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The Transnational Rhetoric in Cabeza De Vaca's La Relacion

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Please provide projector and screen

Title: “The transnational rhetoric in Cabeza De Vaca’s *La Relacion*”

Abstract on *La Relacion* by Cabeza de Vaca

Identity is an important concept in postcolonial literature, especially when one’s identity is achieved rather than inherent. It is interesting to pursue how Cabeza de Vaca, the protagonist of *La Relacion* undergoes a transformation from his initial identity as a Spanish colonizer to a transnational hybrid, the Spanish-American. Despite multiple critics’ argument that *La Relacion* is “a discourse of failure” that “subverts the established order,” my paper rereads the narrative as a transnationally successful rhetoric by incorporating multiculturalism and hybridity. Thus Cabeza de Vaca becomes a hero if we accept his story as a successful, although altered, version of conquest; he is a “hero” because his military and political failures pave way for the spiritual success even though he has not conquered Native American territories and enslaved no Native Americans for the Spanish crown. The Narrative, as a tale of religious and cultural tolerance, rather than military conquest, becomes an even more persuasive tool for a broader transnational perspective. In the early stages of his narrative, Cabeza de Vaca constructs the native as Other, as warrior, pagan, savage, in effect everything that the Spanish colonizers are not. But in his transformative phase Cabeza de Vaca acquires new knowledge about the natives through a new way of thinking about them (the change in his outlook from I to We), and he continues to employ linguistic and religious/social/cultural strategies to identify with the natives. By making his strategies increasingly more visible in his *La Relacion*, a new ideology of transnationalism emerges. Thus my paper looks forward to legitimate cultural explanations through a postcolonial-transnational perspective in present day multicultural world to explore the interrelations across barriers.