a variety of animal specimens. In the European iconography that continues even into the Romantic Age, the Indian is not so much dressed as she is decorated. When she bothers to cover her nakedness at all, it is most often with the effortless gifts of Nature, not
those manufactured by the implements of man.

We are reminded of yet another form of "clothing" found among AmerIndians in this passage by Olive Patricia Dickason:

Body-painting and tattooing were shared by all the people of the northeastern woodlands and the Great Lakes. Early writers referred to tattooing under the general term 'matachias', which also included such items as hair and porcupine quill embroidery and, later, beadwork. These writers were struck with the variety and intricacy of designs with which the people of the New World adorned themselves; its resemblance to heraldry led one observer to conclude 'that Heraldry was ingrafted naturally into the sense of the human Race.'19

Here was a more highly abstracted form of "protection," whether on a symbolic or purely expressive level. Tattooing is commonly mentioned in the narratives and even portrayed pictorially, though rarely does the European endeavor to interpret what it means. What are completely separate categories in Western culture converge in the tattoo or body painting: decoration, heraldry, writing, even protection from the elements. Such a text was thus beyond the means of the European to interpret. Castañeda relates a singular example of how the human body might be converted into the most practical of texts:

The natives gave information of the cattle. They were made out to be cattle by the picture which one of the Indians had painted on his body, since this could not be determined from the skins, because the hair was so woolly and tangled that one could not tell what the animals were.20

But in European eyes, the advantage of such methods
was fleeting. Though fascinated by the intricacy of body designs, Western opinion more often sided with the grim pronouncement of the historian Joseph de Acosta:

The memory of history and antiquity can be preserved by men in one of three manners: first, by letters and writing, which the Romans, Greeks, Hebrews and other nations used; second, by painting, as is used throughout the world, and of which the Second Nicene Council said is a book for idiots who do not know how to read, and third, by numbers...21

As far as the Nicene Council was concerned, the painted Indian body spoke in a manner not at all worthy of the "talking books" used by the European. Thus the undecipherable symbol gave way to a more practical mode of communication: human gesture.

The variety of gestures described in the narratives is vast and sometimes puzzling; a mere sampling will demonstrate this. Jean Ribault recounts how he and the "king" of a local tribe both pointed to the sky to "explain" themselves on first meeting: the Frenchman with one finger to demonstrate the unity of God, the King with two to designate the sun and the moon. How Ribault arrived at such a facile distinction he does not explain, though to a neutral observer they must have both resembled a variety of sun-worshipper. Castañeda, to take another example, describes the inhabitants of Acoma pueblo in 1541 as drawing a line in the dirt to separate themselves from the invading Spanish; later, to show peace, they take sweat from the intruders' horses and "anoint" themselves with it. Sailing above 43 degrees north latitude, Giovanni da Verrazzano encounters a
people who, he writes, "made all the signs of scorn and shame that any brute creature would make." He refers to them later as the "Bad Race." We read in Ulloa, on the other hand, that such gestures could be completely ineffective in preventing an unwanted European landing:

On seeing we were going there, the Indians all came up to the place where we were about to land and began to speak loudly and insolently and to forbid us by signs to advance. We made signs to them to keep quiet and that we did not intend them any harm nor had other purposes than to seek water. The more we reassured them the more arrogant did they become. Finding that no signs or arguments prevailed to reassure them we landed against their will.

But the Indian usually offered a more generous welcome, and, for that matter, a more touching farewell. Cabeza de Vaca, after describing to the Indians of Galveston Island (Texas) in 1529 his sad tale of starvation and shipwreck, is shocked to see them respond to his story with empathetic howling. We learn from Lescarbot that Dominique de Gorgues' departure from Florida (1565) is similarly met with tears. And Francis Drake, skirting the northwest American coast in 1579, recounts how the locals, after trading with the English, return to their homes and begin a "most lamentable weeping." The same tribe is so stricken when the English depart that "they onley accounted themselves as casteaways, and those whom the gods were about to forsake: so that nothing we could say or do, was able to ease them of their so heavy a burthen." Here, in a strange reversal of roles, the native himself is made a "castaway." The shedding of tears is often made to seem
childish by the chroniclers because it happens in "inappropriate" contexts. Whether the European was coming or going, the Indian could be most expressive, though it is difficult for us to infer exactly why. Such behavior may have been a ritualized response to uninvited guests, particularly those in dire need of help (Cabeza de Vaca) or those capable of dispensing it (Drake).

Castañeda remarks on the extraordinary native capacity for self-expression: "These people were so skillful in the use of signs that it seemed as if they spoke." And this was a critical talent, for a life—or many lives—might hang in the balance of touching when the spoken word was of no use. Jean Mocquet says of a Caribbean tribe in the course of a 1604 visit, "If you touch them, even playfully, you must laugh." In a darker, though comic, episode, Verrazzano does not say whether a band of Indians laughed when they saved one of his sailors from drowning in 1524. He tells first how they carried the young man some distance from the shore to save him from the pounding surf. When they realized his terror at being so manhandled, they sent up a chorus of cries "to show him he should not be afraid." This was of no avail. They removed his clothes and warmed themselves by a fire on the beach, all within sight of the men on Verrazzano's ship, most of whom were convinced their friend was about to be roasted and eaten before their very eyes. While the Indians admired the strange color of his skin, the sailor gestured toward the ship to let them know he wished to return. Finally they took him down to the

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boat in which he had overturned, vigorously embraced him, and retired to a high stand of ground "to reassure him" of their intentions. Returning to his fellows, the young man, badgered with questions, noted the glossy skin of the natives, their clear faces, medium height and a mediocre strength accompanied by a "quick-witted" nature. According to Verrazzano, "He saw nothing else." So much for one man's trial by fire. It was the same Verrazzano who would be eaten by cannibals within sight of his own men in the West Indies (1528), a fate perhaps tempted by his having witnessed the comic plight of one of his charges and drawn the wrong conclusion from it. Some gestures were offered in jest in the New World, others in deadly earnest.

Let us consider a more complex example. In this case, the political negotiations between an English expedition under the command of Martin Pring and a tribe--Wampanoag or Massachusetts--dwelling in the vicinity of Cape Cod Bay offer an archetypal example of mutual misunderstanding as conveyed by gesture. The year is 1603. The English are combing the coastline for sassafras, a plant of "sovereign virtue for the French Poxe (syphilis), and as some of late have learnedly written good against the Plague and other maladies." They bring with them two fierce mastiffs (an old Spanish trick), presumably to secure them from ambush. Because of its dramatic account of how symbolic politics can merge with overt aggression, the description of the incident is worth quoting at length:

On a day about noone tide while our men which used to cut downe Sassafras in the

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Woods were asleepe, as they used to doe for two houres in the heat of the day, there came downe about seven score Savages armed with their Bowes and Arrows, and environed our House or Barricado, wherein were foure of our men alone with their Muskets to keepe Centinell, whom they sought to have come downe unto them, which they utterly refused, and stood upon their guard. Our Master...caused a piece of great Ordnance to bee shot off, to give terour to the Indians, and warning to our men which were fast asleepe in the Woods: at the noyse of which Pееce they were a little awaked, and beganne a little to call for Poole and Gallant, their great and fearefull Mastives, and full quietly laid themselves downe again, but being quickned up eftsoones againe with a second shot they rowsed up themselves, betooke them to their weapons and with their Mastives, great Poole with a halfe Pike in his mouth drew downe to their ship: whom when the Indians beheld afarre off, with the Mastive which they most feared, in dissembling manner they turned all to a jest and sport, and departed away in friendly manner: yet not long after, even the day before our departure, they set fire on the Woods where wee wrought, which wee did behold to burne for a mile space, and the very same day that wee weighed Anchor, they came downe to the shoare in greater number, to wit, very neere two hundred by our estimation, and some of them came in their Boates to our ship, and would have had us come in againe: but we sent them backe, and would none of their entertainment.35

As D.B. Quinn notes in his annotated text, the Indians might have set fire to the barricade at the outset if they had truly wanted war. Indeed, the natives were restless, but as Quinn suggests, perhaps all they desired was a chance to trade.

But the problem of always interpreting the strangeness of Indian gestures rather than European ones is at the heart of the prejudice inherent in our understanding of cultural
contact. By way of completing his interpretation, Quinn notes with authority at the end of his footnotes: "Once again the actions of the Indians are ambiguous." And indeed they are—but not because of any ambiguity inherent in the gestures themselves. It is because we lack a narrative of the same "event" as told by a Wampanoag observer that we are left spellbound by the apparent ambivalence of Indian behavior. We have only partial authority to determine who is being ambiguous. We already know Pring's motives, and thus have no reason to wonder why a barricade was built, why mastiffs were brought, why men would spend several days combing the forest in search of a particular plant. To the uninitiated, a group of men gathering sassafras under the protection of an armed guard and the watchful eyes of two hellhounds is not, we must admit, a ringing example of unambiguous behavior. One might just as well say, "The actions of the English were entirely ambiguous," but such an assertion would more likely demand a book than a footnote. What is in question is not a semantic problem, but a more important one of perspective. We must be grateful to Quinn for his textual criticism—he even goes so far as to elicit our curiosity about Indian motives. But in spite of the extensive notes, one leaves the passage with the distinct feeling that the mutual incomprehension and ambiguity that characterized the episode are lost. We sense only the threat to the Englishman, not the Indian.

Such an imbalance is never repaired. The effect of
this passage is to make the English gestures seem pre-meditated and rational; those of the AmerIndians, shifty, unpredictable and potentially violent. The territorial aggression of the English recedes in importance so as to hardly be an element of the confrontation. It is, in fact, the predictable "code" of the English response that makes the firing of the cannon and the arrival of the mastiffs seem perfectly logical to any one of us who might have seen "Fort Apache" or "Beau Geste," or, for the seventeenth century, someone who had sampled a few of the more titillating Indian captivity narratives. We know what the English are doing, and thus construe their responses as defensive and logical.

In a curious way, the politics of the encounter are entirely symbolic: the barricade is surrounded, a cannon is fired in warning, the dogs come to the rescue, the Indians laugh, they burn the forest, the English depart, the locals follow to beg "to have us come in again." But all to say what? No one is killed, or even hurt. One pictures a scantily-clad savage pointing inland with an eye to laying an ambush, but thank God the English are too smart to follow. The point is not so much to infer specific motive as it is to openly admit that the Indian response is no more or less reckless than gathering sassafras with savage mastiffs on the leash during a pleasant summer day along Cape Cod. In Pring's passage the Indian is a creature of massed gesture, the European a master of the singular and articulated response. The cannon speaks with an eloquence to
our ears that a burning forest cannot. In the end the English leave, tired of "communicating." As Pring had written earlier in the narrative, "we found people, with whom we had no long conversation, because here also we could find no Sassafras."

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One of the first lessons the European learned in meeting the Native American was the difficult one, as Vespucci put it, "that they use other names for things." Presumably, if there was an interpreter available, the European didn't have to know what gestures meant; words were a quicker form of communication with less chance of misunderstanding. But languages that had no shared vocabulary or syntax made communication difficult at best. While the European was quick to develop a strategy of training local Indians to act as interpreters, practical limitations often minimized subsequent results. The problem of training interpreters, from a European viewpoint, was twofold: 1) susceptible to a variety of Old World diseases, the AmerIndian usually died in "captivity"; and 2) the variety of dialects and languages to be found even in a geographical area as small as the upper Rio Grande Valley could be, even for a native, an impenetrable Babel. A speaker fluent in one Indian language might be completely useless in a village fifty miles further upstream, a difficult state of affairs for an itinerant expeditionary
force. The French, on the other hand, were something of an exception to this rule: quite by chance they found themselves in the center of the Algonkian linguistic family as they continued up the course of the St. Lawrence River. This was a strategic luxury often denied their rivals and one that they were quick to capitalize on.

But in spite of potential objections, the need for translators was too great to ignore. The most convenient manner of training them was to abduct or barter for a few Indians, return with them to Europe, impress them with a formal tour of the nearest capital city, and then get down to the difficult business of teaching the "savage" the rudiments of a European tongue. The French, as we shall see, did this early on with two Iroquois--Dom Agaya and Taignoagny--though the hospitality they were accorded eventually inspired in them more treacherous than benign intentions. Among European countries the practice was widespread. On his second voyage to America, Columbus used "interpreters" he had taken back to Spain in 1493. But once the Spanish established bases around the Gulf of Mexico, they were able to train natives to speak Castilian in America without chancing the risky Atlantic passage. The English too participated; of three natives brought back by George Waymouth from New England (1605), Ferdinando Gorges wrote, "...and having kept them full three yeares, I made them able to set me downe what great Rivers ran up into the Land, what Men of note were seateed on them, what power they were of, how allyed, what enemies they had, and the like of
which in his proper place." These men were not intended merely as translators of language, but just as importantly, interpreters of the land.

When abduction seemed too provocative a strategy by which to secure guides, Cartier began, in 1541, an interpreter "exchange": a young man from each culture agreed to live according to the dictates of the other and learn his language as a kind of reciprocal hostage, a tactic later used to much advantage by Samuel de Champlain. The French were renowned for the facility with which they arranged these exchanges, a fact that enhanced their reputation among many of the Canadian tribes. But occasionally such "agreements" were purely fortuitous. The famous French "truchements" (interpreters) of South America, for example, who had so impressed King Henry II and the skeptical Montaigne, arrived in the Americas only after being shipwrecked off the coast of Brazil and rescued by the cannibalistic Tupinamba, with whom they lived (much to the distaste of their more civilized countrymen) for many years. The "truchements" were living examples of how interpreters might be "discovered" by destiny, how such an accident could be turned to advance the cause of an imperial adventure. Later the ones to champion such exchanges, the French had been helped at the start by the intervention of fate.

In the Relation of a Voyage to Sagadahoc (1607-8), James Davies notes of one tribe, "ytt Seemeth that the french hath trad with them for they use many french
words." But one could not depend on the widespread currency of any European tongue. The more reliable alternative of employing a native interpreter might well lead to a state of marginal communication. Coronado wrote of one guide, "He is an interpreter; although he can not talk much, he understands very well." In his expedition up the Little Colorado River (1541), Alarcón was not even as fortunate as this. The native guide he brings with him cannot communicate with the local tribe, and so rides in midstream astern the Spanish boat uncertain of the best way to proceed. When the war drums on shore begin to ominously beat, Alarcón decides to pacify the natives by giving them trade goods and firing a harquebus (musket) in an effective display of Renaissance public relations. In the days that follow he adopts a "domino theory of inter-tribal communication"—taking on a chief as a new passenger, he forges on in the hope that this Indian will reveal the linguistic secrets of the tribes further upstream, a strategy that meets with mixed success. The narrative's most memorable refrain is, "At night I retired to the middle of the river," an admission of the ambivalent welcome given his party. A good interpreter was hard to find.

But obstacles to communication still remained even when one had the services of an interpreter who was fluent in the native tongue. A closer look at Cartier's 1535 voyage up the St. Lawrence will reveal what problems might arise with go-betweens who were perfectly capable. At Stadacona, approximately the same site as today's Quebec City, Chief
Donnaconna attempts to prevent the French from sailing further upstream to a town named Hochelaga (Montreal) by granting Cartier three young children as "presents." The Captain, as a generous response, gives Donnaconna a washbasin and a pair of swords in kind. The Indians (Iroquois) then dance in celebration and ask Cartier to fire one of the cannon in his ships, a request to which he readily complies, noting, "These were all so much astonished as if the heavens had fallen upon them, and began to howl and to shriek in such a very loud manner that one would have thought hell had emptied itself there." Communications are made easier by the presence of the aforementioned Dom Agaya and Taignoagny, the sons of Donnaconna who had been kidnapped by Cartier a year earlier and forced to return with him to France.

At this point the story takes an unusual turn. Apparently the Iroquois were intent that Cartier should go no further up the river, so the next day they make a decisive move:

They dressed up three Indians as devils, arraying them in black and white dog-skins, with horns as long as one's arm and their faces colored black as coal, and unknown to us put them into a canoe. They themselves then came towards our ships in a crowd as usual but remained some two hours in the wood without appearing, awaiting the moment when the tide would bring down the above-mentioned canoe. At that hour they all came out of the wood and showed themselves in front of our ships but without coming so near as they were in the habit of doing.48

The devils in the canoe approach, and "the one in the middle made a wonderful harangue." In this strange ritual,
the three emissaries fall down in the canoe as though dead and are carried off by Donnaconna's people--canoe and all--into the forest. Then Cartier tells us, "there in the wood they began a preaching and speechifying that could be heard from our ships, which lasted about half an hour."

The two interpreters come forth (Dom Agaya and Taignoagny) and chant the words "Jesus," "Maria," and "Jacques Cartier," a rather bizarre catechism even for recent "converts" to recite. Cartier asks them what is wrong. They respond that they have bad news: their God, Cudouagny, has told them the winter will be so severe that anyone going as far as Hochelaga will die. The French response, as the Captain reports it, is unequivocal: "At this we all began to laugh and to tell them that their God Cudouagny was a mere fool who did not know what he was saying; and that they should tell his messengers as much; and that Jesus would keep them safe from the cold if they would trust in him." After this stern rebuke, the Iroquois re-emerge from the forest and begin "to dance and to sing as usual." Presumably the pageant is over.

There are already several things worthy of mention in this passage that is too long to quote in its entirety. At the outset, Cartier exchanges swords for children--manufactured objects for human beings. In spite of the apparent imbalance of such a bargain, Donnaconna is pleased to accept (according to Cartier), perhaps because he views the young boys the same way he perceives the swords--both are potential weapons and symbols of military power. As in
Pring's account of Cape Cod, a cannon is fired--more as a theatrical device than a warning, though no doubt Cartier had a hunch what its terrifying effect would be. Significantly, it is Donnacona himself who is inspired to see the ordnance in action because of impressive stories told him by his sons who play the role of ambiguous go-betweens throughout the episode. Neither of them is completely trusted by the French, and, after spending a year away from the tribe, are probably somewhat suspect in the eyes of their own people. The probity of their motives is constantly under question. Taignoagny later claims through a messenger that two of his people have been killed by a cannonball fired from the bark Emerillon on the same day; Cartier investigates and learns that the ship in question never discharged a shot.

So in the face of a twelve-gun salute, the Indian responded with what Cartier calls "a great ruse." In fact, they mounted a full-scale pageant, replete with demons, soliloquies, ritual chanting and divination, not to mention the presence of the lush Canadian forest as a naturalistic set. This might have been the closest thing going in the New World to an Aristophanic farce, at least as far as the European was concerned. After all, the response of the French was to laugh.

Having scorned the omens, Cartier and his men stubbornly sail on to Hochelaga. They reconnoiter the stockaded position of the village and return to Stadacona for the winter, (November, 1535). Then, without warning, a
pestilence breaks out among the Indians. The French sequester themselves in a nearby fort, but soon the symptoms begin to appear among Cartier's men: rotting gums, swollen limbs, legs blotched with blood. February arrives and eight men have died and "there were more than fifty whose case seemed hopeless." Taigoagny's prophecy was coming true—the men who had gone to Hochelaga were dying.

The same Cartier who had sailed a thousand miles into the American interior to find a passage to Cathay now cut open one of his men's rotting corpses to see if he could find the nature of this exotic affliction. But there was nothing to find but darkened blood and lungs rotting from gangrene. Inspired by his strong personal faith, the Captain ordered a Mass to be said the following Sunday, "to which all who could walk, both sick and well, should make their way in a procession, singing the seven psalms of David with the Litany, praying the Virgin to be good enough to ask her dear Son to have pity upon us." This was the second act of the pageant, the European one, a mystery play no doubt as forbidding to the pagan as was the Iroquois performance to the French several months earlier. Where the AmerIndians had responded to a mass display of technology (the firing of the cannon) and the mysterious wanderlust of their visitors by donning the costumes of "devils," the French now organized their own procession in obedience to a mysterious image and chanted their own songs to alleviate an unendurable suffering. The Iroquois performance had been a public one for the benefit of their visitors; Cartier's was
a private service held within a bowshot of the fort. The
narrative does not tell us if the French ceremony was
observed by the locals, but one can safely assume that had
the Iroquois known the stated purpose of the Mass, they
would have found it as foolish as Cartier had viewed their
own divinations a few months earlier. The reason for this
was simple: the Stadaconans had already found a remedy for
the disease.

None other than the interpreter, Dom Agaya, informs
Cartier that the Iroquois have healed themselves. The
Captain is shocked to learn they have done it with the
juices of a local leaf. From this point, the episode reads
like a sermon. Dom Agaya sends two women with Cartier to
gather the branches of the hemlock. The French are at first
reluctant to descend to the depths of taking a native
remedy, but a few of them try, then more, and more still,
until "there was such a press for the medecine that they
almost killed each other to have it first." The
55 ultimate cause of the cure in Cartier's eyes is
unambiguous: "...when God in His infinite goodness and
mercy had pity upon us and made known to us the most
excellent remedy against all diseases that ever has been
seen or heard of in the whole world..." No doubt a
modern-day diagnosis would recognize the symptoms of a
disease that ravaged European sailors for centuries to come;
even Champlain's party who wintered in the same area less
than a century later contracted it. The French had been
decimated by the scurvy.
One is tempted to read Cartier's account as a New World morality play—to infer generalized motives for both sides in order to make sense of the strange spectacle that unfolds. While such abstractions are admittedly fraught with difficulties, there are signs in the story that we should not dismiss as incidental. First, the entire confrontation begins with an exchange, a gift of "weapons" ostensibly offered in the spirit of alliance. Second, when the dispute arises as to whether or not the French will continue upstream, Cartier's display of power (the cannon) is an improvised spectacle of technological prowess. Donnaconna's response (the pageant), on the other hand, is a performance of story-telling and prophecy that equally aims to strike fear in the breast of the "stranger." The European side of this exchange is at once orderly and exaggerated: Donnaconna asks Cartier to fire a cannon and the captain has a salvo of a dozen discharged; then the Iroquois offer a solemn pageant and the French respond by laughing. As perceived by Cartier, the Indian in each performance is an agent of darkness, whether by uncontrollable fear ("began to howl and to shriek in such a very loud manner that one would have thought hell had emptied itself") or diabolical design ("arraying them in black and white dog skins, with horns as long as one's arm"). The Indian response is "inappropriate" because of its complete unpredictability.

Third, the interpreters—Taignoagny and Dom Agaya—cut an ambivalent pair in the narrative. Together they suggest
the reversible motives for using the spoken word--liar and
truth-teller, deceit and communication. Taignoagny loses
Cartier's trust for his suspicious meddling, while Dom Agaya
is the one who reveals to the French captain the cure for
scurvy. They are complementary "twins," emerging from the
forest at one point holding hands. And they are early
avatars of the "bad" and "good" Indian who, like Magua and
Chingachgook, Powhatan and Pocahontas, King Philip and
Squanto, seem to thrive on thwarting each other at every
turn, as though foils for a larger destiny that proceeds in
spite of them. They are men of mysterious and unfathomable
motives. Their constant presence confuses Cartier, but in a
sense, they are reflections of our own confusion. Not
apart, but together, they speak with "forked tongue," the
good and bad Indian in tandem, a symbol of our own
ambivalence toward the native guide who is at once
treachery and indispensable in the quest to master the
land.

Finally, the Christian pageant of the mass is more or
less analogous to the mask given by Donnaconna on the
river: both are supplicatory demands made in a ritual
context. But there is one critical difference between
them. While the Iroquois "play" has a decidedly public
audience, the French one is, from all appearances, private.
The Stadaconans emerge from the forest to perform on what
the French call the "chemin" (highway) of the St. Lawrence;
their rivals barely leave the shadow of the fort in making
their procession. As noted before, if the Iroquois even
watched the French, it is not mentioned. This is not to advance any conclusion about the role of public and private ceremonies in the respective cultures, especially since the French were temporarily motivated by a dread of having their weakness discovered by "the people of the country." One may note instead that the French (like the English under Pring) have the luxury to contemplate the difference between a public warning to their potential enemies and a more secretive ceremony that nurses their private doubts. Because of their technological superiority, they need no other ritual than a twelve-gun salute to make their intentions frighteningly clear.

Lacking such an advantage, Donnacona is pressed as a last resort to summon a symbolic, spiritual presence in the form of a native mystery play to divert the designs of his visitors. He is forced to make his private doubts public, and this is when his "foolish" prophecy—though it issues from a "god" and is subsequently borne out in large part—convinces Cartier of the chief's political weakness. To put it another way, the French are never pressed to sing hymns in order to stop the Iroquois from advancing, not because such a response was unthinkable to a Renaissance Christian, but given the technological balance of power on the St. Lawrence, because it was patently unnecessary. In effect, the Iroquois were too impotent to advance, though the scurvy could. When it did, the French engaged in a desperate ceremony of their own.

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Whether pointing to the land or escaping into it, the Indian gesture is a necessary but inferior substitute for language, as far as the European is concerned. Caliban says in "The Tempest," "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse." In Rosier's relation of Waymouth's voyage to New England (1605), an exemplary but unusual balance is struck between the two cultures in a matter of linguistic exchange:

We have brought them to understand some English, and we understand much of their language; so as we are able to ask them many things. And this we have observed, that if we shew them anything, and ask them if they have it in their countrey, they will tell you if they have it...59

But earlier in the narrative, the first signs of a "perceptual imbalance" had begun to appear:

Towards night our Captaine went on shore, to have a draught with the Sein or Net. And we carried two of them with us, who marvilled to see us catch fish with a net. Most of what we caught we gave them and their company. Then on the shore I learned the names of divers things of them: and when they perceived me to note them downe, they would of themselves, fetch fishes, and fruit bushes, and stand by me to see me write their names.60

Like Swift describing the people of Balnibarbi (who carry with them real objects rather than the words that represent them), Rosier's natives betray a touching but quaint relationship with the concrete. If the Indian was capable of discourse, it sometimes amounted to no more than mimicry. John Brereton, a member of Gosnold's expedition
(1602), comments on the verbal prowess of the locals:

They pronounce our language with great facilitie; for one of them one day sitting by me, upon occasion I spake smiling to him these words: How now (sirha) are you so saucie with my Tabacco? which words (without any further repetition) he suddenly spake so plaine and distinctly, as if he had beene a long scholar in the language.61

No doubt the Indian's task was made easier by the fact that the English word "tobacco" derived from a native one. For some, this was to be the most prized species of the North American parrot--bereft of a "civilized" tongue, the Indian recalls in his childish mimicry Shakespeare's Caliban and Defoe's Man Friday, both made dumbstruck by their authors to play the foil in a brave new world of fictional reportage and blank verse. A sixteenth-century Mexican doctor, Ortiz de Hinojosa, claimed that Indian languages sounded as though they had been created by nature, not man. How ironic this assertion would appear three centuries later when Alexander von Humboldt lamented the fate of the Ature language in South America whose speakers had all died away but one, an old parrot whom the present inhabitants could not in the slightest comprehend. As Columbus wrote in the journal of his first voyage, "They ought to be good servants and of good skill, for I see that they repeat very quickly whatever was said to them."

Another reason the Indian pointed, then: if he was still alive, his pidgin was too rudimentary to emulate, much less understand. He was perceived to be capable of producing only the most elementary of sounds. John Marchant
writes of the John Davis voyage in 1585, "Their pronunciation was very hollow thorow the throat, and their speech such as we could not understand." A number of the early chroniclers drew up primitive word lists, evidence of an early inclination in the Renaissance mind toward an unsophisticated ethology. Cartier's list from his first voyage (1534) is primarily comprised of concrete nouns: "isnez" (sun), "ochedasco" (feet), "henyosco" (gold), "agoheda" (knife), "honesta" (apples) and "cacta" (arrow). The list comprises, in all, some forty terms, and no doubt reflects in a limited way the dreams and the more mundane realities of the Cartier voyage. Another list followed in 1536, made after a second expedition in which the French ascended the St. Lawrence as far as Montreal. This effort is a substantial enlargement on the first. Here are not only cardinal numbers and verbs like "sing," "cry," and "laugh," but an array of useful expressions for later French visitors that range from "walk along," and "keep that for me" to "go and fetch some water" and "so and so is dead." There are also familiar terms ("father," "brother," "mother"), the names of several towns, and an extended section on the parts of the human body, including "hetnenda" (armpits) and "aggonsson" (pubic hair). As Cartier navigated to the heart of America on his second voyage, his new-found vocabulary revealed a heightened European curiosity about the parts of the body, and a more systemized attempt at their scientific collection.

Readers searching for an improvement from the period
on Cartier's second list will more than likely be disappointed. Johann de Laet's *New World* of 1625--almost a century later--is perhaps better categorized, but finally amounts to little more than an interesting variation which contains numbers, fish, and animals, with a curious bow to the abstract in recounting the "Sankikan" words for "good" and "bad." Presumably these latter two demonstrated to skeptical Europeans that the tribe was capable of distinguishing between them in the first place.

Christopher Hall notes in a chronicle of Probiisher's first voyage (1577) a list of some twenty words from the people of Meta Incognita ("Unknown Goal") which range from "callagay" (a pair of breeches), to "attegay" (a coat), to five distinct words denoting the thumb and four fingers. Clearly the effort to gain any understanding of, or control over, various tribes by linguistic means was, throughout the century, a limited effort in North America above the Valley of Mexico. It was left to the Spanish friars in MesoAmerica, Bernardino de Sahagún foremost among them, to launch a systematic attempt at recording native vocabularies.

Aside from the scattered presence of Spanish friars, the relative absence of the Church in North America during this period made such an effort less likely, though of course the ecclesiastic was every bit as capable of burning native codices (Diego de Landa) as he was of resurrecting or preserving them. In the end, these early attempts at word-gathering seem to be the first passing acknowledgment
of a few curious sounds uttered by what were, in the minds of many, little more than "talking animals," and second, a poorly concerted effort to provide future settlers with some means of communicating. Not until Joseph François Lafitau's work in the eighteenth century did some observers understand that the Native American was truly capable of linguistic abstraction, as Anthony Pagden notes:

What limitations the Indian languages were thought to have, as Lafitau later observed, were due less to the inherent defects of Indian semantics than to the missionaries' persistent error in judging Indian languages, as they judged Indian societies, 'by our customs and manners.' Indian semantics were, he pointed out, quite unlike European ones and, had the grammarians been prepared to lay aside their classical models, they might have seen, for instance, that in many Indian languages abstractions have a verbal rather than a nominal form. 71

The problems of reconstructing Indian vocabularies reflected the limited methods employed to gather them rather than any "primitive" means of communication employed by the tribes themselves. The concrete nature of the lists reveals their compilers to have been more at home exploring the physical world than the more speculative realms of philosophy. Research subsequent to Lafitau has placed the paucity of the early efforts in perspective:

The languages of native North America, regardless of relationship, have tended toward the development of involved morphological features, as in word building and formation. In forming a word, there is a general inclination toward 'agglutination,' a combining of various component elements. A problem is created if an attempt is made to enumerate the units of vocabulary. One can sometimes list basic root forms, but when the conjoined elements are taken into
account, there is no little difficulty in establishing what precisely a word is. 72

None of this is merely to take issue with a few word-lists hastily drawn up in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. More important, it is to recall the image of the savage incapable of complex speech (and thus thought) that has so haunted our literature. The bonneted warrior sitting astride his appaloosa with one hand raised, palm pointed forward to the approaching white man in a gesture of peace, brings with him the inevitable greeting: "hau" (a Lakota word). The question, indeed, is how: how can the complexity of any language be reduced to a series of stereotypes that portray a people only capable of uttering quaint metaphors and war cries? Why the pointing Indian? Because he is incapable of truly human speech. He is a creature of gesture, a refined gesture at best. The sign language he fashions to bridge linguistic gaps between tribes comes to be seen iconographically as a pejorative descent from human speech rather than an ingenious alternative to it. Such a muted mode of expression was more animal-like than human; it carried with it the intimation of an alien eloquence and the insinuation that the "savage" was irredeemably wild. The image of the pointing scout articulated the noble gesture of the AmerIndian, his "glorious" submission to the idea of enlightened progress.

From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries the symbolic eloquence of the Indian will slowly change its nature. While the early chronicles commonly describe the
"harangues" of Indian orators to which European guests were subjected, by the nineteenth century such occasions have been transformed into "elegies" as the tribes disappear or are pushed further westward. In a sense, the Indian surrenders "words" (profuse and incomprehensible) in order to have the final "Word" on his own destruction. Roy Harvey Pearce describes the process well in the case of the eighteenth century Chief Logan:

The appeal of Logan's speech—and of myriad speeches and episodes like it regularly reported in newspapers, periodicals, and historical works—was to the sense of the simple greatness of the savage state. Yet the speech, and the tradition which it marked, could not be for Americans evidence of the absolute nobility of the savage. Rather for them it marked the inferior kind of nobility of the savage, a nobility which achieved its ends by emotion rather than reason, by action rather than by thought, by custom rather than by law...It was a kind of nobility which, paradoxically, had to be shown to have contributed to the death of the very people whom it characterized. Thus to account for savage eloquence was to be part of the specifically American task in working out an idea of savagism.73

The childlike metaphors that characterize this discourse are familiar to anyone who has witnessed the spectacle of the Hollywood Indian. But as James Axtell notes, it is sometimes difficult to tell where these metaphors may have originated: "No matter what words were used, the Jesuits had to teach the meaning of their faith largely through homely metaphors and analogies to other aspects of Indian life." One can only wonder whose mouth the "iron horse" originally emanated from.
Such words as we have borrowed—"tobacco," "moccasin," "squaw," "papoose," "pow-wow," "opossum," "moose," "potato"—are called up by our historians to demonstrate the singular contribution of the Indian to American culture. Yet the very enumeration of these words masks a greater influence that was refused in borrowing them, as Axtell argues:

First, they [the English] borrowed Indian words only when English words did not exist, as they did words from Dutch, Spanish or French...The loan words were simply incorporated into English modes of ideation and speech, with little or no alteration of the basic contour of English values. Even phrases like 'happy hunting ground,' 'go on the warpath,' and 'bury the hatchet' were usually poor translations interpreted in pejorative English ways, carrying little cultural freight from their native contexts. As with so many other aspects of native culture, Indian words were tools used to subdue the continent, no more and no less.75

The selectivity of Indian loan-words today is a strange mirror when held up to that same bundle of terms the first explorers brought with them back to Europe. Four hundred years has not changed our policy of regarding as childish an eloquence that pretends to suggest—for whatever reasons—a native refusal to speak.

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When an effective interpreter could be found, his role was not merely to speak in a literal sense. Lúxan writes of the Espejo expedition in 1582, "We took an interpreter to
pacify the Tiguas, whom we had left in revolt." Such a
bow to the power of language suggested that more than the
mere rhetorical was at work in Espejo's tactics. Luxán
mentions the use of Indian women as interpreters in this
expedition to the southwest, recalling an earlier
observation made by his countryman Cabeza de Vaca, that
"women can deal as neutrals anywhere, even during war."
One is also reminded of the critical role played by the
native woman given to Hernando Cortez in Mexico who later
became his invaluable interpreter/guide and mistress: the
infamous Malinche.

In Luxán's narrative, a complicated exchange of women
captives is arranged, but the Spanish, fearing treachery,
take extraordinary precautions: "The latter had left his
sword and harquebus and had the Indian woman tied to his
body, as a man inexperienced in war, although a good and
brave soldier." The exchange is dubiously managed:

The woman interpreter wrestled with him,
took from him a knife that he carried in
his boot, and threw it to the Indians.
Then, like a lioness, she grasped his
sword, seizing it by the guard, which Diego
Perez de Luxán could not prevent without
letting the two Indian women escape,
because his hands were occupied in holding
them.

We cannot say what Luxán's account intimates more, a fear of
castration or a desert sexual fantasy complete with Indian
lioness. The leader of the expedition, Antonio de Espejo,
later wrote, "...we employed all the means at our disposal
in an attempt to see and understand everything, inquiring
into the truth through interpreters wherever they were
available and, where there were none, using the sign language." Even when the rumor of gold is far removed, avarice is replaced by a greed for information. Espejo goes on to remark, apparently with approbation, "I brought also an Indian man from the province of Tamos and an Indian woman from Mohoce, so that they might enlighten us regarding those provinces and the route to that region, if its discovery and colonization are undertaken anew in the service of his Majesty."

Espejo returns to Mexico with a woman interpreter, the Mexico of Malinche who collaborated with Cortez as a go-between in the conquest of the Aztec. The archetypal figure of the female interpreter was not lost on the Spanish themselves, as we see from this account of the Oñate expedition to New Mexico in 1598: "On the 22nd we went to the pueblo of San Cristóbal, where Doña Ines was born. She is the woman we brought from Mexico like a second Malinche..." Our own history in North America also bears the mark of such political/sexual alliances in the near-mythical figures of Pocahontas and Sacajawea. In addition to being interpreters for the White man, they were also providers in a more traditional maternal sense. According to our mythology, Pocahontas makes peace between tribe and nation-state by exercising, at the critical moment, her nonpareil female charms to save the life of the blustering John Smith. Sacajawea, on the other hand, is the eloquent though unspeaking Indian who raises one hand in a gesture of gentle guidance to her White followers. She is

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an interpreter—not of language but the earth—a powerful symbol in the sexualized mythology of the "virgin land."

Malinche, Pocahontas and Sacajawea all point to a hidden realm where the political intercourse between peoples is symbolized by the sexual sacrifice of a tribal woman blessed with unusual powers of communication. Each possesses the ardent desire to aid the conqueror in whatever guise he appears: conquistador, tobacco planter, scientific explorer. Malinche's union with Cortez is never officially sanctioned in the ceremony of marriage, initiating the Mexican state of orphanhood that Octavio Paz has described:

The symbol of this violation is doña Malinche, the mistress of Cortes. It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over. Doña Marina (Malinche) becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal.83

Pocahontas marries John Rolfe, but the very legitimacy of their union and the chaste legend surrounding it anticipate the frigid, more exclusionary policy of the reservation system that would develop in the north. Sacajawea, the wife of a legendary French trapper, upholds the progress of the myth by helping to unlock the secrets of the continent in the first penetration of the land, the only woman to accompany the first overland expedition, and with a mixed-blood child at that. As interpreter, as a bearer of new seed, the woman is a fecund symbol of transformation,

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embracing the licentiousness of Malinche, the whole-hearted conversion of Pocahontas, or the revelation of the earth that passes, at least in our mythology, from Sacajawea to the agents of Jefferson. Note too how these symbols change in the appetites they emphasize: from the sexual surrender of Malinche (sixteenth century) to the pious apostasy of an Indian princess (seventeenth) to the final image of a Shoshone guide pointing unequivocally westward (nineteenth), a stoic landmark which heralds the first empirical mapping of the land. As Philip Young has argued, Pocahontas (and we should add Sacajawea) are profound iconographic symbols; each denies whatever personal guilt she might feel in suppressing the story of what truly happened to her own people. They are symbols desperately sought by the victor to elevate an embittered military conquest into a celebration of the mythical and romantic pursuit of the land. As women—particularly Indian women—they translate for history the greed of the intruder into the most irreproachable ambition; they transform "faithlessness" toward one people into a profound fidelity toward the Other. Simply put, they reassure us that "what happened here was for the best." But this is a secret known only to the dark feminine symbol of the earth itself; incapable of telling it is that chorus of White American colonial voices—the Hester Prynnes, the Priscilla Aldens, the Mary Rowlandsons. The pointing Indian is a woman.

The Pocahontas' have been well-paraded while others have remained nameless and well-nigh forgotten. The most
epic gesture of communication available to the European was the dream of crossing the North American continent. This, in a sense, was a way of speaking to the earth that the White men would devise, of consummation, of linking the land from east to west to complete the American mythos of Manifest Destiny. Just how old this ideal is is borne out in Castañeda's relation of the Coronado journey; not surprisingly, the act is embodied in the person of an Indian woman.

Beginning in Culiacán on the western coast of Mexico, Coronado, in 1540, had marched through the Sonoran Desert and up the Colorado Plateau onto the plains of Kansas. Meanwhile, Hernando de Soto made a landfall in Florida, persisted northward to the Carolinas, turned west and, leaving a trail of frightened tribes in his wake, crossed the Mississippi River into present-day Arkansas. Here it would seem the two expeditions almost met—by chance, by the hazards of forced marches with nothing but a rumor to follow, and by the topological vagaries of North America that nearly allowed at this early date a continental connection to be made. Though only in passing, Castañeda notes the near-miss:

During this trip a painted Indian woman ran away from Juan de Zaldívar. She fled down the barrancas when she recognized the land, for she was a slave at Tiguex where they had obtained her. This Indian woman had come into the possession of some Spaniards from Florida, who had penetrated as far as that region in their explorations. I heard our men say when they returned to New Spain that the Indian woman told them that she
had fled from others nine days before, and that she named the captains. Thus we are led to believe that we were not far from the region they discovered...85

Rather boldly, he goes on to estimate the total expanse of the land at six hundred leagues (about 1500 miles), a woeful underestimation of the continent. But two conquistadors had come within nine days of linking the South Sea (Pacific) with the Atlantic in the ambition of circumscribing the "isle" of America.

And yet they did make the passage—in the person of an Indian woman who remains nameless, disappearing into the brush of Castañeda's narrative no sooner than she arrives. From "sea to shining sea" was not a realizable dream for the European-American until the nineteenth century. But three hundred years before the "iron horse," here is a fleeting premonition of the transcontinental dream. And here is a woman to be memorialized, though a Kansan Sacajawea does not compel us to grandiose visions as does one in buckskin straddling the Continental Divide. Perhaps a name would help us, something more telling than the mere fact that she was "painted"—probably tattooed. An Indian who passed as a slave from one chronicled expedition to the next—and escaped from them both—is the only message we have of the European gesture to traverse the land. Between two armies, two coasts, two masters—a woman who flees into the barranca and disappears, neither the trusted guide nor the devoted wife of the usurper.
Our early history still resounds with the romantic clang of armored men crossing forest, wilderness or desert in search of adventure, wealth, and absolution. The conquistador (Coronado, Cortez, DeSoto) usually rides at their head, but the Spanish were not alone in their quest. It is simply that their expenses were more lavish, their mission more exotic, their disillusionment grander. But they were no more gullible than the others. Up and down the continent the tale of "another country" of wealth and magic is never far away. The Vikings are told of one by two native boys they capture: "They said, that there was a land on the other side over against their country, which was inhabited by people who wore white garments, and yelled loudly, and carried poles before them..."  The Norse surmise, perhaps correctly, this was only Ireland. But Jacques Cartier, when informed of the kingdom of Saguenay in 1535, had no such simple or straightforward explanation: "...for he assured us that he had been to the land of the Saguenay where there are immense quantities of gold, rubies and other rich things, and that the men there are white as in France and go clothed in woolens." The dream of this northern kingdom, believed to be within the bounds of New France, would inspire French expeditions for decades to come. In the course of Martin Frobisher's second voyage (1577), the English encounter savages who eat raw flesh but
"make signs of certain people that wear bright plates of
gold in their foreheads and other places of their
bodies." The next year Pribisher returned to England
with "good ore" he had so mined that was quickly assayed as
worthless.

All these men lacked was a guide who would show them
the way inland. Then, in 1541, Coronado found one, "a
native of the farthest interior of the land extending from
there to Florida." In other words, a native's native, a
man from the heartland who knew the place of riches his
companions could only point to. The Spanish, recalling the
Old World, decide to call him the "Turk."

This guide speaks of a land called Quivira sated with
silver and gold, of rivers with "fish as large as
horses." The locals warn Coronado that he is a liar,
but the Turk eggs him on. One day a soldier named Cervantes
"sees him talk to the devil." No matter, they march
north and eastward. A young boy they meet en route warns
them again the Turk is lying. The warning is to no avail.
The army marches across the Staked Plains of Texas,
fashioning markers from bones and cow dung. One of the
local women seems to resemble a "Moorish woman." A
soldier is ordered to count their steps. They become lost
in the "sea," as Castañeda describes the Great Plains.
There is nothing for miles but flat earth and the occasional
Indian encampment. Finally Coronado wavers and has the Turk
arrested. At last the guide confesses that he was leading
the Spanish onto the plains so they would devour their
provisions and return to Cicuye where the people "could kill
them easily and so obtain revenge for what the Spaniards had
done to them." They execute the Turk (the chronicles do
not agree on the specific method chosen) and finally the
army turns back.

The clarity of Coronado's disillusion is archetypal for
these journeys, some of them rendered more vivid by our
history than others. They are not confined to a
geographical region, a single expedition or a certain
nationality. The story is as familiar and as strange the
twentieth time we read it as it was the first.... The
European boats arrive in the Indies. The men disembark and
enlist interpreters by which to know the land. They plant a
staff in the earth to pronounce their power over it, to
symbolize the wealth they will generate. They take note of
the Antipodeans (called "Indios," "sauvages," "people") and
of their customs—whether quaint, like boring holes in their
skin or tattooing their bodies, or the less palatable
practice of eating the ritually-prepared flesh of their
enemies. Always it is to stress their existence as the
Other, a people who little appreciate the moral advantages
of clothing, good government, and the production of mineral
specie. With curious eyes they observe the Indian. As they
watch him they are filled with a mixture of fear, awe, and
no little disdain, making of the "savage" something like the
creatures who stolidly inhabit the medieval bestiaries. The
Indians are like vessels, to be filled as well as
emptied—they wait to be drained of earthly wealth and
replenished with moral guidance.

Their Gods are disdained. When the Europeans themselves are mistaken for Gods, disdained even more. The people of the land are, by turns, wicked, shy, timorous, savage, gentle, loving, brutal and innocent, though they are invariably "Indians." One day a man dies—that is to say, a European. His death is an act of treachery—an arrow in the back, a hellish fever, a serpent's bite—that is to say, the treachery of the land itself, of the people, the beasts and the vapors that rise from it. Nothing will be the same after this. The first death is always duly recorded, even if those to follow appear as nothing more than numbers. The wall has been broken, the "garden of America" spoiled. The pieces of an old story seem to be reassembling themselves.

Then one day a native rises to tell them the real treasure they want is inland—far inland—always within the grasp of these men supplied as much by local provisions as their unyielding vision of Cathay, or Saguenay, or Cibola. The Europeans laugh, at first—they are not so stupid as to believe everything they hear. Then they ask for more details. They consider further their already vulnerable position and reach the quite logical conclusion that stranger things have been uttered on the face of the earth—and a few have even been true. They push inland, navigating by rivers or whatever mark on the land will allow them to eventually find their way back. They are chained not so much to an implausible dream as to the adventurer's conviction that ignoring the word of destiny is a greater
crime than forging a wayward path of plunder and destruction. They march on to Saguenay, committing themselves to a scorched-earth policy or a scorned one. And though the expeditions as a whole will return to be recorded in the annals of history, many of the men will not.

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For our own purposes, language—and to a lesser extent, gesture—are realms of the abstract. Where we can find unambiguous words or gestures in the European texts we are fortunate indeed. But clearly it would be a mistake to claim for these writers a keen interest in linguistics or the finer nuances of native body language. Most of the early Europeans in North America came to barter; as such, their first gestures or words were often accompanied (if not preceded) by material objects of trade. Now it is time to turn from the study of language (both spoken and mute) to the study of the language of "gifts." We will see how the act of trade—in the form of tribute, largesse and exchange—mediated between cultures with little understanding of each other. The trade between them may speak more eloquently than any rhetoric they could devise.
NOTES


12 Ibid., p.252.


15 Voyages de Découverte au Canada Entre Les Années 1534-1542 (Quebec, William Cowan & Sons, 1843), p.94.


20 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p.217.


22 Les Français en Amérique Pendant La Deuxième Moitié, p.9.

23 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p.218.

24 Ibid.


26 Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America, Ed., Wagner, p.39.


30 Ibid., p.172.

31 Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, Hammond and Rey, p.235.


33 The Voyages of Giovanni de Verrazzano, L. Wroth, pp.135-36.

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36 Ibid., p.228.

37 Ibid., p.219.


41 Ferdinando Gorges, A Briefe Narration of the Originall Undertakings of the Advancement of Plantations into the parts of America (London: E. Brudenell, 1658).


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46 Ibid., p.143. See also pp. 127-29.


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51 Ibid., p.139.

52 Ibid., p.136.

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77 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior,
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87 The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, Ed., Biggar, p.221.


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CHAPTER 4:

TRIBUTE AND TRADE

"The exchange of iron for gold was the incentive for this alliance between Indian and Spaniard. They were both looking for Heaven, but searching for it in the earth."

Marc de Civrieux
Watunna: an Orinoco Creation Cycle
One of the many inspirations for the European Renaissance happened in the eleventh century with the discovery of ancient manuscripts in the library at Toledo, works that had long been guarded by the "enemy" of God, the infidel though civilized Moor. The Church had played a critical role in the preservation of Western culture throughout the Dark Ages, but the works of Aristotle, among others, had been just as zealously protected by the Moorish caliphate in Spain for several centuries. One of the trademarks of the ancient Rome whose writers were to be resurrected in this Renaissance—a systematic ability to adapt the discoveries of other people to its own imperial adventure—was now to become a definitive characteristic of the Europe that emerged from the Middle Ages. From the Middle and Far East the West "borrowed" a series of technological advances that rendered feasible the exploration of the New World. The range and importance of these "discoveries" were vast: the magnetic compass (China), long regarded as an occult instrument, became an indispensable tool for crossing the Atlantic in the sixteenth century; the triangular lateen sail (Arabic) permitted sailing against the wind—unlike square riggers—thus providing the necessary maneuverability for regular ocean crossings regardless of season; "Arabic" numerals (India), increasingly utilized after 1450, were capable of performing calisthenic marvels beside their Roman counterparts—commerce was revolutionized as multiplication and division
became essentially simple acts. One might add to this list gunpowder (Chinese), the vessel known as the "caravo" and the stern-post rudder (Arabic) and still not do justice to the change that transformed the Mediterranean basin. Though copied from Oriental and Middle Eastern models, the subsequent influence of such "inventions" in the rise of the West made them seem as though they had been the peculiar progeny of Europe.

However critical this technology was to European expansion, it was still inanimate; men were thus enlisted to empower and direct the new force in the conquest of the Indies. Many of them belonged to no particular state—Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, Verrazzano, they were Renaissance "free agents" who happily sailed for monarchs foreign to their native lands. They had crossed the old frontiers of local feudal loyalty without yet becoming patriots of the modern nation-state. Many of them hailed from the Mediterranean that had been a major depot of commerce and cultural link between the Orient and the West. In their political loyalties as well as their geographical roots they were men of transition, as familiar with the fluctuations of international commerce as they were with the shifting and ambiguous motives for being a Renaissance explorer.

This is not to presume they were entirely unprincipled. Columbus' quest for gold was no doubt inspired by a desire for personal enrichment, but had also been inflamed by the dream that a large treasure might ransom the holy Jerusalem
from its Muslim occupants. Our own categories of "sacred" and "secular" reveal little about their motives. As long as indulgences could be purchased from the Church for the commission of venial sins, one is hard put to keep separate the material and spiritual worlds of the early Renaissance. Fernand Braudel notes that by the seventeenth century, 166 fast days existed on the Roman Catholic calendar during which fish was commonly substituted for meat on the Christian table. When European fishermen found the cod-rich banks of Newfoundland in the late fifteenth century, the new enthusiasm over the low price of fish in Catholic Europe was most felt by those who were regularly constrained to eat it by religious fiat. Just as the Crusades had been a spiritual endeavor set in the context of economic expansion, so too could commercial ventures be impelled by a religious impetus.

With increasing commercialism and the re-discovery of an ancient past, the cities of Europe were coming into full bloom. But the force of something unforeseen in the leisurely medieval travelogues was about to be unleashed. The sudden liberation of individual ambition these voyages came to represent was embodied in the enormous appetite for knowledge of the early American explorers. Europe was barely prepared for this change: some of the great cathedrals stood as yet unfinished while the young nation-states began to consolidate feudal holdings and develop a bureaucracy in anticipation of their imperial future. Racked for centuries by nomadic incursions from the north.
and east (Huns, Mongols, Vikings), the flourishing cities of Europe were, through the adaptation of foreign technologies, on the verge of establishing an economic empire surpassing in circumference those of the ancient East.

The immense quantities of gold and silver mined in Latin America during the sixteenth century alone radically revised the economy of Europe, and as a result, that of the entire world. The new economics of the late Renaissance were based more on the exchange and concentration of capital than on the inheritance of land. To be sure, land and its development was still an index of power, yet its "unlimited" availability in the New World not only undermined the medieval doctrine of "just price", but encouraged the growth of an ambitious and speculative class of merchants. For these men, few in number though powerful in reach, the exchange of exotic commodities (coffee, sugar, chocolate) over distances unimaginable to the average European required individual ambition, seed capital, and the recurring lure of profit—\textsuperscript{5} the critical ingredients of capitalism. Though it created an inflationary spiral, the staggering amounts of mineral specie imported from America helped to improve the balance of payments for silks and spices from the Orient, as well as to encourage the fluid exchange of commodities that subverted the localized self-sufficiency of the feudal manor.

In his analysis of European colonization, Charles Verlinde\textsuperscript{n} argues that as long as governments lacked the power to colonize the new-found lands of their own
initiative, they would license individuals or joint-stock companies to do it for them. This trend was in sharp contrast to the state-administered exploration of Africa which the Chinese undertook in the fifteenth century. A centralized state of extensive bureaucratic reach, China, in the figure of the emperor, blunted any individual ambitions that might have possessed her captains in the field. The kind of competition between struggling independents who vied to lay claims to personal and national glory (whether commercial entrepreneurs or soldiers of fortune) was peculiar to Europe. For these men--French, English or Spanish--profit and personal honor were inseparable virtues, and would remain so as long as the technology of travel outstripped the technology of state control. They were men chosen to uncover an old dream in a new world. Though they sailed under the patronage of a crown, they marched from an unpredictable and unfathomable ambition to achieve both worldly success and an otherworldly absolution.

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It should come as no surprise to us that the explorers' devotion to trade is, by turns, mystical and mathematical. They perform the act of barter with all the regularity and attentiveness normally accorded a ceremonial rite. And sometimes the ultimate goal--the riches of Cíbola or Saguenay--has all the elusive trappings of a myth. John Hawkins writes of the Floridians, "They have for apothecary
herbs, trees, roots and gummes great store, as Storax liquida, Turpintine, Gumme, Myrrhe, and Frankincense..." In fact, the precision they employ is a compensatory gesture by which they acknowledge their search for the unattainable. As such, a man like Coronado is not so much an exception to the rule as the perfect illustration of a European obsession when, in seeking the fabled city of Quivira, he orders one of his soldiers while the army crosses the Staked Plains of Texas "to make the calculations and even to count the steps."

The act of measurement is a critical part of their progress. So it is they measure distance with a military concern for exactness: "a harquebus-shot away," "a bow-shot high," "the length of a pike"; even the ancient "stone's throw" yields, in the context of such narratives, more an aggressive challenge than a form of amusement. Their goal is to be rich beyond imagination, but according to the principles of their God. The precision of their measurement helps to counteract the sheer implausibility of their mission.

Numbers were used to define, as in terms of distance. But they were also employed to suggest the indefinable—the observation, however calculated, that some things in the New World could not be counted, as Columbus relates on his first voyage to the Caribbean:

Its lands (Hispaniola) are high, and there are in it many sierras and very lofty mountains, beyond comparison with the island of Teneriffe. All are most beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all are accessible and filled with trees of a

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thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky...And the nightingale was singing and other birds of a thousand kinds in the month of November there where I went.

The Admiral uses "thousand" like a ritual chant, though it probably connoted nothing more to the Renaissance reader than "an incomprehensibly large number," much as a "million" does today. While such counting is intended to convey a real number, Columbus repeats the formula until it becomes incantatory; the number is intended to mesmerize as much as identify. Counting is placed in the context of repetition as the Father of America celebrates the unimaginable wealth of the New World at the same time he confines it by an act of enumeration.

Thus the duty of observation dogs them. The ritual or repetitive use of numbers is also present in the Coronado narratives, though this time the effect is not one of hyperbole but compression. The Seven Cities of Gold (Cíbola) were the fabled objective of the Spanish journey. As we read Castañeda's chronicle, we are struck by the number of times that, in an outlying province discovered by an advance party, seven villages or seven pueblos or seven groups of villages are found clustered together. This continues to happen long after they enter Cíbola and find it is nothing more than a "rocky pueblo." For these Spaniards seven appears to be a number laden with magic, much as it is for many cultures—including Indian ones—even today. But Castañeda himself seems oblivious to the coincidence that the Seven Cities of Gold they failed to find still pursue
them with an untiring patience. He begins to make a list of
the settlements they encounter:

Cíbola, seven pueblos.
Tusayan, seven pueblos.
The rock of Acuco, one.
Tiguex, twelve pueblos.
Tutahaco, eight pueblos.
These pueblos were down the river.
Quirix, seven pueblos.
On the sierra nevada, seven
pueblos...11

The recurring number may be nothing more than evidence of
its sacred role among the local tribes. Yet it might just
as well attest to a ritualized quest undertaken by these men
with Coronado at their head. Anthropologists have noted how
cultures will mark sacred geographical distances by using a
fixed set of ritualized numbers. With this in mind, it is
well to remember that the original Seven Cities myth began
as a religious story, recounting how seven Spanish bishops
found refuge from the Moors on the island of Antillia.
Alfonso Ortiz has described a similar process used today by
some of the same Rio Grande Indians whose ancestors Coronado
would have encountered four centuries ago:

In Tewa mythology, and in all thinking
about distant events, there is the
tendency...of reducing time and space into
minimally meaningful units. The number
twelve is used as a formula in ritual
speech and behavior to dramatize this first
migration [of the Tewa.] Thus, in prayer
and speech sacred objects and events are
named in groups of twelve, sacred distances
are measured in terms of twelve steps, and
rituals often take twelve steps to
perform...The further back in time an event
occurs, the more likely it is to be
'preserved' by one of these numerical
formulas.12

In this way the mystical value of numbers might outweigh
their empirical function, for the European as well as the Indian. In the mythology of America, the meaning of "seven cities" or a "thousand trees" might partake of a non-mathematical world, however precise their appearance. The investigation of the New World was a mystical one.

And yet most of the numbers we find are too specific or random to connote any symbolic value. Rosier relates, "Griffin at his returne reported, they had there assembled together, as he numbred them, two hundred eighty-three 13 Salvages, with every one his bowe and arrowes." The English are particularly fond of such unlikely precision, as Patricia Cline Cohen has noted:

The true function of quantification in the early promotional tracts was to augment the credibility of the account by making even the most extravagant claims appear highly concrete and objective. It was during these same years in England that numbers were gaining the reputation for being more objective than qualitative description because something quantified could be resubmitted to measurement or count by a different observer, who would reach the same conclusion. No doubt some of the authors of promotional tracts thought they were engaging in an objective description of reality; most, however, were only exploiting a cultural tendency that credited numbers with truth.14

But this tendency was by no means limited to the English. Fray Marcos writes, "it [an irrigated valley] is so thickly settled by attractive people and so bountiful in food that it could provision more than three hundred men and 15 horses." The symbolic gives way to the hypothetical as Las Casas describes the voracity of the conquistadors:

"...for a Christian eats and consumes in one day an amount
of food that would suffice to feed three houses inhabited by ten Indians for one month." And Cartier writes of his first voyage, "We landed on the lower part of the smaller island and killed more than a thousand murres and great auks, of which we took away as many as we wished in our long-boats. One might have loaded in an hour thirty such long-boats." Here, as elsewhere, an account of the land is turned to a strict accounting. Cartier adds in a manner typical of the Renaissance "new math": "This island is the best land we have seen; for two acres of it are worth more than the whole of Newfoundland."

The act of counting presumed an organizational method by which to arrange the commodities of America. Thomas Harriot's personal choice in A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia tells us much about contemporary assumptions:

The treatise whereof for your more readie view and easier understanding, I will divide into three speciall parts. In the first I will make declaration of such commodities there already found or to bee raised...as by way of traffique and exchaunge with our owne nation of England, will enrich yourselves the providers...In the second I will set downe all the commo- dities which we know the countrey by our experience doth yeeld of it selfe for victuall and sustenence of mans life...In the last part I will make mention generally of such other commodities besides, as I am able to remember...with a briefe descrip- tion of the nature and maners of the people of the countrey.

This is not the taxonomy of an eccentric; many of the narratives employ a similar--though less overt--method of organizing their American "plans."
Indeed Harriott is a harbinger of things to come, though his own structure is more extemporaneous than painstaking. The first category he sets forth includes "merchantable" commodities; the second, "victual and sustenance"; and the third, "of such other commodities besides, as I am able to remember," with a brief ethnoogy of the locals thrown in for good measure. One progresses in the first two from marketing the easily extractable (trade items) to enumerating the likelihood of more permanent settlement (agricultural products). Yet in dividing the commodities of Virginia into three classes, Harriott extends himself the luxury of including anything in the last one that he hasn't already considered, a "catch-all" bill of fare that reveals not so much a state of enlightened organi-

zation as it does an adaptable entrepreneurship. However rudimentary, his method was representative of a wider movement with great repercussions for the West, as Cohen again relates:

Quantification emerged in the seventeenth century as an alternative way to make sense of the world, a way that would account for activities newly perceived in the interstices of the classical categories. A vast, undifferentiated sea could not easily be thought about in terms of qualitative units, but a grid of numbered and horizontal divisions, like Mercator's reduced it to manageable proportions...Economic quantification made it possible to impose control and order on tobacco, linen, indentured servants;...20

In Harriott is ready reckoning at its best--the heart and soul of the American profiteer too methodical to do without a plan, but too pragmatic to so restrict it that it might
leave anything out. This was English acumen that even claimed the leftovers.

A similar principle informs that most familiar of narrative devices, the American "shopping list." In this passage from Pring's voyage of 1603, the writer resorts to arithmetical abandon to advertise the abundance of the land:

Vines, Cedars, Okes, Ashes, Beeches, Birch Trees, Cherie trees, bearing fruit whereof wee did eate, Hasels, Wich-Hasels, the best wood of all other to make Sopesashes withall, Walnut trees, Maples, holy to make Bird lime with,...21

The writer runs up his account, and in America he is unlikely to run out of numbers. The list makes commodities of its elements; it equalizes perceptions with little attempt at varying or interpreting them. When Gabriel Archer writes of a New England voyage, "The seventh of May following, we first saw many Birds in bignesse of Cliff Pidgeons, and after divers others as Pettrels, Cootes, Hagbuts, Pengwins, Murrees, Gannets, Cormorants, Guls, with many else in our 22 English Tongue of no name," he confesses, in the spirit of a dry ledgerbook more than an exotic travelogue, that the endless variety of America will even test the limits of human language.

The nominal list was an important promotional device. But it was also used in a restraining, even verbal, form to ensure that the crown would command its share of overseas profits. Notice how a more controlled method of listing from the royal letters of patent granted to John Cabot (1496) leads to a parallel, even poetic passage of legalese:
And that the before-mentioned John and his sons or their heirs and deputies may conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered that they may be able to conquer, occupy and possess, as our vassals and governors lieutenants and deputies therein, acquiring for us the dominion, title and jurisdiction of the same towns, castles, cities, islands and mainlands so discovered.23

Here, the apparent motive of the listing is opposite that of the promotional tracts: rather than fire the imagination of its players, the passage seeks to circumscribe or define their activities as much as possible. Indeed this suggests the difference between a promotional tract and a document of law— one encourages the "development" of commodities while the other prescribes the limits whereby this may be prudently accomplished. But they share one critical assumption: both are free to verbalize strategies of accumulation, whether wishful or conditional; empirical or legal; descriptive or prescriptive. While the promoter presents a portrait of unimaginable and uncountable abundance, the lawyer seeks to define the range of contingencies that will allow for its just containment. The patent begins by citing "towns, castles, cities and islands" to be discovered by Cabot, only to later add a new element to the liturgy, as though by afterthought: "...towns, castles, cities, islands and mainlands." Someone had the foresight to anticipate what Vespucci was about to discover. Note the incremental progression of the verbs ("conquer, occupy, possess"): they march in orderly deployment from a military encampment to a commercial fait
accompli. In short, the whole passage is fortified against any unforeseeable circumstance that Cabot's "discovery" might expose.

Thus the cumulative spirit of the European--through exaggeration, repetition, or ritual--was not limited to the merchant class. In our own age of trust-busting and anti-monopoly legislation, the commercial and the legal are often perceived as antagonistic, though in the Europe of the late Renaissance they were inextricably entwined, even in the best juridical minds of the age. Racked by religious wars as well as a mounting demand for the codification of maritime and international law, the sixteenth century was a contentious one in search of a legal order.

Formal debates were a popular way of testing legal principles. The most celebrated of these was the argument between Las Casas and Sepúlveda regarding the legal rights of the Indian peoples subjected during the Conquest. In the course of this extended debate, held in 1550, the Spanish crown patiently heard the evidence that both condemned and exonerated the conquistadors for their behavior in the New World.

The Spanish concern for legality, however, was not limited to theatrical occasions. It fell to the jurist Francisco de Vitoria (d. 1546) to render an unprecedented legal opinion against the temporal rights of the Church in establishing a codified system of international law. Vitoria persuasively argued against two documents that attempted to legitimize the European presence in
America—the papal dispensation of 1492 and the "requerimiento." The first of these divided the world into two hemispheres of influence, one belonging to Spain, the other to Portugal, thereby sanctioning any colonial efforts by these two powers in America. The latter was a legal manifesto commonly read to the American Indian on first contact to announce the Christian right of way in heathen lands, native settlements notwithstanding. Unlike many of his peers, it was Vitoria's belief that the natives of the New World were not subject to enslavement simply because they were non-Christian:

The Pope has temporal power only so far as it is in subservience to matters spiritual, that is, as far as is necessary for the administration of spiritual affairs...The corollary follows that even if the barbarians refuse to recognize any lordship of the Pope, that furnishes no ground for making war on them and seizing their property.25

For sixteenth-century Europe this was a bold—and potentially dangerous—idea.

But the danger was more rhetorical than real. The nearly fanatical Spanish obsession for legally examining colonial behavior, a subject which Lewis Hanke has researched in great detail, was often turned into public mea culpas that were qualified or overturned by later legislation. This hesitation, in miniature form, is exactly what we find in Vitoria's The First Relectio of the Indians Lately Discovered. Shortly after collar ing the pope, Vitoria enters a different, though wholly unexpected,
defense of the Conquest:

The Spaniards have a right to travel into the lands in question and to sojourn there, provided they do no harm to the natives, and the natives may not prevent them. Proof of this may in the first place be derived from the law of nations (jus gentium), which either is natural law or is derived from natural law.27

Evidently, "natural law" embodies the inalienable rights of travellers—something akin to the Manifest Destiny of Marco Polo, or even, for that matter, Christopher Columbus. Vitoria appeals not only to the light of Christianity but "Nature," both of them concepts universalist in their assumptions.

The jurist continues, now laying the groundwork for modern international law:

Secondly, it was permissible from the beginning of the world (when everything was in common) for any one to set forth and travel wheresoever he would. Now this was not taken away by the division of property, for it was never the intention of peoples to destroy by that division the reciprocity and common uses which prevailed among men, and indeed in the days of Noah it would have been inhumane to do so.28

In Vitoria, jurisprudence forges unpredictable alliances—private property and international trade are made complementary rights, even desirable duties. Man was made to live separate from the Other, but has no excuse to permanently avoid him. Vitoria is not finished:

Thirdly, everything is lawful which is not prohibited or which is not injurious or hurtful to others in some other way. But (so we suppose) the travel of the Spaniards does no injury or harm to the natives. Therefore it is lawful.29
The tautology in the first sentence suggests that certain injurious acts were not prohibited by law, a clue to the stunted development of international jurisprudence in the sixteenth century. But a strange paradox is unveiled. Clearly it is not the Indians but the Spaniards who are going to make of nomadism a way of life. On a local level, the Europeans are permanent settlers, the Indians seasonal; but the Western urge to wander (capitalistic nomadism) is exercised on a global scale. Vitoria is bringing all his powers to bear in order to make the European migration appear reasonable,

...Tenthly, 'by natural law running water and the sea are common to all, so are rivers and harbors, and by the law of nations ships from all parts may be moored there.' 30

We are told then that Columbus had a right to drop anchor in the Caribbean; the "discovery" of America is so condoned.

Still, Vitoria will affirm the legality of subsequent events; finally we arrive at the crux of the argument in this section of The First Relectio:

The Spaniards may lawfully carry on trade among the native Indians, so long as they do no harm to their country, as, for instance, by importing thither wares which the natives lack and by exporting thence either gold or silver or other wares of which the natives have abundance. 31

This is the culmination of Vitoria's defense, and startling it is. The subordinate clause of an "innocent" sentence verges on the insubordinate. It amounts to a legalistic apology for a policy later known as "mercantilism"--an economic system whereby a patron state imports raw materials
(including bullion) from a dependent colony in exchange for home-made manufactures. The opinion in The Relectio is not the musing of a minor intellectual, but the product of the most renowned legal mind of the age. Preparing the way for mercantilistic theory, it was the Spanish who exponentially increased the volume of world trade during the sixteenth century by importing vast quantities of silver from her American colonies. The Relectio was first published in 1557, by which time the immense mineral wealth of America (or the sustained rumor of it) had convinced Europe of the wonder of Columbus' mission. Now it was no longer necessary to fashion a colonial argument from the superiority of Christianity; the demands of trade as commissioned by the nation-state would be sufficient cause in the future to rationalize the presence of the European in Vera Cruz, Jamestown, and Quebec. The medieval concept of holy war had, in Vitoria, been transformed into a juridical defense of the divine right of commerce:

Also, secondly, a similar proof lies in the fact that this [trade] is permitted by divine law. Therefore a law prohibiting it would undoubtedly not be reasonable.32

The teachings of the Church still loomed large, for the market and the altar held one adage in common:

...the sovereign of the Indians is bound by the law of nature to love the Spaniards... such conduct [resistance] would be against the proverb: 'Thou shalt not do to another what thou wouldest not wish done to thyself.'33

The Golden Rule of Mercantilism is pronounced in black and white: to foster "mutually beneficial" trade that would
"develop" the dependent state while enriching the patron, all according to the stringent dictates of the Church, natural reason, and now, International Law. It is difficult to read Laudonnière's introduction to his Florida voyages without remembering Vitoria:

So, monarchs have sent out enterprising persons to establish themselves in distant lands to make a profit, to civilize the countryside, and, if possible, to bring the local inhabitants to the true knowledge of God. These are commendable objectives quite foreign to tyrannical and cruel conquest. And so they have always nurtured enterprises and bit by bit gained the hearts of those conquered or won over by other means.34

It's no wonder Columbus thought he'd discovered the treasure of Solomon. The State had found a way to sanctify barter.

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These were the theoretical underpinnings of the trade. But how, exactly, was it accomplished? For cultures that had difficulty communicating with one another, the language of barter might replace the language of the spoken word. The material objects that changed hands between Indian and European are as telling of their early relations as any of the more literary pronouncements that come down to us in the narratives. The willingness of Indians to exchange material goods was taken by some Europeans to be as important an index to their humanity as was their power of speech.

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Guillaume Le Testu notes in his *Cosmographie Universelle* of one tribe in the Antilles, "The men of that region are naked, eat human flesh, and are bad to the extent that one cannot even trade with them." As often as not in the first years of contact, it must have been much as Jean Mocquet wrote in 1604: "We traded without speaking, showing by signs what we wanted to have or give."

That originator of the American tall-tale, David Ingram, describes one method of barter that is echoed in the narratives of Ulloa and Frobisher (Settle), among others:

> If you will bargaine for ware with them, leave the thing that you will sell upon the ground, and go from it a prettie way of: then wil they come and take it, and set downe such wares as they will give for it in the place: And if you thinke it not sufficient, leave the wares with signes that you like it not, and they will bring more, untill either they or you be satisfied, or will give no more. Otherwise you may hang your wares upon a long poles end, and so put more or lesse on it, until you have agreed on the bargaine.

The bargain is accomplished through gesture. The neutral ground on which they make the exchange is, in a sense, "sacred". Neither party can violate the space while the other is present without profaning the offer; to do this would be tantamount to willful aggression. Significantly, the transaction is carried out by a process of bargaining rather than a strict market proposition based on a standardized currency.

Fortunately for the European, the perseverance that Ingram describes was not always necessary. Many explorers were intent on trading in volume for exchange on the
international market and many tribes were equally desirous
to purchase European goods. Verrazzano writes of an
experience only too common in our mythology, that of the
native welcome accorded to arriving "white fathers":

We reached another land XV leagues from the
island, where we found an excellent harbor;
before entering it, we saw about XX boats
full of people who came around the ship
uttering various cries of wonderment. They
did not come nearer than fifty paces, but
stopped to look at the structure of our
ship, our persons, and our clothes; then
all together they raised a loud cry which
meant that they were joyful.39

Verrazzano adds that they lured the people on board with "a
few little bells and mirrors and many trinkets." Like
many of his contemporaries, he is not above congratulating
himself for achieving a desired end at the expense of a few
trifles. As Laudonnière would later write of a similar
encounter in Florida, "I gave him a number of little
trinkets to keep our friendship alive." 41

But Verrazzano goes on to more speculative matters in
noting, "They do not value gold because of its color; they
think it the most worthless of all, and rate blue and red
above all other colors." Obviously the cultural
standards of exchange were different; what was of enormous
value to one was a trifling matter to its rival. A man of
Verrazzano's perception is capable of recognizing this
difference, though not of making the difficult inference of
cultural relativity it implies. And yet his recognition of
this difference is the exception. Most Renaissance

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explorers do not probe so far as to even wonder out loud what the tribal basis of exchange might be. Theirs is a sustained incredulity that any people could be ignorant of the chasm that separated a worthless trinket from a handful of gold. Of course, not all European bargains were readily received. As Verrazzano says, "They did the same with mirrors; they would look at them quickly, and then refuse them, laughing."

Mirrors and beads were only a small part of the early European trade arsenal. We might conveniently order the goods that were commonly offered the AmerIndian into three categories: the first is comprised of decorative "trinkets"—beads, combs, mirrors, bells, bracelets, all articles of adornment that later contributed to the stereotype of the "vain savage"; a second group consisted of manufactures intended for domestic use—blankets, kettles, knives, pipes and clothing. (The intended use of such articles was not always followed: copper kettles were often cup up by Indians to be used ornamentally); third, the European offered goods whose consumption was neither decorative nor domestic. Their purpose was more ambiguous, their motive ulterior, their distribution more refined. I refer to these as the "contraband of conquest," the most significant being alcohol and firearms.

The literature on alcoholism and its effect on American Indian tribes is enormous, if not overwhelming. Suffice it to say in this context that whether alcohol was officially prohibited or not in a given area, observers were agreed
that its influence was invariably destructive. Cornelius Jaenen accounts for the widespread consumption of spirits in New France:

Insobriety was so excessive and so often accompanied by extreme aggression because subsistence anxieties were high, sorcery operated freely, sexual restraints were low, and there was an absence of superordinate social control. Neither French church nor state could effectively prevent the sale of intoxicants; nor could native chieftains or dogiques among the converted tribesmen enforce abstinence. The lack of control mechanisms effectively to punish drunken excesses ensured the continuation and extension to new tribes of the complex problem. It soon became, and remained thereafter, the chief problem of culture contact.\(^44\)

Though alcoholic beverages were known in limited parts of pre-Columbian North America (southwest and southeast), in most regions the arrival of distilled beverages irreversibly undermined tribal mores, cohesion, and self-respect. Colonial governments often banned their sale to Indians, but there were many who saw—when local power was still in the balance—that they could not help but weaken native resistance to the European newcomer. Though in many places an article of contraband, alcohol was also a tool—a dangerous one—in the cultural assimilation of the "savage."

The ambiguity that shrouds this contraband derives from the conflicting roles played by colonial governments and private traders—the former attempted to "ban" the sale of such goods while the latter dealt them illegally at a high profit. This conflict between public scruples and private ambition is nowhere better represented than in the drama
played out between Miles Standish and Thomas Morton in the early years of Plymouth Colony. Morton was accused by the public authorities of selling guns to the Wampanoag, a convenient excuse for Standish to organize one of the first in a long series of Indian raids in colonial New England. The conflict this struggle represents—that of the trader turned "traitor" versus the public authorities—hinged on an assumption dear to American ideology: that public morality must struggle to combat and limit individual ambition. The mythic contest between authority and irresponsibility acted out by Standish and Morton was still alive and breathing in popular accounts of how the West was won in the twentieth century. In "They Died With Their Boots On," Errol Flynn as George Armstrong Custer is forced to move into Indian country in the Black Hills because a dirty-dealing fort trader has been liquorizing up the locals to the point of igniting a major uprising. The dictates of Manifest Destiny, according to the film, are purely secondary. Instead, the private sins of the entrepreneur and a few over-anxious gold prospectors are used as a pretext for public intervention—and ultimately national expansion—in this most "noble" of Western romances.

The Indian had but one commodity in the sixteenth century to consistently offer the European in return. This was not his land—only in the next century would property become a desirable commodity to the visitor and thus a point of contention. Nor was it gold—in early European
settlements north of the Rio Grande the pickings were paltry. And furs were not to become a trade staple in the north until the 1580's. It was, in fact, something more critical than any of these. As Verrazzano reported of the same people who refused his mirrors, they later "brought us some of their food..." This was an offer the European could not refuse.

As an item of exchange or an outright gift, food is no stranger to the way we commemorate these early meetings. That most solemn of American holidays, Thanksgiving, celebrates the first stir of the "melting pot" in its potent symbol of Red man and White sitting down to break bread (and Indian maize, succotash, and sweet potatoes) at the same table. The meaning of Thanksgiving is sharing—equal portions distributed to all in a hearty ambience of good spirits. But if this is the cherished image we hold of the early trade, it is in high contrast to the facts presented to us in the original chronicles. It should come as no surprise that the European was perennially hungry—he was, after all, thousands of miles from a base of supply. Neither should it surprise us that those expected to feed him did not, after the first years, always do so willingly.

The accounts of Indians being fed by the strange newcomers are not only few but startling. Champlain records that he saved a band from starvation in 1608, later remarking that their hunger had been no doubt due to their incorrigible migratory habits. But while food, on occasion, was used as a gift by the European, it was rarely
offered in a context where the Indian needed it. In these cases, its offer was almost as ornamental as giving trade beads.

When the Indian offered food to his rival, it was, depending on the context, a symbolic as well as an emotional response to the plight of the European. The intention appears to have been, by turns, securing a political alliance, giving sustenance to a stranger, propitiating the "gods," paying tribute to a powerful neighbor, and even "testing" the European to see if his physiological needs were indeed human. The motives are difficult to disentangle. But it would be as foolish to consider early examples of Indian generosity as purely philanthropic as it would be to characterize the later wars waged by King Philip or Geronimo as nothing but savage uprisings. The promise of food might also hide a darker motive. John Smith declaimed his personal horror at the fact that Indians had gained entry into the houses of Jamestown colonists before the 1622 "massacre" by offering to sell them food. One observation must remain: the European arrived with one hand bearing trifles and the other completely empty. It is difficult to decide which of them amounted to the real "handout."

There was an enormous spectrum of exchanges in which nourishment played a role. The food of the Native American might function as a gift, a market commodity or even a standard of currency. Verrazzano writes, "[they] brought us some of their food" as though describing a completely
innocent act. Twenty years later, Francisco Coronado notes, "we were in such great need of food that I thought we should all die of hunger if we had to wait another day...since altogether we did not have two bushels of maize, and so I was obliged to hasten forward without delay."

At the next settlement he levels what is called the "requisition," ensuring the army's right to a square meal at the expense of local stores. In a more bizarre example, the first unofficial historian of New France, Marc Lescarbot, describes the ordeal suffered by the French settlers in Florida in 1564:

...but perceiving the necessity of the French, the Indians sold their goods so dear that in a short time they wrung from them all the merchandise which they had left. What is worse, fearing compulsion, they did not approach nearer than a musket-shot to the Fort. Thither the soldiers went in extreme destitution and usually stripped off their shirts to buy a fish. If at times they complained of the high price, these rascals curtly replied, 'If you rate your goods so high, eat them, and we will eat our fish,' bursting out laughing, and jeering at them.

Eventually the French saved their skins, as much through their neighbors' pity as their own business acumen. The European had a way of turning the apparent abundance of America into a set of starving circumstances. Sometimes the proverbial cart could be put before the horse, as when John Smith describes the vain attempt of his men in Virginia to catch fish with a frying pan.

We are led to believe by our understanding of economics that the ultimate standard of exchange was something
different: precious metals, gold and silver, were the vital obsession of men who would stop at virtually nothing to obtain them, it is true. But while wampum beads as an exchange currency would become popular in the east during the seventeenth century, the idea of a regulated market economy based on a standardized currency was alien to the Indian cultures of North America. And yet the simple observation remains that the vast world economy the Europeans were developing was extremely precarious when any merchant—rich or poor, laden with a hold of furs or not—found himself on the verge of starvation. The value of food could be more immediate than even gold—there was an unvarying and physiological demand for it. Given the dire circumstances, for example, of Laudonnière's men in Florida, mineral wealth was useless and food the most precious commodity of all in this uncertain market of exchange. Without food, as Coronado realized, the European engine of hunger could not be fed—the engine that sought to convert bushels of maize into the golden treasures of Cibola, Quivira and Saguenay, the engine that propelled an army to march across much of America on its stomach. Not until the European settler became nutritionally self-sufficient—by the third decade of the seventeenth century in a few scattered communities—would the local Indian harvest and the decision of how to distribute it cease to be the arbiter of supply for the most precious commodity of all. If men would plunder to fill their ships with treasure, what would they do to fill their stomachs
during the "starving time"?

And yet, remembering our mythology of Thanksgiving, this same food was purportedly offered to the European as a "gift." That is to say, it "belonged" to the Pilgrim as much as the Indian because it came ultimately from the source itself, from the earth that nourished her children whatever their color. Winslow writes that on the first Thanksgiving (1621) the Pilgrims were able to entertain "some 90 men." In Book 2 of Of Plymouth Plantation, Bradford fails to mention them, noting only the "Indian corn" they had at their disposal. Here the historical giver (the Indian) is replaced in our written records with a mythical one (the earth). Neither in our collective memory of Thanksgiving inspired by the primary sources, nor in the secondary ones to follow, is the role of food as a hard commodity made clear, though it often functioned as such. This is partly due, of course, to its perishable nature. Food is "consumed" (biodegraded) in a way that combs, tomahawks, or copper kettles are not. As a result, it is more difficult to trace in the archeological record than most other trade goods. But there is another reason. The Native American is so tightly bound up in our iconography with the abundance of the land--from Squanto teaching the Pilgrims how to use fish in fertilizing the soil to the marketing of an Indian Corn Maiden on twentieth-century butter packages--that in our mythology he is not truly responsible for having brought the produce of the land to market. In our history of contact, food is not a commodity
but a "gift." As a gift we cannot pay for it, except with prayers: thus the ideology of Thanksgiving. An ear of maize springs as spontaneously from the Indian as, for the alchemist Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, the Indian spontaneously sprang from the earth. For our history to have recognized something as a "commodity" would have required that it undergo a process of "manufacture" (from fur pelt to beaver hat), an economic transformation that echoes the Christian rite of transubstantiation before the Eucharist can properly be consumed. The Indian did not "act" upon food, he merely provided it. In the end, the land and its harvest belonged to everyone. The process of trade (transformation) was a veritable metaphor that any good must undergo before being recognized in our mythos as a true commodity.

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In his travels around the world in 1604, Jean Mocquet described a Carib Indian and a strange dilemma he faced:

I saw one of these Caribs in great pain and doubt over the decision he had to make between a hatchet and a billhook, and took a long time apart to consider which was the more necessary: finally, after thinking a great deal about it, he chose the hatchet.58

Many of the AmerIndians who encountered European goods were similarly entranced. A very large literature already exists describing what was a widespread though usually qualified acceptance of European trade. Whether or not the trade was
beneficial to the Indian is ultimately a moot question. Many articles such as knives, kettles and firearms made life more comfortable for the people who adopted them. Yet there was also a hidden price to be paid in their acceptance—an escalating reliance on replacement parts and other manufactures controlled by the European, a fact which severely disrupted tribal subsistence patterns. This is not even to mention, of course, the cultural disintegration that almost inevitably accompanied the introduction of distilled alcohol.

The early trade abounds with irony. Peter Martyr recounts how Columbus captured one woman in order to give her trinkets, rather than demand gold or any more questionable services of her. Thus the strategy of assimilation might be achieved through adornment as well as exploitation. William Cronon has effectively described the dilemma of certain New England tribes:

As Indians increasingly sold the skins they hunted, they had to have an alternative for their own clothing. Despite some initial reluctance, they found it in European fabric, which, next to wampum, was by mid-century [the seventeenth] the single most important commodity they bought with fur... The decline in deer population made their reliance on European fabrics inescapable.

The demand for furs led to a debilitating dependence on manufactured cloth. Cronon eloquently argues that it was not so much European technology that created this demand as it was the strategy of investing local Indians with a felt
need to participate in the market: the more deer a man
killed, the more he received by way of goods in exchange,
and the more prestige accrued to him in distributing his new
wealth among the tribe. Farther north in what are now the
Maritime Provinces of Canada, an even more vicious irony was
at work. As the European demand for fur pelts rose
precipitously, the MicMac, for example, turned away from
sedentary farming practices to pursue the disappearing
beaver westward. Thus they became nomadic—the
distinguishing characteristic of the "savage"—only because
of the irresistible demands of a faraway market.
Furthermore, without an agricultural base, they were made
dependent on other peoples (Indian or European) for regular
supplies of food.

It may be sentimental to argue that the Indian was
somehow "captured" to participate in the trade, but there is
no doubt that trade was sometimes used to capture the
Indian. James Rosier describes an English ruse practiced on
the New England coast in 1605:

We manned the light horseman [a small boat]
with 7 or 8 men, one standing before
carried our box of Marchandise, as we were
woont when I went to traffique with them,
and a platter of pease, which meat they
loved; but before we were landed, one of
them (being too suspitiously fearefull of
his owne good) withdrew himselfe into the
wood. The other two met us on the shore
side, to receive the pease; with whom we
went up the Cliffe to their fire and sate
downe with them, and whiles we were
discussing how to catch the third man who
was gone, I opened the box, and shewed them
trifles to exchange, thinking thereby to
have banisht feare from the other, and
drawn him to returne: but when we could
not, we used little delay, but suddenly
laid hands upon them.62

Captives were commonly taken by the lure of such trinkets, a fact that made the Indian even more ignorant in the eyes of his rival. But even if the native was not an outright captive, there existed other levels of dependence on the European newcomer.

The AmerIndian was embroiled in a market system whose mechanism was difficult to comprehend. In the same relation as above, Rosier recounts a gracious reception offered the English by one of the local tribes:

In the evening another boat came to them on the shore, and because they had some Tabacco, which they brought for their own use, the other came for us, making signe what they had, and offered to carry some of us in their boat, but four or five of us went with them in our owne boat: when we came on shore they gave us the best welcome they could, spreading fallow Deeres skins for us to sit on the ground by their fire, and gave us of their Tabacco in our pipes, which was excellent, and so generally commended of us all to be as good as any we ever tooke...63

One phrase should be underlined in the passage: "...and gave us of their Tabacco in our pipes." Tobacco had only been introduced to Europe by the Spanish in the mid-sixteenth century. Yet only fifty years later, as we see from Rosier's relation, pipes of European manufacture were being carried to the New World. Thus, long before mercantilism became an official policy of the colonial powers (late seventeenth century), it was well in effect along the eastern American coast. It matters little whether Rosier's pipes were actually for sale—it would not take

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long for the new "calumet" to become one of the more desirable articles manufactured by the European. This unassuming weed was soon to become a symbol of wisdom, affability and leisure in the West. D.B. Quinn notes of the exchange:

When used [tobacco] on such an occasion it was in the nature of a social ceremony, bidding the participants to co-operate. The English were quite unaware of this ceremonial pattern and simply regarded the tobacco as another commodity.64

Whatever the original source of tobacco, the Indians were soon to be buying the new strain developed by John Rolfe in Jamestown, where the plant would, in a matter of years, be growing wild in the streets. Though once an article of contraband violently prohibited by European governments, this useful plant would become a widespread currency in the southern colonies of America once, as Fernand Braudel puts it, "the attractive possibilities of financial return" were appreciated.

There are more diabolical examples of the mercantilist maneuver, to be sure. Bells were a common commodity in the early trade, and the copper hawk's bell that Columbus distributed in the Caribbean earned many nuggets of gold in exchange. In his Decades of the New World, Peter Martyr relates an arrangement Columbus fashioned in 1501 with a Caribbean tribe:

The Admiral came to the Indians, who were full of anxiety and with shaken spirits. As it had not been possible to keep his own men from committing acts of violence and rapine while among them, he called a meeting of the leaders of the neighboring
provinces in which it was agreed that the people (the Spanish) would no longer wander the isle at will, for they had profaned it and left nothing intact. The Indians ['naturales'] promised the Admiral that, from the ages of fourteen to seventy, each would pay a tribute from his respective region, promising to observe this accordingly. They concluded the following pact: that the inhabitants of the Cibaos mountains, every 3 months or 3 moons (saying this to adjust their measurements to the Moon), would bring to the city a fixed measure full of gold, and that those who inhabit the areas where cotton or aromatic substances were produced, would, as individuals, pay a particular quantity in kind.67

Hans Koning has argued that these hawk's bells were sometimes the very measures employed to deliver the gold. In his *Brevíssima Relacion*, Las Casas bears this out:

> In the said sierra is the province of Cibao, where one finds the Cibao mines...The king of this land was called Guarionex, who had so many vassals that one of the prominent ones could gather 16,000 fighting men to serve Guarionex, and I knew some of them. This King Guarionex was very obedient, virtuous, and by nature, peace-loving, and devoted to the kings of Castile. Some years ago, by his order, each person with a house was given a hawk's bell to fill with gold; and if they could not fill it, it was cut in half, because the people of that island were not adept at mining gold.69

Where else could such a magical transformation take place? The Spanish bend an article of trade (hawk's bell) into a receptacle of tribute. Items that formerly filled the trading chests of the European are now to be filled with gold by people who were granted them as gifts or items of exchange. This is no small tribute to European ingenuity:
a trifle becomes a vessel of tribute, a token of friendship, a measure of wealth.

Martyr's account of Columbus offers a clue to the "Admiral's" method of negotiations, and even, perhaps, the reason for his relatively unblemished reputation as an explorer. Columbus makes clear that the motive for collecting regular tribute is to prevent his more unruly men from plundering the locals. This is as we would like it, for the canon of American history would not like us to consider that Columbus could have made such an arrangement of his own volition, unless circumstances forced him to do it.

The "founder" of America is not usually portrayed as one her despoilers--rather, this is a fate left to the ravenous men who follow. Whether the account is accurate or not, there are many clues within Columbus' own writings that suggest he was not the visionary father that many historians, from Martyr to Samuel Eliot Morison, have made him. He pleaded persistently with the Spanish crown to send him sheeps, calves and sugarcane plantings to commence the cause of colonialism in the Caribbean. He had no compunctions ordering Indians to be abducted to train them in Europe as interpreters or display them as curious specimens. He even advocated the development of an Atlantic slave-trade to further enhance the wealth of Castile:

You will tell their Highnesses, that for the good of the souls of the said cannibals, and even of the inhabitants of the island, the thought has suggested
itself to us, that the greater the number that are sent over to Spain the better, and thus good service may result...and the latter [Spanish cattle] might be paid with slaves, taken from among the Caribees, who are a wild people, fit for any work, well-proportioned and very intelligent, and who, when they have got rid of the cruel habits to which they have become accustomed, will be better than any other kind of slaves. 72

Though by our mythos a visionary, the Admiral did not envision the massive Atlantic slave trade that would later develop in the opposite direction.

Martyr's account of the tribute payment by the people of Cibaos is a drama played by ravenous men of greed (the Spanish soldiers) who are staved off by a man of Compassion and Good Sense (Columbus). The discoverer of America fights a rearguard action to save the natives from certain annihilation—at a price. The trade of the Indians thus becomes imperial tribute, though Martyr's tribute is much less directed at the kingdom of Castile than it is to the first of our Great White Fathers, a man whom he held in high personal esteem. One of the first New World protection rackets is so born. We can only wonder how much Columbus' pose was part of a "good cop--bad cop" routine, adopted as a compromise among men with different methods but virtually identical goals. True, Columbus himself wrote that the ultimate purpose of such gold would be that of "rescuing souls from purgatory," and he strictly forbade, in the early days, the trade of worthless articles for native gold. Compared to the notorious soldiers of fortune who would follow (Cortez, Pizarro, Alvarado), his name still
evokes admiration and even reverence among the public at-large. On the other hand, while he apparently took the Franciscan habit on his deathbed, when it came time to measure the flow of supply and demand this was no innocent soul. It was, after all, Christopher Columbus--European free agent par excellence--who, on the isle of Hispaniola in 1492, ordered that the first armed fortress in Paradise be built. One does not fortify as an act of benevolence.

This was an old dilemma. The best Christian was not always the best captain. The Norse saga of Erik the Red (c. 1000) states of Thorhall, "He was a poor Christian; he had a wide knowledge of the unsettled regions." If the New World was Paradise, why did the newcomers need a fort in the first place? Columbus himself put the dilemma well: "a great number of men have been to the Indies, who did not deserve baptism." In similar circumstances, Francis Drake described his mission as "what honor and profit it might bring to our country in time to come." Honor and profit were inseparable objectives. This is the delicate balance the first European garrison represented.

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Some historians and economists have argued that trade is a peaceful substitute for war. In reading many of the early American documents--among them Vitoria's apology for European expansion--one concludes that trade was not so much a substitute as it was a postponement or a precursor that
anticipated armed conflict. To begin with, many of the early European trading parties were indistinguishable from armies of conquest. Once they set out to take their measure of the land, circumstances had a way of revealing their true nature. Coronado writes,

“For, as I wrote to your Lordship, I made the trip from Culiacán in eight days' travel, during which the mounted gentlemen in my company and I carried a little food on our backs and on our horses, so that, after leaving this place, we carried no other necessary articles weighing more than a pound. Even then, and although we took all possible care and precautions in the management of the small supply of provisions which we carried, it gave out. This is no wonder at all, because the road is rough and long, and what with our harquebuses, which had to be carried up the mountains and hills and in crossing the rivers, the greater part of the maize was lost.77

The Spanish do not cast away their harquebuses, but risk instead the loss of their food. Where can we find a more unambiguous response to the classic economic conundrum, "guns or butter?" Apparently the harquebuses win without discussion.

Coronado's journey is regularly marked by the food levies the army enforces on the pueblos scattered in its path. But according to official correspondence, making war was not the primary objective of the expedition. In the instructions issued to Coronado by the Viceroy Mendoza in 1539, we catch a glimpse of the pragmatic motive that would have inspired the conquistador's command:

It is our will and command that you be assigned and paid 1500 ducats per year, which amounts to 562,000 maravedis, which are to be paid to you from our income and
revenue in the said province. Should there be no revenue in the province, we are not under obligation to order any portion of your salary to be paid.78

In more contemporary terms, this operation is to be "self-financing." Coronado has the best of motives for uncovering the wealth of the land--his own salary depends on it. In the document officially appointing him "governor" of the expedition, the justification for Spanish strategy is provided:

You are to protect and defend these lands and their natives in our royal name in order that no injury or ill treatment may be inflicted upon them, and in order that no other persons may enter those lands and take possession of or occupy them, saying that the government of the new land belongs to them, until, as has been stated, measures be taken that are most befitting our service.79

By the cutting edge of a single sentence, the invader of the American southwest becomes its "protector." Coronado is empowered to oversee the safety of the Indians at the same time he is granted them as a way to earn a living--this is essentially the theory behind the Spanish encomienda. The objective is apparently to protect the locals from the inroads of French, English, Portuguese, and presumably, even Spanish rivals. It is no wonder that the army will not barter for goods but requisition them. Neither trade nor war seem adequate strategies, since both require parties of relatively equal strength. Tribute, not trade, is the most convenient arrangement, though it may be nothing more than a postponement of bitter hostilities.

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The Spanish are not alone in the high price they exact for cultural contact. Where there is trade there is likely to be theft, and the English in Virginia (1585) were swift to respond to it, as an anonymous observer tells us, in no uncertain terms:

The 16. we returned thence, and one of our boates with the Admirall was sent to Aquascococke to demaund a silver cup which one of the Savages had stolen from us, and not receiving it according to his promise, we burnt, and spoyled their corne, and Towne, all the people being fledde.81

This reprisal is hardly surprising, considering Brereton's later remark that, "some of the meaner sort given to filching, which the very name of Salvages...may easily excuse." In fact, the entire idea of theft might be interpreted differently depending on who did the thieving. In Mourt's Relation (1622) we encounter the starving Pilgrims of Massachusetts:

And whereas, at our first arrival at Paomet, called by us Cape Cod, we found there corn buried in the ground, and finding no inhabitants, but some graves of dead new buried, took the corn, resolving, if ever we could hear of any that had right therunto, to make satisfaction to the full for it; yet since we understand the owners thereof were fled for fear of us, our desire was either to pay them with the like quantity of corn, English meal, or any other commodities we had, to pleasure them withal.83

The theft of the corn is recorded as a temporary loan; the theft of unearthing buried human remains and its wider repercussions goes unmentioned. Here William Bradford (who some claim was also the author of Mourt's Relation) describes what is apparently the same event:
And proceeding further they saw new stubble where corn had been set the same year; also they found where lately a house had been, where some planks and a great kettle was remaining, and heaps of sand newly paddled with their hands. Which, they digging up, found in them divers fair Indian baskets filled with corn, and some in ears, fair and good, of divers colours, which seemed to them a very goodly sight...they returned to the ship...and took with them part of the corn and buried up the rest. And so, like the men from Eshcol, carried with them of the fruits of the land and showed their brethren...

These are the "fruits of the land," not of the Indian. The loan that Mourt mentions has disappeared. The only thing admittedly borrowed by Bradford is the Biblical allusion to Numbers.

There is a pattern to these exchanges, wherever they occur. The European arrives and engages in a series of increasingly complex negotiations with the local Indians, periodically marked by ritual gift-giving. If he arrives without food and water, he is constrained to apply pressure on his hosts by a variety of measures—begging, barter, plunder, mass levy. The chosen strategy incurs a wide spectrum of responses: scorn, cajoling, begrudging compliance, open resentment—all recognizable characteristics in the canon of the stereotypical Indian male. The longer the European remains, the more likely the Indian is to begrudge him any form of intercourse, even the exchange of "presents." Each side is equally convinced the other is capable of supernatural powers (whether divine or diabolical) at the same time he is inconceivably ignorant of the rules which govern proper human conduct. The Indian
goes naked, eats his food unprepared, is governed by custom rather than law, holds forth at great length in making long-winded speeches at the most inconvenient hours, and knows nothing of the world immediately beyond the wilderness he so tenuously inhabits. The European, on the other hand, is physically unclean, an inept hunter, a maker of selfish bargains, overanxious to show his good intentions to the point of being rude, and, though knowledgeable in the ways of another world (Europe or Heaven), is frighteningly unsophisticated about the rules that govern the present one.

In North America, intermarriage is rare between the cultures, and will be for some time to come. Furthermore, sexual encounters are not often mentioned in the narratives, though no doubt they occurred with some frequency. Perhaps it was believed such tales were too incendiary for public consumption and would weaken the hold of Christian values. At any rate, the most commonly described form of intercourse between the two cultures was material rather than sexual. One would not expect a simple act such as trade to be susceptible to misunderstanding, and neither did many of the contemporary participants. But what meanings lurked behind the making of commercial gestures? We can only guess what it might have meant to receive a knife or a gun in barter from a "friend." What did a string of beads signify to a native—mere wampum (exchange) or the holy rosary of a "Black Robe?" What confusion might have arisen over the sale of "spirits" (alcohol) from men whose brothers spoke
irony in the French phrase for \textit{brandy}, "eau de vie," (water of life) to someone with no common cultural assumptions? How to comprehend men who needed the help of others to supply them with food? Perhaps this very inability to forage for provisions was one of the critical reasons the European was so often mistaken for a creature descended from "Heaven": if circumstances conspired, the worst failing might be misconstrued as a sign of otherworldliness. But so too the most Christian virtue might be linked to an intractable fault: Vespucci says of one tribe, "They are so (liberal) in giving that it is the exception when they deny you anything; and, on the other hand, (they are free) in begging, when they show themselves to be your friends." What such unexpected generosity (or impudence) might have connoted in the balance to a Renaissance Christian is difficult to say. When the European was hungry, no doubt such giving was exemplary; when not, the communal distribution of goods was at best a nuisance, and at worst, a pretext for moral criticism and cultural conflict.

As the Spaniard Alarcón noted of his journey up the Little Colorado River (1540), "If I were to give something to every one, all the goods in New Spain would not suffice." As always, a limited supply encountering a hefty demand created the need for a market price. As William Cronon notes in his study of early New England contact, this required of the Indian an immense transition in his way of thinking—the step from simple barter between neighbors with immediate needs to a commercial market

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economy whose commodities might be shipped thousands of miles to meet a fluctuating demand:

The essential lesson for the Indians was that certain things began to have prices that had not had them before. In particular, one could buy personal prestige by killing animals and exchanging their skins for wampum or high-status European goods.85

The notion of a fluctuating price must also have been a mysterious one. The European peasant, for example, did not have to deal with it at all, since the price of European bread did not vary so much as the weight of it. Save for the natives who made the passage to Europe, the enormous consumption of pelts in the Old World must have appeared a mysterious and forbidding thing in America. Certainly long-distance trade between tribes long ante-dated the coming of the European: the New Mexican Anasazi had a long-established trading network with MesoAmerica, Great Lakes copper was traded on the eastern seaboard of North America, and other examples are not wanting. But this trade, as far as we can tell, operated in far smaller volume than the European one that had developed by the beginning of the seventeenth century. From cod to beaver to sassafras to tobacco, by 1625 the New World had become a plentiful Eden whose riches would have put the royal game parks of Charles I to shame.

There is no wonder that tribal gift-giving might have been misinterpreted by the European as a cut and dried market proposition. Neither is it surprising that the Indian would have summoned great scorn for his rival's
inability to follow local protocol in exchanging objects of value, whether intended as "gifts" or "commodities." But one should be cautious in making contrasts. Nothing would be further from the truth than to suggest the Indian could not be a savvy trader, or that the European had no sense of propriety in striking an acceptable bargain. Both were capable of far-reaching adaptations. Tribes as varied as the Iroquois, the Sioux and the Navajos eventually showed a remarkable agility in turning the fur trade, the horse and sheepherding into cornerstones of successful tribal economies, at least for a time. We should be as wary of accepting outright the stereotype of the "greedy trader" as we are of the "Indian giver." Some of the Indian trade was clearly requisitioned in the form of tribute; but there can be no doubt that much of it was also based on willing and mutual consent between the two parties.

Whatever agreements were fashioned, the pre-colonial Indian had different notions of what constituted a market, or even of a concept as fundamental as "ownership." We should remember that many treaties were contested due to differing interpretations over what rights had been ceded—whether permanent possession of the land and its fruits, or, as was often the case from the native perspective, the contention that such land was being lent to the European (usufruct rights) without implying permanent settlement or occupation.

The trade was to have an immense ecological impact, much of it destructive. Even so, it has become popular in
recent years to emphasize Indian abuse of natural resources in the pre-contact period, presumably to palliate a long-felt cultural guilt. Cronon, for example, argues that Indian conservation practices in New England were guided by something other than a romantic attachment to Mother Earth, as has often been claimed:

Need—as measured by use and by the success of harvest or hunt—still determined [pre-contact times] the volume of trade: there was little reason for the inhabitants of a village to trade for more food than they could eat, or more clothes than they could wear...Precolonial trade enforced an unintentional conservation of animal populations, a conservation which was less of an enlightened ecological sensibility than of the Indians' limited social definition of 'need.'

No doubt the dichotomy of "before" and "after" has too often conditioned our appraisal of the Indian as ecologist. Yet one must ask a further question: was the limited "social definition of need," as Cronon calls it, an impersonal (natural) force in precluding greater growth, or did it somehow arise out of a partly-conscious decision of a given group to conserve limited resources? Cronon suggests that conservationist limits were an inherent character of economic life. But other forces may also have been at work, as Marvin Harris notes in an analysis of an earlier time:

War and female infanticide are part of the price our stone age ancestors had to pay for regulating their populations in order to prevent a lowering of living standards to the bare subsistence level.

In other words, have we mistakenly construed the Indian as a conservationist just because his numbers (and therefore his
demands) happened to be small, or was the growth of his population (and therefore his definition of need) closely regulated because he was, in the broadest respect, a "conservationist"? Were Indian economies regulated by "natural" or "cultural" principles? Whatever our response may be, it will reveal much about our personal assumptions regarding the Native American. It would seem that twentieth century historians are as likely to project the Indian as an extension of Nature as were the chroniclers of an earlier age.

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James Muldoon has written of the fourteenth century, "Increasingly, trade took on greater importance for European Christians than renewal of the Crusades." Of the sixteenth century, I would amend his statement to read, "...for European Christians trade became a Crusade." The link between piety and material trade was critical, even in the most fundamental assumptions of what constituted human propriety. Almost without exception, the first thing one encounters in a description of North American contact (provided it does not take place in winter) is the announcement that the "Indios" are naked or in a very primitive state of dress. Though no doubt many Europeans were endeared to female nudity for reasons more lascivious than philosophical, the majority of them were appalled by the primitive state of culture (i.e. "development") such
nakedness represented. For a civilization strongly tempered by the iconography of the Church, nakedness of the Indian could not help but recall the primordial sin of Adam and Eve. Francis Drake noted along the California coast, "...[we were] bestowing upon each of them liberally good and necessary things to cover their nakednesse; withall signifying unto them we were no Gods, but men, and had neede of such things to cover our owne shame."

This was the convenient alliance that emerged between trade and faith, between 1) a growing population and its expanding economy geared for higher production; and 2) a religion that explained the Fall of Man by positing a carnal sin that must be atoned for by being forever "covered." A contemporary controversy would rage over whether or not Christ had been naked on the cross, but there would never be any question that the "savage" should be clothed—that was a necessary condition to his becoming a Christian. The goals of European trade and faith, however paradoxical, were complementary: they intended to "discover" America (to "disrobe" her) as well as to "cover" the American Indian (to "improve" and "protect" him). As such, the explorers were motivated at one and the same time by the worst kind of economic rapine and the most refined principles of religious prudery. The nakedness they celebrate is that of America, not the Native American. It must have been with a grim sense of satisfaction that an English party under Gosnold found themselves greeted by a particular band of Indians off the coast of New England in 1602:

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From the said Rocke, came towards us a Biscay shallow with saile and Oares, having eight persons in it, whom we suppos'd at first to bee Christians distressed. But approching us neere, wee perceived them to bee Savages... Than after signes of peace, and a long speech by one of them made, they came boldly aboard us being all naked, saving about their shoulders certayne loose Deere-skinnes, and neere their wastes Seale-skinnes tyed fast like to Irish Dimmie Trouses. One that seemed to be their Commander wore a Wastecoate of blacke worke, a pair of Breeches, cloth Stockings, Shooes, Hat, and Band, one or two more had also a few things made by some Christians, these with a piece of Chalke described the Coast thereabouts, and could name Placentia of the New-found-land, they spake divers Christian words, and seemed to understand much more than we, for want of Language could comprehend.94

The assimilation of their leader is virtually complete. If he has not yet been formally converted, the possession of "things made by some Christians" suggest that his change of allegiance is imminent.

The link between prayer book and ledger is an old one. The most ancient examples of writing still extant--tablets from Sumeria five thousand years old--reveal not only sacred information of the priests but everyday business accounts. The strangers who arrived in the New World brought with them a panoply of Renaissance "machines" that, in one way or another, furthered the Atlantic trade: the account book, the astrolabe, the Bible printed on movable type, even a grid system of latitude by which a spherical surface could be squared with minimal acts of "incantation." That most respected of New World historians, Joseph de Acosta, based his hierarchical scale of civilization on the relative
ability of cultures to record their histories in some form of writing. It was no surprise to him that Cortez and a handful of followers conquered the entire empire of the Aztec, just as an alphabet of twenty-six phonetically-based letters would prove more maneuverable than all the pictographs of the Americas. These were the men who would manipulate an alphabet (Phoenician) and a number system (Hindu) from the mysterious East in the holy and commercial subjugation of the Indies.
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CHAPTER 5

THE BOW AND THE LIAR

"As with the bow and the lyre, so with the world: it is the tension of opposing forces that makes the structure one."

Heraclitus
There is a story told by the Winnebago of their first meeting with the French. One day, a long time ago, white men appeared in boats on the horizon of Lake Michigan. The Winnebago came out to offer tobacco to the strangers and waited for their ship to approach. The French heaved to, disembarked, and in greeting fired their guns in the air. Trembling at the sound of them, the Winnebago called the strange noisemakers "thunderbirds." The white men put out their hands in greeting but the Winnebago demurred, placing tobacco in their outstretched palms in the belief the strangers were asking something of them. The French looked at the tobacco. They didn't know what it was. When they saw some of the old men smoking it, they ran about crazily looking for some water to put out the fire. The Winnebago had never seen anything so strange. As the story goes, "After a while they got more accustomed to one another." In time, they even learned how to talk.

The story is normal among first contact narratives in America except for one detail: the ignorance the French exhibit is every bit as "silly" as that of the Native American. Usually the oft-told tale stops at the point when the European fires his rifle and the Indian genuflects in abject horror to the superiority of his "divine" visitors. In a moment the native is crushed by his ignorance of modern weaponry and the attendant realization that a more advanced culture has disembarked to bring him, if not the ways of the Gods, then the civilization of the French—a prospect very
nearly as imposing. Once the joke is over, the savage is taught the A-B-C's, the twenty-third Psalm and the virtue of manufactured metal. End of story.

As an allegorical history of the New World such an account represents the end of an indigenous tradition for many tribes, one that lived in remote isolation from a Europe that had developed long-distance travel, a superior military technology, and a market economy of global reach. The "thunderbird" of the Winnebago story—and scores of other tales like it—symbolizes the ferocity of this invasion. But the Winnebago tale does not end with the stock "firestick" of Hollywood fame. It shows us, too, the French—an equal partner with the Indian at first footing—committing a blunder that must have seemed woefully childish to the Winnebago, though the narrator does not elaborate on their reaction. Wilderness stereotypes of the savvy Frenchman aside, these voyageurs are inept. They are every bit as ill-prepared to encounter tobacco as the Winnebago are a muzzle-loading rifle. For once the White man and Red are on equal terms.

The story has a ring of truth about it, even if one argues the French would have been able to recognize tobacco by the middle of the seventeenth century when the account purportedly takes place. Over the span of three hundred years the accuracy of some of the details can be questioned. But the drama depicted of the misconceptions harbored by each people in the course of a first clumsy exchange is deeper and more complete than that of most
first-contact narratives, the vast majority of which are told by Europeans. In the Winnebago story, for once the familiar image of Daniel Defoe's terrified Man Friday kneeling before Robinson Crusoe is put in a completely different perspective, one that denies the traditional roles usually assigned to such emblematic creations--native servant and white master. Much like Columbus or Vespucci or John Smith before him, Defoe was either too naive to have imagined such a possibility or too disingenuous to have written it down. So it has been with the long literary legacy of colonialism.

First and early contact between Indian and European was commonly based on a series of mutual misunderstandings, especially when gesture was often the most precise form of communication that could be settled upon. With the military conquest of Indian peoples which followed, the loser's "inferiority" was gradually represented in a studied series of iconographic images: the praying Indian (sporting top hat and trousers), the drunken Indian (bartering for brandy), the superstitious Indian (worshiping the horse), the gullible Indian (surrendering the earth for a gaudy handful of baubles). What probably began as a marriage of mutual curiosity was transformed into the cherished and degraded image of "The Ingenuous Savage." What is now wanted in our cultural histories is an honest reconstruction of the contact experience, a revision in perspective, indeed, a history of forgotten things.

The comparison to follow concerns contact between
cultures hitherto ignorant of each other in large part. There are two cases of European-Indian exchange we will consider, both historically-documented and dating from the early or middle sixteenth century. In each example, an eyewitness narrative is contrasted with a broader "historical" version of the same event. All of the perspectives are distinctly European but one, a unique Indian version describing the first case of contact. In many crucial details the respective versions do not agree. But then, one is not likely to read in Jacques Cartier that the French, seeing a man smoke tobacco for the first time, ran madly about trying to keep him from setting his house and family on fire. This is what Cartier wrote in 1535:

Then at frequent intervals they crumble this plant into powder, which they place in one of the openings of the hollow instrument, and laying a live coal on top, suck at the other end to such an extent, that they fill their bodies so full of smoke, that it streams out of their mouths and nostrils as from a chimney. They say it keeps them warm and in good health, and never go about without these things. We made a trial of this smoke. When it is in one's mouth, one would think one had taken powdered pepper.2

This is the historical shadow of the Winnebago tale. Even with Cartier's admirable self-restraint, we sense the surprise of the French at this incomprehensible Iroquois custom. The hold of the Marlboro Man on the Western imagination is such that it seems strange the weed could ever have been alien to the West. But much, we will see, is "alien" in competing historical accounts.
THE CODEX AND THE CASTILIAN

One of the most dramatic accounts of first contact in the Americas is that describing the meeting between Spanish and Aztec in 1519. The ensuing tales of conquest and plunder engendered by the first meeting excited much of Europe with rumors of human sacrifice and fabulous mineral treasure. What is unusual about the first meeting of these peoples— the emissaries of the Emperor Montezuma coming face to face with the conquistador Hernando Cortez—is that it is described in some detail by both European eyewitnesses and Indian informants, though both of them many years after the fact. Because of the large gap in the historical collection of extant Indian documents regarding the Conquest, such a balanced perspective is rare.

The main Spanish account we are concerned with is the celebrated one of Bernal Díaz—penurious gentleman, footsoldier, personal advisor to Cortez. The relation of his experiences in Mexico was only written in the 1560's (some forty years after the incidents in question), and his manuscript was not published until 1632. Díaz' is a straggling narrative that is bound and determined to be an epic one, comprised of episodes detailing plunder, violence, deceit, massacre, treachery, unimaginable glory and wealth, and wholesale human disillusion. The original title, The True History, is as accurate a description of its contents as one could invent, in spite of the author's disconcerting allusions to the chivalric romance which was also to inspire Miguel de Cervantes not many years later. The meeting

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described here is a tiny detail in an immense panorama of destruction and conquest. (See Appendix A)

The Codex Florentino, essentially a native document, was transcribed in Nahuatl (Aztec) from the eyewitness accounts of the Conquest delivered by Mexica Indians in the 1550's. The project was supervised and later translated into Spanish by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, a Spanish Franciscan endowed with a rare mission to preserve a semblance of pre-Conquest history rather than merely destroy it. Like Díaz' True History, it is written several decades after the Conquest; unlike Díaz, however, its witness is collective and anonymous. Exactly which native perspective it relates is open to some question: a certain number of the Codex scribes hailed from Tlatelulco, a rival and former dependent of the Aztec city-state of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City), a fact that may somewhat flavor the tone of the narrative. We should also remember that The Codex Florentino was composed under the watchful eye of the conqueror—as such it is an apocalyptic vision of a lost world, recorded to preserve a memory of Indian culture as well as to serve the paternal strategy of the Church toward a conquered people. (See Appendix B)

We must first establish a context for these relations which are so different in tone, detail, scope, and ultimately, purpose. While the meeting between Cortez and the first emissaries of Montezuma takes place, as Díaz tells us, on Holy Thursday in 1519, this is the "first contact" between these peoples in only the most figurative sense.
In 1517-18, the Spanish had already reconnoitered the Gulf coast of Mexico from the Yucatán to Coatzocoalcos under the leadership of Córdova and Grijalva, trading and skirmishing with peoples who paid some form of tribute to the Aztec capital. Before the Cortez expedition even sailed, the Spanish had evidence of mineral wealth on the mainland and had met with colonial functionaries evidently appointed by Montezuma himself.

For their part, the Aztecs were well-informed of the Spanish intrusion. It would have been impossible to ignore the early Yucatán excursions, if not the rapid deployment of Spanish manpower in the Caribbean since 1492. While Montezuma's messengers were actively pursuing the major trade routes with rumors of the Spanish arrival, so too were his prophets busily engaged in Tenochtitlán. According to the Codex, a number of omens were observed during the ten years preceding the Spanish call at Vera Cruz: a tongue of fire, a temple struck by lightning, a foaming lake whose water boiled and flooded, an ashen-colored bird that bore a mirror on its head reflecting men riding deer, beasts with two heads who vanished into thin air when brought before Montezuma. Add to these omens the ancient prophecy of the God Quetzalcoatl's return to Tenochtitlan from the land of the East, and what we have, as observers have often noted, is a rendezvous between Cortez and Montezuma heavily laden with preconceptions tempered by an aura of divine prophecy. As elsewhere in the Americas, the first physical exchange between the cultures was burdened by the weight of
myth, hearsay, observation from a distance, and earlier contacts that have gone unwitnessed in the historical record. "First contact" was rarely the virgin experience the phrase suggests.

Of the main characters in this drama, some context is needed to understand their apparent motives. Cortez has been given orders by Diego Velasquez to trade along the Caribbean coast of Mexico in order to establish a favorable rapport with the locals and reconnoiter their potential wealth. He has not, as yet, made a name for himself as one of the most ruthless conquistadors in the New World, but his time is at hand. His rival, Montezuma, is a "God" incarnate, an embodiment of the Mexican version of "divine right." His is a sweeping domain: Aztec control over the Valley of Mexico is still young (more or less 150 years), but it reaches as far east as the Yucatán and south to Oaxaca. Dependent states pay regular tribute to Tenochtitlán, often in the form of ritual war captives destined to become the stuff of human sacrifice. Commoners are not permitted to gaze directly at the Emperor; the streets are swept before him as he walks.

It is Hernando Cortez himself who first mentions the meeting between Aztec and Spaniard in a letter to Emperor Charles V dated July 10, 1519. (See Appendix C) Díaz' account will place a very different emphasis on this encounter in the bay of San Juan de Ulloa, but Cortez' is worth some consideration in spite of his cursory treatment of the event. The conquistador writes, "the natives came
to inquire what caravels were those which had arrived..." It is not clear whether the Indians are allowed to come on board or whether they are forced to ask their questions from a distance. But it would not seem to matter either way, for the Captain-General dispatches the incident with military efficiency: "...and as it was very late that day, almost night, the Captain remained quietly in the caravel, and ordered that no one should go on shore." This is all he will tell us of the first exchange that happens in the bay. Unlike Díaz, he does not relate that the ships arrive at San Juan on Holy Thursday, three days before Easter. His account is marked by its unruffled composure in reporting what must have later seemed like the proverbial lull before the storm.

Referring to himself in the third person, Cortez brusquely continues: "Early the next day the Captain landed with a great part of the people of his armada, and found two of the principal Indians there, to whom he presented certain of his own valuable garments..." The disembarkation is marked by a lavish exchange of gifts—Cortez presents his own garments to the dignitaries of the local cacique, who, the next day, comes himself to offer the Spaniard "precious jewels" laid out on a white tablecloth. Cortez has waited until the Spanish are on land ("solid ground") before he makes his offering.

The rest of the letter concerns the political maneuverings that follow the landing at San Juan. Here, Cortez willingly disregards the orders given him by his
superiors and rationalizes a startling decision to the Emperor:

For these reasons, it seemed to us that it was not advantageous for Your Majesties' service to do as Diego Velasquez had ordered the said Captain Fernando Cortés to do (which was to trade for all the gold we could, and, having obtained it, to return to the island of Fernandina, in order that the said Diego Velasquez, and the said Captain might profit exclusively by it, and that it seemed better to all of us that a town should be founded and people there in the name of Your Royal Highnesses.13

Rather than trade with the locals, Cortez boldly decides to maximize profits by colonizing them; this is a step in European thinking that will not be successfully achieved in most parts of North America for another century. It is a kind of mutiny where the captain not only consents to the "uprising" but is instrumental in helping it to come about. Well-known for their sophistication in legal matters, the Spanish discard one document to adopt another, this one a formality to note the founding of Vera Cruz and the subsequent selection of her municipal officers from among the ranks of Cortez' men. There can be little doubt who will be "chosen" Chief Justice of the new municipality.

The ultimate justification of the mutiny is economic:

Having done as stated, and, being all assembled in our Council Chamber, we agreed to write to Your Majesties; and to send you, in addition to the one-fifth part which belongs to your rents, according to Your Royal prescriptions, all the gold, and silver, and valuables which we have obtained in this country, on account of its being the first, and above which we keep nothing for ourselves.14
What, precisely, he meant by "this country"—whether the vicinity of Vera Cruz or all of Mexico—is open to question. The oath is sealed in greed, if not in blood. But the dramatic significance of the step is clear: to prevent anyone of dubious loyalty from returning to Cuba with word of his insubordination (however obsequiously he worded it), Cortez would soon order his fleet to be burned and thereby maroon his men in Mexico. Thus, his description of the arrival at San Juan de Ulloa is only of passing interest in his letter to the Emperor compared to the struggle for power that was imminently occasioned. But we will see a different perspective in The True History and The Codex Florentino, both of which will tell us what transpired on the ship the first night and the three days to follow in far greater detail. The name of the town standing today in the vicinity of their arrival—Vera Cruz ("Place of the Cross")—is the sole reminder in Cortez' letter that the Spanish touch land on the morning of good Friday.

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Our first contact with the two main texts (The True History and The Codex) is somewhat mystifying. In reading them, we are, by turns, confident and doubtful as to their veracity: certain details are shared in both accounts, others are mysteriously omitted in one or the other. While they can be extremely disparate, however, the relations
have enough in common to pose as a recognizable pair.

These are the details on which they agree: a group of Mexica (Aztec) Indians in small boats approach a Spanish vessel. They board it. They pay ceremonial homage to the leader, Cortez—apparently they intend to flatter their hosts. The Spanish give the Indians food and drink. Cortez delivers a speech explaining the purpose of his visit to Mexico. The messengers disembark the same day to return to their leader, Montezuma.

Of course, this is a vapid reconstruction of the event. If we cancel out all the details on which Díaz and the informants of Sahagún disagree, we will be left with nothing but a bloodless document from which to discern a classic struggle for power on the Spanish flagship, a struggle in which both sides vie for opening position before the first blow is struck. We are then left with a history, not of forgotten things, but irreconcilable ones. What is indeed most striking in the accounts is the information so casually omitted in one or the other. And if it is so hazardous to agree on the details of a single meeting, what does this bode for someone who would aspire to tell us—someone such as Díaz or Sahagún—the history of the entire Conquest?

To begin with, gift-giving is a prominent theme. Almost all of the gifts mentioned in each relation are completely ignored in the other. In effect, each side participates in a ritual exchange which its partner refuses to recognize. The bestowal of a gift in one account

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disappears before it can "arrive" in the other. The Codex
does not tell us of the blue trade-beads that Díaz mentions,
beads which the Spaniards, on an earlier voyage, had found
were immensely popular along the Gulf Coast. Nor, for that
matter, does the Spanish chronicler waste even a word on the
exotic array of gifts so richly catalogued in their
preparation and their bestowal on the figure of Cortez
in the flagship meeting. The account which comprises in The
Codex the longest paragraph in the chapter here included
(12,5), is seemingly given no more mention by Díaz than,
"Then the Indians paid many marks of respect to
Cortez..." Is this all we are to hear of the beautiful
turquoise serpent mask and the quetzal feather fan
elaborately related by Sahagún's informants? The Indian
gift-giving is inspired by what one assumes is a complex
variety of motives, ranging from deity worship (Cortez
mistaken for Quetzalcoatl) to the more mundane matter of
establishing a political understanding with a powerful
newcomer.

Not only does the Codex fail to mention the blue beads,
but it attributes other gifts to the Spanish
instead—shields, swords and lances—which are completely
absent in Díaz. A strange inversion has taken
place—symbols of symbiotic trade (the beads, In Díaz)
become the weapons of symbolic combat (iron swords, in the
Codex), both of Spanish manufacture. A gesture of peace is
transposed as a violent challenge, a metamorphosis even
Montezuma's magicians might have been hard put to duplicate
in the palace of the Black Hall.

In fact, it is the theme of metamorphosis that underlies the entire Codex account. The emissaries arrive bringing Montezuma's gifts in supplication; they flee in terror, leaving behind the warlike presents of Cortez. They would transform the conquistador by bedecking him in the splendid regalia of Mexico; he replies by "dressing" them in irons. He frightens them by firing the lombard gun, then entertains his captives with food and wine. Diplomatic envoys from an inland empire of immense reach, the Aztecs are made captives by strangers on a boat at sea. Then, once imprisoned by Cortez, they are seemingly allowed to escape by his soldiers. The state of the emissaries' lives is constantly in flux: they genuflect, they clothe the "God," they are imprisoned, nurtured, threatened, released. They have encountered a Stranger who acts with no clearly perceptible motive. Nothing is exactly as it seems: even when they tell the Spanish they have come from Mexico, they are accused of lying. Perhaps Montezuma's spies were accustomed to hide their allegiance to Tenochtitlán, but for diplomats to invent it? In return for quetzal feathers, the disoriented Mexica are given a cannonade.

While the Codex is fraught with the terrifying implications of the Conquest to come, Díaz treats the meeting offhandedly (rather like Cortez), as the point of disembarking for the march inland. For him, the issue is a commercial one—the emissaries say Montezuma will supply "anything"; Cortez responds reassuringly that they have
only come "to see them and to trade with them." If one recalls the later motto of the English Virginia Company—"we do buy of them the pearls of the earth, and sell to them the pearls of heaven"—Cortez' vow is not altogether dishonest. They have already obtained gold by trading green and amber beads along the coast—now it is their task to find out what blue ones will get them.

The one gift that the chroniclers agree upon is food—more specifically, wine. This represents a curious reversal of the usual pattern of early European-Indian contact, by which the former offers an array of colorful trinkets in exchange for nourishment provided by his native host. In these exchanges, the offer of food is a bold declaration of power as well as an expression of friendship. But in the bay of San Juan the meeting takes place on shipboard—Spanish ground—so the legendary fertility of the land is momentarily unimportant. The Aztec has been "dispossessed" by his eagerness to parley; thousands of miles from Castile, it is the Spaniard on board ship who is host to the Indian. Whatever we attribute this reversal to—the cleverness of Cortez, Montezuma's consuming impatience, the weight of the Quetzalcoatl myth—the European is transformed from the role of supplicant to "host" on this Holy Thursday in 1519. On what may have seemed an apt occasion to partake of a political communion, he is the one to offer food and wine to his Indian visitors. A code of collaboration and faith is being tested: the two parties watch each other engage in the most

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human of pursuits. Do the "Gods" themselves dare eat? Díaz does not tell us. Perhaps the host is there only to replenish.

Sometimes even the gift must be rendered by a show of power: "They made them drink wine," says the Codex, "They made them eat." Over the course of a single day the will of the envoys is broken time and again, according to Sahagún's informants. On the other hand, the tone of Díaz' relation is conciliatory, noting the submission of the messengers without condescending to them. How then do we account for such disparity in two relations of the same event? The Codex tells us the envoys fled in terror, and "paddled with their hands"; Díaz writes, "The messengers returned on shore well content." We might explain such contradiction by the failure of each side to summon empathy for the Other, a decisive characteristic of ethnocentric cultures. But there is another way. It may be that one of the relations is describing more than a single "event."

Let us consider the Spanish cannon. Why is it that the lombard guns that so horrify the Aztecs (in the same tradition as the Winnebago "thunderbird") warrant no mention whatsoever in this episode of The True History? Perhaps the guns were not fired at all and the messengers invented the story merely to impress Montezuma. Or perhaps they were fired, and Díaz, not always the faithful chronicler we would have him be, was sleeping below decks. Better still, there is another possibility: perhaps they were fired and not fired. The discrepancy may arise, not due to a selective
historical memory or any dissimulation, but simply because the Codex describes in one frame what appears in The True History as a "series of events," not merely the first exchange between Cortez and the emissaries. Indeed, the Codex chapter may be a compression of several days—even weeks—following the first meeting aboard the flagship. As such, it might well be a miniaturization depicting the long-awaited arrival of Quetzalcoatl, the final omen, according to Aztec mythology, of the end of one of the eras of the world.

Díaz tells us that on Good Friday the Spanish disembarked. On Saturday—Easter Eve—some Indians arrive at the behest of one of Montezuma's governors bringing food and "some gold jewels." On Easter Sunday, a grand feast is celebrated whose participants include Cortez and the cacique Tendile. Several of the details describing this meeting in Díaz are strangely reminiscent of Chapter 5 in the Codex. Here the lavish gifts of Montezuma are reciprocated:

With that he took out a petaca—which is a sort of chest, many articles of gold beautifully and richly worked and ordered ten loads of white cloth made of cotton and feathers to be brought, wonderful things to see, besides quantities of food. Cortés received it all with smiles in a gracious manner and gave in return, beads of twisted glass and other small beads from Spain, and he begged them to send to their towns to ask the people to come and trade with us as he had brought many beads to exchange for gold, and they replied that they would do as he asked.

The beads of Díaz and the expensive array of the Codex
(12,5) are here exchanged. Finally the circle of ritual
giving half-explained by the Castilian, half by the Indian
informants, is complete.

But a more convincing detail is still to come:

All this was carried out in the presence of
the two ambassadors, and so that they should
see the cannon fired, Cortés made as though
he wished again to speak to them and a
number of other chieftains, and the lombards
were fired off, and as it was quite still at
that moment, the stones went flying through
the forest resounding with a great din, and
the two governors and all the other Indians
were frightened by things so new to them,
and ordered the painters to record them so
that Montezuma might see.25

Here are the lombards; here is the display of firepower as a
weapon of psychological coercion; and here is what the
emissaries later tell Montezuma in Book 12, Chapter 7 of the
Codex:

Fire went showering forth; sparks went
blazing forth. And its smoke smelled very
foul; it had a fetid odor which verily
wounded the head. And when (the shot)
struck a mountain, it was as if it were
destroyed, dissolved. And a tree was
pulverized; it was as if it vanished; it was
as if someone blew it away.26

The witnesses testify that a tree was "pulverized." As the
cannon are also fired in The True History, the possibility
arises that the same event is being described in what
seemed, at first, to be disparate accounts.

According to Díaz, the Spanish had already disembarked
by this time. The close-up Indian description of the
pulverized tree suggests that the two parties were on
land—not on the ship—when the lombard was fired. In Codex
Chapter 7, the messengers also report, "And those which
bore them upon their backs, their deer, were as tall as roof terraces." The mention of horse and rider together implies not so much a shipboard diversion as it does the display of equestrian prowess that Cortez stages on the beach Easter Sunday. The evidence is good that two separate meetings—what Díaz would call two separate meetings—have been fused together in the Codex to form a single episode of gift-giving, political obeisance, and unqualified terror, followed by a singularly fortuitous escape.

The tactic of telescoping historical events might be attributed to nothing more than a collective memory severely damaged in the upheaval of the Conquest. Perhaps. Or, to a native tradition bent on ritualizing history at the expense of specific temporal detail. Perhaps. But the Mexican calendar, as many authorities tell us, was at least as precise as the Julian one with which Díaz would have been familiar. It may be that the meetings of Holy Thursday and Easter were melded in the Codex not because of a failure to focus on detail, but because a different principle of perception is being used than that normally employed in the West. In fact, this principle may not be temporal at all, but spatial in its orientation:

The Nahuas (Aztecs), therefore, believed that movement and life resulted from the harmony achieved by the spatial orientation of the years and the days, in other words, by the spatialization of time. So long as this harmony continued, so long as the four directions of the universe were each allotted thirteen years in every century and their supremacy unquestioned during the specified time, the Fifth Sun would continue to exist.
Consider: the entire story of Codex, Chapter 5, takes place on water--a zone inhabited by the Spanish "Gods" that is not directly under Aztec political control. The Díaz relation has "divided" the events corresponding to Chapter 5 between a shipboard meeting on Holy Thursday and a coastal exhibition of military might on Easter day. Quite simply, according to the Castilian, while the Spanish disembark on Good Friday and make camp by a judicious deployment of cannon and altar, in the Codex they remain on board until the end of Chapter 8, making contradictory gestures of violence and appeasement from the prow of their ship. In the Aztec relation, the Spanish remain outside the territory of the Mexica (on the ocean) until Montezuma has heard of their terrible power and decided, fatalistically, to succumb to their demands. In the Codex the intruder is suspended; he is ritually removed from the earth as a physical threat, until the Emperor makes an irreversible choice as "tragic" in its implication for the Mexica as might have been the classic gesture of an Antigone or Agamemnon.

For Díaz the disembarkation is merely another fact to be recorded, though certainly one pregnant with symbolic possibilities. Unlike Cortez' letter, The True History is carefully framed by the Christian calendar--the journey of Christ shadowing the journey of Cortez and his men. The first paragraph from Appendix A begins and concludes by fixing temporal coordinates from the calendrical holy days.

In The Codex, by comparison, chapters 1-8 of Book 12 exhibit a radically different method of organization. The
activities of Montezuma seem to take place in a permanent state of twilight. Almost no mention is made of calendrical accounting (neither Aztec nor Christian), in spite of its prominence in pre-Columbian Mexico society. There is no specific plotting of time, no clear movement from day to night, except in the depths of darkness: "It was deep night when they came to reach it (Tenochtitlán); they entered it quite by night." The framework of the Mexican informants is not between day and night at all, but water and earth, as the ritual of Montezuma's fear is acted out by the emissaries on board the Spanish ship. From the realm of earth (Aztec) to the realm of water (Spaniard) the envoys are sent, climbing a ladder to pass from their canoes into the ship that harbors the leader of the "Gods."

This is our problem: in the Codex the Spanish remain frozen in the flagship, while they have long since disembarked according to Díaz. Why do the informants of Sahagún suspend them so long over water? Perhaps the answer touches on the human perception of fate and the interpretation of divine destiny. Burdened by the consistent reports of Spanish aggression and greed, in Chapter 8, Montezuma adopts the mask of psychological defeat in the face of his enemy's advance: "But these, when they performed their charge, their duty against the Spaniards, had no power whatsoever. They could do nothing." In the collective Aztec memory that was based on an apocalyptic vision of the past (the Conquest), the Spanish did not "land" until the Emperor consents to a foreshadowing of
final defeat. Of course, the Castilians have already landed—on Good Friday, for one, and various other occasions while reconnoitering the coast during the previous two years. In a sense they have already met one another—Cortez and Montezuma—but for the latter, the final landing is a symbol of his personal submission to destiny and the ultimate defeat of the Aztec people:

And when the Spaniards came forth to dry land, (when) finally they so came, when already they were to move, when already they moved, when already they followed the road, they were well-cared for, they were held in esteem. It was completely in (the emissaries') hands that they went along, that they followed the road along. Much was done for their sake.31

It is no surprise that the Aztecs often depicted Quetzalcoatl in the form of a serpent. As the enemy enters the Aztec realm, the movement of the sentences grows twisting, sinuous, serpentine. But for all this they are no less insistent in their objective. The Spaniard has arrived. He has touched on land, Mexica land. On water he was immobile, his horses useless. He could not advance until Montezuma submitted to an "inevitable" decision. Now the prophecy becomes suffering, the bluster of the lombards a machine of war. The innocence of waiting is over; the second act of the ritual begins. But there is to be no turning back this time—Díaz tells us of Cortez' decision to burn the Spanish ships.

As the two rivals approach their encounter, the theme of mirrored or mistaken identity now plays an important role. Díaz tells us that Montezuma's messenger Tendile had
brought with him several painters to "make pictures true to 32
nature of the face and body of Cortés," as well as the
rest of the Spanish entourage. They are then to return to
Mexico with evidence of the stranger's arrival. Cortez
understands this will be a critical "message" for Montezuma,
and so orchestrates, as stated above, a military/equestrian
display by which to awe the painters. Before they can
depart, his last "gift" to the Mexica (according to Díaz) is
33
"a helmet half-gilt but somewhat rusty" that belonged to
one of the soldiers. It is the Indian emissaries themselves
who claim that it resembles one "which had been left to them
34
by their ancestors," and Cortez extends it to them with
the stipulation that they return it filled with grains of
gold. The incident echoes Columbus' use of hawk's bells on
Hispaniola—an article of adornment (in this case with a
military function) is converted by the European, in the act
of presenting it as a "gift," into a receptacle of political
tribute. The helmet as "vessel" recalls the European
allegory that sexualized the fecundity and largesse of a
feminine America (see Chapter 2). In granting a "favor,"
Cortez consigns the favored (Montezuma) to a position of
debt.

For his part, Montezuma will receive from these
messengers two entirely different "messages": the first, a
painting that will inform him or "fill him in" as to the
true nature of the invader; the second, a helmet that he
will be constrained, in accepting, to fill and send back.
The first message, of his own creation, is a passive one—
it requires only that the Other be interpreted from a distance. The second, the Spanish one, is "active"—not only is it a more practical object (an accoutrement of battle), but demands by its very form an uncompromising response. There is no wonder the Aztec emperor is paralyzed by the Spanish advance—as Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out, Cortez has mastered the art of human communication with a man "only" accustomed to communicating with the Gods:

Montezuma's fear of information received is associated quite coherently with fear of information sought by the Other, especially when this latter concerns his own person... 'And when Montezuma had heard that earnestly he was inquired after and asked about, that the gods urgently wished to behold him before their eyes, he felt torment and anguish in his heart.' (Florentine Codex, XII, 89) According to Duran, Montezuma's first reaction is to want to hide in a deep cave.35

Montezuma had seen the paintings; no doubt they inspired fear in him. Unable to send a "gift" that will deter Cortez rather than further goad his ambition, the Emperor finally settles on a message that the Spaniard will not be able to send back, one that will reflect (or deflect) his slightest move or gesture. He decides to send to Cortez, Cortez himself.

The exchange of gifts earlier cited represents a metamorphosis that rendered objects of trade into objects of war. As we shall see, nothing was immune from this theme of conversion, not even the very identity of the Spanish leader. Díaz relates,

Tendile arrived with more than a hundred laden Indians, accompanied by a great Mexican Cacique, who in his face, features
and appearance bore a strong likeness to our Captain Cortes and the great Montezuma had sent him purposely, for it is said that when Tendile brought the portrait of Cortes all the chiefs who were in Montezuma's company said that a great chief named Quitalbor looked exactly like Cortes...we called them in camp 'our Cortez' and 'the other Cortez.'

Mirrors had long been a popular item in the European trading chests, but never had such a living reflection been so used to deter the political designs of the Other. Perhaps Montezuma sent Quitalbor with the same hope that the Castilian, in seeing his own image, would shed the skin of a threatening invader for that of a submissive cacique. Or perhaps Montezuma wanted to believe there was something so ineluctable in the face of the man (the God?), that once Cortez beheld his reflection (as Quetzalcoatl, according to the myth, had once done), he would self-destruct in a passion of shame and remorse. Then again, the Aztec emperor may have merely wished to reveal with a single gesture the grand scope of his powers—the procurrence of food and jewels aside, the summons of a man who bore an uncanny resemblance to the Castilian "trader" turned soldier-of-fortune.

Exactly how Cortez interpreted this "message" we do not know; it does not even bear mentioning in his letter to Charles V. A man so given to exploiting circumstance for the achievement of a strategic end could not have been oblivious to manipulating it in some way. Bent on achieving an unrelenting objective (Tenochtitlán), he may have perceived the Indian look-alike as a herald of things to come—the eventual domination of the "Spanish cacique." But this
mirrors the psychology of his rival, who preferred to read every step of the Spanish as somehow foreordained in an oracle. Díaz gives us no reason to assume that the presence of the double in any way disturbed the Spanish. After introducing the cacique (the passage quoted above), he returns effortlessly to the main theme of negotiations:

To go back to my story, when these people arrived and came before our Captain they first of all kissed the earth and then fumigated him and all the soldiers who were standing around him, with incense which they brought in braziers of pottery.38

Though Quitalbor later appears in the narrative, the coincidence is accorded no more. The "duel" is thus dismissed as unworthy. Montezuma's message is refused.

In Díaz, other theatrical elements are, if subdued, never far from the surface of events. But this is nothing compared to the document fashioned by Sahagún's informants. The formalized strategy of the Codex—parallel repetition, ritualized speech-making and heroic diction—reveals a historical document disguised as an epic play, which is neither to question its veracity nor underestimate the extent of its importance. It is a deposition testifying to the ambiguity of good and evil, and the attendant corruption that inevitably accompanies political ambition as well as inertia. Even the regulated appearance of messengers to mediate between antagonists echoes a device of ritual Greek tragedy. For the European, on the other hand, the ceremonial unfolding of catastrophe is more abstract—in this case, the calendrical echo of the Passion. In the True
History there is a more secular sense of play: the lombard
guns that perform to the gallery of an already captive
audience.

The Codex celebrates the defeat wrought by the Conquest
as a thing inevitable, an event symbolized by the landing of
an iron-clad serpent. In this it is as much Christian as
Aztec, as much apocalyptic as sacrificial in its human
surrender to a belief in divine agency. In Díaz we read of
a grand pageant, the expedition comprised of episodic events
leading to a climax (the fall of Tenochtitlán), temporally
defined (1521). As told by the Castilian, the story cannot
be understood unless one grasps the major events in their
entirety. But what is most striking about Book 12, Chapter
5 of the Florentine Codex is that it is ontogenetic—it
holds within itself a symbolic representation of the
Conquest at-large. The messengers "eat" the earth before
Cortez, they offer him gifts, they adorn him; then they are
betrayed, the guns are fired, they fall away swooning as
though dead. Victorious, the Spaniards feed them, replenish
them, give them arms, in effect, make them over in their own
image. In all this can be read the appeasement of the
Spanish and the subsequent destruction of the Mexica, the
crushing defeat of the Indian and the first makings of the
modern Mexican. We discover a miniaturized format in which
the whole outline of the epic is embedded in one of its
parts, the story to be played over and over again as though
told by a great machine, a saga of human fear and divine
retribution that we can discern four hundred years later in

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the slightest of its parts.

A Game of Lightning

It has been said that the Spanish are easy targets. The literature of the Black Legend, though partly accurate, bears this out. But we do not need a figure as infamous as Cortez to construct a comparative example of New World historiography. For the moment let us move from Vera Cruz to the east coast of Florida, from the foreboding events of 1519 to the aftermath of a singular meteorological phenomenon in 1564. The Indians have changed from Aztec to Timucua, the Europeans from Spanish to French. Neither of the documents to be considered in this case are native ones--none of the French occupation (1562-65) exist. But two of the French texts we do possess will tell us much about the historical assumptions regarding European-Indian contact in the canon of American history. This time the starting point is not a "thunderbird" but a thunderstorm.

The first of these accounts is a description of a lightning storm and its surprising political consequences. It is written by a Frenchman, René Goulaine de Laudonnière, leader of a French Huguenot colony that was established to rival Spanish claims in the Caribbean and South Atlantic. The French attempts at settlement in the area were later aborted, though they did inspire the Spanish founding of

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Saint Augustine as a deterrent to future incursions. Originally impressed by the natural wealth of Florida and Georgia, the Protestant adventurers-cum-colonists of King Charles IX were nevertheless unable to gain a permanent foothold due to a continual dearth of supplies from France and their befuddling inability to feed themselves by living off the "fat" of the land, as one of them, Jean Ribault, described it. They were more settled than the earlier disastrous expeditions to the region under the Spanish Narváez and De Soto, but hardly more self-sufficient. They also did not prove very adept at the complex negotiating demanded of them by their Indian neighbors. Laudonnière began writing his account soon after he returned to France in 1565, though it was not published until 1586, well after his death. (See Appendix D)

The second relation is based—apparently in its entirety—on the Laudonnière passage. It comprises a single chapter in Marc Lescarbot's *History of New France*, first printed in 1609 and reissued several times before the final edition of 1617. The first English translation was made by Pierre Erondelle in 1609 and reprinted by Samuel Purchas three years later. It is the first history we have of the French colonies, based almost entirely on the primary sources provided us by adventurers and apologists as varied as Cartier, Thevet, Ribault, Laudonnière and Champlain. From the demand that would have inspired the printing of several early editions, one can assume it was widely read by those involved with French colonization and therefore
considerably more popular than Laudonnière's text. The History is panoramic in scope (3 volumes), nostalgic in tone (eliciting the Golden Age of Arcadia), and clearly intended to contrast the avarice of Spanish colonists with romantic French settlers bent on domesticating the wild fruits of the New World: "The best mine which I know is corn and wine, and the raising of cattle. He who has these is wealthy." Lescarbot is a clever writer with a large fund of classical allusions and a year of experience in the New World for good measure—he lived in 1606-7 at Port Royal on the Bay of Fundy in the service of the Sieur de Poutrincourt. By training he is a barrister, by inclination a poet; it is our good fortune he remained largely judicious in his deployment of metaphor and allusion. But sometimes what is most telling about Lescarbot is not what he says of the French enterprise, but—for better or worse—what he fails to say. (See Appendix E)

Setting: the French Fort Caroline on the south bank of the St. John's River in present-day Florida. Having already abandoned one fort, the French cling tenuously to the barricaded settlement they will only leave under heavy armed protection. They live in an atmosphere of mutual distrust with the local Timucua, whose various bands are vying for the attention and perhaps permanent alliance of the French. The Indians dangle rumors of gold and armfuls of food before their visitors; the French display their martial prowess and a blinding array of glittering trinkets. One may safely assume they are mutually contemptuous of one another for
their respective ignorance and limitations.

Then Laudonnière tells us of a bolt of lightning that strikes the fort on August 29. His relation is steady, well-balanced, and obedient to whatever strictures a twentieth-century historian might impose upon a primary source. The bolt crashes, the nearby fields burn for three days. Then Indian and Frenchman parley, the European flexes his muscle, the natives respectfully retire, the heat malingers, the fish in the river die, and--but for the grace of God--the French might have perished too. There are parallels to Díaz and the Codex accounts: 1) a parley is formally opened by a ceremony of gift-giving; 2) the Indians have come with the intention of ascertaining the questionable motives of a stranger; and 3) the European resorts to frightening the messengers with a display of improvised realpolitik. The interval of time and distance between the two (Díaz and Laudonnière) does not seem to have significantly changed the rules and order of combat.

Then we read Lescarbot. His faithfulness to the Laudonnière original (the only one of the French Florida relations to mention the lightning storm) is commendable. He is not, of course, a parallel eyewitness as were the informants of Sahagún to Díaz, but his are the eyes through which a large reading public in France and England will experience the events of the Florida expedition. His evident fidelity to the original text is not at all surprising: he is a sympathetic countryman of Laudonnière who wishes to encourage further French colonial efforts,
and is retelling the events within two generations after they have transpired. Given this, one might well expect him to reproduce such a simple incident with a minimum of mischief in mind. And this is essentially the case.

What he adds to the text is negligible. First we find a very limited vocabulary of "color" a little lacking in Laudonnière, but comprised of a diction forgivable in a man of serious literary aspirations: "orators" ("harangueurs") instead of "Indians"; the fields "drenched" with water ("arrosees") instead of "covered." These are mild intensifiers. Otherwise, in typical seventeenth-century fashion, Lescarbot often borrows word for word from his source. This is not to say he is any more specific than Laudonnière. He is indeed capable of untangling a prolix passage with an almost airy dismissal: "I think it more worthy of interest and of being recorded than any unusual thing that has yet come to pass..." becomes, in Lescarbot's words, "...the like whereof was never seen." This is laudable compression. But where Laudonnière's precision is exemplary, "On August 29 there fell on the fort..." , Lescarbot would instill in us a mood of the imperfect historical past--"It was at the end of the month of August..." At most these are tonal emendations.

The structure a historian imposes on an event can be just as important as his choice of diction. The Bennett translation of the original quoted here uses four paragraphs organized around the Timucuan interpretation of the fires
and the calculated French response. But in the original edition there was no paragraph break in the story whatsoever, a trait shared by many extended passages from the period. Bennett organizes his material in order to help the modern reader. Nevertheless, his translation alters the original and, however subtly, influences our perception of it.

For his part, Lescarbot plots only two paragraphs. The break coincides with an extended passage of time (3 days) and is followed by an obligatory reference to God's mercy. But the incident also happens to appear at the end of a chapter (10, Book I) which began with a meeting between Laudonnière and a local chief, Satouriana. In this way, what began as an unexceptional portion of a rather amorphous narrative (Laudonnière) becomes the crowning finale to a historical chapter that unravels the details of murderously intricate negotiations. In Lescarbot the story turns from being an incident into a moral episode, a link in a longer narrative chain with a clear polemical purpose. Implicitly, the lightning is transposed into an act fashioned by its author with a pointed design, whether the plan is divine (of God) or literary (of Lescarbot). The event is thus endowed with a purpose; the reader may now deem it "appropriate" to the general scheme of things. As the historian tells us at the outset, "...it will be fitting to close this chapter by giving an account of it."

But according to Lescarbot, what is this event really fit to show us? Perhaps we should consider the accounts
from a completely different angle. Rather than ask what the historian has grafted onto the text, let us identify instead what he has omitted from Laudonnière's more prosaic telling. While the latter makes a point to convey the ritual entrance of Allicamany's (Satouriana's) emissaries, even enumerating the gifts of food they bring, Lescarbot is strangely silent on this act so pregnant with political implications. All he tells us is that "orators" were sent. This is very like Díaz who, even in cataloguing a few of the Aztec gifts on Easter Sunday, is curt, even perfunctory, in acknowledging them--the dramatic power of the lombards interests him more. In both cases the European has little patience to report a ritualized political offering, as opposed to clearly-defined market propositions which are a common subject in the early relations. He will accept the gifts, of course. They do not qualify as tribute in the traditional sense since the balance of power is still in question. Lescarbot ignores the offering as a petty detail in a tale of grander proportions. In the annals of literary reporting, one might well argue this is a venial sin at most.

However, we find a much more significant omission when we compare the first paragraph in the Bennett translation with that of Lescarbot. We are told in both of the childish Indian belief that the fires had been caused by the already legendary firepower of the French. But the eyewitness Laudonnière notes something at length that Lescarbot fails to rescue: the French had been as confused in their
ignorance and every bit as mistaken in their first explanation of the fires as had been the Timucua. At first they believe the Indians are burning their houses. Then, that they are lighting signal fires to alert passing ships. Who is the more gullible? Laudonnière is "on the point of sending out a boat to ascertain the facts" when Allicamany's men strike first in their quest to explain the mystery. All that Lescarbot tells us of this same confusion in the fort is "Much anxiety was caused thereby to our French." Much anxiety, indeed. Such compression on the part of the historian is no longer praiseworthy. However unconscious or complex the motive, a story has been distorted. The image of the Ingenious Native returns.

It is now for Lescarbot's reader (and Laudonnière's) to witness the spectacle of the untutored savage playing into the hands of the wily European. The fires, the Timucua speculate, have been caused by the French cannon, not lightning. This singular misunderstanding is then transformed by Laudonnière into a publicly shared one, into a lie. The lie is magnified when he confidently boasts of his restraint in firing "just halfway down the course", an admirable twist by a man not generally noted for his imagination. While Laudonnière is "concealing his contempt" for his neighbor's ridiculous notion, it is for Lescarbot's reader to fully enjoy it, to savor yet another lesson that demonstrates the superiority of the European. Of course, this was conduct that in no way resembled that of the diabolical, treacherous savage.
Rather, it was cultivated, well-bred, thoroughly expedient sneakiness, permittable only among the most refined and dissembling of gentlemen. Though not carved in high relief, this is one of Lescarbot's lessons.

It is worth noting that André Thevet, cosmographer to the French crown, published a brief rendition of the same incident in his *True Portraits and Lives of Famous Men* in 1584. His source was apparently Laudonnière's own manuscript, as many of the details are identical: Chief Allicamany sends six of his people to parley with the French; they arrive bearing gifts of grain, pumpkins and grapes; they ask the strangers why they have fired their cannon and set the meadows ablaze; the mistaken idea that the "thunder of Jupiter" was caused by the French cannons is of central importance. In fact, there is only one noticeable difference between the texts, a difference that should alert us to the dangers of accepting any secondary source as definitive simply because it bears close resemblance to the original: the French captain in Thevet's account is named Gorgues, not Laudonnière. Indeed, Dominique de Gorgues was the French commander who later avenged the disastrous fate of Laudonnière's men at the hands of the Spaniard Pierre Menéndez de Avila. But Gorgues arrived in Florida after the incident of the storm. There can be no doubt that Thevet changed the names deliberately, and there has been speculation as to his motive. Frank Lestringant suggests that the royal cosmographer may have championed Gorgues because of his impressive military
credentials and his Catholicism. He also argues that Thevet had long prevented Laudonnière's manuscript from being published—and out of sheer professional jealousy—though he borrowed from it, as this passage demonstrates. One slightly dishevelled detail is enough to make an entire passage inaccurate.

In the episode of the thunderstorm—of only passing significance in the two main narratives—a shared Misconception is extemporaneously parlayed into a Lie. For one side this is tragic; for the other it is a fortuitous weapon offered them only because they are the second to speak in a critical exchange. The Lie, because of its enormity—and through Laudonnière's ruse of "generous restraint"—is twisted into a threat. This, in turn, will re-inforce the fear the Timucua hold for their visitors. Woefully unable to "use" Nature—to fish or forage for provisions—the French will now be able to manipulate its explanation in order to feed themselves. In return for food the Indians are given "knowledge" (the source of fire) and "mercy" (the supposed restraint of their rivals, now masters). What would have happened if the French messengers had arrived first at Allicamany's camp to demand why the Indians were burning their houses? Curiously, it is the "silent" Indian of our legends who is the first to speak in this exchange. For Laudonnière and the French, the bolt of lightning that sunders the earth is a perfect deus ex-machina.
The use of history for the perpetuation of an Idea is at least as old as Thucydides. In the same way that Laudonnière manipulates the Timucua to achieve a desired result, so have historians of no small repute seized, for example, on the image of Cortez to serve as the critical force of a historical movement—Bartolomé de Las Casas to damn him as the satanic shepherd of the Black Legend, Gerónimo de Mendieta to resurrect him as a New World Moses leading the Mexica into the Promised Land of apostolic Christianity. The uses of history can be as myriad as its victims.

We have moved from the overtly theatrical display of the Spanish guns at Vera Cruz to Laudonnière's ruse forty years later. The latter plays not on the destruction of a tree, but the mere threat of the French cannon, something as potent in its symbolic or metaphorical presence as a real sixteen-gun salute. In each set of relations we find a pattern: the eagerness of the Other to speak; the subsequent manipulation of his ignorance; the burial of ritual gift-giving beneath the grander details of Western episodic narration; and the ideological agenda of a culture when it retells an event (what is an "event" in the Codex?) according to a selected framework. For Díaz, this framework is a memoir of violence and valor; for the Aztec, a tragic,
sacrificial vision; for Laudonnière, a terse apology for failure; for Lescarbot, a colonial advertisement in imitation of a pastoral ideal. No one of these, in and of itself, is precisely a lie. Nor can any one of them exactly be the truth. But we must ask ourselves what they mean as part of a larger tradition. Why, until recently, had we never seen the image of the Frenchman dropping his thunderstick to put out a blazing tobacco fire at the edge of Lake Michigan? Have the Winnebago even remembered it all these years?

The thought of a savage hiding in the forest intent on waylaying the first passing stranger is about as likely an event in our daily lives as meeting a centaur at a 7-11 or waiting for the nightly news from the Delphic Oracle. It is part of our mythology nonetheless to partake in the communal laugh at the "trembling native." While the stories of Pan, Narcissus or Eurydice are no longer believed by our culture to have literally taken place, they still comport themselves with moral conviction in the hands of whomsoever would resurrect them. Where now we look askance at the Greek myths as the legends of another time, we have also learned to tell our own history of the American frontier with at least a measure of skepticism. But even if our own inclination is to scorn them, the images remain an inseparable part of us: the vanishing American, the savage warrior, the treacherous scout, the tragic victim, the trembling native--the list gets no smaller with the passing years. We should note these newer myths with the same
skepticism we bring to interpreting the Greek ones, for it is not a question of whether Pan (or Allicamany) really existed in a time and place long, long ago, but what the details of their stories tell us of the civilization that preserved and propagated them. We no longer believe thunderbolts come from Zeus; it is about time we retold the "thunderstick myth" with the same penchant for accuracy and passion for truth we normally accord our "classics."
NOTES


5 Ibid., pp.11-17.

6 Ibid., pp.1-3.


9 Ibid., p.153.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., pp.153-54.

13 Ibid., pp.155-56.

14 Ibid., p.159.


16 Díaz, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p.69.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.


20 Sahagún, The Florentine Codex, p.16.

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21 Ibid., p.17.
22 Díaz, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p.70.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p.71.
25 Ibid., p.72.
26 Sahagún, The Florentine Codex, p.19.
27 Ibid.
29 Sahagún, Florentine Codex, p.17.
30 Ibid., p.22.
31 Ibid., p.23.
32 Díaz, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p.72.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
36 Díaz, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p.73.
37 Leon-Portilla, Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico, p.32.
38 Díaz, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p.74.
42 Ibid., pp.89-90.
43 Laudonnière, Three Voyages, p.88.
44 Lescarbot, The History of New France, p.89.
45 Laudonnière, Three Voyages, p.88.
46 Lescarbot, The History of New France, p.89.
49 Ibid.
50 Laudonnière, Three Voyages, p.89.
51 Lescarbot, The History of New France, p.89.
52 Laudonnière, Three Voyages, p.90.
"I'D WALK ACROSS TEXAS WITH YOU":

THE CAPTIVITY OF CABEZA DE VACA

"The narrative of Cabeza de Vaca is very difficult to translate for the reason, that the criticism by Oviedo about its lack of clearness is too well-founded. Many parts of the chapters and also whole chapters are so confused that it is impossible to follow the original more than remotely, and paraphrasing had to be resorted to. Even then, in several instances, the meaning remains possibly somewhat obscure. It is as if the author, in consequence of long isolation and constant intercourse with people of another speech, had lost touch with his native tongue."

Adolf Bandelier, The Journey of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca
Is the story of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca the stuff that history is made of or historical polemic? Is there any truth to be found in his tale that does not merely reside in the eye of the beholder? The Royal Treasurer to the voyage of Pánfilo de Narváez has fortunately left us an account of his journey across North America in a 1542 document entitled The Relation. Having undergone several translations into English over the centuries, the narrative has also been adapted as a novel and a play, and strong opinions about its "message" are not wanting. Figures as diverse as the natural historian Joseph de Acosta and contemporary novelist Henry Miller have felt compelled to argue their beliefs about the moral truths embedded within the text. To refer to it, on occasion, as a "story" is not to question the author's integrity any more than it is to normally greet an autobiographical account with some critical reserve. But Cabeza de Vaca's Relation did not so much begin as a story as it has become one in the hands of those who have chosen, with varying degrees of success, to interpret it.

Núñez' narrative is unlike that of any other North American explorer (with the possible exception of David Ingram), in that the events therein recounted take place not over several weeks or a few months, but nine years—from 1527, when the Spanish fleet sailed from Cuba, to 1536, when Núñez arrived with three companions in the Mexican city of Culiacán. Between these years stretches a journey of great endurance and privation, one caused by a series of Spanish military blunders and a strange array of good luck and
coincidence that has inspired more than one reader (including Cabeza de Vaca himself) to explain all of it by appealing to a grand mosaic of supernatural design. In the twentieth century, as we shall see, using divine providence as an explanation for what is otherwise inexplicable is no less popular a strategy in accounting for this odyssey across the North American continent than it was four hundred years ago.

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The Spanish fleet commanded by Narváez was despatched by orders of Charles V in 1527 with the objective to conquer and govern the province of Florida, a region that extended, for the Renaissance Spaniard, far beyond the boundaries of the present state into Georgia and the Carolinas. But before the fleet could reach the American mainland, it was severely damaged by a hurricane off the coast of Cuba, occasioning the loss of many men and horses. In February, 1528, the army again sailed. Its objective: the now-famous peninsula named by Ponce de León in 1512 during his unsuccessful quest for the Fountain of Youth--Florida, "land of flowers." On April 12 they sighted land; like Cortez off the coast of Mexico in 1519, they weighed anchor on Holy Thursday and disembarked on Good Friday, another auspicious beginning for a mainland Spanish expedition. The narrator of The Relation tells us their
force comprised 4 ships, 80 horses and 400 men.

The link with Cortez is not coincidental. Pánfilo de Narváez had previous experience dealing with the Mexican conquistador. When Cortez burned his ships at Vera Cruz in 1519 to demonstrate his new-found independence from the Crown, the Spanish authorities had hurriedly despatched Narváez with a small army to punish him for insubordination. The two finally met in Mexico, but their struggle was brief and decisive: in the course of battle Narváez lost his right eye—and even his men, when it became clear to them which of the Captains was more powerful. The "cyclops" Narváez thus paid a personal price in defending the interests of the Crown, and in so doing had been miserably unsuccessful.

Second in command was Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, officially the Royal Treasurer—an appointment that suggests how primary was the object of finding gold when the force was assembled. His grandfather had been a national hero in the conquest of the Canary Islands, and so it was that Núñez turned to a military career, seeing action at Ravenna, Tordesillas and Villalar before shipping out for the New World in early 1527. We know very little more about him, except that it seems likely he married shortly before his departure.

Once the fleet reached the Florida coast in 1528 (somewhere in the vicinity of Tampa Bay), Narváez settled on a decision that Núñez, and subsequent military strategists, found inexcusable. He divided his men into two groups—one
to reconnoiter inland on foot, the other to cruise the coast and find a safe port; the idea was that both parties would eventually reassemble with new information gained by land and water. But once divided, the groups never saw each other again. Failing to find a port or sign of the others, the ships returned to Cuba and gave their companions up for lost. Thus were Narváez and three hundred men marooned on the North American mainland, each with a ration of two pounds of biscuit and a half-pound of bacon which was to serve them for about fifteen days. But these were men marooned with a dream.

Before dividing forces, the Spanish had already found a few nuggets of gold and been enticed by the stories of great wealth told by some of their Indian captives: "They gave us to understand that very far from here was a province called Apalachen, where was much gold and plenty of everything we wanted." They lived off maize that had been left in abandoned villages and the occasional dead horse from their own stores when the stories did not "pan out." So began a wild goose-chase into the interior, "using the captive Indians as guides." The Spanish slogged on, bearing up under frequent ambushes by the terrified locals.

It was becoming clear they would die, if not by the ambushes, then devoured by the land itself. Over fifty men were dead, all but a few horses consumed. Even Narváez had come to reverse his position—they must escape the land, not penetrate it. Nearby the present-day Apalachicola Bay, the Spaniards submitted themselves, out of sheer desperation, to
a miraculous act of transformation that would make them once again sea-worthy. They erected a bellows out of deerskin, forged tools from the iron in their weapons, braided horsetails into rigging, found stones for ballast, caulked with pine pitch and palmetto oakum, sewed their shirts into sails, and on the 22nd of September set sail in four makeshift barges due west in search of the northernmost Spanish settlement in America, Pánuco. What they did not know was that their destination, across the span of the Gulf of Mexico, was half a continent away. The place they sailed from they named "The Bay of Horses."

Already great hardship had been endured, but this was nothing compared with what was to follow. If the rest of the journey had been planned by their most bitter Protestant rivals, it could not have encompassed a more staggering itinerary. Their water bottles, crudely fashioned from horses' legs, began to rot. They passed within sight of the Mississippi River and sent landing parties ashore to find fresh water; some of the men disappeared. Nearly dying of hunger and exhaustion, the men on the four barges were constrained to follow Narváez' order that each raft should fend for itself. Here the story of what befell the expedition forked into four divergent paths, only one of which we have a historical document. Caught in the surf off the coast of Texas, Núñez' barge beached on Galveston Island November 6, approximately fifty days after leaving the Bay of Horses. The prologue to the adventure was over.

There is no way to faithfully summarize what happened
during the next seven years without trivializing, on the one hand, the hardships of a dwindling band of men, or severely testing the gullibility of the reader on the other. What we have is a credible historical document that professes to tell an incredible story. The Indians of Galveston shelter Núñez' group for the winter. Then, on the verge of starvation, a few Castilians resort to cannibalism. Simplicity is still their forte: they call their new home "The Island of Doom," though now it is difficult to say exactly who is dispensing it. According to Cyclone Covey, the Spaniards infect the native population with dysentery, though the next spring the strange visitors are encouraged to become tribal healers, "without examination or a review of diplomas." Such encouragement was no doubt due in part to the disappointing fact that the Spanish had proved to be so miserable at other occupations, including the gathering of food.

The castaways split up to live among different tribes. For four years (1528-1532) Alvar Núñez becomes an itinerant merchant in the employ of "the people of Charruco," penetrating into the interior perhaps as far as present-day Oklahoma. His station is far removed from that of the Spanish hidalgo he formerly was; he wanders "alone among the Indians and naked like them." In moving from tribe to tribe his status somehow plummets, like that of his few surviving companions, until he is nothing more than a slave. Through a variety of informants, Spanish and Indian, Núñez surmises that most of the men in the other barges
are dead--from drowning, exhaustion, beatings administered by the local Indians. Four men begin to emerge as the heroes--that is to say, the European survivors--of the narrative. Their very selection renders them as "chosen" men--Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso del Castillo, Andres Dorantes del Maldonado, all respectable hidalgos; and Estebanico (Esteban), the "black", a Moorish slave from Morocco. Together, in late 1534, they plan their escape to Spanish Mexico. Since eastward is Florida and all they have suffered for seven years, they set off uncertainly to the west.

Another reversal of fortune ensues. Castillo cures some of the Aravares of their terrible headaches and the Christians re-establish a reputation as tribal healers. Cabeza de Vaca, as he tells us, finds a burning bush in the desert. Later he brings a "dead man" to life, rivalling even Castillo in his new-found powers. Núñez relates, "we put ourselves again in the hands of God." As they bear westward, they attract a train of converts and hangers-on who willingly give the Spaniards their every possession, only to recoup it by taking from their neighbors at the next settlement:

Those who accompanied us plundered our hospitable new hosts and ransacked their huts, leaving nothing. We watched this with deep concern but were in no position to do anything about it; so for the present had to bear with it until such time as we might gain greater authority. Those who had lost their possessions, seeing our dejection, tried to console us. They said they were so honored to have us that their property was
well-bestowed—and that they would get repaid by others farther on, who were very rich.9

Their power had become secular as much as sacred. People followed in their train, if only once to touch them. They carried two gourds given them by medicine men as symbols of their power. Their ritual was simple: they made the sign of the cross over their patients, blew gently on the wound, and "commended them to God." They were accompanied by as many as "three or four thousand Indians," a living chain of faith that straggled across the barrancas of the Sonoran Desert.

They see buffalo, feast on prickly pears, receive an abundance of gifts they can neither consume nor carry. On the Rio Sonora, the Pima present them with six hundred opened deer hearts. Then, quite by chance, one day while waiting for the current of the Yaqui River to subside, Castillo happens to see among the Onovas a man wearing a sword-belt buckle and a horseshoe nail around his neck—an amulet, he said, that "came from Heaven." This sign, of all those they had seen for nine years since leaving Cuba—the swamps, the horse-rigged barges, the burning tree, the homes of their hosts and masters, the holy gourds they would not relinquish, the dead raised to be among the living—this simple horseshoe nail and buckle were proof that their own people were near. In early 1536, Alvar Núñez, on foot in pursuit of a troop of mounted Spaniards on the Sinaloa, overtook his countrymen after a journey of nine years: "They were dumbfounded at the sight of me,
strangely undressed and in company with Indians. They just
stood staring for a long time, not thinking to hail me or
come closer to ask questions." Within a month they were
in Spanish Culiacán, by July in Mexico City. There they
gave an official report of their expedition whose fate it
had been not to divide and conquer, as was often the
strategy of the European, but over the course of nine years,
beginning with a hurricane and ending with a charm made from
a Castilian buckle, to divide and perish. Once in Mexico
City, Núñez tells us, "I could not stand to wear any
clothes for some time, or to sleep anywhere but on the bare
floor." And that was all.

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If Núñez' captivity had finally come to an end, the
task of interpreting exactly what it meant was only just
beginning. The account of the journey became public
immediately: in 1536 the thirty-page Joint Report of
Núñez, Castillo and Dorantes was delivered to the
authorities and printed three years later in Gonzalo
Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés' General and Natural History of
the Indies. Meanwhile, Cabeza de Vaca's own narrative (The
Relation) was printed at Zamora in 1542 and again, with
slight emendations, at Valladolid in 1555. The account was
soon translated into Italian, and in 1613 from Italian to
English.

For contemporary observers with an interest in
America, the story was deeply moving. Many of them possessed fundamental assumptions that, in one way or another, were only confirmed by Núñez' survival. One of the four survivors to reach Mexico City—the Moorish slave, Esteban—later went to reconnoiter northern New Mexico in an attempt to find the Seven Cities of Cíbola. The chronicler of the expedition that followed on his heels, that of Francisco de Coronado (1539-41), had a strong opinion about the "information" relayed so enthusiastically by Esteban and his companions:

It happened that, at this time, there arrived in Mexico three Spaniards, Cabeza de Vaca, Dorantes, and Castillo Maldonado, and a negro, who had been shipwrecked in the fleet sent to Florida under Panfilo de Narváez. They came by way of Culiacán, after crossing the country from sea to sea, as any one may learn from a report which Cabeza de Vaca himself addressed to Prince Philip, who is now king of Spain and our lord. They told the good Antonio de Mendoza how, through the lands they had traversed, they obtained interpreters and important information regarding powerful pueblos with houses four or five stories high, and other things quite different from what turned out to be the truth. 16

Pedro de Castañeda's narrative appeared in 1596. Before the century was even out, a disillusioned scribe in the employ of the army had accused Núñez and his companions of distorting—whether willfully or not—the truth about the American lands they had "discovered."

But New Spain was not solely the haunt of the military, or men in pursuit of worldly riches. There were others, like Joseph de Acosta, who saw in Cabeza de Vaca a gesture of divine beneficence: "...in which passing ten years in
barbaric lands, penetrating as far as the South Sea...made themselves holy healers and recited the words of the Church and made the sign of the cross in healing the sick ones..." This passage, from The Moral History of the Indies, appears under a chapter entitled "Certain Miracles God Has Made in the Indies For the Faith, Without the Men Who Performed Them Deserving Credit." In Acosta's eyes, Núñez' journey is a "peregrinación"—a pilgrimage. The human tenacity he embodies in order to survive is secondary to the mysterious will that moves him. As such, Cabeza de Vaca the man is more than a man: he is a cipher, a sign of God's will who carries within him, albeit unconsciously, a small part of the strategy of Creation. In its most literal sense, this idea is "Biblical": the word of God is revealed in the Book of the World as well as in the Bible. In the former, each of His creatures plays a character in an unfolding story—none other than the history of Creation itself. Such a metaphor is borne out by the very language Acosta uses: the "obras" of God (divine works) are cognate with "obras de teatro" (theatrical plays), reminding us of the conceptual link in the Christian tradition between human and divine authorship. As Núñez performs his work, he begins to perceive that he is the work of God. Cabeza de Vaca is thus the consummate artisan in employ of the Lord: his is an inspired craft, that of "médico evangélico," a doer of Christian good works.

Religious ideology was not all that motivated contemporary reactions to the Narváez story. In his New
History of the New World (1579), the Italian Hieronyme Benzoni used Núñez' tale as a way to encourage more humane treatment of the Indian in future expeditions: "...[Cabeza de Vaca] shows by the practice of real experience that gentleness is a more efficacious way of treating these nations than either harshness or violence." By Benzoni's account, the perpetrators of evil in the Americas were none other than the Spaniards themselves, the continuing incarnation of the Black Legend that the Dominican Las Casas had helped to incite. One need only glance at the index entries for The New History in the Chauveton translation (1579) to appreciate the all-consuming fire of Benzoni's polemic: "Cruelty of the Spanish surpasses the barbarians," "The Spanish depopulate the Indies," "Indians prefer to kill themselves rather than live under the Spanish," "Cuzco captured and pillaged by the Spanish," "The name of God blasphemed by the Indians because of the Spanish," etc. Does another entry--"Humanity of a Frenchman towards an Italian"--refer to an event in the New World, or the eagerness with which Chauveton agreed to translate him into the French? Though Núñez is not a typical conquistador in Benzoni's eyes, still, he cannot take him completely at his word:

...[the four survivors] who, returning to Mexico, publicly declared before the world that they had cured several patients merely by blowing on them: and even that they had resurrected three from the dead. May their Holiness forgive me, if it pleases: I would easier believe that they killed four men than I would they could have resurrected one who was half-dead.
Gentleness was one thing, miracles quite another.

During the sixteenth century the narrative's meaning varies with each interpreter. The Frenchman La Popellinière views the expedition as yet another Spanish misadventure in America, one that should only further French ambition to stake a competing national claim. In Book 2 of The Third World (1582), he summarizes the adventure with neither reference to miracles nor good works:

Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, with only four companions remaining of three hundred who had descended on the land with Narváez, lived everywhere with great pain and poverty, the men [with whom they lived] not sleeping with pregnant women until two years had passed, and leaving them if they were infertile to marry someone else.21

La Popellinière is more ethnologist than apologist.

Oviedo y Valdés, on the other hand, the first to print The Joint Report (1539), finds inspiration in a classical vein:

Consider the travels of Ulysses, the trip of Jason, the labors of Hercules— all fictional, metaphorical: understood as they should be, they won't surprise you compared with the works of these poor sinners who followed such a hard road and reached such an unhappy end.22

The Renaissance was as intent on congratulating its own heroes as resurrecting those of Antiquity. Yet Oviedo is capable of apostrophizing in a more pious mode:

Thus was the tale of Captain Pánfilo de Narváez and his armada, whom God may pardon in his infinite mercy—keeping in mind as absolution for their sins, their work and inhuman deaths. So it is that one should believe that divine goodness saved their souls— they were, after all, Christians and they only wanted to expand Christendom, serve their Prince and free others from poverty and
want--each in his own sincerity. It seems they justly deserved the last sigh that Ezekiel made in the last hour of his life: 'Whenever the sinner repents, he will be forgiven.'

In this interpretation the Narváez voyage becomes an allegory of the human condition: the survivors are those who, once pardoned for their sins, are granted the glory of everlasting life through their faithful and humble evangelism. The labors of Núñez inspire everything from the ethnographic to the sublime.

After Samuel Purchas' translation in 1625, the narrative was not rendered again into English until 1851, this time by Buckingham Smith. It was retold in 1869 by H. Kingsley and translated by Fanny Bandelier in 1905, a flurry of activity that belies its long dormancy in English. With Cyclone Covey's translation of 1961, we have a modern version collated from The Joint Report (1539), The Relation (1542) and Los Naufragios (1555).

If the number of recent translations is any indication, the English-speaking world has finally found a worthy message in Núñez' "peregrinacion." On one level this interpretation betrays a spiritual skepticism alien to the sixteenth century. Adolf Bandelier writes in his 1905 introduction: "That they attributed their success to the direct aid of divine power was in strict accordance with the spirit of the times and by no means to their discredit...Not only the times must be taken into account when judgment is passed, but also the violent strain under which they labored for such a long period." The mere fact that such a
critical overview could even be attempted attests to the
difference in intellectual climate between the two ages.
The Industrial Era was unprepared to embrace Renaissance
miracles—at least, for a time.

In 1939, Haniel Long published The Marvellous
Adventures of Cabeza de Vaca, a fictional version of the
narrative Núñez might have written "as though unafraid of
his King and his times. I wish him to address us four
hundred years later, in this world of ours where human
relation is still the difficult problem, and exploitation
26 the cancer." Narváez' Royal Treasurer is here
resurrected from obscurity to fight a twentieth-century
political battle ("exploitation"). Though compelling, the
account is a thinly-veiled attack on Western nationalism:

We Europeans all talk this way to ourselves.
It has become second nature to us. Each
nobleman and alcalde and villager is an
avenue that leads us to this way of talking;
we can admit it privately, your Majesty, can
we not? If a man need a cloak, we do not
give it to him if we have our wits about us;
nor are we to be caught stretching out our
finger in aid of a miserable woman. Someone
else will do it, we say. Our communal life
dries up our milk: we are barren as the
fields of Castile.27

Like Acosta and Oviedo before him, Long is entranced by the
rhythm and the rhetoric of a morally-righteous vision. The
skepticism of Bandelier is nowhere in evidence.

But in the 1972 reprint of this slim volume there is
much more to be found. The preface of this later edition
is written by none other than Henry Miller, who confesses in
the course of it:
Even as a child I was impressed by the story of how the Indians greeted the first white comers as gods. Later, as a man, and as an American particularly, the shameful record of our relations with the Indians saddened me to a degree beyond anything I had ever felt in connection with man's inhumanity to man.28

Miller's attachment to Cabeza de Vaca is that of a severely disillusioned man at last granted his reprieve. For him, the four survivors from the Island of Doom recall the apostolic poverty of St. Francis, Jesus and Buddha:

The men who govern the world promise this and that, always freedom, honor, security—and work. Their promises are empty, have been proved empty again and again and again. But men who are empty like empty promises. The man who counsels, 'Look to yourself, the power is within you!' is looked upon as a dreamer and a madman. Yet these are the very men who performed miracles, who altered the world.29

While Long advocates "giving the cloak" to the needy, Miller stresses the importance of self-reliance in lamenting, "The whole trend of the times is towards surrender of individual power and authority." Their respective programs of action are diametrically different. In current political parlance Long's assumption might be characterized as "liberal," Miller's as "conservative," though we find them in perfect repose between the same covers. This is precisely our problem: exalting Cabeza de Vaca makes strange bedfellows.

Dramatic reappraisals of the journey have not ceased. In Cyclone Covey's preface to his 1961 translation, recently reprinted as Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America
(1984), the vision of what Núñez means is no less modest:

There was a more compelling reason than riches for Cabeza de Vaca's sanguine view: He had learned to love the land as beautiful and the Indians as surpassingly handsome, strong, and intelligent. In the midst of his sufferings, he caught a vision of the brotherhood of man. He wanted to bring the Indians civilization and Christianity and to establish a humane order among them. He had found that he could cure their sicknesses, communicate Christian teachings, and compose their tribal hostilities, leaving the lands he passed through in peace.31

The international covenant that fairly glowed in Long's vision is reflected further in Covey's paean to Núñez. Whether or not this characterization of Cabeza de Vaca is even accurate we will examine. But this is history that marches to an inexorable drum. One is struck by the predictability with which twentieth-century commentators (no less than their sixteenth-century counterparts) feel obliged to justify their resurrection of the story from some profound and relentless moral imperative.

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Since Covey's translation is the most recent (and the most available to the general reader), an examination of what he has distilled from the original will help us perceive how far removed we are today from the first printed text. Consider, for example, the fifty-seven chapter titles in the 1961 and 1984 editions. Covey reports that the 1542
text had no chapter titles whatsoever. However, he goes on
to add, the one to follow in 1555--published at Valladolid--
reveals that a sixteenth-century editor added them to the
text in an inconsistent and misleading fashion. Thus Covey
has taken it upon himself to alter the titles where
necessary in order "to fit the text better." In
addition, he admits that the paragraphing is, in large part,
his own invention, due to the infrequent use of paragraphs
in sixteenth-century texts. It is clear he has taken large
steps to aid--and to influence--the comprehension of the
modern reader.

But what is the effect of this editorializing? The
very titles suggest the European genre of the picaresque,
and not surprisingly, since this was a form nearly
contemporary with the original Relation. The more one looks
at them, however, the more laden they seem with cultural
assumptions that are difficult to dismiss. Consider some of
the varied traditions they echo: "The Ominous Note at Aute"
(American Gothic); "Treachery in the Night Ashore" (visions
of Odysseus); "The Buckle and the Horseshoe Nail" (Iberian
Aesop); "A Strange New Development" (the Conquistador Roman
à Clef); and "How We Became Medicine-Men" (Renaissance
Self-Improvement). When we remember there were no
titles in the 1542 edition, the effect of such an editorial
strategy is significant. The titles are episodic,
summarizing and morally suggestive. The reader is faced
with interpreting not only Cabeza de Vaca's account (and all
the shortcomings inherent in human memory when relating
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events many years after they have happened), but also the adornments of a Spanish printer in the sixteenth century and an American translator in the twentieth equally desirous of introducing the public to "one of the great true epics of history." The eclecticism of the titles is picaresque, but picaresque with a purpose.

Covey calls the narrative an "epic." How one chooses to characterize it will be revealing of personal, as well as cultural, assumptions. This particular word is burdened with sweeping connotations: moral grandeur, heroic struggle, Greek formality and fate. To call it an "epic" is to construct an archetypal framework as old as Homer on the story of a hidalgo turned military adventurer from the small town of Jerez de la Frontera. Do we want to do that? Is it even possible to avoid projecting ourselves onto a story that ostensibly belongs to Núñez? In fact, what other word can we choose? Covey tries, in the course of his introduction, "sojourn." This is a choice with fewer historical trimmings to be sure, but it is also one that inadvertently trivializes the deaths that plague the expedition and the long, bitter struggle of Núñez himself. "Sojourn" denotes "a temporary stay in a place," and thus conditions our reception of the story by reassuring us "it's going to turn out all right after all"; we will accept what consequences may come because the Hero (as Joseph Campbell would tell us) returns with information important to the "tribe." Is it really just the story, the sojourn, of one man? Of four? Four hundred? We fashion

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our answer in a diction that is convenient but careless.

Covey's next choice—the most imperial of all—further reveals his allegiance to classic literature: "odyssey".
The preface innocently begins, "This sixteenth-century odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca's is one of the great true epics of history." Not only are we asked to conceptualize his narrative as an adventure in the heroic Mediterranean tradition, but now are besieged by an array of magical allusions ranging from Circe and the Laestrygonians to the cyclops Polyphemus. The calling forth of such figures is covert, but we can hardly use "odyssey" and completely suppress them in our minds. One could no more do this than call something "quixotic" and not see a peasant gallivanting over the horizon on the back of an ass. In this sixteenth century "odyssey" of the New World, it is clear who plays Odysseus—the one who returns to tell of his adventures. However innocent this schema may appear, who, exactly, should we identify with the Indians during the ten years following the fall of Narváez? Perhaps the Cyclops: "Whatever their stature, they looked like giants to us in our fright." Perhaps the Laestrygonians: but the only cannibals Nuñez encounters are Spaniards. Then again, the Lotus Eaters: but the narrator evinces not the slightest desire to remain anywhere on the North American continent. To a modern reader, one of the more frightening themes of The Odyssey is the predictable regularity with which the Greeks are sacrificed in episode after episode because of their leader's rashness; their slow extinction acts as a

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dramatic foil to the archetype of the "lone survivor." And so it is with "odyssey" as an epigraph for this narrative: four hundred men become a literary convention to set the heroic survival of Núñez in grand, classical relief. With such difficulties our allusions are rife.

Why not find a word lacking all literary pretensions? Why not, say, "journey": "a spell of going or travelling, viewed as a distinct whole; an excursion or expedition to some distance; a round of travel." Though it will answer certain objections, this word too has connotations that will make of Núñez' story something more than the words set down within it. In the sixteenth century, "journey" meant "a day's work," (from journee=day); in the seventeenth, "a day's fighting." But in the four hundred years separating us from the time of the actual voyage, the word has taken on, in English, the suggestion of a formal excursion that concludes as a religious pilgrimage. For John Bunyan, a century after Cabeza de Vaca, "journey" is not merely a noun denoting travel, but a metaphor for the Christian path to salvation: "Then Christian began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his Journey."

No word that we can choose will be completely bereft of connotations. The more common the word, the more unconscious its power over us will be. The title of the latest re-edition of Covey, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, owes a debt as much to the tradition of the exotic travelogue as it does to the entire adventure.
genre of science fiction. It is the delight of the linguist and the curse of the historian that no word in the arsenal of the critic will be completely objective. The Judaeo-Christian tradition of meaningful suffering endured in the faraway wilderness (from the Hebrew prophets to Isaac Asimov) is busy at work in the relation of Cabeza de Vaca: what happens at the Bay of Horses is a testament to Western ingenuity in the face of shipwreck (Robinson Crusoe) or abandonment (Treasure Island) that suffuses our romantic literature. To call Núñez' narrative an "epic", a "sojourn", an "odyssey" or a "journey" feeds a cultural appetite in our literature for human deprivation and triumph that has been endemic to the European romance for centuries—ever since the Westerner decided to distinguish himself from all rivals by drawing attention to his singular adaptability when threatened by circumstances causing great duress. The temptation for translators and interpreters to make a journey of their own in explaining the one made by Cabeza de Vaca has been too great to refuse.

Suppose for a moment we can overcome all editorial intrusions in the text and even the wish in ourselves to link Núñez to a noble, heroic tradition. Are we then free to understand the narrative as we please? The answer is a resounding "perhaps." We can understand Núñez only insofar as we agree on what he is saying. Sometimes such agreement is difficult to muster.

One of the most critical points in any polemic concerning Cabeza de Vaca is his alleged treatment of the
Indian. For those who see in Núñez an uplifting alternative to the lurid Puritan captivity narrative that depicted the Indian as an unregenerate demon, his role as a tribal healer is evidence of good intentions transformed into even better works, a rare enough feat among early American explorers. This messianic interpretation has several important consequences. As Covey says in his introduction, "In the midst of his sufferings, he caught a vision of the brotherhood of man."

If we read The Relation as a tragedy whose protagonist conquers his hubris to achieve a glimmer of self-understanding, then such a lofty encomium by Covey is, in part, justified. In such a reading, the tribulations of the early acts reach their climax when Núñez raises the poor Indian from the dead and sets out with his companions to heal with the mere touch of a hand on the road to Culiacán. The story has all the elements of classic drama, or, for that matter, a medieval morality play: tragic irony, divine fate, omens, charms, deathly messengers, and finally, individual absolution. The chapter titles tell us as much—"The Ominous Note at Aute," "The Disappearance of the Greek," "The Great Transformation." The performance might be characterized as a pagan format adapted to serve as a Christian homily on the benefits of international brotherhood. And why not? As Núñez relates, "during all which time people came seeking us from many parts and telling us we truly were children of the sun...Confidence in our ministrations as infallible extended to a belief that
none could die while we remained among them." Such a sublime interpretation would hardly be unfounded, and editors such as Covey have willingly taken Núñez' lead. But Cabeza de Vaca has set his story in a careful framework of his own choosing. A man who meets a "burning tree" in the desert and raises a man from the dead has already done some valuable extracurricular reading.

But there are other ways to read his relationship with the various tribes. The narrative is indeed rich, if not as a completely verifiable ethnography, then in the human lesson that is there to be grasped in nearly every chapter: neither noble nor savage, the Indian is a human being capable of both extremes. Here is an observation ignored at great cost by most of the European expeditions to follow, and forgotten by the historians, editors and translators who would still "explain" the Indian in a simplified manner to their captive modern audience.

How do we characterize a people who, on first meeting a band of dazed-looking white men with strange hair on their faces, lament for half an hour over their desperate condition and offer them food and shelter for the rest of the winter? (Han); a people who "love their offspring more than any in the world and treat them very mildly." (Capeque); a tribe that spend their idle time beating defenseless strangers, making them into slaves, and murdering them for nothing more than having "left one house for another" (Quevenes); a people who cast away their daughters at birth to be eaten by dogs rather than have them...
48

grow up to marry an enemy, (Marianes); a tribe
consisting, in great part, of "thieves," "liars," and
49
"drunkards" (Yguaces); or a people who treat the white
strangers as separate equals, leaving them to lodge and
50
scavenge on their own, (Avavares)? In our nomenclature
they are all "Indians." But if a language is to render
distinctions useful to its speakers, the word "Indian" for
all these peoples will not do. We have known this for a
long time; it is only in reading Cabeza de Vaca that we find
we have known it for much longer than anyone would have
expected. The rubric "Indian" is no better at predicting
what the behavior of any single tribe will be (until the
messianic stage of the narrative) than it would be to study
an ethnography of Castile in preparing for a voyage to the
south of Greece. This escapes even Núñez himself. In his
mind, the single belief the Indian lacks--Christianity--is
more telling of his ultimate nature than any of the
differences that might separate individual tribes. The
Royal Treasurer insists on calling them "Indios," though
this word seems counterfeit when examining the mettle of his
own experience.

Quite simply, there is no "map" in the Western mind by
which to discern tribal differences. Even a barrier such as
a range of mountains separating Old World tribes (the
Pyrenees or the Alps) can never succeed at permanently
distinguishing them in the New, since the European conceives
of the Antipodes as a singular mass inhabited--however
tenuously--by a singularly heathen people. Núñez shows us

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how they are different: one tribe saves him from drowning, another beats him to within an inch of his grave. Yet the same man who endures such a difficult lesson cannot bring himself to comprehend it. It would be too much for us to expect him to realize in 1542 what it has taken the rest of the West four centuries to even begin to understand.

But can we so easily indulge those who have followed in his trail? Does Núñez find "a vision of the brotherhood of man?" Perhaps. Yet he writes unabashedly of the San Antonio region, "I think the land would prove very productive if developed by civilized men." And later, in a spirit more resembling that of Thomas Harriott than St. Francis, he concludes, "I have wanted to say this much, not merely to indulge the curiosity of humans about each other, but to impart a knowledge of usages and artifices which would be of value to those who might sometime in the future find themselves among these people." Would Núñez have agreed with what Haniel Long makes him utter as a fictional character after his return to Christendom?:

In facing these marauders [the Spanish] I was compelled to face the Spanish gentleman I myself had been eight years before. It was not easy to think of it. Andres and Alonso agreed that it was not easy. What, your Majesty, is so melancholy as to confront one's former unthinking and unfeeling self?53

But he would become a "gentleman" again, returning to the Americas in 1541 to lead an expedition in Paraguay—not to live as an Indian but to explore as a Spaniard. And what are we to make of Miller's remark that, "The conversion was
not only thorough and complete but alive in his consciousness to a degree almost unbearable to read of"? If any conversion was made, it happened in the souls of the Indians, not the Spaniards. We read in Chapter 54 ("The Great Transformation"), "We are thankful to our merciful God that it should be in the days of Your Majesty's dominion that these nations might all come voluntarily to Him who created and redeemed us. We are convinced that Your Majesty is destined to do this much and that it is entirely within reason to accomplish." The "great transformation" is what the heathen undergoes to achieve a "civilized" state, not what Núñez purportedly endures in his nine years' wandering. That his attitude stands in stark contrast to the tactics of plunderers like Guzmán, Cortez and Alvarado is not to be denied. But it is hard for us to know how much this rift between their principles might have already existed before his "odyssey" even began. And, in spite of the differences between them, there is one thing they share: the unquestioned assumption that their culture is innately superior to that of the Indian. Only in their method of how best to convert the "Indios" do they part ways. I do not suggest this is a small disagreement, but the fact that Núñez later returns to the New World to lead an expedition up the Rio de la Plata (even as a "friend" of the Indian) demonstrates the deep-seated values he shared with more notorious figures like Orellana, Drake and Pizarro--men who presumed an absolute right of "discovery" enforced by the religious rhetoric of Christian conquest
and domestication.

There exists no primary source evidence that demonstrates Cabeza de Vaca was "converted" by his march across Texas. Changed? Of course. Deeply affected? One presumes so—who would not be by a passage of nine years in a land thousands of miles from home? But to argue that he renounces the most ethnocentric assumptions of his Renaissance peers because he learned to speak (by his account) five or six Indian languages, is to mistake a hard-bitten strategy of survival for a heartfelt tolerance. Cabeza de Vaca was not converted by his travels, except by those interpreters who would make him a part of the mythological American experience that demands of the individual—from William Bradford to Horatio Alger—that he shed an old identity to become a new American man. If there ever was a "school of hard knocks," a proving ground for the inextinguishable spirit of the human being, it is this story of a "fallen" conquistador. Yet it is ironic to see a faithful Catholic from southern Europe paraded as a symbol of moral regeneration that champions the Protestant ethic of Anglo North America. In the philosophy of consensus politics and the Melting Pot, Núñez has been unofficially adopted as a child of the culture, and after four hundred long years of waiting has finally been awarded the coveted status of "convert."
The Good Indian and the Bad Indian—as noted, Núñez experiences both. While those he describes are neither quite the noble savage of Columbus (later, Montaigne), nor the unrepentant one of Cortez (later, Shakespeare's Caliban), it is hard to miss the narrator's incredulity at meeting each of them, and the subsequent caricatures into which they harden. Of course, he is not without his own preconceptions, as when describing the Isle of Doom and its inhabitants:

For us there was no joy, feasting, or sleep, as we waited the hour they should make us their victims.
In the morning, when they brought us fish and roots and acted in every way hospitably, we felt reassured and somewhat lost our anxiety of the sacrificial knife.56

The widening disparity between the "gentle sheep" and the "vicious cannibals"—both of whom were in fact the Native American—had already become a part of European expectations.

Robert Berkhofer has described the process by which the Western mind incorporated both of these extremes into a unified portrait of the savage:

...many commentators on the history of White Indian imagery see Europeans and Americans as using counterimages of themselves to describe Indians and the counterimages of Indians to describe themselves. Such a negative reference group could be used to define White identity or to prove White superiority over the worst fears of their own depravity...That Indians lacked certain or all aspects of White civilization could be viewed as bad or
good depending upon the observer's feelings about his own society and the use to which he wanted to put the image.57

This was a strategy by which to confront the Other. In fact, it contained the notion of diametrical opposites, a polarity that reflected the ancient theory of the Antipodes ("with the feet opposite") and the persistent terminology of "Old World" and "New." The dictates of geography played a decisive role in defining the European image of the Indian.

But if this is a unified portrait it is one with a fearsome contradiction. How the West has tried to resolve such disparate images is one of the telling marks of anyone who would interpret Cabeza de Vaca. Indeed, the range is vast. For Francisco Lopez de Gómara, secretary and apologist for Cortez, Núñez survives in the world of "barbarians" through the wisdom and grace of God. For Adolf Bandelier, "Cabeza de Vaca, unconsciously, and by distinct methods, imitated the Indian Shamans and probably succeeded [healing], in at least many cases, since the procedure was new and striking." By 1961 Núñez had become the symbol of "the brotherhood of man" for Cyclone Covey, a concession to the Noble Savage in spite of his earlier dismissal of "a long string of Indian Stone-Age tribes." Núñez offers myriad explanations to the Indian mystery.

Cabeza de Vaca is among the first in our records to propose a resolution to this paradox—that the White man go to live with the Indian (by accident more often than design)
in order to learn the secrets of the wilderness and the
mastery of self-control, finally to re-emerge from his
captivity with a heightened understanding of what the
prerogatives of civilization must properly be. Once he has
returned to his own people, his feelings regarding the
savage are nobly infused with equal doses of tragic regret
and maudlin sentimentality. He clearly benefits from his
sojourn with the "savage," but only for the purpose of
bringing back the knowledge he has earned to the safety of
civilization. This is the archetypal lesson of Cabeza de
Vaca, the forlorn Ishmael who laments, "And I only am
escaped alone to tell thee."

The "unique" travails of Núñez have transformed
themselves into a verifiable genre--"The Self-Improvement
Captivity Narrative." Here the reader discovers, over the
course of innumerable hair-raising events, that the narrator
is capable of conquering the natural elements that once
threatened his life, and more important still, of securing
himself a prestigious role within the tribe and fulfilling
it more effectively than any of the natives could ever have
dreamed of doing. His role changes according to the
particular version: shaman, hunter, warrior, peacemaker.
But inherent in every variation is that, given time and
practice, the White man will end up "doing it better."
Núñez is an early celebrant of the genre--a Spanish
hidalgo, more accustomed to fighting battles than healing
the incurably ill, is forced by popular demand to ascend to
the calling of Indian shaman with as many as four thousand

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worshipping locals in his train. It is an early episode in
the theme of the White Man's Burden.

But his "sojourn" is appealing only because it is
temporary—the captive must bring back with him a message
that will dignify his suffering, whether a passage from
Scripture in the seventeenth-century narrative of Mary
Rowlandson, or as in Cabeza de Vaca, "a vision of the
brotherhood of man." For the captive to forever remain with
the tribe would be a waste of tribulation and the
hard-earned wisdom it conferred; for him to willingly stay
would be incomprehensible, an act of racial and cultural
treachery. From Núñez to the Puritan captivity narratives
of the seventeenth century, from the dime novels of the
nineteenth to twentieth century Hollywood, the theme of
white rejuvenation through an extended visit to Indian
country evokes a deep response in the American audience,
whether colonial or contemporary. In the film "A Man Called
Horse" (1970), an English nobleman submits to ritual
torture among the Sioux, eventually rising to help them
63 crush their enemies in war; in "Little Big Man" (1971),
the orphaned survivor of an Indian raid is raised by the
Cheyenne and later returns to "civilization" as a critic of
its military fringe embodied by George Armstrong Custer; in
"The Emerald Forest" (1984), a young boy is adopted by
an Amazonian tribe, and after helping them retrieve the
ritual stones they had long been wanting, returns to con-
vince his White father that the newly-constructed dam he has
engineered will end a way of life for his adopted people

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forever. In a final act of absolution, they sabotage the
dam so as to offer a bleak warning of dire "things to come."

Thus the Indian may be "good" or "bad", depending on
the lesson the captivity advertises. It may just as likely
be a harangue against the evils of modern technology as a
denunciation of savage "Stone-age tribes." But the
polemical objective of self-improvement is what all versions
share—whether the improvement of the individual or the
civilization he represents, the apotheosis of a Renaissance
gentleman or the castigation of a culture expanding beyond
the reach of its moral limitations. The savage—noble or
ignoble—is championed or vilified with an eye to a larger
issue. "The Self-Improvement Captivity Narrative", by turns
didactic and sentimental, fashions the argument that
Progress is necessary and good, but that it must be
implemented with a just moral vision. Thus was Cabeza de
Vaca enlightened.

This will help account for the fractured legacy of the
"savage" that has been willed to us. We have Magua and
Chingachgook, Dom Agaya and Taignoagny, Geronimo and Tonto,
renegades and friendslies, the army-issue tomahawk that,
turned over, functions as an innocent, peace-loving
calumet. Yet in spite of the gulf that separates each pair,
their common origins are more decisive than any opposites
they would appear to embody. At first glance the pairs are
polar in opposition, but the geographical metaphor is
misleading—they are not antipodal in the sense of True and
False, Accurate and Inaccurate. Rather, the Good Indian
and the Bad are equally exclusive of the truth (as would be
the Good and Bad Spaniard), and only end by projecting what
is false in each other so as to establish a superficial
aesthetic. Their apparent contrast suggests a balanced
vision, but this is misleading—the characteristics they
share are far more important than their outward identities.
What do Geronimo and Tonto have in common? Broken English;
dark, beady eyes; an affinity for the unexpected; the
uncanny ability to track a three day-old trail across
Monument Valley. In short, they have nothing in common but
everything: they are Indian.

This polarization manifested itself on a much larger
scale in the theory of the New and Old Worlds. After the
"discovery" of America, the European came to slowly
understand that the abyss between worlds, once bridged, not
so much resolved the gulf between Self and Other, but
projected the fear of a continent that had discovered its
cultural and geographical poles and still seemed no closer
to the truth in announcing them. The earth was not so much
the royal orb of Elizabeth or Charles V as it was a
slow-gyrating top. Dr. Chanca, an early companion of
Columbus, wrote of America, "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
65
distinction." This may be the greatest lesson to be had
from Núñez: that he no more learned the truth about Man in
crossing Texas than he had on the battlefield of Ravenna.
And we have no more learned the truth about the Indian in

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making of him a mysterious shaman than we did casting him away as an unregenerate savage. It was Europe's task in the sixteenth century to redefine the traditional Christian vision of the world. And as it came to be clear that Truth would not be revealed in easy polarities, a more incremental search for precision began in the seventeenth century with the rise of empirical science.

This is what the paradox of the Noble Savage is: a fever symptom that the Old World bequeathed to the New, arising from an age-old doubt in a civilization marked by a Christian ideology no less than the memory of a "heroic" and pagan past. The paradox could not be more thorough. Throughout the Americas the Indian was enslaved while his demise was lamented, was isolated on territorial reserves for his own "protection" while being instructed in the "superior" ways of civilization, was denied his language while his oratorical tradition was appropriated as an artifact of eloquence, and finally, was made the token reminder of a historical romance that narrowly missed annihilating him. And this is what Cabeza de Vaca and his long train of interpreters would preserve—the radical depiction of an Indian culture whose life-blood would help revive the soul of the West.

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Much attention has been granted Núñez' narrative in recent years for its alleged uniqueness. But one finds
throughout it many of the same exploration archetypes examined thus far. When Narváez and his men disembark on the mainland, they march in search of a fabled city in "a province called Apalachen, where was much gold and plenty of everything we wanted." Their knowledge of the province comes, predictably enough, from Indian guides who direct them into the interior. Marching inland, the Spanish find "quite a quantity of corn ripe for plucking." In the end, Apalachen turns out to be a village of some forty houses with nothing cached that even resembled gold. The dreamers are crestfallen, as they will later be at Cibola.

Their march inland is dogged by a siege of attrition—"the constant guerrilla tactics of the Indians" who appear and disappear without warning. The men are stricken by malaria due "to the discouraging nature of the country." Putting out on four rafts from The Bay of Horses, the Europeans nearly perish from hunger and thirst, but are saved by the welcome intervention of the inhabitants of the Isle of Doom. They are welcomed with tears and boarded for the winter. The customs of the locals are reported with a mixture of curiosity and disbelief. Instead of taking slaves, the surviving Spaniards are forced to become them. The food the Indians consume--straw, insects, lizards, even deer dung--is reported with disdain and begrudging admiration, though it is eminently clear what such food reveals of a people who can find nothing better to eat: "I honestly believe that if there were stones in that
land they would eat them." The native women are often observed to toil harder than the men, suggesting the now-familiar image of the "indolent savage." The strangeness of the White men allows them to be mistaken for "children of the sun." Their faith severely tested, the Christians put themselves "again in the hands of God" and travel forth as medicine men.

Like many of their fellow explorers, they are presumed to have unusual healing powers. They send female ambassadors (interpreters) to announce their arrival at each village in their path. They develop a system of exchange that might be justly construed as a form of tribute or reciprocal plunder—the people of one settlement turn over all their earthly possessions to those in the next for "medical services" rendered. By the end of the narrative the natives hold the Spaniards in awe, not for the cannon they possess but the medicinal cures they dispense at every stop. Like Cortez—or Cartier, Pring, and Laudonnière—the four healers are too clever to miss a chance to parlay a native misconception into a consolidation of their own power. Late in the journey, the Indians attribute a touch of death as well to the four strangers:

We told them, then, to conduct us northward. They answered as before: there were no people in that direction for a very long distance, nothing to eat, and no water. When we remained adamant, they still excused themselves as best they could, and our gorge rose. One night I went to sleep in the woods apart from them, but they shortly came to me and stayed awake all night telling me of their terror and pleading with me to be angry no longer, that they would lead us where we would though it meant their death.
We still feigned displeasure in order to keep the upper hand, and a singular circumstance strengthened that hand mightily. That very day, many of the Indians had fallen ill, and the next day eight men died. All over that area, wherever this became known, the natives panicked; they seemed to think they would die at sight of us.74

Herein is the complexity of Cabeza de Vaca, a man possessed of genuine Christian charity that is leavened with a clever grasp of realpolitik. We do not know why these Indians died—Núñez was not, after all, a "doctor." But it is entirely possible they were killed by the healers themselves, by the germs they carried of Old World diseases to which the AmerIndian was highly vulnerable.

A fascinating history it is. But it contains enough of the standard European narrative to make us pause before pronouncing it of inimitable design. It is not to doubt the veracity of the "facts" if we acknowledge, nevertheless, that anyone sufficiently familiar with the exploration literature of the age would have been capable of inventing such a story—except perhaps some of the ethnographic details—without ever having set foot in the New World. This is not to denigrate Cabeza de Vaca, only to place him within a larger tradition from which he is often removed by his most passionate defenders to advocate some "timeless truth" or current polemic. In fact, to show how much his experience had in common with that of his peers is to place him squarely in the realm of the verifiable rather than raising him to a near-prophetic niche difficult for any human being to fill. Núñez' experience was unique, but
neither more nor less so than the fate of the three hundred men who died on the mainland before his hallowed banishment to the wilderness.

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For contemporary readers, the soldier turned treasurer turned merchant turned shaman is today a pawn in the larger battle over the representation of ethnic identities. Those who had hoped to re-evaluate the Spanish presence in the New World and put the Black Legend to rest once and for all have made of Núñez a convincing champion. Here at last was a man whose experience, if it could not disprove the accusations of Las Casas and his disciples, could at least cast their aspersions in a suspicious light by suggesting that for every blood-thirsty conquistador in the New World there was also a Cabeza de Vaca. And in a country deeply divided over racial and ethnic lines, Núñez has become the powerful rejoinder to the Puritan captivity narrative that so persistently denigrated the Indian.

Cabeza de Vaca was something different, it is said. But the evidence does not bear this out. Today's polemic only offers the polar image of a wandering saint as a substitute for the fallen conquistador, neither of them capable of describing the complex role of the Spaniard during the sixteenth century. The implications of this argument would have us believe that the true villains of America were not "hot-blooded Latins" but non-separating
saints; that the encomienda was somehow preferable to the
one-family homestead; that if we spoke French or Spanish our
aesthetic sensibilities would have triumphed over our petty,
democratic ones; that the Inquisition was not as destructive
to the American spirit as the intolerance of Puritan Salem;
that if the yeoman farmer had been more gallant in his
plunder, then America—that spent grain of "Tudor England's
75
lusty blossoming"—would be a far nobler place to reside
in today. Amen.

The face at the pulpit has changed, but the sermon
continues. And we are no closer to the truth now than when
the Puritan was wrongly taught as the fountainhead of
American literature for so many years. The antidote to
historical apologies that go disguised as significant
revision is simply to go back to the text and ask ourselves
how it has been promoted to make us see it in a particular
light. And, to bring with each of us a strong dose of
common sense. Cabeza de Vaca's tale is not the story of
what could have happened in the New World—a "vision of the
brotherhood of man"—if all else had been equal; it is the
story of what did happen—on the St. Lawrence, in Virginia,
in California and New Mexico, from sea to shining sea. That
it is an exceptional saga of human endurance by no means
makes it a singular exception to the general pattern of
North American narratives. To claim that it is anything else
is to hunt for salvation in the story of a man who is only
himself "saved" with a train of four thousand Indians in his
wake. As a "white messiah", Núñez fully participates in

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the literature of conquest clothed as a prophet rather than a conquistador, bearing a gourd rattle in place of a harquebus, planting the cross before the imperial blazon: his walk across Texas is no less imbued with the civilizing mission of the West than was the Lewis and Clark expedition some three hundred years later. To deny this is to reinvent history out of whole cloth.

Our fascination with Núñez reflects our faith in an archetype dear to our culture: the chosen individual who faces insurmountable adversity and somehow comes out of it alive, our ancient and unfathomable need to listen to an Ishmael or a Ulysses tell a story of penitence and woe in the making of an epic journey. Perhaps the tale told by a lone survivor is more poignant a trope in the Atomic Age than it ever was before, and the theme of the survivor is critical to our understanding of Cabeza de Vaca. Anyone who reads The Joint Report (1539) submitted by Núñez, Dorantes and Castillo will see how the messianic role of Cabeza de Vaca is seriously undermined when three survivors—rather than one—tell the tale of their walk across North America. The facts do not noticeably change, but the emphasis on the "chosen" individual does. And if we are to remember all the survivors of the expedition, there was also one Juan Ortiz, discovered by the De Soto expedition to be living with a tribe in the vicinity of Tampa Bay in 1539. A reliable report of Ortiz was made by the official chronicler, though his story is not a part of our history as Núñez' is, for once Ortiz went into the "wilderness" he never came out

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again to write his version. But he did survive, and we do not know how many others also might have. Who will tell Ortiz' story? Or those of his lost companions? It is as though in re-reading Moby Dick we casually discovered for the first time in "The Chase" that one of the harpooners escaped the final disaster and swam ashore to live the rest of his life on a nearby island, never to have anything to do with Ishmael again.

2 Ibid., p.30. The following summary of Cabeza de Vaca's journey is made from Covey's text.

3 Ibid., p.33.

4 Ibid., p.37.

5 Ibid., p.64.

6 Ibid., p.66.

7 Ibid., p.67.

8 Ibid., p.93.

9 Ibid., p.103.

10 Ibid., p.85.

11 Ibid., p.107.

12 Ibid., p.122.

13 Ibid., p.125.

14 Ibid., p.134.

15 Ibid., p.15-17.


19 Ibid., Index.

20 Ibid.


23 Ibid., p.314.

24 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.16.


27 Ibid., p.34-35.

28 Ibid., p.xii.

29 Ibid., p.xix-xx.

30 Ibid., p.xviii.

31 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.13.

32 Ibid., p.15.

33 Ibid., p.21-22.

34 Ibid., p.7.


37 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.7.

38 Ibid., p.56.

39 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "journey".

40 Ibid.


42 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.13.
43 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
44 Ibid., p. 89.
46 Ibid., p. 61.
47 Ibid., p. 68.
48 Ibid., p. 78.
49 Ibid., p. 80.
50 Ibid., p. 91.
51 Ibid., p. 83.
52 Ibid., p. 97.


54 Ibid., p.XV.

55 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.133.

56 Ibid., p.58.


58 Francisco Lopez de Gómara, Historia General de Las Indias, (Barcelona: Editorial Iberia, 1954), I: 75.

59 Bandelier, The Journey of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, p.XXXII.

60 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.7.


62 A Man Called Horse, dir., Elliot Silverstein, 1970.


64 The Emerald Forest, dir., John Boorman, 1985.


66 Cabeza de Vaca, Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America, p.36.
67 Ibid., p.36.
68 Ibid., p.39.
69 Ibid., p.41.
70 Ibid., p.44.
71 Ibid., p.79.
72 Ibid., p.89.
73 Ibid., p.93.
74 Ibid., p.112-113.


CHAPTER 7:

THE WAMPANOAG DISCOVERY OF EUROPE

"When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."

William Shakespeare
The Tempest
An old literary genre was revived in sixteenth century Europe in light of the first American explorations. It possessed a romantic character worthy of the medieval troubador tradition at the same time it recalled the didacticism of classical tragedy. The genre—or sub-genre if you will—was later to inspire some of the best-known fiction in the Western canon. Though possessed of many variations, the outline of the basic story is simple. It goes something like this... A European vessel ranges the high seas sometime during the Age of Exploration. One day, unexpectedly, a terrible storm comes up. The crewmen battle the elements doggedly to save their lives, but to no avail: the ship is crushed by a tempest of wind and water, and the men founder in the wreckage until they drown. All of them, that is, except one, who happens to find his way through lots of luck and no little determination to a desert isle where he is cast up by the tide like a modern-day Jonah. On closer inspection, this desert isle turns out to be not so deserted. As he lies exhausted on the shore, a woman approaches. She is Indian. She is beautiful. She is naked. She revives the poor sailor, presumably with a kiss. He cannot believe his eyes when he comes to, that fate could yield such consolation in the wake of utter wreckage. She nurses him back to health until the day they decide to go meet her people. Her father, usually the chief of the local tribe, disapproves of the stranger, yet can hardly do anything but defer to the wishes of his favorite daughter. The lovers are happily married for a time.
Eventually Fate intervenes in such a way that the marooned man--most often by himself--must find his way back to "civilization" in order to regale his peers with tales of shipwreck, romantic destiny and moral absolution. Such romance lacks the complexity of Cabeza de Vaca's "peregrinación," but the outline of the story is familiar enough to anyone conversant with the travel literature of the age.

This is how the readers of Europe often discovered America. The story was told in many languages with any number of different morals at stake, as we shall later see. We find the tale told through the person of an English pilot in Jean Mocquet's *Voyages* of 1614. Some seventy years later the same story is narrated with minor variation in *An Anthology of Various Voyages to Africa and America* published by Louis Billaine. But perhaps the most fantastic version in currency during the sixteenth century was that of the sole survivor of a Portuguese shipwreck, Diego Alvarez de Correa, who, in a startling succession of adventures, was adopted by a native tribe, elected its chief, married to a beautiful Indian princess, taken back to Europe to meet Catherine de Medicis (who agreed to be the young woman's godmother), and then, in what must have seemed a lovesick snub at European nobility, returned to the New World for ever after to live with his native bride. As Gilbert Chinard has pointed out, "Nothing is more common and more obligatory in the narratives than to find the story of a man shipwrecked, thrown on the shore of a savage land, rescued and revived by a young and beautiful Indian who then cares
for him and saves him from ferocious cannibals."

Some of our greatest writers have woven such unabashed sentimentality into a tapestry of more delicate and long-lasting design. In "The Tempest," Shakespeare's Prospero is shipwrecked on a mysterious isle and finds a magical helpmate, Ariel, who is at once the progeny and prisoner of Caliban's mother, Sycorax, presumably the original inhabitant of the Bard's "brave new world." Shakespeare deprives Sycorax of a romantic maiden's beautiful figure, but endows her with a magical legacy on a powerful level (Ariel), charms that the intellectual Prospero cannot refuse once he resolves to make himself unquestioned master of the isle. Our protagonist is seduced by magic, a rarefied beauty invisible to the eyes of most mortals. But Prospero is not like most mortals. He is a castaway rescued by feminine charms that endow him with all the authorial power of his lost books.

A century later, Daniel Defoe resurrected the fantasy of the itinerant European voyeur in Robinson Crusoe. Here the arch-survivor of our literature lives in complete isolation for twenty-odd years until he rescues from imminent death Man Friday. But in truth, Friday rescues Crusoe from an equally terrible fate—an inconsolable loneliness with no apparent reprieve. Like Shakespeare, Defoe adapts the shipwreck tale to serve as a vehicle for his personal moral vision of a New World. The beautiful princess of Correa's story is transformed into the dark-skinned, docile Man Friday. Both are submissive, physically
attractive, and in terms of the plot, remarkably convenient. As characters of fiction, Sycorax (or Ariel) and Friday are clever mutations of a simple though seductive tale.

Such stories no doubt captivated the European public, particularly when possessed of a pronounceable moral—grotesque, maudlin, or respectably classical. In the story Mocquet relates, the English pilot persuades the Indian princess that if she saves him he will be betrothed to her. She shows him "fruits and roots good to eat," takes him back to the tribe as her husband, and they live happily for two or three years, the princess even bearing her beloved pilot a child. Then, one day, he sights a European ship bearing toward the coast. Dropping everything at a stroke, he runs out into the surf to be rescued, but rescued alone, "being ashamed to bring with him the naked Indian." His wife watches from afar as the sailors take him aboard, and in a fit of despair at so losing her husband, "after having made her regrets, she took the child and cut him into two pieces, throwing one half toward the man on the sea as if to say it belonged to him, and returned to the mercy of fortune with the other, full of grief and pain."

Even to Renaissance readers well-versed in the classics this must have been a shocking tale. The woman's resolution, after all, is the same as Medea's in defiance of an unfaithful husband. But the terms of the story seem inverted to a modern reader. At first glance it would seem unusual that the Indian is the one betrayed and the
Englishman the party who comports himself savagely, oblivious to fulfilling the duties of a faithful husband and father. Lest we forget this irony, the narrator of the tale concludes, "I couldn't look at him [the Englishman] anymore without feelings of horror and hatred." In Billaine's story, a Christian falls in love with another Indian maiden whom—without the slightest trace of literary foreshadowing—he sells into permanent captivity as a slave when finally he is "rescued" by his own people. Slaving, in fact, was the very occupation of Robinson Crusoe when he was shipwrecked on "the Isle of Despair." To what do we owe such a vicious theme of human betrayal in the European annals?

Part of the answer is to note that the romanticism of these stories is often of the self-flagellating variety: the sins of a civilization are visited on the soul of one of its errant individuals. It is as though a culture beginning to realize its own culpability in the wreckage that accompanied America's "discovery" attempted to purge itself of that memory by creating the figure of an Indian maiden sullenly betrayed by her white consort into a life of profound grief or servitude. Thus the guilt of Europe is conveniently deferred to one of its sons, an individual of such heinous character that the reader cannot help but enjoy the narrator's hatred for him, a poetic rather than political justice of limited repercussions for the society at-large. The shipwrecked sailor becomes an exotic scapegoat on which to hang the guilt of the West. We should
not be surprised to find that the theme of moral absolution is common in the genre. No small chapter in Defoe's novel is the one in which the sinful Crusoe, near delirium in the grip of a tropical fever, commends his pitiful state to God's mercy, thus setting out on the road to repentance that will make his solitude meaningful. The performance of this allegory is, however crude, somehow "necessary" to the travelogue in a psychological sense: Indian culture is idealized in the form of a beautiful woman (Billaine and Mocquet), or conversely portrayed as savage (Defoe), while the corrupt European falls into the clutches of one or the other, either to admonish an exploitative culture or to absolve himself of a more personal form of corruption. Either way, redemption is regained through the performance of a Renaissance morality play.

The shipwreck tales explained something that the explorers' journals could not. The regularity with which they appear attests to a large and renewable public demand. The early captivity narrative—whether the mainland Puritan variety or that of the outlying exotic isle—is an important sub-genre of exploration literature. It has even become an important part of our own mythos. As Philip Young has noted, there is no story dearer to the American myth of youth and regeneration than the rescue of John Smith by the beautiful princess Pocahontas. Here is the American captivity narrative in all its glory: the saved is a fearless masculine adventurer, the savior a dark, feminine symbol of the mysterious and fecund earth. The two conjoin
(though never marry) in a symbolic alliance of the European and Indian spirits, a temporary union that would later become an embittered rivalry over possession of the land. Less well-advertised, however, is that Pocahontas became a captive herself in 1613 when she was lured onto a ship and kidnapped by Jamestown colonists to be used as a political hostage against her father, Powhatan. Though she was later to become (by all appearances) a willing convert to Christianity, she was forced to live for an extended time at Jamestown in protective custody, a state from which she was never really rescued, unless by the promises of an ambitious husband-to-be (John Rolfe) or those of a proselytizing religion. Though "captive" in a more figurative sense than Smith, Pocahontas died thousands of miles from home (Gravesend, England) in 1616, about eighteen years of age.

Her voyage is representative of countless others made by the Native American to Europe, many under less auspicious circumstances and that yield up today even scantier details than her own. It has been long forgotten that traffic across the Atlantic went in both directions. The ordeals of Mary Rowlandson, Prospero and Diego Correa are mirrored in the forgotten captivities of Squanto, Pocahontas, Yapoco, Essomericoq and thousands of Indians nameless in our history, who, by the design of force or human curiosity, journeyed to the exotic Old World in an unwilling mission to discover the strange continent of Europe. They were not shipwrecked; neither were most of them rescued. They found themselves in Europe more the pawns of political strategy than an avenging
Fate. But their captivity narratives—what we can piece together of them—are no less emblematic of the human response to captivity and cultural dislocation than the narrative of Robinson Crusoe. Though we cannot date exactly the "Wampanoag discovery of Europe," it is no less important an event for our inability to do so.

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Early explorers like Columbus and Vespucci loaded entire holds with specimens of the strange new species, the American Indian. During the ten years following Columbus' first voyage, it would be safe to estimate that a few thousand AmerIndians—largely from the Caribbean and the coast of South America—were shipped on Spanish and Portuguese vessels to the Old World. In 1507, Queen Isabella outlawed the practice of transporting Indians to Europe for the purpose of enslaving them, and from this point the traffic in human cargo diminished, though it persisted in smaller numbers for centuries to come. But as the times changed so did the motives for forcing the Indian (later, inviting him) to make the Atlantic crossing. In the seventeenth century, Squanto was abducted by the roving privateer Thomas Hunt; three centuries later the Lakota prophet Black Elk willingly made the journey as a youthful member of Bill Cody's Wild West Show. Whatever the particular motive for transporting them, the duress the captives endured and their unfailing reception as exotic,
half-human curiosities suggest that certain social and racial attitudes in Europe changed little between the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution.

The means for securing captives were most often brutal; the motives for doing so ranged from pragmatic official policy to an unflinching voyeurism worthy of the most sordid courtier. Following his second voyage, Columbus arranged for the sale of some 500 Caribbean natives in Spain to reimburse Ferdinand and Isabella for their timely investments. In 1534 Cartier carried to France the two sons of Chief Donnaconna—Dom Agaya and Taignoagny—to teach them a civilized language and awe them with a dazzling display of Parisian splendor, all with an eye to using them as pilots on the next voyage out to America. Some captives, as those entrusted to the Englishman Ferdinando Gorges, provided valuable information about New World terrain and natural resources. There was a legalistic motive for their abduction as well: anyone wishing to stake a political claim in the New World might promenade such captives as irrefutable evidence of their American landing. Then too, the "savage" in his "natural" state cut a curious enough figure in European capitals that his public exhibition might be a convenient way to make him earn his own room and board. Cortez sent several of Montezuma's jugglers from Mexico in 1519 who performed to excellent notices in Europe before the King of Spain and the Pope.

A notable exception to the general pattern of kidnap-
according to the wishes of his father, agreed to accompany the French to their homeland in 1504 in order to master the finer points of European gunnery. Apparently this knowledge was to be put to use on his return by gaining a military advantage once and for all against the tribe's traditional enemies. From the scant records that exist, it would seem unlikely that he ever returned to his father's people. His ultimate fate has been debated, though Marcel Trudel claims that his family tree in France extended well into the seventeenth century.

This was the common fate of the Indian "visitor"—to die thousands of miles from home with a captivity tale that was almost invariably interred with him. The problem in resurrecting "the other captivity narrative" is great: even for those who have consulted it at length, the historical record is painfully mute. For Essomeriqc to have begun a line of descent is indeed rare. From what we can tell, most captives died within a few months after their arrival, usually stricken by one of the myriad Old World diseases to which they were notoriously vulnerable. Usually the only record we have of their captivity is scratched down in the baptismal and death registers of a given church. Unlike the romantic captivities of America, all we have to go on for those of Europe are the dry pronouncements of record books and the occasional eyewitness version of a public ceremony in which a Native American may have participated as a decorative ornament. In either case, the description normally stops at numbers, dates, and a cursory detailing of
physical appearances with whatever moral inferences can be freely drawn from them.

Consider an early example from France, attributed to Henri Estienne in *The Chronicle of Eusebius* (1512). This is a typical period description of the Indian captive:

Several human savages have been brought forth from that island (which one calls the Terre Neuve) to Rouen, along with their pirogue, their clothes and their arms. They are the color of soot, have very large lips, and have some tattooing on the face, running from the eyes to the middle of the chin, and across the jaw, in little streaks. Their hair is black and coarse, resembling the mane of a mare. During their entire life they never have a beard, or any other hairy growth on any part of the body, excepting the head and the eyebrows. They wear a belt to which (fastened) a kind of little bag to hide their genital parts. They talk with their lips and have no religion; their barque is made from the bark of a tree. With a single hand a man (can) place (one) on his shoulders. Their weapons consist of great bows, with the cords made from the guts or sinews of animals; their arrows are of reeds, pointed by a stone or by a fish-bone. Their food consists of broiled meat; their drink, of water. They have no use for bread, wine or money...15

Stylistically, the passage represents what we will call the "ethnographic cage." First, there is little variation in sentence structure; clauses and sentences begin with "they" or "their" in a matter-of-fact accounting of physical characteristics and observable habits. Second, the rhythm of independent clauses (and their attendant observations) falls into shorter and shorter units as the paragraph progresses, suggesting impatience or even fatigue on the part of the observer, an inference borne out by the widening
scope of his subject—everything from religion to weapons to money. The simplicity of the sentences implies a concomitant lack of sophistication on the part of the human beings they describe. The Indian is here caged by the stylistic narrowness (repetition, reduction) of his observer. In fact, even if one were to attribute great moral development or cultural sophistication to such a captive, the style of Estienne's passage would belie any such claim. A subtle kind of Renaissance taxonomy is at work. Though linear, it is unsystematic ("they have no use for bread, wine or money..."); though authoritative in tone, its concern is superficial, largely limiting itself to physical details. The Indians are described like living statues. The detached tone, the structural uniformity and the parallel repetition all suggest that the observer is guided by the most enlightened of principles, a prototype of what today we would call the "scientific method." Indeed, we are hard put to glance at such a passage without unconsciously congratulating it for its apparent "objectivity." The tone might be described as a literary equivalent of "cinema verité."

    Not surprisingly, the same principle was at work when describing the Indian in America. Hernando Alarcón recounts the appearance of a tribe along the Little Colorado River (1540):

> Their bodies are branded by fire. Their hair is cut in front, and in the back it hangs to the waist. The women go about naked. They wear a large bunch of
feathers, painted and glued, tied in front and behind. They wear their hair like the men. There were among these Indians three or four men dressed like women.16

When the sixteenth-century travelogue changes into an ethnology, the sentences coalesce into a uniform cadence and perspective. However unempirical its method, such a passage gives the illusion of scientific detachment. In Estienne's account, the most subversive of analogies can be upheld by a rhythmically-balanced sentence that even scans in the iambic: "Their hair is black and coarse, resembling the mane of a mare." As primitive ethnology, it reveals how the most illogical association ("They talk with their lips and have no religion") can be raised to the level of scientific inference when confined within the narrow domains of stylistically "objective" prose. There is no Pocahontas to rescue this victim from imminent ruin. The European captivity narrative need not describe physical bondage to enforce nevertheless the boundaries of the cage.

Some captives were so confined; others were relegated to celebratory roles. Those "fortunate" enough to be ceremonially displayed were received enthusiastically by the European, at least until the novelty of their presence wore off. In 1550, King Henry II made a ceremonial entry into Rouen, the Norman city that had long been an entrepot for Indian captives. This was to be an astonishing event in its elaboration: using a mixture of classical imagery and flesh and blood Native American captives, Henry's entry was celebrated as a marriage of the ancient grandeur of Athens.
and Rome with the noble masculine bearing of the American Indian. In a sense, all the marvels that had thus far eluded the French in the New World were now to be re-invented in the Old. From the contemporary engravings we still possess, the procession was far more lavish than anything to be found on the St. Lawrence: white horses, trumpeters, elephants, goddesses, nymphs and naiads swimming in the Seine, and, the pièce de résistance of the entire performance—a small island in the river inhabited by some ferocious Tupinambas from Brazil and a bevy of French sailors disguised as a rival tribe ready to give them mock battle. Like the early cartographic vision of the Americas, this last spectacle was confined to a remote though prominent island arbor.

The contemporary engravings of the event, presented in the illuminated manuscript C'est La Déduction (1552), reveal the state procession in what might be imagined as an allegory celebrating the new-found confidence of Renaissance Europe. The field of vision in the colored engraving "Chaste Diane, Orpheus, Neptune..." encompasses the entire processional entry as the artist looks across the Seine at the spires of Rouen. In the foreground is a ruined arch under which the dignitaries ride. They cross over the bridge that spans the river, carrying the eye forward toward the heart of the city on the opposite bank, marked by the great cathedral. In the water to the right of the bridge frolic nymphs and sea monsters, presumably impersonated by the good citizens of Rouen. Amidst them, in full water,
rests a larger-than-life representation of Neptune who holds a trident while straddling his throne. To the left of the bridge is the small island occupied by the Tupinambas and the French sailors disguised as their mortal enemies. As the walls of the city rise up behind them on the opposite bank, the island seems to sit as though on the wing of a large arena. The only trees to be seen in the engraving are those on the island that shelter the "Indians," both real and make-believe.

The guiding line of sight in the illustration is the parade, many of its participants astride white chargers prancing across the bridge. Then, in following the procession across the river, one is struck by the allegorical arrangement of the festivities. On the right of the bridge is the "Mediterranean," represented by the fulsome allusions to classical mythology. On the left is "America," an island lush with vegetation that, while separate from Neptune and his charges, mirrors the exotic past of Europe in its enactment of a "savage" fantasy. The allegory is, in fact, a map. Its spatial dimension is symbolic of a broader geographical one. America is represented as a distant island, populated by naked indigènes who stand innocently harbored beneath an exotic verdure. As one gazes on it, the world is frozen in the gesture of a passing parade—America to the west (left), exotic antiquity to the east (right), while the best and the brightest of France negotiate the bridge between them. But the role of the Indian, however exotic, is ancillary. As
the procession crosses the river, one senses the spirit of 
self-congratulation among those whose task it has been to 
hold in the balance two worlds—the classical and the 
New—in the act of articulating the age we know as the 
"Renaissance." The treatment of the Indian is allegorical 
rather than representational. Due to the very assumptions 
of allegory, the effect is to render the "savage" as a 
symbol rather than a creature of flesh and blood, as the 
indistinguishable member of a tribe rather than a 
recognizable individual.

From the zoological perspective of the "ethnographic 
cage" to the pageant of myth and allegory in Rouen is but a 
small step in the Renaissance mind. Both depict the Indian 
as a being worthy of observation yet unworthy of empathy. 
Through language or pictorial art they relegate him to a 
safely distant reserve. While one role is fashioned through 
the crude eyes of an observer (the "cage"), the other is 
elaborately planned as a celebration of European dominion. 
The first succeeds in denying the humanity of its subject by 
demoting him, through linguistic repetition, to the status 
of a curious animal; the second achieves a similar end by 
elevating the Indian to a symbolic role that is equally 
incapable of conferring on him any individual personality. 
In either case he is tribal, his motives unfathomable, his 
very being remote. Here the objectives of science and art 
coincide: the "ethnologist" and the "allegorist", whether 
by laborious representation or a symbolic flight of fancy, 
reduce the Native American to a dependent and inferior
status.

The crowds that gathered to watch such "specimens" or "men of myth" were considerable. The lavish presentations in which they were paraded scorned no cost or classical allusion. Théodore Godefroy recounts the entry of Charles IX into the city of Troyes in 1564:

...then proceeded a square of soldiers at the head of those who followed. Among these marched several properly-dressed Savages, the captain of whom was mounted on a unicorn draped in ivy...the drums sounded and the said Savages mounted donkeys, horses and goats, a thing very pleasant to see. ...Two of the savages carried a sign held high, round and trimmed in ivy, on which were written these words: "France in peace will not merely hold, but grow to rival in esteem Alexander...20

In this way the Indian was, if not chastised for his incorrigible nature, incorporated as a minor figure into the heroic and mythic past of his captors. It is unlikely that a European prisoner in America (John Smith included) ever underwent a stranger ceremony than a royal procession would have been to a newly-arrived American native.

To associate the Indian with the classical and the antique was to explain his existence in a most comforting manner to the people of Europe. Their acceptance of him required that he be "covered" in the symbols of a noble past: ancient armor, unicorns, bows and arrows. If any coincidence was to help sustain the analogy between the peoples of the New World and those of the ancient Mediterranean, it was the limited state of military technology among both, a fact that inspired legends of
terrible ferocity as well as uncommon bravery, whether one spoke of a Wampanoag chief or a Roman centurion.

But these analogies were by no means limited to the accoutrements of war. Montaigne wrote of the Tupinamba, "Their language, moreover, is a soft language, with an agreeable sound, somewhat like Greek in its endings." Bernadette Bucher has remarked on the close resemblance between the Indians in Theodre de Bry's engravings and the classical anatomical poses of Antiquity that were rescued for European eyes during the Renaissance. Heroic romance would perform what no expedition had been able to--the domestication of wildness, the transformation of the Other into one of "Us" by colonizing him, not in the New World, but as an inhabitant of the Epic Age that had begun in the Old.

The function of celebration or performance engendered a hybrid image that was exemplified in the royal processions of Henry II and Charles IX, an image that was the offspring of the mythic and the historic, the eminently attractive claim that the Indian was no mere creature of fantasy, but the living reminder of a noble Mediterranean past. In a quite different though parallel historical context, Cairns Craig has written of the motives that possess a dominant culture to express such a paradox:

The periphery [in this case, the Indian] becomes the repository of the historically backward in which the lost evidence of the core culture [Europe] can be recovered: the peripheral culture allows the historian or the critic to define what escaped
definition at an earlier period in the dominant culture.23

The Indian resembled an ancient though "backward" ancestor of the European. He would help revive and explain the exploits of Hercules to a culture on the verge of ennobling him. Robert Berkhofer argues how this type of analogy advanced a "scientific" theory of progress:

The results of these bodies of comparison confirmed the fundamental assumptions that prompted them in the first place. The beliefs of earlier peoples and modern primitive peoples showed remarkable similarities; the belief and behavior of modern Europeans differed markedly from those of earlier peoples and contemporary primitives (except perhaps for some nations' peasantry and serfs). Entailed in these comparisons from the beginning and seemingly proven by the findings was the premise that the present conditions of primitive peoples could be taken to represent the early condition of present civilized societies.24

As with so many other facets of the Indian image in the West, the act of its appropriation to reflect an inherent inferiority can only be explained by resorting to paradox. The Indian was heathen but heroic. Heroism, though a virtue, was really the province of the long-ago Heroic Age. Like Cicero, the "savage" could be given to interminable harangues; like the Laconians, he might also be proverbially terse. But ultimately, his wildness was only to be confirmed by contrast with the "civilized" world. Thus it is that the "rescue" of the Indian in the European captivity was nowhere as dramatic as that of John Smith or Robinson Crusoe in the American genre. It was, in fact, a completely
anti-climactic event:

This yere [1502] were brought unto the King three men taken in the new found lands, by Sebastian Caboto, before named in anno 1498. These men were clothed in beasts' skins and eate raw flesh, but spake such a language as no man could understand them, of the which these men two of them were seen in the King's Court at Westminster two yeres after clothed like Englishmen, and could not be discerned from Englishmen.25

The Indian was indeed "rescued"—by his own captors; or as was more often the case, he simply disappeared from the pages of the historical record—forgotten, neglected, perhaps dead.

There have been some attempts to ascertain the fate of Indian visitors to Europe. Carolyn Foreman has undertaken it with a broad swath, as has Olive Patricia Dickason for those carried off to France. But, as noted before, the captivity of these men, women and children does not normally end with a routine escape that spells out a moral for the pure in heart. Piecing together any such story is fraught with the temptation of assigning it a meaning that would turn out to be utterly inappropriate had none of the pieces been missing in the first place. The Indian captivity narrative is not told in texts but anecdotes.

We might etch the details of even a few of the captives to suggest the range of their experience. Several Inuit (Eskimos) returning with an expedition to England in 1577 were given permission by Queen Elizabeth to exercise their native agility by hunting swans on the Thames. A certain Francisco of Chicora, so named by the Spanish after
his capture in 1520, was baptized, paraded and educated in
Europe before returning to the Carolinas to interpret for
another expedition which he deserted at the first
opportunity. Several of the "savages" were displayed to
the amazement of the public in London where they ran down
stags in the royal game parks on foot. An old Micmac
legend has it that an early French party returned to Europe
with the native Simmoodawa who was encouraged to give a
public performance on how to hunt and cure game, after which
"to take a mischievous revenge upon them for making an
exhibition of him, he went into a corner of the yard and
eased himself before them all." The anecdotes by which
we would know them are exclusively public. Their interior
selves are impenetrable; stolid and unreflective, they are
little more than literary equivalents of a cigar-store
Indian.

But let us consider a captivity story that is better
documented than most. In Jean Mocquet's Voyages (1614) we
meet the Indian Yapoco, of whom the narrator tells us a tale
perhaps uncharacteristic in detail but perfectly
representative in outline. In 1604 Yapoco, the nephew
of a Brazilian chief, arrives in France, in the charge of M.
Mocquet. As circumstances would have it, Yapoco at one
point is asked by his French hosts to tend to some meat
roasting on a spit in a local tavern, an idea so despicable
to him he walks out on his companions without another word
and sets forth on the road to St. Malo, a port on the Breton
coast. Nothing more is heard from him after his decision to
walk off, so to speak, into the French sunset.

Nine years pass. In 1613, after returning to Paris in the wake of yet more travels, Mocquet goes to the Louvre, where he hears that the Sieur de Rosilly will be exhibiting several members of the Tupinamba tribe to the King and Queen Mother. He arrives on the assigned day to meet the Brazilians and there is shocked to see Yapoco among them. At the sight of Mocquet, the chief's nephew jumps up and down for joy, embraces him wildly, and recounts the tale of his exploits since their last meeting. The story, indeed, was a strange one. Yapoco had found passage back to the New World from St. Malo, but then was dropped some three hundred miles from his native country. Somehow arriving at Maragnan, a small island off the coast of Brazil, he found passage on a French ship that, no sooner than leaving the island, was seized by English pirates.

Mocquet was no doubt a good judge of sea-yarns; but Yapoco's exploits were unique. As the visitor went on to relate, through his own devices he had found the means to return to France. Once arrived, he enlisted the sympathy of Madame de la Ravardière, the wife (perhaps sister) of one of Mocquet's friends in the area of Poitou. She heard the story of his travails and decided she could do nothing less than give him employment on her own estate. Everything was satisfactory, until--

It so happened one day that a pig fell in the trench nearby the chateau. The lady of the house ordered her servants and Yapoco to get him out. But, although a Savage, Yapoco so disdained the idea of such a vile task he frankly refused to do it. At this,
the Madame insulted him and he left without saying another word for the city of La Rochelle where he found passage to Le Havre and from there to Paris. 31

This Indian was finding the French to be a haughty and pretentious lot.

Finally caught up with his old friend, Mocquet returns to his lodgings and treats Yapoco with all the generosity at his disposal. As the King desired to see this unusual visitor, Mocquet accompanies him shortly thereafter to the royal reception. "I made him get down on his knees before the king who asked me to act as translator for the young man, whose language I knew a little." The King gives him some silver, Yapoco goes to Le Havre (for what reason it is not particularly clear), and the redoubtable Madame de La Ravadieré (no doubt stung by the pangs of conscience) sends her people to retrieve him. Mocquet sadly concludes, "I have had no news of him since. Thus is the story of the fortune of young Yapoco."

Because of its relatively intricate detail, the story is rare for early captivity accounts of the Indian. Still, as the narrative is so compact, we get little hint of the true ordeal Yapoco must have undergone on his global "odyssey." But there are some notable similarities between his narrative (as told by Mocquet) and that of Cabeza de Vaca. Both undergo, for example, a rapid decline in social status when transplanted to a different and "exotic" culture. Both are expected to perform tasks which they utterly disdain (a servant rescuing a pig, a slave gathering

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wood), so betraying their noble origins. Both are, by the end of their journeys, accorded an unusual status that gains them entry to a privileged realm of the host culture (royal guest, tribal healer), where they participate in a ceremony of great symbolic importance—Núñez falls to his knees to raise from the dead an Indian Lazarus, Yapoco genuflects before King Louis XIII to acknowledge (however unawares) the principle of divine right. And lest one believe the analogy ends there, it is well to consider the more visceral similarities of their ordeals. Given the wrong time of year (autumn/winter), an Indian crossing the north of France on foot in order to book a passage home would have been as presumptuous and unlikely a pilgrimage as that of a Spanish hidalgo trekking the Sonoran Desert in the blazing heat of mid-July.

Such a comparison may seem far-fetched. But if we possessed a text of Yapoco's "adventures," particularly one told in his own hand, we might be more likely to admit his story to the ranks of the classic travelogue. In Mocquet's Voyages the narrative is barely anecdotal—a noteworthy though passing point of interest in a book with a more adventurous agenda. But imagine for a moment what we would have thought of Cabeza de Vaca if his history had been told years later by a passing acquaintance (someone comparable to Mocquet) that he made en route to Culiacán. Most of the details that made his captivity so empathetic and tragic would simply have disappeared: his European past, his warning to Narváez not to divide forces, the cannibalism of
his compatriots, and among other things, the extended sense
of a narrative chain of events, the episodic account of
cause and effect that climaxes by framing his nine years'
suffering in the wilderness as a messianic errand undertaken
by a repentant conquistador. All that we know of Yapoco
from Mocquet is what the latter casually tells us about a
stranger from a radically different culture; in The
Relation, by contrast, all that we know of Cabeza de Vaca is
what Cabeza de Vaca wants us to know. What might be
construed as roughly parallel events (the ordeals of Núñez
and Yapoco) are rendered by our history into discontinuous
categories: one combines the impetus of a personal
advertisement with the solemn demeanor of a mystical
confession; the other can bear little scrutiny beyond the
random and anecdotal. All the guesswork in the world cannot
make of Yapoco's story a real "narrative," unless, as an
alternative, it was reconstructed as a fictional one, a
genre held in suspicion by many historians. The problem is
profound and, what is worse, circular: not only do we not
know all of Yapoco's story, but we do not know what we do
not know because the Indian experience of Europe was
hardly—if ever—recorded in a format considered appropriate
(biography, history, travelogue), much less in the hand of
the Indian himself. As such, the European captivity
narrative will never be written. But must we fall into the
trap of forgetting that it ever occurred at all? That, if
nothing else, is what Yapoco's story can teach us.

But there may yet exist another account of the same
man. Gilbert Chinard claims that the indigène Itapoucou who pays a visit to the King of France in 1613 and appears in the pages of Claude D'Abbéville's *The Isle of Maragnan* is the same Brazilian of Mocquet's acquaintance. Some of the details would bear this out; others are not so telling. For instance, D'Abbéville's description reveals little of the man Mocquet describes. In *The Isle of Maragnan* we read that Itapoucou's father (not his uncle) was the chief of the Coyete, and that the nephew was named for a local species of fish. Before his baptism, Itapoucou carried a name meaning "bar of iron", as well as ten or eleven others he had earned in battle.

His exploits as a soldier mark a significant part of D'Abbéville's brief portrait: "He enjoys very much making speeches and is never shy when he must speak, particularly when the subject is arms or the principles of the Christian faith." D'Abbéville, responsible for bringing Itapoucou and five companions to receive religious instructions in France, has no difficulty resolving the contradictions inherent in the roles of pagan and Christian warrior: "His judgments firm and his discourse religious, his word good, his zeal for piety and the authority he submits to will bring him to God and his grace...joining knowledge with courage, his piety and his word, and in a short time—as we hope—will help build a beautiful Church of God not made of stones, but converted souls." According to Chinard, this is the same man who refused to go into the trenches to rescue a pig for the noble Madame de La Ravardière.
Perhaps Mocquet alone was privy to such stories. In any case, the Itapoucou reported by D'Abbéville is dutiful and self-effacing, far different than the prideful man who twice ran away from his French hosts after encountering an unspeakable insult. Even with a limited number of documents, serious inconsistencies as to his true nature persist.

The journal Mercure Francois from 1617 devotes a dozen pages to the arrival of these same Tupinamba with their Capucin fathers and the subsequent plans for their baptismal ceremonies. Unfortunately, as the journal relates, "while in the process of making preparations [for the ceremony] three of them died." As though to compensate for such an untimely tragedy, the baptism was conducted in a festive spirit:

To baptise the three remaining Tupis, the Church of the Capucins was dressed in a tapestry of silk, gold and silver depicting the life of St. Jean Baptiste. The altar was covered in gold and riches: a rug of silk trailed down the steps and on the ground nearby. In the nave nearby was a trellis that separated it from the altar, and there was a stage at the back for the baptism, on which stood a vermilion and gilt basin, with white taffeta above rippling down to the floor.

As with the royal entry into Rouen, the Indian is encompassed in a theatrical spectacle, here to occasion a solemn religious rite rather than a secular parade. The conversion of the Tupi souls is signalled by the costumes they sport: "The King, the Queen and the entire court arrived at four o'clock forthwith in order that the three
Maragnans dressed in long robes of white taffeta, open in front and behind to the belt, be given the holy oil..." Yapoco—"Itapoucou"—the man with some eleven names earned from his earlier exploits in America is now to be called "Louis Marie" after the French King. Accompanying the ceremony, the "Chappelles" provide a "melody of voice and instruments." The initiation of the Tupis is complete. Now, having played out their role in the Christian ritual of baptism, they will fade from the historical record and eventually disappear. It would appear that this is the same Yapoco. But with such fragments we can never be certain.

The history of theatrical receptions accorded the Indian would indeed be a long one. Carolyn Foreman has noted in detail the roles assigned to later visiting Indian dignitaries in the centuries following the Renaissance—these were often as captive of the crowds that clamored to see them as their predecessors had been of their politically-motivated hosts. The Cherokees who visited England in the 1760's were besieged by crowds anxious to even see them eat and drink. Several Mohegans, on display in 1765 at the cost of one shilling per spectator, apparently gained their "protectors" such a profit that the House of Lords passed a law shortly thereafter requiring a license to import the Native American. In 1817, a contingent of Senecas visited Drury Lane Theatre and even performed. Ten years later, an Osage party touring France "appeared at the theatre several times," and at a performance of Blaise and Babet, "The actors did not take
their eyes off the savages, and all of the glasses in the theatre were directed continually on them." In Ghent the same contingent ate supper on stage and performed a war song to a packed house. In the mid-nineteenth century, a more circumspect strategy was developed to avoid such a spectacle, but as Foreman recounts it, this was to no avail: "A private view was arranged for the Iowas at the Surrey Zoological Gardens, in order to avoid a crowd; the Indians gave their war whoops, while the monkeys chattered and the large animals roared." In spite of its reputation as an unprecedented tour de force, William Cody's Wild West Show was merely a modern incarnation of the captivity narrative as public performance.

The roles of "specimen" (zoological, scientific) and "actor" (theatrical, artistic) merged in the figure of the AmerIndian abroad: he would inform as well as entertain his "civilized" audience in a spectacle mounted in a closed space, whether "cage" or stage. By assigning the Indian a theatrical role, the West was able to contain native "savagery" at the same time it could shamelessly exaggerate it according to an acceptable convention. Thus did the role of the Native American change from that of a public nuisance (or threat) to that of a symbolic, celebratory figure.

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Acknowledging the scantiness of our sources is not enough. Is there a story we can tell of the Indian

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captivity that will neither belittle nor rhapsodize it? But we lack even a clear stereotype of the captive which we might call up our collective conscience to alter. Presumably there can be no caricature of a figure about whom we know next-to-nothing. It is our opportunity to invent an image—an archetype rather than a stereotype—that reveals a common experience while retaining the guise of a human individual. Pieced together from a hundred tiny fragments the story would go something like this...A Wampanoag father of three was hunting for food on the beach one day when he was greeted by men, strange men riding on the back of a large bird with white wings. They lured him on board with the promise of gifts, and then told him that he was to accompany them to a place called "England." Whether this was the name of the bird or not, the man could not tell. He entered the bowels of the creature and was chained to it with large necklaces wrapped around his ankles. For many days he could do nothing but listen to the sound of the water and the men around him, by turns bored and restless. By the time the bird landed he understood it was not a bird at all, in fact, it was not even alive as he had once imagined it. When he came out again into the world, the sun was glaring. There was a crowd of people looking hard at him as though he had no father, no wife, no children, no people. Some of them shouted, laughed. They put him in a house with several smaller houses within it. There they covered his body in tight clothing and talked to him in sounds that did not even resemble the speech of an enemy.
They repeatedly threatened to touch him with a small stick, a tree with only two branches growing from it, as he knelt. To prevent him from escaping, they made him wear shoes.

But he watches them watch him. They are small of stature, white-complexioned. They move their hands excitedly when they talk. They have tongues which they commonly cluck together with no regard to whom is speaking. The women cover their breasts while raising them to a position of prominence. The men wear their members in small sacks that hang between their legs. Their food is coarse and salty. They pass round pieces of metal in token of esteem. Some are carried through the streets on the backs of large dogs; others are beaten—like dogs. They have public places where they suspend by a long cord certain persons who have offended their leaders. They do this until they can no longer breathe. They walk on two legs, as we do.

This is what the Wampanoag sees. So that he can be properly baptized, they lead him to a great cathedral which he mistakes for a ship. He believes he is to be returned home. Music begins. It is deep and powerful and knows about him—where he comes from, how many children he has. They sing to him, but strangely fail to dance. On his head they make him wear water. After some words they are finished and he returns to the house. Three days later he falls ill—smallpox, let us say. He knows he is not in a dream because the pain of dreams is different from this fever. He tells the fathers—that is what they call

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themselves—that he thought the cathedral would take him home. They smile at this, tell him to be calm, begin to recite something, a chant of strange words. The next day, he dies. The last image he has is of a man with no teeth who touched him as he walked on the stone path into the ship. That is all. Such is our eulogy for the Wampanoag.

**EPILOGUE**

Whereas Cabeza de Vaca learned with singular success the new roles of merchant and medicine man during his captivity, the "childish" disorientation of the Indian in Europe was wittily reported by his hosts as a normal part of the "savage" entertainment. Yapoco's occasional confusion was only a harbinger of things to come. Carolyn Foreman has shown how legion are the images of the dumbstruck Indian before the high altar of European art and technology. In 1725, an Indian woman given a repeating watch at the French court concluded that it was a spirit because of its inexplicable movements. Some Cherokees visiting England forty years later were delighted with their tour of the private Pembroke Estate—until they saw a statue of Hercules wielding a club which so frightened them that they demanded to leave. In the nineteenth century, a group of Ojibways visiting England asked to see the "iron horse" (train) drink. In the reign of Queen Victoria, Foreman tells us, "The visit of the Indians to the Thames Tunnel displayed a rare example of primitive man before a work
which attests to a high grade of civilization." She
goes on to add, as though part of the crowd herself (1943),
"As the old chief gazed upon the likeness of the engineer
(on the face of the medal) the great difference between men
in a savage and civilized state was observed by the
onlookers." The speechlessness of the old man was not
a new theme. Le Berger, an Iroquois chief, was carried to
France in 1649 to witness the triumph of Renaissance
civilization, and after seeing the city of Le Havre on
arrival was unable to speak for two hours. If the
Indian was not already a mute witness to European
superiority, presumably a tour of the Old World would make
him so.

Such disbelief in the face of "progress" connoted a
childlike nature whose image struck a deep nerve in the
European need to understand the Other. A gradual change in
Western thinking about the "savage" was reflected by the
evolution of these journeys to the Old World. The first
voyagers to America sent back boatloads of the indigenous
inhabitants with the crass hope of enslaving them. As the
African slave market quickly proved to be more lucrative
than the American one, the role of the Indian captivity
changed. The "slave" turned to "specimen" or "interpreter,"
both capacities in which the Indian acted to inform or
reassure the European about the superior nature of Western
culture: the specimen, by embodying the starkest of
contrasts with the civilized world; the interpreter, by
aiding the forces of exploration as a hired hand. By the
seventeenth century, however, the perception of the Indian in Europe had undergone still another change. The French most clearly exemplified this evolving attitude in their official policy, though the assumptions that guided them were shared by their political rivals. Now, instead of a "slave," a "curiosity" or a "guide," the Native American was being converted, as the Renaissance and Reformation gave way to the Enlightenment, into a "child."

The image of the puerile Indian had been long-dormant. By the "invention" of America, in Edmundo O'Gorman's famous phrase, the Old World had created (metaphorically, given birth) to the New. The widespread influence of such a metaphor only made the presumption of the "childlike Indian" more convenient and, ultimately, defensible. The jurist Vitoria was among the first to provide a theoretical framework in justification of this idea, as Anthony Pagden notes:

> For the obvious deduction to be drawn from all that has been said is that the Indian is no 'third species' but some variety of fully grown child whose rational faculties are complete but still potential rather than actual. Indians have to be trained to perceive what other men perceive without effort, to accept what other men regard as axiomatic without prior reflection...Like the children of other races he will one day grow into a free and independent citizen of a true polis. Until that time arrives, however, he must, for his own benefit, remain in just tutelage under the King of Spain, his status now slave-like, but not slavish.54

The nature of the Indian, in this view, was evolutionary. By the mid-seventeenth century, as Cornelius Jaenen argues,
French policy was no longer to display the Indian in Europe but to educate him, a status that still presumed his cultural inferiority while advocating the possibility of advancement.

The power of metaphor is vast, be it as a cipher of cultural assumptions or an actual force in shaping them. For Europe, the discovery of Antiquity and America were roughly simultaneous, and the West reached for a human image by which to measure itself both against ancient ancestors and new-found rivals. We have seen how the female form was grafted onto America in cartographic representation during the sixteenth century, as well as the significance of the sexually-charged metaphor that was implied in her "discovery." The personification inherent in such imagery could not help but have wide-ranging consequences in the years to follow.

By the seventeenth century, personification had also become a common method by which to measure the "growth" of civilizations. Europe began to enlist a schema of history that conceptualized the world—explicitly or implicitly—as a human body. This conceit was well-suited to the idea of Progress, because inherent in the metaphor of age was the necessary image of continual growth or maturity. The Indian was therefore cast as a child, someone who would need to be taught the principles of culture through the careful instruction of his elders. Such a historical paradigm neatly coincided with the observation made by many contemporary Europeans that the older an Indian was, the
less likely were the chances he would accept the catechism of the Church or the competing one of Secular Progress. Only if he could be reached while still an impressionable youngsters could he flourish as a productive member of the larger culture. Culturally, if not genealogically, the Indian was an "orphan," and the West took upon itself the serious mission of raising him.

The delicate irony in using the "stages of life" as an analogy for cultural growth was that, sooner or later, decrepitude and senility were bound to deprive the mature body of its powers, even returning the individual to a state of infancy in his later years. How could the supposed maturity of Europe be thus exalted if it would only end in senescence? Like so many other paradoxes where the Indian was concerned, this one could be turned to advantage by, if not a sleight of hand, a slight reordering of perspective, as Robert Berkhofer explains:

The major line of reasoning in this period [the Renaissance], and the one most congruent with the classical humanist's conceptions of a Greek and Roman Golden Age as well as with the orthodox Christian's conception of monogenesis, pictured the continuing degeneration of human beings after the expulsion from the Garden of England to the present...

Accordingly, Indians were portrayed as corrupt copies of the Jewish or other high civilizations of the past or, at worst, the very agents of Satan's own degeneracy. 56

In other words, progress and degeneration competed as explanations of the Indian. But whether the judgment was based on evolutionary or devolutionary principles, for the "savage" the verdict was the same: depicted as a child, he
was too immature to have attained a civilization of the first rank; as a degenerate, he was too far removed from the genesis of man to be fully cognizant of his own powers. The prerogatives of nature and human nature were bound against him. Finally, as Ernest Tuveson notes, the "battle of the metaphors" was resolved:

When the expectation of the early end of the world arose again just before and during the Reformation, the decay of nature and society was to hover over Western Europe as an omen of the Apocalypse; and one of the elements making possible the emergence of the 'modern' world was the final discrediting of the idea, and its replacement with a doctrine of progress rather than degeneration in history.57

The advantage of this "anthropomorphic history" was the ease with which its grand design appropriated any foreign culture and relegated it (even if paternally) to an inferior position. With the empirical advances of the Enlightenment and the continuing obsession with human progress, the evolutionary version of the world eventually won out over its rival in the West. Given the guiding light of human reason, "development"—moral and physical—was inevitable. Again, Berkofer traces this movement:

In conjectural or theoretical history, the ranking of societies that was part of the comparative method became a theory of progression. By analogy between the life cycle of a human being and the history of the species, philosophers in the eighteenth century, especially in France and Scotland, produced a history of the sequence of stages of society that the race had passed through to reach the height of progress exemplified by Europe at the time. Just as a single person advanced from infancy through youth to reach adulthood, so all humankind had passed through savagery and
barbarism before gaining civilization. 58

The hierarchical structure of the metaphor recalled the Great Chain of Being, an idea critical to early Christian thought. But the major difference between them was that the scale of the Great Chain was discontinuous. In the same way that the islands of Mandeville's medieval travelogue (see Chapter 2) were separated by an unknown expanse of the Ocean Sea, so was the distance between monkey and man and man and angel an unbridgeable gap in the Great Chain, making of the human condition an isolate rung on the ladder of Creation. But the personification of culture as a human body had, as another legacy, very different repercussions: not only was it hierarchical, but evolutionary. The typical categories (savagery, barbarism, civilization) were contiguous and fluid rather than static and absolute. The West might develop the "orphans" of the New World into full-fledged partners of a progressive civilization.

The change from a static to a dynamic state did not necessarily herald any greater freedom of movement or, for that matter, intellectual profundity. The scientific racism of the nineteenth century that appropriated the biological conclusions of Darwin for use in a virulent polemic against the "inferior" races demonstrated quite clearly that Progress could be held over the head of alien peoples like the sword of Damocles. As the European came to discover his place in the universe, he forced on the world an ethnocentric vision of human identity as well as, in a larger sphere, the anthropocentric vision of an organic path.
to enlightenment.

Today we say of "backward" peoples (the Indian, the Third World) that they exist in a state of "underdevelopment." However, it has been argued that terminology such as "development" harbors a covert judgment as well as signalling an overt description. Our final task is not to definitively settle such a question, but to see how the "discovery" of America helped lead to the widespread notion that cultures might be described in terms of growth or development in a sense that goes far beyond mere demographic considerations.

The "discovery" of America confirmed the ancient European conviction in an antipodal duality. In a sense it served as a psychological mirror for the West. But further discoveries in the sixteenth century went beyond the notion of Other to that of others, from duality to plurality in understanding the outline and shape of the earth. The New World was not the only one to be discovered, as La Popellinière noted in a tome aptly titled The Third World:

I will therefore divide what men judge as habitable into the old world, the new, and the unknown. The Old includes Europe, Africa and Asia. The New is all of America, including Labrador and Eotilland... The unknown to us is the Terra Australia, so-called by the Spanish and the Portuguese.59

In fact, the "unknown" was being incorporated as a permanent category of investigation into the vision of the West. No longer would the counterweight of America be able to signify or contain the diversity that the European was now
contemplating (and projecting) after his "discovery" of the world.

We think of America as being the unprecedented and inimitable discovery of the sixteenth century. But reconnoitering expeditions in search of a Northwest Passage and others using the strait named for Magellan far to the south had hinted at the existence of polar continents consisting of massive, impenetrable ice floes. Terra Australis to the south and Terra Septentrional nortward are, on Renaissance maps, vastly exaggerated. Ironically, what the polar masses do in sixteenth-century cartography is to frame the known world—including the Americas—in what can only be described as a Renaissance version of the old Orbis Terrarum (see Chapter 1). The world has once again become an island, the "oikumene" of Ortelius now nearly engulfed by the sprawling polar masses. The Ocean Sea of the ancients and early Church that surrounded the known world has been transformed into two continental blocks of ice. The incomprehensible persists, but in solidified form. At the center of this world we do not find the Mediterranean but, as D.W. Meinig notes, the waterway that became the seat of a new Western culture:

It is better seen as a new Atlantic world. The ocean had become the 'inland sea of Western Civilization,' a 'new Mediterranean' on a global scale, with old seats of culture on the east, a great frontier for expansion on the west, and a long and integral African shore.60

While this vision is still essentially insular, its recognition of diversity is an important characteristic. No
longer is the seafarer confronted by the Ocean Sea, but many oceans. On a larger scale, the existence of the AmerIndian called into question the once-cherished notion of the unity of mankind. As La Popellinière states, the "discovery" of America was not only important in itself, but also begged the issue of how many more discoveries were to follow in its wake:

How many new kinds of animals have been made known to us that were unknown to our fathers? God only wants that the eyes of men see everything: the people of the century to come will know so many other things that were hidden to us.62

Indeed, Montaigne noted this same precedent the New World had set when he lamented of it, "I don't know if I can guarantee that some other such discovery will not be made in the future, so many personages greater than ourselves having been mistaken about this one." The simple, weighted balance of Self and Other, Christian and pagan, east and west, Old World and New, was becoming a pluralistic vision of an unknown though abundant future.

From duality to diversity, the Western grasp of the world was changing. The static medieval balance of believer and non-believer was giving way to the establishment of a continuum based on scientific "truth." The essence of the new science was not stasis but process, whether it be found in the ethnography of Acosta or the later nineteenth-century theories of racial identity. Central to the theory of progress or gradation was the analogy of growth and the near-unassailable metaphor that followed of economic
"expansion" and "development." These, I believe, are figures of speech that ultimately derive from a human model (child--adolescent--adult), though that derivation is most often unspoken, if even remembered. As Bernadette Bucher reminds us, this was not an idea that began with the Renaissance, or even in the West: "After Greco-Roman antiquity and ancient China, all the European Middle Ages took pleasure in viewing the human body as a 'little world,' reproducing the order of the cosmos on a smaller scale...The correspondences between human anatomy, the paths of the stars, and the signs of the zodiac, go back to the Greek principle of melothesia, or the localization of astral influences on the human body." However, it was only with the "discovering" of America--the "laying bare" her riches, the sexualized allegory of the continent in European art, and the subsequent rush to "develop" her natural resources--that a deep-seated cultural conviction in the inevitability of progress was tied to the organic model of human development.

This was the pathetic fallacy at its most extensive reach--and its most dangerous. The notion that the human individual might provide a model for understanding the entire process of history is an idea still attractive in the twentieth century. The power of the pathetic fallacy is tantalizingly simple: to explain the world we use ourselves as a model. But is this projection of ourselves ultimately any more scientific than the animism practiced in the most "primitive" of tribes? To question such a metaphor--so
common has it become in our parlance—is unthinkable, somehow, even disloyal to the greater "movement of history" that allegedly carries us forward into the future.

The "discovery" of the Indian (the Other) was the intermediate step between the medieval and modern worlds. The pagan had existed before the sixteenth century as Tartar, Saracen and Slav, but at least in European eyes had resided on the Orbis Terrarum with a Biblical pedigree dating back to Noah. The AmerIndian, however, provided incontrovertible proof of polarity, whether internal or external, psychological or geographical. At the outset of the sixteenth century he had been colonized--intellectually if not actually--as a throwback to an ancient European past or an infant who craved the instruction of his more experienced elders. In any case, he was destined henceforth to be incorporated into a measurable scientific order rather than isolated as an absolute symbol of Otherness. At stake in this conversion is the very fate of the Other in a struggle whose memory still haunts the West: that between an older world self-proclaimed as singular, universal and sacred, and a new one that supplants it--pluralistic, nationalized and proudly secular. The "savage" has been claimed by both as indisputable evidence of doctrinal truth, whether of the coming Apocalypse or the unfailing march of secular progress. This alone, if nothing else, should be sufficient warning to us that a self-serving image of the AmerIndian is still a part of our cultural baggage that even after 400 years we cannot seem to part with.

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NOTES


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p.124.

9 Receuil de Voyages, p.93.


12 Ibid., p.6.


14 Marcel Trudel, Historie de la Nouvelle France (Montreal: Pides, 1963), I: 34.


17 Denis, Une Fête Brésilienne, pp.4-19.

18 C'est La Déduction (Rouen: Robert le Hoy, 1551).

19 Ibid. (page unnumbered).


23 Cairns Craig, "Peripheries," from Cencrastus, No. 9, 1982.


26 Dickason, Myth of the Savage, p.208.

27 Foreman, Indians Abroad, p.11.

28 Ibid., p.35.


30 Mocquet, Voyages, pp.79-81.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p.81.

33 Ibid.


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.


39 Ibid., pp.174-75.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.
42 Foreman, Indians Abroad, p.77.
43 Ibid., p.84.
44 Ibid., p.133.
46 Ibid., p.141.
48 Ibid., p.42.
49 Ibid., p.67.
50 Ibid., p.168.
51 Ibid., p.173.
52 Ibid.
56 Berghofer, The White Man's Indian, pp.36-37.
58 Berghofer, The White Man's Indian, p.47.
63 Montaigne, The Essays, p.150.
64 Burcher, Icon and Conquest, pp.54-55.
On Holy Thursday, in the year 1519, we arrived with all the fleet at the Port of San Juan de Ulua, and as the Pilot Alaminos knew the place well from having come there with Juan de Grijalva he at once ordered the vessels to drop anchor where they would be safe from the northerly gales. The flagship hoisted her royal standards and pennants, and within half an hour of anchoring, two large canoes came out to us, full of Mexican Indians. Seeing the big ship with the standards flying they knew that it was there they must go to speak with the captain; so they went direct to the flagship and going on board asked who was the Tatuan(1) which in their language means the chief. Doña Marina, who understood the language well, pointed him out. Then the Indians paid many marks of respect to Cortés, according to their usage, and bade him welcome, and said that their lord, a servant of the great Montezuma, had sent them to ask what kind of men we were, and of what we were in search, and added that if we were in need of anything for ourselves or the ships, that we should tell them and they would supply it. Our Cortés thanked them through the two interpreters, Aguilar and Doña Marina, and ordered food and wine to be given them and some blue beads, and after they had drunk he told them that we came to see them and to trade with them and that our arrival in their country should cause them no uneasiness but be looked on by them as fortunate. The messengers returned on shore well content, and the next day, which was Good Friday, we disembarked with the horses and guns, on some sand hills which rise to a considerable height, for there was no level land, nothing but sand dunes; and the artilleryman Mesa placed the guns in position to the best of his judgment. Then we set up an altar where mass was said and we made huts and shelters for Cortés and the captains, and three hundred of the soldiers brought wood and made huts for themselves and we placed the horses where they would be safe and in this way was Good Friday passed.

1 Tlatoan.
APPENDIX B
(Florentine Codex)

And when they had gone to reach the coast, [the water folk] ferried them across; they took them by boat across to Xicalanco. Once again they departed from there by boat; the water folk took them. Every- thing was placed, was heaped in the boats; they filled the boats with goods. And when the boats were filled with things, thereupon they departed. They betook themselves to the water; they went to reach the [Spaniards'] boat; they approached their boat.

Then [the Spaniards] addressed them: "Who are you? Whence have you come?"

Then [the messengers] thus answered them: "We have come from there—Mexico."

Again [the Spaniards] addressed them: "Perhaps not. Perhaps you only flee from there. Perhaps you only pretend it. Perhaps you make sport of us."

But when they were assured, when they were satisfied, then they hooked the prow of the boat with an iron pole, in order to draw [the messengers] toward them. Then also they set out a ladder.

Fifth Chapter, in which it is told what came to pass when Moctezuma's messengers entered there into Don Hernando Cortés's boat.

Thereupon they climbed up. In their arms they each carried the array [of the gods]. When they had proceeded to climb up into the boat, each one of the group separately ate the earth before the Captain. Thereupon they prayed to him; they said to him:

"May the god deign to hear: his governor, Mocte- zuma, who watcheth over Mexico for him, prayeth unto him. He sayeth: 'The god hath suffered fatigue; he is weary.'"

Thereupon they arrayed the Captain. They put him into the turquoise [mosaic] serpent mask with which went the quetzal feather head fan, and with which went, with which were inserted, with which went suspended the green stone serpent earplugs. And they put him into the sleeveless jacket; they clad him in the sleeveless jacket. And they put the necklace on him—the plaited green stone neck band in the midst of which went the golden disc. To his back they bound the mirror for the small of the back; also on his back they placed the cape named tzitzilli. And about [the calf of] his leg they placed the green stone band with the golden shells. And they gave him, they laid upon his arm the shield with [bands of] gold crossing [bands of] shells, on whose lower rim went quetzal feathers outspread; on which went a quetzal feather flag. And before him they laid the obsidian sandals.

And the other three adornments, the array of the gods, they only placed in rows before him.
And when this had been done, the Captain said to them: "Are these all your [gifts of] greeting, your [gifts for] approaching one?"

They answered [the Spaniards]: "These are all with which we have come, O our lord."

Then the Captain commanded that they be bound. They put irons on their ankles and their necks. This done, they then shot the great lombard gun. And the messengers, when this [happened], indeed fainted away and swooned; they each fell; each one, swaying, fell; they knew no more. And the Spaniards raised each one, raised each one so that he sat; they made them drink wine. Thereupon they gave them food; they made them eat. Thus they restored them; thus they regained strength.

And when this had come to pass, then the Captain said to them: "Hear! I have known, I have heard that it is said that these Mexicans are very strong, very brave, great overthrowers. If there is one Mexican, he can pursue, drive on, overcome, turn back even ten or even twenty of his foes. And now I wish to be satisfied; I wish to see you; I wish to test you—how strong you are, how powerful you are."

Then he gave them leather shields, and iron swords, and iron lances.

"And very early in the morning, when the dawn is about to form, we shall contend against one another, we shall fight one another as equals. By comparing we shall know who will already fall down."

They replied to the Captain; they said to him: "May the lord hear: his governor Moctezuma hath by no means commanded us to do this. We have come only to greet, to salute [our lord]. What the lord requireth is not our charge. And if we should thus act, would not Moctezuma therefor be mightily wrathful? Would he not destroy us?"

Then the Captain said: "No; for it will come to pass. I wish to see, I wish to marvel at [your prowess]. For it hath gone to be known in Castile that it is said that you are very strong, you are very brave. Eat while it is yet early dawn; while it is yet early dawn I also shall eat. Indeed prepare yourselves."

Sixth Chapter, in which it is told how Moctezuma's messengers returned here to Mexico. They came to relate to Moctezuma that which they had seen.

Thereupon [Cortés] left them; [the Spaniards] let them descend to their boats. And when they had climbed down to their boats, then they rowed vigorously. Each one rowed as hard as he could; some paddled with their hands..."
APPENDIX C

(Cortez)

The said Captain Fernando Cortés left there, continuing his voyage, and we arrived at the port, and bay, which is called San Juan, where the above-named Captain Grijalba traded, of which extensive relation has heretofore been made to Your Majesty. Immediately upon our arrival, the natives came to inquire what caravels were those which had arrived, and as it was very late that day, almost night, the Captain remained quietly in the caravel, and ordered that no one should go on shore. Early the next day the Captain landed with a great part of the people of his armada, and found two of the principal Indians there, to whom he presented certain of his own valuable garments, and, speaking to them through the interpreters, he gave them to understand that he had come to these parts, by command of Your Royal Highnesses, to speak to them, and to tell them what they should do to advance your service. For this he besought them that they should immediately go to their town, and call the cacique, or caciques who might be there, to come and speak to him; and, to ensure their coming, he gave them two shirts for those caciques, and two jackets, one of silk and one of velvet, also various caps, and some hawk's bells; so they went with these valuables to the said caciques.
APPENDIX D

(Laudonnière)

So things moved along, and the hate of Chief Satouriona against me continued. On August 29 there fell on the fort such a stroke of lightning that I think it more worthy of interest and of being recorded than any unusual thing that has yet come to pass, more strange than historians have ever written about. The fields were at that time all green and half covered with water, and yet the lightning in one instant consumed about 500 acres and burned with such a bright heat that all the birds which lived in the meadows were consumed. This thing continued for three days. It left us in wonderment, because we could not guess where all the fire came from. At first we had the opinion that the Indians had burned their houses for fear of us, abandoning their old places. Then we thought that they might have observed some ships in the sea and, following their usual custom, lighted up fires here and there to show that people lived in this land. Finally not being reassured, I decided to send to Chief Serranay to find out the truth. But as I was on the point of sending out a boat to ascertain the facts, six Indians arrived from the land of Chief Allicamany.

On entering, they made a long statement, but first they presented several baskets of corn, pumpkins, and grapes. Then they spoke of the amiable alliance that Allicamany wished to enter into with me. They said he could hardly wait, from day to day, until the hour would come when it would please me to put him in my service. They said that in view of the obedience that he had given me, he found it very strange that I should direct such a cannonade against his dwelling, making many of the green prairies burn away right up to the waterline, so much so that he expected to see the fire in his house. Because of this he humbly begged me to order my men not to shoot any more toward his lodging, otherwise he would have to abandon his land and go to a place more distant from us.

When we heard the foolish opinion of this man, which might nevertheless be very profitable for us, I spoke expediently as to what I thought of the matter at that time, responding to the Indians with a happy countenance and saying that what they had told me of the obedience of their chief was very agreeable with me because previously he had not behaved himself in that way toward me, especially when I had told him to send me the prisoners that he detained of the great Olata Ouae Outina, even though he [Satouriona, i.e., Chief of Allicamany] counted them unimportant. I told him that this was the principal reason why I had sent the cannonade, and not that I had wanted to reach his house, as I could easily have done that if I had wanted to do so. I said that I had been content to fire just halfway down the course to let him know of my power. I assured him that if he continued in his good behavior, my men would not be shooting at him in the future and I would be his loyal defender against his greatest enemies.

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The Indians were content with this response and returned to reassure their chief who, notwithstanding this reassurance, kept away from his home and at a distance of about twenty-five leagues for a period of about two months. At the end of three days the fire was entirely extinguished. But for two days after that there was such excessive heat in the air that the river near which we had our habitation became so hot that it seemed almost to boil. Many fish died and of many species, to such an extent that in the mouth of the river alone there were enough dead fish to fill fifty carts. The putrefaction in the air bred so many dangerous diseases among us that most of my men fell sick and seemed about ready to finish their days. However, our good Lord took care of us and we all survived without a single death.
APPENDIX E

(Lescarbot)

Soon after, half a league from the French fort, there fell a thunderbolt the like whereof was never seen, and therefore it will be fitting to close this chapter by giving an account of it. It was at the end of the month of August, at which time, although the meadows were all green and moist, in a moment this thunderbolt consumed more than five hundred arpents, and by its fiery heat burnt all the birds in the meadows; this lasted for three days, with continual fire and lightning. Much anxiety was caused thereby to our French, and not less to the Indians, who, thinking that these thunders were cannon-shots fired at them by our men, sent orators to Captain Laudonnière to testify to him the desire of Chief Allicamani to maintain their alliance, and to be employed in his service; that therefore he considered passing strange the cannonade directed against his dwelling, which had burnt a wide stretch of verdant meadows, and consumed even what was under water, and actually come so near his house that he had expected it to be in a blaze; he therefore besought him to cease, as otherwise he would be compelled to abandon his land. Laudonnière, concealing his contempt for the foolish notion of the man, joyously replied that he had ordered these cannonades on account of the rebellion made by Allicamani, when he sent for the prisoners detained from the great Ołata Ouæ Outina; and that he had no desire to harm him, but had contented himself with firing only half-way, to make manifest his power; assuring him, moreover, that as long as the chief remained willing to render him obedience he would be his faithful defender against his enemies. The Indians, contented with this reply, returned to their chief, who notwithstanding this assurance absented himself from his house for the space of two months, and departed to a distance of twenty-five leagues.

At the end of three days the thunder ceased, and the blaze utterly died out. But on the two following days the air suddenly became so excessively warm that the river almost boiled over, and so great a quantity of every kind of fish died of it that at the mouth of the river there were enough to load more than fifty wagons; from which there arose so great a stench that many severe contagious diseases broke out among the French, of which, however, by the favour of God, no one died.
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