

Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico
A Social Biography of a life in 16th Century Africa, Iberia, and America

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The European maps of old oft times depicted fantastic lands, filled with upside-down geography and Bosch-like inhabitants. Over time the maps were replaced as the people and creatures encountered by the Europeans in what they perceived as new lands, New Worlds, fell to their diseases and explorations. New Maps were drawn for the New World, coastlines and mountains slowly formed as knowledge and experience overran previous features of imagination. This is not to say that the Americas were not seen as fantastic. Viewing the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan in central Mexico with his European eyes, conquistador Bernal Diaz doubted whether what he saw was real. With time and familiarity, the spaces once marked 'here there be tygers' slowly came to be filled.

Imagined lands continued to exit in the minds of Spanish expeditions to the Americas. The topsy-turvy nature of the New World as once depicted by the maps continued to exist within the actual interactions of Europeans and the geography and peoples of the Americas. What was of the normal order and place of Europe did not always hold once the Atlantic was crossed, and all events were not the success (in Spanish eyes) of a Cortez or a Pizzaro. The interactions of Spaniards in the spaces of lands far from the Crown were constantly shifting plays for power amongst themselves as well as with the natives they encountered. Opportunities of social mobility based on conquest and performance, as found in the early Castilian frontier towns of the Al-Andalusia borderlands where the needs of settlement and protection gave initiative to owners of horses and arms and helped create a class of hidalgos, were possible. The needs of Europeans in the Americas during the 16th Century lead to rearrangements of social order, with group dynamics adjusting to events on the ground that produced a leveling of social stance as well as reversals. The brutal dictates of survival in a harsh land became the foundation of new relations. There exists hints of just such a restructuring in the journey of the survivors of Panfilo de Narvaez's 1528 expedition to "*conquer and govern the provinces that are found from the Rio de Las Palmas to the cape of Florida*", a region composed of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico from peninsular Florida to the eastern coast of New Spain.

Out of more or less five hundred landed participants, only four were known to have survived the Narvaez expedition. The primary account of their survival comes from the hand of one of them, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, who set down his version of the experience in his *Relacion* edition of 1542 and of 1555. A Joint Report composed of Cabeza de Vaca's testimony as well as that of Andres Dorantes de Carranza and Alfonso Del Castillo Maldonado has been lost, though portions of it remain as compiled into book 35, chapters 1 through 6 of Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdez's *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. Along with Cabeza de Vaca, Alfonso Del Castillo Maldonado and Andres Dorantes, there survived Dorantes' North African slave Estevanico, or Estevan. As a group, these survivors were twined around each other like strands of DNA. The understanding and skills gained from their daily survival along the Texas coast allowed

them to trek successfully from the shores of Florida to New Spain. This trek is a testimony in itself to a resourcefulness that often is passed over in supposed "Black Legend" influenced accounts of Spanish conquistadors and their brutality.

The expedition to settle the lands of Florida and Rio de las Palmas set forth from Sanlucar de Barrameda at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River on June 17th, 1527 under the command of Panfilo de Narvaez. Panfilo, an experienced conquistador in his own right, had been sent by Diego Velazquez to arrest Hernan Cortez in 1520, only to end up Cortez's prisoner for three years and missing an eye. Panfilo's imagined conception of Florida's geography combined with his sense of territorial possession as created in the documents of his grant would be a factor in the outcome of the expedition. Others involved in the journey had their beginnings in different times and different locations. The expedition's treasurer Cabeza de Vaca and the North African slave Estevanico integrated different worlds. Both of these men in the eight years spent inhabiting America, passed through the looking glass and back. The journey shaped forever their lives and beings. The path of their lives reflected the upside-down, topsy-turvy effects of their experience, and Cabeza de Vaca's account reveals a connection of varied worlds and lands that distilled down to four people bound by origins walking through a harsh landscape of wildness, hunger, survival, and the spiritual. A land where masters became servants, and slaves became powerful.

Before boarding the ship that was to take them to the New World, both Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico had traveled from different geographies and social worlds. The expedition they joined was itself a mixed grouping, composed of not just Spaniards (including 10 married women), but also Portuguese, a certain Greek named Doroteo Teodoro, and six Indians from New Spain, one being the person of Don Pedro, a native lord of Texcoco. As evidenced by Estevanico himself and at least one other, black Christianized slaves of Africa were also members. The origin cities of both Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico in Iberia and Northern Africa were in themselves places of diverse populations.

Estevanico is described last at the end Cabeza de Vaca's *Relacion* in the chapter titled "What happened to the others who went to the Indies." After relating what he knew of Dorantes and Castillo, Cabeza de Vaca writes that "*El quatro se llama Estevanico; es negro alarabe, natural de Azemmour*". Estevanico is the fourth, and as translated by historians Adorno and Pautz, an "Arabic speaking black man, a native of Azemmour".

Founded by Phoenicians or Carthaginians, Azemmour is located at the mouth of the Umm ar-Rabi River in the Dukkala region of the kingdom of Morocco along the northern atlantic coast of Africa. Portugal, as well as Castile, had been involved in a seesaw struggle with Azemmour in the years between 1486 and 1502, controlling the city from 1508 until abandoning it in 1540. Dukkala, along with al-Shawiyya were major ancient grain producing regions which attracted the attentions of the Portuguese in the 15th and 16th centuries, for both export to Portugal as well as supplying the chain of coastal forts involved with the cloth, gold, and slave trade. In Azemmour, Portuguese administrators and merchants interacted with local Muslim merchants of Arab and Berber groups, as well as communities of Jewish traders expelled from Spain in 1492, such as the powerful al-Dibs family. The countryside itself, from the 12th century, was originally composed of small local Berber farms and villages. By the 15th century, Arab pastoralists had replaced these people. The Almohads had relocated these Arabs from their original

lands to the east so as to put pressure on local Berber tribes. Over time, with the process of granting permanent usufruct, divisions of land became established and the pastoralists settled, their herding lifestyle becoming replaced with that of cereal agriculture. In 1500 however, the population of Dukkala was still dominated by Arab pastoralists.

Initial, pragmatic Portuguese rule of Dukkala involved allowances for Islamic religious and legal practice that devolved with the lack of restraints on the part of local leaders and the resumption of the Portuguese slave-raiding practice the *calvagada*. The intensity of the *calvagadas* at times reached such proportions that the populations of large agricultural areas were often drastically reduced, leaving fields and lands as empty as Estevanico and the other survivors of Panfilo's expedition would discover in the lands of Sonora (Northwestern Mexico) near Rio Petalan in 1536. Estevanico's and Cabeza de Vaca's first re-encounter with Europeans after 8 years would be a group of Spanish slavers desperately seeking slaves which their raids and the earlier conquest of the region (Nueva Galicia) in 1530-31 had depopulated through capture and flight. Azemmour, along with Santa Cruz do Cabo de Gue (in the Sus) served as the primary centers for the Dukkala slave trade. *Calvagadas* alone were not the only manner of supplying forced human labor. Climatic conditions played a role as well, creating in the years 1521 and 1522 a drastic famine in the northern and central Moroccan plains. To escape the hunger, many converted to Christianity and were taken to Lisbon as indentured servants. Once in Lisbon, there existed an overland route to Spain and ultimately Seville that populated Spanish towns with slaves along the way such as that of Huelva. Close to Huelva is the town of Gibraleon, of which Cabeza de Vaca indicates that Andres Dorantes was a resident.

Andres Dorantes, a nobleman serving the Duke of Bejar in Seville, would have acquired Estevanico as his slave prior to his joining of the Narvaez expedition, though whether specifically for this trip or earlier cannot be known. While settlement and native depopulation in New Spain and the Caribbean produced a need for immigrants and imported labor, not all were allowed legal passage to the New World. With the intent on converting the natives, the Crown had forbidden in 1501 "Muslims, Jews, heretics, former apostates reconciled to the faith and anyone newly converted from passage to the Americas." However, the Crown did permit passage to "blacks or other slaves born under the tutelage of Christians, our subjects and native peoples." In other words, these African slaves were required to be *ladinos*, having either been born or having lived in Spain for enough time to be molded into Spanish culture. They also would have been Spanish speaking and of the Christian faith. This criteria was lessened in 1518 when slaves known as *bozales* were permitted to be shipped directly from Africa to the Indies if they were already Christian or converted as soon as they set foot on Caribbean soil. Being black and a slave, Estevanico would have fit these criteria, and most importantly he fit the category of being a Christian. Given the history of Portuguese rule over Azemmour, Estevanico would have been considered a *ladino*. That he was a Christian is indicated by Cabeza de Vaca at various points in his *Relacion* by including Estevanico when referencing the group of four as Christians, as well as supported by later comments by Oviedo. The fact of his name is an indication-Estevanico, diminutive of Estevan or Stephen, martyr of the Christian Church - of baptism.

By 1526, however, the policy had changed. Complaints from the Indies detailed the problems associated with *ladinos* "guilty of knowing too much and being too

resourceful," - and of their escaping to the wilds to interact with the indigenous population as well as *bozales* slaves in resistance to the Spanish colonizers. A royal decree was issued amending the policy to permit export only of *ladino* slaves who had inhabited the kingdoms and lands of Iberia for less than one year. For those wishing to take with them slaves who fell outside of these criteria, such as with Dorantes and Estevanico, there was required a special license.

Estevanico was part of the slave population of 15th Century Spain that was composed of *esclavos blancos* (Moorish and Morisco) slaves taken during conflicts in North Africa or during the fall of Muslim Grenada, as well as negro, or black African slaves. Negro slaves were brought from Africa to Iberia primarily by the Portuguese as well as Spanish, Genoese and other agents. The place with the highest exchange of slaves was the slave market of Seville, second only to that of Lisbon. Church census records from 1565 give a total slave population of six thousand out of a total urban population of 85,000. Deed transactions of the Seville Protocols indicate most of these involved black African slaves. Their presence was an everyday sight in the city's urban tapestry, becoming part of Spanish culture through integration of language, and most importantly, religion.

The majority of slaves who served as domestic servants within the households of Seville worked a variety of chores. They were also put to work in other professions, though craft guilds denied them admittance. Slaves could be found working at their master's printing and sword making shops, and functioned as business agents in the Americas. With wealthier families it was routine to own and interact with slaves, who often served as personal attendants, as in the case of Estevanico and his master Dorantes. The distinction between personal slave and domestic servant blurred, entering into the gray regions of ownership and daily human interactions of power and authority. To these very daily interactions within the household Cabeza de Vaca was most familiar. As a native member of a noble family of Jerez de la Frontera, "*un caballero natural de Jerez de la Frontera,*" Cabeza de Vaca was accustomed to slavery. His grandfather, to whom Cabeza de Vaca constantly traced his lineage and influence, had been Pedro de Vera, conqueror of Gran Canaria. The conquest of the Canary Islands by Castile occurred from 1478 to 1496. Appointed military governor of the island of Gran Canaria in 1480, Pedro de Vera rapidly forced the submission of the native Guanches within three years by taking advantage of internal strife amongst the different native groups, as well as the conversion and subsequent capitulation to Christianity of one of the Gran Canarian lords and his followers. Almost immediately de Vera began to send Guanches slaves back to markets in Spain. Despite royal bans against enslavement of the Guanches, and especially of those converted and baptized into the Christian faith, de Vera was able to ship and sell a good number into slavery, often under the auspices of rebellion and the tag of war captive. From the conduit of his grandfather, the childhood as experienced by Cabeza de Vaca would have been composed of the presence of these slaves on most familiar grounds. Testimony by the alcade of Jerez de la Frontera attests to the childhood home of de Vaca as holding Canarian slaves. The forms and relations of slave and master as instilled in Cabeza de Vaca's childhood in Spain would, with the dictates of survival, undergo change during his long sojourn in North America. The learning of childhood and pressures of society did not always change easily. Later actions by Cabeza de Vaca during his governorship of the South American Rio de La Plata region tell of the

surfacing of the model of his grandfathers as military commander. At points during his six years along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico, Cabeza de Vaca himself would be a slave, a slave to natives, while his later governorship of Rio de La Plata saw him justify the taking of natives as slaves during warfare. While Cabeza de Vaca would travel through just this looking glass of master become slave and back again, Estevanico, himself a slave, would travel a similar though opposite route. Estevanico would remain in a cloudier glass where, despite the distance from centers of power and control, boundaries yet remained.

Part II: The Looking Glass

Having sailed from Spain in 1527, the ships of the Narvaez expedition arrived at the island of Santo Domingo where 140 of the men jumped ship "*because of the promises and proposals made to them by the people of the land there.*" Prohibitions had been in place to prevent the opposite of this occurrence. There was a fear that people of the islands of the Caribbean would join the Narvaez expedition and increase the loss of settlers to New Spain which had been occurring as the native populations decreased and the wealth of Cortez's conquest of Mexico became known. Less in numbers, the expedition continued on to Cuba where they spent time stocking up on horses, arms, and necessary supplies and waiting for amenable weather. A hurricane had struck previously, destroying two of the ships and killing sixty people and twenty horses. Cabeza de Vaca's report of the hurricane relates the force and strangeness of the storm. Cabeza de Vaca heard all through the night a "*a great uproar and noise of voices, and a great sound of little bells and flutes and tambourines and other instruments.*" In searching for survivors they come across, at a quarter of a league into the forest, "*the rowboat of one of the ships on top of some trees.*" American storms and weather disoriented and confused Narvaez and his pilots, and was the initial factor that began a series of mistakes that broke the endeavor into separate pieces.

After wintering in the port of Xagua (present-day Cienfuegos) on the southern side of Cuba, the ships set sail around the Cabo de San Anton for Havana, only to encounter a series of storms that blew the fleet towards western-peninsular Florida, where land was sighted on April 12, 1528. In the mind of Narvaez, the ships had crossed the North Sea (or Gulf of Mexico) and landed close to the mouth of Rio de Las Palmas, located on the eastern coast of New Spain north of Rio Panuco and the settlement of Santisteban del Puerto (founded by Cortez in 1523, and by 1525 part of Nuno de Guzman's province of Panuco). The lands granted by the Crown to Narvaez extended from Rio de Las Palmas (the northern border of Panuco) west to the South Sea (the Pacific Ocean) and also north and east across the arc of the North Sea (Gulf of Mexico) and to peninsular Florida.

Initially, Narvaez and the pilots thought they had landed south of Rio Panuco, and so sent a brigantine with the pilot Miruelo in what to them would have been north and east direction to seek the mouth of Rio de Las Palmas. Meanwhile, an encounter with native Americans revealed maize, shipping boxes of Castile containing the bodies of dead men, and samples of gold. Through the use of sign language, the Indians caused the Spaniards to assume that a rich province lay inland. This was a province called Apalachee. According to Cabeza de Vaca, the Indians indicated that in Apalachee "*there*

was much gold, and they (the Indians) gestured that it had a great quantity of everything we valued." Errors with this communication were possible, a matter which Cabeza de Vaca records in his post-journey writings. *"I answered...we were traveling without an interpreter, unable to speak to the Indians, and therefore had a difficult time communicating with them."* Outside of attempts by Cabeza de Vaca to portray himself in a good light given his knowledge of the expeditions fate, he did point out real problems associated with language and understanding. The knowledge of the usefulness of Cortez's *La Malinche* interpreter skills faded when held against the lure that Apalachee and its gold offered. The fact of the conquest of the Aztecs did not always contain how the conquest was made possible. Panfilo Narvaez, thinking himself to be north and east of Tenochtitlan in New Spain and having information of a land with gold, made a decision to march inland while the remaining ships sailed to the (assumed) close-by harbor at Rio de Las Palmas, where they would rendezvous with the overland group. In deciding to split the expedition into an overland and sea group, Panfilo, as Cabeza de Vaca recorded, asked for the opinions of the highest officials of the expedition. Only Cabeza de Vaca and the notary Jeronimo de Alaniz opposed this decision, and spoke of the need to find *"a known and safe harbor, and in an area that was populated; and that having done this, he should go inland and do what he wished."* In other words; To Settle. Panfilo however, decided to continue with his plan, and had the notary witness that due to the lack of harbor and resources for supporting settlement the group would head inland while the ships skirted the coast. Cabeza de Vaca was requested to stay with the ships, and refused. Despite the distance from the Spanish homeland, cultural pressures remained strong. Having fought in Italy at the fearsome battle of Ravenna in 1511, as well as in the service of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia in putting down the Comuneros Revolt, honor was an integral part of Cabeza de Vaca's persona. To go with the ships because of fear (as Cabeza de Vaca has Panfilo accuse him of) would be unacceptable. Despite his misgivings and because of his sense of honor, Cabeza de Vaca joined his fate with the land expedition. On May 1 or 2nd, 1528 near the mouth of Tampa Bay on the Western coast of Florida, the Narvaez expedition separated from its ships. This decision by Panfilo would be the ultimate cause of the expeditions end. The inland party would not again meet with the ships, and only four of its members would survive. The looking glass had been stepped through, and only reversals would be encountered.

Left to their own resourcefulness once the tether line of the ships was cut, the Narvaez expedition continued its march in the direction of Panuco, slowly becoming aware of the vast distance between where they thought they were and where they actually were. Compounding their slow disintegration was the time spent in search of the supposed riches of Apalachee, which was discovered to be a village of forty huts made of straw and not another Aztec capital. The Indians kept a constant pressure on the Spaniards, *"wounding our men and horses"* with powerful bows and arrows. The power of the horse that had once unsettled the Guanches on the Canarian Island of Tenerife or the Aztecs at first sighting was not commented upon by Cabeza de Vaca. The portmanteau biota of disease worn by the Europeans was switched and the Spaniards battled illness as well as Indians as they trekked inland in search of, and then flight from, Apalachee. Six months after initially landing at modern day Tampa Bay, the expedition had traveled north and east to the crook of Florida at Apalachee Bay. Here the horses became food as a flotilla of rafts was constructed. Water and wind worked to further

disperse the men as they continued their coastal journey towards Panuco. Panfilo Narvaez whose fateful decision to split the group from the ships was swept far out into the Gulf of Mexico after declaring that "*it was no longer necessary for any of us to give orders, that each of us should do what seemed best to save our life.*" The flotilla passed the mouth of the Mississippi River, and continued on to the western coast of Texas and the offshore islands, breaking into even smaller groups that eventually vanished into the ocean and into the vast Texas regions, victims of hunger, of the natives, and the harsh land they had failed to settle. Between 1528 and 1534 the core group of Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes, Alfonso Castillo and Estevanico would survive. At times they would separate from one another, living with the Karankawas, Mariames, Yguases and Quevenes Indians who inhabited coastal Texas. By 1533 the four managed to learn of each other's presence, and planned to travel as a group towards their original goal of Panuco and regions inhabited by Europeans. To survive amongst the people they encountered, Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes, and Alfonso Castillo all "*buen caballeros and hidalgos*" and former masters and owners of their own slaves- became themselves slaves. Estevanico, already a slave, became twice a slave.

In their time spent as slaves, the men endured many hardships, including the hardships shared by all living in the region. The search for food was never-ending and difficult. Lizards, spiders, the occasional deer and fish, prickly pears (cactus fruit), roots and nuts all had to be acquired. The roots that had to be dug or pulled from the water caused fingers and hands to be so worn that "*the brush of a straw would cause them to bleed.*" In order to eat the survivors needed the knowledge and experience of the Indians familiar with the land, as well as the edge group existence gave to survival. Taken as well as 'taken in' as slaves, they performed a number of tasks and services that ranged from food gathering, to carrying of mats and wood, to maintaining smoky, anti-mosquito fires, and pulling canoes. Intimidation and bad treatment were part and parcel of being a slave. The survivors were "*kicked and slapped and cudged*", had their beards pulled and "*arrows placed at our hearts*" and threatened with death. While life as a slave provided a form of consistency via the communal effort at food gathering, the standing of the slaves was unstable. Other Spaniards who had initially survived the flotilla of rafts had been killed by the Indians for such as "*going from one lodge to another*". The Mariames had killed both Esquivel and Mendez due to a dream, and dreams as the Spaniards knew, could come at any night. The fear and harshness of treatment forced both Dorantes and Cabeza de Vaca to flee from one group to another. After becoming aware of each other's presence among the coastal Indian groups, strategic decisions were taken by the four survivors to maintain contact. In 1533, after setting dates and locations in which to attempt to escape and head as a group for Panuco, Cabeza de Vaca left the Quevenes he had been with and was given "*as a slave to an Indian with whom Dorantes was staying.*" These were the Mariames, who were neighbors of the Yguases who held Castillo and Estevanico. In 1534 during the time of the prickly pear harvest, the group of four finally reconnected with each other and successfully fled, beginning a trek decidedly different from their previous experiences. Knowledge of the land and native Indian culture negotiations shaped them into a moving band of healers, following established routes that eventually lead them to Spanish Nueva Galicia in northwestern Mexico.

Of Estevanico's time as a slave to the Indians there is no record. To the natives along the coast he was seen as being the same as Cabeza de Vaca and the other

Spaniards. What thoughts he may have had on seeing his former owner become a slave and servant is tied to his own feelings, perspective, and interpersonal relationship with Dorantes and the others. The fact of his leaving with the group pointed to a deeper cultural affinity and mutual cooperation with the Spaniards and a real desire to leave the world of the Indians and return to a European world. At the initial re-contact with Cabeza de Vaca and his plan to continue on to Panuco, Estevanico's only hesitation, along with Castillo's, was one of logistics. Both men, being unable to swim, pointed out their concerns to Cabeza de Vaca, who promised to carry them across any stream. There is no indication in Cabeza de Vaca's writing that Estevanico did not wish to continue with the Spanish survivors.

In the year of travel (1535-1536) from the Texas coast inland to northern Mexico and finally south to Nueva Galicia and Mexico's west coast, Estevanico came to occupy a unique place within the group dynamics of the survivors, as well as with the large following of natives that came to accompany them. All of the survivors at this time functioned as type of trans-frontiersman viewed by the natives in a religious sense in their capacity as healers. Having had the position of healers thrust on them by the demands of the natives and their 'otherness', Cabeza de Vaca, Castillo, Dorantes and Estevanico became part of a vast, migrating phenomenon of tribute exchange that worked to carry them through the lands of northern Mexico. Viewed by the natives as "*hijos del sol*" they performed miraculous cures by prayer and by making the sign of the cross, tapping into an established concept of shaman. In response the natives brought food and goods to the healers, often in overwhelming abundance. When Cabeza de Vaca's raised back to life a seemingly dead man, and with their being given magical gourds whose origins were unknown, their reputation grew. The awe created by their powers, combined with the act of producing food, goods, and tribute formed into a pattern of exploitation in which the Spaniards and Estevanico both used and were used by a chain of natives. The groups that accompanied the healers would send word ahead to the villages and towns along the route, telling them about the powerful healers and how to act accordingly. The natives accompanying the Europeans would take the goods brought by the villagers for the healers, and the village would also be pillaged of goods. The magical awe generated by the healers, and the skillful manipulation and intimidation by the large numbers of traveling natives, created such a reputation that at one village, the inhabitants sat waiting with their faces to the walls while in the center of their home all their belongings were piled, waiting to be taken. Despite the loss of their goods, the villagers quickly adapted themselves to the pattern that came to be established. As the group traveled from village to village, those who had been pillaged joined the movement and replaced the former pillagers. In this manner Cabeza de Vaca and his companions returned to Nueva Galicia and lands held by the Spaniards, and a mass exchange of goods occurred.

Throughout this yearlong journey, Estevanico had participated as a healer along with the others. By the time they had reached northern Mexico near the convergence of the Rio Grande and the Rio Conchos, he had taken on the role of oracle. Cabeza de Vaca writes that:

"We had a great deal of authority and influence over them (native inhabitants). In order to conserve this we spoke to them but a few times. The black man always

spoke to them and informed himself about the roads we wished to travel and the villages that there were and about other things we wanted to know."

This role as spokesperson and mediator for the Spanish, combined with the information gathering aspects of an explorer, was the form of agency and authority that Estevanico inhabited when he became the first North African to travel into the American Southwest. Despite his status within the interactions of the survivors and the natives who followed them, by the time the group returned to established Spanish lands and all its inherited European influences in the spring of 1537, Estevanico had slipped from Cabeza de Vaca's narrative, reappearing only at the end of the *Relacion*. Once out of the wilderness and spaces of northern Mexico, the other survivors of the ill-fated Narvaez expedition returned from their time through the looking glass and re-inhabited the cultural worlds they came from. Dorantes and Castillo both settled in New Spain, having been married by Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza to wealthy widows. Cabeza de Vaca returned to the model of his grandfather Pedro de Vera and was granted governorship of the region of Rio de La Plata in South America. Only Estevanico would stay within the cloudy looking glass, a space where his authority and power (both real and imagined) was his own.

Part II: And Back

According to Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, Estevanico was purchased from *"one of those who escaped from Florida (Dorantes) for the purpose of making known the unknown lands"* of New Spain. Estevanico was viewed as a human intelligence asset for a planned expedition north from Mexico into the Southwest. Viceroy Mendoza's wrote that he 'retained' Estevanico. Whether he was bought or retained, slave or free, Estevanico was in the end commanded by Mendoza to obey the leader of the 1539 expedition, Fray Marcos de Niza. Estevanico however, outpaced Fray Marcos, putting distance between the man he was instructed to obey and the freedom and power of a journey under his own command. The two left San Miguel de Culiacan on March 7th, 1539. According to Fray Marcos, on Easter Sunday the two separated. Estevanico proceeded north, continuing as he had done before by sending word ahead from village to village, exhibiting the symbol of the gourd as he had utilized it on his previous journey with Cabeza de Vaca. With him were two Castilian greyhounds. Each night a structure was prepared for him to sleep in, and he was fed on a set of green plates he carried with him. On his feet and arms he wore bells and feathers. He had operated as the front-runner for Cabeza de Vaca, gathering and relaying information of his conversations with the natives about conditions of the land and people always ahead. He operated in the same manner with Fray Marcos, except now on his own and independent. Ranging with his group of some three hundred Indians towards the pueblo city known as Cibola (in present day New Mexico), he regularly sent back to Fray Marcos a message in the form of a cross. The larger the cross, the grander the land and the city. Fray Marcos reported that the crosses kept getting bigger and bigger, and so did the talk that described Cibola. Points of reference lent to mismatched notions of grand. To the locals of the region about Cibola, it was a large city, and one to which Indians traveled just to see. But like Apalachee, it was not Tenochtitlan. And Cibola did not fit the pattern of welcome and arrival Estevanico had become used to. The leaders of the city refused him entrance, and when he persisted they killed him. In the

various reports that mention him, he ended up dying three deaths, each one an indicator of friction and stress among the native inhabitants and strangers.

According to Fray Marco's fanciful account, when the lord of Cibola received the gourd that had been sent by Estevanico, he hurled the gourd to the ground with much anger and wrath. He told the messenger to leave immediately, for he knew what sort of people they represented, and that they should tell them not to enter the city or he would kill them all. Perhaps word had reached the ruler of Cibola via the southwestern trade routes concerning the loss and pillage system of the movement that had brought Estevanico through the Sonoran region and back to New Spain. Fray Marcos describes how Estevanico pressed ahead, and when he arrived they were placed in a large house outside of Cibola. In a reversal of the pattern, the natives took away from Esteban everything he carried with him, saying that it had been so ordered by their lord. The next day as he tried to flee, Estevanico was killed. Coronado, after capturing the city of Cibola in 1540, was told that Estevanico was killed because he was "*a bad man, and not like the Christians who never kill women, and he killed them, and because he assaulted their women, whom the Indians love better than themselves.*" In the same year, while on an expedition along the Gulf of California (the South Sea), Hernando de Alarcon encountered the story that Estevanico had been killed because when the chieftain of Cibola asked the negro "*if he had any brothers, and he answered he had an infinite number, that they had numerous arms, and that they were not very far from here. Upon hearing this, many chieftains assembled to kill him so he would not reveal their location to his brothers.*" Whether killed because of actions that had sustained him in his earlier journey, or due to his abuse of his power and position, or out of self-defense, Estevanico's long travel from Azemmour in Africa, and through the geographic and cultural landscape of the New World had ended. The memory of Estevanico would be embodied by his greyhounds and his set of green plates that passed to the hand of the lord of Cibola. These objects passed into the talk of the native inhabitants of the region, and spread to the coast of the Gulf of California to be heard by Alarcon in 1540. Frozen in his own cloudy looking glass, Estevanico retained in his final run his own agency, his own power, and his own conquistador expedition.

Notes:

The full title of the 1542 edition is: *La relacion que dio Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca de lo acaescido en las Indias en la armada donde iba por governador Panphilo de Narbaez, desde el ano de veinte y siete hasta el ano treinta y seis que bolvio a Sevilla con tres de su compania.* The title for the 1555 edition is: *La relacion y commentaries del governador Alvar Nunez de Cabeza de Vaca, de lo acaescido en las dos jornadas que hizo a las Indias.*

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