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# Werner Herzog as Double Translator: Thinking From Subalternity in Aguirre, the Wrath of God

## **Keywords / Palabras clave**

Werner Herzog, Aguirre the Wrath of God, Aguirre la ira de Dios, Cine, Film, Subalternity, Subalternidad, Translation, Traducción

# *Werner Herzog as Double Translator: Thinking From Subalternity in Aguirre, the Wrath of God*

Aarti Smith Madan / Worcester Polytechnic Institute

What's more, when you think of people 400 years from now trying to understand civilization today, I think they will probably get more out of a Tarzan film than out of the State of the Union address by the President that same year.

Werner Herzog, Herzog on Herzog

Always enigmatic and source of infinite bemusement to those within and without academia, German director Werner Herzog's relationship with the Americas has proved both long and tenuous. His first considerations of the territory began with a video camera stolen from the Munich Film School, a flight to the Amazonian jungle, and the resultant product, the 1972 Aguirre, the Wrath of God (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes). Critically acclaimed for its portrayal of imperial insanity on celluloid, Aguirre... nevertheless put Herzog in the limelight for less lofty reasons. The accusations? That he was haphazard in the production of the film and inscribed an indelible trace of his presence in the Peruvian jungle. Internationally criticized for aestheticizing environmental and human catastrophe,

Herzog is often branded an eco-criminal for his complicity in local catastrophes on-site of his films (Cheesman 286). In particular, he is notorious for misdeeds in the production of Fitzcarraldo (1982), a film that sparked a small civil war in the Peruvian Amazon and left behind a large clearing in the rainforest; Herzog preferred to drag an actual ship across a mountain rather than rely on special effects (Cheesman 287; Koepnick 157). [1]

Here we have the crux of the Herzogian style: a no-holds-barred quest for realism in portraying man's destructive power. In several interviews Herzog defends this impulse, vehemently lauding Aguirre... as the antithesis of Hollywood blockbusters while denouncing the latter's artificiality. He contends that his landscapes "are never just picturesque or scenic backdrops as they often are in Hollywood films" in which "the danger is never real, but in Aguirre... the audience can really feel the authenticity"; he touts the fact that he avoided a "Hollywood-style postcard movie" in part because there "was none of the glossy multi-camera sophistication you find in Hollywood films" (Herzog & Cronin 81-94).

In this analysis, I aim to explore the ways in which Herzog's relentless, even reckless, quest—to defy Hollywood and to offer cinematography as historiography for "people 400 years from now trying to understand civilization today"—subverts hegemonic tales of colonial first encounters (Herzog & Cronin 235). Alongside the many contemporary films that broach the theme of imperialism, Aguirre, the Wrath of God proves admirable. Indeed, rather than enlighten an uninformed public, film can counterintuitively perform acts of re-colonization or neo-colonization in the narration of first contact. Of the most memorable colonial-themed cinema, we might recall that the seventies welcomed Nelson Pereira dos Santos's Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês (1971), followed by Roland Joffé's The Mission (1983) and Carlos Diegues's Quilombo (1984), while the nineties

celebrated the Columbus quincentenary with Ridley Scott's 1492: Conquest of Paradise (1992). More recently, Terrence Malick's The New World (2005) and Mel Gibson's Apocalypto (2006) represent two very distinct tales of love, war, and conquest.

I pause, momentarily, with Apocalypto, a prime example of a colonialist cinematic endeavor that fails in its attempt to represent the waning days of the Mayan empire. Though aiming for authenticity with its Mexican set and Yucatec Maya script and actors, the film holds true to patterns already established in Gibson's filmography: violence and gore are the central protagonists. The Mayas function as mere background. People magazine's film critic is on target: "Want to see a knife plunged into the chest of a still-alive man, his heart pulled out and his head cut off? Park yourself right here" (38). Gibson depicts the Maya as a savage people in need of saving; he insinuates that the missionaries' arrival in the film's closing minutes is a welcome respite from brutal infighting. Anthropologist Traci Ardren concurs in her article "Is Apocalypto Pornography?":

The message? The end is near and the savior has come. Gibson's efforts at authenticity of location and language might, for some viewers, mask his blatantly colonial message that the Maya needed saving because they were rotten at the core. Using the decline of Classic urbanism as his backdrop, Gibson communicates that there was absolutely nothing redeemable about Maya culture, especially elite culture which is depicted as a disgusting feast of blood and excess.

Despite the negative backlash both pre- and post-production, Gibson proves a master at luring audiences to view his historical films. As with Braveheart (1995) and The Passion of the Christ (2004), fans flocked to the cinema to see Apocalypto, and having little prior knowledge of the Maya civilization, they departed the theater with the neo-conquistador's Hollywood representation etched

into their cultural memories. Such was Gibson's success—nearly \$60,000,000 in gross earnings, according to IMDB—that Apocalypto spawned the 2007 re-release of its Mexican-made Aztec predecessor, Salvador Carrasco's La otra conquista (1999); Carrasco's English-language DVD cover tells it all, "By comparison, Apocalypto was just a rumble in the jungle."

With its wide reach and realist effects, then, filmic representation of colonial history can play a pivotal role in the perpetuation of colonial difference.

On the other hand, I will illustrate that translation can function as a strategic method of resistance, as seen in postcolonial works that re-write colonial texts in order to disempower them as purveyors of colonialist ideology (Ashcroft et al. 6-8) [2]. According to Walter Mignolo and Freya Schiwy, translation in its linguistic sense can both contribute to and enhance the colonial difference between Western and non-Western languages (4). All the same, they contend that a new form of double translation/transculturation is plausible in which the duo coalesce and produce a border-space that rearticulates the colonial difference from the subaltern position, resulting in what Mignolo has famously deemed border thinking (15).

I look to Mignolo and Schiwy's theory of double translation in order to eliminate or, at the very least, override the problematic that arises from the respective conceptualizations of representation seen in Gayatri Spivak (1988) and José Rabasa (1993), whom I will return to briefly. Mignolo and Schiwy contend that the Zapatista theoretical conception of translation is not merely an interchange between two languages but rather a complex double movement involving the double translation/transculturation between Marxism/feminism and the cosmology of the Amerindians. The Zapatista discourse translates on a number of levels, including a translation between space and

time. In transforming Amerindian memories of the past into the perspective of today, the Zapatistas conflate the past into the requirements and necessities of the present and global time. Via their amalgamation of the past/present and Marxist/feminist/Amerindian cosmology, the Zapatistas, Mignolo and Schiwy note, practice “a particular kind of translation/transculturation [...] in which a dense history of oppression and subalternization of language and knowledge is being unlocked” (10). The Zapatistas unlock the knowledge by translating the subaltern perspective into Western understanding, a feat achieved by a process of re-education. Mignolo and Schiwy explain that the urban intellectuals (i.e. Subcomandante Marcos) dismantled their former tools—high, urban culture and the –isms of Marxism/Socialism/Leninism—and reconfigured them with the knowledge of the indigenous community leaders (i.e. el viejo Antonio) and the guerrilleros (13). As a result, the movement succeeds in its project of translation, practicing a border thinking that serves “as a place of epistemic and political confrontation” and “undoes the dichotomies that sustained the modern/colonial world-system and its hegemonic epistemology” (16). Mignolo and Schiwy’s theory of translation disseminates the perspective that is underscored by subaltern epistemology, thus thinking from subalternity in order to provide a critique of the imperialist project.

I would like to accentuate precisely this notion of thinking from, which is imperative to border thinking. Although Spivak’s intellectual project innovatively highlights the problematic of subalternity and representation, it proves rather fatalistic: the subaltern is condemned to a voiceless existence in which both speaking about and speaking for the subaltern are unviable options. With Rabasa, it seems that representation only widens the already gaping breach between Self and Other: if we coalesce the two ideologies, the Self cannot speak about or speak for the Other because, in essence, the act equates to the re-subalternization of the Other. Certainly, both Spivak and Rabasa locate sites of resistance. Spivak’s intellectual can “unlearn his privilege”—similar to Mignolo and

Schiwy's "process of re-education"—just as Rabasa posits the feasibility of "minor discourse" (Spivak 89-91; Mignolo & Schiwy 13; Rabasa 123).

The difference between the thinkers, nevertheless, resides in a question of faith. Spivak's negative conclusion (the subaltern cannot speak) ultimately supplants her site of resistance—she lacks faith in the subaltern project; representation is thus an unattainable goal. Mignolo and Schiwy, on the contrary, demonstrate faith in double translation's ability to appropriate the border space between hegemonic and subaltern epistemologies by thinking from subalternity. Consequently, the double translator is allowed the possibility to defy and expose the colonial difference by means of border thinking. For the purposes of this essay, then, I will show that film's attempt to contest and criticize the imperial project succeeds when it transcends representation and instead ventures into the realm of translation.

Using this trajectory of translation→transculturation→border thinking to analyze Aguirre, the Wrath of God, I will argue that via a translative montage of specific, albeit distorted, moments from Latin American colonial history, Werner Herzog practices border thinking in his role as double translator, thinking from the perspective of epistemological subalternity and simultaneously disseminating that perspective through his viewing public. For double translation to take place—and, subsequently, for border thinking to occur—Mignolo and Schiwy insist that grammar must be transformed in order to translate bilaterally. But does film consist of a linguistic and grammatical composition?

I look to Dennis Donoghue (1959) to suggest that, indeed, there exist multiple cinematographic languages. Donoghue explains that modern drama relates to poetry, though beyond the superficial level of mere language. As each of the "concrete elements" of drama unite—plot, agency, speech,



gesture, and so on—they exhibit a coherence similar to that which is necessary between the words of a poem (10). And, in the same fashion, these elements may be considered a network of distinct languages that must cross and combine to transmit the interplay of the drama.

Many of the same elements that constitute theatrical drama transfer to the medium of film. Thus, the script, the scenery, the actors' gestures, the soundtrack, the thematic content, the reception, and even the camera's movements might be seen as contrapuntal languages that compose the “poetry” of the film. Film's plural language translates a subject matter already in existence—be it literary or historical—and imparts upon it a new dimension, as Walter Benjamin notes in regard to the art of translation:

[T]ranslations that are more than transmissions of subject matter do not so much serve the work as owe their existence to it. The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering. [...] No translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living—the original undergoes change. (72-73) [3]

As Benjamin suggests, translation critically alters our perception of the original work, and perhaps even more so in cinematic translation due to the change of medium: in this respect, the translation corresponds to Roman Jakobson's “intersemiotic translation or transmutation,” or what Tullio Maranhão simplifies as “pure and simple invention inspired by the original text” (emphasis in original, 233, xiv). Indeed, Maranhão acknowledges that translation is not limited to the traditional linguistic transfer of source language (written or spoken) to target language; instead, “there is a broader sense of the word ‘translation’ in which it can refer to [...] cultural and inter- and

intrasemiotic systems” (xi). In the translation of history to film—an intersemiotic cultural system—the Benjaminian “afterlife” of the event is precisely what unfolds on the screen, imbuing a message within the viewing public.

In Aguirre..., the filmic poetry creates an afterlife of the Latin American colonial encounter, one that questions and condemns the methodology of imperialism. Herzog incorporates cinematographic languages (script, scenery, actors, gestures, soundtrack, and so on) composed of a grammar in which the hegemonic and the subaltern unite in transculturation par excellence: European and indigenous actors share the screen while the Latin American colonial encounter unfolds in the German language; the German band Popul Vuh strums indigenous music in the background while a European film crew runs amok in the Peruvian jungle; and all the while, a water-dappled camera (stolen from the Munich Film School) jostles around the Rio Huallaga as it captures all of the above. [4]

Herzog’s filmic languages do not rely on a dialogue basked in the comfort of the Occidental studio. Rather, he portends a telling of the colonial encounter by means of appropriating the (sometimes uncomfortable) border space between Occident and Orient, between hegemonic and subaltern, between Self and Other. Herzog transforms his contrapuntal languages and their corresponding grammars to communicate the subaltern perspective at the hegemonic level, thus translating the imperial project bilaterally in an act of double translation.

Disregarding its thematic content and neo-colonization, one can argue that a film such as Apocalypto achieves the same linguistic transformation; it too is filmed in the Yucatec Maya language on-site in Mexico by its Anglo-Saxon director and for its Anglo-Saxon viewing public. Yet

while there exist multiple differences between the films, one in particular is noteworthy: reception. Because Mel Gibson's film recounts the Maya empire's last days, it does not require audience participation—what you see is what you get, in particular for the uninformed public. Herzog's Aguirre, the Wrath of God, on the contrary, does not represent the precise historical moment that it initially purports but rather creates a translative montage of multiple re-illustrated moments in the conquest of Latin America, ranging from both Lope de Aguirre and Gonzalo de Pizarro's actual expeditions in search of El Dorado, to Atahualpa's encounter with the Bible, to the reading of the Requerimiento; perhaps more so than definitive moments, the film portrays the insanity of the imperial project as a whole. That the events are distorted is of importance, for Herzog's informed audience is allowed entry into a dialogue in which the film director simultaneously plays the part of double translator, one who communicates not a hegemonic representation of the events—the filmic grammar—at face-value but rather a translation altered to relay the subaltern perspective.

### **Werner Herzog's Critique of the Imperial Project**

The opening caption of Aguirre... implies to spectators that they are on the cusp of viewing a true story chronicled in the diaries of the monk Carvajal. It states:

After the conquest and plundering of the Inca Empire by Spain, the Indians invented the legend of El Dorado, a land of gold, located in the swamps of the Amazon headwaters. A large expedition of Spanish adventurers, led by Gonzalo Pizarro, set off from the Peruvian highlands in late 1560. The only document to survive from this lost expedition is the diary of the monk Gaspar de Carvajal.

Yet Herzog frankly admits that the “film is not really about the real Aguirre,” declaring that instead,

he “just took the most basic facts that were known about the man and spun [his] own tale” based on the impetus for the film: a children’s book about adventurers that briefly chronicles the “adventures” of Lope de Aguirre (Herzog & Cronin 77). He explains that he “made up characters based on names [he] had read in the original documents” and that the “entire script is pure invention, the voice-over is a fabricated diary of the monk of the voyage, even though a monk with the same name did exist and wrote a diary of a totally different expedition” (Herzog & Cronin 78).

While maintaining many of the same characters of the historical expedition—Lope de Aguirre, of course, but also Pedro de Ursua, Inez de Atienza, Fernando de Guzman, Flores, and others—Herzog introduces several key figures, including Okello (a black slave), Balthasar (an Indian slave, formerly a prince), and a native flutist—three representative examples of the non-European world whose presence enhances the sensation that Aguirre... is a microcosm of the New World in the sixteenth-century. The film employs the “true” Lope de Aguirre story as the framework to translate an incontrovertible critique of the unending cycles of colonialism, which underscores (1) the Spaniards’ false conception of land/nature, (2) the abidance by social/hierarchical hegemonic relations amidst an unknown terrain, and (3) the avarice that accompanies their every step on the path of conversion [5]. I will develop these points in greater detail in the coming pages.

Herzog’s critique begins with perhaps the most homogenous characteristic of Latin American colonial narrative: the emphasis upon nature’s hostility. Not surprisingly, nature functions as a character in Aguirre... and for good reason—Herzog insists that he likes “to direct landscapes just as [he] like[s] to direct actors and animals,” a statement evidenced by the film’s opening moments (Herzog & Cronin 81). A sheer vertical drop of six-hundred meters blanketed in fog greets viewers prior to the sight of human activity. Suddenly, an ant-like trail of faceless men, women, and animals

appears out of the clouds while descending the precarious decline. Within moments, a chicken-cage catapults down the mountain's face, distributing the poultry to the land. Then, a cannon can no longer maintain its grip on the steep descent, and this instrument of colonial power tumbles down the mountain, exploding against the treacherous landscape below. We immediately realize—as did Columbus, Cortés, Cabeza de Vaca, and so on—that the terrain does not welcome the advances of civilization.

As individual faces come into focus, an intrinsic difference between the Indian slaves and the Spanish conquistadores becomes apparent: in contrast to the Spaniards' military boots and full armor, the Indians—encumbered with Spanish equipment—traverse the land either barefoot or clad only in sandals and ponchos. Furthermore, upon arriving to the foot of the mountain and discussing their dire situation, Aguirre (Klaus Kinski) and Pizarro (Alejandro Repulles) underscore the European arrogance in the face of the New World's hostile nature. As they stare mesmerized at the gushing rapids of the Rio Huallaga, Aguirre insists that the river is impassable; Pizarro disagrees, his hubris leading him to declare, “[f]rom here, it gets easier.” But the terrain's intensity does not lessen, and the next moments depict the expedition's clumsy trudge through knee-deep mud. The camera captures Pizarro astride his horse as he becomes entangled in the ravine, and then shortly thereafter, Indian slaves appear to struggle as they carry a sedan-chair through the mire.

Within these opening scenes of the film, we witness Herzog's translation of the Spaniards' false conceptualization of nature and their resultant failures, reminiscent of Columbus's encounters with inclement weather and the New World's topographical nuances as well as Cabeza de Vaca's grueling battle with the North American landscape. But while Cabeza de Vaca's Naufragios immediately homes in on the dangers of the savage, un-Christian land that he and his men have disembarked

upon, the conceit of Herzog's conquistadores does not diminish (88). That is, the Spanish arrive with Western armor, chicken-cages, cannons, horses, and sedan-chairs in order to conquer an unknown land, yet the very agents of imperial strength inevitably go awry in the terrain of the New World: in addition to the doomed first cannon, the second impedes the expedition's advance as its wheels refuse to tread through the murky groundwater. The men themselves also struggle to traverse the land; despite their military boots and horses, the Spanish appear emasculated in contrast to the Indians, who patiently negotiate the terrain sans European commodities. And although the sedan-chair only exists as further indication of the social hierarchies, it proves impractical amidst the jungle's terrain, nearly losing its human cargo on multiple occasions.

Herzog's cinematographic languages continue to emphasize the land's power after Pizarro bids the smaller expedition—that of Pedro de Ursua (Ruy Guerra) and Lope de Aguirre—on its way. As the men, women, and animals drift down the river in ramshackle rafts, the water's force is evident as small droplets cover the lens; the dizzying camera bounces and jolts with each rapid, and as the river roughens, Herzog captures a nearly one minute still of its violent gurgling. Suddenly, an enraged whirlpool traps one raft, refusing to surrender its victims. The film translates colonialism's deficiencies through these scenes of nature's tremendous power; it falls into its own trap by attempting to represent and understand nature in the Western code, consequently reducing the land's natural density and multiplicity. In underestimating the terrain's power, the Spaniards themselves are ultimately rendered conquered, powerless to move either forward or backward. While nature maintains its identity, so too does the West in its constant quest for order.

Order prevails in spite of nature's consumption of all imperial modes of power, including Spanish weaponry (the cannon) and transportation (the rafts), and the conquistadores relentlessly attempt to

maintain the coloniality of power by differentiating within the social hierarchy. Though incongruous amidst the harsh jungle, the sedan-chair bearing Ursua's wife Inez (Helena Rojo) and Aguirre's daughter Flores (Cecilia Rivera) together with the elaborate dresses of the women and the Spaniards' medals and armor provide a clear distinction between the powerful and the powerless. At times, however, the film prefers subtlety. Consider, for example, the tableau of the Spaniards' camp when Pizarro delivers his harangue regarding the new expedition in search of Christian lands. The scene metonymically represents the Spanish world, a static one rigidly divided by class and race and with the white, European male—Pizarro—as the focal point centered in the frame. The hierarchical charade also continues later in the film as Aguirre constructs a canopied shelter on the raft, thereby demarcating the Church and the aristocracy from the common soldiers and slaves and yet again testifying to the European quest to maintain Western organization. Despite the inhospitable setting, the conquistadores insist on the façade of hegemonic power relations in order to distinguish the Self's order from the Other's chaos.

Certainly, the Spaniards transport European law, public decrees, and alleged democracy across the Atlantic, yet the social institutions of the Old World unfold as little more than a farce in the context of the New World. After Aguirre's mutiny against Ursua, he organizes a "democratic" election in which his heavy gaze—and gun—determine the vote: Fernando de Guzman (Peter Berling) is enthroned as Emperor of El Dorado—a site they have yet to discover—and he proceeds to openly weep in recognition of his honor and responsibilities [6]. As if to complement the farcical election, Guzman himself is a droll character bedecked in a ruffled magenta shirt that accentuates his large gut, red suspenders, tan Capri pants, and a sword that seems to be mere adornment. The new Emperor plays the role of monarch with solemn vanity, locating, in Foucauldian terms, his "power at the extreme of its exercise," receiving massages and shaves from the slaves, gorging on the limited

provisions while the common soldiers starve, and taking possession of all land within his sight (97). To assert these extremes, he declares: “All the land to our left and all the land to our right now belongs to us. I solemnly and formally take possession of all this land. [...] Our country is already six times larger than Spain, and every time we drift, we make it larger.” Aguirre, however, comprehends the ludicrous nature of the quest for gold and land. Of interest to him is power and fame, as he makes clear at the movie’s end. As such, he caustically questions Guzman’s non sequitur, asking “[h]ave you seen any solid ground that would support your weight?”

Despite belittling Guzman, Aguirre elects Guzman as Emperor, and it is thus Guzman the Emperor who presides over the Spaniards’ attempt to enact the Old World judiciary system in the wilderness of the New World. In yet another scene that provokes uneasy laughter, Guzman plays judge as the monk Carvajal plays jury in order to determine Ursua’s sentence. The tableau is again designed based on rigid class distinctions. Though the jury condemns the defendant to death by hanging for his alleged treason, the judge overturns the sentencing, granting Ursua clemency in order to honor the anniversary of the last Moor’s expulsion from Spain. The punishment: Ursua is not entitled to citizenship of El Dorado, and his earnings will be divided between the Church and the remaining soldiers. In completing the satire, the Spaniards devote precious time, energy, and wood—valuable and scarce commodities that should be allotted to the assembly of rafts—to the construction of a makeshift jail that will house Ursua and his loyal partner Armando (Armando Polanah).

Herzog’s filmic languages—the script, the scene, the setting—in the fragment above translate the colonial inability to incorporate, to invoke Foucault again, the “exotic charm of another system of thought,” thus demonstrating the “limitation of [their] own” (xv). In their attempt to maintain the distinction between Self and Other, the Spaniards create a mockery of their own judicial system yet



fail to see the incongruity it poses amidst their setting. Though all signs indicate that they are far from the hegemonic organization of Spain, the conquistadores nevertheless are limited to European judicial and legal systemization, specifically in the realm of the writing and reading of documents [7]. In his analysis of Columbus's writings, Rabasa contends that Columbus in effect creates a new history, "writing a *new world* in his *Diario*, letters, and nautical charts—indeed, imposing a new order on the European image of the planet" (55; original emphasis). Following Michel de Certeau's writing/power correlation, Rabasa argues: "Writing, thus, bears the power to construct a *text* and impose an order on the world. [...] Columbus exemplifies writing in the mode of a master discourse—writing as a conquering and capitalistic enterprise" (55, 75; original emphasis) [8]. In this sense, Herzog's colonial heroes equate writing with making history and consequently with imposing a "new order on the world," one that aims to reproduce hegemonic power relations but which, in the parameters of Aguirre..., unfolds as a charade.

Pizarro's introductory speech upon the expedition's arrival to the foot of the mountain exemplifies this charade. His proclamation—that the Spaniards are lost and sending out a smaller search expedition—has been transcribed onto paper, and he announces to the few gathered, "I declare all of this in the form of a document to be submitted for approval to the Council of the Indies. Herewith I append my signature." While the document is intended to denote power, it is spoken and recorded in a magical clearing in the midst of the Amazonian jungle as they are powerless and lost, thus Pizarro's powerful declaration that the document will be submitted for later approval weakens in effect. His artificial tone and detached precision in the reading of the document lend the scene an air of uncertainty and, ultimately, further the schism between the realities of the natural environment and the colonial display of power. Pizarro's depiction of colonial politics succeeds only in manifesting itself as spectacle.

In what appears to be a caricature of Pizarro's proclamation, Aguirre replicates Pizarro's failed strategies of legitimization after the success of his mutiny. Though the group has diminished in size, Aguirre maintains the formality of the first decree, and the entire expedition gathers round to hear the monk Carvajal read Aguirre's text:

Caesarian King, by the grace of God, through our Holy Mother, the Roman Church, Phillip II of Castile. We, the undersigned, have until yesterday, the seventh day of 1571, regarded ourselves as your servants and subjects. We are now more than two hundred miles from your servant, Gonzalo Pizarro. Fate, God's help, and the work of our hands have carried us down a river, a river the natives call Huallaga, in search of a new land of gold. We have decided to put an end to the quirks of fate. We are forging history, and no fruits of this earth shall be henceforth shared. We rebel under death. Our hands shall perish and our tongues dry up if this is not so. The House of Hapsburg is overthrown. And you, Phillip II, are dethroned. By dint of this declaration, be you annihilated. In your place we proclaim Don Pedro de Guzman as Emperor of El Dorado. Flee from hence, O King! And may God bless your soul.

The declaration embodies the imperial correlation between writing, history, and power, for only through the act of transferring oral words to a written text is history legitimized and thus capable of producing power. Again Herzog deliberately detracts from the scene's formality, lending it the irony that accompanies Pizarro's reading. Immediately following Carvajal's final words—"[a]nd may God bless your soul"—Emperor Guzman, still clad in his clownish uniform, squeezes into the improvised throne, the wrinkles of his chubby face collecting his tears. As if to stamp the scene as a pastiche of colonial history, the emperor complains about his rickety throne, to which Aguirre—in

typical caustic fashion—replies, “[w]hat is a throne but a plank covered with velvet, Your Majesty?”

Lutz Koepnick (1993) argues that Pizarro’s proclamation and Aguirre’s second mutiny are acts of division that unsettle the former rules and institutions of Spanish society (. To push his argument a bit further, we ought to consider the scenes as caricatures of the colonial emphasis on writing/reading/power [9]. Aguirre... translates the preposterous character of Spanish colonial documents such as the Requerimiento, a text drafted in 1512 by the jurist Juan López de Palacios Rubios, which, according to Sabine MacCormack, “presented nations to be conquered with the option of peaceful submission and evangelization and which was to be read out by the conquerors before initiating warfare” (144). The Requerimiento provided an ultimatum for the New World inhabitants (1) to acknowledge the superiority of both Christianity and its practitioners or (2) to accept violent conquest. Patricia Seed describes the text as “both a military and political ritual,” functioning as a “formality” and a “mechanism” to enact political authority and justify military action for the failure to submit (70, 13, 73). With its ceremonious performance, the text appeared as a farce even to its contemporaries; Seed notes that Bartolomé de Las Casas “did not know whether to laugh or to cry” when he heard the Requerimiento (71). But before criticizing this reaction, Seed fleshes out its catalyst:

When read at full speed from the deck of a ship at night before a daytime raid, when read to assembled empty huts and trees, when muttered into thick Spanish beard, the way the Requirement was implemented strikes many even today as absurd as the text itself. [...] It was not merely the text itself that created the absurdity, but the context in which it was delivered. (71)

The text’s reading was a ritual means of declaring colonial power, albeit to deaf ears, but in spite of

its absurdity, the reading of the Requerimiento was effective: power, never mind its outlandish realization, nearly always achieves results, as had the Islamic jihad that the Requerimiento most closely resembled (Seed 72). Indeed, the Spanish emphasis on what seems a mechanical formality was based on the Moors' already proven success as Spain's longest imperial rulers.

Herzog translates this mechanical formality—one invoked to ensure hegemony—by means of Pizarro and Aguirre's declarations, but his spin again imparts an uneasy laugh in viewers, perhaps similar to that of Las Casas. For those who fail to catch the sardonic humor in the first two performances of writing/reading, Herzog includes a last scene (previously mentioned) in which Emperor Guzman appropriates a territory six times as large as contemporary Spain via an oral declaration, a written documentation on torn and brittle paper, and a brief flick of his feather pen—all from beneath the comfort of his shaded canopy. By recasting the reading of the Requerimiento, the film translates the preposterous nature of colonial writing, reading, and documentation of history, depicting the acts as the perpetuation of megalomaniac chimeras of absolute hegemony.

Certainly, the alleged premise for the conquest of Latin America was the evangelization of the un-Christian and savage land, as evident in the decree of the Requerimiento, which suggests that the Amerindians could opt for voluntary Christianization as opposed to a violent conquest. The colonial encounter did not unfold as such, however. Though Tzvetan Todorov insists that “[i]ninitely more than gold, the spread of Christianity [was] Columbus's heart's desire,” Columbus's letters make apparent that the desire for riches functioned as the primary incentive for his expedition, as it did for the immense numbers that succeeded him (10). Herzog translates the avarice that accompanied the Spanish evangelization of Latin America by means of the film's central story, which portrays man's quest for riches, fame, and power, admittedly with the accompaniment of an ecclesiastical

representative. Though Aguirre's expedition is essentially a search for El Dorado, simply the sight of the monk Gaspar de Carvajal reminds viewers that the conquistadores have arrived upon unknown and mysterious lands "through the grace of God, as servants of the Holy Roman Church." Furthermore, Pizarro's proclamation in the film's first moments opens with the statement "as long as the Virgin Mary is with us" and closes with "may God be with us," thus reiterating the belief that regularly appears in the narratives of conquest: divine will accompanies the Spaniards—God is unquestionably on their side.

In addition to the implicit references to Christianization, Aguirre... is at other times explicit in regard to the matter. During the above proclamation, for example, the camera pans to the monk Carvajal's face as Pizarro reminds his men that, "as on all expeditions, the word of God must be brought to the pagans." Later, as Emperor Guzman and the black slave Okello wistfully lust for the riches of El Dorado, the former imagining food on gold platters and the latter ironically commenting, "and perhaps I will even be free," the monk reminds them that they must not forget their true mission: to spread the word of God. With impeccable timing, Guzman reminds him that a jewel-encrusted cross will indeed be a nice substitution for his misplaced silver one.

Perhaps the most overt scene regarding the religiosity/riches amalgamation, however, occurs after Aguirre's mutiny, as the Spanish slowly drift down the river Huallaga. As they meander aimlessly, a native couple aboard a canoe suddenly appears out of the jungle. In harmony with their Amazonian surroundings, the couple glides the canoe across the placid river, docking next to the Spaniards' dilapidated raft. As the Amerindians come aboard, their red and yellow attire—an extension of the jungle foliage—further suggests their connection to the land. The multiple fish that lay on the floorboards of their canoe indicate their relative ease amidst the wilderness, an ease that appears in

stark contrast to the conquistadores, who, with ravenous shrieks of “fish,” immediately rob the natives’ goods, fish included.

The Spanish, of course, at once unleash a barrage of questions upon the natives. Acting as an interpreter, the former Indian prince Balthasar prods the couple and discovers that they are members of the Yagua tribe, and he relays what the indigenous male states:

He knows from his ancestors that one day, the Sons of the Sun would arrive from afar, through great perils the strangers would come from thunder from tubes. They have waited a long time for the coming of the Sons of the Sun. For here on this river, God never finished his creation.

By means of this declaration, Herzog translates to film the prominent myths that the Europeans were believed to be gods who had arrived in a mythological second coming. Specifically, in the conquest of Mexico, Cortés’s letters indicate that Moctezuma believed the conquistador to be the god Quetzalcóatl, while in Peru’s conquest, Atahualpa allegedly accepted the New People’s names as Viracochacuna, meaning “the gods” (emphasis in original, Todorov 116-19; Harris 13) [10]. In order to concretize the myth, Herzog depicts Aguirre as the epitome of the Son of the Sun, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Aryan who constantly accompanies the “thunder from tubes”—that is to say, he walks alongside the cannon, which comes to symbolize his autocratic volition and power.

The Spaniards covet not only the natives’ fish. Rather, upon hearing Balthasar’s interpretation, Guzman’s first inclination is to lean in, grab the male’s necklace, and insidiously ask him, “Gold, where did you get that?” The monk Carvajal’s eyes are equally tantalized by the sight of gold, and he commands Balthasar, “Ask him where El Dorado is.” Quickly, though, the monk, realizes his

blasphemous error and thus proceeds to initiate the conversion process:

Has this savage ever heard of our savior Jesus Christ and of our mission and the True Word of God? This is a Bible. It contains the word of God that we preach to bring lightness into the darkness of their world. Does he understand at all that this book contains the word of God? Take it in your hand, my son.

The Amerindian places the Bible to his ear, and after declaring that the book does not speak, he throws it to the ground. “Kill him for his blasphemy!” And within seconds after allegedly ridiculing the Bible, the native becomes another victim of European colonization.

While the scene depicts the Amerindian subjects as welcome objects of colonial evangelization who nevertheless disappoint colonial presumptions—that the word of God, that writing, is equivalent to power—it is also an explicit translation of the scene of Cajamarca during the conquest of Peru. The infamous account includes an interchange between the priest Valverde and the Inca leader Atahualpa in which the former presents the latter with a Bible that the Inca subsequently throws to the ground. While the causes of the fall of the book vary depending on author, the Amerindian writer Guamán Poma indicates that Atahualpa deliberately throws the book to the ground due to disappointment—the book fails to speak (Seed 28) [11].

Herzog presents viewers with a translation that weaves together re-illustrated historical threads (i.e. Requerimiento, Atahualpa, and so on) to create an artistic rendition of the brutal evangelization process. In his depiction of colonial Christianization gone expectedly awry, the presumed intent of the conquest ultimately functions as a secondary actor of Aguirre... as avarice and lust play the

protagonists.

Ironically, Carvajal contends that the Christians “preach to bring lightness to the darkness” of the indigenous world—to allow the savages to see the truth—but the Christians themselves cannot see (that is, comprehend and accept) the Amerindians through the shroud that covers their imperial eyes. They see the native couple only because the pair initially acquiesces to the Spanish demands, boarding the raft, releasing their fish, and acknowledging the conquistadores as gods. Yet in the precise moment that the Amerindians deride the Christian word, the Spaniards cease to see them and opt instead to delete them. Though the conquistadores constantly remark “there must still be Indians out there,” and “there are Indians everywhere—the whole area is full of them,” they are incapable of seeing them, for the natives fail to be an element of their false conceptualization of New World land. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) contends that America was perceived by the first European inventors as a “primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures (some of them human), but not organized by societies and economies; a world whose history was the one about to begin” (126). In the same vein, Aguirre...’s conquistadores see the Amazonian territory as a space occupied by few humans and therefore ripe to be claimed and colonized, a space one whose history could only be written by Spanish scribes.

Despite repeated warnings of “keep your eyes open,” the Spanish cannot see their invisible enemy. Though poisoned arrows seemingly launched from nowhere continue to barrage the conquistadores, they fail to apprehend the source. As illustrated by the indigenous couple above, the natives appear only as an appendage of the jungle, their faceless shadows momentarily bursting upon the riverbanks in order to attack and retreat as quickly as they appear. In one memorable scene, the Spaniards lackadaisically float toward an Indian village from which they hear shouts—exclamations interpreted



by Balthasar as “meat is floating by!”—and after disembarking, the men invade the village. Though the Amerindians counterattack, they do not once come into focus; they rather blend into the woods with their straw skirts and headdresses. Furthermore, while viewers are privy to the sounds and images of cracking whips and whistling arrows, not once do they, nor the Spaniards, see the source. Their encroachment successful, the conquistadores proceed to burn the village, according to Koepnick, “not because they wish to wipe out an enemy base or to seize a piece of land, but rather in order to erase a provocation of their colonial vision, to redeem their construction of Amazonia as mere nature” (147). Mere nature, however, it is not, and the men continue to perish, their frustration evident in Carvajal’s closing lamentation “we lose men, but we never see the enemy.”

Like the shrew-like creature that Aguirre presents to his daughter—“this animal sleeps its whole life away. It’s never really awake”—the conquistadores of *Aguirre...* remain in the dark, oblivious to their reality and unable to awaken. Herzog translates the blindness that accompanies the fogged imperial glasses through the lens of a water- and dirt-speckled camera that, while never out of focus, fails to capture precise moments, and more specifically, moments that reveal Amerindians as more than a mere haze. In their visions of colonial power, Aguirre and his men are blinded as they seek absolute hegemony; powerless to distinguish between reality and hallucination, the Son of the Sun closes the film blinded by solar light, still incapable to see beyond the optical illusion of imperialism.

Admittedly, the Spaniards cannot see the Amerindians, yet in a process of mimesis that surpasses even the dearth of sight, the conquistadores *become* the savage natives in order to survive in the hostile lands. Herzog employs a number of frames early in the film that underscore the similarities between the two groups. Aguirre, for instance, appears gazing at the native flutist in multiple scenes, and, curiously enough, the men are clad in similar uniforms. As we hear the muffled sounds of the

flute, the camera freezes on the men, displaying the European Aguirre in full sixteenth-century metal armor, including a helmet that covers the ears and ascends the head, arriving at a conical point. At his side appears the indigenous musician, dressed in an alpaca poncho and, to complete the picture, an alpaca hat that covers the ears and ascends the head, arriving at yet another conical point. In one scene, the pair appears, side by side, as both their right earflaps wave in the wind.

This conqueror/indigenous alignment replicates the mimetic process seen in multiple colonial narratives, in particular Cabeza de Vaca's Naufragios. As the conquistadores become trapped in the vicious terrain of the Amazon, they become equally—if not more—barbarous than they believe the “savages” to be.

Herzog's infatuation with pigs further manifests this mimetic process [12]. In the expedition's initial trudge through the mire, the Amerindians and Europeans alike struggle to traverse the trough, yet Aguirre only reprimands the natives, belittling them as swine and commanding them to proceed. It is Aguirre's European sidekick Perucho, however, that in the end displays loutish and pig-like characteristics—not the Amerindian slaves. Of all the Spanish characters, Perucho is perhaps the most outwardly despicable. His scruffy and thin face, under-bite, and baldness add physical unattractiveness to what is already a charmless character; his appalling actions exaggerate his already weak persona. Indeed, Perucho unconditionally obeys Aguirre's orders, be they rational or not. Shortly after the whirlpool victims perish, Aguirre, not wanting to exert time and energy on a proper burial, slyly asks Perucho, “Isn't the cannon getting rusty?” Perucho understands the code and proceeds to light the cannon, snorting and grunting piggishly under his breath along the way. The cannon fires, and within seconds, the stranded raft bursts into flames, suggesting that the Spaniards have, in effect, cannibalized their own people.

Later in the film, Perucho repeats his grunting as he hovers around Inez, who patiently feeds Armando through the bars of the makeshift jail. Like a pig, his hunger—literal and sexual—is insatiable. His hunger for murder is equally voracious, for twice more in the film, he yields to Aguirre’s commands, first hanging Ursua and then decapitating a traitor; in both incidences, swinish grunts escape his mouth. Herzog’s Perucho, then, is symbolic of the savagery that comes to pervade the colonial encounter, of the unquestioned abidance by colonial rules, and of the eventual transformation of the Spaniards. Like a pig, he begins to consume any and all in his midst, ultimately becoming the equal of the “savage” Amerindians of the Spanish imaginary, those who lick their lips at the sight of human meat. Herzog translates the Spanish barbarism explicitly at *Aguirre...*’s end, zooming in on a large mouse devouring a recently born one and then looping the same scene again. The cannibalistic scene leaves little to the imagination.

Though human cannibalism does not enter the film’s script, there is insinuation regarding the consumption of the Spaniards’ horse. By the expedition’s last moments, the Spanish have depleted their provisions, and the Emperor is entitled to the little that remains. As Guzman devours a meal of fresh fish and fruit, the horse begins to buck and bray, interrupting his meal. Frustrated, the Emperor commands that the beast be taken off the raft, and the men hurl it into the water, only to see it again on the shore moments later: the camera freezes first on the men—who gaze longingly at the horse, as if their imperial power has departed—and then on the horse itself. The monk Carvajal’s voice-over reads, “[i]t was a bad decision. In Mexico I saw an army of Indians flee at the sight of one single horse. And besides, we could have eaten meat for a week.” As Beatriz Pastor notes in her analysis of the discovery of America and specifically of Cabeza de Vaca, at the moment that the horse is identified as potential food for the Spaniards, “the goal of conquest is in the process of

being replaced by that of survival” (emphases in original, 132-33). She traces the evolution of the horse as an instrument of conquest, contending that,

In Cortés’s Letters, the figure of the horse is always the quintessential symbol of the military superiority of the Spaniards, making the teules superhuman in the eyes of the Native Americans. Cortés, Bernal Díaz, and Tapia refer to the terror their horses provoked among the natives, who believed them to have magical qualities; and they remarked frequently on how important the role of the horses was in the conquest of Mexico. (emphases in original, 132)

Aguirre...’s horse ceases to play an important role as it stands, solitary and wistful, on the banks of the Rio Huallaga. Herzog thus translates the plight of the imperial project by means of its instruments of power, whose descent commences with the cannon’s fall, continues with the explosion of the gunpowder, and comes to a screeching halt with the loss of the horse: “war is replaced by industry, and all the instruments of conquest, all the attributes of the conqueror are transformed into objects that can be used for flight or survival” (Pastor 133). Survival, however, is not pleasant, and as the Amerindians dine on fresh fish, the remaining conquistadores quietly eat the algae and seaweed that collects on their wooden rafts.

Aguirre’s quest for El Dorado is a futile one, doomed to failure from the conquistadores’ first steps down the six-hundred-meter drop in search of a potentially non-existent site. Through the panorama of Pizarro’s farewell, Ursua’s overthrow, and Aguirre’s subsequent secession from the Spanish government, the film suggests a cycle of imperialism in which Aguirre himself is ultimately conquered by the countless monkeys that skitter around and colonize his raft. Although Herzog acknowledges that the “film is about this tremendous military force that steadily comes to a

standstill, and towards the end a real feeling sets in that everyone is moving in circles,” it seems rather that the cyclical nature of Aguirre... both begins *and* ends the film (Herzog & Cronin 78). We witness circular movements as Pizarro’s horse chases its tail, enveloping its rider in the ravine, and again when the first raft circles ceaselessly in the whirlpool, its victims waving their rifles, flags, and oars in the air. At the catastrophe’s end, the dead Spaniards lie like the spokes of a wheel, their rifles, flags, and oars completing the full circle. And, as the monkeys’ imperial project unfolds in the last frame, a speedboat circles around and around the raft, circumscribing the lunacy that swaddles Aguirre—“the Wrath of God,” described in the screenplay as “unscrupulous, and with an almost pathological criminal energy, yet so utterly human that one could not say, this kind of man no longer exists,” a Hegelian world historical man if there ever were one (Herzog 8). Herzog’s translation, then, is a lasting critique aimed at the relentless cycles of imperialism: the Aguirres of the world will continue to exist and reproduce and tyrannize, true to Marx’s adage that history repeats itself as a farce.

### **The Double Translator’s Distortions**

In the last decade or so, Herzog has exploded into the mainstream scene in ways that even he, for all his hubris, could not have predicted. With fictional films dealing with historical events (such as Rescue Dawn (2006) and The Bad Lieutenant (2009)) followed by the French government’s shocking decision to grant him the one and only filming permit for Cave of Forgotten Dreams (2011), Herzog has crafted a formidable oeuvre around real-world events. In a 2006 Harper’s Magazine article Tom Bissell ponders Herzog, noting that “[a]ny art form that incorporates the experience of real people will inevitably result in accusations of distortion. The question is not whether Herzog has shaped his subject matter but why” (71). The query, while pertinent across the

gamut of Herzog's filmography, is particularly relevant to the translative montage in Aguirre, the Wrath of God.

In response to Bissell's question, I offer that Herzog's shaping, distorting, and altering of the subject matter in Aguirre... is a means to elide a propagandistic and hegemonic direct representation of the Latin American colonial encounter (i.e. Apocalypto). He instead transforms his cinematographic languages and their corresponding grammars to translate distinct colonial moments, including the reading of the Requerimiento, Atahualpa's scene at Cajamarca, Cabeza de Vaca's labyrinthine route through North America, and Lope de Aguirre's quest for El Dorado. Clearly knowledgeable about the Occidental historical representation of these events, Herzog undertakes a process of re-education to surpass the impossibility of speaking for or speaking about the subaltern and, consequently, produces a critique thinking from subalternity, thus "transform[ing] the imperial design" instead of being "absorbed into its logic" (Mignolo & Schiwy 12).

Of importance in this transformation is Herzog's role as double translator, in which, like Subcomandante Marcos, he appropriates the border space between hegemonic and subaltern epistemologies. Herzog manipulates Occidental knowledge in his translation of historical events insofar as he opts against utilizing, for example, Francisco de Xérez's account of the scene at Cajamarca, or even Cabeza de Vaca's own Naufragios, or, for that matter, Lope de Aguirre's famous letter to King Philip II in September 1561. Instead, he employs creative license to manipulate—to doubly translate—the perspective of Amerindian knowledge regarding the same events; the distortion allows Aguirre, the Wrath of God to become a site of resistance that imbues in viewers an afterlife that contests and critiques the colonial project.

## Notes

[1] For a more detailed analysis of Herzog's ecological misdeeds, see Tom Cheesman, "Apocalypse Nein Danke: The Fall of Werner Herzog," in Green Thought in German Culture: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Ed. Colin Riordan. Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1997: 285-306.

[2] See Bill Ashcroft et al., The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, London: Routledge, 1989 in which Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note that "writing back" must be a tool of postcolonial resistance so as to reverse the "cultural hegemony [that] has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity" (7). The critics furthermore contend that that the inclusion of the indigenous point of view in the re-writing of the early canon presents a means of both indigenous resistance and colonial duplicity.

[3] Derrida's concept of the "supplement" further indicates that direct translation is impossible, for each word is slightly different in another language. The same notion could be applied in regard to film, for each filmic "language" (costume, scenery, script, soundtrack, and so forth) is to the director/screenwriter's discretion and thus impossible to export to another "translation."

[4] Perhaps it is safe to assume that Herzog's own alleged subalternity provokes his rejection of the hegemonic stratus; according to his official website, the filmmaker was raised in a remote Bavarian mountain village and "never saw any films, television, or telephones as a child. He started travelling on foot from the age of 14. He made his first phone call at the age of 17." See [www.wernerherzog.com](http://www.wernerherzog.com) for more curiosities regarding the director and his filmography.

[5] I say "true" because the story tends to be a compilation of the at least ten accounts written by members of the expedition, the numerous statements and reports presented by eyewitnesses to the legal authorities, the letters of those authorities, and finally the three letters from Aguirre himself, including one to King Phillip II (Pastor 175). Furthermore, the various accounts present a biased perspective that shines the conquistadores' actions in a positive light. Rabasa contends that his basic premise is: "verbal texts, maps, icons, and other cultural products should be taken as rhetorical artifices and not as depositories of data from which a factual truth may be construed" (9).

[6] Both Rabasa and Beatriz Pastor testify to the sixteenth-century tendency to struggle in the separation of real and imagined, Rabasa stating, "the sixteenth century had no grounds for discrimination between the real and the fantastic" (65). Pastor concurs that the Spaniards' inclination for myth and fantasy was considerable even for the period, declaring that "the blurry line of demarcation between reality and fiction affecting people's perception persisted throughout and beyond the age of exploration" (60). It is not my intention, however, to undertake, or to underscore, a second modernity reading of the first one. Rather, it is to note that Herzog depicts the implementation of executive authority in the midst of an unknown—and potentially non-existent—land, thus translating the Occidental neurosis of order and progress to the film.

[7] Inez, however, plays the exception to the rule; she repeatedly indicates that the laws of the land do not matter, declaring to Ursua, "we are not in Castille here." Indeed, Herzog portrays Inez as a sort of foil to the conquering men, a delicate species of femininity that is connected to the land, as indicated by a variety of scenes, namely one in which she holds a branch with leaves and another, in which she literally walks into the forest, never to be seen again.

[8] Michel de Certeau cited in Rabasa: “I designate as ‘writing’ the concrete activity that consists in constructing, on its own blank space [un espace propre]—the page—a text that has power over the exteriority from which it has first been isolated” (emphasis in original, 55). See Michel de Certeau, The Practices of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven F. Randall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984: 134-135.

[9] Koepnick contends, “[s]imilar to the earlier sequence, the clearing by no means delimits a space from which to establish stable institutions and define a cultural order against the perils of nature. Rather, it is used once more to evoke an act of separation: Aguirre’s rebellion inhabits the clearing not in order to found a new religion and legal order nor to worship past generations, but to overthrow the divine hierarchy altogether [...]” (149).

[10] See Olivia Harris. “‘The Coming of the White People’: Reflections on the Mythologisation of History in Latin America,” in Bulletin of Latin American Research 14.1 (1995): 9-24; Gananath Obeyesekere, The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. My intention is not to argue the veracity of these myths or whether or not they were indeed perpetuated by the Spaniards in order to exploit the Amerindians. It is rather to indicate that Herzog was aware of the myths and as such chose to translate them to the film.

[11] See Patricia Seed, “Failing to Marvel: Atahualpa’s Encounter with the Word,” in Latin American Research Review 26.1 (1991): 7-32 and MacCormack for more regarding the scene at Cajamarca.

[12] In an interview, Herzog states, “Actually, the original script had a different beginning to the finished film. I had planned a scene on a glacier at an altitude of 17,000 feet that started with a long procession of altitude-sick pigs tottering towards the camera. Only after a few minutes of following this line of animals would the audience realize that they are part of a Spanish army of adventurers [...]. Unfortunately, many crew members got altitude sickness for real and I had to abandon the idea” (92). Additionally, the Spanish cruelly snatch and cook a pig at one point in the film.

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