Film Analysis 2
Cabeza de Vaca, Robinson Crusoe, Dances with Wolves

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The relationships and encounters made between the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples in *Cabeza de Vaca*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Dances with Wolves* are explained through the use of anti-conquest love plots. Anti-conquest love plots are stories narrated not to be a story of colonization, but to be a story of survival containing messages about colonialism, race, and the culture of natives. In anti-conquest love plots, the narrator is present in the context of colonialism, but is characterized to be disinterested in colonizing the natives. The narrator is more concerned with surviving during their dangerous adventures and with gaining understanding, knowledge, and a clearer sense of self. Even though the narrator is set in a narrative of military invasions, colonization, or imminent colonization, he is uninvolved in these endeavors and instead learns to love the native people. At the ends of these stories, the narrator questions the society he originated from because of the newfound love he has for the natives and because he now sees the pain his society has brought upon them. The endings of these stories are crucial to the anti-conquest love plot because the narrator’s revelation shows the true message of the story.

In the film *Cabeza de Vaca*, anti-conquest love plot is especially evident in the last scene. The last scene of the film shows the natives carrying the Christian cross across the land, marching into the storm. The deeper they go into the storm, the worse it gets. This foreshadows negative outcomes from the spread of colonialism and Christianity while also expressing the anti-colonial message that the natives had to bear this burden. Alvar protested the colonization of the natives and screamed to God about how the white men are treating the indigenous peoples. The character of Alvar is an apology for the colonization of these natives and allows the white colonizers to wash their hands from the guilt of colonialism.
Robinson Crusoe illustrates an anti-conquest love plot in that Crusoe has a trans racial friendship with a native he met on the island, Friday. This friendship is depicted most clearly in one of the final scenes of the film where Crusoe and Friday are put up against each other to kill one another. Neither of them can bring themselves to kill the other because of the bond they formed on the island. Before their fight ends, the island is invaded by Europeans and Friday is shot; however, Crusoe is rescued by these same Europeans. There isn’t a sense of victory in Crusoe’s rescue because of Friday’s death and the capturing and killing of the other natives. Even though Crusoe could not bring himself to kill Friday, Friday still ended up being killed by a European. Crusoe is sad that Friday dies, but, like the format of anti-conquest love plots, Crusoe goes home to his wife and picks up his life right where it left off, despite his experiences with on the island with Friday.

The film Dances with Wolves exemplifies an anti-conquest love plot in the final scene as well. In this scene, Dunbar is leaving the tribe with Stands with Fist to “try to find someone who will listen”. This gives a sense of hope for the Natives, but it is false hope; for the Lakota Indians are eventually wiped out completely. This is an example of anti-conquest love plot because the white soldiers in the film are portrayed to be savages and the natives are portrayed to be noble and intelligent, but the hero of the film is still a white person. Dunbar’s heroic act of sacrificing himself by leaving the tribe is essentially an apology for the fact that the soldiers are following the tribe and for colonialism as a whole. The white people in this film are clearly guilty for the eradication of the native peoples, but Dunbar’s story is the way they can cleanse themselves of this guilt. The final scene of the film communicates that the death of the Lakota was inevitable, therefore taking away the responsibility for their extermination.
All three films have many similarities in terms of the anti-conquest message they share, but there are also differences amongst them. Dunbar’s experiences with the natives had a huge impact on his moral compass; by the end of the movie he even identifies as one of the Lakota. Alvar’s experiences with the natives had an impact on him and he essentially becomes part of the tribe, but he is rescued and returns home with the Europeans. Crusoe’s experiences did not have a great impact on his moral compass. While the anti-conquest message was attempted in this film, it was unsuccessful in that Crusoe just used Friday to survive and forgot about him once he returned home. All three protagonists have their revelations, where the ultimate message is revealed, in different circumstances. Crusoe and Alvar both lose their native friends to European colonizers which eventually leads them to their revelations. Dunbar has his revelation when he fully accepts the inevitability of losing his Lakota family. The difference here is that two of the protagonists had to experience loss to understand the tragedy of colonialism while the other protagonist just envisioned the loss he would eventually experience to understand how awful colonialism was.