

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: JOURNEYS OF REDEMPTION:
DISCOVERIES, RE-DISCOVERIES AND
CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF
THE AMERICAS

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Journeys of Redemption utilizes the concept of redemption to consider how the Americas are contextualized topologically and chronologically, and, as such, how these spaces are given narrative meaning. By relying upon a definition of redemption that simultaneously considers spiritual deliverance with material recovery, the Americas become, at once, interpretable as contested grounds and promised destinations.

Following Chapter One, the “Introduction” to this project, Chapter Two provides the methodological foundation, describing theoretical approaches towards a definition of redemption that will serve as the underlying basis for my argument. The following chapters all apply redemption in readings of films that may be categorized as captivity narratives. Chapter Three considers how Bruce Beresford’s 1991 film,

Black Robe, utilizes redemption in its depiction of a Jesuit priest's interactions with Indigenous groups (such as the Huron and Iroquois) in seventeenth-century French Canada. Chapter Four examines redemption in the Brazilian film Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971). This film about a nameless Frenchman's captivity among the sixteenth-century Tupinambás, illustrates the ways in which redemption has functioned, and continues to function, as a foundational contributor to colonial and nationalist projects. Chapter Five focuses on Cabeza de Vaca (Echevarría, 1991), a Mexican film recounting Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's historic sixteenth-century trek across much of North America. The spiritual focus of this film is studied in terms of how it both challenges and corroborates the historical Cabeza de Vaca's own accounts of redemption. Chapter Six considers filmic representations of borders and border crossings, thereby examining how the Americas become shaped by distinction and congruence, how the terrain of this hemisphere becomes, at once, the ever receding Promised Land and a space in dire need of redemption and exorcism. The French film Le Salaire de la peur (Clouzot, 1953) is here compared to the German film Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes (Herzog, 1973) in an attempt to elucidate how both of these texts create senses of displacement through their associations of the Americas with perdition. Finally, Chapter Seven attempts to juxtapose my readings of redemption in the contexts of pilgrimage, the Americas, and film.

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by

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Chapter One:

Introduction

One of the most famous anecdotes concerning film history recounts the reaction of spectators to the first public screening of a film, the Lumière Brothers' L'Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat in 1895. According to legend, the recorded image of a train pulling into a station so shocked the viewers, that they jumped up from their seats and ran away from the café where the film was being screened. Supposedly, these first viewers could not distinguish the recorded space of the film from the space they inhabited, and the movement of the train disrupted their understandings of distance and representation.

Although there is speculation as to the veracity of this anecdote, it is still highly significant that, from the onset of filmic reproductions and projections, the medium has defined itself not just through its ability to realistically depict motion, but through its implicit challenge to spectatorial assumptions of space and time. Film, then, has historically been understood to be both a depiction of movement as well as a moving force in and of itself. The recordings of foreign lands and peoples, a definitive feature of film throughout its history, and the transportation of these recordings to all corners of the world, made of film an industry and art form intricately connected to the production and consumption of "otherness." The film spectator, as the early viewers of L'Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat, has been, and still is, a mediator of place and time, engaged in a transaction that demands the distinction between a "here" and a "there," a "them" and an "us," a "past" and a "now."

Therefore, watching a film is both an interpretative and a performative project, wherein one subsumes the motions of others and assumes a vantage of distinction.

Journeys of Redemption has, as its basis, an understanding that film, like any other cultural production, both shapes and is shaped by the social, political, and economic contexts from which it is produced. This project, then, is an analysis of film through informative systems of identification as well as an analysis of cultural foundations and assumptions through the filmic medium. Also, because of my focus on the ways in which filmed movement translates into identificatory movement, Journeys of Redemption considers how representations of journeys into “foreign” terrain demand a specific engagement from the viewer that, quite literally, places and re-places understood origins and destinations. The represented journeys that comprise the material of my investigation, then, all share the trait of enacting a narrative discourse of belonging and dis-belonging.

In addition to my concentration on film and its subsequent encodings of place, time, and subjectivity, I am also concerned with the ways in which colonial travel discourses in general routinely engage in similar demands from readers. Of course, film occupies an important place within colonialist traditions – not only did films bring images of the colonies to colonial seats of power and, likewise, bring images of metropoli to those colonized who bore the brunt of colonial oppression, the medium also historically promoted a viewing practice that replicated the systems of power that, in large part, fueled it. This is to say that the film-viewing public learned to “place” itself against what was being represented, granting the public’s positionality a power derived from distance and distinction. In this way, even those oppressed by

colonialist and capitalist regimes, can derive pleasure through identification with the camera's supposedly objective position¹.

This dissertation also, therefore, explores the ways in which colonialist representations of the "other," specifically the American "other," operate through a mechanism much like that which I have attributed to film. Journeys to America during the early colonial period were depicted as travel to the borders of the European imagination, relegating all that was encountered in this hemisphere beyond understood places and times. In this way, one can imagine readers of Walter Raleigh's descriptions of headless savages in the Guyanas in his The Discoverie of the Large Rich, and Beautifull Empire of Guiana as being similarly shocked as those French viewers of the first screening of L'Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat. Descriptions of the Americas, such as those by Sir Walter Raleigh, Stephen Greenblatt argues, created a sort of "rift,... [a] cracking apart of contextual understanding in an elusive and ambiguous experience of wonder, [that] is a central recurring feature in the early discourse of the New World" (19). Similar to the wonders of cinematic movement, the wonders elicited by travel to the New World necessitated both an inclusion of the "other" within a colonial context and, more significantly, a reassertion of the place of the European within this newly formed contextualization.

Finally, Journeys of Redemption explores another representative movement, through which to position and compare the movements evident in cinema and

¹ I should note that resistant film and viewing practices have existed throughout the history of cinema. However, these practices have consistently been relegated as divergent and not, therefore, as the established traditions. Also, I need to make clear that not all "established" practices equally represented that which was foreign. I am addressing hegemonic production and consumption practices (to be found in cinemas around the world, from the silent films of Brazil's Golden Age of Cinema, to Hollywood's monopoly on distribution, ensuring a globally recognized U.S. nationalist identification) that depend on "primacy" and "authority" for its legitimacy.

colonial discourses: the pilgrimage. This practice of travel is conversant with those described in conjunction with film and colonialism precisely because it demands an active interpretation of placement and power on the part of the performer. Pilgrimage narratives often describe journeys of meaning, wherein pilgrims move towards and through associations with practices and traditions that place them in a definitive position in the contexts of their cultures. In other words, the pilgrim's body performs a process whereby physical progress is equated to spiritual advancement. Pilgrimages promise to bring the places pilgrims materially occupy in concert with spaces of divinity, enabling the pilgrim to propel an identification from profane positionalities to sacred ones. The pilgrimage is, in this way, a performance of identity through a re-constitution of space and time. One should also note how colonial ventures adopted pilgrimage models – the Crusades, for instance, had both territorial and spiritual (re)assertion as its basis and even Columbus' initial voyage to the Americas was represented in his letters as analogous with the Spanish Reconquista (Zamora, 35).

In short, through a study of pilgrimage, my analysis makes explicit the roles through which spirit, nation, and image become mutually definable and inextinguishable. In this way, filmic journeys in, to, and through the Americas may be understood to be depictions of how identification with terrain and "home" bear the resonance of a spiritual signification, and of how identifications with the spirits and souls of a people become translatable as nationally loaded projections. The means through which spirit, nation, and image become conversant, I maintain, is through an adoption of redemption as the identificatory model and practice.

“Redemption” is classically defined as deliverance, salvation, atonement, repurchase of something sold, paying something off, and recovery of payment². The two elements of these definitions which will be used as foundations for my argument are the connection between a spiritual recovery and a material one, and the assumption that redemption is a process whereby one is brought back to an original state, whether that be purity, innocence, fiscal soundness, or freedom from debt. Redemption, then, is the means through which one returns and constructs a distinction between what one is essentially and what one is because of consequence. It is the manifestation, and proof, of one’s connection to both what is good and what makes things good. It is, interestingly, a re-contextualization of context, a re-placement of events in such a way that they can be viewed sequentially. Redemption, I argue, creates both the distinction and interdependence between origin and destination. Redemption is, ultimately the force that allows for a destination to become an origin³.

The project, itself, consists of six chapters (not including the Introduction), each geared towards substantiating my argument about how redemption figures as a narrative process wherein cinematic representations and employments of spatial and spiritual identification translate into constructions of belonging. The first chapter, “Approaching Redemption: Towards a Working Definition of ‘Pilgrimage,’” lays out the theoretical and methodological foundation for the analyses that follow. More specifically, this chapter engages the practice of pilgrimage in the construction of a model through which the narratives of the films I have chosen to illustrate my thesis may be considered. Utilizing anthropological, sociological, historical, and cultural

² All of these definitions come from [The Random House Dictionary of the English Language](#).

³ I would like to thank Dr. Kevin E. Quashie for his help in formulating this argument.

examinations of pilgrimage practices, I propose a definition of the pilgrimage as a performative act, one wherein the pilgrim is made to occupy a representational role in a narrative discourse. I subsequently trace this role in specific filmic representations of journeys to and through the American hemisphere to ultimately arrive at an understanding of what kinds of narrative traditions and expectations have granted constructions of American spaces the power of either promise or despair. To do this, I pay special attention to the ways in which pilgrimage and colonial traditions share presumptions of origins and destinations, and argue that redemption is the process through which both traditions negotiate constructions of belonging.

The following four chapters illustrate my argument by considering depictions of redemption in five films. All of these films represent European encounters with American spaces, and all show these encounters necessitate some sort of redemption. In this way, these films depict the Americas as spaces wherein one may be entrapped and from which one must escape or through which one must find deliverance. Because these films all document captivity of some sort, all share the trait of representing journeys to and through this hemisphere, however none of the films' characters find the means to leave these American spaces. In some cases, this is seen as providential, while in others this inability to return to sites of origin reflects damnation. In all cases, though, colonial narratives of discovery and dominance inform the structure and substance of the films and present American Natives as having symbiotic ties with the lands they inhabit. Also, since most of these films are re-enactments of historical events dating from the colonial periods of the respective regions displayed, the films further share the quality of bearing the role of

foundational representations, illustrations of proto-national identifications. These films are, therefore, allegorical in nature, all depicting modern anxieties towards belonging and disbelonging, in metaphysical and, in some cases, explicitly socio-political ways. Finally, every film represents a pilgrimage, a journey towards a communion between physical place and divine realm, between a material self and a holy embodiment. As such, these films present themselves as excellent sources for a study of the ways in which redemption works to locate the subject ideologically.

Chapters Two through Four each focuses on one particular film, all three of which are based on historical accounts of European captivity by the hands of Native Americans. Each chapter thereby examines the ways in which the respective film utilizes history and considers the context of the film's production in order to comprehend the foundations upon which the film's representations of colonial encounters in the Americas are built. I pay particular attention to the films' usage of historical sources in their varied attempts towards authenticity. Scholarship regarding historical representation as well as contemporary cultural identifications is presented to guide my analyses regarding each film's methods of depicting a colonial past. For the most part, scholarship about these three films has centered upon the accuracy of the historical representations, as well as the political imperatives that have informed such representations. These films are, therefore, highly contested sites of legitimacy and each bears the weight of delineating the parameters of national belonging. Since each of these films also present journeys of discovery and quests for salvation, the historical and national constructions that inform each film are made to play active roles in the represented pursuits of redemption.

Chapter Two focuses on Bruce Beresford's film Black Robe (1991). Set in 1634 in what is today Quebec, Black Robe charts the journey undertaken by the Jesuit Father Laforgue as he searches for an endangered mission site in the Huron area. Laforgue begins his journey as a determined missionary and ends in a profound crisis of faith. Immersion into the wilderness of New France and contact with such tribes as the Algonquin, the Iroquois, and the Huron all contribute to the translation of Laforgue's journey into a metaphysical enterprise wherein his identity is challenged and his past experiences are rendered obsolete. The journey through the wilderness, ostensibly a pilgrimage to a sacred site, becomes an exile, an expulsion from Paradise. Black Robe is based upon a novel of the same name by Brian Moore, a work that uses the 17th century Jesuit Relations quite extensively as a source for historical accuracy as well as a significant contributor to the novel's, and the film's, plot. Scholarship is presented examining both Moore's and Beresford's appropriations of history, and particular attention is paid to the film's function as a documentation of a national origin. In particular, I analyze the film's usage of wounds, dismemberment, and disease in light of the film's representations of community and power, and arrive at an argument concerning the ways in which Black Robe engages redemption in its construction of an ambiguous and fragile sense of national belonging.

In Chapter Three, I provide a similar approach to Nelson Pereira dos Santos' film Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês (1971). This film, like Black Robe, has instigated several debates regarding historical authenticity and the role of history in constructions of modern political subjectivity. Also similar to Black Robe, Como Era

Gostoso o Meu Francês depicts interactions between Europeans and Natives in colonial America and the place of these interactions in the creation of national identifications. The film is set in what is today Brazil during the mid-16th century. It chronicles the capture and eventual cannibalization of a young Frenchman by a Tupinambá tribe. Relying heavily on the book Hans Staden: The True History of His Captivity, originally published in 1557, the film reproduces in detail scenes from Staden's own account in its plot construction. Many scholars make the claim that Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês challenges authenticity by juxtaposing contradictory relations and thereby deconstructing official historical narratives. Others point out that Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês does, in fact, strive towards authenticity in that all of its content, even that which seems contradictory, is directly derived from historical sources. As such, Jean de Léry's account of his own experiences among the Tupinambás in his book History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America, is also extensively referenced, even so much as to formally depict the struggle between this chronicler and his fellow Calvinists against the administration of the failed French colony of France Antartique. Besides a discussion of the film's use of history and authenticity (or its challenge) in the construction of a national identification, I closely examine the ways in which Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês utilizes the trope of discovery in order to problematize redemption as a narrative practice. Specifically, I argue that this film illustrates the pivotal role of redemption in colonialist discourse just as it destabilizes the vantage points necessary to maintain this discourse.

Chapter Four continues this examination into the ways in which redemption is represented in film by centering on Cabeza de Vaca directed by Nicolás Echevarría (1991). Like Black Robe and Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês, this Mexican film is set in colonial America and is based on historical accounts of European contact with the original inhabitants of this hemisphere. Specifically, Cabeza de Vaca is derived from the writings of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the second in command of an early Spanish colonizing venture to what is today Florida. In his Naufraios, published originally in 1542, Cabeza de Vaca recounts the shipwreck that precipitated his, and his three companions', eight year sojourn among Native communities as they made their way across the modern-day United States towards the Spanish settlements in Nueva Galicia (the borderlands between what is today Mexico and the United States). Cabeza de Vaca makes special use of the historical figure's descriptions of the miracles he supposedly performed and through which he won the Natives' trust. As such, Cabeza de Vaca is highly mystical in nature and ultimately represents the protagonist's trek across this vast terrain as a spiritual journey. The more Cabeza de Vaca, the fictional character, comes into contact with American cultures and landscapes, the more enlightened and compassionate he becomes, resulting finally in a quite literal invocation of American spaces as redemptive and sacred. Much of the scholarship I discuss in this chapter focuses on this invocation, mainly as critique against the film's exoticization of Native peoples and cultures. I consider Echevarría's appropriation of historical sources and the discrepancies apparent between his film and Cabeza de Vaca's Naufraios as a way to reflect upon the political implications of and national constructions within Cabeza de Vaca. Since

redemption is so evidently tied with definitions of place and space in this film, I study the ways in which the protagonist's journey functions as a pilgrimage and parallels spiritual thresholds with political frontiers, making it possible to construct very tangible definitions of belonging. This stands in stark contrast to how Nelson Pereira dos Santos negotiates the concept of redemption in Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês, and provides me with a good basis from which to engage in a more comparative approach.

This is the approach which guides Chapter Five. Rather than considering one film, I juxtapose two films so as to compare the ways in which redemption functions to shape cinematic representations of journeys through American spaces. These films, Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes (Herzog, 1973) and Le Salaire de la peur (Clouzot, 1953) are European representations, German and French respectively, of roughly overlapping American spaces. Although both are set in drastically different time periods, with Aguirre taking place in the 16th-century and Le Salaire de la peur depicting a time shortly after World War II, both depict journeys in and through north-western South America (around and within Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela). Both also feature unsuccessful attempts by Europeans to escape what has become an overwhelming and ultimately deadly terrain. Unlike the previous three films discussed, however, neither of these two films focuses on the interaction between Europeans and Native Americans, relegating Indigenous communities, quite literally, to the margins of shores or roads. I, therefore, focus on the ways in which American spaces, as entities in and of themselves, are transformed into the conduits through which redemption is emphatically denied. My argument, stemming from my earlier

analyses of the redemptive strategies connecting history, nation, and spirit, is here considered against the contrasting definitions of cinema as proposed by Sergei Eisenstein and André Bazin. As two critics whose work is generally acknowledged to have significantly shaped discussions of the nature and function of cinema, Eisenstein and Bazin provide me with the opportunity to question how representations of redemption are shaped by cinematic form. In other words, this chapter examines how a study of filmic representations of redemption may differ from other such representations in other media. Furthermore, I employ the trope of the border, a trope that figures prominently in both Aguirre and Le Salaire de la peur, to explore the strategies Herzog and Clouzot employ in directing viewers' understandings of subject positions. These strategies are particularly telling in that they function to situate the viewer within the redemption process and thereby involve us in constructions of belonging and disbelonging.

Finally, I conclude this manuscript by re-examining the role that pilgrimage has to play in the constructions of redemption. As a model for an examination of redemption, pilgrimage offers itself as a means to study the intersections and intercommunicability between such concepts as origins, destinations, and movement. The interplay between constructions of history, nation, and spirit may be thereby studied and the various processes through which one is made to identify with and through these constructions may be analyzed. A study of the Americas as constructed spaces that have been shaped by, and have contested, the concepts of origin, destination, and movement, may, I suggest, provide a platform upon which more research and thought can be given to the ways in which film represents meaning in movement.

By studying redemption, one can both deconstruct the notions of “origin” and “destination” and can articulate how such notions operate ideologically. This is the overarching goal of this body of work. The analyses I provide in these pages contribute to the on-going project of challenging any totality connected to place, whether it is a definitive sense of nation, region, border or frontier. Rather than posit an alternative identification with place, however, I demonstrate how any identification is always mediated through ideology. By focusing on the process of how one connects to place, how one establishes belonging or dis-belonging, I emphasize how identification negotiates both movement and stasis, an emphasis that will challenge both a fixed and an amorphous construction of identity. By focusing on redemption as a central theme that informs how pilgrimages are defined and how the Americas have been constructed historically and culturally, I investigate how specific filmmakers have attempted to depict this hemisphere as a space wherein the nation is granted spiritual significance, and the spirit is safely rooted in a national essence. The New World’s attempts at self-definition, I argue, are redemptive acts, dynamic negotiations of origins, destinations, and destinies.

Chapter Two:

Promised Lands: Redemption and Colonial Encodings of the Americas

Stephen Greenblatt's Marvellous Possessions explores the traditions through which European chroniclers of the American "discovery" and conquest constructed the lands and cultures they encountered. By examining European Medieval and Renaissance transcriptions of the "wonders" to be found beyond European geographic borders, Greenblatt demonstrates how the Americas were represented through descriptive paradigms that allocated what is different and distant from European contexts within these same European domains. Rather than focusing upon the ways in which the Americas confounded and strengthened European imaginations, thereby granting the American hemisphere an implicit "wondrousness," Greenblatt considers these same imaginations within a definitive framework. As such, the Americas were not "marvelous" in and of themselves; it was the European need for "marvel" in the project of distinguishing itself from the rest of the world, Greenblatt argues, that shaped the foundations through which a sense of "belonging" could translate into the mechanisms that structured the discourses and practices of colonialism and possession. Greenblatt writes that:

[s]truggling to grasp hold of the immense realms newly encountered, Europeans deployed a lumbering, jerry-built, but immensely powerful mimetic machinery, the inescapable mediating agent not only of possession but of simple contact with the other. For this reason, the early modern

discourse of discovery... is a superbly powerful register of the characteristic claims and limits of European representational practice. (23)

The American landscapes and cultures that were represented to a European audience, then, served as the means through which Europeans not only enacted supremacy and originality, but through which they effectively redeemed their places in the world. By studying how European chroniclers defined themselves through the backdrop of the Americas, one is made more fully aware of the power invested in American representations, an investment that effectively ensconced itself amidst all the foreign “wonders” of this hemisphere.

Michel de Certeau, also, has studied the limits and reach of European imaginations in conjunction to its applications concerning the Americas. In Writing About History, Certeau argues that the Americas were, in part, understood to operate as a sort of “tabula rasa,” a clear slate upon which Europeans encoded their desires. José Rabasa questions Certeau’s representation of the colonizing process by positing that the Americas functioned more as a palimpsest, or, more accurately, as a dialogic textual practice through which indigenous cultures were absorbed or translated. Rabasa acknowledges Certeau’s construction of the Americas as a “blank page” to be not only a reference to the systematic negation and obliteration of indigenous cultures, but, more significantly, as a practice that foregrounds the importance of “writing” in European self-construction. In order to “claim” American soil and peoples, Certeau contends, Europeans needed to “write” them, to “reinscribe” power as a discursive and representational act. More specifically, the inscription of desire upon American places and societies affirms a connection that is wholly founded upon

practices of consumption and production. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Certeau argues that “writing” is both a generative and destructive process, wherein one “can express the desire that expects from the other the marvelous and ephemeral excess of surviving through an attention that it alters” (198). In other words, the “writing” of place and time is very much a transaction – between self and other, between life (or permanence) and death (or ephemerality), and between production and consumption – and is, thereby, not a monologic, unifocal practice. As an apparent gesture to his earlier claim about European constructions of “blank pages,” Certeau here states that the writing of modern subjectivity is done upon “a black (and not blank) page” (198). In this way, Certeau emphasizes how the appropriation and representation of “everyday life” is an enactment upon a page that is already full, so full, in fact, that what is inscribed upon it remains illegible.

Addressing Certeau’s representation of American “pages” (blank or black), Rabasa argues that such manifestations of colonial projections do not leave the necessary space to articulate the complex transactions that made up the colonial enterprise. He writes that:

...it appears appropriate to me, at least from the perspective of the Spanish colonization, to speak of a European pursuit of a New World that bears the imprint of native and ancient texts whereon the West discovers or fabricates its imperial destiny. The pursuit obviously implies an appropriation of indigenous texts, but that is very different from reducing the encounter to “blank page” versus “Western desire.” (42)

Rabasa, here, insists upon a recognition of the complexity of the colonizing projects (and projections) upon the Americas. Rather than following the apparent progression of Certeau's representation (from blank to black), Rabasa opts for an exploration that accounts for the ongoing adoptions and dismissals that make up colonialist writings. Although, as he notes, the trope of the "tabula rasa" or "blank page" is in abundant evidence in colonial inscriptions, European (Spanish, specifically) hegemony demanded a continual negotiation of the "fullness" of the American worlds encountered. Europeans needed to translate this "abundance" into lack, *as well as* "reading" their own histories and destinies in American "pages." In other words, colonialist discourse vacillates from recounting the "barren" nature of American cultural traditions to identifying its own origins and destinations within this foreign terrain. It is through this vacillation, the insistence on inscribing the European imagination upon the indigenous and the obverse need for Europe to "find" its own *raison d'être* and legacy through interactions with America, that colonial discourses constructed a political, historical, economic, social, and cultural European identity.

This project continues these scholars' examinations of colonial "translations" of American lands and peoples, but considers European encodings of the Americas in terms of redemption. In order to establish a platform from which to launch my analyses, I address here three dominant tropes found in colonizing discourses: that of the Tabula Rasa, that of Paradise, and that of Destination. As Certeau points out with his treatment of American "blank pages," the Tabula Rasa ensures that the colonizing and colonized powers remain distinct (one is meaningful within a specific context, the other not) yet inextricably accessible (one affords meaning to the other). This

conjunction of difference and access allows for colonial enterprises to function as redemptive projects – incorporating that which lies beyond an originating space to affirm the legitimacy and value of this same origin. Likewise, Greenblatt’s arguments on the colonial practice of describing the “marvelous” may find its counterpart in my study of the function of Paradise in ensuring a redemptive nature to colonial projects/projections. The placement of the Americas within a Judeo-Christian narrative tradition, and its placement at the onset of history, as it was understood, marks a traveler to the Americas as a sort of pilgrim, attempting to connect her/his destination with a definite sense of origin. Greenblatt argues that the representation of the marvelous creates a spatial-temporal ellipsis, a placement beyond time and space wherein one encounters that which is out of one’s context. I contend that representations of the Americas as Edenic also function to “displace” the reader and “re-locate” this same within a narrative practice that demands an understanding of travel to the New World as a redemptive act. Finally, Rabasa’s claims on the multiple and contradictory transactions to be found in colonial discourses is reflected in my study of the colonial constructions of the Americas as destinations. By searching for destinies and entitlement in American soil, colonists were effectively constructing their American destinations as originating points, places that upheld and promised the value of their journeys west. Just as Spanish colonizers depicted their discoveries as proof of their original power and relevance, as Rabasa claims, representations of American destinations also were depictions of groups equating their destinations with their destinies. What follows, then, is an examination

of how these various depictions of American spaces and peoples function to promote a redemptive interpretation of colonialist enterprises.

In the context of this study, I am defining a colonizing institution as a systematic engagement with a geographically and culturally distinct body for the purposes of self-definition. Historically, such enterprises have been informed fundamentally by economic and political imperatives and have been carried out as projects to increase the wealth and power of the colonial state. Culturally, colonizing institutions utilize constructions of identificatory power in that the colonizer occupies the center of cultural definition and the colonized functions as a supporting mechanism of this center. As such, the colonizer depends upon the colonized for material and representational power whereas the colonized is placed within a structure wherein s/he has no definition outside of this determined context.

I am using this broad definition tentatively, however, more as a means to delineate the parameters of a representational praxis than as a representation of historically and geographically specific occurrences. Aijaz Ahmad warns against the loose application of such terms as “colonial” and “postcolonial” as they de-historicize and displace the mechanisms through which agencies of power have been promoted and resisted. As he explains:

[t]he fundamental effect of constructing this globalized transhistoricity of colonialism is to evacuate the very meaning of the word and disperse that meaning so widely that we can no longer speak of determinate histories of determinate structures... Instead, we have a globalized *condition* of postcoloniality that can be *described* by the ‘postcolonial critic,’ but never fixed as a determinate structure

of power against which determinate forms of struggle may be possible outside the domains of discourse and pedagogy. (“Postcolonialism,” 31)

My aim in this study is not to “describe” colonialism or to place specific texts within this framework. Rather, I am utilizing colonialism as a practice of representation in much the same way that I have utilized pilgrimage. Because my archive for this chapter are self-evident and self-defined representations of colonizing ventures, I will explore how colonialism is translated into narrative, how this narrative functions in the context of the pilgrimage narrative, and how these narratives serve the purposes of redemption.

Pilgrimage is a representative act that affords the inclusion and exclusion of devotees into narrative traditions. Pilgrims perform pilgrimages to distant locations thereby incorporating their own experiences and geographical parameters into a wider context. The pilgrimage context gives meaning to the journey from one locale to another and makes the pilgrim’s original spiritual and geographical space conversant with the pilgrim’s spiritual and geographical destination. Redemption, in my analysis, is equivalent to the process whereby the pilgrim’s destination and destiny becomes translatable into an origin, therefore insuring that the pilgrimage process be continually performed. This process, rather than merely eradicating distinction between spiritual and geographical locales, promotes it in order to perpetuate the need for redemption and the importance of recognizing and interpreting the discursive tradition of which it is a part.

Colonialism, as a represented and representative act, also functions similarly. The colonizer journeys to a distant and distinct locale in order to gain some form of

empowerment (usually economic and political). This journey is understood as a colonizing venture in that it is performed within and through a colonizing context. That is, the colonizer inserts her/himself within a larger colonizing narrative. This narrative is what gives meaning to the colonizer and her/his colonial subjects. The colonizer's original geographical state is informed, I argue, through her/his destination and supposed destiny. Unlike the redemption process in the pilgrimage context, however, the destination or colony is *not* made translatable into an origin. Rather, the destination is made all the more foreign and distinct from the origin. Redemption, in the colonizing project, necessitates distinction in order to perpetuate the geographical and cultural distance between origin and destination. Colonial redemption also necessitates repeated performance in its construction of this distinction. The colonizer must be continually redefined on the basis of her/his difference from the colonized.

Although both journey traditions, that of the pilgrim and that of the colonizer, are part of different contexts, their representative and performative natures make it possible that they do occasionally overlap⁴. Such an overlap is particularly evident in the case of the Americas, where the “new” terrain afforded a unique opportunity for the re-enactment of redemption, both spiritual and economic. In fact, the Americas

⁴ The European Crusades is, perhaps, the clearest manifestation of the overlap of colonizing and pilgrimage contexts. Popes Gregory VII and Urban II used pilgrimage traditions in order to justify an expansionist agenda. Urban II is quoted as having said “[e]nter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves” (Bowman, 159). Glenn Bowman makes the case that the Crusades redefined both pilgrimage traditions and expansionist imperatives, granting a spiritual status to foreign exploits and an imperialist facet to sacred journeying. He writes that “[t]he Crusades, which brought the pilgrims of God into intensive administrative contact with real cultural otherness (and the wealth of the cities of the East), fostered a new perception of travel” (163). Although the Crusades does not fit my study's defined geographical parameters, it is of note in its representational and, perhaps, foundational role in articulating redemption as a negotiation with the foreign or Other.

provided a space where spiritual and economic redemption could be mutually determined. This is due in large part to the perception of the Americas as a foreign and necessarily distinct space from that which had been represented in colonizing and Western pilgrimage discourses. In short, the fact that the Americas had not been represented and representative in former Western pilgrimage and colonizing narratives made it all the more powerful a forum for the construction and imposition of meaning. The foreignness and “newness” of the Americas had, therefore, to be continually performed and re-enacted. This phenomenon, I believe, is still very much in evidence in American cultural expressions today and so is manifest in filmic representations of American redemptions.

The colonial history of the Americas is intricately entwined with attempts to define and form spiritual spaces through which non-American individuals could advance their missions of redemption and salvation. Jesuit missionaries, reformist Protestants, Jews escaping persecution from the Spanish Inquisition, and Muslim Africans (among others) came to the Americas with a variety of projects and intentions, some seeing their journeys as part of a spiritual undertaking, others forced into shaping new terrain that could sustain their beliefs and practices. Although not all of these spiritual re-placements fit under the rubric of colonizing ventures, all of them had to negotiate a colonial context and had to, therefore, consider the American space as both promising and necessitating spiritual redemption.

It is particularly telling, therefore, that the Americas, even at the onset of their colonial histories, were considered texts that demanded both spiritual *and* political translation. Christopher Columbus exemplifies this phenomenon in a letter to the

Spanish court of Ferdinand and Isabella. He writes: “[t]o the first island which I found, I gave the name *San Salvador*, in remembrance of the Divine Majesty, Who has marvelously bestowed all this; the Indians call it ‘Guanahani’. To the second, I gave the name *Isla de Santa María de Concepción*; to the third, *Fernandina*; to the fourth, *Isabella*; to the fifth, *Isla Juana*, and so to each one I gave a new name” (16). Columbus’ re-inscription is an enactment very reminiscent of Genesis. The process of naming is, here, a performance of power in that he is reconstructing the worlds he encounters and re-presenting them to fit his own world knowledge and experience. He culls from religious and political traditions by actively locating the spaces and peoples he meets within a Biblical and colonial context. The order with which he names is also of note in that he grants the first or original site of “discovery” with the highest symbol of Christian power, that of Jesus Christ, and proceeds downwards from divine to earthly representations of influence. He equates a hierarchical ordering principle to the order through which he encounters American spaces. He thereby forges a narrative construction of the Americas by appropriating land *and* representation. Finally, I find it particularly intriguing that he does, indeed, provide a former, or “original,” name to the first island he comes across. This fact foregrounds his act of naming as a transformation, not a construction, and therefore marks his representation as an act of conquest. This is significant in that his claim of authority must be founded upon translation, not merely creation.

Alan Morinis notes how this process of translation also served to define and place religious centers of colonized cultures within Christian contexts. He writes, “Catholic missionaries in Latin America and India have taken over indigenous

shrines, which they converted to Catholic shrines and to which people continued to come” (112; “Persistent Peregrination”). Important pilgrimage centers in the pre-colonial Americas were re-constructed to address and manifest Christian principles and narratives. They thus became sites of layered meaning, locations that exemplified both the malleable nature of signification and the enduring power of the need for spiritual representation. Morinis claims that the continued popularity of these translated sites speak to the structural persistence of pilgrimage and to the representational variability of the narrative traditions these pilgrimages cull from. As such, the pilgrimage act itself is more defining of a culture’s desire for spiritual interpretation than what the pilgrimage means in all of its contexts.

This is an important argument to consider when discussing how pilgrimage institutions, both European and indigenous, fared colonial encounters and encroachments. However, one must also bear in mind that such acts of translations were enactments of power and often were an important means through which encountered populations and cultures could serve as defining elements of colonial dominion. The fact that pilgrimage centers survived translation might very well have signified that the colonizing pilgrimage narratives belonged in the colonized spaces, that they were naturally compatible with the terrain – spiritual, geographical, and political. Christian narratives, which played such an instrumental role in American colonizing ventures, may have been understood, therefore, to be truly universal, perhaps even original, if pilgrimages to re-configured Christian sites maintained influence. The act of translating spiritual power within a colonial context, then, furthered the conviction that Christian doctrines had to be introduced as both a

spiritual signification that transcended geographic specificity and that it was the role of the Europeans to promulgate these narrative traditions in places which had not had access to them. In short, with the advent of transporting pilgrimage, spiritual significations became more localized in and through Europe even as it became a means through which non-European terrain and peoples could be made part of a European context.

Tzvetan Todorov writes that part of the colonizing imperative is the negation of the pre-existing cultures and traditions of the colonized. This negation is an active process and goes well beyond ignoring or discounting originality. The colonizer must effectively construct the colonized by articulating narratives wherein the colonized fails to have significance before s/he is encountered. Essentially, this process is one of representation (with very real and enduring political, social, and cultural consequences), and conquest is determined through the application of discourse as a means of defining power. When I speak of “translating” people and places, then, I am referring to a discursive act wherein meaning is re-considered and re-applied through representations that recast both colonized and colonizer in narrative traditions which appear to be consistent with those utilized before the encounter, but which are actually re-interpretations. Much as pilgrimage is a re-interpretation of narrative traditions that appear to have original sources, colonizing ventures also significantly re-present traditions in the guise of continuance. In fact, this performed perpetuation is of primary importance in the power structures within colonialism. It is what enables redemption, as a political, social, and economic act, to be made possible.

There are three significant representations of the Americas within this scheme of performing colonialist redemption. One is of the Americas as an un-encountered space, a space that has no representation, and, therefore, no signification, prior to European conquest. The second is of the Americas as an un-discovered and, therefore, un-encumbered space, an earthly paradise “virginal” in its manifestation of a lack of history and culture and utopic in its very distinction from European landscapes and traditions. Finally, there is the representation of the Americas as a space that may hold and nurture destinies; a space whose very foreignness insures that the colonizer may re-create and re-present her/himself through the act of arrival. These three representations are tightly linked and frequently overlap in order to grant one another significance and purpose. All, furthermore, ensure the sorts of negotiations necessary to construct redemption and redemptive attempts.

As a *tabula rasa*, a space that bore no imprint of signification other than its very lack of meaning, the Americas offered both the necessity and the means for colonizers to reconstruct and represent themselves and their missions. The translation of pilgrimage traditions, in this context, presented a particularly difficult endeavor. Reconfiguring the Americas as a space wherein meaning was absent, the imposition of meaning was made both justifiable and necessary. The Americas was, therefore, understood to be un-represented except through the act of conquest. Essentially, those who engaged in colonizing missions to the Americas were faced with what seemed to be the task of creating a textual practice where none had existed before. Inserting the Americas in narrative contexts, then, demanded that the Americas be actively translated into images, descriptions, and activities through which these

spaces might be placed upon maps (literal, cultural, and political) which included such spaces as had been represented and were in themselves representative. If colonizing ventures demanded both a more encompassing and more specified mapping of space (as José Rabasa claims in Inventing America), the Americas needed representation if only insofar as this hemisphere was to share a graphic space with the colonizing world. The colonizers were forced to add the space and meaning of context to their own cultural understandings and geographies.

The construction of the Americas as a tabula rasa, then, was very significantly a demand that colonizing practices engage as both representing and represented traditions. By adding unknown, because unrepresented, spaces, to their world, they had to continuously reconsider how to maintain power through both spatial and temporal representations. Spatially, the Americas were represented as distinct, and, therefore, geographically and culturally distant, from colonizing origins, at the same time as it constituted a space whose borders and domains were undistinguishable and necessitating systematic and on-going delineation. Since many political and cultural enterprises constituted larger colonizing imperatives, reconstruction of American spaces and their parameters was an integral part of maintaining and claiming political and cultural distinction among the colonial forces. American spaces, then, had to be included in specific cultural narratives even if these spaces were instrumentally only made part of these narratives by their lack of definition. In short, the Americas had to be spaces demanding definition, but definition by differentiated and unique colonial powers. They were, therefore, spaces deemed conquered and conquerable and, so, spaces whose locations within colonial parameters had to be continually reinforced.

The colonizers' goals of, first, constructing American spaces as lacking signification and, second, of filling that void that they had created with meaning specifically integral for their narratives and motives, also necessitated negotiations wherein historical and anticipated projections could be read into their respective political and cultural enterprises. Time, therefore, had to be reconsidered in much the same way as space had. The Americas were represented within this scheme as spaces that were conquered and molded to fit into paradigms acknowledged by colonial powers. This was not merely a matter of imposing tradition upon subjugated space, for imposition requires that a former and, therefore, original state and practice exists prior to domination. In order for imposition to reflect an active negation of pre-existing signification, it has to be tempered with re-interpretation and re-enforcement of dominating cultural and political traditions. As such, the Americas had to be made to fit into established narratives so that these discourses were seen as consistent and on-going despite geographical and temporal difference, and that these narratives were understood to be both malleable enough to incorporate this difference and compact enough to remain significantly unaltered in their representation of colonial power and culture. The Americas were, therefore, represented as virtual chapters within narrative attempts at self-definition and self-justification. Temporally, then, the Americas had to be placed within present and future manifestations of colonial representation and preservation, and never be made to interfere with the dominating narratives that led up to encounters, conquests, and subjugations. Historically vacant, the Americas could then be represented only through narrative practices that promoted the need of the colonized to be continually defined by, and through,

colonial encroachment. The constructed newness of the “New” World, then, played an incredibly significant role in establishing and maintaining colonial power.

Contemporary pilgrimages, as engagements fundamentally tied to interpretations of narrative traditions, structurally and contextually overlapped with colonizing constructions of non-meaning as well as challenged these same constructions in significant ways. If redemption in colonizing ventures was intricately connected to processes wherein colonial forces could be defined and maintained through contact with American cultures and places, and if these ventures necessarily repudiated pre-conquest traditions in order to ensure an original and, therefore, essential discursive incorporation of American spaces, then pilgrimages working through these frameworks had to negotiate and accommodate constructed non-signification. One way in which such an engagement is most obvious is through the imposition of meaning over established sites and practices of spiritual power, an imposition that at once demanded an acknowledgement of the existing power of these sites and practices as well as a denial of the efficacy and legitimacy of the significance of this power.

An excellent example of this simultaneous adoption and rejection may be found in the history of Lac Ste.-Anne, a pilgrimage site in Canada. When Father Jean-Marie Lestanc founded the pilgrimage practice at Lac Ste.-Anne, he was fulfilling a vow to St. Anne he had made during a pilgrimage to Brittany, to St. Anne’s shrine in Auray. He promised to establish a site and practice of pilgrimage in the saint’s name across the ocean, a promise of transporting her significance and representation to a place he deemed as needing such an importation. He founded the

Canadian shrine in her honor at a place that had been systematically invested, and then divested, of meaning, at the shores of the lake that now bears her name. Prior to this re-naming, the lake had been called Manitou Sakahigan by the Woodland Cree, a name meaning “Spirit Lake” which the Catholic missionaries translated as “Devil’s Lake”⁵. For the purposes of my current argument, this brief historical treatment illustrates the process wherein negation of signification necessarily accompanies an imposition of significance. The evolution of the lake’s name, from “spirit,” to “devil,” and then to bear the name of Mary’s mother, exemplifies not only the active dismissal of prior signification, but the implicit power of renaming as a process which erases the traces of meaning. Calling the lake, “Devil’s Lake” rather obviously illustrates how the missionaries attempted to discredit and, indeed, condemn prior acts of worship at this site. Calling “Devil’s Lake” “Lac Ste.-Anne,” however, expunges this act of condemnation as well as appropriating the lake’s spiritual history. Referring to the lake as “Lac Ste.-Anne,” is, ultimately, a more forceful re-naming than “Devil’s Lake” because it extricates the lake from its native and reactionary history, and places the lake within another context. It incorporates the lake within a narrative discourse “foreign” to its particular history, and thereby makes it signify a tradition that has been re-placed as opposed to dis-placed. The lake’s former names and representations are thereby made insignificant through the lake’s role in a narrative that has not included its locational and cultural specificity.

It is also of note that this naming process comes from a direct act of transculturation – Father Lestanc brought signification from Auray to his missionary

⁵ All of this information on Lac Ste.-Anne and its history has been gathered from Alan Morinis’ article, “Persistent Peregrination.”

home in northern Alberta. This signification has been evidently transplanted to Auray and is, in the strictest sense, not native to Brittany itself. However, Lestanc's exportation of meaning from Europe effectively redeems not only his position in light of his religion, but his position in the geographical scope of his mission.

Representing St. Anne in Canada, then, at once makes St. Anne's significance unbounded by locational differentiation as well as casting Auray as a site of origin. This process redeems a European location within Christian discourse by affording it the status as a site from which the Americas may be understood and defined. St. Anne's name and significance essentially makes the Canadian prairie and northern France correspondent in that both are infused in the same narrative context. Such a correspondence eases travel and transportation for one is not journeying from one context to another, but to different manifestations, with different degrees of legitimacy, within the same context. Rejecting prior signification, then, casting the Americas as a *tabula rasa* allows for both the connection and distinction necessary to ensure spiritual and political colonizing action.

When Christopher Columbus landed on the coast of Venezuela, he was so amazed with the space he encountered, that he described it as "The Gardens." He wrote that this place, "in which I am assured in my heart that the earthly paradise is" (McMichael, et. al., 14), was a manifestation, if not the historical equivalent, of the Garden of Eden, the utopic place from which humans were banished and to which believers were secured return through divine grace. The construction of the Americas as paradisaical was frequently utilized by others invested in colonizing enterprises, finding expression as a space whose difference from European understandings was

considered pre-historical and, thereby, representative of original states of spiritual and social consciousness. The Judeo-Christian Bible served as a key mechanism in informing interactions with this space, not merely as a tool towards conversion and proliferating of Christianity, but as a context through which this space was granted signification and meaning. In a sense, encountering America was taken as a justification of the Bible's applicability and veracity and, likewise, the Bible legitimated the encounter by placing it within a narrative of redemption. The lost Eden was found again and could be molded to prove permanent and useful, to be a space wherein those who wandered to its limits might be considered as enacting the Biblical promise of return to paradise. The New World became the New Jerusalem and, with this construction, those who ventured to it were performing not only politically and economically profitable enterprises, but were performing a sacred and spiritually encoded act. What is perhaps most relevant for my study is the fact that the translation of the Americas in Biblical terms made spiritual and political projects inseparable and indistinguishable. They were both manifestations of the other, for they were both representations of a powerful narrative tradition.

The placement of the Americas within Biblical narrative traditions had the further effect of redefining how American spaces were to be met and negotiated. Since American topographies found signification in promoted textual practices, they became characterized as exemplifying some of the fundamental concerns of these practices. Notions of innocence became paramount in fostering how the inhabitants of this space were constructed and in proposing how these inhabitants interacted with the spaces wherein they lived. The indigenous population became manifestations of

the paradisaical formulation of their placements; they were essentially the products of their terrain and were, consequentially, innocent and in need of instruction and signification. Similarly, understandings of creation and the production of meaning found new projections on this utopic space. Like the Biblical garden, the elements therein had to be named and shaped in accordance with an overarching system of signification. They had to be re-created to fit the paradigms of not only Christian meaning and purpose, but with the paradigms of Christian conceptualizations of creation. The Americas provided fora for creation to be performed and placed within redemptive contexts. Encountering paradise meant that what was encountered was at once primal and essential to foreign understandings of self and subject, as well as undefined and alien. The connection between colonizer and colonized American spaces was therefore implicit in that these places ensured the colonizers' placement within Christian geography and historiography. The colonizer was, after all, *returning* to an originally signified space and was thereby performing an act of spiritual and social redemption. There was no question, in this scheme, that the colonized space belonged to the colonizers' spiritual and social world. On the other hand, redemption demands distinction, and this encountered space's difference from encountering spaces had to be maintained and controlled. As such, although the colonized space belonged to the colonizer's world, the colonizer did not belong to the colonized space. The colonizer had to create, essentially, not only the process of signifying American terrain, but had to create, and continually re-create, foreignness. I contend, then, that the construction of American space as utopic necessitated a

reconsideration of creation as a concept and as a practice. Creation was, at once, deemed to be a divine prerogative and a mortal and, therefore, political necessity.

Encountering paradise also demands a reconsideration of time, an understanding of time as both malleable and shaped by definite limits. Since colonial constructions of American paradise functioned in large part as textual negotiations, as re-performances of narrative precedence, the placement of American encounters within imperial and Christian historiographies was at once a re-interpretation of origin as well as a re-construction of destination. Colonizers were understood to be meeting cultures and landscapes bound to the past, to an Edenic past as well as a civilizational backwardness. Colonial presence in the Americas, therefore, may be understood as an enactment of modernity, a bringing up to date of subjectivity and power. The project of colonialism was very much tied to the project of placing all parts of the known world within a shared, and Eurocentric, time frame. This modernizing imperative was conceived as redeeming the populations that, through geographical, cultural, and spiritual distance, necessitated progress and advancement. Likewise, encountering paradise redeemed the expansionist projects of the colonizers, as European hegemony encountered both its means and its source. In a narrative sense, the colonial chapter was written as both a harkening to the past and a call to the future, a necessary rootedness in religious and cultural history and a promise for this rootedness to bear fruit. While maintaining a link to a Biblical understanding of origin, colonial enterprises could essentially inscribe their political and economic projections onto the foundations of Genesis, adding their return to Eden as both a political and spiritual mandate. Time, therefore, was a crucial element in colonialism

in its function as a vehicle through which the encountered spaces and peoples were both made compliant to European and Christian history and were made to reflect the supremacy and legitimacy of particular histories over others.

Since many European emigrants came to the Americas in the hopes of encountering and living within a utopic space, a space utopic both in its prefiguration by Eden and in its status as new and, therefore, easily shaped to conform to religious and spiritual demands, the American paradise became an influential construction in the pilgrimage traditions of those newly arrived. In order to elaborate on this process, I find it useful to consider one of the ways in which pilgrimage patterns have been graphically interpreted. In Erik Cohen's work on distinguishing pilgrimage from touristic practices, he relies on the assumption that pilgrims travel to encounter the spatial and spiritual center of their traditions and that tourists journey away from the center towards the outskirts of their particular societies. He writes, that there is "a centrifugal tendency in tourism (Christaller 1955) and its penetration of ever new, more peripheral areas; this tendency is the very opposite of the expressly centripetal tendency of the pilgrimage – the orientation of a system of pilgrimage itineraries, like the spokes of a wheel, toward a common center (Turner and Turner 1978: 6, 40-102)" (57). In the case of the Americas, however, the "New World" posed an interesting problem to this paradigm outlined by Cohen. Although Cohen speaks to a particular tendency in late 20th-century tourism and pilgrimage, the notion of the center and the margin did, indeed, function very prominently in colonial understandings of space as sacred and profane. More particularly, colonial journeys worked within and through narrative traditions that

both questioned and promoted a geographically and spiritually specific center. The Jews who escaped from the Spanish Inquisition and formed communities in the Americas, for instance, were understood to be re-performing the narrative dictates of exile and dispersal, a distancing from home or center. The Catholic missionaries who set up communities of worship in the Americas might have been said to broaden the reach of Christian doctrine in accordance with the evangelical mission espoused by Christ and his disciples, taking the word of God to the farthest reaches of humanity, while still adhering to an understanding of centrality in the manifestation of religious power in the body of Christ and his representatives. Protestants who attempted to escape religious persecution in their native lands had to recreate a spiritual center, a “New Jerusalem,” and called upon the Biblical prerogatives of the “Promised Land” in order to do so. My contention is that, although Cohen’s articulation of pilgrimage as centripetal fosters an understanding of the importance of the “center” in pilgrimage traditions, it does not account for the ways in which this “center” becomes represented and representative. With the encounter of the Americas, the “center” became all the more important in its delineation of a geographical source or origin, but it also problematized this same geographical system in that it emphasized the representational influence of the “margin” and the “center.”

The nature of representation, much like the nature of redemption, assumes a pre-existing and informative essence, something that is representable and is, therefore, redeemable through representation. Casting the Americas as a representation of paradise, a representation accountable to both historical and

religious paradigms and to the prospects of interpreting these paradigms through lived experience and the possibilities of expansion and empowerment, necessitates a connection between the represented space and the representation that this space is meant to manifest. Placing the Americas within narrative traditions of redemption – the return to Eden; the Promised Land; banishment from the locus of power and signification – makes those who voyage to the “New World” active interpreters of these traditions and the lands and peoples they encounter. More significantly, it places these interpreters as the means through which the connection expressed above is made possible and significant. Connecting the centers of religious and social dictates to spaces “foreign” and apart from this center functions quite similarly to the connections described in the Introduction to this project, the connections between sacred and profane spaces and the connections between traditions and re-enactments. The pilgrims’ mobile bodies become the fundamental instrument for performing connectivity and this instrument is, in pilgrimage traditions, redeemed through her/his performance. Those seeking redemption in the New World, whether fiscal, political, and/or spiritual, were therefore locating their journeys and settlements within contexts informed by a definite understanding of origin and destination, of center and margin. They were re-creating centers of power in new lands and were, significantly, upholding the centrality of the representations of power they were re-enacting, those representations that found its essence in the spaces they had left.

It would be perhaps facile to say, then, that these new inhabitants were creating the Americas as representations of the traditions they had left but were transporting to new fora, but the premise of the American Eden necessitates that we,

as students of culture and representation, ourselves actively connect the historical appropriation and suppression of land and peoples with the narrative precedent set by the Paradise from which the forebears of humanity, it is said, were exiled. We must, therefore, ourselves chart the course through which Adam and Eve, as represented by those acting in the name of their creator, arrived in the Americas, claimed its Biblical locatedness and were thereby redeemed to their lost home. In short, we must negotiate the narrative traditions of *return* when we consider how colonial powers dominated and disseminated the peoples who lived in these encountered lands. It is in this light that we may consider one of the more famous equations of the “New World” and its Paradisical signification, Sir Thomas More’s Utopia. Published in Latin (in order, it is said, to make the text accessible to all of educated Europe⁶) in 1516, More ascribes his work to his study of Plato and his interest in the accounts of the journeys of Amerigo Vespucci⁷. These two influences, that of classical and modern understandings of place and subjectivity, find expression in the narrator of the work, Raphael Hythloday. This narrator is Portuguese by birth but his last name is More’s compounding of Greek so that “Hythloday” means “expert in nonsense” (Logan and Adams, xi). Likewise, “Utopia,” the name of the island where Hythloday encountered the native population which is modeled by and a model for contemporary European society, is More’s construction of Greek and Latinate words and means, literally, “No Place” (Logan and Adams, xi). It is of note that the society described as “The Best State of a Commonwealth” (More, 1) finds closer ties to Plato’s Republic than to Biblical Eden, however the tradition of “reading” the Americas by way of

⁶ M. H. Abrams claims, “Utopia was written and published in Latin; it was designed for the educated readers of all Europe” (434).

⁷ See M. H. Abrams’ introduction to the work in The Norton Anthology of English Literature (434).

European discourse and narrative traditions and, more specifically, by having the Americas represent what is lost or missing in European society speaks to the understanding that the Americas were, very significantly, constructed through understandings of redemption.

I include Utopia in my discussion primarily to illustrate three key dynamics: the intrinsic connection and distancing in representations of American paradise; the connections between representing the Americas' material distinction and utilizing the Americas towards a project which emphasizes material impossibility; and the significance of "return" to understanding American representations. Hythloday remarks how "Amaurot lies at the navel of the land, so to speak, and convenient to every other district, so it acts as a capital" (More, 44) and that "[t]he nearest [towns] are at least twenty-four miles apart, and the farthest are not so remote that a man cannot go on foot from one to the other in a day" (More, 44). Proximity of centers of culture, then, is a fundamental aspect of the balance of this model society. All citizens have access to these centers and their easy distance enables all towns to play active roles in the network that is the hallmark of the Utopian civilization. The mobile body in Utopia is, therefore, the means through which the land is connected, and mobility is facilitated by the accessibility of this land. Likewise, the capital is located at the "omphalos"⁸ of the Utopian space, the geographical and, therefore, spiritual and social center, of all the outlying regions. What is most striking about the groundwork More provides is the intrinsic connection, and connectability, of the geography of the land to the land's signification. The two, seemingly, cannot be

⁸ M. H. Abrams defines this word as "[n]avel, umbilicus – the spiritual as well as physical center of a nation" (441).

isolated. Hythloday also makes an intriguing observation when he states that “[t]he road to heaven is equally short from all places” (More, 10). Heaven, as the Judeo-Christian source and destination, is here made accessible to all who venture towards it. The locations of these roads are defined physically and spiritually by their endpoint. Hythloday seems to say, then, that all Christian subjects, just like all Utopian citizens, must consider distance in relation to their mobility, and he places all known lands as equidistant through their signification within a Christian geographic network. In short, he collapses the physical world into a dynamic progression towards divinity. The globe is here not only traversable but is in itself a viaduct or road through which one approaches the “omphalos” of spiritual and rational understanding.

However, it is of key importance in this text that this center of spiritual and regional signification be not only accessible, but also distinct from outlying areas. It is of note, therefore, that Utopia is located within the colonial imaginary, within, more specifically, an imaginary construction of the “New World.” Its distinction from Europe is measured through distance, both geographic and metaphysical. Its parameters, although textually accessible inter- and intra-nationally, serve to circumscribe a space foreign to More’s readers, and this foreignness is made all the more significant in Utopia’s location within the Americas. Although the Americas were, in colonial discourse, physical places wherein commerce and social organizations were being enacted, it was also a space upon which imaginary places were being engraved and scripted. The Americas had to be made responsive and responsible to European colonizing enterprises and, as such, they had to at once reflect colonial discourses as well as remain distinct from the colonizing centers. The

Americas, then, had to be both familiar and foreign terrain in order for the colonial enterprises to validate their actions. The Americas provided, therefore, the raw materials for expansionist economic and political practices and the raw materials for European self-definition, distinction, and redemption. This space provided these materials because its very materiality was interpreted and made interpretable through European discursive traditions and its signification was tied to the hemisphere's material distance and distinction from Europe. More's Utopia, therefore, finds a home in the Americas because the Americas were, paradoxically, materially imagined and material for the imagination. It is fitting, then, that Paradise on Earth be located within a space whose signification and materiality were necessarily both mutually legitimating and contradictory.

It would be remiss to use Utopia as a documentation of colonial representations of the Americas without taking into consideration how it functions as a critique of contemporary European mores and social structures. It would also be unfaithful to the text to dismiss the satirical and playful character of a projection of perfection upon what was generally considered materially imperfect and needing of redress. In no way, then, do I wish to insist that More's Utopia correlates with an understanding of the Americas as a collection of utopic spaces. As I mentioned above, Utopia literally means "No Land," and its situation within the Americas points to the possibility of signification of this hemisphere within the European imagination rather than an entrenched signification and place within European discursive practices. The Americas, as a tabula rasa, allowed for such impositions of meaning and attempts to mold "new" territory in ways that would best fit distinct, and often

divergent, practices of signification. The Americas were, in a very significant way, stages upon which European identificatory practices could be enacted and performed. This is why, I maintain, the Americas figured so prominently in colonial Europe's projections of redemption. The Americas as paradise, as utopia, was always a projection, always an interpretation of some pre-existing narrative tradition. To concretize America's signification in European colonial discourse would undermine the hemisphere's power as something that could be read, interpreted, and performed. Arguing that America functioned in specific, isolated ways, that it was always and consistently viewed through certain lenses and with certain goals in mind would undermine, in my mind, the more complicated project of colonialism's consistent need to divorce significance from materiality, to maintain that a place's meaning is always in need of redefinition and reaffirmation. This in no way should be taken as an excuse for colonialism or its many manifestations. In some ways, conceptualizing America as shifting terrain, as infinitely malleable, as a forum for identification and misidentification, as, ultimately, a place whose history and formation depended on re-enactment, on redemption, fostered and promoted many of the atrocities which happened, and continue to happen, on these soils. Casting the Americas as a redemptive space, then, should not be construed to mean that it was, in itself, redeemed through colonialism, but that the process of redemption, the project of reconsidering origins and destinations, value and material, was imperative to the construction, and continual reconstruction, of this space. The Americas, based on More's text, therefore, is at once the material grounds for his project and immaterial in its physicality. Utopia, likewise, is at once a recipe for social progress and

possibility and a project that can never find true material form. It is particularly telling, then, that “No Land” is situated in a space whose material significance is in constant flux.

I conclude my discussion of the representation of the Americas as paradisaical with commentary on how the concept of return figures significantly in More’s work and how this concept may aid my own project of considering how representations of redemption play a crucial role in granting shape and meaning to this hemisphere. Hythloday’s account is one of reminiscence; he tells the narrator and Peter Giles of his experiences in Utopia while residing in Antwerp. This is significant because it not only emphasizes Utopia’s distance and distinction from contemporary Europe, but it positions this fictional terrain within discourse, within a recounting of past encounters. By situating Utopia as a telling, as something that is told, then retold by the narrator, and finally read by a European audience, Utopia very literally occupies the same space as the book of the same name. Indeed, the land’s physical elusiveness is alluded to at the book’s closure when the narrator says “...I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are many features that in our own societies I would like rather than expect to see” (More, 111). The context of Utopia, its placement within European discourse and outside physical reality, is something that is desired and remembered. It occupies both a nostalgic space (through Hythloday’s memory) and a projected space (through the narrator’s retelling and desire). As such, Utopia is forever situated in both the past and the future and does not allow for immediate interaction and engagement.

Return, therefore, figures prominently in utopic and paradisaical representations of the Americas because it underscores the discursive construction of the terrain that is being represented. The Americas, in this sense, is always remembered and yearned for, something to be described as experiences past and hoped for in experiences to come. It is, then, always contextualized by movement either towards or away from, and always decontextualized as a space uninhabitable except through revery and re-performance. The American paradise, as something that is returned to as the manifestation of Eden or as something from which one returns, emphasizes the redemptive nature of the “New World.” The Americas functions prominently, then, as discursive redemption, either by placing its encounters within a return to and through pre-existing narrative traditions or by redeeming its signification when outside of American terrain. Much as American resources and cultures found redemption through a European market, American significations were redemptive in that they emphasized European distinction, distance, and originality. Through the redemptive powers of colonial discourse, Europe indeed became an originating and destined space, the overriding context through which the Americas were granted meaning and shape.

The final American representation that I would like to expound upon for the purposes of illustrating the inherent redemptive nature of colonial conceptualizations of this hemisphere is that of the Americas as destinations. As I mentioned above, this last representation, along with that of the Americas as *tabulae rasa* and as manifestations of paradise, is often informed through its interactions with these other representations and should not be considered so much as an alternative representation

as a corresponding one. The concept of destination holds particular relevance for my study in its incorporation of both movement and providence. A destination is a longed-for place, the place wherein movement ceases, the goal or end-point of a journey. Likewise, the word alludes to “destiny,” an outcome that is pre-inscribed, fore-told, in short, discursively determined and determinant. In my treatment of the Americas as destinations, I will be culling heavily from both these significations and, particularly, from how these meanings inform one another.

Constructing the Americas as destinations necessitates a spatial negotiation that distinguishes an originating point, that which was left behind, and a point of arrival, that which is to be met. Space, then, is considered through temporal localities wherein the past is connected to origin and the future is connected to destination. As much as a distinction between these two locations is inherent in this representation, their connection and connectability is also very much in evidence. Through the temporal consideration of space, space is placed within a narrative context wherein the destination is causally linked to the originating point whether as its outcome or its negation. The destination, therefore, is both necessarily distinct from the origin and necessarily connected to it as part of a larger discourse of movement, salvation, or recuperation. By applying such a construction to the Americas, one can quite easily read how the Americas figured within redemptive frameworks. The Americas were the destinations of many travelers, whether by choice or by force. They were distinct and necessitated distinction from the various points of departure. Although the Americas are not easily assembled into one cultural and social signification, their locations as destinations made it possible to consider this hemisphere as a

conglomeration, as one space with many opportunities. This push towards conglomeration was an important facet of colonial discourse because it placed an emphasis upon the diversity and disparity of the origins of the travelers and upon their relocations. The Americas as destination, then, fostered redemption by reconsidering origin, by highlighting source and destiny, and by maintaining negotiations with American spaces as conduits through which origin and destiny were afforded due consideration. As such, the destination's distinction from the origin and this distinction's function as a means through which to arrive at a new consideration and negotiation of the original point, makes it possible for American spaces to attain a sort of homogeneity, a sameness. What distinguishes these spaces, finally, are the ways in which these destinations speak to the origins of its settlers and travelers. The Americas, therefore, afforded the possibility to construct and reconstruct the concepts and discourses surrounding the various sources and origins of colonizing entities. The Americas as destinations, then, effectively fostered the construction of terrain foreign to it as original and originating points and sources of discourse and representation.

American destinations also actively constructed grounds upon which historicity and historical applications and prospects found connection and mutual legitimacy. As the "New" World, a space entrapped within a discourse of arrival and ascendancy, the Americas presented an opportunity for settlers and others who traveled to this terrain to reconsider their prior locations within historical, narrative, and redemptive frameworks. As mentioned above, the Americas occupied a past-less tense, a space with no respective history, a space wherein history itself was foreign.

This is particularly significant for my purposes because the arrivals upon American land situated the arrivants in a position wherein past experiences and traditions could communicate with possibility, with future manifestations and rejections of these same. The imposition of specific histories and meanings on American lands and cultures was very much a performance of this situatedness, of enacting mutual signification of specific pasts and futures. I have argued how distinction effectively shapes both colonizing discourses and redemptive enactments, and, as such, the Americas had to be both foreign and familiar grounds in order for the arrivants to consider their arrival as destined, as reaching a destination. Much as “destination” connotes finality and completion of a trajectory, it also affords those who have reached this destination the opportunity to construct a means towards recuperating their movements and origins within a linear and causally significant context.

Within a narrative framework, the destination or culmination of a trajectory allows for a sort of backwards movement, an evaluative re-presentation of all that has transpired. This re-presentation affords the events and ideas that occurred prior to the arrival at the destination a new signification, one that grants all of these elements causality and communicability. Destination occupies an interesting place narratively in that it is at once destined, pre-ordained and understood – it is the motivation of the actions that are taken to attain it – and it is forever placed within an attainable future. As such, it frames all of the events that lead to it, contextualizes these events within a unified system of meaning. Once the destination is reached, then, the narrative trajectory must look back, embrace all that has transpired towards a culmination. It must, I believe, create a new trajectory, one wherein the past is re-explored and re-

presented. The origin, then, the source for and of the destination is effectively placed within a future context, something that must be re-presented in light of the attainment of destiny and destination. As I mentioned earlier, redemption affords the possibility for origin and destination to be inter-communicable, for both to afford meaning to the other. More specifically, redemption necessitates that the destination and the origin be inter-changeable, that the destination become an originating point and the origin a new destination. The destination, then, is forever in flux and never occupies a present tense or a material presence. It is always at once both past and future. In short, destinations provide the means towards redeeming the past and towards projecting redemption into the future.

The Americas as destinations, then, distinguish both spatially and temporally the many originating points of colonial travelers. As destinations, in fact, the Americas allow for space to be considered within a temporal and historical framework (as space that has been left and space that has been arrived at) and for time to reflect spatial and cultural properties (a pre-arrival geographic and social definition and a post-arrival regional and cultural identity). Destinations, because of their locations within trajectories, make such a spatio-temporal merging possible.

American destinations, one may argue, forever occupy destined spaces, spaces that are both attainable and distant discursively. The Americas within this schematic, therefore, are represented as and representative of a future that inherently reflects the past, a future that is built from and of the past. These destinations, then, are never present and are forever in flux. The Americas, in this light, have yet to be reached.

One may argue that the pilgrimage center, the place towards which pilgrims journey, fosters redemption by providing mechanisms of distinction and continuity. The arrival at the center allows for pilgrims to interpret their locations both geographically and spiritually – their home spaces are thus made both different from and communicable with the center of worship. The center’s own understood connection to the divine, its manifestation of a spiritual destination, makes its location reflective of another incipient journey, one from the mundane to the holy, from the profane to the sacred. It is, in this sense, redemptive because of its function both as destination and as a platform from which spiritual movements may be undertaken. The spiritual center, therefore, finds its power and relevance through its enactment of placement within discourses of movement. Although I maintain that journeys to the Americas are not in and of themselves pilgrimages, I do find that the shared characteristics of American destinations and pilgrimage centers, particularly in their representations of movement as significantly encoded through narrative understandings of space and time, in their functions as “placements” over “place,” fosters an intriguing foundation from which pilgrimages taken through, to, and from the Americas may be understood. Since my study is geographically limited to this hemisphere, I will attempt to construct a theoretical approach to considering in tandem the destinations of both spiritually motivated journeys within and through the Americas and those movements that bear colonial, national, and cultural significations. The travelers’ placements within spiritual and colonial discourses and narrative traditions will, therefore, be made inextricable and mutually defining.

In order to illustrate and begin to examine these corresponding destinations, I will use an account of the foundation of a sacred site in Costa Rica. The Basilica de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles in Cartago, Costa Rica, was erected to house a statuette which was, as tradition has it, found on the Basilica's location. Constitutionally declared the Patron Saint of Costa Rica, Nuestra Señora de los Angeles is worshipped in the form of her statue and attracts numerous pilgrims to her shrine. Leslie Ellen Straub recounts the founding of the shrine and the finding of the statue thus:

The image is a dark-stone figure of the Virgin with the Child Jesus on her arm. According to tradition, it was found in 1635, on a boulder in a place called 'La Gotera' in the outskirts of Cartago, by a *mulata* named Juana Pereira. The narrative recounts five instances in which the women and then the parish priest secured the Image only to find it on the boulder again. After each new encounter with the Image – the Little Black One, the Negrita – it was guarded more closely, until, finally, having placed it in the Tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved and discovering that the Image had fled once more to the boulder, the priest concluded that the site was the Virgin's choice for her church. (Robinson, 44)

Based on this recounting, the boulder in La Gotera seems to occupy a destination both because it manifests divine will or choice and because it is placed within trajectories wherein the statuette miraculously moves to this location and wherein the priest and residents of Cartago recognize this miracle. Pilgrimages to the shrine, therefore, are reenactments of the statuettes' own movement to the Virgin's chosen site and of the movement of Christian piety to adapt to and celebrate this choice. The Christian

populace then and now travel to the shrine with the knowledge that their destination is spiritually significant – it is a place wherein spiritual imperative has mastered physical limitations, wherein the Virgin is manifested both by her image and by her ability to move this image despite material constraints. The shrine, then, is both spiritually and materially encoded within a mutually informed context; it is at once a physical place granted spiritual significance because it was repeatedly “chosen,” and a site of spiritual enactment made significant because of its miraculous manifestation of physical change without recourse to human intervention. The movement of the icon, then, is miraculous because it merges, indeed, makes inextricable, divine will and material placement.

It is particularly important, then, that this miracle was granted national⁹ signification through the decree passed in 1824 by the Constitutional Congress of Costa Rica making Nuestra Señora de los Angeles the Patron Saint of the new nation (Robinson, 44). Insofar as the Virgin chose to manifest her will on Costa Rican soil, the re-definition of the newly independent nation was made to correspond to and legitimate events that happened more than one-hundred years prior to its inclusion within an officially national signification. Including the miracle as part of the constitutive discourse of Costa Rica effectively places the nation within a context

⁹ Although my example here is post-colonial and therefore different from the central concern of this chapter – namely how colonial discourses utilize redemption as an inherent component of their legitimation and hegemony – I do feel that the discursive strategies exemplified by this example, and, I may argue, by nation-states themselves, do not significantly contradict the impetus I am discussing. In fact, because of the nature of redemption and its use in articulating belonging in the Americas, the similar applications of such concepts as “origin,” “destination,” and “return” by colonial powers and those which followed them says much about the structural overlapping of these systems of governance and cultural production. In the following chapters I will examine this overlap more fully, while recognizing that redemption, by its very nature, employs a particular engagement with history and spatial definition that makes divides between colonial and post-colonial American significations at once clear and ambiguous.

wherein Costa Rican soil is affirmed and distinguished both politically and spiritually. Moreover, this action grants the nation-state the power to construct, through its apparent reclamation, a narrative of arrival and pre-destination, a narrative wherein the history of Costa Rica is made to resonate with the story of the statuette itself in that both “return” to locations and significations despite physical and social obstacles. In other words, the constitutional decree marks the statuette as a manifestation of not only both divine and national prerogatives, but as a manifestation of the correspondence and inextricability of these prerogatives. The Constitutional affirmation of the Virgin’s miracle and the miracle itself are both redemptive acts, therefore, in that both not only allow pilgrims and citizens the promise of salvation and empowerment, but that both employ discursive strategies that emphasize redemption as a *return* to a prior state or signification. The newly formed Costa Rica is, in this way, a destined place and a destination making its inhabitants forever journeyers *back to* “original” sites of definition and signification.

A useful way of considering these three representations of the Americas (as *tabulae rasa*, utopias, and destinations) as interconnected and significant is to note how they all position the colonizer, and, indeed, the defining mechanisms of this hemisphere as foreign entities. The foreigner, then, is of utmost importance in the construction of American identities and identifications. As *tabulae rasa*, American spaces must be externally inscribed and shaped, meaning must be imported from sources outside American borders. The foreigner not only inhabits this space but enacts significance by her/his very presence as a significant and signifying body. Her/his significance is particularly marked within a context whose meaning demands

articulation. American utopic constructions, representations of the Americas as “New Jerusalem” and “promised lands,” also necessitate a positioning of the system of definition as intrinsically foreign to the space being defined. Although this construction grants American spaces innate connections within Biblical and other Western narrative traditions, the being that enacts signification must necessarily be located outside the spatial limits of this hemisphere while steadfastly inside foundational European paradigms. As such, s/he must embody these paradigms in order to “return” to spaces wherein Western narrative traditions may find legitimacy and substantiation. It is, therefore, imperative that the material presence of pre-colonial American spaces and cultures finds connection and significance through enactments of Western re-clamation and re-interpretation. The foreigner plays a key role in these enactments because it is manifest in her/his encounter with American terrain a synthesis of meaning and its physical manifestation. S/he reunites the signification that had been disturbed and detached from its source. Finally, in the context of colonial constructions of the Americas as destinations, those who are granted defining and defined positions are expressly those who arrive and do not originate from American locations. Once American spaces no longer fit neatly into this structure – in other words, once a creolized identity and identification is constructed – the representation of the Americas as destinations becomes, paradoxically, even more ingrained and necessary in American definitions. As illustrated above, discourses of independence and autonomy re-enact positionings of the Americas as destined and as spaces that must be reached. In such a system, the foreigner occupies a central role in shaping what it means to belong or not belong

within this trajectory of identification. The following chapters more fully explore the function of the foreigner in representations of colonial redemption and provide an application of these constructions of redemption towards a study of film.

Pilgrims, themselves, are intrinsically connected to that which is foreign. Their journeys towards spiritual centers and sites of worship depend upon constructions of space that differentiate where they have been from where they are going. Pilgrimages, then, trace movement towards meaning and those that perform pilgrimages enact a process whereby that which is distant from divinity and holiness is made closer and more intimately tied to significance. In Judeo-Christian traditions, all of humanity is understood to be displaced and foreign to the spaces traveled and inhabited. In Luke 9:57-58 of the Christian Bible, Jesus answers a man who wishes to follow him by stating: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Robinson, 84). Redemption, in this context, is a reclamation of space, a redefinition of place as home. The very fact that journeys are the physical manifestation of pilgrimage enforces the assumption that all who travel pilgrim paths travel as foreign beings looking for significance and signification, looking for redemption of their foreign status.

Pilgrimages within, to, and from the Americas, then, operate through terrain heavily encoded as foreign. Whether a pilgrimage center is within American boundaries or without, American pilgrims must continually re-enact belonging and reclamation of American spaces as home spaces, as destined land. As such, American pilgrimages are not only spiritually redemptive to individuals, they are also redemptive of individual connections to space. Because the Americas have been, as I

have argued, made to occupy spaces foreign to signification and made to house cultures foreign to their geographic parameters, the Americas are constantly in motion, constantly in flux between material presence and significance. Those who inhabit these spaces are, consequently, forever journeying between notions of origin and destination, between physical connections and meaningful connections. Through colonial constructions, the Americas are distant yet accessible, so, although I want to restate that not all colonial excursions and incursions are pilgrimages, colonial discourses of redemption parallel pilgrim discourses of redemption precisely because both fundamentally inscribe notions of the foreign.

The Christian church has played fundamental roles in propagating and promoting pilgrimage traditions in the Americas as well as in shaping colonizing ventures to, from, and within this hemisphere. Examples of the church's involvement in American colonialism can be culled from the consistent presence of priests and church emissaries in colonizing expeditions, the expressed commitment of the church in converting and baptizing non-Christian inhabitants of the "New World," the resistance of individual clergy to church-sponsored activities (the actions of such people as Bartolomé de las Casas serves as illustrative), the role of the church in mediating disputes among colonizing entities (particularly among the Spanish and Portuguese as can be evidenced by the Treaty of Tordesillas), and the continued negotiations between church and state after American nations won independence. Based on the profound impact of church involvement in American colonialism, it would be immensely difficult, perhaps even impossible, to fully isolate discursive and practiced manifestations of redemption as either spiritual or political.

Alan Morinis writes that “[t]here are many cases of pilgrimage places being assimilated to non-earthly realms: heavenly Jerusalem, celestial Vrndavana. But more striking and significant is the emphasis on the collapse or cancellation of time and history that is so central to pilgrimage” (“Introduction,” 26). Morinis is here describing a process wherein the historical traditions of specific pilgrimages are made present and presentable through their re-enactment and incorporation into lived experience. As such, past is intricately fused into present actions, and the future, the substantiation of promised redemption, is implicit in past discourses and traditions. This “collapse” or “cancellation” is particularly intriguing when considered in light of the synthesis of geo-political and spiritual identifications I have been discussing. Just as there is a “collapse” of time, there is also a “collapse” of space in that the place of divine worship manifests national or regional significance and the nationally encoded place embodies spiritual meaning. When spiritual and national significations merge and become mutually defining, then, a sort of “collapse” happens as well, wherein space is made to encompass both history and providence and time is made to measure advancement and rootedness.

I like to think of this collapse in semiotic terms, wherein the signifier and signified become indistinguishable and inseparable. The land that is signified both nationally and spiritually becomes in turn representative of a national spirit and a spiritual manifestation of citizenry. The signified land collapses into a signifier of belonging or disbelonging, so that any representation of this space is assumed to be at once natural and vulnerable to mis-representation. A representation of a mountain-top is therefore rendered majestic and imperial because it is recognized as both being

part of a larger network of national and spiritual significations and because it becomes the very symbol of this signifying process. One learns, through this metonymic and metaphoric parceling of terrain, to *read* the space we inhabit and traverse.

Ernest Renan articulates the spiritual signification of national identity by defining the nation as inherently a manifestation of “a soul, a spiritual principle” (19). By discounting the geographic, linguistic, and racial parameters of the nation as not sufficiently illustrative of the arbitrary and heterogeneous qualities of these same within national distinctions, Renan states instead that the nation is a statement of choice, will, and desire. He writes that “[t]he wish of nations is, all in all, the sole legitimate criterion [to defining nationhood], the one to which one must always return” (20). This “wish” is founded upon Enlightenment doctrines of human will and its application within social spheres. It is, therefore, a modern construction of belonging, one that correlates the subject to historic manifestations of signification and re-signification. As a “spiritual principle,” the nation is an essence without material substantiation and necessitates discursive articulation to exist and materialize. The state, in this sense, is only arbitrarily connected to the nation it represents and can, and, Renan argues, should be entirely subject to citizens’ desires and choices. Since the nation and the spirit are thus similar constructions of individual significance, their respective performances, the ways in which they are made manifest, must necessarily negotiate redemption as a structural and legitimizing principle.

Returning to colonizing discourses that, I maintain, both influenced and molded current understandings of the interconnectedness and interdependence of nation and spirit¹⁰, redemption may be said to contextualize and even represent this “wish” that Renan describes. In order to illustrate the use of redemption within colonial strategies, I will reference the following description of colonial structures of power provided by Aijaz Ahmad¹¹:

The colony... is marked, first of all, by a ruling class, namely the metropolitan bourgeoisie, that is located nevertheless outside the colony; second, by the existence of a state apparatus that is an instrument not of the indigenous propertied classes but of the externally based ruling class of the metropolitan bourgeoisie; third, and thanks to the highly repressive character of the colonial formation, by the great *overdevelopment* of the state apparatus and great *underdevelopment* of the indigenous propertied classes; fourth, by the relatively low development of the indigenous bourgeoisie and prolonged power of large-scale landed property under colonial patronage; and, fifth, by a fundamental antagonism between the military-bureaucratic apparatus, as an instrument of the metropolitan ruling class, and the indigenous society, which the military-bureaucratic apparatus administers and represses on behalf of the colonizers... The fundamental *departure* from colonialism is signified, meanwhile, by the elevation of the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landowners as ruling classes, which position they had hitherto not occupied. (“Postcolonialism,” 20-1)

¹⁰ Indeed, as Aijaz Ahmad makes clear, “[i]t is much to be doubted that it was normal for bourgeois classes to arise as ruling classes [after colonial occupation] before there were territorial states to rule, nations to administer, governments to make laws favorable for capitalist accumulation, intellectuals to naturalize the idea of nationhood” (“Postcolonialism,” 19). In other words, the discursive strategies that were used to distinguish the post-colonial state from the colonial one were very much ingrained and practiced within and as part of colonizing imperatives.

¹¹ This description is Ahmad’s re-articulation of Alavi’s original description of the differences and similarities between the colonial and post-colonial states.

Economically and politically, colonial powers are redeemed by creating structures and discourses of distance and distinction wherein the colony provides both the resources for colonial advancement and material accumulation and the means through which the colonizer may manifest its power and legitimacy. The “external base” of power is therefore significant in that it provides a clear representation of the separation of power that is vital to colonizing institutions and in that it geographically inscribes the process of recuperation that I have argued is instrumental to discourses of redemption. It is through distance and distinction that the metropolitan bourgeoisie may perform its significance and signification. Interestingly, based on Ahmad’s argument, post-colonial redemption utilizes the same systems of power and only alters the location of variables within this structure. As such, the indigenous bourgeoisie and propertied classes occupy the position of the metropolitan bourgeoisie and thereby re-perform the same negotiations of distance and distinction. What is redeemed in post-colonial systems of power is place within an imposed structure, the power, essentially, to distinguish the new ruling classes from the space of occupation. Although discourses of nationalism and national autonomy are intrinsically connected to this shift in position, the state is still very much “externally based” and must effectively enact distance from the populace and place it represents. Redemption, therefore, plays a fundamental and foundational role in colonizing discourses precisely because of its articulation of origins, destinations, and the processes whereby these two are linked and distinguished. In short, redemption provides a context and structure to discourses of difference and distance.

Captivity narratives have played foundational roles in colonial traditions, particularly in their descriptions of moments of encounter that are coded by violence, desire, and salvation. Such narratives illustrate the problematics of distance and distinction that I have tied to discourses of redemption. By erasing distance, by effectively placing one culture (namely, the white, European culture) within the domains and often the grasp of the foreign, the processes of distinction and distinction-building are emphasized. The captive culture articulates redemption by re-instating its difference from that which has seized it and its representatives and hoping that some mechanism will enable distance to be once again exercised and maintained. These narratives also make interesting use of spirituality, wherein the captive individual re-considers the distance between her or his God and her or his person, thereby fervently (re)immersing her/himself in devout practice or questioning the efficacy of such practice. Appeals to God for succor and salvation are, in these cases, often appeals of recognition of difference between captive and captor. God is therefore either accompanying the captive individual through all her/his tribulations, making sure that the captive's distinction from her/his captors is furthered by the evidence of holy grace and intervention, or God is far away, nowhere to be seen, essentially refusing to acknowledge the worth, and thereby the distinction, of the captive. Spirituality therefore provides a gauge in such descriptions wherein distance and distinction are measured and recognized. The following chapters all focus on captivity narratives precisely because they so directly address redemption as combinations of spiritual distance and colonial proximity.

Chapter Three:

Redemption, History, and the Fragmented Body in Black Robe

In Bruce Beresford's film, Black Robe (1991), Father Laforgue's journey to the Huron mission in upper New France (modern day Quebec) and his subsequent captivity by an Iroquois tribe exemplify the types of redemptive processes I have connected to American colonial constructions. The film explores the ambiguous relationships of colonizer and colonized, Christian and pagan, and emphasizes the dynamics wherein power, both colonial and spiritual, are both performed and made manifest. During his captivity, Laforgue, called "Black Robe" by his indigenous contemporaries, speaks to a fellow captive, an Algonquin chief named Chomina, regarding the possibilities of clemency and mercy on the part of their captors. Chomina states that the Iroquois, like all tribes, cannot display mercy or their power would be questioned by others. Power, in this light, is performed through acts of violence and through the recognition by external bodies of severe and brutal treatment. Power is therefore enacted through violence and made manifest by the mutilated bodies of captives.

This chapter explores how this power is represented and how these representations may be read in terms of redemption. By considering the scholarship on the film, and on the novel from which the film is derived, I examine the ways in which Black Robe has been challenged on the basis of its historical accuracy and authority. At once an attempt towards historical fidelity as well as an acknowledged

derivation of its historical sources, the film demonstrates a connection with history that is exemplary of cinematic representations of redemption in the Americas. The film articulates a need for historical placement and contextualization, just as it demands the power to transcend the limitations expected of authenticity. It seeks to anchor itself in, and then free itself of, the socio-political realities of that which it represents. As a film that includes a captivity narrative, this struggle with history is readily linked to a struggle with place and dominance. Being trapped in a foreign land and a foreign culture necessitates a re-location of identity, and escape (or its failure) can be read as an enactment of identification. Redemption is thereby measurable in terms of the distance between that which is native and that which is foreign. It is particularly telling, then, that the film's connection with the places it represents has also been contested. Neither Brian Moore, the author of the novel, nor Bruce Beresford, the director of the film, are Canadian, and this foreign-ness has been held to accentuate the film's tenuous relationship with its represented content. Finally, the fact of the protagonist's religious occupation only further enforces the redemption that is portrayed and enacted in Black Robe. Ostensibly seeking martyrdom and further immersion into his Jesuit tradition, Father Laforgue finds that his journey away from Europe acts as a physical distancing from his faith. The power of the American landscape and the cultures that populate it to draw Europeans away from their previously uncontested subject positions and to place them in need of redemption is here amply represented, and the viewer is thereby expected to "discover" this new world, its promises, and its dangers. I end the chapter with a close look at how these various facets of redemption – the historical, national, and

spiritual components I have mentioned – are quite literally “embodied” in the film, since it is through the mutilated bodies of both captives and captors that redemption is finally, albeit problematically, enacted.

Since critical study of Beresford’s Black Robe is so scant, I have considered the much more abundant work done on Brian Moore’s novel (of the same name) as additional material. Although I do believe strongly that one cannot assume correspondence between media, even when treating similar subjects, and that form is of the utmost importance in the articulation of a text’s meaning, the scholarship I am utilizing here is relevant to my analysis of the film in that it deals principally with thematic concerns and historical sources that shape both texts, novel and film. It is also important to note that Brian Moore authored both the novel upon which the film is based as well as the screenplay for Black Robe. The choices Moore makes in transforming his novel into a screenplay are telling and will be discussed later in this chapter. Meanwhile, I would like to devote some time to teasing out the responses that Black Robe, the novel, has thus far elicited.

Much of the scholarship generated by this novel focuses on the difficulties of placing Black Robe amidst the context of Moore’s oeuvre. As a writer who is primarily concerned with present-day subjectivity, a novel set in seventeenth-century Quebec seems out of place in his list of publications. Moore himself has stated that Black Robe “was just an aberration. I read this book [Graham Greene’s discussion of The Jesuits in North America] and I wrote that book. I’m not going to become a historical novelist” (quoted in O’Donoghue, 131). It is important to recognize, at this point, that Black Robe’s origins are found in a historical treatise written by Graham

Greene, himself a writer concerned with the “foreign” or “other.” His travel writings on Africa, Mexico, and Panama, for instance, and his largely adventure-based literature, make Greene a figure whose “place” as a British writer is intriguingly complex. One may argue, then, that Black Robe’s deviance from Moore’s oeuvre is indicative of a general urge to venture beyond a known domain, to, like Father Laforgue, traverse cultural boundaries and, in so doing, redefine oneself.

Inspired by the devotion and apparent tragedy of the early missionaries to the New World, Moore researched Francis Parkman’s The Jesuits in North America and then Parkman’s main source, the seventeenth-century Jesuit Relations. After consulting anthropological and historical sources on seventeenth-century Native American customs and practices, Moore began to write Black Robe. In his preface to the novel, Moore writes:

[t]his novel is an attempt to show that each of these beliefs [Christianity and Native American beliefs] inspired in the other fear, hostility, and despair, which later would result in the destruction and abandonment of the Jesuit missions, and the conquest of the Huron people by the Iroquois, their deadly enemy. (ix)

As such, Black Robe arose from a desire to trace the progress of faith, and its instability, through history, to situate the individual’s need for meaning in a setting utterly foreign to that of the novel’s readers. As Jo O’Donoghue points out, the distance created by Moore’s choice of subject, is such as to grant the novel authenticity as well as to “dilute its immediacy and impact” (131). These effects, O’Donoghue goes on to mention, seem to deviate from those elicited from Moore’s other, non-historical, fiction.

Besides the fact that critics agree that Black Robe is unlike any other Moore novel, they also find thematic correspondences between it and other work produced by Moore. For the most part, critical writing about Black Robe situates the novel as an extension of Moore's previous work in that it, like the others, deals explicitly with crises in faith. Moore scholars are particularly interested in pinpointing the interplay of religion and faith in this work, tracing how Moore separates these two elements and gradually strips faith of stability. Moore, himself, has stated that "[a]lthough I'm not a religious writer, religion – the Catholic religion – has played a major role in many of my novels... I use religion as a metaphor" (quoted in Gallagher, 50).

Hallvard Dahlie considers Moore's use of religion in Black Robe by comparing the novel to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Both, Dahlie claims, recount "a journey into the darkness of a continent, and into the darkness of one's heart" (88). The parallel created here between the undiscovered continent (be it Africa or America) and the undisclosed heart, the "primordial truths" that can be found in both, certainly bring the novel's treatment of colonialism to the fore, however Dahlie does not give this aspect much attention. He treats Laforgue's journey into recently "discovered" New France as a metaphor, one that resonates with spiritual, rather than material, articulations. Moore agrees that this is certainly an aspect of his work; he acknowledges that "[w]hat I actually tried to do is write a Heart of Darkness tale, set in the past" (quoted in O'Donoghue). His consistent and self-noted use of religion as a means to represent the individual's struggle with belief in what s/he knows is not real also supports a read of the novel as allegory, as a representation of a search for meaning where meaning does not exist (at least not in an understandable

form). In short, there seems to be quite a lot of emphasis placed on this novel as being, perhaps, more symbolic than others that Moore has written, and this is due to the fact that the subject of the novel is historical.

The symbolism with which the novel is met is paradoxical in that the novel documents a disintegration of symbol, a sort of divestiture of meaning in things that were initially granted great value. Dahlie describes this process in terms of loss. He points out how Father Laforgue continuously loses elements of his identity. He loses his name when Mestigoit, the sorcerer, challenges his authenticity; he loses his ability to pray towards the end of the novel; and, most significantly, he quite literally loses himself in the wilderness. After all these losses, Dahlie argues, all that's left is "a painful and profound transformation, and... a triumphant love" (95).

Michael Paul Gallagher SJ, on the other hand, shows how the "triumphant love" that Dahlie describes is fraught with ambiguity. Gallagher argues that Moore consistently represents crises in faith wherein "what seemed clear meanings or definite norms are now seen to be fragile metaphors" (53). Moore, Gallagher states, distinguishes between two kinds of faith: Faith, with a capital "F," that signifies belief and accordance to institutionally held doctrine, and faith, with a lower-case "f," that is a universal force, one that, Gallagher argues, is important to survival. It is this "faith" (often by means of "Faith") that Moore deconstructs, showing how little is known and knowable. By stripping symbols of their meaning, Moore leaves his protagonists, Laforgue in this case, without anything to stand for. Laforgue, who was a representation of "Faith," a literal embodiment of the Catholic Church, is, at the end of the novel, meaningless and void, trying desperately to find some meaning to grab

on to. The novel ends with Laforgue's profession to love the Huron tribe he is living with, and with a renewed ability to pray. Rather than a "triumphant love," however, Gallagher claims that "the option that is called love, itself ambiguous and unsteady, seems the only foundation for "faith" (and even for "Faith"), or at any rate for the confessedly fragile self-meaning that is capable of emerging beyond crisis and becoming livable again" (58). Jo O'Donoghue puts it this way: Moore documents "the determination to live by the fiction of faith if not the reality" (131).

O'Donoghue, like Dahley and Gallagher, tries to situate Black Robe amidst Moore's other works and does so by describing the shared themes of "admiration for the zeal of the individual and pessimism about the possibility of sustaining personal religious belief" (132). Unlike Dahley and Gallagher, however, O'Donoghue does address the novel's colonialist subject matter. "In Black Robe," O'Donoghue states, "the Church as an institution is well-meaning, but blind" (134). Rather than promote belief, the Church provides "an infinite potential for division and misunderstanding" (O'Donoghue, 134). Even so, O'Donoghue does not address this potential as political, and affirms that the Christianity represented by Moore is destructive in its incapacity to acknowledge other Faiths. The Native Americans, on the other hand, "are not quite so blind [as the Church]; that is to say both that their own beliefs demand extraordinary perception of them and that they are forced into at least acknowledging Christian beliefs by having them constantly before them" (O'Donoghue, 134). Here O'Donoghue does point towards an imbalance of power, in that the Church does not need to acknowledge other Faiths, but, for the most part this critic positions the religious and spiritual relationships in the novel as being on

par. O'Donoghue cites Moore as saying "Black Robe is very much concerned with religion. It deals with the inability of the Jesuits, with the best motives in the world, to understand the religion which the Indians had, and the belief on both sides... that each side saw the other side as the agent of the devil" (134-5). This apparent misrepresentation or miscommunication between Faiths is further emphasized when Moore claims that "[t]he only conscious thing I had in mind when writing it was the belief of one religion that the other religion was totally wrong. The only thing they have in common is the view that the other side must be the Devil" (135).

In terms of the novel, this attempt to give both European and Native belief systems a level playing field is accomplished by the text's use of alternating perspectives. Laforgue's crisis of faith and the ongoing examination of his place in the Americas is rendered through Moore's active use of juxtaposing perspectives and switching between points of view. The novel is structured as an ongoing vacillation between European subjectivities and Indigenous ones. Following a depiction of Father Laforgue's experiences among "savages," for instance, the reader is afforded with a portrayal of indigenous men and women's discussions of "Black Robes." In the sections from the vantage point of the French, Frenchmen have names and titles and the Indigenous are amassed under the moniker "savage." In the sections emphasizing indigenous subjectivities, on the other hand, members of tribes are named and their positions within their communities articulated, while the French they come into contact with are collectively referred to as "Normans" and the Jesuit priests as "Black Robes." By varying perspectives in this way, Moore shapes the novel's structure in such a way as to emphasize the cultural and political "distances" between

the groups (they do not appear within a univocal narrative or a unifocal projection) and to, finally, force the reader to construct the “bridges” that may link these distinct perspectives. In this way, the novel is structured as a sort of dialogue, a documentation of the silences and articulations that exist between the two groups and of the responses of one group to the other.

The end of the novel is of special significance, therefore, because it brings to the fore the dialogic nature of what has preceded it. As Father Laforgue baptizes the ailing members of the mission, he struggles to find the power and motivation to pray. Finally,

...a prayer came to him, a true prayer at last. *Spare them. Spare them, O Lord.*

Do you love us?

Yes. (italics in text; 246)

There are three utterances, three articulations here: the prayer from Laforgue to God; the question of Taretandé to Laforgue demanding to know of the priest’s investment and intent towards the tribe; and the response, vocalized by Laforgue in answer to Taretandé and, perhaps even, God’s response to Laforgue’s doubts and appeals. What has been a series of specific and distinct points of view, then, ends in a merging of voices and perspectives.

The film version of this text does not replicate this structuring device, as it consistently focuses upon Father Laforgue as protagonist and central reference. Moore’s interplay between communities of faith and power, therefore, becomes translated in the film as a documentation of one man’s encounter with wilderness, both literal and metaphysical. Essentially, then, the film follows the readings

provided above (by Dahley and Gallagher, in particular) in its portrayal of an individual's spiritual journey, accommodating the colonialist emphasis within the space of the symbolic. Like Dances with Wolves, a film Black Robe has been compared to, the film charts a man's loss and reconstruction of identity within a new context, not the juxtaposition and confrontation of belief systems Moore claims is the basis of his novel. Since Moore wrote the screenplay for the film, he evidently decided to accentuate the symbolic resonance of the novel, its Conradian properties, rather than attempting to replicate the original text's dialectic nature.

This is not to say that the novel, itself, provides an adequate, let alone thorough, documentation of the colonizing process as it occurred in seventeenth-century New France. This is arguably not the novel's aim. This process provides the backdrop or means through which the clashes of Faith and faith may be inscribed, and does not constitute, in itself, a subject for inquiry. This can be ascertained through the novel's (and, incidentally, the film's) treatment of history. Two scholars, in particular, have compared the novel Black Robe to its attributed source, the Jesuit Relations, and, although historical accuracy cannot be ascertained by this means, Moore's choices for what depictions to include and exclude are made clear.

In the preface to his novel, for instance, Moore attributes his use of obscenity in his rendering of Indigenous languages to the fact that the Jesuits recounted frequent references to scatological and sexual elements during their interactions with the "savages." Jeanne A. Flood takes issue with this usage by declaring that "Moore takes from the Jesuit Relations permission to write obscenity, but not permission to invent a style that could represent a language such as LeJeune and Brebeuf described"

(45). Based on the seventeenth-century text, she claims, Indigenous languages were noted not only for their vulgarity, but more so for their eloquence. She cites Father Paul LeJeune, in his contribution to the Relations, as stating:

There is no place in the world where Rhetoric is more powerful than in Canada, and nevertheless, it has no other garb than what nature has given it; it is entirely simple and without disguise; and yet it controls all these tribes, as the Captain is elected for his eloquence alone, and is obeyed in proportion to his use of it, for they have no other law than his word. (Flood, 45)

Flood, therefore, argues that Moore's rendering of Indigenous speech bears nothing of this eloquence, instead relying on a brisk and direct delivery of commands and responses, punctuated by violent, sexual, and scatological references.

Moore's usage of the Relations proves, however, to be more complicated than mere stylistic choice. Flood points out how virtually every event that appears in the novel (and, I argue, in the film as well) is directly lifted from the Relations. This is particularly true as the novel recounts Laforgue's journey to the Huron mission. From Laforgue's losing himself in the woods to his torture by the Iroquois, "[I]t is not overstating the case to say that Moore's account of the journey derives entirely from the Jesuit Relations" (Flood, 42). This, in and of itself, is not what troubles Flood. She is most concerned with his reliance upon the seventeenth-century text compiled with his manipulation of same in order to advance thematic and narrative concerns that bear no relevance to the depictions of the Jesuit missionaries in New France.

Flood argues:

To impose on the narratives the Jesuits wrote of

their own lives Laforgue's contemptible timidity, sexual panic, and lack of faith is not to take a novelist's freedom to create a different kind of story with its own laws and its own authenticity. (52)

Whether or not Laforgue's character is as "contemptible" as Flood has it, she does make the point that Moore's use of history is one of constructing a forum in which to advance his interests rather than of establishing a testimony to the forces that have helped shape modern-day Canada. I do not believe that historical narratives *need* to testify in this way, but all texts do carry a weight that informs their composition and content by the mere fact that texts are positioned in specific places and times. Setting Black Robe in seventeenth-century Quebec, therefore, does demand certain negotiations on Moore's part, and it seems to me that there are some critical elements missing from his representation of this time and place. Flood touches upon this responsibility when she states that "[t]he preface of Black Robe exists to dissociate the novel's crude excess from the author and to assign ultimate responsibility for it to history as the seventeenth-century Jesuits reported it" (49). There does seem to be a certain relaxation on Moore's part, a reliance on historical credibility that does not need to be exercised or challenged. This credibility does have flaws, however, as David Leahy points out in his article "History: Its Contradiction and Absence in Brian Moore's The Revolution Script and Black Robe."

The Revolution Script, a novel by Moore recounting the separatist movement in Quebec, will not be discussed here, although it should be noted that Leahy's argument rests partly on Moore's repeated, as well as particular, use of history. Possibly the best article dealing with Black Robe to date, Leahy's argument makes

the case that Moore's focus on individual moments of "epiphany," the redemptions he depicts, are housed in history in order to give these moments substance and legitimacy, but do not directly address this same history or its impact. Leahy writes that:

...whether or not one believes in the meta-narratives which ground the discourses of history, The Revolution Script's and Black Robe's appropriation of and resistance to history engender their own meta-narratives about the French fact in Canada which in turn suggest some of the ways in which our class-divided society is ideologically constituted and culturally reproduced. Or, if you will, how literary subjects' moments of epiphany are never class or value free, but are situated – and situate the reader – on one side or the other of privilege. (308)

In other words, Moore's depiction of Laforgue's journey deep into the Canadian wilderness should not be understood in terms solely of a spiritual quest for meaning, but as a journey within the network of journeys undertaken for the sake of colonialism. Certain salient facts about this journey, and others like it, are clearly absent from Moore's novel and the film derived from it, and they need to be considered in order for the struggle between Faiths that Moore depicts to be given its true, and devastating, power. For it was not a simple case of mutual annihilation that caused "the destruction and abandonment of the Jesuit missions, and the conquest of the Huron people by the Iroquois, their deadly enemy" (ix), as Moore claims in his preface to Black Robe. The fact of colonialism needs to be inserted into this struggle for power, and Leahy points out places where that insertion is crucial.

Leahy first makes the case that, unlike their role in the novel, the Jesuits were an intrinsic part of the political and economic goal of the French (312). In the novel there is a clear distinction between the three facets of French occupation: the economic, the political, and the religious. Fur trappers are made to seem entirely different, and independent, from Champlain and his men, for instance, both occupying distinct spheres of power and influence. More telling, the Jesuits are on the margins of both, not having the power and ability to distance and distinguish themselves from the Natives, as the political and military representatives do, nor able to completely immerse themselves within the Native population, as the trappers seem to do. Leahy states that:

[i]n Black Robe... the Jesuit's *mission civilisatrice* is dissociated from the economic imperatives of the French fur trade. This flies in the face of their vital political-economic function as the vanguard of French colonial ideology among the natives. (312)

The Jesuits were not marginal members of both French and Native communities, therefore, but significantly powerful in both. To not corroborate this fact makes Laforgue's journey one without political consequence. His crisis in faith, brought about by his loss of identity (as Dahlie maintains), is not quite tenable in light of the immense power his identity would hold over his actual environs.

One should note also the significant errors in Moore's representation of Natives. Moore does acknowledge that he has taken artistic liberty in making members of the Algonquin and Iroquois tribes be able to understand each other's language without need of translation (Flood, 42). Both tribes spoke entirely different

languages, making it impossible to understand one through the other. However, Jeanne Flood points out, this liberty is taken a bit too far when one acknowledges that the tribes' distinction from one another is entirely language-based (42). If both tribes shared a similar enough language, they would not be the fatal enemies Moore depicts them as being.

Leahy also points out that Moore's representation of the rivalry between the Iroquois and the Huron is misleading. Black Robe, both novel and film, does not contextualize this rivalry, making it seem as if it was entirely wrought by inter-tribal dynamics. In fact, Leahy claims, the rivalry was fueled, if not created, through European economic policies (312). The Dutch initiated the trade of arms with the Indigenous Canadians, and they chose the Iroquois to be their middlemen. When the French began its own weapons trading, they utilized the Huron as go-between. The feud between Iroquois and Huron was, therefore, entirely socio-economic, as both tribes fought over territory and market. It should not surprise one, therefore, that both the Dutch and the French encouraged this rivalry, and did not merely consider it Indigenous custom and tradition, as Laforgue does when he needs Chomina to explain the feud to him in Black Robe.

Finally, Leahy makes the case that Moore does not give a balanced depiction of savagery. The novelist graphically describes the torture imposed on the protagonists by the Iroquois and recounts such acts as cannibalism to be solely in the domain of the Indigenous. In contemporary Europe, however, such acts of "barbarism" were also being committed and Father Laforgue, as a French Roman Catholic priest, would surely have known of them. Not acknowledging the vicious

acts committed against the Huguenots and in the name of the same Church as Father Laforgue represents,

conflicts with Moore's professed guiding concept of the Jesuits' civilizing mission of the 'voice of conscience' – a concept which, like the text's silences about contemporary wars of religion, and clerical and judicial torture, falsely makes the indigenes' 'barbarism' seem absolutely alien to European social and religious practice. (Leahy, 313)

The horror and incomprehension that the reader, and viewer, encounter through Laforgue as he comes up against "barbarism" cannot stem from lack of experience, therefore. Were Laforgue to be constructed more along the lines set by historical precedent, his understanding of the difference between civilization and savagery would be, for the most part, based upon religious and racial distinction rather than merely upon the rituals and traditions he encountered upon his trip upriver.

Black Robe, as I have stated, stands out amidst Brian Moore's oeuvre in its situation in the distant past. However, place, a little explored aspect of the novel, is also telling of this book's relationship to Moore's body of work. Flood makes the case that:

[n]o matter their setting, no matter the fictive citizenship of their characters, all of Brian Moore's novels involve a transaction between an Ireland of the mind and a Canada of the mind. The defining characteristic of Moore's mental Ireland is a powerful patriarchal authority rooted in traditional Roman Catholic belief and providing a sturdy structure of meaning and value on which all human experience

can be located. (53)

Although Flood does not elaborate on the “defining characteristic of Moore’s mental” Canada, one may suppose that Canada functions as the arena upon which, and through which, Ireland’s foundational authority may be confirmed or challenged. As a native of Ireland, and as a writer who is pretty extensively represented in Irish literary scholarship, Brian Moore’s own emigration to the Americas is here treated as a particularly telling event through its own supposed illustration of the kinds of themes with which Moore works. If one were to extend Flood’s reading, Canada is defined most explicitly through Moore’s fiction not as a distinct place, but as a place that is distinctive of Ireland. In other words, its distance from Ireland, Moore’s origin, is the true marker of Canada’s function in Black Robe. Since both nations were colonized by the British, one cannot equate Laforgue’s distance from France to Moore’s own journey to the “New World.” Flood makes the case, however, that one can see a clear parallel between both character and author’s journeys if one considers these same as illustrative of a more primal, and less political, reaction against an authority that takes on the characteristics of Freudian patriarchy. Both Moore and Laforgue enact their own Oedipal trajectories, one concludes, and effectively construct their new residence solely on the terms dictated by its relation to both voyagers’ sources. Although Flood does not consider how this construction re-enacts colonizing practices, the kinds of concerns brought up by Leahy make it clear that Canada in Black Robe is the great wilderness, unexplored and dangerous, not a place with a definite and defining history.

I switch my attention now to the film itself which, as I have maintained, can be considered in light of the above scholarship regarding the novel. Mostly faithful to the events and themes depicted in the book, the film also portrays an individual's quest of redemption and follows the trajectory outlined by Moore's novel and, consequently, of the Jesuit Relations. Among several distinctions, most notably considering the unifocal perspective of the film that I have discussed above, one can list changes from book to script that clearly are motivated by form. In the novel, for instance, Chomina's character is a counterpart to the Algonquin chief, whereas in the film, Moore has combined these two characters into one. Saving narrative space in this way, the film version effectively deflates the debating and community consensus that so largely fills the Indigenous "sections" of the novel. Chomina becomes the tribe's conscience, indeed, the Native conscience, rather than one representative among many. Language, also, is a basis for comparison. Although both texts are fairly exclusively rendered in English, film's inability to rely upon a similarly omniscient narrational "voice" as one may find in literature, accentuates the fact that the characters are communicating in a language that had no place in the historical context being depicted. Such differences are easily understood to arise from formal constraints. The very scant scholarship done on the film itself never raises comparisons between novel and film, and Black Robe's placement within a chain of translations (from historical representation to novel to film) is left virtually unexplored. Unlike most of the work done on the novel, however, the scholarship concerning the film does consider the role of history in shaping the represented events and does question the role of authenticity in representations of power.

It should be noted at the outset that the film, like the novel, occupies a contested position in its function as a depiction of Canada, as either nation or wilderness. Jane Freebury, in her review of the film, utilizes the fact of Black Robe's transnational production to couch her argument about the film's apparent lack of self-contextualization. As the product of an attempt to counteract Hollywood box-office power, Black Robe is one of several films created through the cooperation of various national film industries. "Since 1986," Freebury explains, "an official co-production agreement has made it possible for the Canadian or French, UK, German or New Zealand film industries to collaborate creatively and financially with the Australian industry – this being a way for these small national industries to compete internationally against the hegemony of Hollywood" (119). As a result:

...the feature film Black Robe became the first Australian-Canadian co-production and, under the terms of the new official co-production guidelines, did offer scope for Australian creative input – this is actually a minimum percentage, calculated in terms of numbers of cast and crew to match capital investment. (Freebury, 120)

An Australian reviewer, Freebury concerns herself with distinguishing between the two nations' contributions and the impact of this same on the representations of one nation's markedly different colonial experience. Bruce Beresford, the director of Black Robe, is himself Australian and has been, to date, active outside of Australia but widely regarded as a major representative of the national cinema of his native country. Brian Moore, as mentioned above, is the screenwriter and author of the novel upon which the film is based and is a resident of Canada, but he is generally

regarded as an Irish author. Whether or not these extra-Canadian origins actually contribute to the film's legitimacy as a depiction of Canadian history is, I believe, impossible to determine and rather a non-productive line of inquiry, however the historical and national "distance" that has informed much of the criticism of both novel and film is quite significant in itself. Black Robe is, therefore, suffused with notions of the foreign, both in content and in reception, and, as a treatment of national origin, may be said to stand out as an external (founded beyond the Americas' boundaries) rather than internal construction of American identification.

Freebury maintains that Beresford approached the construction of his film as one would a documentary. Through its emphatic concern with authenticity, "Black Robe is not unlike the good documentary with revelatory images of an unfamiliar time and space" (Freebury, 122). As such, the film presents itself as bearing a distinct connection with history, one that foregrounds the past's presence. Freebury writes that:

[w]e are informed that plates, implements, maps, canoes and weapons were made or built to represent historical detail with absolutely meticulous accuracy. Clockmakers and armourers were enlisted to recreate timepieces and period dress; costume makers hand-sewed decorations of chicken and fish bone, porcupine quills and feathers to Indian clothes. (122)

This evident concern with authenticity turns the film's mise-en-scène into a veritable document, ensuring that the images captured on film can be understood to correspond exactly with the images that Laforgue or Chomina themselves would have encountered in 1634. The focus, thereby, seems to be on the historical legitimacy of

what is depicted, giving the film a material nature that counteracts the thematic concern with the fragile and ephemeral nature of faith. Unlike the novel, one may conclude, the film is motivated through the tensions created between substance and absence, whereas Moore's novel highlights intercultural recognition, or, rather, misrecognition as the operating dialectic. Although she does not explicitly make this connection, this difference between media can be reflected in Freebury's most pointed argument against the film's use of history:

[t]his Western of the Canadian wilderness is a film more concerned with its historic credentials, with the material details of its cultural and social specificities, than it is with the context of its own production, with how it resonates with the contemporary audience, with what it has to say about contemporary issues of ethnicity and its representations. (123)

In other words, Beresford seems to dictate that history can be found in the objects that populate the frames of Black Robe, although the way these objects are represented and utilized do not appear to significantly shape the film's attempt at historical construction. History is therefore the arena in which the narrative is placed; it does not shape the narrative in any fundamental way. The modern viewer does not, for instance, learn to distinguish between or find connections within historical and contemporary understandings of race or gender. The political implications of the film must thereby be mediated through an identification resting solely on an individual's existential search for meaning. This is particularly problematic since the film arguably presents itself as a commentary on the political consequences of colonialism and evangelism, ending, as it does, with a quote from the novel's preface regarding

the eventual genocide of the Huron people and the questionable efficacy of the Jesuit missionary presence in Canada.

Freebury also points out that incorrect Indigenous languages are used without critique. As Flood argues, Moore does not give much care to replicating the eloquence and power of the Indigenous languages represented in the novel, and makes a serious error in making the Algonquin and Iroquois languages mutually comprehensible. Freebury adds that:

Black Robe, like *Dances with Wolves*, for all its vaunted sensitivity to the issues of representation of ethnicity with strategies such as subtitling spoken Indian languages (not, incidentally, the Iroquois, Algonquin and Huron of the peoples depicted in the film, but the Cree and Mohawk languages; the Huron language is extinct) is yet another reworking of the traditional classic [Western] text. (124)

Not only are Indigenous languages misappropriated (in one case, the Huron's, because of the impossibility of actual representation), but the fact that such languages are made to seem interchangeable most certainly diminishes any attempt at an anti-Eurocentric approach to history. What intrigues me most about Freebury's claim, however, is that she is the only scholar I've found who has critically considered the film's use of subtitles. On the whole, the film is in English (not the French or Latin of Laforgue's community), making it arguable that the filmmakers were not attempting to authentically duplicate the cultures represented. It strikes me as most probable that the filmmakers chose to use English as the primary language because of economic and experiential concerns. Since both Moore and Beresford are native

English speakers, and since much of the crew came from Australia, the choice of English seems to follow as a convenient choice. Also, the film's marketability is, presumably, increased by opting for English as the central language, rather than French. Most interestingly, however, choosing English makes it possible to distinguish the central language from the arguably marginalized Indigenous languages, by relegating these last to script. If French were chosen over English, one assumes that all of the language in the film would be subtitled, whereas the choice to have only the Indigenous languages be translated graphically makes these languages occupy a significantly different position within the narrative. The Indigenous communities essentially become foreign, whereas the European communities are made to most directly represent the film's intended audience.

A consideration of the use of subtitling potentially advances Laurent Dittmann's argument about the film's use of writing. Dittmann bases his thesis primarily on one scene that is present in the film but not in the novel. This is the scene wherein Laforgue and Davost demonstrate the power of writing to Chomina and his tribe. Laforgue asks Davost to write down a secret that only Chomina and his community might know. Laforgue then proceeds to read the secret (the events leading to Chomina's mother-in-law's death) aloud to a bewildered audience. Chomina is certain that the act of writing is a kind of sorcery, and cannot comprehend this act as a supposedly neutral transmission of information. It is ironic, then, that the audience's access to Chomina and to the members of his and of other tribes is made so predominantly through writing. The film's viewer arguably oversteps her/his bounds by delving into the Natives' "secrets," that which should not be transmitted

other than orally. More significantly, everything that the Natives say become translatable in this way, everything recorded and conveyed through a process that is analogous to a kind of infiltration. This corresponds to Ditmann's main point that the film formally documents the injustice of the colonial enterprise, even as it does not directly state as such, and that it does so through the use and representation of writing.

Although I believe that Ditmann's distinctions between Indigenous and European identifications are reminiscent of the same kinds of romanticism that have permeated colonialist discourses and that can themselves be found in the Jesuit Relations, wherein the Native is closer to nature and less encumbered by trappings of modernity than the colonizer, Black Robe does present these distinctions and does demand that the viewer distinguish between communities on these bases. This, in itself, limits the kinds of redemption represented in the film. As in the scene wherein Laforgue illustrates the written word, the subjective encodings of bodies and land represented throughout the film demonstrate the power relations between colonizer and colonized, making the very identities of the Natives something that must be not discovered, but covered yet again, re-covered as written text re-signifies oral language, and recovered into a colonialist discourse. The film's use of writing, therefore, functions to not only present information, but to re-present information in such a way as to call attention to the ideological bases of representation.

This is especially evident, Ditmann contends, in the film's conclusion wherein the quote from Moore's preface to the novel concerning the eventual extinction of the Huron peoples and the destruction of the Jesuit missions takes the place of the image

of Father Laforgue's baptism of the Huron. Written text takes the place of image and sound, and the film ends as it begins: with writing. Dittmann interprets this usage of the written word in this way:

[l]a structure du film retourne à l'écrit comme à une source de vérité, de signification et surtout, de mort. Après avoir montré la faille qui existe dans son plan d'écriture, ouverture dans laquelle le spectacle se donne comme entre les deux pans d'un rideau, Beresford referre cette blessure pour nous fournir une conclusion, une morale, une mort. (78)

Dittmann connects the film's representation of writing with death by pointing out the relationship between the fact that Laforgue demonstrates writing by disclosing the means of Chomina's mother-in-law's death with the written disclosure of genocide and decay at the film's end. Not only do these written words represent death, they act as a sort of killing agent in and of themselves, distancing the viewer from the events being represented and placing all of Black Robe's mise-en-scène in the realm of historical discourse. Like Chomina's bewilderment at Laforgue's ability and power to re-cover his family's history, the viewer must contend with the replacement of spectacle by the written word from which the spectacle emerged. We are meant, Dittmann claims, to see this replacement as a sort of death, a loss of signification and a usurping of power. As such, we are made aware that the film is more concerned with representing historiography than it is with representing history, deconstructing the writing that is the source and culmination of its own representations. Using Dittmann's analogy to curtains, one may see how the film represents the tragedy of colonization by its explicit referral to the process of discursive replacement, allowing

writing to finally cover up and hide that which Beresford has striven to bring to the fore.

Freebury sees the film's closure quite differently, and makes the case that the words that take the place of images at the end only further enforce the film's indebtedness to the Western and to the ideologically charged heroic codes that shape this genre. She writes that

[t]he final words that screen over the last frames inform us that the Huron settlement was decimated and the Jesuit mission survived another fifteen years. This additional bit of text only serves to underscore the film's point: that the efforts of those black-robed figures were only a little short of heroic. The plight of the Indians is mere detail behind the foregrounded protagonist, in this instance, a pioneer priest. (126)

Freebury brings up an important point that Ditmann does not mention and that is the fact that Black Robe is, above all, the depiction of an individual's quest for redemption. Following the dictates of Classical Hollywood Cinema, Black Robe rarely deviates from its focus on its protagonist, and Laforgue's character development is central to the film's narrative. Freebury points out that the film's very beginning is an extreme example of this focus: the black screen that opens the film is shown, as the film progresses, to be a close-up of Laforgue's black robe, making this character's body the most important structural and formal element of the film (124). So, although the film does indeed provide a commentary on historiography as Ditmann posits, it does so through, and perhaps more specifically as a consequence, of its treatment of an individual. This complicates Ditmann's argument in that

Beresford's particular use of history is lost or even contradicted by the film's maintenance of Laforgue as its central focus. This character becomes more than a representation of re-covery or its entrapments. He becomes the means through which the viewer is introduced to seventeenth-century New France, our guide and mediator. Freebury is quite correct, therefore, in her acknowledgement of this film's resonance with the Western genre:

As a vision of the traditional clash of cultures in times past, Black Robe is still pegged to the structures of old, to the stereotypes which inhabit the diegetic world of the Western. Indeed, it operates as a classic text of the Western genre: lone stranger arrives in isolated community, sets its troubles to right, then moves on. (122)

The connection of this film with what is certainly a leading representation of the colonialist enterprise in the Americas, the Western, marks Black Robe as engaging with redemption in a way that Ditmann cannot allow.

Ditmann's mention of Laforgue's journey through the Canadian wilderness is limited to his connection of the trials that the priest must endure with that suffered by Jesus Christ. He writes that "[l]e Jésuite traverse pratiquement les mêmes épreuves que son Dieu, connaissant un véritable chemin de croix quand il est passé par les verges iroquoises avant d'être mis au supplice" (75). Laforgue's journey as a re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross is advanced in light of the casting of Father Laforgue by Lothaire Bluteau, an actor who shortly before the production of Black Robe starred in the title role of the important Canadian film Jésus de Montréal. Following this observation, one may easily surmise that Laforgue's quest for redemption, his desire for martyrdom in his attempts to follow the footsteps of his

Lord, is a sort of pilgrimage. Indeed, Laforgue is headed to a supposedly holy place, a Jesuit mission in an isolated outpost of New France. Laforgue also consistently tries to convert the Algonquin tribe that guides him by claiming that he can lead them towards Paradise. The journey to the mission and the journey to Paradise are thereby made to correspond, one group leading the other on journeys that, Laforgue initially believes, overlap. As Laforgue progresses into the “wilderness,” his faith is tested and he must work towards reconciliation with his earlier beliefs. The redemption he seeks, therefore, is different from the redemption he receives in that his hopes for communion with Paradise become a hope for communion with his newly acquired home. Essentially, then, he arrives on the journey that he was led upon by the Algonquin, but deviates from the journey to Paradise that he embarked upon. The narrative therefore traces the reconstruction of an American space into a sacred space, first by Laforgue’s attempts at the conversion of America to Paradise, and finally by his own conversion of Paradise into America.

Ditmann does not explore the religious and spiritual encodings of Black Robe beyond a basic signification, so these extrapolations into the film’s reliance on redemption as narrative strategy are my own. What I have found to be Ditmann’s most instrumental contribution to my argument, and why I use him as a springboard for a final, more specific, consideration of redemption in this film, is his acknowledgment of scars as a guiding motif. Ditmann contends that the bodies represented in the film are, themselves, already dying, as characters who are disease-ridden, have badly scarred faces, and are missing body parts make up the cast. The historical encoding of these bodies furthers the film’s treatment of death by making

the audience aware that those whom these characters represent are long dead. We are not meant, therefore, to merely consider the lasting effects of the events depicted on the screen; rather we are forced to look at the scars left after the fact, and consider how much of American (French Canadian, specifically) history is built from dead flesh.

The scar, therefore, works as an important motif in this film because it, too, may be “read” as a form of historiography. It is a record of injury and pain, an inscription on the body of what that body has endured. This reading is especially evident in the scene wherein Laforgue encounters a priest in Rouen who has served in New France and who has been brutally disfigured during his tenure there. The left side of his face is scarred and mauled and he is missing an ear and several fingers. The scars exist as testimony, as a literal inscription of history that one cannot but read. Ultimately, Ditmann suggests that the film positions history in this regard, as a reading of scars, of tracings left behind by violence and death. The film offers, therefore, a sort of mourning, a lament of the fact that French Canada is, and has been, “un espace mort-né” (79).

I agree with Ditmann’s reading of the significance of scars and bodily disfigurements in the film, however, I do think that this motif functions to not only signify pain and death, but to signify power as well. Ditmann does not mention the fact that the priest in Rouen sees his scars as emblematic of his mission and sense of purpose. For him, they are not lamentable, but proof of God’s will in the endurance of his missionaries. Ditmann himself connects this mutilation with the tattoos worn by the Iroquois, but he does not actively correspond these bodily changes to

enactments of power. In fact, I argue, they are manifestations of the ways in which redemption works in the film.

The priest in Rouen explains to Laforgue that Indians tortured him but that he looks forward to returning to New France to continue his and the Church's mission. What better calling, he exclaims, can exist than civilizing and converting the savage and God-less. Power, based on this evidence, is performed through bodily sacrifice and martyrdom, and, significantly, through *returning* to spaces of ignorance and brutality. It is performed by return and enactments of mercy and made manifest by physical disfigurement. As Father Laforgue loses a finger during his captivity by the Iroquois, his continued dedication to his stated mission of advancing towards the Huron settlement is made manifest by his literal dis-association of bodily harm from conviction and spirituality.

In both examples of power, that evidenced by the Iroquois' torture and that enacted by the clergy's return, the disfigured body serves to illustrate power in that it effectively distinguishes the captor from the captive and the brutal from the meek. Dismemberment further emphasizes the representative nature of the physical because of a process of distinction – in these enactments of power, the disfigured individual represents another tribe, another cause, a breach of limits, both territorial and physical. The body becomes a marker of conquest and submission, evidence of the power that has made it distinct. As such, the body is also marked by distance, a body that has wandered into territory foreign to it or has been forcibly brought into a place to which it does not belong. The disfigured body is thereby made foreign, representative of spaces outside of specified geographical and cultural limits.

Dismemberment also graphically represents distance in that it severs sections of a unified whole and fragments parts of what is considered a complete body. The brutally disfigured body, therefore, becomes a key emblem of power for both colonized and colonizer, captive and captor, and Christian and pagan because it essentially signifies redemption, both its need and fulfillment.

It is important to recognize that Beresford's movie is not only a depiction of the journey from captivity to freedom (exemplary of the journey from the mortal world to Heaven), it is also an exploration into the ambiguous nature of this process. The film is, after all, a testament to one man's quest for spiritual redemption. Throughout his ordeals, Father Laforgue becomes less and less certain of his stated mission of mass conversion, unsure as to whether "seats in Paradise" have any relevance to the contexts he encounters and which encounter him. Towards the end of the film, he states, in fact, that "this world is an illusion," making it difficult to discern whether "this world" is that shared by all humanity or the Canadian wilderness he traverses across.

This lack of distinction, this evidence of his inability to articulate spatial and, hence, spiritual difference is further emphasized when he finally encounters the Huron and is asked by its chief whether he loves "us." I mentioned how Brian Moore structured this scene in his novel, but the film offers another way of considering difference and distinction that is quite informative. Before Laforgue responds to the question, a series of flashbacks is presented wherein faces of the many indigenous peoples he has encountered appear, both those who have aided him in his quest and those who have served as obstacles. It is, apparently, his inability to differentiate

between the four distinct tribes represented and their roles in his journey, that enables him to reply in the affirmative. “Us,” therefore, is not the Huron specifically, but the Indians as an undifferentiated group.

Because he ends his travels in an illusion, one whose distance and distinction from his native Rouen is called into question, and because he can no longer distinguish his place among the unconverted, Laforgue’s redemption, the need for which inspired his journey, is seriously cast into doubt. Laforgue is thereby made a tragic figure who, in fulfillment of his quest, his redemption performed, can no longer appreciate the distance and distinction between himself, those who have captured him and those whom he has “captured.” He is isolated from the process of redemption, therefore, and cast out of its structure and context. Beresford, one can argue, is here problematizing the intrinsic connections between redemption and enactments of power. As a film that represents captivity, therefore, Black Robe, like the title suggests, represents how fragmentation (from the individual and her/his representation, her/his garb) and performance (of individuality and of enactments in social, spiritual, and cultural contexts) play foundational roles in constructions of power, and how these constructions paradoxically utilize redemptive discourses yet make redemption untenable.

The reading I have provided for the film’s end differs from my reading of the novel’s conclusion primarily in regards to perspective. Throughout the film, the viewer has never truly departed from Laforgue’s vantage point, casting all that transpires in the narrative in the function of “enlightening” and “broadening” the Jesuit’s understanding of America. In the novel, however, the reader is continuously

distanced from Laforgue, and reunited, creating a movement that not only fosters a need for conciliation, but one that informs our understanding of redemption within this dynamic context. I do not believe that one text provides more of an opportunity for redemption than the other, necessarily; rather they utilize redemption to function differently within their narrative structures, and, thereby, recast its place in the creation of each text's thematic objectives. Whereas redemption is made necessary (yet impossible) through the film's reliance on fragmentation, redemption's untenable promise may be understood to be defined in the novel not so much through fragmentation, but through the process of unification, the, perhaps insubstantial, bringing together of what is distinct and distant. In other words, the novel necessitates that the reader actively redeem its various parts in order to arrive at a conclusion, an engagement that the film documents but does not practice as such.

I end my treatment of this film by briefly considering a contemporaneous text to the Jesuit Relations, the main source for Black Robe, and that is the written documentation of Samuel de Champlain's work in North America. I believe that this text offers an illustrative representation of redemption that furthers an understanding of this film's use of the body, especially the "fragmented" body, in both constructing and challenging the interplay between captivity and its release in colonial narratives of power. Within Champlain's accounts of his administration of "New France," he encloses a description of an attempt by a Jesuit priest to secure the redemption of a "savage's" body and spirit (253-6). Martin, the French name of this specific American, requests that Father Joseph Le Caron provide for his baptism in an attempt to cure his body of a fatal illness. Champlain describes how carefully the priest

explains the demands and responsibilities inherent in conversion, especially that the promise of spiritual salvation is only applicable to those who completely relinquish their former beliefs and uphold a constant, unwavering conviction of Christian doctrine. Once Martin is baptized and his body significantly “healed” of its infirmity, he decides to return to his tribal religion to complete his cure. Champlain then documents how Martin’s health quickly deteriorates as his Christian identification is discarded. After his death, the French settlers and missionaries remark upon the tragedy of this thwarted redemption in the context of the seemingly futile, but ultimately necessary, project of civilizing those incapable of Christian virtue. Champlain uses this account to corroborate a representation of the duplicitous and ungrateful characters of those whom he considers his wards. In this way, Martin’s body becomes illustrative of, not only Algonquin, Huron, and Iroquois treachery, but of the burden the colonial forces must carry in their missions to “improve” the lives of those to whom they “accept” responsibility. Martin’s irredeemable body, then, serves to represent both the need to redeem the “savages” and the inherent redemptability of the French mission in America. One may, thereby, see the film’s paradoxical treatment of redemption as a re-articulation of what is essentially a key component in assuring colonial hegemony, the assertion of worth and position through a promotion of redemption as a basis for belonging.

Chapter Four:

Redemption and History in Como era gostoso o meu francês

The final scene of Nelson Pereira dos Santos' film, Como era gostoso o meu francês (1971), has been consistently scrutinized by scholars. The scene consists of a single shot depicting Seboipepe, a Tupinamba woman, silently eating the roasted flesh of her lover. Because of the film's title, translated in the United States as "How Tasty was My Little Frenchman," the viewer is conscious of cannibalism, and of a sensuality derived from it, from the film's very outset. The final shot, then, is a sort of confirmation, the graphic manifestation of an act that has continually occupied the viewer's imagination if not the screen itself. The scene immediately prior to this one, however, provides an interesting counterpoint to the shot, a juxtaposition that has yet to be closely analyzed. In this scene, Seboipepe's lover, the nameless Frenchman, a captive of Seboipepe's tribe, is ritually bludgeoned to death. In one sense, then, the juxtaposition of final scenes gruesomely underscores the transformation of the Frenchman as he becomes meat and thereby enforces the impact that has been granted to the final shot. The juxtaposition becomes all the more intriguing, however, when one considers the Frenchman's final threat wherein he yells that his death will be redeemed by the total destruction of the Tupinamba tribe and its associates. The viewer understands, of course, that this threat is prophetic and that the tribe, and other indigenous tribes throughout the Americas, have been and are currently the victims of systematic genocide. By juxtaposing these two moments of violence, the reference to genocide and the cannibalistic act, Pereira dos Santos forces the viewer to weigh one

against the other, to consider the differences and connections between past and present oppressions. Rather than enforcing a moralistic condemnation of one moment of violence over another, the director puts both actions on similar planes: the genocide becomes intimately, uncomfortably personal, and cannibalism becomes politically charged activity. This juxtaposition, and the comparative practice it instigates, very precisely illustrate the ways in which Como era gostoso o meu francês engages in exploring redemption.

Como era gostoso o meu francês represents redemption within the context of a captivity narrative. In this sense, redemption is defined against the dangers of being taken from one's cultural context and made part of a foreign context. More precisely, the cultural and affective subjectivity of the captive is threatened by incorporation into a foreign body¹². Redemption is an implicit part of captivity narratives because these texts depict subordinations that are not merely physical, but also cultural and, very often, spiritual. The captive is distinguished from her or his captors in more ways than those derived directly from the imprisonment, for the reader of a captivity narrative is meant to identify with the captive and to thereby differentiate her/himself from the captor. Distinction between cultures is thereby made necessary and is necessarily re-performed. In the case of Como era gostoso o meu francês, the capture and imprisonment of the nameless Frenchman by the Tupinamba tribe is represented through a number of performances of distinction, performances which, Pereira dos Santos seems to maintain, are founded on unstable, yet highly significant, locations of identity. As with the juxtaposition between the concluding scenes, viewers of this

¹² Since this film represents the cannibalistic practices of the Tupinamba tribe, this "incorporation into a foreign body" is made literally manifest.

film are prompted to compare captive against captor, to consider who acts as oppressor and who as oppressed. There is never any doubt that the Tupinamba is ultimately the oppressed party and there is no evidence to maintain that Pereira dos Santos hopes to challenge or minimize the suffering of this and other tribes. Nor is it I think correct to contend that the director is deconstructing Europe's role as colonizer. There is another kind of negotiation in evidence here, one that neither sentimentalizes nor excuses. Redemption in this film is therefore neither given nor received. It is, rather, questioned and explored, and its roles in Brazilian historiography and in national and cultural identification are brought to light.

What follows is an examination of the ways in which Como era gostoso o meu francês posits questions of history and identity, in particular, the ways in which the film actively defines history and identity in terms of redemption. As I have been arguing, redemption necessitates a simultaneous distinction and connection. In order for one to be redeemed, one has to disassociate oneself from current debts, traits, beliefs, and actions. One has to meet certain standards of value, whether spiritual, social, or financial, and so one must progress beyond or transcend a particular state. However, redemption also implies a regression, an adoption of past traits, for redemption means intrinsically to return to a heightened status, to be placed, once again, on "sound" footing. Captivity narratives are excellent vehicles whereby to study redemption because they provide quite literal manifestations of these dynamics. In order to be redeemed, the captive must establish distinction from her/his captors, and must construct freedom as a kind of return to originating circumstances. Captivity narratives, thereby, work towards affirming the status quo, for the captive's

freedom depends upon an acknowledgement of the superiority of the captive's origins, which is often the reader's own origins.

Based on what I have presented thus far concerning Como era gostoso o meu francês, one can surmise that Pereira dos Santos is not following this more traditional approach to redemption. The film certainly does not affirm origins, Brazilian or European, and, if anything, it challenges any formal articulation of such. However, the film is very essentially about the origins of Brazil's culture, its colonial legacy, and its continuation of reprehensible practices. Pereira dos Santos demands, therefore, that we engage in an intense examination of these origins even as he seems to insist that they are incomplete constructs. Ultimately, I argue, the film evidences Brazil's need for redemption of its past and present abuses, its need to distinguish itself from what it has been. It is, in this way, a call to action. The film also problematizes the national origins to which one might look for redemption. There is no state that Brazil should return to, no prior manifestation Brazil should reconstruct. History's function in this film is not to guide or direct this necessary redemption. History is used most strikingly as context, as a basis for comparison, distinction, and identification. History may be understood to be the scene prior to the present, a scene whose meaning lies very implicitly in its juxtaposition to that which follows.

In order to establish these claims, I pay particular attention to the connections and distinctions that comprise a reading of Como era gostoso o meu francês. I consider, for instance, the stylistic and formal allusions that give shape to the film's structure, citing ways in which Pereira dos Santos uses these elements to instill a comparative viewing strategy. I also pay special attention to the film's historical

sources and Pereira dos Santos' strategy for both engaging with and distinguishing from these sources. I finally consider an underlying concern that has influenced the scholarship of this text and that is the film's assumption and/or dismissal of truth. Brazilian history is made to exist somewhere in between this reclamation and negation, and thereby plays a fundamental but unstable role in the film's articulation of redemption.

Como era gostoso o meu francês is said to have had its inception when its director, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, considered combining two project ideas. Pereira dos Santos "had long been contemplating a film project about the Staden adventure" (Sadlier, citing Helena Salem, 191) wherein Hans Staden's chronicle of his captivity among the Tupinambas would be dramatized. In addition, Pereira dos Santos' daily commute from Niteroi to Rio de Janeiro took him past an island in Guanabara Bay that had housed a Huguenot colony in the mid-sixteenth century, a regular reminder of another, roughly contemporaneous, European venture in early colonial Brazil (Sadlier, citing Helena Salem, 191). By combining these two project ideas, that of Staden and of the Huguenot mission, Pereira dos Santos was able to conceive of a narrative film that would not only document Brazilian history, but would also consider the linkages between colonial ventures, and between these ventures and modern Brazilian identities.

Darlene Sadlier also comments that Pereira dos Santos was driven to make Como era gostoso o meu francês when he heard of the sufferings of an indigenous community he had had contact with when producing Vidas Secas (191). This earlier film, based on Graciliano Ramos' important novel of the same title, also explores

attempts to build foundations upon Brazilian soil, though, unlike Como era gostoso o meu francês, the settlers in Vidas Secas suffer the brunt of colonial domination and its legacy of environmental exploitation, economic disparity, and social marginalization. Como era gostoso o meu francês, on the other hand, satirically considers power and its positionings, and represents colonial oppression as a certainty that, although not elaborately depicted, guides the film's viewers in our readings of the Tupinambas' actions. By creating a film wherein the indigenous contingent of Brazil is not cast as obstacles to progress, nor as romanticized ancestors of modern Brazil, Pereira dos Santos portrays the Brazilian Indian as a part of the past, present, and future, as a constant in Brazilian culture and society, and, as a consequence, the film markedly reacts against colonialism and its continuing presence.

Besides Staden's account, the Huguenot colony, and the desire to bring to light the past and present oppression colonialism has wrought, Darlene Sadlier counts the "economic miracle" of the mid-twentieth century as an important influence to the film's conception. She writes:

But to read How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman exclusively as an allegory about the demise of indigenous groups in the northeast is to overlook its subtle implications for another kind of cultural imperialism that had begun in the mid-1950s, when President Juscelino Kubitschek opened the nation's doors to massive foreign investment in an attempt to rapidly transform Brazil into a modern industrial nation. (201)

Kubitschek's actions spurred an intense focus on growth, development, and progress, and numerous projects intended to maximize use of Brazil's resources and

terrain were begun. From the founding of Brasilia, the new capital city located in the geographical center of the country, to the building of the Trans-Amazon Highway, a project meant to facilitate access to the Amazon Forest from the industrial south, the subject of Brazilian economic and political interest shifted radically, and the country's leaders began to look for as yet unexplored and untapped sources of wealth. Needless to say, the "economic miracle" did not produce the intended results, and by the time of the film's production, vast environmental damage, rapid inflation, steadily rising unemployment, and fluxes of migrants in unprecedented numbers all were evidence to the failures of Kubitscheck's plan. By underscoring the enduring damage created through European colonialism, Sadlier argues that Pereira dos Santos is creating a forum through which one may consider present decisions and conditions as part of a continuing cycle of grievous mistakes. In other words, Como era gostoso o meu francês arose from a need to redress human rights abuses, a wish to explore Brazil's colonial past, and a desire to historicize and contextualize the present.

The film did suffer censorship after its production, however not on the basis of its treatment of history or of its humanitarian concern for indigenous rights. Rather, it was the film's use of nudity that forced Pereira dos Santos to trim at least fifteen minutes from the director's cut. Pereira dos Santos comments that "la censure n'acceptait pas une telle colonie de nudistes" (Gordon, citing P. A. Paranagua, 114). Although the film was produced and released during the dictatorship's most repressive regime, it is ironic that nudity became the defining facet of Como era gostoso o meu francês' notoriety and not its ideological foundations. Richard Gordon credits the film's heavy use of female nudity as the basis for this reaction (103),

although Darlene Sadlier provides a stronger case when she remarks that it was male nudity, specifically, that made censors around the world uncomfortable with the film (203). It is rumored, too, that Como era gostoso o meu francês was not displayed at Cannes' film festival as a result of this discomfort with masculine nudity (Sadlier, 203). Therefore, although Pereira dos Santos' inspirations were admittedly political, it was the film's depiction of phalluses that provided Como era gostoso o meu francês its most immediate response.

Darlene Sadlier makes the important observation that "Pereira dos Santos's film is less interested in distorting a canonical text than in revealing what that text omits" (204). By adapting foundational historical texts to screen, and by contextualizing modern indigenous experiences, Pereira dos Santos is not attempting merely to document Brazilian reality, but to emphasize the discrepancies and misconstruances that make up modern Brazilian identity. In other words, one will not find Brazil's past, present, or future on screen; rather, by viewing Como era gostoso o meu francês, one may witness the omissions and deviations that add up to a Brazilian national identity. Redemption in this context is not, therefore, an attempt to find the present in the past or to trace consequences to an originating event. Pereira dos Santos utilizes redemption as a strategy to both emphasize how redemption works in national consciousness and to show how this particular national application is built upon the gaps and fissures of history rather than its affirmations.

Besides the motivations and consequences behind the production of Como era gostoso o meu francês, the film also makes significant references to several influential styles, movements, and generic traditions. Some of these, such as the

newsreel or cinema verité, are of international import, however others, like Antropofagismo or Tropicalismo, are specific to Brazilian culture. All of these influences, however, infer the idea of what is foreign or beyond national parameters. In this way, although Como era gostoso o meu francês is a film that roots itself quite firmly in a national foundation, its aesthetic and cultural thrusts are, at their cores, international. There is nothing wholly “Brazilian” in this film, indeed there are no Brazilian characters insofar as they are defined as either European or Indigenous. Brazil’s origins are certainly key to understanding this film, but they are not entirely present in the film itself. The film’s use of multiple stylistic allusions enforces this ambiguity.

Richard Peña, in his oft-cited article on the film, points to a genre that, indeed, informs all of the films that I study in this project, and that is, as I argue, a key instrument in tying national narratives of origin to redemptive structures – that is, the captivity tale. He writes that

[t]he idea of the author or narrator as captive, as opposed to a conqueror as in Bernal Diaz’s The Conquest of New Spain, lends a peculiar power to writing like that of Staden’s which later writers of fiction would use as a standard narrative device. In this sense the narrative of How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman harks back to a sub-genre of adventure or travel literature called the ‘captive witness.’ (191)

This “peculiar power” is essential to the make-up of Como era gostoso o meu francês, however its function in the film is, I believe, quite different than that found in Staden’s or other captive narratives. First of all, captivity narratives from the

colonization of the Americas did not, in and of themselves, have the influence upon later fiction writers that Peña maintains. Rather, such narratives were themselves influenced by existing literary accounts of captivity, such as can be found in the Bible, influences that had tremendous consequences for the formation of American nation-states. However, Peña is exactly right in focusing upon the captivity tale as a fundamental influence for Como era gostoso o meu francês, especially since the film references the “adventure” and “travel” qualities of this tradition without ever quite becoming an adventure or travel film. The iconography and thematic components of such genres are present, of course – the buried treasure chest, the connivance of escape, the formation of unlikely allies – but these components function more as references to these traditions than to the actual embodiments of such. In other words, Como era gostoso o meu francês “harks back” to captivity narratives in order to emphasize the absence rather than the presence of the “peculiar power” Peña identifies.

The film also makes explicit use of another filmic form popular before television’s dominance throughout the world became firmly established: the newsreel. Como era gostoso o meu francês is structured loosely as a feature-length newsreel, complete with a booming narratorial voice and the use of intertitles to fragment the narrative. Both Bruce Williams (205) and Darlene Sadlier (193) note Pereira dos Santos’ use of this form, and Sadlier further specifies the director’s formal reference when she observes that, “[a]s the ‘broadcast’ [the film’s narrative] continues, scenes of exploitation and murder are accompanied by a Mozart French horn concerto that was the popular soundtrack for the short newsreel, ‘Atualidades Francesas’ (French

Current Events), shown in Brazilian movie theaters in the 1960s” (193). Pereira dos Santos’ use of the newsreel form is especially interesting in its effective subversion of both time and space. Temporally, the film’s contemporary Brazilian viewers would be forced to reconsider both the present and the past, as colonial Brazilian history is paraded as both modern and in progress. Spatially, these same viewers would also be required to question their own placements and national identifications, as newsreels may generally be argued to position spectators as distant from the events depicted. Moreover, since Pereira dos Santos references a recognizable newsreel depicting French events, the film itself is dis- or mis-placed as occurring on foreign terrain. The film does chart a Frenchman’s progress in Brazil, and does depict the French Huguenot attempt at colonization of “France Antartique” as Brazil was known, so the reference to France is not arbitrary. However, it should be understood that the film’s playful use of the newsreel format demands of its viewers not an adherence to a stated time or place but a willingness to compare and reconsider the past and present, the here and there.

Richard Peña (192) and Bruce Williams (205) also address the influences of cinema verité on Como era gostoso o meu francês. A filmic movement arising from the concerns of film’s relation with the reality of what it records, cinema verité was particularly significant after World War II when filmmakers around the world began to reconsider the ways in which film had been used to disguise, distort, and manipulate truth and to capitulate upon the ways in which film can uniquely represent reality. The basic goal of cinema verité is to produce the most direct connection between viewer and that which is recorded with the least interference from direction,

cinematography, and editing. As such, long uninterrupted takes, an absence of soundtrack, a static camera, and spontaneous acting all are trademarks of this movement. Como era gostoso o meu francês certainly does exhibit these formal devices, even if it also includes segments, namely those accompanying the intertitles and voice-over narration, that deviate from these criteria. What is significant about Pereira dos Santos' reference to this particular movement is in its application towards depicting events and situations that would be impossible to represent in any way approaching objectivity. The film's viewer is never led to believe that what she or he sees and hears is real, yet truth, as an ideal, is of the utmost concern to the film's apparent thematic and ideological goals. In other words, by referring to and utilizing the techniques of a movement that has as its aim disclosure and transparency, Pereira dos Santos highlights both the process of truth seeking and the various gaps and omissions in Brazilian national history and cultural identification.

Captivity tales, the newsreel, and cinema verité are certainly not specific to Brazilian cultural expression, however the following three intellectual and cultural movements I discuss are all attempts to define just what this cultural expression consists of. These three, the Brazilian indigenist romantic tradition, Antropofagismo, and Tropicalismo, also play important roles in contributing to the many sources and intertexts of Como era gostoso o meu francês. These movements also bear unique relations to Brazil's national formation and arise at junctures wherein the articulation of what composes Brazilian identity is crucial.

The Brazilian romantic tradition I address is exemplified most explicitly by the work of one of Brazil's most important writers, José de Alencar. Writing in the

mid-nineteenth century during the nurturing of Brazil's relatively recent claim of independence, Alencar is best known for his novels chronicling early European and indigenous relations. His most famous novel, Iracema, published in 1865, is a classic depiction of modern Brazilian national identification, wherein Brazil is represented as being, literally, born from the tenacity and daring of the European adventurer and the humility and self-sacrifice of the Indian virgin. Darlene Sadlier writes of the ways in which Iracema presents itself in Nelson Pereira dos Santos' film:

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman... provides a fascinating counterpart to the romanticized image of the Indian created by Alencar... Unlike the 'romance' between Martim [the European adventurer] and Iracema [the Indian virgin], the encounter between Jean and Seboipep is not idealized. Jean shows absolutely no interest in Seboipep, who is not a virgin and whose name in Tupi means 'bloodsucker'... (199)

Although I question Sadlier's assertion about the Frenchman's complete lack of interest in Seboipepe (his refusal to leave without her complicates this claim), Sadlier is absolutely right in observing that the couples' relationship is not romanticized as is Martim's and Iracema's. For one thing, Seboipepe does not renounce her allegiance and duty to her tribe, as does Iracema, and she certainly does not die for her love, as the protagonist of Alencar's novel does as well. However, by depicting the affair between the Frenchman and Seboipepe, Pereira dos Santos cannot but remind the viewer of the formative tryst between Martim and the "Virgin of the Honey-Lips" as Iracema is known. By showing those "Honey-Lips" sucking on meat from the Frenchman's corpse during the very last shot, there is no doubt that the Indian

Maiden that *Iracema* typifies has been recast and reconsidered as a figure with an existence and function beyond that of a romantic national imagination.

Nearly every study of Como era gostoso o meu francês refers to this film's indebtedness to Antropofagismo, an important movement within Brazilian modernist culture. Led by Oswald de Andrade in the 1920s, Antropofagismo played upon the colonial mythos of the savage and his relation to civilization. By referring to the cannibalistic practices of the autochthonous inhabitants of Brazil, the Portuguese and other colonial powers cast their conquering of and claim to peoples, goods, and land as work done to civilize and advance retrograde cultures. With this logic, Brazil began with a civilizing act, a denunciation of savagery. Andrade, in an attempt to subvert this logic and to challenge Brazil's easy identification with European cultures, claimed that Brazil actually began when the first European was consumed by Indians. In his "Manifesto on Antropofagismo," Andrade proposes an understanding of Brazilian culture as a consuming entity, an organism that ingests European, Indian, and African cultures towards a kind of digestive syncretism. Brazilian culture, therefore, is practiced and maintained through a consumption of what is both foreign and local. Resulting Antropofagist texts made ample use of juxtapositions, collage, and a combination of heterogeneous forms, styles, languages, and narrative traditions.

Besides Como era gostoso o meu francês' obvious relation to Antropofagismo through its use of cannibalism, many scholars have argued that the film is indebted to this movement on other, more subtle, grounds. Theodore Robert Young, for instance, claims that much of the film's discourse surrounding encounters between cultures is influenced by Antropofagismo (83). The shifts in power depicted in the film become

manifest as characters are expunged from communities, “ingested” into tribal customs, and, ultimately, “digested” by other characters. Bruce Williams also utilizes an Antropofagist methodology when he argues that Pereira dos Santos’ use of “indigenous motifs from Brazilian colonial and nineteenth-century literature” (205) enables one to “argue that the film is once again consuming *European* culture” (emphasis in text, 205). Williams rests his argument on the belief that the film does not intend to reproduce any reality, European or Indigenous, but, rather, aims to deconstruct already ingrained representations of these realities, representations that have been and are formed and maintained by the West. As such, Como era gostoso o meu francês, like Seboipepe, feeds off of European myths, illusions, and misconceptions. Luís Madureira, also, refers to the film’s Antropofagist antecedents through his analysis of Como era gostoso o meu francês’ formal structure: “[b]y fragmenting its sources into nine intertitles – white script on a black screen – and interspersing them throughout the film, My Little Frenchman thus re-enacts in textual space the Tupi ethics of anthropophagy, a sort of revenge of the repressed primitive” (122). In other words, the sources are quite literally “swallowed up” by the images and sounds that frame the intertitles; the sources are absorbed into a foreign body and made into something else entirely. In this way, Madureira argues, “[t]he film cannibalizes its colonial archive” (122).

The final influential Brazilian cultural movement that I want to point out is Tropicalismo. This movement was created as a reaction to the military dictatorship’s suppression of citizen’s rights and heavy censorship regulations. As a result of these obstacles, Tropicalismo uses irony and subversion to, at once, celebrate Brazilian

identity and protest the limits placed upon this identity by the dictatorship. Utilizing tongue-in-cheek humor, stylistic excess, and formal dissonance, Tropicalismo offered a means through which artists and intellectuals could ridicule the political right and lament freedoms lost. Como era gostoso o meu francês was made during the apogee of this movement, and in it one can discern definite stylistic links to other Tropicalist films such as Glauber Rocha's Terra em Transe and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's Macunaíma. Theodore Robert Young finds that Pereira dos Santos is especially Tropicalist in his use of dissonance in Como era gostoso o meu francês. He writes:

Much as the tropicalista music of Caetano Veloso mixed clashing sonorous elements, How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman presents the audience with a series of internal oppositions: the voice-over and the visual images; the expected relationship-based outcome and the film's actual conclusion; even the incongruous behavior of the European characters. (86)

These oppositions make the film difficult to "digest," thereby requiring its viewers to reconsider their expectations of cinema, of history, and, one may argue, of the nation. Young claims that the film's use of dissonance ultimately concords with the "tropicalista's postmodern destruction of history" (83). Although I disagree with Young in that I don't believe this film, or the other Tropicalist films I've mentioned, attempt to destroy history, they certainly do attempt to disrupt it. This disruption, amidst the pomp of a historical fiction, makes Como era gostoso o meu francês resonant with Tropicalist tendencies and practices.

Como era gostoso o meu francês takes great pains to make its historical archive explicit, and, as such, can be said to utilize historiography as a formal device.

Not only is this film a depiction of historically-based events, it is also a depiction of how these events are documented. By focusing on historiography in addition to, or, perhaps, over and against, history, Como era gostoso o meu francês distances the viewer from the kind of absorption that typically characterizes Classical Hollywood narrative (a tradition that has been and is arguable understood to be the norm in terms of feature films throughout most of the world). My subsequent discussion of history should be read with the understanding that Pereira dos Santos is relying on viewer recognition of the many discrepancies he orchestrates. The history depicted in the film is generally familiar to a Brazilian audience, so the viewer is expected to pay more attention to how the history is represented than to its content.

The historical source that is most in evidence in Como era gostoso o meu francês is Hans Staden's The True History of His Captivity. Hans Staden was a German who went to Brazil to work as a gunner for the Portuguese. While thus employed, he was captured and held captive by the Tupinamba. For nearly two years (between 1549-51), he lived as a prisoner among the Tupinamba in what is today the state of São Paulo. After finally escaping from captivity, Staden found his way back to Europe and wrote a chronicle about his adventures in the New World. The True History of His Captivity was first published in German in 1557 with woodcuts depicting, among other things, the cannibalistic practices of the Tupinamba. Staden's chronicle proved to be extremely popular and was quickly translated into several languages. In 21st century Brazil, Staden's tale is still immensely influential and has been adapted to numerous genres and forms. Monteiro Lobato's Sítio do Picapau Amarelo, a work made for the education of children which has been televised and

made into movies for over half a century, includes an entire chapter on Staden's adventure in the midst of its discussion of Brazilian history. Schoolchildren, too, still learn of Staden as a courageous individual who, even amidst savagery and barbarity, was able to maintain his dignity. In this way, modern Brazilians have grown up identifying with the German gunner and vilifying the native inhabitants of Brazil who held him captive. Pereira dos Santos' choice to make a film about the Staden adventure, therefore, is an exploration into an integral part of national identity, and the character of the Frenchman in Como era gostoso o meu francês was and is easily recognized as being a referent to Hans Staden.

Como era gostoso o meu francês should not be considered as merely a rendition of Hans Staden's text, however. It utilizes this text, makes extensive reference to it, but the film is, after all, a fictional account of a nameless Frenchman, not a bio-pic about the German adventurer. Darlene Sadlier makes this distinction well when she claims that

[i]n the process, the film would become less a 'translated' adaptation of Staden than a subversive retelling of the story; it would treat the native populations in a realist fashion, but it would ultimately be an experiment in pastiche and intertextuality, offering a political satire about global capitalism and the Brazilian economic 'miracle' of the 1960s and 1970s. (192)

Pereira dos Santos' film, therefore, engages Hans Staden's famous adventures for a larger purpose than mere depiction. Although the film's narrative follows quite closely with that of The True History of His Captivity, the viewer is kept distant

enough from the protagonist to make it ultimately impossible to regard the film as a “true” adaptation of Staden. Richard Gordon also makes an excellent point when he points out that Pereira dos Santos actively fictionalizes Staden, casting reputedly real events within a fictional framework. By doing this, Gordon argues, “the director removes emphasis from his [Staden’s] point of view and transfers it to the Tupinamba, whose leader in the film *is* a historical figure, Cunhambebe” (emphasis in text; 90). It is especially ironic that the character based on Staden is rendered nameless and his future hopeless while Cunhambebe, his reported foe, is made to be the only character whose existence can be confirmed. In other words, the viewer of Como era gostoso o meu francês is meant to keep Staden and his adventures in mind while watching the film, however not as a measure towards authenticity. Rather, Staden’s text and the film become two strings in a dialectic process wherein authenticity is questioned and ideological motivation is foregrounded.

Most criticism of the film is concerned with comparing Pereira dos Santos’ text with Hans Staden’s chronicle. Comparisons, as can be imagined, abound. Richard Gordon has provided a pretty exhaustive list of the ways in which Como era gostoso o meu francês coincides with Staden’s text. He enumerates the ways both texts are alike in this way:

both characters (Staden and Jean [the Frenchman] from the film) are captured by the same tribe, the Tupinamba (allied with the French), while in the company of Portuguese (allied with another tribe, the Tupinikin) as artillerymen, but under vastly different circumstances; the national origin of both is questioned, but with different results; a visiting Frenchman refuses, at first,

to help both of them; both use ‘magic’ in the attempt to affect their predicament; and the same particular chief, Cunhambebe, appears, though in somewhat different conditions. (110)

The scenes wherein the Frenchman’s true nationality is misunderstood; wherein the French trader betrays his compatriot; and wherein the Frenchman claims to have links with divinity as a means towards manipulating his captors to release him, all, therefore, have precedence in Staden’s chronicle. Darlene Sadlier adds to Gordon’s extensive list by pointing out that Pereira dos Santos attempted to remain faithful to Staden’s accounts by having the bulk of the film’s dialogue in Tupi. She writes that “[h]e [Pereira dos Santos] used an approximation of Tupi (a lost language) for nearly all the dialogue... In this regard, he was being consistent with Staden, who describes everyone – including the French who pass through the Tupinamba village – as speaking Tupi” (203). This attention to historical accuracy, Sadlier goes on to argue, is part and parcel of Pereira dos Santos’ goal of producing as realistic a portrayal as possible. Staden is, therefore, here used as a resource, and perhaps as a framework, but not as a stringent template. The many differences between his accounts and Como era gostoso o meu francês attest to this.

Among the changes made to Staden’s account, scholars have defined several that significantly impact the film’s construction of meaning. G. U. de Sousa, for instance, points out that Staden’s text begins with a personal narrative and ends with an ethnographic description of the Tupinamba, while Pereira dos Santos’ film begins with a documentary and ends with a more personalized treatment (96). This is significant in underscoring the differing thrusts of both texts: Staden uses his

experience to lend credulity to his more “objective” notations of Tupinamba culture, whereas Pereira dos Santos uses a historical overview to contextualize and historicize the fictionalized story that follows. In other words, one may argue that Hans Staden is aiming towards providing proof of an experienced reality, whereas Pereira dos Santos is challenging the credibility of and motivation for such proof.

Darlene Sadlier and Richard Gordon also discuss the importance of the differences between the two texts that deal with nationality and identification. Sadlier remarks that the Frenchman’s allegiance with the Villegaignon mission in Brazil is a departure from Staden’s account that bears consideration (195). By merging two different historical events, the Huguenot colony and Staden’s capture, Pereira dos Santos can provide enough context to destabilize the centrality of any one event and can consider the similar repercussions and shared goals of these and other colonial ventures in Brazil. Richard Gordon also notes that Staden requested permission to work with the Portuguese, whereas the Frenchman was captured by the Portuguese after his expulsion from the Villegaignon community (89). Not only is the Frenchman’s allegiance to any group (French, Portuguese, or Tupinamba) made questionable, but his continued presence as a prisoner (to one group or the others) furthers his role as a pawn in a larger game of power and diminishes the urgent and righteous quality Staden attempts to invoke with the telling of his own imprisonment by the Indian tribe. Gordon also makes a very important distinction when he addresses the fact that the Frenchman eventually welcomes assimilation into the tribe (if only to ensure survival), while Staden resists assimilation. Gordon writes that

[t]he scene in which he [the Frenchman] first solicits information about the tribe and encourages Seboipepe to

help him with one of the first steps of assimilation – the removal of all body hair – is an emblematic departure from Staden’s account. At the beginning of his story with the tribe, Staden relates, the women try to shave his beard and he steadfastly refuses them permission to do so, attempting to maintain the ‘mark of his difference.’ (91-2)

In fact, it is Staden’s conviction and self-preservation in the face of difference that defines his heroism. As such, the Frenchman’s easy allegiances make him a dubious hero. His final condemning words – the threat that more of his kind will come and lay waste to the Tupinamba – bear the weight not only of providence but of his conclusive and most definite identification as a colonizer. For Staden, this identification is understood to be immutable, whereas the viewers of Como era gostoso o meu francês see it as the culmination of, or perhaps the foundation for, a series of postures.

Such a reading implies that the Frenchman’s death at the film’s end is more ironic than tragic, even if the viewer was prepared for a Staden-like escape from captivity. Richard Gordon disagrees and claims that “Jean’s [the Frenchman’s] death is clearly tragic” (90). Other critics (Sadlier, Madureira, de Sousa) support my belief that the Frenchman’s demise is “clearly tragic” only in that it heralds the history that we know to come. The distance Pereira dos Santos maintains between viewer and protagonist is such that the Frenchman’s death cannot register as tragedy, at least not clearly. The arguable ambivalence of the text’s conclusion is another significant departure from Staden. The German’s book tells a tale of redemption, wherein an individual’s faith enables him to overcome horrible odds. Ambiguity in such a text

would diminish its underlying righteousness. In Como era gostoso o meu francês, however, this righteousness is challenged and ambiguity takes its place.

Part of this ambiguity stems from the film's treatment of its Indigenous characters. Richard Gordon compares Staden's representation of the Tupinamba with Pereira dos Santos' and concludes that the film attempts to portray the Tupinamba as a legitimate and credible community with laws and cultural practices specific to its needs (90). In Staden's text, however

[h]is captors are consistently referred to as 'selvagens' and their cannibalism is clearly represented as barbaric. Moreover, throughout the narrative God is shown to be on the side of Christians and against the 'savages,' regardless of their tribe. (90-1)

Pereira dos Santos emphatically diverges from Staden on this point by having all of the main European characters exhibit dubious morals while all of the Indigenous characters act within prescribed roles. Since the film's protagonist is not one with whom the audience can readily sympathize, his function is less to provide a direction for the narrative than it is to offset practices modern viewers might find reprehensible. Ultimately, then, the Frenchman's character affords a level of integrity to the Tupinamba, whereas Staden resolutely attempts to divest the tribe of such.

Darlene Sadlier claims that "[w]here the book and film diverge most dramatically is in the representation of women" (198). Staden limits his depiction of women to cultural descriptions, and no one female character is presented. Because Staden emphatically claims chastity, women in his text are presented collectively as that from which he maintains distance and distinction, and that which contributes to

his ethnographic rendering of the tribe. In other words, women form part of the menace in the personal part of his text, and part of the visage in the “scientific” part. In Como era gostoso o meu francês, of course, Seboipepe’s character disturbs this distance created by Staden. Her primary significance to the film can be proven by the facts that she is the final figure to be seen (as she munches on what is, presumably, the Frenchman’s roasted neck), and that she provides the point of view for the title of the film. Seboipepe, Sadlier claims, is not presented as menace or visage since Pereira dos Santos does not allow the film to progress romantically. The Frenchman, Sadlier writes, “shows absolutely no interest” (199) in Seboipepe and only significantly interacts with her when he discovers the gold in her navel. My reading of the film differs from Sadlier’s in that I feel that Pereira dos Santos does, indeed, invest in exoticism when presenting Seboipepe. Even if the Frenchman might show no interest in her (which I don’t think is necessarily the case), the viewer is clearly meant to recognize Seboipepe as a beautiful and alluring woman. Her naked body is meant to stand out from that of the other women’s because of its considerable presence in the foreground and the center of frames. Among the naked female bodies, Seboipepe’s body is also among the most, if not the most, classically beautiful in Western terms. Because she is distinguished from the other women in these ways, the viewer expects a romantic relationship to develop between her and the Frenchman. The final shot of Seboipepe eating the Frenchman is meant to resonate because of the elusive romance the viewer has been substantiating. Therefore, although Sadlier claims that the representation of women marks Como era gostoso o meu francês’ most emphatic difference from Staden’s account, I argue that the two,

finally, are quite similar in that Seboipepe's naked body is meant to adorn the screen, as are the naked women in the woodcuts in Staden's book, and that the male gaze through which she is depicted maintains her character quite solidly within patriarchal traditions.

A difference between Staden's chronicle and Pereira dos Santos' film that is unmistakable and extremely significant is Staden's dependence on religious rhetoric and his consistent reference to God as an active agent in his narrative, all of which are absent in the film. Both Richard Gordon (115-6) and Darlene Sadlier (196-8) comment at some length on this difference. Gordon remarks how Staden's insistence on his own spiritual and moral superiority to that of his captors is a primary focus in Como era gostoso o meu francês, wherein the Frenchman's assurance of his own worth in comparison to the Tupinamba is directly challenged. The Frenchman's claim to divinity, his implantation of himself in Tupinamba lore, is portrayed as transparent subterfuge. In other words, Staden's recognition of his supposed superiority is meant to further his underlying mission of distinction and distancing between Europe and America, civilization and savagery, whereas the Frenchman's claim to superiority is understood to be both erroneous and manipulative, for he, finally, is nothing more than flesh. Darlene Sadlier compares Staden and the Frenchman's religiosities in this way

by contrast with this figure [Staden] who is both religious and something of a con man, Jean [the Frenchman] in the film is a relatively emotionless character, and at no times does he demonstrate any religious inclinations. The faith which Jean relies for his survival rests not in God, but in his belief in the power of commodities (gunpowder and

gold), as well as in his technological expertise. (197-8)

What is of specific interest to my argument concerning redemption in Como era gostoso o meu francês is the fact that Staden constructs his worth on the basis of his spirit, for, materially, he has been stripped of any other manifestation of power. His redemption, therefore, rests on the recognition that he is more than human flesh and more than those that eat such flesh. The Frenchman, on the other hand, accrues his value and attempts to barter his freedom with his possessions and experience. He does not, like Staden, place himself beyond the Tupinamba's realm of power, but actively immerses himself within it, attempting to assure his survival by making his role in this realm indispensable. The Frenchman's redemption, therefore, is not a recognition of faith and constancy, but a recognition of debts paid in full. Pereira dos Santos thus quite brilliantly provides a forum through which the intersections and shared interests of the religious and the mercantile colonial enterprises may be studied.

Hans Staden's book, of course, is not the only source for Como era gostoso o meu francês. The film itself makes several citations, among which lies another very important source: Jean de Léry's Histoire d'un voyage fait en Brésil, first published in 1578. Since Pereira dos Santos wanted to merge a retelling of Staden's adventure with a narrative concerning the French Huguenot colony in Guanabara Bay, Léry's book provides the bulk of material for this second narrative thread. In the preface to this text, the Huguenot Léry describes the incentive for writing his chronicle, which, namely, is an attempt to address and correct misinformation promoted by the Jesuit André Thevet's book Cosmographie universelle, published in 1575. Léry formed part

of a colonizing mission in Brazil led by Admiral Nicolau Durand de Villegaignon. The colony was founded in 1555 and Léry joined the mission in 1557. After merely three years, the colony was disbanded and the Portuguese took over that part of Guanabara Bay. Thevet's book claims that the colony suffered from mutinous actions on the part of the Huguenots, a claim that Léry strongly refutes. His book, Histoire d'un voyage faict en Brésil, is an attempt to prove that it was Villegaignon's brutality and treachery that made the Huguenots flee for their lives. The book also offers ethnographic information about the Tupinamba that very likely proved useful to Pereira dos Santos as an addition to Staden's own observations.

Léry's text appears in Como era gostoso o meu francês, most generally, in the inclusion of the Frenchman as the protagonist. Rather than having a German or a Portuguese protagonist, using a Frenchman allows Pereira dos Santos to underscore the fact that many different groups were interacting and battling with one another for control of Brazil. More specifically, Léry is fundamental in providing a significant part of the text that makes up the narration and intertitles of the film. In the preface to his book, Léry includes a copy of a letter that Villegaignon wrote to John Calvin, claiming the successful progression of the Huguenot mission. This letter is quoted by a narratorial voice in the newsreel section of Como era gostoso o meu francês. The most significant contribution that Léry makes, however, lies in the newsreel's most important function. Darlene Sadlier makes the excellent observation that the newsreel is an abbreviated Histoire d'un voyage faict en Brésil (193-4). Villegaignon's letter is spoken by the narrator, however the images that accompany this narration all defy what is being said. Although I will speak about this

discrepancy at more length below, it should be noted that the visual depictions of the French mission all come from L ry's refutation of Villegaignon. In this way, Como era gostoso o meu franc s reenacts the polemic of the Huguenot colony and graphically depicts the problematics inherent in testimony.

Lu s Madureira provides an extensive listing of all the sources cited in Como era gostoso o meu franc s. Besides Staden's and L ry's texts, the list includes

the royal cosmographer Andr  Thevet's Cosmographie universelle (1575),.. the letters of the Jesuit missionaries Jos  de Anchieta and Ant nio N brega (two of Brazil's mythic founding fathers), the Hist ria of Brazil (1576) by Magalh es G ndavo, a 1587 treatise by the plantation owner Gabriel Soares de Sousa, and finally a 1560 letter to the king by Mem de S , third governor of Brazil. (269)

These early colonial writers contribute their words to frame the film's narrative and to situate it within an established historical context. Furthermore, Pereira dos Santos keeps this assortment of sources from becoming univocal and hegemonic by constantly reminding the viewer to compare that which s/he sees and hears, that which s/he experiences, to that which s/he reads. In this way, Brazilian history is transformed from an official narrative to a collection of perspectives and, most importantly, absences.

Traditionally, one would expect the figure of the Frenchman to act as arbiter of these absences. His presence on the screen, much as the presence of Staden in his own text or of the presence of the many sources within the film itself, might have served to alleviate conflicts created by difference, might have provided stability as a recognizable point of view. Pereira dos Santos teases his viewers' expectations,

however, by not making it possible to identify with the Frenchman in any significant way other than as a representation. This is intriguingly illustrated in the scene wherein the Frenchman, along with two Portuguese crewmen, is asked by the Tupinamba to prove his nationality. The Tupinamba ask the men to speak in order to ascertain whether or not they are Portuguese and, therefore, their enemy. The Portuguese men recite recipes (an example of Brazil's popular ridicule of Portugal) while the Frenchman recites an excerpt from a French poem concerning the European's difference from the Indigenous. Madureira identifies this excerpt as a "fragment from a 1558 'Ode sur les singularitez de la France Antarctique d'André Thevet' by Etienne Jodelle" (122). The excerpt itself is as follows: "Ces Barbares marchent tous nus;/ Et nous, nous marchons incogneus,/ Fardés, masquez" (Madureira, 122). Luís Madureira translates this as "These barbarians go around naked, but we walk unknown, made up, masked" (122). This quote has thematic significance since the Frenchman is, ironically, not recognized as French and is thereby imprisoned. Jodelle's rather romantic commentary on the artifice of European culture, its veiling of the self behind such rags as status and tradition, is here stripped of its metaphorical signification and made quite literal. The Frenchman is not, nor will be, recognized or identified as anything other than as a representative of a European colonial power, albeit a false one, even as he "goes around naked."

More significantly, though, this scene wherein the Frenchman is not recognized is illustrative of Nelson Pereira dos Santos' overall treatment of primary sources in this film. The use of colonial texts is not geared towards authenticating or validating the content of the film, just as the poem does not ultimately identify the

Frenchman. In most historical fictions one would expect references to primary sources to do just that. Just as the Frenchman is not given enough substance to command our sympathies, the primary sources exist as echoes that serve to accentuate rather than establish. Staden, Léry, Jodelle, and the others provide counterpoints through which the viewer is led to approach history as s/he does the film's narrative, as an ongoing discourse between experience and expectation. Pereira dos Santos' use of sources does not only cast doubt on historical empiricism. Most critics agree that the film challenges any hegemonic construction of history. One may conclude, then, that Como era gostoso o meu francês questions the validity of any approach to truth. I believe, however, that truth absolutely underscores this film, even as the film deconstructs its own sources, "cannibalizes" them as Madureira claims (122). The most significant function of these sources, therefore, is not authentication or its opposite, repudiation. Pereira dos Santos manipulates his sources in such a way as to prompt a critical viewing practice, a practice that compares perspectives, juxtaposes motivations, contextualizes actions and generally contributes to an active pursuit of knowledge and an active engagement with texts. We are not meant to derive truth from this fictional film, but we are meant to know that it exists. When discussing the sources and inspirations of Como era gostoso o meu francês it is important to consider that its primary sources are not the vessels of truth; they are, instead, elements to be sifted and weighed.

Since I have provided a detailed examination into the film's sources, I now propose to analyze how Como era gostoso o meu francês more generally depicts and utilizes history. First, I isolate the historical incidents depicted in the film from the

film's historical context. Then, I complete my study of the historical context by describing the history of Brazil during the time of the film's production. From these descriptions, I consider how the film creates links between the depicted history and the events concerning Brazil in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These links are essential for they are, ultimately, what enables viewers to contextualize the film and use it towards an analysis of present situations. The past and the present, as I argue below, are both continually in evidence in Como era gostoso o meu francês. Finally, I reflect upon some larger and more fundamental questions regarding the film and its relation to history, namely how the film represents historiography, how it both substantiates and questions historical processes, and finally, what is the film's relation to truth. This last seems to be the most imposing question surrounding scholarship on Como era gostoso o meu francês, whether it aims at verisimilitude or at metaphor, at authenticity or allegory. It is this question rather than its answer that I believe is the film's most relevant contribution to my study of redemption.

Set in the mid-sixteenth century, Como era gostoso o meu francês in part depicts the struggle between the Portuguese and the French for control of Guanabara Bay and the island of São Vicente. The Frenchman, banished from his French compatriots for unspecified reasons, works for his erstwhile enemy, the Portuguese, at the time of his capture by the Tupinamba. This is the first of three major historical struggles that the film directly cites.

The film also references incidents pertaining to the French Huguenot colony of Fort Coligny. This short-lived colony in "France Antarctique" (the French appellation for modern-day Brazil) struggled under the tyrannical command of its

founder Villegaignon. A Calvinist convert, Villegaignon sailed to Brazil to found a Protestant mission and settle a base for further French ventures. Jean de Léry wrote his Histoire d'un voyage as a recrimination against Villegaignon for the abuses he and other Huguenots suffered there. The film's initial news-reel inspired sequence cites the struggles at Fort Coligny by having a narratorial voice read Villegaignon's letter to John Calvin while showing contradictory images straight from Léry's account. Our first contact with the Frenchman, in fact, is his expulsion from the French colony. Tossed into the sea with a ball and chain strapped to his ankle, the Frenchman's figure negates Villegaignon's promise that dissenters are treated fairly.

Finally, the film depicts European interactions with Indigenous populations as well as inter-tribal conflicts. In order to maximize labor and trade, the Portuguese and French allied themselves to rival tribes, the Tupinamba (allied to the French) and the Tupiniquim (allied to the Portuguese). The Frenchman, of course, is mistaken as a Portuguese and made prisoner of the tribe allied to the French.

The Frenchman serves to remind the viewer of these historical struggles while also subtly distorting them. After all, he is French, but works for the Portuguese enemy; he is nearly killed by Villegaignon's men although he is said to illustrate "fair" treatment; and he is captured and eventually executed by the tribe allied to his country of birth. He is indicative, therefore, of both history and its fissures.

It is especially important to consider, too, that Como era gostoso o meu francês was produced at the height of a dictatorship. Brazil's most recent dictatorship (lasting from 1964 to roughly the mid-80s) was at its most repressive after the coup of 1969 and continuing on into the mid-70s. Not only was censorship a serious threat,

but artists and intellectuals faced exile and “disappearance.” A film that questions official history and challenges white hegemony, therefore, is unlikely to have found funding, let alone distribution in such a climate. However, Como era gostoso o meu francês was produced with state backing and was censored namely for its heavy use of nudity and not for its ideological content. There are two main reasons for this. First, the film was produced at a time when historical fiction feature films were being heavily promoted by the government. Finally, Como era gostoso o meu francês was, according to Pereira dos Santos, not seriously considered as social commentary. In other words, its critical positions escaped notice while such things as nudity and cannibalism became focal points.

Richard Gordon and Luís Madureira comment on the ways in which the government directly affected Como era gostoso o meu francês. Madureira notes that “after the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a series of incentives for their production and distribution, historical films retelling the official story of the nation and geared toward popular consumption became the rage” (120). Although Pereira dos Santos’ film challenged this “official story,” it received funding from Embrafilme (Madureira, 121), the state-sponsored film production company, and “became one of the biggest box office hits of 1972” (Madureira, 121). Whether or not its success had anything to do with its subversive qualities, Como era gostoso o meu francês has since been acknowledged to be a hallmark of Cinema Novo precisely because of its manipulation of such genres as historical fiction towards social and political critique.

This manipulation is, of course, at the forefront of the director’s agenda. Nelson Pereira dos Santos had every intention of subverting the government’s criteria

for sponsorship. He claims that “[t]he government financed historical films, but it wanted the history to be within official parameters – the hero, the father of the country, all those things we have been told since elementary school” (Gordon, 113). These parameters were stretched in ways that escaped censorial notice, and a film was produced problematizing the very history the government wanted celebrated. The government’s promotion of history is particularly interesting in that it supposedly does everything that this film challenges: a historical film solidifies a national foundation; it turns the audience’s attention to the past and away from the present; and it promotes the progressivist assumption that the present regime is the culmination of all past struggles and glories. Furthermore, Gordon cites Robert Stam and Ismail Xavier to point out that “[b]y sponsoring serious, mildly subversive literary and historical films, the regime entered into a kind of accord with the better-behaved of the opposition filmmakers, permitting some critique as long as it was confined to respectable literary adaptations, or to historical dramas set in the safely remote past” (113). In this way, the government could claim that the film’s very existence is evidence of the regime’s leniency.

The rationale for the film’s production during the military dictatorship, whether it was because of governmental interest or because of a failure on the government’s part to recognize the film’s implicit ideological critique, is understood by the director himself to have been a critical factor in the very creation of the film. As such, the film is a reaction to the limitations imposed upon it. Pereira dos Santos argues that directors during this time “learned to turn the government’s interest in historical themes to our own purposes, expanding the official parameters” (Gordon,

85). I find this to be a constructive way of considering Como era gostoso o meu francês, as an “expansion of official parameters.” It includes official history, but it creates a platform large enough wherein this history is seen to be partial and incomplete. Interestingly, by expanding the parameters in this way, history, itself, is camouflaged and the film is granted the status of fiction. Pereira dos Santos exclaims that “the historical dimension of How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman went largely unrecognized in official circles. It was viewed as a fiction – as if official history were not itself a fiction” (Gordon, 86). Ultimately, then, Como era gostoso o meu francês was successfully produced and distributed in this repressive climate because it was historical, and thus fell under the government’s criteria for promotion, and because it wasn’t historical in that it did not utilize the official history as its foundation and guide and was, therefore, rendered fictional.

Both of these historical contexts, that depicted in the film and that surrounding the film’s production, are described here in paradoxical terms in order to accentuate the ways in which these contexts may be seen to overlap. It is most certainly arguable that Como era gostoso o meu francês disguises its critique of the military regime under a historical façade, and that the film recognizes colonialism as a paradigm for Brazilian post-colonial reality. In other words, Pereira dos Santos creates a very definite link between depicted and experienced histories, a link that is meant to facilitate the transference of the viewers’ critical viewing practices from the film to her/his own society.

Richard Peña nurtures a comparison of both historical contexts by pointing out how essential the theme of “presentness” is to Como era gostoso o meu francês.

He writes that

[t]he film begins with a declaration: ‘Latest news from Terra Firme.’ This statement falls outside of the body of the letter that follows, and thus forms part of the screenplay written by the director, who here begins to establish one of the film’s major themes: the possible implications of this story about the colonial past for the Brazil of today (Terra Firme was one of the colonial names of Brazil). The film is announced as the ‘latest news,’ suggesting that in a way we must see it as a statement about the present. This motif of ‘presentness’ or actuality is especially reemphasized throughout by the exceptional camera work of Dib Lutfi. The long, uninterrupted hand-held shots, quick zooms, and use of natural light are clearly reminiscent of the techniques of cinema vérité. (192)

The motif of “presentness” is especially important as a way to deconstruct the “official” quality of history. By blurring the boundaries between past, present, and future and making history contemporaneous with the viewer’s experienced reality, Pereira dos Santos makes every one (depicted, representing, or viewing) equally equipped to reconsider that which s/he is shown, and he makes everyone equally responsible for what has happened and its consequences. Unlike other historical films, Como era gostoso o meu francês does not provide such “entries” into the past as characters with which viewers can easily identify or emotions and situations viewers can recognize. We are not thus swept away to another time. Rather, we are

presented with the past in the most direct ways possible – through primary sources and an anthropological quasi-documentary. Because of this, the viewer is always conscious of both history and her/his experience as “presents” that must be simultaneously considered.

Because of this “presentness,” it is quite possible and profitable to actively compare the depicted history with that of the film’s time of production. Darlene Sadlier does just this in an in-depth and comprehensive way. Citing Raymond Williams’ belief that “[t]he traditional culture of society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation” (Sadlier, 204), Sadlier actively uses the depicted history of Como era gostoso o meu francês to decipher Pereira dos Santos’ interpretation of Brazil’s position under the dictatorial regime. She finds such a process to be key to a serious engagement with Pereira dos Santos’ film. She argues that

[t]hroughout it [the film] suggests that the historical archive is as riven by conflict as contemporary politics, and it makes clear that the country’s past and present-day realities are not distinct. Although the major historical trauma it exposes is a familiar one of European domination and genocide, it suggests that this irreducible violence keeps returning and repeating itself in the here and now; meanwhile, it converts the traumatic event described by the Staden text – the cannibalist act – into a provocative metaphor for resistance to a modern society of global capital and foreign consumption. (192)

One must, following Sadlier's argument, read late-twentieth century history into this depiction of sixteenth-century Brazil. To see the film as merely a representation of the past is to fail to provide the context through which this depicted past can resonate. "After all," Sadlier notes, "no matter what changes modernity has wrought, certain things have remained the same: Brazil's economy is still troubled, and in one sense the film's depiction of a rich local culture under siege is equally true for the colonial period, for the 1970s, and for the present day" (204). The past and present are therefore mutually informative elements in Como era gostoso o meu francês.

The comparison between the depicted history and the history at time of production that Sadlier develops most is that pertaining to the genocide of the Tupinamba. The continued extermination of Indigenous communities and cultures is of especial interest to Nelson Pereira dos Santos himself. The dubious presence (or absence) of Indigenous figures in official historiography is something he actively challenges. He claims that

[t]oday, for example, it is clearer than ever that the indigenous tribes are an integral part of our history, yet there are Marxist thinkers in Brazil who ignore the existence of Indian culture and its influence on national culture. There are those who still maintain that the history of Brazil begins with European colonization. According to that view, social history dates from 1500. The Indian disappears, as if he has had nothing to offer. (Gordon, 114)

In Como era gostoso o meu francês, however, the Indigenous becomes foregrounded and Tupinamba culture is made the norm to which the Frenchman must adhere. Ironically, the tribe's eventual genocide is also manifest. The viewer does not

witness any violence inflicted upon the Tupinamba by Europeans, however the extermination of this and other tribes underscores the entire narrative. We know, for instance, the import of the curse the Frenchman delivers to his captive, that his “brothers” will, indeed, avenge his death with countless deaths. Although it is unlikely he himself will be considered, the Frenchman’s prophecy of vengeance is recognized by the viewer as established history. One cannot, therefore, watch this film without keeping in mind the tribe’s genocide and the current situation of Indigenous communities in Brazil. Darlene Sadlier elaborates on this by analyzing the film’s final quote (written by Mem de Sá): “There I fought on the sea so that no Tupiniquim remained alive. The dead stretched rigidly along the shoreline, covering nearly a league” (Sadlier, 200-1). Sadlier writes that

one of the most important functions of the quote from Mem de Sá is to remind Brazilian audiences that their national identity, even down to the present day, has depended on the continued extermination of the ‘New World’s’ original inhabitants. At the time How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman was made, the Brazilian government was in the midst of a drive to uproot indigenous communities in the interior who were standing in the way of the trans-Amazon highway; these people were being not only physically uprooted, but also violently forced, quite against their inclinations or abilities, to become ‘modern.’ (201)

As mentioned earlier, violence towards a tribe with which Pereira dos Santos had previously worked was one of the film’s catalysts. Indigenous genocide thereby prompts the film’s narrative and the story of its construction. Ultimately, then, Como

era gostoso o meu francês depends upon the viewer to connect and give meaning to the many deaths that separate the depicted time and the time of the film's production.

Upon discussing the ways in which Pereira dos Santos represents history, most critics mention the fact that the film makes frequent use of discordant images to offset narration containing colonial writings. This practice is usually understood to be the film's most blatant challenge to official versions of history. Bruce Williams, Richard Peña, and Theodore Robert Young all make this case. Williams says that

[i]n the initial sequence, for example, discrepancies between letters and chronicles presented in voice-over (which narrate the experience of the Huguenots in Brazil) and the visual depiction of events impel the assumption of a critical stance and prohibit the suturing of the viewer into the diegetic realm (characteristic of the classical cinema). The often ironic counterpoint between sound and image thus encourages distance rather than identification. (204-5)

By making sound and image discordant elements, history as a methodically accurate and, above all, empirically verifiable discipline is problematized. This has obvious ideological implications. As Williams elaborates, "the spectator becomes conscious of his/her viewing strategies and of the impossibility of facile acceptance of the pseudo-newsreel as documentary" (205). The distancing between viewer and narrative is thus a means towards fostering a critical viewing practice that can be applied towards deciphering other forms of "official" information. Theodore Robert Young reaches a similar conclusion when he states that "the voice-over narration... describes the official version of events, in striking contrast to the images on the screen" (84). "Official" in both these critics' readings signifies deceit and purposeful

omission, an obscuration of reality towards promoting state interests. One may suppose from this reading that the voice-over narration, although from a contemporary primary source, is less legitimate a source of truth than the images that repudiate it. In this way, truth is something that is “shown,” something that words conceal. Finally, Richard Peña similarly concludes that the discordant images and words challenge official history. He writes that

[t]he official version of the conquest and colonization of Brazil – official in the sense that documents like the Villegaignon letter do indeed form the colonial historical record – is certainly not what we are being shown. Immediately thereafter we are given the film’s first intertitle. The intertitles consist of quoted extracts from the colonial legacy of documents, letters, and diaries used as ironic, ‘historical’ counterpoints to the events depicted. (193)

As Peña, Young, and Williams illustrate, Como era gostoso o meu francês is generally understood to posit a challenge to historiography by its consistent contradiction of its own archive. Ultimately, then, the film places its narrative within a historical context in order to challenge that very context. The narrative is, finally, discordant with the history it represents, just as the images are discordant to the voice-over narration.

Darlene Sadlier presents an insightful counter-argument to this in her article “The Politics of Adaptation.” As I have mentioned above, Sadlier points out that there is no part of the film that directly opposes history. Regarding the commonly-held argument illustrated by Williams, Young, and Peña, Sadlier claims that, “the film’s technique is more complicated, involving something other than an opposition

between lying 'history' and transparent 'reality.' Despite their sly humor and evident irony, the images we see on the screen are no less 'historical' than the off-screen voice on the soundtrack" (193). She proves her point by tracing such images as that of the Frenchman being thrown into the water to Jean de Léry's descriptions of the treatment met to his Huguenot companions by Villegaignon. In other words, Pereira dos Santos is not challenging history by presenting discordant images; rather, he is complexifying history, juxtaposing one version with another. Sadlier says that

[p]erhaps the best way of explaining the opening of the film would be to say that it is made up of two or more historical documents in ironic juxtaposition (framed by a burlesque newsreel) and that it favors one document over the others by granting it the status of photographic "truth." At any rate, it would be a mistake to view How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman as a straightforward attempt to mock the archival record. Certainly it mocks historical personages (all of them European), but on one level it is a fairly respectful attempt to adapt or interpret historical narratives. (194)

Such a reading, rather than reducing history to manipulation and deceit, opens up the possibility of a multivocal and dynamic history, one formed through the juxtaposition of sources rather than the validation of one over the other. The "truth" of the Fort Coligny story is not to be found in one source, but in the comparison of perspectives and descriptions. An effective reading of the ways in which Como era gostoso o meu francês might be said to represent history, then, may be understanding the film as an encounter of sources. "In other words," Darlene Sadlier concludes, "How Tasty Was

My Little Frenchman offers not so much a denunciation of history as a new reading of historic sources, adapted in the form of a quasidocumentary narrative about the encounter between cultures” (194).

Other than the film’s treatment of history, the most hotly debated topic is the related question as to whether one should view Como era gostoso o meu francês as an attempt towards realism, an authentic portrayal of sixteenth-century Brazil, or as a parody of realism, an allegorical, perhaps, depiction of cultural exchange and betrayal. Such a question is seemingly easy to answer as historical films usually make it clear as to how one should approach the veracity of what is depicted. Tone is one such marker. The tone of Como era gostoso o meu francês is not, however, so easily identifiable. It certainly utilizes sarcasm and irony, and may therefore be understood to question its historical content, however the film also goes to painstaking lengths towards authenticity, as may be demonstrated by the fact that the dialogue is mainly in Tupi. Scholars, themselves, are usually completely divided on this issue, some basing their whole arguments on the film’s challenge to historicity while others strongly proclaim the film to be extremely accurate on all historical counts. Nelson Pereira dos Santos himself has “insist[ed] that How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman was an ‘anthropological’ as opposed to an ‘ideological’ project” (Sadlier, 203) thereby implying that his primary goal in making the film was to depict culture as accurately and objectively as possible.

Critics who find the film to be “an accurate and impartial portrait of the Tupinamba” (Gordon, 111) agree with Pereira dos Santos’ stated goal of providing an almost ethnographic representation of the ancient tribe. Pereira dos Santos’ self-

proclaimed “cinéma anthropologique” (Gordon, 111) has been hailed by some to have successfully combined two potentially very different genres – the historical fiction and the documentary. It is not a stretch, then, to argue that the film not only borrows narrative content from Staden and Léry and other early chroniclers of colonial Brazil, but that it also mirrors the anthropological properties of these same, wherein customs, flora and fauna are minutely, if not impartially, described. Richard Gordon cites a critic, de Sousa, who “insists that ‘Based on anthropological research, and even with dialogue in Tupi, the movie offers an ethnography of Tupinamba culture’” (111). The amount of research necessary for the making of Como era gostoso o meu francês is clearly evident, and its intent on representing the Tupinamba as realistically as possible, and not as the savages they were described as in the colonial writings, is deducible. In fact, one of the most important functions of the film is to showcase an alternative portrayal of the Indigenous people and customs to that promoted by the European colonizers. John Mraz, for example, lauds Pereira dos Santos’ efforts in “focusing on the Indian perspective of the ‘discovery’ of America” (Gordon, 114). This corroborates arguments that characterize the film’s use of its primary sources as counterpoints rather than as faithful portrayals.

Luís Madureira’s argument concerning Como era gostoso o meu francês, however, strongly negates any sense of the realistic portrayal of the Tupinamba. He claims that “[t]he anthropophagic politics of the film become a self-conscious joke, in other words, and the reconstruction of the primitive world is once again revealed as a masquerade. The luminous writing of the intertitles thus becomes the only space in the film where the primitive lingers...” (125). To claim that the “true” Indigenous

culture lies only in the interstices of the intertitles, perhaps in the spaces and silences created through the discordances between primary source and filmic representation, is a dramatic shift from claiming that Como era gostoso o meu francês provides an accurate portrayal of the Tupinamba. Many critics have also noted the film's casting as posing serious doubt upon any attempt at authenticity. Luís Madureira calls the actors who play the Tupinamba the "Indians from Ipanema" (123) and Richard Gordon cites a critic, Greenspun, who claims that "the verisimilitude [of the film]... is something of a joke. The Indians are middle-class white Brazilians (ordinary men and exceptionally beautiful, young women) stripped down and reddened up for the occasion" (111). Madureira argues that the film's inauthenticity is, in itself, a comment on colonialism and its systematic portrayal of the Indigenous. The Tupinamba in the film are not, therefore, the Tupinamba as they had existed, but the represented Tupinamba of colonial literature. They were and are reproductions without clear referents. Madureira writes that "[t]he return to an 'original' colonial situation thus comes to be performed not under the sign of History but Allegory" (123). Although I do believe that Pereira dos Santos was not trying to call attention to the "inauthenticity" of his casting (his insistence on the film's accuracy makes this point clear), and was not, as Madureira claims, deconstructing the image of the Indigenous so much as giving it substance, it is, in my mind, impossible to see this film without the question of "truth" arising. Therefore, I find it most productive not to try to claim that the film succeeds in producing verifiable portraits or that it fails to do so, but rather to consider why the establishment of truth is so central to our understanding of Como era gostoso o meu francês.

I will return to an analysis of how truth functions in the film, however, in order to establish the political and cultural significance of this concept as regards Como era gostoso o meu francês, I would like to first discuss Michel de Montaigne's famous essay "Of Cannibals" and to revisit a text which strongly influenced Pereira dos Santos' depiction of redemption: Jean de Léry's accounts of his time among the Tupinamba in the mid-sixteenth century (to be found in his History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America). This latter text is, as I have mentioned above, directly cited in Pereira dos Santos' film, providing a basis for the depictions of Tupinamba culture and for the use of this depiction to further investigations on authority and moral responsibility. Léry's text not only provides a first-hand account of the social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual manifestations of the Tupinamba, it also makes clear that this account is constructed in large part to correct historical inaccuracies (specifically those of cosmographer André Thevet) and to illuminate how these inaccuracies and others of their kind derive from a practice of defamation and violence (Léry's "Preface" to this text is precisely devoted to a disclosure of these motives). As a Huguenot and a documenter of the atrocities committed upon Protestants through the sanction of the French crown and the Catholic church, Léry had much at stake in offering his observations of Indigenous-American customs through a critical and, indeed, condemning examination of French imperialism. Sent to "Antarctic France" as a Calvinist missionary, and witness to the opportunism and hypocrisy of French economic and political foreign policy, Léry demanded that colonial ventures uphold their moral and spiritual obligations, and, thereby, infuses his American treatise with invocations to

redemption. The insistence, then, that Tupinamba practices (particularly those understood as “savage”) be considered, not in light of their inferiority to their European counterparts, but as a means through which to examine the injustices and atrocities in evidence in contemporary France, therefore, very much informs Léry’s accounts. The following quotation confirms this insistence, specifically as it applies to American practices of cannibalism:

So let us henceforth no longer abhor so very greatly the cruelty of the anthropophagous – that is, man-eating – savages. For since there are some here in our midst even worse and more detestable than those who, as we have seen, attack only enemy nations, while the ones over here have plunged into the blood of their kinsmen, neighbors, and compatriots, one need not go beyond one’s own country, nor as far as America, to see such monstrous and prodigious things. (133)

Montaigne furthers this comparative analysis of European and American ethics and morals by examining the philosophical traditions that construct “barbarism” and its place against “civilization.” Like Léry, Montaigne considers Tupinamba social behavior, such as polygamy, recreation, and, of course, cannibalism, to reflect upon morés, including monogamy, labour, and an abhorrence to the physical body, that have shaped contemporary European self-identification. Using a variety of rhetorical strategies such as irony, paradox, and allusion to make his claim about the “civility” of savages and the “savagery” of the civilized, Montaigne deconstructs the structures that place one culture over another and assures hegemony. He creates a sort of standard of the indigenous culture, forcing his European readership to compare themselves to Americans rather than comparing

what is presumed to be an inferior race to a superior one. For example, regarding the displays of unshakeable valor and honor among the indigenous prisoners of the Tupinambas, he sarcastically claims that “[t]ruly here are real savages by our standards; for either they must be thoroughly so, or we must be; there is an amazing distance between their character and ours” (1396-7). In this way, Montaigne affirms distinction, as do the vast majority of colonial and colonialist writers, but challenges the values that define such distinctions. What we are left with after reading “Of Cannibals” is a sense of difference and a sense of lack, this latter sense fueling an investigation “of civilization” rather than “of cannibals.”

Ultimately, of course, both Léry’s book and Montaigne’s essay say more about their own cultures than they do about the “other” culture they depict. Although Léry might not have agreed with such an argument, Montaigne is evidently conscious of his essay as a sort of “self-reflection.” In a very significant sense, Como era gostoso o meu francês also utilizes this strategy, and does so to consciously offset contemporary Brazilian understandings of their location in time (history) and space (geography). The identificatory strategies the film provides are, therefore, complicated and unstable. As I have argued above, redemption necessitates a construction of difference, one that this film utilizes to promote a continuing engagement with questions of belonging and dis-belonging.

The film chronicles the attempts of the Frenchman to both escape his imprisonment from the Tupinamba and to gain their trust by adopting their cultural and political traits. As such, the Frenchman hopes to survive by strategically enacting difference and similarity. This enactment of conflicting identities is highlighted by

the narrative structure that foregrounds, at first, the Frenchman's distinction from his captors, then his assimilation into their culture, and, finally, his return to an allegiance with colonizing powers as he discovers that his adoption of Tupinamba customs will not ensure his survival at the hands of the tribe.

To complicate the film's treatment of this kind of indefinite identification, the Frenchman, whose namelessness indicates an identity based solely on national and cultural distinction (a distinction which, in turn, is misread by the tribe who take him for someone of Portuguese extraction), often performs difference and similarity simultaneously. Two examples from the film illustrate this double performance and both emphasize the Frenchman's use of his European background and experience to assure him acceptance by the tribe. For one, the Frenchman utilizes his knowledge at making gunpowder for the tribe's benefit in their on-going war against their rivals, the Tupiniquim, thereby ensuring his utility and the necessity of his presence and expertise. While producing gunpowder, however, he shrouds his knowledge in mystic lore, creating no doubt that the knowledge is inseparable from his being and that, without him, the tribe cannot effectively win their war. In this way, the Frenchman distinguishes himself from his captors while attempting to ingrain his knowledge and strategy within what he understands to be the tribe's technological *modus operandi*.

The second example of simultaneous distinction and sameness is the Frenchman's relationship with and utilization of his appointed wife, Seboipepe. While maintaining the tribal power relations that ensure her obligation to him, the Frenchman also interprets her acts as coded with fidelity and constancy. Sure that her

subservience will help him escape, the Frenchman performs both a tribal courtship and a European-based romance, thereby merging the two into a love that will guarantee his survival. On the day of his appointed death, the Frenchman distinguishes the two forms of relation with his wife and claims that, because of their love, she cannot turn him over to his executioners. He attempts, therefore, to distinguish their relation from those bound by tribal dictates while placing their relation within a context of female subservience he believes Seboipepe understands. Needless to say, both his conflicting performances of distinction and similarity fail as he is killed, albeit with the opportunity to die as a warrior, and is last shown being eaten by his widow.

Pereira dos Santos' use of the protagonist to disturb the process of identification furthers the viewer's need to ascertain truth. The title itself is indicative of the dissonance of our expectations to the experience of watching the film. Despite the fact that "gostoso" means "savory" in culinary and gastronomic terms, it also means "delicious" in sensual and sexual terms. Because of the Frenchman's affair with Seboipepe and with our own expectations of how romance gets traditionally scripted on film, we, as viewers, expect love to conquer appetite, for "gostoso" to, after all, refer to the sexual prowess of the protagonist. It is, therefore, important to note that the film ends with a shot of Seboipepe feasting on her lover's body just as it begins with her perspective since the title is told from her point of reference. The hero of the story, then, is taken out of not only his own cultural context but the context of heroes in Western narrative traditions. In effect, we discover that what we

have heard and what we know is unstable at best and that we must explore once again those terrains that were assumed to be fully explained.

This is not to say that Como era gostoso o meu francês relativizes truth nor is it to say that the film negates its existence. The film, as I have argued, is very much concerned with truth, but it does not offer itself as an example thereof. Rather, Pereira dos Santos uses his film as a forum through which truth may be examined. By depicting historical inconsistencies, the filmmaker attempts to call attention to that which neither the film nor the historical texts represent. The film may be understood to spur the viewer with questions rather than with facts, with absences rather than with presences. Truth is, in this way, a very important facet of this film because it is that which the film presents as a sort of counterpoint to itself. Just as we have been trained to comparatively consider history, we are ultimately compelled to comparatively consider the film. The film does not exist in isolation. It is a conglomeration of representations that must be compared to other representations of Brazilian “origins” in order for it to hold meaning. It is through these comparisons, this active negotiation of Brazilian abuses, promises, and silences, that change is fostered. Rather than redeeming Brazil and its history, Pereira dos Santos creates a forum through which we may compare “Brazil” with itself.

To conclude, I reference, once again, the Frenchman’s plea for redemption at the film’s end. One should note that this declaration, like the other examples of simultaneous distinction and “incorporation” that I have noted, also is more ambiguous than its narrative context may imply. Through Hans Staden’s account, we are informed of the protocol to be found in Tupinamba rituals and social

engagements, of which the demeanor and actions of a prisoner of the tribe are elaborated upon. We are told, for example, that prisoners are expected to defy and condemn their Tupinamba captors upon execution. Staden writes that after taunts and threats, "...the prisoner replies: 'When I am dead I shall still have many to avenge my death'" (161). This reply is essentially that which the Frenchman makes, placing him squarely within the traditions of Tupinamba culture as we know them from Staden. The Frenchman is, therefore, both distinguishing himself from his captors by promising his redemption, a distinction that specifies the superiority of the European over the American identity, and he is also performing an expected, culturally-determined role by demanding revenge of the Tupinamba. It is not an altogether simple or wholly accurate claim, then, that the Frenchman is acting out of a European identification when he states that the tribe will pay for his execution.

However, since the devastation of indigenous peoples and their cultures is, supposedly, well-known to the film's viewer, his damnation is given the weight of providence. At the time of the execution, what has been our almost complicit enjoyment¹³ of the Frenchman's powerlessness is cast in the light of the present predicament of native peoples. We, as viewers, know that what he says will come to pass, that the distinction he is inscribing will be terrible and irrevocable. We may also recognize that what he says is inscribed within a particular social convention, and, therefore disassociated from his specific experience. There is, then, a presentiment in

¹³ Louise Spence and Robert Stam discuss this "complicit enjoyment" as a subversion of colonial narratives of power. They write that "[t]he film plays ironically on the traditional identification with European heroes by placing the camera, initially, on American shores, so that the Amerindian discovers the European rather than the reverse. By the final shot, which shows the Frenchman's Tupinamba lover dining on him while manifesting no emotion beyond ordinary culinary pleasure, our 'mutual' identification with the coloniser has been so completely subverted that we are quite indifferent to his fate" (246). I argue that our "indifference" stops short when we consider the impact of redemption in the film's articulation of history.

the Frenchman's condemnation that must still be interpreted and considered comparatively and contextually. This explicit request for redemption is the final moment when we are forced to contextualize the film and its premise to our own experience of history and political experience. The fact that the scene incorporates a plea for redemption is all the more important, because we are made to question what, exactly, has been and needs to be redeemed. This scene affords a forum for our own understandings of present circumstances to share a space with history. What makes this scene so powerful is that we discover the present in the past, that we are forced to make a connection, and perhaps a distinction, between what has happened and what is happening¹⁴. Ultimately, Como era gostoso o meu francês demands an engagement that acknowledges redemption's foundational place in colonial and national narratives, while fostering a critique of history and culture that has, at its core, an understanding of the instability and flexibility of identity and identification in the constructions of belonging.

By depicting a discovery narrative in this way, Pereira dos Santos affords his viewers the opportunity to de-mythologize an origin, to reconsider this origin in cultural and political terms. As such, the film is a treatment of redemption and its place in historiography. Rather than redeeming Brazilian history, presenting as viable another venue towards recuperating the distinction and linkage between origins and

¹⁴ It is, therefore, very important to note that this film was made shortly after the worst phase of the dictatorship in Brazil. Due to highly restrictive censorship, many filmmakers were impeded from portraying certain elements of contemporary Brazilian society and policy, and chose, like Pereira dos Santos, to explore allegorical and historical frameworks in which to comment on Brazilian culture. The scene I have just described, then, is incredibly important since it provides the opportunity for a direct connection to be made between allegory and reality, between history and everyday life.

destinations which, as I have argued, is redemption's intrinsic goal, Pereira dos Santos has produced a forum through which redemption itself may be scrutinized.

Chapter Five:

Redemption, History, and the Indigenous in Cabeza de Vaca

Alan Morinis, whose work has been invaluable in shaping my own understandings of the spatiality of redemption, writes:

It is conventional to refer to sacred places of pilgrimage as centers, and from a social and especially a cultural point of view, the image of the center is valid. But centrality is only one spatial concept that is tapped in locating the sacred place in relation to its fields. Geographically, the sacred place is actually seldom central. Most commonly, the journey takes the pilgrim to the top (mountain peak), edge (seashore, forest), or beyond (desert, uninhabited region). (“Introduction,” 19)

Morinis points out an intriguing paradox in pilgrimage spatiality, that of the spiritual and meaningful center lying at the borders or outskirts of social spheres. Judith Adler notes, too, that early medieval Christian pilgrims often performed the roles of hermits, escaping the temptations of society to wander in the wilderness utilizing John the Baptist or Abraham as models. These ascetics played important roles in defining the boundaries of society and social discourse, and were often sought after by believers wishing to find their place in a Christian topos. Adler writes that:

[t]he Greek term *xeniteia* (from *xenos*, stranger), translated into Latin as *peregrinatio*, is of military origin, referring to a mercenary’s stay outside his country. In ascetic usage it denoted voluntary expatriation and a determination to live, literally, or figuratively, as a stranger in an alien land. Insofar

as homeless vagrancy was the most extreme form of poverty in the ancient world, and expulsion rather than imprisonment was one of the most common forms of punishment, dramatic acts of voluntary exile served as an eloquent performative discourse about radical renunciation, humiliation, and reliance upon God alone. (32-3)

The contention that redemption can only be found when one leaves places that are known and frequented, when one ventures out into what is unknown, compels one to believe that redemption is a process wherein centers of meaning are re-located and re-contextualized, wherein one effectively participates in the creation of a center of meaning through dislocation. In this way, redemption is something that is not fixed in place (insofar as it necessitates mobility) yet it is accessible (since it is, as Adler maintains, a practice of belief and a performance of re-signification). The frontier, therefore, plays an instrumental role in pilgrimage discourse and practice because it delineates limits – the frontier is the separation between sacred and mundane, between civilization and wilderness; it is the measure of progress as well as the measure of spiritual need. The frontier, in a very significant way, allows one to distinguish where one has been from where one is going and it allows one to incorporate this distinction into lived experience. The body that reaches the frontier and, perhaps, crosses it, is a body that has been placed within a new context and is, therefore, a body whose return reinscribes the limits that define belonging.

In colonial discourse, the frontier also marks distinction – distinctions of progress, property, and potential. Much as in pilgrimage traditions, the frontier in colonizing institutions is not geographically bound and must be continually re-inscribed and re-maintained. It is forever shifting, encroaching on settlements or

receding with the advent of conquest. The a-locality of frontiers threatens, of course, the spatial fixability of colonies but it also functions to concretize civilization and civilizing imperatives in space. The frontier effectively places and re-places what is beyond and within, and it does so *precisely because* the frontier is not geographically placeable. The frontier is at once where beyond and within meet as much as it is where they diverge. The frontier therefore does not occupy place so much as it provides the space for distinction. Michel de Certeau observes that the frontier marks a space “created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them” (127). The frontier is in this way a narrated and narrative space, a space that is defined through its practice as meaning. The frontier affords communicability and distinction; it, therefore, presents a context wherein one body may be defined through its interaction with another. Since colonization, as I have argued, is very much concerned with the above kind of definition, the frontier provides an encouraging means of creating and re-creating locations of power.

Redemption, whether economic, political, cultural, or spiritual, depends upon an understanding of the frontier. If an original state is to be sought after or employed as a direction, there needs to be some consensus as to its limits, its parameters. Entering into sacred ground, like crossing frontiers, is transcendent because the mobile body is now a signifier of where s/he has been and wishes to go. It is the frontier, after all, that changes bodies in motion into pilgrims and pioneers, and it is this frontier that is continually referenced as the structuring mechanism of these bodies’ movements. It is what defines the journey as redemptive. It is so essential in

redemption work, that it must continually be performed and re-performed, and since it is not, and never has been, fixed spatially, there will always be frontiers to cross¹⁵.

Cabeza de Vaca (Dir. Nicolás Echevarría, 1991) depicts the captive narrative recorded by Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the treasurer of an early Spanish colonizing venture to Florida. A story whose plot is intricately concerned with exploring frontiers and borders, the narrative follows Cabeza de Vaca from his shipwreck on Florida shores, through his enslavement and apprenticeship by an Indigenous sorcerer and his disabled assistant, on to the protagonist's journey across the southern regions of the United States, and finally ends with his geographical if not spiritual reabsorption into Spanish domain through his arrival at a newly ordained Spanish mission in what is today the area containing northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest. A film that is highly mystical in nature, Cabeza de Vaca equates the protagonist's journey west with an increasing sense of communion with the lands and peoples he encounters and with an increasing awareness of his power as a spiritual leader and healer. Cabeza de Vaca begins the film as a member of the Spanish landed classes, clearly distinguished through class and bearing from his companions, the few survivors of the shipwreck, and ends the film as a nameless, haggard old man, whose clothing, demeanor and tentative use of the Spanish language stand him apart from those who were once his compatriots. In short, the film traces a series of frontier crossings, each of which intimately changes the protagonist because it forces him to renegotiate his identity in markedly different contexts.

¹⁵ It is a truism that colonizers anguish over the apparent "diminishing" of the world, where there is no longer anything, anyone, or anywhere to discover. This would mean that the frontier has finally disappeared, that there are no more frontiers left to cross. I would contest that there are now more frontiers than there ever has been, and I base this belief in what I consider to be an increasing need to articulate and perform distinction.

Another way to consider the narrative progress of the film and its depictions of frontiers is to note how the film continuously places Spain as a marker of identity. In a very real sense, the film traces Spanish codes of power (religious, economic, political, and cultural) through its applications and misapplications in American terrain. As such, what is a hopelessly inappropriate application (Spanish ways and distinctions bear no meaning in an American context) is turned into a violently oppressive system of displacement and subjugation (Spanish ways and distinctions bear the *only* meaning in an American context). The film, then, represents how this process of empowerment occurs and it does so through its contrast with the almost diametrically opposite progression of the protagonist. From the beginning of the film, the demarcation of Spain from what lies beyond it is already very much in question. Captain Narvaez, as he abandons his men, and his responsibility for them, after the shipwreck exclaims, “[e]s el fin de la España¹⁶!” Although his words mark his breach of any contractual obligation he may have, they also indicate that the narrative begins where Spain ends and that this frontier will be of utmost importance in locating the subsequent events in relation to this re-contextualization. At the end of the film, of course, Spain has overcome its limits and has effectively met Cabeza de Vaca at the end of his journeys. As he confronts an officer in charge of building the mission, he asks “[t]u eres España? Esto, esto es España? Aquello [the monumental cathedral under construction] es España?¹⁷” Cabeza de Vaca is here berating the officer for enforcing a signification that, based on the protagonist’s experience, is antithetical with this new terrain he has discovered, but his words also can be read as posing a

¹⁶ My rough translation of this quote is “[t]his is the end of Spain!”

¹⁷ My rough translation of this quote is “[a]re you Spain? Is this, is this Spain? Is that Spain?”

serious question. Where, exactly, is Spain? Can Spain be transplanted? Can it be left behind? From the end of Spain to its incipient presence at the end of his eight-year journey away from it, the frontier that has been used throughout the film to distinguish property and custom has, after all, made a progress of its own. In a sense, then, Cabeza de Vaca cannot escape Spain and, more significantly, neither can America. Cabeza de Vaca is always displaced, as a representative of the Spanish crown in indigenous lands and as a representative of America in the Spanish colonies. In a very literal sense, therefore, he cannot cross the frontiers that mark him from those he encounters. He is forever beyond.

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's written accounts of his experience in the Americas, compiled in Naufragios, are, the primary basis of the film, Cabeza de Vaca. His own depiction of his separation and reintegration into Spanish terrain and culture also emphasizes the distinctions and necessary adaptations he developed in order to survive both physically and spiritually. This chapter considers the ways in which the film presents Cabeza de Vaca's journey west in terms of spiritual advancement, equating his connections with the terrain and peoples he meets with steps towards achieving redemption. More specifically, the following pages explore the reliance upon history that Echevarría assumes with this process and the implications this assumption has on an understanding of how both American terrain and peoples function to advance growth. Although quite different ideologically, both texts enact colonialist methods of distinction by constructing American spaces and cultures as, ultimately, distant and foreign. Furthermore, the Americas, and Americans, are located by the film in realms that exist not only beyond Europe, but

beyond reality, as Cabeza de Vaca charts the title character's adoption of supernatural powers as part of his assimilation into the New World. Finally, Cabeza de Vaca's character development underscores the ways in which Echevarría constructs redemption as an approach through which history and nationhood may be claimed and fostered and through which the modern subject may be solidified. Cabeza de Vaca's transformations offer a comforting sense of distance from the horrors of colonialism while still providing a medium through which to acknowledge these horrors. In effect, then, not only does Cabeza de Vaca afford the historical figure redemption, but the film also allows the viewer to redeem her/himself from her/his own contributions, direct or indirect, to colonialism.

Even as Cabeza de Vaca played several roles in his adventures west, he has also established a wide range of iconic positions throughout history. From the very representation of the model conquistador to the voice of subalterity, Cabeza de Vaca and his experiences have proven to be rich material to mold into disparate agendas. Glorified as a saint by Antonio Ardoino in the preface to 1763 edition of Naufragios (Young, 180), Cabeza de Vaca was also criticized for adopting and promoting "un aura de mártir y mesías cristiano" (Floek, 363) by his very crew mates. All the same, Bartolomé de Las Casas, among other contemporary chroniclers, saw great value in Cabeza de Vaca's writings, not only for their ethnographic information, but for their support of a more humane treatment of the Indigenous (Juan-Navarro, 67). Cabeza de Vaca's supposed miracles have also given cause for many historians since his day to address his exploits in religious or divine terms. Furthermore, the conquistador has alternately been hailed as a hero and pioneer. Richard Young points

out, for instance, that even today, Texans proudly claim Cabeza de Vaca to be the first practitioner of modern medicine in the area (181).

These celebrations of Cabeza de Vaca's contributions to religion, technology, and conquest, however, say more about the projects the conquistador is meant to be endorsing than it does about the man himself. As Juan-Navarro convincingly argues:

This hagiographic portrayal is the result of a decontextualized mis-reading of sixteenth-century historical sources... His [Cabeza de Vaca's] self-representation as the loyal conqueror and pacific evangelist endowed with the attributes of a religious and political leader, his geographic and ethnological knowledge of the territory, and his rhetorical ability to enlighten his readers' imagination reveal a goal that is not primarily ethnic, scientific, or even literary, but rather political and military: to justify his actions during the journey and request new *mercedes* from the king (most probably an appointment as the leader of a new expedition to the region). (76-7)

Needless to say, Cabeza de Vaca's writings produced more results than iconicity – he was granted gubernatorial command of the Río de la Plata. Juan-Navarro reminds us that one must consider the ideological and political backdrops not only to the conquistador's many incarnations, but also to his own writings and actions.

It is all the more intriguing, therefore, to consider the more recent adoption of Cabeza de Vaca as a representative of abjection. Partly because of his supposedly failed mission, and because of his own constructions of diverse identities, Cabeza de Vaca has been described as a “good conquistador” to be compared against such men as Cortés and Pizarro. Tzevan Todorov, for instance, has connected Cabeza de Vaca

to love, and has cast his figure to illustrate both the various rationales for the conquest of the Americas and the dialectical nature of same (Suárez, 838). Even more recent studies of Cabeza de Vaca's representative functions, such as that of Tania de Miguel Magro, still maintain the conquistador's potential benefit to the oppressed. Miguel Magro writes that "Cabeza de Vaca is the appropriate figure for the current postcolonial tendencies, because through him the voice of the other can be rescued..." (62). Although I find this argument both dubitable and problematic, it is indicative of Cabeza de Vaca's persistent malleability as representation. One can mold this figure to fit completely opposing viewpoints and agendas. Echevarría arguably relies on Cabeza de Vaca's protean qualities in order to advance his reading into colonial history in Cabeza de Vaca. As César Valverde notes, the film casts the conquistador as no less than a "líder y representante de lo abyecto" (60) and it does this by showcasing the conquistador's gradual transformation into the Other. "Así es que Cabeza de Vaca se convierte en el Otro," Valverde writes (61). From conqueror to conquered, from heathen to saint, from Spaniard to American, Cabeza de Vaca has traveled many paths, many journeys in representability.

It is fitting, now, to mention some facts concerning Cabeza de Vaca's life. Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was the treasurer of Pánfilo de Narváez's expedition to what is today Florida when, in November of 1528, it shipwrecked on the coast of what is today Texas (this, and following, information compiled from Young, 179-80). Only four crew members, including Cabeza de Vaca, survived. For six years the men lived among the Indigenous inhabitants of the area as prisoners and, later, as free men. In 1534, the three Spaniards and the one African slave decided to head

westward in the hopes of coming across a Spanish settlement. Finally, after two years of traveling, they found a Spanish expedition in Culiacán, Mexico. Although Cabeza de Vaca recounts that he described the poverty and apparent misery of the Indigenous tribes he encountered, the four travelers inspired many Spaniards to retrace their steps in the pursuit of gold and slaves. In 1537, the three Europeans were taken to Santo Domingo where they testified before the colonial authorities. The written testimony was later revised as Naufragios and was first published in 1542, fourteen years after the famed shipwreck. As mentioned above, Cabeza de Vaca was then awarded gubernatorial command of the Río de la Plata. He returned to Spain shortly thereafter and wrote another chronicle, the Comentarios, encompassing his experiences in South America as well as North America. This last was first published in 1555, two years before Cabeza de Vaca's death. It is also interesting to note that Cabeza de Vaca was never institutionally censored (Miguel Magro, 62), a fact that many historians consider indicative of the conquistador's careful selection (and likely deletion) of events to recount. His probable self-censorship is widely agreed upon by scholars.

Naufragios, the text most relevant to my study of Cabeza de Vaca, has been studied both for its authenticity and for its impressive rhetoric. Santiago Juan-Navarro identifies three primary themes apparent in the text: "the construction of an identity based upon the dialogue with the native Other, the interaction between the Spaniards and the Amerindian cultures, and the role of the miraculous healing practices as an expression of cultural and religious syncretism" (72). These three themes have been variously studied and compared to contemporary treatments of Euro-American cultural interactions, and have provided the basis for the many

arguments concerning Cabeza de Vaca's iconicity. The miracles attributed to him have, obviously, given rise to Cabeza de Vaca's rumored divine prowess. His descriptions of the Indigenous and their customs have elicited the conquistador's celebration as an ethnographer and pacifist, and Cabeza de Vaca's discussions concerning the necessity he and his fellow crew members felt in redefining themselves have made it possible for claims regarding his subalterity. These three themes are also instrumental in the construction of Cabeza de Vaca, wherein the filmic character may be said to be magical, benevolent, and misunderstood.

It is important to recognize, however, that even though Naufraios spawned Cabeza de Vaca and other fictionalized revisions (such as José Sanchis Sinisterra's play, Naufraios, o la herida del Otro or Abel Posse's novel, El largo atardecer del caminante), the original text was itself very much founded upon existing fictional traditions. Robert E. Lewis, for instance, has argued that the text shares with its literary contemporaries "the characterization of the author as a heroic protagonist in whom the intrepid explorer, the humane conquistador, the Quixote-like personage, and the miraculous holy man are intertwined" (cited in Juan-Navarro, 69). Enrique Pupo-Walker isolates various literary traditions in Naufraios, such as "medieval chronicles, classic texts of antiquity, the Bible, medieval hagiography, travelogues, chivalry romances, picaresque novels, and the Arcadian tradition" (cited in Juan-Navarro, 71). Such attention to rhetoric and style, one may argue, proves Cabeza de Vaca's intent went beyond providing mere documentation of his and his fellows' experiences. In fact, Naufraios still remains one of the more "readable" and "enjoyable" colonial chronicles because, in many ways, it reads like a novel. The

text's literary attributes may give rise to doubt as to its authenticity as a testimonial, however, Richard A. Young convincingly makes the case that, because the title Naufragios was only created after the original publication, and because its original title defined the book as a "Relación," subsequent editions could do away with the legal and juridical language implied by the original title. In other words, the "Relación" already did its part in convincing the necessary people, so Naufragios was either already considered a legitimate account of events or legitimacy was no longer necessary. Since the "Relación" is lost, the verifiability of Naufragios is, therefore, questionable.

One may argue further that Naufragios lends itself well to revisionist history precisely because of this literary quality. By focusing on constructing a protagonist who may occupy differing roles at differing times, a character whose complexity may give rise to psychological considerations, but whose good intentions are never in doubt, Cabeza de Vaca goes beyond a documentation of events towards fomenting an affinity between reader and narrator, an investment that can be carried to many, even contrasting, interpretations and uses. More obviously, and perhaps more significantly, however, it is Cabeza de Vaca's appeal to the reader's sympathy that finally makes it possible to argue that this figure was, ultimately, an advocate for the Indigenous. Wilfried Floeck writes that "Esta simpatía creciente por los indios... es seguramente una de las razones que ha impulsado a varios artistas actuales a una relectura del texto de los Naufragios con la intención de rellenar sus huecos y descubrir bajo la representación discursiva un subtexto que revelaría una aculturación latente pero nunca abiertamente confesada" (364). Cabeza de Vaca's ambassadorial

role provides a means to discuss the beginnings of post-Columbian American identity without having to resort completely to the two antagonistic positions of oppressor and oppressed; in other words, his figure provides an aperture for the liberal twentieth-century American and Latin American scholar and artist, one who certainly wants to side with the oppressed, but whose own origins most likely point towards the oppressor, to more comfortably insert her/himself within the power dynamics that still exist today. César Valverde takes this even further by arguing that Cabeza de Vaca's text provides a means to avenge the Indigenous by depicting a failed, miserable conquistador, one who must submit to Indigenous power, as well as giving modern Spaniards the opportunity to argue that the conquest of America ultimately has negative effects for all parties, "sino que también España 'sufrió'" (59). Finally, Cabeza de Vaca's forced assimilation into Indigenous traditions and his reconsidered Spanish identity (although he never quite betrays his allegiance to a Christian God or to the Spanish Crown), provides the impetus that Krista Walter contends gives rise to another definition of the conquistador's identity, one that Echevarría's film strongly supports: Cabeza de Vaca as "mestizo" (Walter, 140).

Cabeza de Vaca, therefore, is an account of mestizaje, the process through which one becomes the symbiotic being that is the American. It is instructive, therefore, to note that Echevarría himself states that the birth of Cabeza de Vaca did not have to do with the man himself, but with the "Spaniard gone native" Gonzalo Guerrero (Floek, 367). Guerrero was one of the two soldiers (Jerónimo Aguilar was the other one) that Cortés found in the Yucatán. They had lived for years as the slaves of an Indigenous tribe, and when Cortés "liberated" them, Guerrero famously

declined, opting to remain with the tribe (Floeck, 365). Wilfried Floeck goes on to mention that in the introduction to the film's screenplay (published in 1994 and co-written with fellow Mexican Guillermo Sheridan), Echevarría lays claim to the fact that he planned to make a film about Guerrero as early as 1982. In 1984, Echevarría was contracted by IMCINE, the Mexican state-funded film production company, to shoot a film based on Cabeza de Vaca's famed journey, and the director decided to use Cabeza de Vaca as a means to approach the issues he wanted to deal with in his treatment of Guerrero.

Rápidamente Echevarría y Sheridan se ponen de acuerdo para tomar los Naufragios solo como pre-texto, concentrándose en unos pocos episodios, “poniendo énfasis” – como destaca el propio guionista – “en el extraño proceso por el cual un belicoso conquistador español se convierte, durante los ocho años que le lleva cruzar de lado a lado el continente Americano, en un *chamán*, un curandero que entiende, quizá como no lo hizo nadie de su estirpe, al mundo indígena.” (italics in text; Sheridan and Echevarría cited in Floeck, 367)

In this way, the director and other supporters of the film have reconciled arguments concerning the film's many liberties with Naufragios – that the film was never intended to be faithful to this source. I speak more on this debate in the pages that follow.

In the meantime, however, Cabeza de Vaca's production itself has garnered some notoriety and deserves mention. For one thing, the film, which took ten years to finally be released (Hershfield, 8), was said to have been planned as part of a larger celebration of the Quincentennial of Columbus' “discovery” of America, a fact that

puts the film's anti-colonial position into some doubt. Echevarría argues that he did not mean to coincide the film's release with the Quincentennial, but that, for bureaucratic reasons, it could not be released sooner (Suárez, 836). This does not address the fact that the film received funding from the Spanish Quincentennial Commission, a point that enables Luis Fernando Restrepo to classify Cabeza de Vaca as "part of a multinational diffusionist project galvanized around the quincentennial celebration of the Discovery" (191). Originally made for television (Hershfield, 8), Cabeza de Vaca was not theatrically released. It was first aired in 1991 "as part of the American Playhouse Theater series" for PBS (Hershfield, 8). The other polemic surrounding the production of Cabeza de Vaca was the highly international nature of its funding. Luis Fernando Restrepo identifies Cabeza de Vaca as a "coproduction of IMCINE, Spanish Television, the Spanish Quincentennial Commission [as mentioned before], American Playhouse, Channel Four Television (England), the José Revueltas Cooperative, and the state governments of Nayarit and Coahuila" (191). Joanne Hershfield addresses the incredibly international scope of Cabeza de Vaca's production by pointing out that the current president of IMCINE, Ignacio Durán, appointed in 1989, favored international coproductions as a means of handling Mexico's scant resources (9). In and of itself this international backdrop was not a problem, however many questioned the film's appeal to a national sensibility in light of its transnationality. César Valverde writes that

[n]o es de sorprender entonces que la película redima tanto al conquistador (para un público pro-español) como al indígena (pues se realiza en 1992) utilizando códigos y estereotipos visuales reconocibles para un público estadounidense (códigos y estereotipos

asociados tanto con lo indígena como con América Latina en general, como por ejemplo el representar al indígena asociado con lo exótico, la hechicería y lo fantástico, y al español con el delirio de riqueza, las empresas absurdas, la crueldad y la traición). (59)

In short, by being an international coproduction, Cabeza de Vaca had to appeal to the many national viewerships of its supporting entities and could not, therefore, effectively promote a rigorously challenging approach towards the represented historical moment. I tend to disagree with such arguments as these, for I don't see Echevarría's attempts as being necessarily appeasing. Although hardly a radical perspective, the director obviously sees his film as addressing concerns central to an American identification, more specifically, a Mexican identification, so I find it more intriguing to explore how this identification is created as opposed to arguing for its representational validity. Also, I'm not sure that a transnational coproduction is any less nationalistic than a purely national one. Although this merits further analysis in another study, one may even argue that international coproductions foster a nationalist identification, a need to distinguish and redeem.

From this to the film itself. The film is initially set in northern Mexico, in Culiacán, in 1536. Through the use of flashback, the film then follows the protagonist's memory and traces the incidents which led up to the "rescue." Finally arriving back in Culiacán after eight years away from Spanish dominion, Cabeza de Vaca is shown to be a different person than his compatriots think him to be. He is no longer like them, and is now identifiable with the Indigenous people whom his fellow Spaniards are in the process of enslaving. The structure of the film, then, follows the

conquistador's assimilation to and adoption of American culture, a process that we, the modern viewers, understand to be indicative of sound reasoning, an open mind, and a warm heart. We are also to understand that Cabeza de Vaca is, in some ways, ahead of his time in his compassion for the Indigenous and grieve with him at the Spaniards' general lack of understanding.

As I have mentioned before, the film's depiction of history has led to many arguments concerning its veracity and its representation of its original source, Naufragios. Although Echevarría himself stresses the liberties he has taken with historical records (the credit sequence to the film announces that Cabeza de Vaca is "inspired" by Naufragios, not "based upon"), there have been some critics who admire the film's "realistic" approach to history. Álvaro Mutis, for instance, writes that "[I]eyendo este guión y, luego, viendo la película que le dio vida, tenemos esa inquietante certeza de que, por primera vez, nos han contado las cosas como fueron" (cited in Floeck, 378). I imagine that Mutis is here reacting to the almost certain necessity for Cabeza de Vaca, the historical personage, to have omitted or at least consciously misrepresented actual events, a necessity that Cabeza de Vaca depends upon to "set the record straight" as it were. The film also includes elements that appear impossible or incredible (the various miraculous healings, for example), so an argument towards the film's realism must present some explanation towards the film's extra- or supernatural depictions. Richard Gordon argues that those who lay claim to the film's realistic representation may, in fact, be responding to what he terms as the film's "magical realism." He writes that "[t]he reception of the film as authoritative, ethnographic, and documentary-like perhaps reflects the success of

Cabeza de Vaca's magical realist strategy. On the other hand, it may merely imply that the film is heir to a context of reception that sees 'realism' in Latin America only when it is 'magical'" (Gordon, 98). It is fair to say, then, that those who react to the film as a realistic portrayal of history (and most critics do not), must do so out of their own limited understandings of this history or, as I have posited, out of a concordance with the logic of the film's narrative that essentially debunks the historical records that have "inspired" it.

On the other hand, many more critics have based their arguments on the film's historical liberties. Richard Young, for instance, summarizes the film's treatment of Naufragios as a reaction to the basic problem posed by the almost certain fact that Cabeza de Vaca himself must have shaped his narrative to conform to contemporary expectations and demands (186). Cabeza de Vaca is not a film based upon Naufragios, therefore; it is instead a rationale for Naufragios. Young writes that "[l]a película no es, ni pretende ser, una 'adaptación' de los Naufragios en el sentido estricto de este término. No hay pretension alguna de fidelidad al texto del siglo XVI" (194). Joanne Hershfield agrees with Young's assessment concerning the error of considering the film as an adaptation, stating that "[t]he 'past' that is reconstructed in Cabeza de Vaca, through memory, does not attempt to reinterpret history but to make sense of the position and function of the self in the creation of history" (14). I believe that Hershfield is absolutely right in this claim, for Cabeza de Vaca is the means through which truth and objectivity are arrived at in the film, but is himself not "true" to life. He is the figure the viewer identifies with, the means towards which

the inequities of colonialism may be despised, and he is never a solid enough character to be the subject of a more biographical approach.

Although I agree with both Young and Hershfield in their claims, I believe that the film's treatment of history is more problematic than it may seem by the above arguments. Santiago Juan-Navarro provides an intriguing counterpoint, for instance, when he writes that "[a]lthough the film presents a revisionist view of the conquistador as a transcultural subject, it continues to present Cabeza de Vaca as the mythical cultural hero produced by five centuries of pseudo-historiographic magnification" (76). Juan-Navarro bases this claim on his study of the various ideological uses the historical personage has been put towards, and considers Cabeza de Vaca to, rather than denounce these uses, continue in the same tradition. The film cannot claim, therefore, the kind of historical license it does, for it is part and parcel of a historical tradition that obscures rather than elucidates. César Valverde affirms Juan-Navarro's analysis of the film's contribution to damaging and ideologically charged traditions when he writes that:

Cabeza de Vaca es una reconstrucción del asombro que habrían experimentado los recién llegados, pero ese asombro solo tiene cabida porque se representa al indígena y al nuevo mundo como puro exotismo. Es otra construcción de América como espacio mágico-realista, asombroso y deslumbrante, otra representación hecha desde afuera para ser consumida afuera. (60)

As with Richard Gordon's concern with the film's "magical realism," Valverde effectively points out that such "magic" recasts the spaces Echevarría is purportedly

trying to reclaim in very much the same terms as did those who initially made reclamation necessary. America in this film is ultimately the America of the colonial mythos, a place for which, ironically, the film mourns. The pathos inherent in the “mourning” also elicits interesting speculation in terms of Cabeza de Vaca’s relation to history:

The images coerce us to sympathize with the “good” oppressor, like Cabeza de Vaca, who is more a fellow victim than a victor. We can take little comfort in the fact that a Spaniard of the conquest can be made better by being “conquered” himself, then “converted” to a more human perspective. More importantly, we are meant vicariously to enjoy Cabeza de Vaca’s psychological transformation. That a sixteenth-century Spaniard can be subconsciously persuaded, seduced even, to forego his dogmatic beliefs and hypocritical values is not only plausible but also laudable in postmodern society. (Walter, 142-3)

The viewers are sutured into a narrative structure that recognizes a transformation we, in a “post-colonial” society, would wish were possible. One can claim, furthermore, that Cabeza de Vaca transforms from a sixteenth-century conquistador into, not a more enlightened conquistador, but into a late twentieth-century advocate of New Age beliefs. He becomes the intended audience, so that we can recognize ourselves in the past at the same time that we can rejoice to be living in much more enlightened times.

These contentions concerning Cabeza de Vaca’s rather damaging usage of history have been countered by claims that the film, not trying to be realistic, is more

a comment on historiography than an example of it, is more a challenge to history than a product of it. In other words, those who focus on the film's manipulation of history towards its own ends do so at the risk of losing sight of the film's ultimate goal of questioning our own present, our own subjectivities. The film is more a representation of the present and its relation to history than of the past proper, one may argue. Wilfried Floeck makes clear that one should not judge the film purely on historical grounds, because it does not attempt to represent history. He writes:

Además, Echevarría evita cualquier intento de realismo histórico. Aunque procede del género de la película documental y conoce muy bien las culturas indígenas, se decide por la ficción y no a reconstruir un mundo indígena desaparecido hace siglos y muy poco conocido en la actualidad, sino a inventarlo. “Tratándose de mi primera película de ficción,” explica en la introducción al guión, “preferí inventar en lugar de documentar.”
(370)

The choice to invent rather than to represent speaks to the film's argued use of “magical realism.” Echevarría's pre-colonized America is founded upon his imagination, his desire to connote rather than to denote. It should not be necessarily recognizable, but should be, instead, representative of ideals wholly grounded in “post-colonial” experience. It is truly an Edenic place, a place defined by what the director himself has understood to be “lost.” “Echevarría no se interesa por un realismo histórico o etnológico, sino que busca el efecto espectacular, ya en la puesta en escena de un paisaje grandioso, ya en la configuración de las fiestas y los rituales de los indígenas” (Floeck, 376). The study of Cabeza de Vaca, one might conclude, should not be so constrained by historical accuracy, but should rather consider the

symbolic and interpretative nature of what is represented. To claim that the film is historically misrepresentative is, finally, a moot argument since it was never intended to be such.

Joanne Hershfield does not discount the historical dimension of the film's project, however she does contextualize it with more overarching goals. She writes that:

Although films such as Cabeza de Vaca may be set in a real or fictional past, and it is the context of this past that frames the narrative, one of the functions of historical films has been to deploy history as a "critique of the present," in the words of Marcia Landy. Landy writes that historical films, rather than reflecting history, "generate a knowledge of the past that is intimately tied to the ideology of the given moment in which they are produced" (54). Films grounded in historical narratives may thus be read, in part, as responses to changing discourses about nationalism, nationhood, and national identity. (Hershfield, 10-11)

As such, a primary focus on historical accuracy would not allow for several possibly rich areas of study of Cabeza de Vaca. Agreeing that the film "should not necessarily be considered a progressive or radical film" (9), Hershfield recognizes the film's limitations concerning its representation of history. She chooses, rather, to study the film as exemplary of Mexican identity in the late twentieth-century. Her article, which is quite a seminal one in studies of Cabeza de Vaca, then proceeds to explore tensions evident in modern Mexican subjectivity that require a reappraisal of history and a reclamation of a distinctly national space, both clearly intentions of the film.

The desires underscoring Cabeza de Vaca find expression in the exoticized Indigenous worlds represented therein. Luis Fernando Restrepo considers these desires in his own article “Primitive Bodies in Latin American Cinema,” and partly follows Hershfield’s project of analyzing the kinds of concerns about identity, nationhood, and history that are present in the film. Restrepo concludes that “[t]he metropolitan spectator’s desire for the tribal world emerges from its (imagined) absence. The film, thus, actualizes and mediates a desire for a remote, unrecoverable, primitive world” (206). History, in this case, may be said to aid in distancing this desired world from the modern viewer, placing it in the far past, rather than providing insight into its specific and realized traditions.

Krista Walter sums up her argument concerning Cabeza de Vaca’s use (or misuse) of history by writing that “[t]he purpose of such lies [that some of the existing members of Cabeza de Vaca’s crew make concerning the tribes encountered – such as there existing cities of gold and women with three breasts apiece] is to underscore the truth of the experience we have just watched, the truth of Native America, some truth about humanity, perhaps, but the film is forced to concede to its illusions” (145). The film, therefore, actively encourages its viewers to differentiate between fact and fantasy, and clearly argues that official history is littered with self-serving lies. It offers itself as an alternative, Walter argues, an alternative that, although completely imagined by Echevarría, attempts to speak more closely to the emotional and psychological events surrounding Cabeza de Vaca and his crew. Needless to say, the film, as revisionist historiography, can only do so much as the

official historiography it decries, filling its mise-en-scène with cannibal women, miraculous shamanistic rituals, and deformed dwarfs.

The film also relies on the assumption that, since identity is “constructed,” it can be disassembled and reconstructed without too much difficulty. Thus the soulless and guilt-ridden heirs of the conquistador simply acquire new souls from those their forebears had formally subjugated or annihilated. The same can be said for the film’s take on history: since history is constructed, after all, it can simply be deconstructed and co-opted to meet our present ideological needs, enabling us to free ourselves from our oppressive inheritance. (Walter, 143)

With these words, Walter defines her argument against those such as Floeck and Hershfield who, she might contend, do not closely enough examine the implications of Cabeza de Vaca’s appropriation of history in order to analyze the modern man trapped in the conquistador’s body. Even if Echevarría himself proclaims his freedom from the chains of historical accuracy, or, to put it less cynically, admits to inventing much of what the film promotes as truth, the film does rely upon history in order to formulate its message. History cannot, therefore, be overemphasized in scholarship on Cabeza de Vaca, for it is the film’s very medium.

I’d like to end this exploration into existing critical responses to Cabeza de Vaca’s use of history in order to briefly address an underlying and motivating thread in all these arguments: they all, in some way, rely upon redemption in order to make their case. I discuss this in more length towards the end of this chapter, however, it is important to recognize at this point the rather undeniable fact that Cabeza de Vaca

attempts to redeem the past, either through the erasure of history (as some claim when they insist that the film is not historical), or through the censure of history (as others who proclaim that the film depicts the destruction of a utopic representation of modern constructions of selfhood), or even when it luxuriates in history's implicit remoteness (as follows those who analyze the film's active use of exoticism). Krista Walter is the only critic who explores the implications of Cabeza de Vaca's redemptive strategy, however, the film's narrative construction clearly follows a journey into truth, a progressive enlightenment, in short, a pilgrimage.

Before I proceed discussing the ways in which Cabeza de Vaca relies upon redemption, I offer a brief synopsis of what, exactly, critics have reacted to when claiming the film's inaccuracy. What follows, then, is a listing of the ways in which Cabeza de Vaca and the work which "inspired" it, Naufraios, compare. To contextualize the following, one should be reminded that Echevarría insists on not relying solely upon Naufraios for his conception of the film. Carlos von Son remarks that "la película mantiene una cercana relación narrativa intertextual con cierta fidelidad pero al mismo tiempo utiliza ciertos elementos narrativos y pasajes solamente como puntos referentes y de partida. El propósito de Echevarría es expandirlos, desarrollarlos y contextualizarlos para construir así un texto independiente" (141). This independence that Echevarría attempts to nurture, von Son might claim, should not be seen as faults in the film's scheme, but as deliberate ways of constructing distinction between Cabeza de Vaca and Naufraios. Carlos von Son goes on further to say:

Consecuentemente la interpretación el director
Nicolás Echevarría (como de su co-autor

Guillermo Scheridan [sic]) permite usar el imaginario contemporáneo y el desarrollo de los sucesos silenciados y oscurecidos bajo las manipulaciones producto de la censura en la narrativa de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. Al contextualizadas Echevarría usa la fusión de las observaciones de chamanismo de la cultura yaqui de Carlos Castaneda con referencias cristianas. (143)

By considering the film as a mechanism through which one may “fill in the blanks,” as it were, of Naufragios, and may thereby both emphasize the incomplete nature of the original sixteenth-century text and underscore the necessity to consider the difference between what was recorded and what may have happened, Echevarría embarks upon a hypothetical scenario, one whose main authority lies in providing Naufragios with an emotional and psychological dimension. Carlos von Son is absolutely right in connecting this film with the work of Carlos Castaneda because both present themselves as ambassadorial constructs into foreign and strange, and imagined, terrain. Both exoticize the Indigenous and place this group not only in the past but in the remote regions of our subconscious. The “gaps” that are filled, I argue, are mostly done so with the director’s obvious desire to redeem both the conquistador Cabeza de Vaca as well as his colonial descendants. In other words, Echevarría fills the “gaps” of Naufragios not with probable truths, as von Son argues, but with the opposite, the supernatural and spiritual.

Krista Walter provides a useful basis for comparison when she notes that both texts, Naufragios and Cabeza de Vaca, operate on the same spectacular schema. Both present the foreign as strange and dangerous, and then progress to make this same

familiar and benevolent (Walter, 143). The fact that Cabeza de Vaca uses exoticism to reach its aims is not, then, in itself indicative of departure from the sixteenth-century text. Rather, it is how and to what extent the film casts a magical aura to pre-colonial America that really permits one to consider Echevarría's choices and their implications. One should first note that the film's Cabeza de Vaca is mentored, and eventually spiritually guided, by a Shaman and his assistant. Neither figure exists in Naufragios (Gordon, 96). From the start, then, Echevarría builds his character's compassion upon spiritual foundations marked by "Otherness," one that contradicts the very firmly maintained Catholicism in Naufragios' author's characterization of himself. In fact, Krista Walter points out that Naufragios' narrative development serves to further entrench Cabeza de Vaca within a Catholic tradition, whereas in Cabeza de Vaca, the title character drifts further and further away from this same tradition or, at best, reconsiders its hierarchy and supremacy over other religions and spiritualities (141).

One scene that does appear in both texts and has been considered in some length by Walter (141) and by Richard Young (199-200) is the scene wherein Cabeza de Vaca witnesses a nearby shrub burst into flames. Both critics point out the obvious allusion to the Biblical story of Moses and the burning bush, as they do the fact that the author of Naufragios uses this scene to illustrate God's power and mercy. After becoming lost from his guides, the book's Cabeza de Vaca wanders about for many days, barely surviving, and the burning bush becomes a beacon through which he is able to know of God's protection and his own eventual rescue. In the film, however, Cabeza de Vaca is pointedly walking towards the west, aiming to reach his

compatriots, so he is neither lost nor directionless. The burning bush occurs supposedly when the Shaman tries to alleviate the cold and provide some warmth for Cabeza de Vaca. We are shown alternating shots of a miserable, shivering Cabeza de Vaca as well as the Shaman blowing on embers, until the film cuts back to display a shrub close to Cabeza de Vaca erupt in flames. The implication is, obviously, that the Shaman both knew of Cabeza de Vaca's plight and was able to remedy it through magic. This is a significant difference from the burning bush scene in Naufragios precisely because the scene in the book is one of Cabeza de Vaca's most blatant attempts to show how Divine Providence has continually interceded on his behalf. By making the agent of change a human and an Indigenous shaman, therefore, the film goes some distance in redressing both the book's Catholic platform and its Eurocentric basis.

Another major distinction between texts lies in the fact that the film's narrative begins with Naufragios' chapter ten (Restrepo, 190) and proceeds from there. Luis Fernando Restrepo argues that were the film to begin in any point in the former nine chapters, the viewer would have found it significantly harder to sympathize with the title character. The first nine chapters recount expeditions wherein Indigenous communities are decimated, women and children are imprisoned, and Cabeza de Vaca administers these injustices as Treasurer. Rather than "filling in gaps," therefore, one may argue that Echevarría goes to quite a bit of trouble to create more holes than Naufragios presents. Restrepo's argument furthers my contention that Cabeza de Vaca's character is not meant to be in and of himself substantive, but rather he is a vehicle through which Echevarría may proceed with his redemptive

work; he provides the visible and identifiable manifestation of redemption at work. That which he is redeemed of, however, is not looting, and genocide, and raping, but the simple fact of his being a conquistador. We can forgive him this because his identity, rather than his actions and responsibilities, changes.

There are, of course, other significant differences between Cabeza de Vaca and Naufraios. For one thing, whereas in Cabeza de Vaca, cannibalism is associated with the desperation of the Spanish crew, as it is in Naufraios, the film also includes an elaborate scene wherein brightly painted cannibal women threaten the protagonist and his friends (Gordon, 95). In Naufraios, Cabeza de Vaca recounts how he was caught after trying to escape his Indigenous captors, namely after an extended chase. Cabeza de Vaca, however, delves directly in Carlos Castaneda's famous Las enseñanzas de Don Juan (von Son, 146) and borrows a scene wherein a prisoner, in this case, Cabeza de Vaca himself, is unable to escape because a shaman has tied a lizard to a post. Since the lizard cannot escape the perimeter allowed by the tied rope, neither can the escapee do so. Cabeza de Vaca is brought magically back, therefore (Gordon, 97). Furthermore, Krista Walter points out, "...Echevarría takes literally such statements from the text [Naufraios] as 'the Indians appeared at a distance like giants,' or 'our fears made giants of them.' The director actually uses an actor with pituitary gigantism to portray one of the central native characters, in effect rendering the hallucinations, illusions, and ambiguities of the documented experience as though real" (143). Once again, the changes from Naufraios to Cabeza de Vaca can be characterized by an evident exoticism, an emphasis on the super-natural. Another very significant difference is that whereas in Naufraios the Indigenous peoples are

described in multiple instances as resistant, agents who fight the Spanish and militant colonialism, in the film, the Indigenous characters more passively react to events around them (Restrepo, 191). Other than the very first instance wherein Cabeza de Vaca and his surviving crew members are captured, (a scene, incidentally, which is never actually shown), the Indigenous characters are generally defenseless against Spanish encroachment and depend upon Cabeza de Vaca for assistance. Finally, and very importantly, although both texts take great pains to denounce military colonialism, Naufragios does not condemn colonialism itself (Restrepo, 190). Cabeza de Vaca, the author, expresses his belief that peaceful colonialism, with a focus towards evangelism, is the optimal way of subjugating the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. This is quite ironic considering that one of the film's primary grievances is the forced conversion of the Indigenous (the final shot of the immense silver cross being carried by Indigenous laborers attests to this). In short, Echevarría does make changes to his version of Naufragios, as he himself admits, however these changes almost unanimously reflect the underlying theme of salvation through a spiritual connection with the past and with the land, a past that is magical and a land that is spotted with exotic peoples. There is much to Krista Walter's argument, then, when she claims that Cabeza de Vaca essentially reproduces, rather than challenges, colonialist depictions of the Americas.

It is important to note that Echevarría's ultimate redemptive strategy depends upon very specific representations of the Indigenous. As far as has been established, the actual Indigenous peoples Cabeza de Vaca would have come into contact with were largely nomadic or semi-sedentary (Young, 179). Although they did not

accompany Cabeza de Vaca on the whole of his journey, his trek to the west was largely based upon their guidance. In the film, Cabeza de Vaca essentially finds his own way, and when he is accompanied by Indigenous people, he is so because of his shamanic powers. The indigenous, therefore, follow Cabeza de Vaca, rather than lead him. Luis Fernando Restrepo further identifies the actual Indigenous peoples whom Cabeza de Vaca would have met as Coahuiltecans and Karankawas (207), and not much information about them still exists (Restrepo, 207).

Echevarría has “declare[d] his concern, both in documentary and fiction film, with ‘los indios,’” (114) Richard Gordon states, so he had a definite intention of depicting the Indigenous respectfully and with compassion. I do not, therefore, intend to criticize his inclusive view of the Indigenous. His representations of the Indigenous, however, have received much comment, particularly because of the exoticism the film heaps upon them. What follows then is a general assessment of how the Indigenous are represented in Cabeza de Vaca and how these representations contribute to the redemptive strategy upon which much of the film’s narrative relies. Firstly, one should recognize that much of what we are shown of Indigenous culture is imagined by Echevarría himself. Luis Fernando Restrepo points out that the film has very little dialogue, and the little there is in Indigenous languages has been invented by Echevarría (197). The emphasis on Indigenous custom and tradition is thereby placed upon visual representations as opposed to what is said or understood. Regarding the invention of the Indigenous, Richard Gordon writes that:

Notwithstanding rigorous research, faithful ethnographic details, and some late changes of how the film represents indigenous people, we must

read the anthropological authority heaped on Echevarría in the context of his admission that he is inventing peoples and that his interest lies in mysticism, rather than ethnography. (81)

The emphasis on mysticism over ethnography is a telling one particularly in that it suffuses the characters, the Indigenous characters especially, with symbolic roles. They are indeed exotic because they are meant to illustrate that which is exotic. The same can be said for their magical or spiritual powers – if one were to focus on the mystical over the ethnographic it makes sense that these particular Indigenous characters would be supernatural, detached, as it were, from such “real” considerations as day-to-day survival and resistance to colonialism. It can even be argued that the further into colonized territory that Cabeza de Vaca ventures into, the less supernatural and the more pathetic and defenseless the Indigenous characters become. The power of the Indigenous, it can then be deduced, lies in their supernatural, their distance from reality and European civilization.

However, the Indigenous image in Cabeza de Vaca is very much based on this same European imagination that distinguishes it. Luis Fernando Restrepo, for instance, points out that “[t]he film’s art director, José Luis Aguilar, stated in the TV interview with Alejandro Pelayo that the indigenous costumes were based on the copperplate engravings of Theodore De Bry, the author of The Great Voyages (1590-1634)” (198). Restrepo then proceeds to enumerate the many critiques of De Bry’s conglomeration and frequent misappropriation of Indigenous customs and traditions. Attributing elements to differing tribes and creating what Restrepo calls a “bricolage” (198) of that which is loosely defined as Indigenous, De Bry’s work has hardly been

considered authoritative. In other words, Cabeza de Vaca derives its primary representation of pre-colonial Indigenous America from a source whose main purpose, it can be argued, is to document the marvelous nature of the Other. This may account for such glaring misrepresentations as draping American south and southwestern Indigenous figures in leopard skins! Krista Walter uses this last detail to substantiate her already solid argument against the film's reliance upon the exotic to represent the Indigenous (144). She also calls our attention to the fact that such misrepresentations are also closely aligned with behavior that goes beyond a purely mystical quality and, rather, affirms colonial practices of dehumanization. These leopard-skin wearers are also, after all, cannibals (Walter, 144). Richard Gordon dedicates quite a bit of discussion to Echevarría's use of cannibalism to define the Indigenous, particularly the "bad" Indigenous who attack Cabeza de Vaca. He cites Roberto Ferrando who, in his introduction to Naufragios, notes how the text does not mention any example of cannibalism among the Indigenous with whom Cabeza de Vaca enters into contact, whereas plenty of evidence in the text exists depicting cannibalism among Spaniards (114-5). Whereas the film does maintain textual fidelity on this last point depicting, as it does, a Spaniard grown mad through his desperate resort to cannibalism, it also proportions this practice to individuals who appear to relish in it, whose savagery clearly is associated with lack of civilization and refined culture, with even, perhaps, malignity. Inasmuch as the Spaniard's act is indicative of extreme need, the Indigenous preparation for the cannibalistic feast is indicative of nothing beyond barbarism. Cabeza de Vaca, therefore, may be argued

to do little to assuage colonial misrepresentations of the Indigenous, even if its main purpose is clearly to exalt the “primitive.”

Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative trajectory clearly utilizes redemption, and it does so primarily by contrasting the Indigenous to the European. The title character’s redemption is measured, after all, by his distancing from his original Spanish identification and by his approximation to a more developed American one. As such, the first half of the movie spends a good deal of time exoticizing the Indigenous, making them significantly different from the represented Spaniards. The second half, one may argue, is dedicated to humanizing the exotic to ensure a sympathetic reaction from the viewer and to mirror Cabeza de Vaca’s own familiarization with the Indigenous. Cabeza de Vaca, the historical figure himself, also follows a similar project in writing Naufragios, wherein that which has been exoticized is made familiar and that which has been dangerous is made safe. He does this, however, by basing his redemptive strategy on what is essentially the opposite identificatory platform from that of his cinematic counterpart. If redemption in Cabeza de Vaca is understood to be a movement towards an American identification, redemption in Naufragios is most definitely a movement towards European identification. Cabeza de Vaca writes:

[c]omo los indios se volvieron, todos los de aquella provincia, que eran amigos de los cristianos, nos vinieron a ver, y nos trujeron cuentas y plumas, y nosotros los mandamos que hiciesen iglesias, y pusiesen cruces en ellas, porque hasta entonces no las habían hecho... (cited in Valverde, 62)

In reciprocation for hospitality, then, Cabeza de Vaca and his compatriots offer his Indigenous hosts and supporters what is, based on the above description, a gift far more generous than mere feathers. The Spaniards offer salvation to “los indios” by forcing them to enact European religious convention. This exchange, resonating more as a supplication on the part of the Indigenous and as a decree on the part of the Spanish than as a transaction of items of comparable worth, is ultimately what distinguishes Echevarría’s version from its source. In order to redeem Cabeza de Vaca from the redemption he himself describes, as it were, Echevarría must cast the enslavement and conversion of the Indigenous as a tragedy and not as a victory. In this way, one may argue that the viewer feels most empathetic towards Cabeza de Vaca, and not towards the beleaguered Indigenous characters, for the Spaniard could not halt the inevitable. In other words, Cabeza de Vaca, the film character, is a tragic figure because he cannot alter history or even his own historical persona.

Krista Walter is the only critic of Cabeza de Vaca thus far to identify redemption as a primary narrative device in the film. Regarding the change from exotic to familiar that the film enacts in its treatment of the Indigenous, Walter writes:

...the malevolence of the land and its inhabitants established in the film’s beginning has now been in a sense redeemed. The demons have been humanized, and the evil sorcerer turns out to be good: the slave is now free, and a new kind of divine justice has prevailed. We can be sure of this primarily because Cabeza de Vaca has himself become a medium for the benevolent magic of the New World. The film’s narrative development operates on this logic of redemption. What the Spaniard fears is evil turns out to be good

once he has freed himself from his own oppressive cultural identity. (141)

The Indigenous characters in the film are the primary gauge of Cabeza de Vaca's redemption, for his spiritual journey, and his trek across America is most certainly that, depends upon his absorption of Indigenous custom and power. Through this gradual absorption, the audience bears witness to Cabeza de Vaca's reversal of roles from leader to slave and back to leader. Beginning his journey as colonizer, the title character becomes essentially the Indigenous characters' only hope for survival. Likewise, the film may be said to replicate this transformation in its depiction of Cabeza de Vaca, the historical figure. The film depicts the anachronistic development from a conquistador, albeit a "failed" one, to an abject figure, perhaps even subaltern, whose "voice" must be recuperated by postcolonial means. Walter furthers this by arguing that "[h]is [Cabeza de Vaca's] cultural redemption – and, by implication, ours – depends upon an experience of radical otherness. Only by shedding all vestiges of cultural superiority can we hope to be purified" (143). As such, the Indigenous and other oppressed groups are here presented as spaces or states that may be inhabited, bodies that may be assumed, parallel planes of existence that may be tapped for spiritual, and social, salvation. Cabeza de Vaca's viewers are undoubtedly already aware of the massive genocide, enslavement, and forced conversion that characterized colonial enterprises, so Echevarría utilizes this shared knowledge not so much as a subject for exploration or as a platform for resistance, but as a confirmation of sorts. The plight of the Indigenous certainly confirms the worth of the historical figure Cabeza de Vaca, however, ultimately, our sympathetic responses to the atrocities of history confirm our own humanity and spirituality. In

any case, communal oppression in Cabeza de Vaca seems to say more about an individual's response than it does about the forces administering this oppression or resisting it. The Indigenous in the film are, finally, martyrs, not victims or agents, for their oppression becomes functional in Cabeza de Vaca's, and the viewer's, spiritual growth.

It is interesting to note that the filmic Cabeza de Vaca's most illustrative moment of power occurs when he resuscitates a dead Indigenous woman. As a reversal of his initial role depending upon the massacre and subjugation of the Indigenous, here he makes it possible for the bringing back to life of one whom he may have previously killed. This scene is also present in Naufragios (albeit with significant differences, as I explore below), however I feel that a closer look at how this scene negotiates redemption is imperative to an articulation of how redemption works in Echevarría's overall project. One may parallel, for instance, Cabeza de Vaca's resuscitation with Echevarría's essential resuscitation of that which is past and, we are to assume, misunderstood. By bringing both Cabeza de Vaca and the extinct Indigenous groups "back to life," so to speak, the director of Cabeza de Vaca, like the film's protagonist himself, distinguishes his treatment of colonialism from others by emphasizing the spiritual powers (rather than, or at least above, the political, cultural, and social ones) that have been lost. This distinction is important because Cabeza de Vaca seems to imply that, although the material realities of genocide and slavery cannot be fully reclaimed, spiritual "truths" are still extant and viable. Like Cabeza de Vaca on the screen, the viewer may tap into these truths by essentially resuscitating something that lies dormant in him or herself, something that

the modern individual has lost. As Cabeza de Vaca finds the Indigenous in himself, viewers of Cabeza de Vaca may experience a similar satisfaction in allowing ourselves to be redeemed, rather than condemned, by history.

The film displays this resuscitation scene as an entirely mystical and spiritual endeavor: Cabeza de Vaca seems propelled toward the swaddled corpse and, through a syncretic adoption of Christian and indigenous rituals wherein he seems entranced, he is able to elicit increasingly more noticeable movement from what was understood to be dead. The Indigenous people who witness this “miracle” hail Cabeza de Vaca’s power and spirit, and the Spaniards in attendance look on in wonder and disbelief. In short, the film creates an essential connection between the protagonist and his Indigenous hosts, one based on a spiritual alliance that the protagonist no longer shares with his compatriots. Cabeza de Vaca has, thus, arguably developed a burgeoning Indigenous identity by developing his spiritual power, whereas the three other Spanish voyagers are understood to remain in what is an unenlightened and retarded spiritual space. The dead Indigenous woman can be brought back to life, but these Spaniards cannot be brought into a wholly Indigenous, and American, consciousness.

The written account of this same incident, on the other hand, differs sharply in its treatment of Cabeza de Vaca’s allegiances and enactments of belonging. He writes that:

our Indians, to whom I had given the prickly pears, remained there, and at nighttime they returned to their houses and said that that one who had been dead and whom I had cured in their presence had arisen revived and walked about and eaten and spoken with them, and

that as many as I had cured had become well and were without fever and very happy. This caused very great wonder and fear, and in all the land they spoke of nothing else. All those to whom this report arrived came looking for us so that we could cure them and make the sign of the cross over their children... And they said that truly we were children of the sun. (118-9)

In this account, there is an implicit understanding of Indigenous naïveté, an understanding sharpened by the distinct differentiation of an “us” and a “them.” Cabeza de Vaca is here relying upon the reader’s identification of her/himself with the Spaniards and, thereby, interpreting the writer’s words to, indeed, reflect Cabeza de Vaca’s power, but in such a way that it is present because of Indigenous backwardness. In other words, the reader recognizes Cabeza de Vaca’s power only if s/he believes that his power is one of racial and spiritual superiority. Cabeza de Vaca is not a healer, but he is more powerful than the Indians because they believe that he is.

In short, both depictions of this miraculous “cure,” filmic and written, reinforce a sense of belonging in order to represent power, but both demand that the spectator/reader ally her/himself with the opposite sides of a constructed dichotomy: the film enforces the viewer’s appreciation of Cabeza de Vaca’s Indigenous identification whereas the written text fosters an identification against Indigenous “ignorance.” Whether or not one representation is more “accurate” or “unbiased” is not the issue, necessarily. Rather, it is highly significant that the redemption represented in the Indigenous person’s resuscitation functions, in both instances, to redeem Cabeza de Vaca and his audience through an active enactment of

identification and belonging. We, finally, are asked in both instances to consider the Spanish presence on American terrain by understanding our own relations to this same terrain.

The film ends with a spectacular scene of a group of Indigenous peoples carrying an enormous silver cross while marching to the beat of a drum played by a Spanish soldier. Apparently work for the construction of the new church, this event is set in juxtaposition to Cabeza de Vaca's adoption of a spirituality that is depicted as being very much in synchrony with the American landscape. Shrubs burst into fire when Cabeza de Vaca is cold, he can find his way by reading markings on terrain, he has learned how to use dirt and stones to heal and bring people back from the dead, and the sorcerer demonstrated how to harm people by drawing effigies in sand. The Indigenous laborers carrying the cross, on the other hand, are spectacular precisely because of their incongruence with the terrain they march across. A vast, empty desert, the only thing that differentiates the land they traverse from the sky is the cross that obscures the horizon. The cross, because of its enormity, dwarves the carriers and dominates the landscape. Its power comes from its clearly being an imposition upon the land and its people, not something derived from these same. The Christian religion, itself, is continually displayed as being ineffective on American soil and only works when used in conjunction with Indigenous spiritual practices. Cabeza de Vaca's cross, which is taken from him during his capture by the sorcerer, is converted into an amulet garnered by feathers and plants and given back to the protagonist only when he has learned the sorcerer's trade. It is with this syncretic faith that Cabeza de Vaca is made to perform miracles, through a harmony of both

belief and knowledge of place. The cross that marks the end of the film, then, is a synthesis of another sort, a synthesis of religion and domination that is symbolized through forced labor. In short, the film clearly supports both the connection and connectability of faith and territorial identity, either as being intrinsic and native (as in the case of Cabeza de Vaca) or foreign and forcibly transplanted (as in the connection of Christianity with colonization). Because of this distinction, the film utilizes the concept of the frontier also as a means of spiritually signifying those who belong and those who do not. Cabeza de Vaca, as a foreigner, must learn the ways of the land which are, apparently, so unlike his own, and it is only through his being reclaimed by this land that he can safely and miraculously traverse across it. His spirit, as well as his body, must cross thresholds that are intimately shaped from and through American soil. It is by crossing the spiritual frontier that he, and the film itself, can claim authority to advocate for the Americas.

This film reconsiders the redemption posited by most captive narratives, that of being rescued and re-assimilated into an original culture. Cabeza de Vaca's re-immersion into Spanish culture, for instance, is not a rescue by any means since he has found another originating point and another destination. It is only through his experience with American terrain and American people that he can understand the barbarism of colonizing ventures, and because of his contact with a spirituality which is intricately tied to an American sense of belonging, he cannot truly claim to be a part of Spain or its enterprises. As such, redemption in this film is a recognition of value in foreign soil and peoples and an appropriation of this value into one's own understanding of location. This recognition has dubious consequences, of course,

since it does not dismiss the presence and power of an origin or of a destination. It does not question entirely the processes through which these two are constructed. Rather, it affords distinction to these two by granting very different allocations of value to either. Insofar as Cabeza de Vaca effectively denounces his origin and opts for a new destination, this new destination is inextricable from his journeys, his experiences, and, most significantly, the land he has seen. In other words, the film does not question an imposition of value on territory and peoples so much as it questions a “foreign” imposition of value. This film ultimately negotiates the issue of frontiers and boundaries by actively constructing these same in its redefinition of American history. The viewer, finally, must cross these constructed frontiers towards an appreciation of the intrinsic value of what it means to be tied to American land. Therefore, the American viewer is trained to distinguish between the land depicted, which was untainted by European significations, and the land inhabited and must form a connection between these two. The viewer, finally, is asked to redeem her/his location by virtue of recognizing its essential history and spirit. In this regard, Cabeza de Vaca and Naufragios are not too different for both texts depend upon a spiritual recognition of American lands and peoples, a recognition that becomes through the courses of both texts a sort of signification. American people and places become inherently symbolic locations of identity and identification, for the cultures and lands described in both texts become attainable and identifiable only as steps towards individual redemption and salvation.

Chapter Six:

Borders and Redemption in Le Salaire de la peur and Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes

Throughout my drafting of this chapter, I have been employing a conscious superimposition of film and geography in my presentation of the Americas. Just as film (in its non-digital format) is literally a composite of separate and distinct cells which, through movement, take on the illusion of connectivity and sequence, this hemisphere, I have been considering, is a conglomeration of differentiated, and differentiating, nation-cells which, through an imposition of movement (both sacred and profane), form a network that is traversable and inter-related. The film medium's illusion is dependent on a projector and a screen, whereas the illusion of hemispheric communicability is dependent on the traveling body, a represented (and representative) subject that performs and re-performs connection through space and time. I argue that the Americas' cohesion is illusory not as a statement on political relations or cultural hegemony, but quite simply as a recognition that national constructs have no real, that is, empirical, relation to the places they signify. As such, the traveling body becomes both projector and screen, as it were, of geographical and historical identification.

I find this filmic construction of the Americas useful in that it not only allows me to grapple simultaneously with the work of representation and connection, a work that I have been considering in redemptive terms, but because it affords me the opportunity to explore the spaces that differentiate and define the individual cells that

make up the American narrative composite. I like to think that the last three chapters investigated the content of such cells and the mechanisms that enable a signifying element to contextualize and correspond cell to (and against) cell, place to (and against) place. Now, I would like to shift my attention to an area that we are meant to, quite literally, overlook in our attempts at unity and correspondence. In my construction of the American film strip, this area would be the spaces dividing cell from cell, those spaces which get lost in movement. This chapter, therefore, will consider borders and their work in constructing redemptive representations.

I will begin by briefly considering the work of two important film scholars, Sergei Eisenstein and André Bazin. Both men had particular investments in the Americas and their representations: Eisenstein considered D. W. Griffith, an early American filmmaker, to be instrumental in defining his own film practice, and Bazin spent a great deal of his own research studying classical Hollywood cinema, a study from which he helped to formulate the auteur approach to film analysis. Beyond personal indebtedness and Hollywood, both Eisenstein and Bazin used American spaces as forums through which both could identify and analyze the constitutions of film and film practice. Whether it is the deserts of northern Mexico, as Eisenstein filmed them, or the deserts in the U.S. southwest, as Bazin interpreted them in the works of John Ford, the Americas became necessarily representable and representative of film aesthetics and mechanics.

After discussing how Eisenstein and Bazin define and dissect film and the borders they isolate and construct in the process, I turn my attention to another European scholar who was also highly influenced by American spaces and spatial

representations. Michel de Certeau was deeply interested in how one constructs meaning through the acts of living and being. Beyond epistemology, de Certeau was interested in documenting how mundane and quotidian acts bear a deep resonance in how one understands life. His work on Native American dispossession and displacement, for example, calls for a politics beyond documentation and recognition. He insists that there is a political vein in phenomenology that significantly defines value and worth, and a philosophical vein to politics that contextualizes the more commonly associated political branch of ethics. My own work in this chapter pays particular heed to de Certeau's analyses on borders and barriers and their narrative functions.

My consideration of European texts finally culminates in a close-reading of border constructions in two European films that are set in the Americas, Le Salaire de la peur (Wages of Fear, Dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1953) and Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes (Aguirre, the Wrath of God, Dir. Werner Herzog, 1973). I should note that my use of European texts in this, my last, chapter is not meant to reflect either a definitive representation and reading of American spaces, nor its opposite, an erroneous and/or romanticized representation. As I have attempted to argue, representations of American spaces that necessitate an active (and narrative) identification on the part of the viewer must, in some way, perform a process that alludes to, or actively embodies, redemption.

All such representations, therefore, negotiate distinction and sameness, foreignness and belonging. These films are no different. It is not my attempt to gauge the American-ness of any film, because I question the worth of such an engagement

as well as its efficacy. I do, however, wish to emphasize the European, read foreign, nature of these texts if for no other reason than to highlight the importance of distance in representations of redemption. My analyses of the films, in particular¹⁸, will focus on the estrangement and displacement that is evidenced in the texts' content and structure, and how borders are made palpable and suggestive of a terrain that is alien and foreign. Redemption in these representations of the Americas seems to make constant reference to space beyond American borders and seem to consider the Americas as one almost homogeneous space.

I like the idea of ending with an external view of this hemisphere. Such a view allows one to consider the hemisphere in its totality and allows one to really consider the network of borders that criss-cross and delineate how one should read this totality. It is this view that has inspired my configuration of the American film strip. The external view both affords a distance that makes closure possible, and, more significantly, invites re-consideration and re-interpretation. It is a view, I believe, which may inspire the need for, as well as the promise of, redemption. If my project is to consider the Americas as an inter-related amalgam of narratives, the context of such an amalgam demands that we simultaneously understand the Americas as divisible and as unified. Redemption is a result of considering a multitude of places and times at once (a here and a there; a past, present, and future). It is an attempt to give sequence and meaning to context. I do not believe it is the only way to consider the complicated definitions that make up the Americas, but it is

¹⁸ I do not plan to spend any significant time commenting on the theorists' relations to American spaces and representations thereof. My main consideration of these scholars is one focused on their definitions of space, time, and movement in relation to film and/or representation. My own film analyses will afford me with the opportunity to apply these theorists' arguments towards a postulation on American redemptions.

one that has been particularly dominant in attempts to foster allegiance between Americans and the places they inhabit. Ending this project with an external view, then, paradoxically allows one to scrutinize redemptive representations better than immersing oneself in a specifically defined and differentiated place. I believe this is so in large part because we see borders and connections at once.

Sergei Eisenstein's work on (and with) film has been instrumental in shaping film studies as a discipline. He was actively engaged in constructing a film praxis that derived, in part, from contemporary discussions of language and meaning. As such, he argued that film works like language does – it has various discernible and discrete elements that, considered together, allow for abstract and creative expression. Constructing a lexicon of film, then, is absolutely essential to understanding film's function and promise. Eisenstein argues that the most basic element of film, that which informs and threads all others, is montage, the active placement of shots. "Cinema," he claims, "is, first and foremost, montage" ("Beyond," 15). Montage goes well beyond editing, in Eisenstein's formulation, for it functions dialectically in producing not only narrative continuity, but emotional, logical, and ideological meaning. The juxtaposition of two shots creates a new understanding that neither shot, by itself, can create. Likewise, the juxtaposition of two compositions, or two narrative threads, or two different camera angles, creates a dynamic third result that goes beyond the mere sum of the two juxtaposed elements. It is this process of connection, of conscious placement, that makes film a distinct art medium and gives it its aesthetic and conceptual power.

Eisenstein emphasizes what is essentially invisible in film, the meeting point, or divergence, of two distinct elements. As such, montage is more a force than an isolated thing; it is the vector that directs how film physiologically and psychologically works. This conception of montage as a dynamic principle is illustrated by Eisenstein's rendering of montage in terms of "collisions." He writes, "[b]ut in my view montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another" (emphasis in text; "Dramaturgy," 28). Film, then, is the result of a series of explosions, mini-Big-Bangs, that propel the viewer towards new perspectives. These perspectives are not necessarily visual, but conceptual, psychological and emotional. They are perspectives that cannot be documented, only prompted. Through film, Eisenstein hopes, viewers will become literate in a new way of seeing, one that foregrounds a dialectic understanding of meaning. Viewers of film will become experts at seeing what is not literally there, at envisioning what lies between elements, and, most importantly, at being consciously active participants in constructing the meaning of any film. The social and political implications of montage, therefore, make it a sort of organic offshoot of the larger project described by Marx. Film, then, is inherently connected to revolution and liberation. If explored and utilized, this connection may, Eisenstein considers, place film firmly as "the new watchword for our epoch in the field of art. And really justify Lenin's statement that 'of all the arts... cinema is the most important'" ("Dramaturgy," 42). The synthesis that results from the collision of film and spectator, then, is the same power that mobilizes society.

Eisenstein's conception of film is particularly relevant for my own purpose in his active use of movement as both the form and content of his argument. Montage is, after all, a dynamic force, one that creates a sort of movement. Eisenstein even compares film to a moving vehicle when he writes "[i]f we are to compare montage with anything, then we should compare a phalanx of montage fragments – 'shots' – with the series of explosions of the internal combustion engine, as these fragments multiply into a montage dynamic through 'impulses' like those that drive a car or a tractor" ("Beyond," 21). The "impulses" which motivate a film and those which result from viewing the film are all movements begun by the filmmakers themselves. Film, then, is not only composed of these "impulses," but is, in itself, a medium for artistic, political, and intellectual "impulses." Film does not only present an illusion of movement, therefore, it is, quite explicitly, movement in and of itself. The elements that are moved, through montage, are inconsequential except when placed within this dynamic. Eisenstein would argue, perhaps, that the border between two shots in a film strip *is* film in its very essence. The shots, themselves, are vehicles to be moved. The material content of these shots, then, the spaces film represents, bear no meaning without direction. The spaces must be moved, must be placed within a temporal order, for them to register as significant.

André Bazin, writing roughly 20 years after Eisenstein, makes a case against the essentially defining nature of montage. Commenting on the developments made in film technology and practice after the advent of sound, Bazin remarks that montage played a much larger role in the silent era than it does in contemporary films (of the 1950s). As such, post-sound films tend to be less expressionistic and symbolic than

their predecessors. Concerning pre-sound film, Bazin writes, “[t]he meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator” (46). Montage works by allusion, as it were, and not description. It cannot display reality; it can only refer to it. Realism, as Bazin describes it, can be enhanced when a film minimizes its role in directing spectatorship, when the camera becomes a recorder of events rather than a manipulator of space and time. The connection between reality and its perception is made tighter the less a director controls how this reality is presented, allowing for greater freedom on the viewer’s part to create meaning specific to her/his experience of the film. With montage as the basis of film, viewers cannot exercise choice and cannot create a unique, independent connection with film. “In short,” Bazin claims, “montage by its very nature rules out ambiguity of expression” (54). In the time of Bazin’s writing, an era still recovering from recent fascist and totalitarian abuses, choice and truth were qualities that seemed paramount to any socially conscious expression. Manipulation and illusion do not have the place in contemporary filmmaking that it did before sound became an established component of film. On the basis of reality, Bazin argues, film should attempt to display as much as it can, give as much freedom of interpretation to the viewer as it can. The camera should expand the scope of its lens, not focus it tighter. Ultimately, Bazin argues for a revision of film’s function as a language, one that includes as fundamental an element “that would permit everything to be said without chopping the world up into little fragments, that would reveal the hidden meanings in people and things without

disturbing the unity natural to them” (55). One such element, Bazin claims, is depth of field.

Because of technological advances, and because of changing understandings of film’s function and possibilities, films have demonstrated an ever-growing capacity to clearly represent all areas of a set simultaneously. Whereas films made under montage as a guiding principle tend to focus on one image or one area of a frame at any given time, films that are made to depict “reality,” Bazin notes, attempt to clearly display all spaces at all times. Close-ups are discarded in favor of medium and long shots in such films. Lighting is utilized to enhance visibility and not disguise or hide parts of a frame. Deep focus is used for clarity in the background of a shot as well as in the foreground. Long takes are preferred over frequent cuts. In short, all areas of a frame are given equal representational weight at the same time. The realistic film attempts to amass meaning, not filter it. Bazin refers to Orson Welles, William Wyler, and Jean Renoir as members of this movement away from montage. Stylistic and political trends such as Italian Neorealism and those found in many British post-war films also emphasize depth of composition over montage. Although he does not mention it, the New Latin American Cinema movement is created with these understandings of realism in mind. Contemporary independent U.S. filmmaking, particularly in the area of documentary, strives for such realism as well.

Filmic space, Bazin argues, should have volume and heft and should not just be a backdrop upon which images are paraded in succession. As such, filmic space can be depicted as viable, significant (and signifying) space. It follows, then, that the

movements I mentioned above, including the Nouvelle Vague in Bazin's own France, all depend upon an engagement with space and time that is closely linked with national and cultural identity and history. Although some cinematic movements evidence more of a political investment than others, all arguably refer to the place upon which the action of the film occurs as a key element in the construction of the film's meaning. These are films set in real places in real times, and they are meant to establish a direct and intimate connection with the film viewership because of this use of reality. We are meant to feel that the spaces depicted and the spaces we find ourselves in bear a connection that goes beyond interpretation. We can go so far as to say that we are meant to recognize and reclaim filmic spaces for ourselves.

It would seem that whereas Eisenstein looked to the interstices between shots for film's essence, Bazin looks not only at the shots themselves, but gazes through the shot at the images impressed thereon. James Monaco categorizes both critics' arguments in terms of space and time. Eisenstein, Monaco notes, emphasizes time in his formulation of film language, and Bazin does the same with space. Montage is about order and sequence, images viewed through time. Compositional depth foregrounds the space upon which these images are situated. As such, both critics approach the question of film's workings by separately considering the two most prominent qualities that grant film its uniqueness and allure as both technological innovation and artistic practice: the representation of an image through (rather than in) space and time. Jean-Luc Godard, with his film practice, is credited by Monaco as synthesizing the two strands of this dialectic with his focus on movement and stasis. Any representation of an image through space and time will have to record change or

its absence. One cannot, therefore, solely look into the frame or look in between the frames in order to formulate film's methodology. One has to consider both at once, and the only way to do so is to examine the movement that makes both frame and border, and both space and time, interdependent and indistinguishable. Although not specifically about film, I find Michel de Certeau's considerations of the narrative qualities of movement an excellent place to begin this examination.

Michel de Certeau writes that "every story is a travel story" (115). This is generally understood in terms of narrative's temporal dependency – every narrative, whatever its structure, is a meaningful ordering of events. Order, sequence, repetition are traits made manifest through time and its passage. As such, narratives depend upon a dynamic engagement with time, a movement forwards or backwards or through. Certeau, however, uses his statement to make a case for the topological character of narrative, that not only does narrative represent, and instigate, temporal change, it also demands a sort of dis- and re-location. Stories can transport listeners to faraway places, of course, or they can return readers to her/his home with developed insight, but what Certeau is interested in with his investigation of the role of space in narrative is not the nature of these places so much as how these spaces are constructed through their telling. "[A] movement," he claims, "always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history" (118). Movement, then, not only links space and time; it also allows both to be narratively representable, and representative. As such, one cannot narrate space without utilizing time (a landscape frozen in time; the changes wrought on a city through the years; the differences between a place encountered and a place left behind) and one cannot tell

of time without the use of space (flowers withering in an abandoned garden; the overlap of notes in a musical composition; the distance, and difference, between here and there). Every narrative representation, therefore, is part of a movement that traverses, as it constructs, its spatial and temporal arena.

It is important to remember Certeau's distinction between place and space at this point. A place is a space without narrative. To tell of a place is to create a space of it. "A place is... an instantaneous configuration of positions," (117) Certeau writes; it is the order through which things are located and localized. An object can only occupy one place at one time. If one were to move the object, its next location would be its place, not its new place, or its better place, but its place. To consider the process of movement, or the difference between the places upon which the object was situated, or the consideration of a past place and a future place, is to create a space of place. Place is, therefore, static. "[S]pace," on the other hand, "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements" (Certeau, 117). Certeau illustrates the difference between space and place by noting the difference between the illustration of a street on a map and the process of walking down that very same street (117). The street is "placed" on a map, definitively situated. It cannot be anywhere else. It is defined by its position and the positions of the other noted streets. The process of searching for that street on the map and gauging its length, its intersections, and its distance from where one happens to be is the creation of a space. "In short," Certeau writes, "space is a practiced place" (117). There are as many spaces as there are negotiations with place. Whereas movement creates space, it is absent from place. A

represented place is, therefore, always a space and always an engagement with movement. “[E]very story is a travel story” (115), then, because narrative dis-places teller and told.

Certeau points out a fascinating paradox concerning space: “[i]t is the partition of space that structures it” (123). Space is thereby shaped by its borders. Space demands a sort of containment, a parameter in order to give it definition and distinction. In order for there to be a “here,” the “here” has to be distinct from a “there.” It is this distinction, this boundary, that makes the “here” a “here” and the “there” a “there.” If one crosses this boundary, one creates another space that itself needs to be defined against a limit. A city’s limits are what structures the city, not the space within these limits. The same can be said of national boundaries: the United States, for instance, is shaped by its coasts and by its borders to Mexico and Canada. It is not shaped by the space within it. One may even politicize such a statement by claiming that the border between Mexico and the U.S., a highly contested and contestable space, significantly defines both nations. One cannot, perhaps, consider a national, or any other, space without referencing its borders.

Because of this necessary delimitation, one can conclude, as Certeau does, that narratives both set limits and transgress them. Since narrative is a representation of temporal and spatial movement, narrative may be thought of as a dynamic construct that challenges and stretches pre-established limits as well as establishing and setting its own parameters. Certeau writes:

By considering the role of stories in delimitation, one can see that the primary function is to *authorize* the establishment, displacement or transcendence

of limits, and as a consequence, to set in opposition, within the closed field of discourse, two movements that intersect (setting and transgressing limits) in such a way as to make the story a sort of “crossword” decoding stencil (a dynamic partitioning of space) whose essential narrative figures seem to be the *frontier* and the *bridge*. (emphases in text; 123)

Narrative, then, is shaped both by inclusion and exclusion, and its limits, what defines its structure in space and time, are marked not by stasis, an ending of movement, but by *conflicting* movement. The border, therefore, is not a place, a static location that encases the space that is a nation or a narration; the border is a volatile and dynamic space that demands constant re-articulation. As Certeau points out, the border is both frontier and bridge; it is what divides familiar terrain from the foreign (as the frontier does) and what connects these two terrains (as a bridge). It is neither exclusive nor inclusive, but both simultaneously. Above all, the border is constructed through movement and is, in itself, moving and movable. Certeau expresses this more elegantly when he claims that “boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits” (129).

I elaborated in previous chapters on the ways in which the Americas have been represented as spaces that mark and are marked by encounters and dispersals. I have also considered filmic depictions of travel across borders within the Americas, borders that are all made to create a sort of implicit connection between the narrative being recounted and the space of its recounting. I have attempted to show how national definition in these movies demands an active distinction and simultaneous connection with what is foreign. This process of distinction/connection is, I argue,

redemptive in its structure and purpose. Redemption, therefore, necessitates a transgression of limits and their definitive establishment. It is, essentially, a negotiation with borders. Since the Americas have been so significantly defined on the basis of their promise and need of redemption, as I have argued, the borders and boundaries that fragment and divide the hemisphere are narrative constructions of belonging and displacement. They are hardly static demarcations; rather, American borders are volatile, dynamic representations of the ways in which movement, as a concept and practice, constructs collective and individual subjectivity.

I begin this chapter with an analogy between a strip of film stock and the American hemisphere. Both are conglomerations of distinct cells/regions that, when viewed together, display an illusion of cohesion. As I mentioned, movement is the only way through which these cells/regions can be connected – either by moving the film stock through a projector or by moving a body over national/regional borders. The effect that results from the projection of the film stock is what is generally understood to be film itself. Both Eisenstein and Bazin agree that film is not its material, plastic presence. A taxonomy of film necessitates the development of a syntax, not a chemical, physical dismantling. Film is a complex of spatial and temporal representations organized through/with movement so as to create meaning. Certeau comments that “[t]he opacity of the body in movement, gesticulating, walking, taking its pleasure, is what indefinitely organizes a *here* in relation to an *abroad*, a ‘familiarity’ in relation to a ‘foreignness’” (emphases in text; 130). The moving body, therefore, continually (re)constructs and (re)performs relation and position. The narratives that ensue from such re-negotiations must, based on Certeau,

be repeated foundations and transgressions of borders. Like the cells in a strip of film stock, these narratives can be fragmented into a great number of border crossings.

I have here provided three ways of considering represented, and representative, movement within, to, and from the Americas. The first two are derived from attempts to articulate film's form and function, and the last to "ground" narrative and movement. Eisenstein offers a temporal basis for his definition of film language. Film is, he argues, the (dis)juncture within a series of shots. Bazin counters this assumption with the claim that film is the record of an interaction with real space, not just an ordering practice. Certeau provides a way of examining movement within a narrative, not by tracing its trajectory, but by exploring the tensions (in the form of border crossings) that shape, direct, and comprise the narrative. In the next section, I apply these considerations towards an analysis of two films, Le Salaire de la peur and Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes. Although I do believe that more work is necessary to really establish a reading of movement in film syntax, and to, thereby, contribute to the dialectic started by Eisenstein and Bazin, my main goal in the following pages are to build upon these arguments concerning movement and borders with my own exploration of movements towards redemption. The border is, therefore, my central focus in establishing how these two films construct, and place, the Americas within narratives of salvation.

Le Salaire de la peur is a film set in an unnamed Latin American country. This country's anonymity enhances the film's themes of isolation, fragmentation, and decomposition by, quite literally, being a place with no discernible geographical connection to anywhere else. In the course of the film, a travel agent's storefront

window is displayed with a poster advertising ticket fares to South American cities such as Caracas, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Lima, but the price of these tickets is well beyond the scope of any of the characters. The placement of this country, therefore, is completely founded upon its distance from anywhere else. It is a place impossibly far away from places with actual, recognizable names. Actually shot in France, the film incorporates images and sound meant to connote Latin America, but stays clear from ever using these elements as document of any actual culture, history, or social structure. Naked black children playing in the mud, peasant women speaking Spanish with bundles on their heads, and a shot of an indigenous family watching the progress of trucks along an unpaved road, all work towards contributing to an effect that distances more than it locates. This is a place meant to be recognized as foreign and apart, not meant to be recognized in and of itself. So it is away from any locus of identity that the film situates its band of exiles.

The film follows a handful of men, Europeans and U.S. nationals, who have sought refuge in this unnamed place from undisclosed troubles in their native lands. Exiles based on criminal or political activity, they find it impossible to leave after they arrive. Salaire depicts the boredom and desperation of these men who will, ultimately, stoop to anything for enough money to get out. With the outbreak of an oil fire in a refinery some distance from the city in which these exiles live, the U.S. owned oil company headquartered in this same city, Las Piedras, decides to hire drivers to transport two truck loads of nitroglycerine to the refinery in order to quench the fire. The roads to the refinery are, of course, unpaved and filled with ruts and obstacles, so the drivers must be very careful to ensure that the trucks do not bounce

enough to trigger the nitro and explode. The trucks must, therefore, go at a snail's pace and demand complete concentration on the parts of the drivers. Four men are finally selected to drive the two trucks: an Italian named Luigi, a Dutchman named Bimba, and two Frenchmen named Mario and Jo. The last half of the film is a depiction of these men's confrontations and struggles against the numerous dangers found on their way to the refinery.

One could argue that this "way," the road that the men traverse, not only functions as both venue towards salvation and material manifestation of everything that keeps the men from reaching this same salvation, but as a symbol of the competing forces of movement and stasis. The men cannot afford to stop on this road, nor can they speed up their journey. They must travel according to the dictates of the road itself. As such, the men have very little control over their movement, even though they must continually strategize how to get over impossible craters in the road or how to avoid falling rocks. The first half of the film functions to construct the social, political and economic forces that determine the exiles' interactions with this unnamed terrain, whereas the last half offers an intense examination of a handful of these men's struggles against the terrain itself. Movement and stasis play complex roles in this film, because movement does not allow progress and stasis does not promise stability. In fact, because of the extremely slow tempo of the film, it is often difficult to distinguish between movement and stasis.

The final sequence of the film, after three of the four men have died, and the fourth, Mario, is returning to Las Piedras with his escape from the stultifying place guaranteed, is particularly illustrative of this ambivalent movement. Stylistically

different from the rest of the film, this sequence uses parallel editing to depict both Mario's journey and Las Piedras at once. It also makes use of frequent cuts, a dominant soundtrack, and excessive camera movement. Both Mario and those in El Corsario Negro, the bar frequented by the exiles, are listening to the same waltz on their respective radios, and, as the waltz gains momentum, everyone in the bar begins to dance and Mario, himself, begins to swerve his truck to the rhythm of the music. Escalating to an almost chaotic choreography, bar patrons and Mario's truck destabilize the, until then, static camera and cause it, too, to dance in time to the music. This is the most movement that has been depicted in the entirety of the film and it, as can be expected, comes to a grinding halt as Mario loses control of his truck and drives off a steep cliff at the same time as Linda, a native to Las Piedras in love with Mario, faints to the floor amidst dancers' feet. The final shot of the film is a steady close-up of the Parisian subway ticket Mario has kept as a good luck charm, laying on unnamed ground after having flown out of the crashing truck. Instead of the waltz, all we hear is the uninterrupted screech of the truck's siren. The movement that has signaled the film's climax is, finally, the movement that ends both Mario's progress and the film itself. The metro ticket, a material manifestation of mobility, is transformed into debris that litters the landscape, a symbol, now, of stasis.

The parallel editing in this final sequence is particularly significant in that it acknowledges a mobility and access available only to the film viewer. The film has heretofore used this feature primarily to accentuate simultaneity over short distances, namely to depict how both trucks have to negotiate similar events. As such, parallel editing is primarily read as a continuation of narrative flow, as a means of providing

counterpoints to moments of suspense. In this last sequence, however, the use of parallel editing becomes markedly stylized, and, along with the divergent practices of soundtrack and camera movement, serves to enforce a sort of communicability that goes beyond a sequence of events. In short, the viewer is meant to notice, in a way unrelated to the majority of the film, the interplay of space and time as it affects viewership in conjunction with its effects on the characters themselves. It is at this moment that we, unlike the characters, can cover the spaces that they cannot. We create the link, as it were, between Mario's truck and his destination, a link that never materializes within the diegesis. The editing allows the viewer to sojourn back and forth multiple times and at increasing speed, foregrounding an access to space that the characters do not, and never did, have. Because the viewer has developed an investment with the characters' ability to move despite great odds, the viewer negotiates the parallel editing in this sequence as a sort of travel. We are, effectively, completing a journey that the characters cannot complete. We travel effortlessly between Las Piedras and Mario's truck, erasing distance and its temporal and spatial components. The cut, therefore, occupies space that is recognized as both traversable (to us, the viewers) and limited (to the characters).

The characters' entrapment in this isolated, foreign place is rendered, therefore, through our own mobility and accessibility. On a formal level, as I have illustrated, the cut becomes our "ticket" in, out, and through this place. We are made to recognize the limits of the characters' mobility through our own unlimited access. As such, we are made to effectively recognize barriers that only we can overcome. Those barriers and obstacles that the film so painstakingly depicts as being, just

barely, surmountable on the journey to the refinery cannot, ultimately, compare with those that can only be non-diegetically tackled. On a thematic level, the characters' alienation is constructed through an acknowledgment, on the viewers' part, of distance and foreignness. The landscape is unnamed and therefore indefinable. It is, however, recognizable as Latin American. The anonymous country, therefore, exists outside of geography but well inside cultural preconceptions. I believe this "familiar indefinability" works similarly to the film's use of formal techniques to ensure viewer placement. Just as the cut allows the viewer to construct and deconstruct temporal and spatial barriers and to, ultimately, secure her/himself beyond the film's location, the "Latin American" quality of the setting provides a similar promise of construction and deconstruction. We are aware of the fictive nature of the terrain, just as we are aware of the cultural encodings that make this place foreign. Because of this dual awareness, Las Piedras is made to exist through distance and foreign-ness, not just as a distant and foreign place. The depicted country will always be located beyond the boundaries of any viewer's geographical and cultural location. We must, along with the main characters, travel *to* Las Piedras from somewhere else. Since Las Piedras is inherently distant and foreign, we must also attempt to engage in a journey *from* this place as well. The country depicted in the film is, thereby, made to exist as a sort of purgatory, a way-station between origin and destination. It is not a place of stability, but of passage. Viewer and character recognize this, but only the viewer can truly make use of the visas and passports and metro tickets that punctuate the film, because these manifestations of mobility are literally dis-placed in the diegesis. Our

engagement with the characters' isolation is founded upon, therefore, an understanding of our placement as opposed to the characters' lack of place.

The ambiguity of movement and stasis in the film can thereby be explained through the viewer's engagement with the filmed terrain. As much as the film relies on movement for its premise, it also equally depends on the viewer's developing sense of security and placement. It can be argued that the outcome of this film is to commend a sort of centeredness and fixity on the viewer's part, but I find it more intriguing to claim that the ultimate project of the film is to nurture exactly the kind of tension evidenced by the contradictions and interplays between movement and stasis. In a sense, this film creates a sort of dialectic that demands the viewer's active engagement in the construction of space. I like to think of this dialectic as resonant with Certeau's analysis of movement and narrative. Both movement and narrative, he claims, create borders and bridges, and it is in these liminal spaces, loaded with possibilities and culminations, that both forces (movement and narrative) find their shape and their impetus. It is also in, and through, these border zones that movement and narrative become inter-definable.

Clouzot's film constructs a liminal space, or, rather, a border made up of many borders, in order to represent a movement without progress, a stasis made up, not of the lack of movement, but of conflicting movements. This space is both topographical and narrative; in fact, its narrative depends on the crossing and re-crossing of terrain, and its topography relies upon a consideration of places as sequences, one place leading to another. *Las Piedras* is, therefore, not only fictional, but fictive in that the film is based upon the city's function as a border. It begins as a

destination for the exiles, then becomes a point of departure for the four drivers, then becomes, once again, a destination for Mario. Although the name of the city aptly translates as a pile of rocks, it is the only place in the film that has a name and the ability to provide some measure to the movement therein. Las Piedras is, in a way, the most “concrete” place in what is, essentially, a space made up entirely of movement. The city functions, then, as an ambiguous defining mechanism, a nexus wherein men from all over Europe and the United States converge, and wherein the movement that makes up the narrative is centered. The city, like the entire country, is thereby defined through its distance and through its ability to represent displacement. Therefore, although Las Piedras functions as a border/bridge, it does not actually border or bridge any place but the places constructed through the characters’ movements and through the viewer’s subsequent placement.

It is particularly telling that this liminal city is situated within the limits of Latin America. Besides the many problematic stereotypes that appear throughout the film, the diegetic treatment of what may be understood to be a real place, or conglomeration of places, enforces an understanding of the Americas as being apart, and distinct, from a position of identification. One does not identify with Salaire’s Latin America; rather, one identifies the film’s place within Latin America. In fact, what salvation there is for the characters, and, ultimately, for the viewers, lies in identifying oneself *against* this unnamed place. Like many treatments of the Americas already discussed in earlier chapters, Salaire’s America is neither origin nor destination, but a space in between. It is a space, therefore, that necessitates, just as it promises, redemption. It is a space that demands placement within a larger context,

both narrative and geographical. Las Piedras cannot exist but as a reference to other places and stories. Even though the exiles yearn for passages to such places as Caracas, Rio, or Lima, one is still meant to understand these real, Latin American cities as, not only context for Las Piedras, but as existing within a larger, non-American context. In a sense, these real cities function to situate Las Piedras geographically, a situation that, ultimately, enforces the location's Latin American qualities and its distance from the exiles' homes. Caracas, Rio and Lima would be ways out of Las Piedras, not ways back, or towards, a place of identification. Being trapped within the Americas, therefore, interestingly promotes a kind of unification of the hemisphere (these places are ostensibly connected) as well as a distinct sense of difference and displacement. The exiles are, quite literally, nowhere, even though they are in the Americas.

This film makes very evident use of redemption, both fiscal and metaphysical. The exiles embody a sort of existentialist paradigm in that they are permanently detached from sources of meaning and cannot effectively construct significant relationships with their contexts. They are also cast out from where they belong, hopelessly trying to find entries back to their homelands and to structures providing agency. The viewer never knows the causes of their exile, but these men's oustings transform their origins into virtual paradises. The only way back, they learn, is with the advocacy of some higher power, which, in the film, is cynically rendered as monetary. Their spiritual/metaphysical redemption, then, is quite literally only made possible through material remuneration. Their journey is, therefore, primarily understood in terms of redemption.

The oil refinery, we discern through a giant map in the manager's office, lies at the end of a road running deep into the country. The exiles must, ironically, travel into the interior of the unnamed country in order to finally be able to escape it. The road through American terrain is, at once, a road into its depths as well as a passage out of it. The road is, also, inconsistent, varying from paved to unpaved, filled with pot holes to relatively clear, traversing across steep, rocky cliffs to densely wooded jungle. In fact, the episodic nature of the film's narrative makes it clear that each leg of the journey offers new types of roads with new, and often unforeseen, obstacles to be overcome. Because of the nitroglycerine, the viewer becomes wary of all road conditions and the manners in which the trucks negotiate these same. As the drivers begin to die, one becomes more acutely aware of the tension created between American terrain and the exiles' journey towards redemption. The road begins to disappear until the two remaining exiles (Mario and Jo) must construct their own way through what is virtually in-navigable land. Essentially, as the film progresses, the exiles have to interact more and more with the land they cross, to the point that one of them, Jo, gets run over to ensure safe passage of the truck over a slick oil spill. The displacement of the characters becomes, then, more and more apparent, so that, when Mario makes it to the refinery and is coursing back to Las Piedras, his manipulation of his truck to the tune of a Viennese waltz throws him off the established road and into an abyss. The road that so dramatically becomes the manifestation of the exiles' attempts towards redemption, therefore, is measured by the distance from Western constructions of advancement to uncivilized and inhospitable foreign-ness.

This distance can be understood as analogous to that between the West and its furthest reaches, between a definable, and defining, place and a space that cannot have definition. The film traces the trajectory between these two poles and imparts value to each according to its redemptive promise. Ultimately, neither Europe nor that which is not Europe can save the exiles, but then again the film never quite depicts either extreme. Europe is only recognized as being the goal, the home to be returned to; it does not actually appear in the film. Likewise, the road *from* Europe is understood to lead to a place that is virtually inaccessible, a place without routes or direction. This no-place is also only connoted in the film. In other words, the film depicts movement *to* and *from*, depicts the border region that lies between the West and the “jungle” and is defined by movement. By containing the narrative within a border, the film relies upon the viewer to construct the sites of placement and displacement that will give meaning to the movement depicted therein. By placing the narrative in Latin America, the viewer must accommodate these sites in geo-cultural terms, acknowledging differing significance within a spectrum defined by civilization and barbarism. The Americas lie somewhere within this spectrum, on the border, as it were, between place and space. Redemption, one is led to understand, is ultimately a re-assertion and reclamation of place, an escape from the border. Redemption cannot, therefore, exist within the liminal space constructed by the film. It only exists in the film’s context, the defining, and definite, place of the viewer.

Le Salaire de la peur begins and ends with extreme close-ups. The opening shot is of a group of scorpions bound together by string. They are fighting amongst themselves regardless of the fact that they are being manipulated to do so. One can

easily read this opening shot as symbolizing the pathetic, and fruitless, struggle of the exiles amidst forces much stronger than their own. The initial close-up is replaced with a medium shot that contextualizes the bound scorpions, placing them in the middle of a dirty city, Las Piedras, complete with donkeys, half-nude children, and vultures. As mentioned earlier, the final shot is an extreme close-up of the Paris metro ticket lying useless on the ground. The context for this shot, we are made to understand, is the film as a whole – the events leading to the crash, the entrapped characters, the tone of hopelessness and desperation, etc... In a sense, then, Salaire is framed by representations of displacement: the metro ticket's transformation into debris and the scorpions' controlled battle. These representations are meant to situate the viewer thematically and also culturally. Our entrance to Las Piedras, and the film, is an entrance into a cruel and ostensibly foreign terrain. Our departure from the anonymous country, and the film itself, is a departure from a space that is, significantly, *not* Paris, nor the West, nor, perhaps, any place at all. In other words, the film actively places the viewer beyond its boundaries and depends upon this contextual placement in order to ensure the distance necessary to communicate displacement. I'd like to end my treatment of this film by suggesting that the viewer is thus not so much situated in a definite and comparatively better place, but is made to effectively *practice* placement and to maintain and nurture the power that accompanies this practice. Because the film places the Americas within a space that is never completely stabilized, the viewer, I argue, must venture *from* American frontiers in order to give meaning to the characters' immersion *into* this hemisphere.

Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes also recounts a journey deep into American jungles by a group of Europeans. Like Salaire, the characters in Aguirre are also in search of money and recognized power, and embark on their trek with this redemption in mind. Although Aguirre is set some 400 years prior to the setting of Salaire, both films may be argued to depict the same space, a space that is uncharted and defined by its inaccessibility. Aguirre is based on a historical figure, who, through his quest for El Dorado, translates immersion into the Americas as displacement. Not only does the character lose himself in the Amazon jungle, Aguirre relies on similar meta-physical paradigms to Salaire to impart a sort of universal isolation. The Americas in both movies, it seems, is a space that changes from geographical presence to philosophical forum, a space that loses reality and reliability the more it is encountered. It is appropriate, then, that this shifting terrain be represented, in Aguirre, in relation to its meandering and seemingly endless waterways.

Aguirre charts an expedition led by conquistador Gonzalo Pizarro over the Andes and into the Amazon basin. Initially determined to find El Dorado, Pizarro becomes more and more apprehensive of his mission as signs of the city's existence seem to fade in validity. Don Lope de Aguirre, an officer in Pizarro's company, uses the commander's faltering as an opportunity to strike up discontent and foment rebellion among the troops. Through extreme forms of coercion, Aguirre ultimately is able to take control over a mutinous group who re-embark on their quest for El Dorado after Pizarro has given up. The last half of the film follows Aguirre's ill-fated journey along the Amazon River, depicting the Spaniards' struggles with starvation, sickness, hostile natives, and, finally, madness. More a treatment on power,

subjectivity, and the lack of ultimate meaning in human endeavors than a historical approximation, Aguirre equates travel over space with an exploration into the human psyche. The Americas become synonymous, in this way, with the region between the conscious and the unconscious.

If Salaire de la peur emphasized its editing and juxtapositions of shots and scenes, one may claim that Aguirre follows the Bazinian recommendation of accentuating depth of field. There are several long takes throughout the film that both document characters and the landscape that envelops them. In fact, the film is punctuated by shots with no dialogue or character interaction. With little to no narrative function, these shots aim at disclosing the interplay between character and setting, showcasing composition, scale, diegetic sound, and a slow, laborious passage of time. We are continually made aware of the surroundings in this film, particularly of the seeming incongruence between the characters and narrative action and the terrain they traverse.

This incongruence is illustrated sharply by a scene in which the crew, mad with hunger and illness, sight a life-sized sailboat sitting atop a tall tree. Unsure of the veracity of this vision, the crew's comments of disbelief give way to a silent gaze as the camera slowly tracks the passage of this strangely-moored ship. There is something oddly unsettling about this scene, an unsettlement that goes beyond the surreal nature of the stranded ship. The quiet, slow documentation of the boat atop the tree creates a contemplative, almost serene tone, one that works towards placing this unusual sight on par with the other shots of the jungle that we have become

accustomed to. In other words, this scene is unsettling because it hovers between the natural and the unnatural.

Another shot with a similar effect occurs after one of the horses brought on the expedition escapes from the raft it has been sailing on and swims to shore. The shot tracks slowly, and silently, by the horse, adorned with its regalia, looking at the camera from amidst foliage. Again, the incongruence that the shot documents is challenged by the unhurried and steady way that the camera records its object. This shot, like that of the ship, renders a sort of lonesome and quiet tone to what is startlingly out of place. The effect is that of a strange eeriness, one that does not seem to stem from an unexpected sight, but from a sight that should be, but is not, unexpected. Both of these shots create a sort of “alien familiarity” that runs like an undercurrent throughout the entire film. We, the viewers, are made to account for what we see, to acknowledge the displacement depicted. However, because the displacement is not directly referenced, our acknowledgment forces us to re-conceptualize a sort of defining order, re-consider what is proper placement. As such, the viewer is put in an ambiguous position, as arbiter of placement and as witness to the illusive quality of this same. There is an almost claustrophobic feel to the film, as a consequence, because we are constantly called upon to define and maintain borders that never quite separate incongruence.

Perhaps the most defining camera movement of Aguirre is the tracking shot. Placed upon a raft, the camera documents movement in relation to the woods that line the shores. The woods, therefore, seem to float by the screen, making it difficult, sometimes, to gauge progress, for we are essentially moving in the opposite direction

of the depicted objects. The only stability gained from the tracking shot is the camera itself; although it, too, is moving, the camera becomes the point through which we can discern velocity and direction. What is supposedly stable – the trees, and rocks, and people that populate the shores – is, in fact, that which is represented as moving. Likewise that which is unstable, the camera and the rafts, becomes our only fixed position. The world floats by before us, granting the gazers, the conquistadors and ourselves, the position from which placement is made possible. We are at the center, essentially, and the world moves in accordance to our position. The implications of power inherent in this type of shot are, of course, significant in this depiction of colonization and Eurocentrism. One can very effectively argue that Herzog is questioning the very nature of power, as stability and placement within a hierarchy, through his formal choices alone. However, and this is where I'd like to take my own analysis, as much as the gazer is destabilized in this film, the land that floats by is only referenced in terms of this destabilization. The function of the American terrain in Aguirre is to ensure viewer displacement. One can, therefore, argue that both Salaire and Aguirre depict the Americas in similar ways, even though the former film engages the viewer in a definitive placement and the latter in an active displacement. The land, itself, is a consequence of position, not its predeterminant.

The final, and most famous, shot of the film suggests a reaction to the tracking shots described above. Instead of recording the passage of land from the vantage of the conquistadors, the camera turns around, as it were, and records the conquistadors from the vantage of that which surrounds them. Also a tracking shot, this shot is recorded by a mobile camera, one that travels completely around the lone figure of

Aguirre on his raft, the only surviving member of his expedition. Like the hub of a wheel, Aguirre's figure is always centered while the camera creates a sort of circumference of the space that sets him apart from the viewer. What is recorded in this shot is both the distance between this character and his surroundings and his stasis in what has been a continual documentation of movement. These two elements, distance and stasis, are the ultimate result of a project to move closer to the mythical golden city. The journey's destination is, the film seems to suggest, Aguirre himself, a narcissism and egocentrism that can only be understood in the context of its own limited parameters. The land that rotates around Aguirre's figure in this final shot, then, is undeniably a reference to this character's psyche and psychosis and not a geographically understood space. It is neither (or, perhaps, both) origin and destination for, in this case, the land moves in accordance to the character and not the other way around.

Aguirre, clearly a film about the search for redemption (both material and spiritual), offers more of an examination than the substance of the search. Like *El Dorado*, then, the Americas are a gauge of distance and despair, the context for a narrative that proceeds nowhere. The Americas lie somewhere beyond the characters', and the viewer's, grasps, promised lands that hover between haven and prison. The land, that which quite literally grounds us in this film, becomes the ultimate symbol of indeterminacy and liminality. The Amazon jungle, specifically, typifies this amorphous topography as the uncharted deep in the diegesis and as the vulnerable and rapidly diminishing place in the viewer's modern context. Unlike Salaire, Aguirre is shot in South America and great pains are taken to verify the

authenticity of this setting. Representations of flora, fauna, and native customs – the stuff of conquest and colonial discourse – function to “place” the actors in what is, ostensibly, alien territory. In other words, the viewer is meant to acknowledge the real, material presence of the landscape as well as its metaphorical distance and inaccessibility. These contradictory negotiations fuel the narrative, as I mentioned above with the ship moored atop the tree and the stranded horse, with an unsettling reminder of the tenuous nature of placement and order. The displacement evidenced in the cinematography is dramatically made manifest in the final shot that leaves the viewer in no place at all, or, rather, a place created only to contextualize a character. Like the conquistadors’ search for El Dorado, the viewer is led on an expedition of a “real” place that dematerializes into a discursive platform.

The Americas, in both Aguirre and Salaire, can best be understood as spaces in need of context. This context may be geographical, the Americas as west of Europe and east of Asia, for instance. The context is also, significantly, historical; the placement of the Americas in a narrative of conquest and resistance is an example of this. Considering the thematic concerns of both films, then, one recognizes displacement not so much as a result of the characters’ needs and quests, but because these characters are not where, we are meant to understand, they should be. They are displaced in the Americas because they are not elsewhere. The Americas provide diegetic settings within larger geographical and narrative contexts, and both films rely on this understanding in order to substantiate their respective meanings. In other words, the Americas are understood *in relation to* a place and time and not as a *de facto* place and time. In this way, both films cast the Americas simultaneously as

elsewhere and nowhere, places where the characters are lost or stranded and spaces that only exist as representations.

Certeau's argument correlates movement and narrative and, by doing so, creates a means of exploring the communicability between a place and its representation. The pursuit of studying narrative representations of movement, then, is very much an investigation of how one corresponds a represented space with the place it represents. The Americas are certainly no different than any other places in that movement defines American parameters and frontiers. The "direction" and "velocity" of this movement, however, are what merits consideration as distinctive. Redemption as a narrative practice and discourse significantly defines American movements within, to and from the hemisphere, as I have shown, and thereby makes one's "placement" within narrative contexts immensely significant as a marker of agency. How one depicts belonging to American spaces necessitates, I argue, the construction of contexts through which the Americas are placed geographically and historically. Essentially, to belong to the Americas is to create and practice a narrative wherein American spaces are effectively redeemed. This chapter has focused on representations of *not belonging* to American spaces, and, as such, has explored terrains that are not conducive to, nor granted, redemption. These are lands that are certainly not places of origin and are destinations reached through mischance and desperation. They are lands that must be escaped from. The viewer, then, regardless of her or his residence and territorial affiliation, must travel into American spaces and then out again in order to grasp the films' depictions of displacement. If Certeau's argument that movement creates space is assumed, therefore, one may

claim that the Americas exist as neither point of departure nor arrival in these films, but as manifestations of the movement between these two points. The Americas are the grounds upon which, and through which, movement is made significant.

Of course, this is the same conclusion I arrived at with my examination of “American” films: that the significance of the cited texts depends upon an understanding of the Americas as locations within the spectrums between origin and destination, between native and foreigner. More precisely, these texts demand an active re-location of American spaces. By broadening my scope to include “non-American” representations of American spaces, then, I am by no means engaging in an attempt to more precisely locate American distinctions. I am not, in other words, using “non-American” texts to demonstrate what *is* “American.” Rather, I am further exploring the necessary *distance* created in order to define American belonging. One must distance oneself from American spaces in *all* of these texts, in order to position oneself within geographical and temporal contexts. The Americas, therefore, are not only volatile, mobile constructions; they are also essentially apart from and distant to points of subjective definition. One must always arrive at or leave the Americas if one is to foster a sense of belonging to these spaces.

Ultimately, then, the American “film strip” with which I began this chapter can re-emerge as an illustrative mechanism for exploring the connections between American places and the spaces used to represent them. The separate places that comprise the individual cells of the film strip can only be understood as disparate when one considers the filmstrip without running it through the projector, when one considers its material construction. The narrative, illusionary as it may be, is brought

forth through a movement that masks the dividers between the cells, makes the filmstrip significant as a cohesive unit, one that emphasizes what it depicts, the content of the filmstrip, over what it contains, the composition of the filmstrip. And, as I have argued is the case for American spaces, one must actively disassociate the film strip from the film narrative if one wishes to escape into the worlds depicted on the screen. It is this disassociation, above all else, that I have been examining, for this disassociation is precisely what constitutes the dynamics of redemption.

Chapter Seven:

Vanishing Points: A Journey Home

As the pilgrim returns from her/his journey, s/he brings with her/him a new understanding of home. Physically distant from the pilgrimage center, home is both origin and destination (depending on the leg of the journey) and, as such, provides the framework through which the pilgrimage may be interpreted and practiced. Home also makes it possible to effectively compare both departure and return, two journeys that, despite opposing directions, enable a topological and chronological contextualization of where one belongs. Furthermore, home is that which, because of its location in most pilgrimage trajectories, comes to symbolize respite and even stasis. The pilgrim's redeemed body and spirit may certainly change her/his home, making it conversant to the pilgrimage center and history, but home becomes a practiced stability, a performed foundation within pilgrimage schema. It is that which must be distinguished from the pilgrimage itself if redemption is to be accepted.

I like to think, therefore, that home is as much a narrative engagement as the movements that define and shape it, that, despite its location as the context for one's body and life, it, too, demands that one continually re-interpret one's presence and agency against and through cultural narratives of belonging. In fact, because home connotes stability and security, it very easily gets normalized as the backdrop upon which pilgrimage's significance may be considered. Home exists before and after pilgrimage and, thereby, frames redemption, gives this identificatory process both its motivation and application. Home is far from the neutral forum one may consider it

to be within pilgrimage paradigms, therefore. One may even argue that, if anything, home as a concept and practice is what is strengthened and secured through pilgrimage. It is what, ultimately, becomes redeemed. In an effort to illustrate the “return home” as redemptive in national and spiritual schema, I offer an analysis on a familiar construction of an American home-space that has intricately informed the national imagination of the United States: the founding of a “home,” both spiritual and material, by the New England Pilgrims.

There are, surprisingly¹⁹, very few filmic depictions of the Mayflower pilgrims and their landing on Plymouth Rock. During my research, I have found that the majority of films dedicated to this topic have been produced for children²⁰. In fact, most of these films are animated shorts²¹ that often highlight the tensions between pilgrim and turkey rather than any of the racial, religious, and gendered problems that the Pawtuxet, the Wampanoag, and other Eastern Woodlands tribes encountered with the arrival of the pilgrims. The animated nature of these depictions, and their focus on children as audience, is telling in that the image of the pilgrim is given a didactic status and that it relies upon (and creates) recognition – the viewer is

¹⁹ I say “surprisingly” because, in my experience, the image of the pilgrim’s landing and subsequent interactions with the Indigenous community of Massachusetts is such a vivid one in the United States. From Thanksgiving posters to school re-enactments, this image is much circulated albeit not in film.

²⁰ Two recent examples are Disney’s *Squanto: A Warrior's Tale* (Dir. Xavier Koller, 1994) and the TV movie *Dear America: A Journey to the New World* (Dir. Don McCutcheon, 1999).

²¹ The examples I have come across are: *The Hardship of Miles Standish* (Dir. Friz Freleng, 1940) with Elmer Fudd; *Jerky Turkey* (Dir. Tex Avery, 1945); *Pilgrim Porky* (Dir. Robert Clampett, 1940) with Porky Pig; *Pilgrim Popeye* (Dir. Izzy Sparber, 1951) and *Wigwam Whoopee* (Dir. Izzy Sparber, 1948) both starring Popeye the Sailor.

meant to encounter the animated pilgrim with familiarity so that twists on the Mayflower story such as having pilgrims line up for cigarette rations rather than food and having a turkey turn into a bald eagle after eating spinach can resonate as a re-telling and re-contextualization of something known, knowable, and accepted. These depictions rekindle the pilgrim image in the minds of modern viewers and provide historicity to such contemporary concerns as material scarcity (the cigarette rations) and patriotism (the turkey/eagle kills the animated Indians in order to save Popeye).

It has not been my intention, in these pages, to re-historicize the Mayflower pilgrim narrative or any such nationally-foundational narratives, nor even to focus upon these narratives as paradigmatic of redemption stories in the Americas. Rather, I use the scarcity, and power, of the filmic Mayflower pilgrim here as an encapsulation of my argument concerning cinematic representation of redemption and how these depictions construct (and re-construct) the parameters and boundaries of the Americas. By creating a tight bond between redemption and the pilgrimage, the pilgrimage in the Americas, and the filmic representation of redemption in American contexts, the arguments that have provided the framework for this project rest on the fundamental (and, I argue, inextricable) dynamics of spirit, nation, and image. Throughout this project, I have applied and examined redemption as a narrative process wherein understandings of where and when one belongs get challenged and nurtured. It is one way in which one's life may be given shape and direction, placed within larger and, perhaps, more powerful narrative contexts. Redemption assures both the possibility for change and salvation, a reinstatement of agency understood to be lost, *and* the guarantee that defining mechanisms and structures will support one's

value and worth precisely because this value is, if inconstant, certainly recoverable. One is forever valuable and forever in need of proving one's value within redemptive paradigms. As such, one's original state, understood to be that which redemption recuperates, is the measure of one's progress as well as the measure of one's need. Redemption places a subject, therefore, within a narrative process that makes origin and destination interchangeable, yet affords definitive distinction whereby one may gauge one's placement against that of others.

I have demonstrated how this ambiguous, yet powerful, process operates to give shape and meaning to both material and spiritual pursuits, in fact providing a means through which material and spiritual worth are made co-determinant. Redemption figures prominently, therefore, in both pilgrimages and colonizing projects, for both practices rely upon the interpretation and transformation of physical to essential value and vice-versa. Both practices necessitate reconstructions of spatial and temporal origins and destinations as key identificatory practices. Rather than equating both practices, however, I have chosen to examine where pilgrimages and colonizing ventures overlap and have found that, in large part, this overlap has significantly determined how the Americas have been, and continue to be, represented and representative.

The location of the Americas within redemptive narratives, therefore, occupies an intriguing position as terrain that is shaped by divergent movements of both origin and destination. It is definitively understood as land that is arrived at, although it is simultaneously representative of an original, and originating, space. Also, because of its forced incorporation into pre-existent Western narratives of

redemption, American spaces have proven to be “fertile ground” for continued performances of belonging and dis-belonging. The Americas has, very literally, provided the stage upon which many divergent attempts at self-definition have been played. American spaces are, therefore, both represented as innately imbued with meaning and representative of the process whereby meaning is transplanted and made to grow. In short, the place of the Americas within redemptive narratives makes the distinction between American “signifieds” and American “signifiers” impossible to determine. The Americas are a representation within a larger discursive narrative. The Americas are narrative in nature.

Narrative representations of American spaces, therefore, must negotiate and sometimes establish pre-existing narratives of belonging. In some ways, one may argue that American narratives of belonging are always comparative or synthetic in nature because what it means to be American is continually contested and contestable. It is a land of shifting identities and identifications, so cultural representations of identity must either make use of this malleability or presume an essential, underlying meaning. Because of the tensions caused by attempting to represent what is, at best, shifting terrain, I have argued that representations of American belonging are either redemptive in nature or make use of redemption as a narrative strategy. Redemption allows for American transitions and transformations to become representative of constancy, tradition, and continuity. Representations of movements to, within, and from American spaces, then, consistently demand a simultaneous correspondence and distinction of both origin and destination.

Film, as a medium built upon representations of movement, therefore provides a promising venue towards an exploration of American articulations of redemption. The viewer not only processes recorded movements towards a narrative format, but also, as I have stated, actively imparts movement to the images projected on screen. As interpreter of movement, the film viewer is a key figure in any filmic representation of redemption. The placement of the viewer in relation to the diegesis, therefore, is instrumental in substantiating and/or challenging the film's ideological project. The viewer must always be situated in relation to a film, and this situation, when the film is precisely about belonging and situatedness, must be carefully and meaningfully constructed. In preceding chapters, I have explored a few instances wherein the placement of the viewer in relation to the space depicted upon and created by the screen significantly informs how a sense of belonging is elicited or complicated. American filmic narratives of belonging not only have to utilize redemption in some form, they also have to actively include the film viewer in the redemptive process. As such, viewing such films is very much an exploration into movement and its constructions of meaning. More significantly, viewing such films necessitates the same kinds of identificatory processes provided by redemption on the part of the film viewer as that of the film characters. We are actively practicing belonging and/or dis-belonging when we watch these films.

My main goal with this project has been to explore one of the key imperatives that has informed and transformed this hemisphere. More specifically, I have attempted to examine redemption as a way to consider how the Americas become contextualized topologically and chronologically, and, as such, how this land is given

narrative meaning. My analyses were constructed as applications of “reading” redemption into culturally significant discourses and practices, and, hopefully, will instigate further considerations of redemption and its influence on articulations of belonging. There are quite a few other directions one can take this study, examinations into American constructions of identity that I have only alluded to and referenced. What follows is a brief outline of some other ways of negotiating redemption and American identities.

One may, for instance, utilize an alternative focus to that employed in this project, one that addresses more specifically the ways in which Indigenous pilgrimage traditions have both changed and persisted through colonizing ventures. The ways in which the “native” is defined filmically could play a central role in this study. One might refer to some of the pilgrimage traditions of pre-Columbian Indigenous groups and compare them to their post-Columbian counterparts. This comparison would enable one to call attention to the means through which transculturalization has defined who gets to be considered “native” in the Americas. One might also comment on how religious, political and economic conventions have shaped the Indigenous “pilgrim” as s/he is understood today, particularly in terms of a national sense of belonging. There may also be a discussion of how American apparitions, particularly of the Virgin Mary, have redefined both European and Indigenous pilgrimage institutions. Such shrines as the Aparecida (Brazil), Copacabana (Bolivia), Guadalupe (Mexico), Lac St. Anne (Canada), and Saut d’Eau (Haiti) provide intriguing platforms wherein a national sense of belonging (or dis-belonging) becomes merged to a spiritual one. The nature of these apparitions may provide an

effective point of comparison for treatment of representations (filmic or otherwise) that actively define what it means to be “native.” The use of Marian apparitions in feature films can also provide an interesting vehicle for discussing how representations of divinity are grounded in an understanding of the significance and sanctity of place. The political implications of this process of spatial definition will be particularly relevant to a discussion of the ways in which Indigenous pilgrimages, and Indigenous peoples themselves, have been relegated to a place far from contemporary metropolitan understandings of nationhood. The notion of redemption, also, will find an intriguing counterpart in the films’ treatments of memory and tradition.

Another approach to reading “redemption” in American narrative traditions could focus more specifically on the roles that slavery and the forced displacement of Africans have played in constructing what it means to “belong” to this hemisphere. The redemption of place (both in its literal and metaphorical connotations) and the connection of this process with the many journeys that have contributed to the creation of the African diaspora might function as platforms for much of this analysis. One might begin by describing a variety of pilgrimages undertaken by people of African descent in the Americas, and might focus on how the destinations (and pilgrimages themselves) have been shaped by and against such movements as slavery, abolition, and attempts towards the enactment of civil rights. The place of Africa in constructing these pilgrimage patterns will play an important role in this investigation. Also, places such as Brazil, Haiti, the United States, and Canada have been regarded as pilgrimage centers for a variety of reasons. These reasons, and how

they have been constructed historically and culturally, might provide a foundation from which one may discuss how mass movements by people of African descent in the Americas have been depicted filmically. The relation of the concept of diaspora to that of pilgrimage might form an instrumental part of this study and might provide the theoretical framework for an argument on how redemption gets connected to a narrative reconstruction of belonging. There are not many filmic representations of blacks traveling en masse, and those that do exist tend either to emphasize displacement or a search for connection to other blacks within the diaspora. It would be very interesting to study how redemption functions in these reconstructions of community and/or attempts to negotiate dispersal. The Americas, as a dispersed and dispersing space, plays an intriguing role in these narratives.

This role may also be emphasized in an analysis of pilgrimage and its representations within a globalized hemisphere. One may explore in more depth the relationship the pilgrim has to the space s/he crosses. As a “wayfarer,” an outsider, the pilgrim re-defines what it means to belong or not belong to a place. The process of redefinition is complicated when one considers how pilgrimage centers, and pilgrimages themselves, carry national signification. One of the fundamental quests upon which one may base this study is the attempt by pilgrims in the Americas to mold a national space into a spiritual place, or, more precisely, to construct the two as inextricable elements of what it means to belong or not belong. One may, for instance, trace how the international (or intra-national) is understood in these accounts, and how such important concepts as borders, citizenship, and the Metropolis function to reproduce a pilgrimage experience. The twin components of

pilgrimage, movement and stasis, can lead one towards a consideration of representations of post-colonial and post-modern America as well as a discussion of how film, as an industry and as a means of cultural expression, negotiates the national and the global. The search for national belonging may then be explored in relation to how the theme of redemption is translated in national terms. The problematics of looking at redemption cross-culturally and transnationally poses interesting questions in the placement of the film in regards to its viewer. Filmic representations of an American quest, at once national and spiritual, simultaneously involve the viewer as both trespasser and fellow pilgrim. One may also look closely at how films represent borders and border crossings, how they depict national parameters, how globalization and transnationalism are treated, how the Metropole and the frontier are utilized, and how modernity informs the narratives. By addressing how pilgrimages reinscribe loci of identity and identification, one may illustrate how redemption, as a goal and the process towards this same, is as much a national investment as a spiritual one.

I would like to think of my own project as a representation of pilgrimage, a quest towards an elucidation of what it means to be American (in the hemispheric sense). I have veered from, however, presenting any shrine or temple of Americanness, a place wherein my quest(ions) have come face to face with a monolithic answer. Rather, I want to emphasize the importance of the journey itself. Pilgrimages have been defined variously, but always in terms of the significance of moving towards the ideal. I would like to think of my project as a return, a process whereby the home is re-contextualized through the journey out and back. This home is not the place we left behind and might not have appeared familiar, but its presence

has haunted my project even before I began its writing. This dissertation, then, should in no way resemble a destination, but will remain a testament to the necessity of considering motion in all of its identificatory potential.

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