

Interdisciplinary Humanities



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Splitting Oaks

Deborah Owen Moore

I'd like to speak in arrows. These would be the seventeen Cabeza de Vaca described. He was always admiring arrows delivered into the core of a tree, splitting the *roble*.

What is the heart of the matter, I would ask Cabeza. And where does yours fit in? My heart is full of pins, he'd say, that keep it sewn together. But after something's sewn, you take the pins out. Not this time, Cabeza'd say.

Cabeza de Vaca had the heart of an adventurer. You might call his boyhood "picaresque." What can be had in the New World, he'd often ask his mother. She'd send him to confession.

Cabeza de Vaca's first name is Alvar. Accent on the "A." He never wrote what *los indios* called him during the six years they kept him their slave. It must have been something nice, though, because he stayed on with them three more years once free.

What is the function of the pericardium? I'd like to ask Cabeza de Vaca this very question. What is the role of the pericardium? Is it a raincoat for the heart?

I know you are talking, but I don't understand what you're saying. *Los indios* didn't speak to Cabeza in Spanish. It was something else.

My heart is made of Lincoln Logs and words not in the dictionary. Cabeza has taken his heart apart, remade it many times since. I haven't found where he describes the how-to's: connectors, roof pieces, glue.

Cabeza de Vaca wrote and wrote about his shipwreck adventure when he returned. He was happy to see his Spain again but never did include all the words he learned while away.

Cabeza will agree an oak is motionless, even when I remind him that the heart is a muscle. He has never revealed in his pages if the heart of the *roble* is quick water over sticks, hasn't said how to get there, or what you can see when you do.