

## LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

# Reading the Affects in the Colonial Americas: The Exteriority of Feeling in Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios*

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This article proposes an affective turn in scholarship on colonial Latin American literature, focusing on Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* as a case study. Through an engagement with embodied, intersubjective, and circulatory affects in Cabeza de Vaca's text, it sketches out a critical framework that investigates what I call the exteriority of feeling in the colonial Americas. My reading focuses on three main areas: the theory of the humoral body as the cultural referent that shapes the externalization of embodied affect in Cabeza de Vaca's text, the description of forms of affective transmission precariously established between European and indigenous communities, and the emergence of affective minefields and emotional untranslatables in colonial contexts. In this way, this article works toward a broad investigation of the meanings, functions, and circulation of affect and emotion in the colonial Americas.

Este artículo propone un giro afectivo en los estudios coloniales latinoamericanos, tomando a los *Naufragios* de Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca como caso de estudio. A través de una discusión de afectos encarnados, intersubjetivos, y circulatorios, se esboza un marco teórico para la investigación de lo que podría llamarse la exterioridad de los sentimientos en la época colonial en América Latina. El análisis se enfoca en particular en tres áreas: la teoría de los humores corporales como el referente cultural que da forma la externalización de los afectos encarnados en el texto de Cabeza de Vaca; la descripción de formas de comunicación afectiva que se establecen de forma precaria entre comunidades europeas e indígenas; y la emergencia de campos minados afectivos y expresiones de emotividad intraducible en contextos coloniales. De esta forma, este artículo intenta impulsar una investigación más amplia de los significados, funciones y circulación del afecto y las emociones en las Américas en el período colonial.

This article argues for an affective turn in scholarship on colonial Latin American literature, focusing, as a case study, on Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación que dio Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca de lo acaescido en las Indias*, known to contemporary readers as *Naufragios*.<sup>1</sup> Through an engagement with culturally specific, intersubjective, and circulatory forms of feeling in Cabeza de Vaca's text, I work toward a critical framework that investigates what I call the *exteriority of feeling* in the early Americas, drawing on contemporary theorizations of the affects, as well as on research into the history, anthropology, and sociolinguistics of the emotions.<sup>2</sup> The *Naufragios* chronicles the shipwreck of the expedition headed by Pánfilo de Nárvaez and Cabeza de Vaca's subsequent sojourn from the coasts of Florida to northwestern

<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the *Naufragios* are from Rolena Adorno and Charles Pautz's critical transcription of the edition of the *Relación* published in Zamora, Spain, in 1542.

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary theorists often advocate a stark dichotomy between affect and emotion. This dichotomy finds its origin in Brian Massumi's (2002) interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the ethology of affect of Baruch Spinoza. Affect, for Massumi, is a transgressive vector of force that lies beyond signification and meaning, inhabiting the outside or underside of consciousness. Emotion, in contrast, is portrayed as the semantic representation of these preconscious forces, now assimilated into discursive practices. In the present article I resist this dichotomy, following recent critiques that emphasize the shades of gray bridging the visceral experience of affect and its discursive codification as emotion (Cvetkovich 2012, 4–5; Ngai 2005, 25–29).

Mexico in the years 1527–1536. It expresses the perspective of a Spanish shipwreck who, in the course of his long trek and through many trials and tribulations, comes into close contact with indigenous cultures of emotion and “systems of feeling” (Rosenwein 2002, 842). Cabeza de Vaca’s chronicle also registers cultural models of embodied affect that circulated in early modern Europe and that the chronicler invokes when describing the perils of shipwreck. Critical commentaries on the *Naufragios* have long pointed out the feelings of fear, anguish, and bodily pain expressed in this text, yet they have tended to approach these experiences as private, transcendental, and ahistorical categories, failing to inquire into their historical contingency, cultural relativity, and intersubjective circulation. In line with recent theoretical reflection on the “transmission of affect” (Brennan 2004) and the roles of “public feelings” (Cvetkovich 2012; Berlant 2004), I approach felt experience instead as a cultural construct that moves across social collectives and shifts according to historical context—“feelings, not as properties of the self, but as produced through the interaction between self and world” (Labanyi 2010, 223).

Beyond prompting new interpretations of central aspects of Cabeza de Vaca’s text, this approach serves as a springboard for two interrelated claims regarding the productivity of the interface between contemporary affect studies across disciplines and colonial Latin American studies. The first of these claims is that, despite a long-standing interest in emotional life in the early Americas, the theorization and historical contextualization of affect and emotion demands further development within colonial Latin American studies. My second general claim is that a movement from a consideration of the interiority of feeling (i.e., feelings as transcendental, internal experiences of the subject) to an exploration of its exteriority (i.e., feelings as collective, shifting constructs) may lead to important developments in this regard.

Recent scholarship in colonial Latin American studies and related fields, including Latin American cultural studies, postcolonial theory and ethnic studies, and gender and sexuality studies, pave the way for this project. Within Latin American cultural studies, the call for an engagement with affect and emotion has been voiced as a response to the “decline in the explanatory power of the central keywords of cultural studies” and the need to approach cultural production “from an affective angle that, in most cases, had previously been foreclosed as little more than a symptom of underlying political and ideological processes” (Sánchez Prado 2012, 12). The timeliness of this inquiry hinges on a redefinition of the organizing concepts of Latin Americanist critical thought (e.g., textual discourse, subjectivity, the social sphere) and on a movement beyond the blind spots of deconstruction and poststructuralism, strands of thought that neglected affectivity, materiality, and embodiment (Moraña 2012, 314–317). These calls do not single out any particular historical period as a privileged object of study. Yet it is noteworthy that most recent work on affect and emotion in Latin American cultural studies is concerned with the postindependence period, and in particular with the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>3</sup> An affective turn in colonial Latin American studies thus aligns with major disciplinary shifts currently under way while at the same time filling a historical void that this bias toward contemporaneity creates. In addition, as I discuss toward the end of this article, an exploration of colonial affect also supplements recent scholarship that rethinks the colonial roots of modernity beyond the sphere of discourse and epistemology, thereby formulating new critiques of aesthetics and sense perception for these purposes.

Scholars in postcolonial studies have pursued similar agendas. Saskia Schabio and Walter Göbel (2007, 1) remark that “the postcolonial world has been mapped with the help of economic, social, political, and linguistic methodologies, which have helped us understand how mechanisms of subjection and resistance play out,” but that other vectors “concerning the psychological and the affective” have been sidelined. As Elizabeth J. Bellamy (1998, 343–344) underscores, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, two central figures of subaltern and postcolonial thought, drew on psychoanalytic notions of affect “in their efforts to articulate subaltern experience” and yet “there has been no analysis of how they brought affect to bear on postcolonialist critique.” While leaning on Sigmund Freud’s discussion of the role of affect in the structuring of consciousness and in processes of mental representation,<sup>4</sup> Bhabha and Spivak also turn to another figure whose thought provides a useful reference point for an affective turn in colonial and postcolonial studies, Frantz Fanon. “In the colonial world,” writes Fanon (2005, 19) in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “the colonized’s

<sup>3</sup> The temporal span covered by the articles included in the multiauthored collection of essays *El lenguaje de las emociones: Afecto y cultura en América Latina* (Moraña and Sánchez Prado 2012), for example, ranges from the late nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Recent individual works exploring affect and emotion in Latin American cultural production are perhaps even more pointedly focused on the contemporary moment (e.g., Herlinghaus 2009; Podalsky 2008; Reber 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Freud discusses affect in some detail in *A General Theory of Psychoanalysis* (1935) and *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (1959). Yet as Jerome C. Wakefield (1992) observes, “Freud’s failure to provide a theory of affects on par with his theory of instincts ... continues to haunt the field and must be considered the Achilles heel of theoretical psychoanalysis” (2). Contemporary postcolonial critics interested in psychoanalytic notions often strive to move beyond these gaps in Freud’s theory of affect (see, e.g., Cheng 2001; Khanna 2003).

affectivity is kept on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent ... [and] the psyche retracts, is obliterated, and finds an outlet through muscular spasms." Fanon, notes Bhabha (2005, xxiii), "was quick to grasp the psycho-affective implications" of colonialism and its power over both the unconscious and the corporeality of the colonized. Contrasting Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "body without organs"—a body that resists "organization and structure ... allowing affect and desire to 'have free rein'" over it (Musser 2012, 79)—to Fanon's discussion of colonial, racialized affect, Amber Jamilla Musser notes that "from both [the works of Deleuze and Guattari and Fanon] we can understand the affective work [involved] in the making (and unmaking) of subjects" (80). Yet for Fanon, Musser emphasizes, "these affective effects are not desired; they simultaneously threaten to dismantle and imprison the colonial subject" (80).<sup>5</sup>

Although a call for a turn to affect has not been voiced within colonial Latin American studies as explicitly as it has in other fields, scholars of the literature and culture of the early Americas have often discussed felt experience in their work. Readings of the foundational tropology of the "wonder of the New World," of the affective states described by European observers of religious rituals and communal celebrations, of the spiritual "afflictions" that tormented indigenous subjects according to European chronicles, of the excessive character of the representation of nature in travel chronicles and New World natural histories, or of colonial confession manuals often discuss specific emotions as individual, subjective experiences.<sup>6</sup> Fernanda Molina's (2010) study of sodomy trials in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Peru examines signs and expressions of affectivity "a través de los cuales los acusados de sodomía expresaban sus sentimientos," voicing "diversos estados, incluso contradictorios" (33). Zeb Tortorici (2007, 37) remarks along similar lines that "in terms of historicizing desire, we see that ... desire in its many quotidian physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual manifestations was omnipresent." From a different angle, Heather Allen (2015, 495) has explored the representations of Moctezuma's tears and sighs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conquest histories, which she reads in relation to the weeping trope in Iberian popular ballads from the fifteenth century and Aztec traditions of invocation for divine intervention, the *tlahtoani's* "supplicatory prayer."<sup>7</sup>

Other recent studies have drawn on notions developed by contemporary theorists of affect and applied them to colonial Latin American literature and history. John Beasley-Murray's (2010, 3) prologue to *Post-Hegemony: Political Theory in Latin America*, for example, opens with an interpretation of the Spanish *requerimiento* as a ritual that shaped "the habits and affects of the subjugators" in the New World. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory of affect, Beasley-Murray proposes that this ritual "helped [the Spaniards] bind the affect mobilized in their hunt for gold, counteracting that affect's centrifugal tendencies by organizing it as part of an ecclesiastical, imperial, and monarchical hierarchy before the men were let loose as a war machine" (5). Stephanie Merrim (2010, 284) has also repurposed the notion of "structures of feeling," coined by Raymond Williams (1977), to describe *colonial* structures of feeling that coalesce in seventeenth-century creole discourse and "cross into the future, whether into the wars of independence or into a politicized political consciousness."<sup>8</sup> For Merrim, these colonial structures of feeling, manifested in specific colonial texts, unfolded into a "Baroque chiaroscuro" that shifts between discourses "studded with positive wonder and praise" and litanies "of negative wonder, of scandal and protest" (284).

These constitute important steps toward an affective turn in colonial studies, but a more expansive, programmatic, and nuanced engagement with affective experience in the colonial Americas appears both timely and necessary. These categories still await a fuller theorization in light of the public functions of feeling

<sup>5</sup> For another account of the psychological impact of colonialism on colonizer and colonized, see Memmi (1965); see also Oliver (2004, 47–59). One key difference between Freud or Fanon and the contemporary theories of affect and the historiography of emotions on which I draw is that for Freud and Fanon affective experience is contained within the subject and therefore is not treated as a historically variable construct or as an intersubjective force.

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the "wonder of the New World," see Greenblatt (1991) and Martínez-San Miguel (2008, 44–45). In *The Writing of History*, Michel de Certeau's (1988, 209–243) reading of a Tupinamba ceremony dwells on the affective states described by European observers of indigenous rituals. Sylvia Marcos (1992) has explored the expression and repression of indigenous erotic practices in sixteenth-century Mexican confession manuals, and Jean Franco (1989) has studied the experience of rapture in the writings of mystical nuns in seventeenth-century New Spain.

<sup>7</sup> Larissa Brewer-García (2012) explores the related topic of colonial forms of embodiment in her discussion of translation and the mestizo's body. Mestizo translators, she argues, were believed to acquire their "invaluable linguistic expertise ... corporally ... through ingesting his indigenous mother's milk" (371). In sixteenth-century Peru, Jesuit discourse assigned mestizo translators a codified "body type defined by material characteristics that could manifest themselves in physical, spiritual, or behavioral ways" (365). Building on Allen's and Brewer-García's insights, we can perceive actions such as weeping and breastfeeding as affect-laden practices and public performances of affect.

<sup>8</sup> In Williams's (1977, 132–134) definition, the notion of structures of feeling does not intend to deal specifically with the affects but rather to encompass an array of social experiences located at the "edge of semantic availability" yet exerting "palpable pressures ... on experience and on action." In this article I prefer to use the notion of systems of feeling, developed by Barbara Rosenwein (2002, 842), to encompass the codes that regulate the bonds and expressive forms available to the members of specific "emotional communities."

as a collective experience and in relation to the cultural variability of the visceral experience of feeling and its discursive expression. In this context, this article introduces key insights of contemporary affect theorists as well as historians and sociolinguists of emotion as potential bearings for an exploration of the exteriority of feeling in colonial texts, as well as for an affective turn in colonial Latin American studies more broadly. My initial contention here is simple: colonial subjects and colonial texts give shape to, and are shaped by, constellations of affective worlds that demand focused, independent examination. This point of departure moves beyond dominant definitions of colonial texts and colonial subjects formulated within the so-called new paradigm, or *nuevo paradigma*, that has shaped the field of colonial Latin American studies since the late 1980s.<sup>9</sup> This new paradigm sees colonial subjects chiefly as epistemological and discursive formations, Foucauldian entities configured by technologies of power and knowledge. Although this framework of analysis has spurred many important advances in colonial Latin American studies, it also neglects important affective dimensions of colonial subjects and colonial texts. It detaches the colonial subject from its viscera—or, more precisely, it circumscribes the viscera of the colonial subject within the orbit of discourse, neglecting the way the affects and emotions of the subject exceed, precede, or bypass discursive technologies.

Within these alternative coordinates, my reading of the *Naufragios* highlights three salient aspects of this text, tying each of them to a specific form of affect that is actively molded by cultural and historical contexts and that circulates across subjects or between subject and world. First, I look at the externalization of embodied affect in the first section of the *Naufragios*, drawing on studies of early modern humoralism to outline the cultural matrix of this process. Second, I turn to scenes of intersubjective affect in Cabeza de Vaca's chronicle, building on Teresa Brennan's thought to delineate the transmission and circulation of forms of feeling across indigenous and European communities in the New World. Third, I engage with instances when these forms of transmission begin to falter, giving way to the emergence of what I call affective minefields within colonial contexts.

### **Embodied Affect: The Humoral Body in the *Naufragios***

In scholarship on the *Naufragios*, the articulation of emotional experience has been read in relation to hagiographical discourses, indigenous mythologies, and colonial structures of power and knowledge. Margo Glantz (1993, 420) notes that the descriptions of bodily pain in the *Naufragios* evoke the iconography of the suffering body of Christ: "El texto proporciona abundantes datos para verificar las comparaciones esbozadas: las espinas, las cruces, las llagas, los malos tratos, la sangre, el sufrimiento corporal ... las marcas corporales como signos de una hagiografía." Turning toward the emotional reactions of indigenous communities, Jacques Lafaye (1993, 24) suggests that the wonder or fear supposedly experienced by the Amerindians encountered by Cabeza de Vaca were mediated by the Quetzalcóatl myth, an association that brought about the perception of miracles "como fenómenos de psicología colectiva." In an influential essay, Rolena Adorno (1991, 167) pursues a different perspective by describing what she calls "the negotiation of fear." For Adorno, fear constitutes "a weapon employed by both sides, the native Americans and the European. ... Both groups created, managed, and manipulated it, depending on who had the upper hand."

Despite their perspectival and methodological differences, these previous readings share an understanding of affective life as a transcendental, interior domain within which terms such as *fear* are accorded universal and unchanging meaning. These studies investigate and contextualize the discursive expression and political uses of a particular form of feeling, yet subtract feelings in and of themselves from historical and theoretical scrutiny. But while certain neurobiological components of the experience of fear may have indeed remained constant from the time of Cabeza de Vaca through the present, there likely existed other factors that distinguished not only the expression or uses of this form of feeling in the *Naufragios* but also its textures and modes of circulation in the early Americas. To what extent, in other words, is affect in the colonial Americas context specific, representationally and experientially? And can a reading of the *Naufragios* contribute to the exploration of such a question?

Recent work on affect and emotion in early modern culture provides useful bearings for a consideration of these questions. Strategically, this strand of research works against a presentist bias that ignores historical variations in regional cultures of emotion: as Ronda Arab, Michelle M. Dowd, and Adam Zucker (2015, 3) observe, "the broader interdisciplinary and sometimes ahistorical nature of much influential affect theory has tended to preclude precise historical inquiry into the production and maintenance of affective stances, sometimes robbing criticism of explicitly diachronic engagements." But in addition to framing affect and

<sup>9</sup> See Díaz (2014, 253) for an overview of this paradigm and its strong influence on generations of scholars who began their studies "bajo una nueva lente en la que ya no se veía al productor de textos coloniales como autor, sino como sujeto colonial."



emotion *in themselves* as historically situated entities—rather than as abstract, internal experiences, as assumed by Lafaye, Glantz, and Adorno—investigations of affect and emotion in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe delineate a set of cultural norms and beliefs, such as the Galenic theory of the humoral body (Floyd-Wilson 2003; Paster 2004; Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson 2004; Schoenfeldt 1999; Trevor 2004), which inform the expression of embodied affect in Cabeza de Vaca's text. The Galenic notion of the humoral body suggests that the human passions respond to shifts in the circulation and consistency of four humors—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—coursing through the bloodstream. In early modern European culture, Gail Kern Paster (2004, 2) observes, the notion of the humoral body gave way to popular “comparisons of the oceans to the human passions,” expressed in the iconographies “of the constant man as a rock amid the waves ... [and of] the valiant mind as belonging to a man ... undaunted by the waves battering his vessel.” As were the tides in the ocean, humoral fluids were considered sensitive to seasonal and temperature changes, dampening or arousing internal affections and external actions according to their viscosity: “Clear judgment and prudent action required the free flow of clear fluids in the brain, but melancholy or cholera altered and darkened them.” Placing Cabeza de Vaca's shipwreck narrative in this context prompts a rereading of the tumultuous oceans and flooded landscapes described in the text as analogous manifestations of the humoral dynamics of the chronicler's embodied affects: the tale of a body threatened by unpredictable passions and struggling to maintain control, as vividly suggested by a passage describing a group of shipwreck survivors, huddled together to resist a storm:

A una ora después de yo salido, la mar comenzó a venir muy brava y el Norte fue tan rezió qui ni los bateles osaron salir a tierra, ni pudieron dar en ninguna manera con los navíos al través por el ser el viento por la proa. ... A esta hora el agua y la tempestad comenzó a crecer tanto que no menos tormenta había en el pueblo que en la mar, porque todas las casas e iglesias se cayeron, y era necesario que anduviésemos siete o ocho hombres abraçados unos con otros para podernos amparar que el viento no nos llevase. (26–28)

Following Paster (2004, 2), it could be argued that, beyond providing a description of an actual event experienced by the chronicler or invoking the motifs of a shipwreck narrative, this and other similar passages explicitly recall for early modern readers the analogy of the oceans as passions as well as the iconography of “the valiant heart” attempting to hold steady against the sway of the humors, “undaunted by the waves battering his vessel.” The description of perilous seas in the *Naufragios* appears to anticipate early modern libidinal psychogeographies, rooted in humoral models of embodiment, where internal emotions are mapped out as physical spaces. As described by Giuliana Bruno (2002, 237), Madeleine de Scudéry's seventeenth-century *Carte de Tendre* (Map to the countries of tenderness), for instance, charts affections as topographical accidents, picturing a “Lake of Indifference,” a “Sea of Enmity,” a “River of Inclination,” and the “Windy Road to Tenderness.” Instead of constructing a libidinal psychogeography of this sort, however, Cabeza de Vaca's text projects affective intensities outward, externalizing the shipwreck's embodied affects and mapping them onto the turmoil of floods or the ravages of the sea in the New World.

Within the humoral model of embodied affect, the key test of a virtuous heart was thought to be the maintenance of its temperance under adverse circumstance. In the first sections of the *Naufragios*, such a task proves increasingly difficult as human and material losses mount:

Cressciendo cada día la sed y la hambre, porque los bastimentos eran muy pocos e iban muy al cabo, y el agua se nos acabó porque las botas que hezimos de las piernas de los cavallos luego fueron podridas y sin ningún provecho. ... Quando amaneció vimos una isla pequeña. Y fuimos a ella por ver si hallaríamos agua; mas nuestro trabajo fue en balde, porque no la avía. ... Estando allí surtos, nos tomó una tormenta muy grande ... la sed fue tanta, que nos puso en necesidad de beber agua salada. Y algunos se desatentaron tanto en ello que súpitamente se nos morieron cinco hombres. (76–78)

In these critical instances, Cabeza de Vaca regularly appeals to the figure of Christ for divine intervention: “Como vimos que la sed crecía y el agua nos mataba ... acordamos de encomendarnos a Dios nuestro Señor. ... Plugo a nuestro Señor, que en las mayores necesidades suele mostrar su favor” (78). As noted, preceding scholarship proposes a figurative association between Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* and the suffering of Christ. Taking into account early modern notions of humoralism, these evocations of religious iconography also underscore one of the central concerns of the initial sections of the *Naufragios*: the regulation of the humoral body and the maintenance or renewal of its temperance after the shipwreck of the expedition.

Within the humoral model, both the body of Christ and the body of the ordinary mortal were considered “vessels of liquids” (Paster 2004, 4). What distinguished one from the other was the former’s capacity to keep the humors, and the passions they arouse, always in check. This model of embodiment does not see in the body of Christ an entity that is immune to the movements of the humors—it conceives of it, rather, as a humoral body whose fluids maintained the greatest purity and stillness (Paster 2004, 2–5). Cabeza de Vaca’s frequent appeals to Christ in the midst of catastrophe appear in this light as the invocation of forms of humoral temperance that regulate affect and emotion in the first sections of the *Naufragios*.

Such appeals as well as the resonances of the iconography of the humoral body in the text begin to underscore the presence of historically contingent and culturally specific forms of embodied affect that connect the interior of the subject to the exteriority of the world in the *Naufragios*. Yet the most resonant scenes of affect and emotion in the *Naufragios* move away from the battered temperance of the chronicler and his fellow travelers and, in doing so, leave the familiar territory of early modern humoralism to enter new and uncharted affective worlds. In several instances the narrative turns toward forms of intersubjective transmission that cut across indigenous and European collectives; at other moments it registers the treacherous attempt to decode the codes and systems of feeling of the indigenous communities that Cabeza de Vaca encounters in his journey.

### Intersubjective Affect: Tales of Affective Transmission

Daniel T. Reff (1996) has proposed that we move beyond the sphere of discourse and intertextuality to assess the lived experience and material realities governing central aspects of the expression of fear in the *Naufragios*. Reff argues that, beyond the intertextual resonances of European hagiographies, miracle tales, and indigenous myths, we can locate in these passages traces of the “reality of life” in New Spain following the conquest (118). The fear that afflicts indigenous subjects according to Cabeza de Vaca, Reff observes, “occurred at a time when Spanish slave raiding and epidemics of Old World diseases claimed thousands of Indian lives in the regions immediately to the South of where Cabeza de Vaca traveled. . . . [T]his information gave rise to fear of bearded, sword-wielding men who had the power to kill with disease” (118). Reff’s reading therefore builds on Adorno’s (1991, 181) analysis, which already places the experience of fear in the *Naufragios* in the context of the spread of contagious disease. Tellingly, however, fear—and feeling in general—is seen in both Reff’s and Adorno’s commentaries as an aftereffect of information regarding the spread of contagious disease. What is traded and exchanged between Amerindian communities in northwestern Mexico in this context is data regarding the transmission of mysterious illnesses that afflict indigenous communities and for which Cabeza de Vaca performs mysterious, ritualistic “cures.” Yet if we consider feelings not only as historically and culturally situated experiences—as outlined in the previous section—but also as public, circulatory, intersubjective constructs, other kinds of networks and forms of transmission become noticeable. In the miraculous cures episodes of the *Naufragios*, for instance, Cabeza de Vaca serves as an affective mediator who trades with his indigenous “patients” various forms of emotional experience and expression:

Los indios me dixeron que yo fuesse a curarlos . . . yo vi el enfermo que íbamos a curar que estava muerto, porque estava mucha gente al derredor dél llorando y su casa deshecha, que es señal que el dueño está muerto. Yo le quité una estera que tenía encima con que estava cubierto. Y lo mejor que pude, supliqué a nuestro Señor. . . . E después de santiguado y soplado muchas veces, me trajeron un arco . . . y lleváronme a curar a otros muchos. (162)

In his performance of these cures, Cabeza de Vaca’s deploys verbal utterances (e.g., religious prayers) as well as ritual gestures (e.g., the sign of the cross, blowing on a patient’s skin), blending indigenous customs and European practices that remain at least partially unintelligible to his “patients.”<sup>10</sup> Cabeza de Vaca thus pieces together and circulates a range of what we can call “emotives,” borrowing a term developed by William M. Reddy (2001). The statements a speaker makes about his or her emotions, Reddy claims, are examples of utterances that are neither exclusively descriptive nor purely performative (99). In Reddy’s definition, these utterances, constitute emotion-oriented speech acts with multiple, layered functions: “(1) a descriptive appearance; (2) a relational intent; and (3) a self-exploring or self-altering effect” (100). As such, these utterances do provide an account of internal feeling states, but they also initiate, foster, or terminate intersubjective relationships: “When a speaker says ‘I am afraid of you,’ it may be a way of

<sup>10</sup> As Kimberle López (2001, 149) notes, Cabeza de Vaca was “unique among the conquistadors for his willingness to participate in the process of transculturation between Old and New Worlds.”

refusing to cooperate with someone ... to say 'I am in love with you,' may propose or confirm a long-term sexual liaison" (101). In addition, emotives are capable of forming or changing an affective bond, and they can also intensify or attenuate emotional states, as it arguably occurs during a declaration of love or a request for a conjugal separation (101). Emotives, Reddy concludes, "do things to the world ... [they are] themselves instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, intensifying emotions, instruments that may be more or less successful" (101).

Cabeza de Vaca's recombinant emotives—fusing European and indigenous traditions, as well as Christian prayers and indigenous healing rituals—appear to fulfill these dynamic, relational functions but bypass the mediation of comprehensible linguistic statements such as those listed in Reddy's examples (e.g., "I love you"). In Cabeza de Vaca's text, emotives unfold, instead, into instances where the brunt of what is transmitted is a gestural and bodily effect rather than the outcome of discursive interaction, and where the contents of these gestures are at least partially unintelligible to the receiver. Bypassing verbal expression, these passages in the *Naufraños* register emotives that mold and alter feeling states through opaque nonverbal signs: uncovering the body, blowing on the patient's skin, and making the sign of the cross appear in this light as a particular kind of ambivalent emotive that is traded between subjects within cross-cultural interactions in the context of Spanish colonialism in the New World.

In other instances, Cabeza de Vaca's text registers emotives that are traded through mimetic imitation. At one point, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions weep for the losses incurred during their shipwreck. Their indigenous interlocutors sit among the shipwreck survivors and reproduce the sorrow that unsettles them, adopting and reproducing the emotives they see them perform:

Y así estuvimos pidiendo a Nuestro Señor misericordia ... derramando muchas lágrimas, aviendo cada uno lástima, no sólo de sí mas de todos los otros que en el mismo estado vían ... los indios ... cuando ellos nos vieron así ... espantáronse tanto que se volvieron atrás. Yo salí a ellos y llamélos ... ; hícelos entender por señas como se nos había hundido una barca y se habían ahogado tres de nosotros. Los indios, de ver el desastre que nos avía venido ... se sentaron entre nosotros. Y con el gran dolor y lástima que huvieron de vernos ... començaron todos a llorar recio, y tan de verdad, que lexos de allí se podía oír. (98–100)

Here, Cabeza de Vaca sees the lamentation of the Amerindians as an empathetic response: "los indios ... con el gran dolor y lástima que hubieron de vernos ... començaron todos a llorar recio" (99–100). Yet as Janet Whatley (1990, xxxiv) underscores in a different context, these exchanges of emotives may have also served alternative, ritual functions observed in other indigenous communities, such as the Tupinamba in South America, known to practice a "weeping greeting" or "welcome of tears," underscoring once again the possibility that the emotives registered by Cabeza de Vaca's text are never fully comprehensible, even when they succeed at establishing forms of empathetic communication and interaction.

These scenes of shared weeping as well as the miraculous cure episodes begin to delineate concrete manifestations of the exteriority and intersubjective circulation of affect and emotion in the colonial Americas: they trace social circuits through which forms of feeling travel, attaining specific functions. To flesh out these forms of circulation more fully, we can invoke Teresa Brennan's (2004, 2) theory of the "transmission of affect," which challenges the notion of the individual subject as a self whose "emotions and energies are naturally contained, going no further than the skin"—a notion that has remained operative in Western culture since the Enlightenment. Significantly, as she fleshes out her critique of individual self-containment, Brennan invokes another bearing that helps us retrace the historical articulation of affective experience in the *Naufraños* beyond its references to humoral models of embodied affect. For Brennan, the early modern subject was not yet assumed to be an affectively self-contained individual: Michel de Montaigne, she points out, famously observed "that an old man would find his energy intensified ... [in the company of a younger man] while the younger man ... in his company would find his energy depleted" (160). Susan James (2003, 16) has noted along similar lines that for philosophers such as Nicolas Malebranche "emotions such as sadness could circulate among people" and that "in utero ... the mother's imagination could affect the shape of her child."

This alternative model of subjectivity suggested by Brennan—a porous subject whose feelings do indeed travel farther than the skin, spilling over others—is arguably more congruent with the historical context of Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufraños* than the figure of the self-contained subject of post-Enlightenment thought. Moreover, the forms of affective transmission described by Brennan and James in the context of early modern culture appear to apply to the colonial Americas as well: as the miraculous cure episodes and the weeping scenes mentioned earlier demonstrate, Cabeza de Vaca returns time and again to instances in

which emotives are traded and feelings circulate intersubjectively through performance, ritual, or imitation. Perceived as an affective mediator or go-between, Cabeza de Vaca establishes a precarious conduit between communities built around disparate “systems of feeling” that govern the nature of the affective bonds and the modes of emotional expression available to their members (Rosenwein 2002, 842). Yet it is also at this point that differences between early modern and colonial forms of affective transmission begin to surface. It is noteworthy in this regard that Brennan’s theory of transmission is predicated over a homogeneous field through which affect circulates without encountering obstacles or breakdowns. Processes of affective transmission in colonial contexts, in contrast, reveal the existence of conflictive and striated circuits: affective minefields where affective formations are always at risk of imploding into one another.

### Affective Minefields and Emotional Untranslatables

A concrete manifestation of these affective minefields appears in the *Naufragios* shortly after Cabeza de Vaca performs a miraculous cure in a community ravaged by a mysterious illness. Once healed, Cabeza de Vaca notes, his patients are careful not to mourn those who had previously died from this affliction:

Después de muertos, ningún sentimiento hizieron, ni los vimos llorar. ... Y más de quinze días que con aquéllos estuvimos, a ninguno vimos hablar uno con otro, ni los vimos reír ni llorar a ninguna criatura, antes, porque una lloró la llevaron muy lexos de allí. Y con unos dientes de ratón agudos la sajaron desde los hombros hasta casi todas las piernas. E yo, viendo esta crueldad y enojado de ello, les pregunté por qué lo hazían. Y respondieron que para castigarla porque avía llorado delante de mí. (218)

This passage registers the haunting presence of indigenous cultures of emotion presumably long in existence before Cabeza de Vaca’s arrival in the New World. Since the particular systems of feeling that organize these cultures of emotion do not seem fully compatible with European lexicons and referents, these elusive forms inhabit the margins of colonial discourse, surviving as shards of collective memory, as parahegemonic or counterhegemonic formations. Nevertheless, traces of these systems are registered by colonial texts themselves to a degree. They surface, for instance, in seemingly inconsequential details such as the method of punishment chosen for the child who cries in front of Cabeza de Vaca: “La llevaron muy lexos de allí ... con unos dientes de ratón agudos la sajaron desde los hombros hasta casi todas las piernas” (218), an action that insinuates the existence of an organized, systemic array of norms concerning emotional expression and restraint that remains unknown to the chronicler and to his readers.

Additional traces of these systems of feeling emerge in the famous story of Mala Cosa, a demonic figure that, as Cabeza de Vaca recounts, comes out the underworld to terrorize indigenous communities, submitting their members to varied torments, twisting their limbs, cutting into their flesh and removing their organs, and paralyzing them with “fear” (164–168).<sup>11</sup> What is particularly significant about the story of Mala Cosa for the present analysis is that it appears to signal the existence of two incompatible networks of feeling and the incommensurability of the cultural systems that organize them. According to the narrative recounted by Cabeza de Vaca, Mala Cosa’s appearance and his evil deeds make the Avavares shudder with fear: “Se les levantavan los cabellos y temblaban” (166). This tale, however, elicits at first the mockery of the Spaniards: “Destas cosas que nos dezían nosotros nos reíamos mucho burlando de ellas” (166). Yet shortly thereafter, when the victims of Mala Cosa show the Spaniards the physical scars of his violence etched on their bodies, the Spaniards, finally grasping the supposedly demonic nature of Mala Cosa, sympathize with the Avavares. Trading feelings, the Spaniards extend the Avavares their faith as refuge: “Les dávamos a entender que si ellos creyesen en Dios nuestro Señor ... no tendrían miedo de aquél ni él osaría venir” (168).

Not unlike the punishment of a child who flaunts the system of feeling of her community, the story of Mala Cosa thus indexes public codes governing the experience, expression, and public circulation of affect and emotion. The defined affective effects of this story circulating among the Avavares is underwritten by a system Cabeza de Vaca and his companions first find laughable. Only afterward does the cognitive attachment of Mala Cosa to the figure of the devil cause in them a seemingly sympathetic reaction—*seemingly* because it is never entirely clear whether Cabeza de Vaca’s own fear is congruent with the effects the indigenous listeners of the tale of Mala Cosa experience upon hearing or retelling this narrative. In the interstices

<sup>11</sup> For an overview and reinterpretation of the various possible identities of Mala Cosa, see Carlos A. Jáuregui (2014, 427), who remarks that “la cosa extraña” narrated by the story of Mala Cosa is “un depósito de sentido sobre experiencias y terrores concretos ... [que] expresa *afectos* tangibles frente al mal y *cogniciones* concretas sobre el sometimiento a poderes ajenos.”



of this (mis)translation—indigenous “fear” of Mala Cosa converted into the Spaniards’ sympathetic fear of the devil—something slips. Discrepancies and dissonances in modes of experience and forms of expression underscore at this point the presence of indigenous systems of feeling whose cultural coding appears to be lost in translation. A distinguishing characteristic of affective transmission in colonial contexts thus appears to be its gradual unfolding into minefields within which not only the expression of emotion but the experience of affect and emotion itself becomes an opaque, recalcitrant, and untranslatable form—a collective experience that a text such as *Naufragios* can partially register but cannot comprehend.

The nature of affect and emotion as experiences that cannot always be translated across cultures has been debated in the fields of anthropology and sociolinguistics since the 1980s, when scholars begin to suggest that “not only did the expression of emotion vary across cultures but that people from different cultures had radically different feelings” (Plamper 2015, 98).<sup>12</sup> When applied to the *Naufragios*, these forays into the cultural relativity of affective life and the untranslatability of emotion encourages a problematization of the conflation of European and indigenous systems of feeling into a single category. This conflation reproduces a rhetorical strategy deployed by Cabeza de Vaca himself: the “attachment” of indigenous affective and emotional experience to European molds and concepts,<sup>13</sup> applying terms such as *espanto* or *lástima* (98–100) to the feelings he notices in his indigenous interlocutors, without factoring in the potential presence of cultural gaps that may turn these terms into unstable, misplaced ideas. Following scholarship on non-Western lexicons of emotion and their cultural particularity (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz 1988), a question that surfaces here is whether Cabeza de Vaca misrepresents not only the emotional expressions he notices but also the actual feelings encoded by those expressions.

These incongruities also offer a defined, feeling-oriented parallelism to the epistemological “problem of other minds”: the asymmetry between the direct access an individual consciousness has to its own mental states and the always indirect, inferential route through which this consciousness accesses the mental states of others. Because these modes of indirect access are granted by inference and analogy, doubts regarding their reliability always creep in: “Trust in analogical inference [of the mental states of others] is limited ... and many believe that these bridge constructions easily collapse” (Skirke 2014, 229). In general terms, a similar asymmetry can be observed between a subject’s access to his own emotional states and the analogical inference of the emotional states of others: the inferences a subject makes about the emotions of others must always navigate the challenges inherent in all forms of interpersonal communication. Yet these challenges become even more pronounced in cross-cultural contexts, giving rise to emotional untranslatables linked to distinct systems and networks of feeling that cannot always be bridged. The narrative of Mala Cosa and the story of the punishment of the child who cries in front of Cabeza de Vaca outline these systems and networks as obscure figures that resist processes of attachment and cognitive assimilation. Within the affective minefields of a text such as the *Naufragios*, the “bridge constructions” that may make the affective experience of others comprehensible disintegrate into emotional untranslatables that are not merely discursive (i.e., failure to translate certain lexicons of emotion) but also experiential (i.e., failure to translate certain forms of emotional experience in themselves).

The existence of these affective minefields returns us to Fanon’s (2005, 56) notion of affect in colonial contexts as a highly ambivalent force that may be both destructive and generative—one that forms and severs bonds, produces moments of empathy as well as instances of miscommunication or incommunication, and constitutes a building block for intersubjective interaction and at the same time flinches like “an open sore.” A distinctive feature of the *Naufragios* is that Cabeza de Vaca’s unusual sensitivity as a chronicler and his close contact with Amerindian communities allows for these conflictive forms to be partially encoded, providing future readers with an opportunity for historical investigation into indigenous cultures of emotion—a project that dovetails with one of the vanguards in the historiography of the emotions: regional and comparative analysis of historical affects (e.g., Plamper 2015, 293; Matt and Stearns 2014, 7–8)—as well as a useful point of departure for future theorizations of colonial affect in the Americas.

<sup>12</sup> Michelle Rosaldo’s (1980, 20–53) work on Ilongot emotional culture describes Ilongot notions such as *liget*, which Rosaldo translates into English as “passion” but situates within their own emotional lexicon and cultural ecology. Along similar lines, linguist Anna Wierzbicka (1986) has studied a form of feeling in Polish culture, known as *tesknota* in the national language. Wierzbicka remarks that English “has no word for the feeling encoded” in this term (587). Steven Mullaney (2015, 32) remarks that while untranslatability of *tesknota* might be debatable, the problem “is not merely a matter of paraphrase or translation but one of collective identity and shared structures of feeling.”

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Pagden’s (1993, 21) influential principle of attachment describes the translation of “varieties of experience of an alien world” into more familiar practices, via “analogue or metaphor,” as routinely carried out by European chroniclers in the New World.

Extrapolating from this reading of the *Naufragios* to scholarship on colonial Latin American literature and culture more broadly, it could be argued that the study of affect and emotion in general and the exteriority of feeling in particular may unfold into three interrelated areas: first, the investigation of the historical articulation of affective life in relation to concrete referents and contexts (e.g., early modern theories of humoralism and their transfer to the texts of colonial chroniclers in the New World); second, the exploration of the cultural specificity of forms and networks of feeling in the early Americas (e.g., the particularities of European and indigenous codes governing the experience and expression of emotion); and third, the theorization of colonial affect and its social circulation in the Americas (e.g., the emergence of affective minefields and emotional untranslatables). But this line of inquiry might also contribute to other disciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavors beyond the study of colonial texts. Although these contributions can be sketched out only most rudimentarily in the space of this article, I suggest, as a corollary, the potential alignment between an affective turn in colonial studies and the movement toward a reflection on the geopolitics of the senses and perception enacted by theorists and practitioners of decolonial aesthetics. In the introduction to a special issue on the topic, Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vásquez (2013, n.p.) sum up this movement as one that is “framed in the larger project known as ‘modernity/(de)coloniality.’ It considers aesthetics as being an aspect of the colonial matrix of power, of the imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the colonization of the New World. ... Decolonial aesthetics starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception.”

The critique of the coloniality of power and knowledge, which traces its roots back to the work of Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007), is thus at present opening up into new territories by exploring the realm of the senses and the domain of the body. Emotion plays a crucial role in this context, because “la herida colonial, influencia los sentidos, las emociones, y el intelecto ... la herida es sentida y sufrida ... en las emociones y en el intelecto” (Mignolo and Gómez Moreno 2012, 9). The study of the exteriority of feeling in the colonial Americas may therefore add to these advances, underscoring the importance of considering not only the geopolitics and coloniality of power and knowledge but also the *geopolitics and coloniality of feeling*: the way feelings circulate within colonial racial and economic hierarchies, and the manner in which Eurocentric forms, lexicons, and systems of feeling marginalized other systems in the colonial Americas, as the attachment of indigenous affective experience to Western concepts and the partial erasure of its specificity in the *Naufragios* already insinuates.

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