

# “On such a full sea are we now afloat”: Travelling through Oceans, Writings and Images in Early Modern Times

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There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.

(*Julius Caesar*, IV, 3, 272-278)

Brutus's speech is heavily impregnated with the imagery of the sea and the voyage, both literal and metaphorical. Here, as in many other passages of many other early modern works of diverse nature, Shakespeare emphasises the liquid element that, from the fifteenth century onwards, would constitute a huge turning point, when the Ocean became an immense stage of events, with a more or less direct impact everywhere. As the Portuguese Renaissance poet Luís de Camões expressed in his epic *Os Lusíadas*, “new worlds were being shown to the world.”<sup>1</sup>

All the records approached in this essay, of heterogeneous origin, authorship, nature, and purposes, belong to a proficuous, large universe of written and iconographic productions, whose relevance stems from their practical, useful, informative data, as well as from their interrelationships with other works of the same period; all of them bear witness to the dynamic process that forever changed the world and the perception of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> My adaptation of Camões's line 8, stanza 45, Canto II, referring to the deeds of the Portuguese: “Novos mundos ao mundo irão mostrando.”

The project of the Discoveries appears to be encapsulated in the title of one of Bacon's texts, *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris*, written around 1616 and entirely centred on the liquid element. In fact, in a never-ending movement, the Atlantic route established a perennial interconnection and originated a deep, global change, having started flooding the New World with old habits and the Old World with wondrous things, never seen before. Hence, it will not be redundant to state and restate —by evoking the flux and reflux of the ocean waters— that those were complex times, simultaneously interesting, disturbing and challenging; moreover, like the rest of Bacon's vast literary production, the text on the sea tides highlights relevant characteristics of a peculiar era, never again achieved, when Occultism coexisted with Empiricism, and Astrology was not separated from Astronomy, or Alchemy from Chemistry.

Up to then, for centuries, the Western notions of exoticism and otherness had been confined to a relatively limited space, with the Mediterranean Sea as its epicentre, and somehow kept within patterns of acceptability and verisimilitude, even when considering the distant lands and peoples reported by Marco Polo. Caravels, carracks, galleons were now navigating far beyond the boundaries of a preconceived universe. The world was becoming stunningly wider, not only in its physical and conceptual spatiality, as the theories by Copernicus and Galileo, among others, were being grounded, but also in its cultural horizons, through the Humanist recovery of precious written legacies, some unknown, others thought to be lost. The concepts of the planet we inhabit, of Nature, God, and the relation of Humankind to them both had therefore to be reassessed, according to plural perspectives, having implied new notions of exoticism, otherness, selfhood, and identity. At a unique age when innovation was amalgamated with tradition, and amidst varied tensions, intersections and dichotomies, the way the discovered realities were registered, through words or images, could not but display the multifaceted characteristics and worldview of those complex times. In a relatively short period, the Europeans and the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa, the American continent, and the lands "Down Under" came to face a series of dilemmas, raised by the myriad of novelties, not rarely very difficult to deal with, to accept, to assimilate, or to explain. Amidst a series of striking habits, nudity, the black colour of human skin and anthropophagy were the hardest ones

to behold by the Western travellers. The materialisation of such realities that rather seemed to belong to idealised, fictional worlds implied the revaluation of almost everything, along with the acknowledgement, for the first time in history, of the existence of other microcosms based upon very different paradigms, even when compared with the ones previously disclosed by the ancient terrestrial routes. Furthermore, the shattering of an erroneous conceptual system that had prevailed for hundreds of years, organised according to a rigid but somehow reassuring hierarchy, brought about insecurity and scepticism, not only to the Europeans but certainly also to the native peoples dwelling in those faraway places.

As Professor Maria Helena de Paiva Correia refers in one of her works on Renaissance English Literature,<sup>2</sup> at the dawn of the age of the Discoveries, the problematic situation around the Mediterranean Sea, fully controlled by the Ottoman Empire since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, accompanied with the new epistemology and the significant progress in navigation, pushed vessels and seafarers to the oceanic open waters (29). The consequent reshaping of Southern Europe would lead to a broad, deep, and unprecedented reshaping of the entire world in every sphere when, primarily due to commercial reasons, the sea west to the Iberian Peninsula started being navigated. As Paiva Correia emphasises in the same work, the Ottoman rulership of that vast region led to, or accelerated, the substitution of the Mediterranean routes by the Atlantic ones, at an age when Europe lacked alternative terrestrial trade itineraries and depended on a precarious, stagnant agriculture. Moreover, the Iberian nations (Portugal and Spain), besides occupying a privileged geographical situation, were carrying on—unlike the Italian city-states— an expansionist policy coincident to an amazing era of progress that would connect them to the other oceans and continents of the globe (30).

Although the fundamental reasons for the Discoveries were undoubtedly commercial since the beginning, the maritime expansion comprises two different phases that eventually would coincide. The first— exploration— was led by Portugal and Spain, when there was a need to overcome the fear

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<sup>2</sup> *Literatura Inglesa I (Época Renascentista)*.

of the unknown open waters, to cross them, to reach coast after coast and to draw, or correct, charts. An immensity of iconographic records after written reports started being produced, many of them by Germans and Flemish who, up to then, were playing no outstanding role in the maritime enterprise. The second phase —exploitation— would later be shared by other European nations, and dominated, above all, by mercantile interests and colonial policies.

In early modern times, when distance and the notion of distance were being shortened in multiple senses, the mapping and the depiction of the world constituted a many-sided process, accomplished through cartography itself, based on new data, new techniques, and the systematic use of nautical instruments, some invented, some readapted, others improved, and through a set of another kind of “charts”: books on animals and plants; travel reports of various kinds; poems, treatises, and essays; iconographic works, many of which specifically produced to illustrate the written accounts, as mentioned above. Literature and iconography complemented one another and recorded a series of precious data, namely forms of life now extinct, chiefly due to the Europeans’ predatory actions; simultaneously, they captured forever the way the New World was then being apprehended.

Three aspects must be considered, regarding both the process of reporting and the strong interaction of word and image. Firstly, the records were certainly motivated by practical purposes of different nature: i) factual, in terms of promoting widespread information; ii) scientific, in terms of data interchange among men of knowledge; iii) economic, in terms of the maritime trade. For instance, let us not forget that, at least at the beginning, the Portuguese commercial empire was mainly founded upon the exotic spices, which had become as valuable as gold. Animal and, above all, vegetal species were disseminated and introduced in other continents, miles away from their places of origin, in order to be sold, eaten, or transformed into curative substances. Eventually and regretfully, human beings would also be exploited, transacted and considered mere items of merchandise. Secondly, the reports seem balanced between the endeavour to capture, in a reliable way, all that was being seen and the difficulty subjacent to the task, whenever places, plants, animals, and people with odd, peculiar features (according to Western standards) were not depicted right away *in*

*loco* or soon afterwards. Thirdly, beyond their artistic dimension, many of the reports were made after the tales of sailors and adventurers, most surely influenced by feelings of awe and fascination.

The descriptive and narrative processes began to change, as a tendency towards precision was growing steadier and the vernacular languages were replacing Latin which, notwithstanding, would remain, until very late, the *lingua franca* used by scholars. Simultaneously and frequently, antithetical tendencies were projected on the records because imagination proved to play a relevant role, when new realities, lacking verisimilar consistency, were reported by travellers and afterwards depicted by authors; moreover, as old superstitions regarding the Ocean began to fade away, new fears began to arise out of unexplained phenomena, such as violent storms, gigantic waves, amazing geological formations, phosphorescent waters, and other natural luminescences. Taking all these contextual aspects into account and starting with cartography, I will now approach some of the “charts” that, in varied fields and through varied ways, depict what was then being apprehended.

Early modern cartography assumed an essential key role. It was particularly concerned with and based upon new notions of exactitude, especially since the Portuguese systematic sea voyages initiated in 1415. But even in this domain, the use of symbolism and allegory persisted (it was probably considered normal) through the insertion of artistic motifs.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the reproduction of ancient concepts did not end overnight. In the late fifteenth century, more precisely in 1482, a printed map by Lienhart Holl, or Holle, depicting Ptolemy’s inhabited world would come to light,<sup>4</sup> although the most astounding items are undoubtedly Heinrich Bünting’s maps, produced in the late sixteenth century and contained in his work, written in Latin, *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*

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<sup>3</sup> Among many others, maps with these characteristics were conceived by the Portuguese cartographers Lopo Homem, Pedro Reinel, Jorge Reinel, and Lázaro Luís, and are contained in the following works, respectively: *Atlas Miller* or *Lopo Homem-Reineis Atlas* (1519; French National Library, Paris); *Atlas de Lázaro Luís* (1563; Academia das Ciências de Lisboa).

<sup>4</sup> Printed in Ulm, reproducing the map contained in Ptolemy’s *Cosmographia*.

(1581): *the Clover Leaf Map; Europe in the Shape of a Queen; Asia in the Form of Pegasus*.

Literature, iconography, and the interaction between both constitute much more complex spheres, due to the specificities intrinsic to the process of representation, to the new nomenclature and to the very usual mixture of factual with legendary matters. Accounts and pictures gave origin to other accounts and other pictures, within a dynamic process potentiated by Guttenberg's printing press. For instance, Albrecht Dürer produced his famous rhinoceros in 1515, after two letters<sup>5</sup> sent from Lisboa to Nuremberg by correspondents who had seen the large animal, brought from India in that same year; afterwards, Hans Burgkmair, Conrad Gesner and David Kandel (who worked for Sebastian Münster, the author of *Cosmographia*, 1545), among others, made reproductions of the astounding creature, after Dürer. Carolus Clusius drew the dodo in 1605, based on Jacob van Neck's report of his expedition to Indonesia (1598-1600). Once the dodo would be extinct within approximately 100 years after the Dutch arrived in Mauritius, Clusius's iconographic pieces, together with other ones of the same kind, become particularly important. The same happens with the works of other artists, namely Theodor de Bry's impressive scenes of cannibalism and appalling acts of torture inflicted to the native inhabitants of the Americas, made after Friar Bartolomé de las Casas's pungent written testimony entitled *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552).<sup>6</sup>

Within an immense set of records depicting animals (as the aforementioned rhinoceros and dodo) and exotic plants (for instance, the corn, the pineapple, the black pepper, and the cinnamon tree),<sup>7</sup> a small South American creature constitutes an enlightening, complex example in the

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<sup>5</sup> One by Valentim Fernandes, a Moravian merchant and printer, the other of unknown authorship.

<sup>6</sup> *A Most Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

<sup>7</sup> Many early modern engravings of fauna and flora are assembled in the work by Marília dos Santos Lopes, published in 1998: *Coisas maravilhosas e até agora nunca vistas. Para uma iconografia dos Descobrimentos*.



fields of Philology, Geography, and Politics. Its triple designation of different origins —tatu; cassacam; armadillo— bears witness to the process of colonisation of the New World, anchored in the Treaty of Tordesillas. The animal may be visualised through two 16th-century iconographic displays (by Hans Staden and Conrad Gesner) and two written records (by Hans Staden and Sir Walter Raleigh). In a world then already divided between the two Iberian kingdoms, the Portuguese adopted the Indian word “tatu,” used in *Wahrhaftige Historia* (1557) by the German author; the Spaniards named it “armadillo,” used in *The Discovery of Guiana* (1595) by the English author, who fortunately also registered another native word: “cassacam.” Staden was reporting on the Brazilian territory visited by him, already occupied by Portugal; Raleigh was reporting on the territory visited by him, already occupied by Spain. Here is the description by the Elizabethan writer:

(...) a beast called by the Spaniards armadillo, which they [the native tribes] call cassacam, which seemeth to be all barred over with small plates somehow like a rhinoceros, with a white horn growing in his hinder parts as big as a great hunting-horn (...). (27)

As it happens with the maps, reliable accounts co-exist with material of another nature, sometimes even in the same work. For instance, Hulsius would produce an implausible woodcut<sup>8</sup> after Sir Walter Raleigh’s also implausible description of a people (whom he actually never saw), in a text generally accurate. Raleigh himself was indebted to Pliny’s legendary reference to the Blemmyae, a Nubian tribe believed to be acephalous, when he wrote:

(...) a nation of people whose heads appear not above their shoulders ... They are called Ewaipanoma; they are reported to have their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and that a long train of hair groweth backward (...). (37)

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<sup>8</sup> Inserted in the German translation of *The Discovery of Guiana: Kurze wunderbare Beschreibung des goldreichen Königreichs Guianae in America* (1599).

The miscellany I am here considering is peculiarly displayed in two other written works created a century apart. In Gesner's exquisite book *Historiae Animalium* (1551-58; 1587) we find accurate depictions and descriptions, such as the rhinoceros, the tatu, the castor and the ostrich, side by side with creatures, such as the unicorn, a polycephaly, and a sea satyr. The same happens in Edward Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents* (1658), which mixes apes, vipers, and other common animals with monstrous creatures from the realm of fantasy (many by Gesner, actually). Items of a still different nature that still fall into another category kept being produced, for example Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires Prodigieuses* (1561), presented to Queen Elizabeth I when the author visited England, and Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* (1642). Classical and medieval works on animals, wonders, and malformations had therefore not been dismissed during the new era; they were being reread, certainly according to other perspectives, and taken into account, in an effort to understand the amazing discovered realities. Iconographic works like the ones contained in these texts seem to reproduce the fright of unexplained phenomena. Furthermore, the persistence of certain ancient matters seems to constitute strong evidence of the composite spirit of the age that skilfully articulated Natural Philosophy and Neoplatonism with Experimentalism and Observation.

The intersection of both approaches —the ancient and the new— is masterfully delineated by Garcia de Orta in *Colóquios*, written in India in 1563, when the Portuguese were in full possession of their empire in the East. The author, a physician, herbalist, and naturalist, one of the major figures of the Renaissance in Portugal, devised a peculiar work with a peculiar structure, in the form of colloquies, i.e. conversations between two Iberian interlocutors —Orta, himself, and Ruano, his *alter ego*. The first, who was already settled down in Asia at the time, represents the innovative approach, based on observation and experimentation; the second, a fictional Spanish physician who was there visiting his Portuguese fellow, represents the traditional approach based on inherited, theoretical knowledge. Throughout the dialogues, the Oriental fruits, spices, trees, substances, and “simples” (meaning “herbs used singly”) are listed in alphabetical order, followed by the description of their features, the indication of their therapeutic uses, and the locations of transaction and

distribution within the early modern commercial network. Orta's was indeed a pioneer text, with a strong, deep impact on other authors and on diverse fields, both of knowledge and action; but because it had been written in Portuguese, its wide circulation and subsequent influence would be only reached in 1567, through Carolus Clusius's translation of it into Latin. This version is illustrated by Clusius himself, who thus added a valuable dimension to the contents. Regrettably, however, the translator did not keep the original structure, in the sense that the colloquies—the conversations—between the two physicians do not exist, having thus erased significant, paradigmatic rhetorical devices.

As the Europeans reached the new territories, there was a usual—certainly natural—major tendency to highlight the interaction with the indigenous peoples and the places where they dwelled. Nevertheless, and independently of the everlasting conflicts in the Old Continent, the Europeans' interaction among themselves also changed at that time, having taken different tonalities. The perspectives and interactions afore mentioned may be observed in two other interesting works: *Carta a El-Rei D. Manuel* (1500),<sup>9</sup> by the Portuguese Pêro Vaz de Caminha; *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Açores* (1591), also known as *The Last Fight of the Revenge*, by the English Sir Walter Raleigh.<sup>10</sup>

The *Letter*, actually not a single sheet of paper but a long text<sup>11</sup> addressed to King Manuel I of Portugal, belongs to the early phase of the Discoveries—exploration—and is primarily centred on the encounter with the “Other,” epitomised by Theodoor Galle's allegorical engraving *America* (ca. 1600), after Stradanus. Due to the Portuguese policy of secrecy regarding the maritime expansion, this valuable piece of literature would only be published in the nineteenth century. Pêro Vaz de Caminha was a knight who travelled with Pedro Álvares Cabral to India in 1500, as

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<sup>9</sup> *Letter to King Manuel* (my translation), hereafter referred to as *Letter*.

<sup>10</sup> Hereafter referred to as *The Last Fight*. All the quotations belong to the modernised version of the text entitled *A Report of the truth concerning the last sea-fight of the Revenge*.

<sup>11</sup> In the edition I am using it occupies 50 pages.

a secretary to the royal factory. The fleet sailed further westward than planned—while using the turn of the sea (“volta do mar”), a navigational technique developed by the Portuguese to catch favourable winds— and, instead of proceeding on the India route, discovered by Vasco da Gama two years earlier, reached the coasts of another continent. The *Letter* constitutes both first-hand news to the king on the unexpected arrival in an unknown land and a detailed report on the place and its inhabitants, who were then plainly denominated “Indians.” It also constitutes a fine example of the mutual amazement, at a somehow Edenic stage that characterised these first encounters, and has forever captured those unique, primeval moments when the territory had not yet been given a name. Caminha only mentions “the land,” at first believed to be an island, found, by chance, on the way to Calicut, and ends his report by using the term “Vera Cruz” (“True Cross”). As a matter of fact, the designation “Terras de Vera Cruz” (“Lands of the True Cross”) lasted until our days as an alternative, more poetic synonym for Brazil.

Caminha centres his attention on the native inhabitants, who lived in a pre-iron age and to whom gold did not constitute a panacea, as it also happens in More’s *Utopia*. Caminha bears witness to two of the three most conspicuous novelties beheld by the Europeans on the African and American continents: nudity, tattoos and, above all, anthropophagy. Hans Staden’s testimony in his *Wahrhaftige Historia* is impressive: he tells and depicts what he witnessed and almost experienced when he was about to be killed, roasted, and eaten by a Brazilian tribe, had he not been rescued by another tribe, allied to the Portuguese. The famous, also impressive engravings by Theodor de Bry depicting anthropophagic scenes were precisely made after Staden’s *Wahrhaftige Historia*. Caminha did not face Staden’s experience, fortunately for him, but he is constantly struck by the natives’ lack of clothes and body marks, on the one hand, and by their cleanliness, health, good shape (32-33) and generosity (32; 33-34; 36-37; 38), on the other, while describing, in detail, the physical characteristics of both men and women, their feather adornments, their dwellings and their weapons (which they gradually stopped carrying, in an attitude of total trust—10-11; 13-15; 20; 29-30; 35). At the same time, Caminha gives account of the natives’ perspective, by referring to their own curiosity and reactions before the European clothes, animals and food (16-17), certainly

also puzzled by their/our physiognomies, and he openly recognises that the Indians are “muito mais nossos amigos que nós seus” (44).<sup>12</sup> Amidst an atmosphere of goodwill, the dichotomy Civilisation/Nature could not but surface, due to crucial actions and occurrences, namely: the Portuguese permanent effort to clothe the naked Indians; the building of a large cross, the offering of a small cross to each one of the natives, and the celebration of Mass (24; 48), thus metonymically marking the beginning of evangelisation; the flight to land, in a stolen skiff, of four members of the crew (two deported convicts and two cabin-boys), thus literally marking the beginning of miscegenation, which was a characteristic of the Portuguese colonisation everywhere: “E cremos que ficarão por aqui” (50),<sup>13</sup> writes Pêro Vaz de Caminha.

Sir Walter Raleigh’s *The Discovery of Guiana* shares many aspects with Caminha’s *Letter*, in the sense that the former visited South American territories with similar characteristics, lived similar experiences, and acknowledged the Indians’ constant generosity. But unlike the *Letter*, both *The Discovery of Guiana* and *The Last Fight* belong to a later phase, when colonisation was at full speed. *The Last Fight of the Revenge* was written in 1591, when King Felipe II of Spain was I of Portugal, i.e. when the Iberian Peninsula was politically unified, as a consequence of King Sebastião’s loss at Alcácer-Quibir, in 1578; therefore, the Portuguese Archipelago of Açores, strategically located in the Atlantic, was then under the Spanish flag. The arch, everlasting opposition England/Spain (and vice versa) bursts out both in the report of the events and in the events themselves, at a time when a fortified England under Elizabeth I’s rule was seeking an active participation in the maritime enterprise, encouraged by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in the Battle of Gravelines three years earlier. Although the English were defeated by the Spaniards on the Açores waters, Raleigh’s account of the peculiar, odd battle—the Battle of Flores<sup>14</sup>— is imbued with emblematic meanings, whose scopes are

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<sup>12</sup> “much more our friends than we [are] theirs” (my translation).

<sup>13</sup> “And we do believe they will remain here” (my translation).

<sup>14</sup> Flores is one of the Açores islands.

amplified by the author's literary skills. The 14-year old galleon *Revenge*—the Queen's finest warship with a highly symbolic name—fiercely fought alone for 12 hours against a recently renewed Spanish fleet. It eventually surrendered and, badly damaged, sank near the Island of Terceira during a storm.

So it pleased them to honor the burial of that renowned ship the *Revenge*, [not] suffering her to perish alone, for the great honor she achieved in her life time. (13)

*Revenge's* resistance may symbolise both England's and its Queen's resilience against a long Spanish menace to independence, both political and religious; moreover, and due to the characteristics of this naval battle, it may be understood as a sign of the growing strength of a nation that had recently gone through deep, radical changes.

Thus it has pleased God to fight for us, and to defend the justice of our cause, against the ambitious and bloody pretenses of the Spaniard, who seeking to devour all nations, are themselves devoured. (14)

Raleigh's writings are imbued with the same anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic feelings that can be detected in *The Discovery of Guiana*. As he reports the last battle of the *Revenge*, he develops a series of considerations, and the text goes far beyond the report of the factual event. The author vehemently denounces the Spaniards' rapacity, plunder, cruelty, and prepotency in the New World; but so does Bartolomé de las Casas, and he was a Spaniard. Curiously, Raleigh mentions de las Casas in *The Last Fight* and must have read his writings, once he uses them to ground his own argumentation against the Spanish methods in the New World (15-16). Then, proceeding with his vigorous criticism and anti-Spanish feelings in the superlative, he focuses on the Europeans' interaction among themselves, while disputing the immense resources of the colonies, which led to another kind, or level, of prepotency and rapacity in the Old Continent. For Raleigh, the Spaniard was indeed a great deal worse than the Turk (16). From another perspective and within the complexity of the relations among Europeans, one must not forget that the English were carrying on ferocious acts of plunder and rapacity when they assaulted the Iberian ships, loaded with treasures from the other side of the ocean, or that they were anchored

on the same beliefs of superiority and the right to appropriation, rulership and Westernisation. Be that as it may, a crucial, complex fact that often tends to be disregarded must be here mentioned: countercurrently, some early modern authors of various backgrounds, including missionaries (mainly Jesuits), were bold enough to support the native peoples, their environment and cultures, and to denounce the process of colonisation that would follow those first moments of the encounter with the “Other,” as told by Pêro Vaz de Caminha. Besides Friar Bartolomé de las Casas (*Brevísima Relación*) and Sir Walter Raleigh (*Discovery of Guiana*), the Portuguese Fernão Mendes Pinto (*Peregrinação*, ca. 1569, published 1614) and Father António Vieira (*Sermões*, 1633-1681) would expose the Europeans’ rapacity, plunder, cruelty, and prepotency in the New World.

This second stage of the Discoveries —exploitation and settlement— is depicted in two other English texts that constitute interesting data at several levels: Sir George Peckham’s report concerning Newfoundland (*True Report of the Late Discoveries*, 1584) and Thomas Hariot’s written testimony on Virginia (*A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 1588), both assembled in Hakluyt’s well-known compilation on the English maritime enterprise, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589). The texts by Peckham and Hariot are centred on actions within Sir Walter Raleigh’s projects for the New World and on expeditions commanded by two of his relatives, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Raleigh’s half-brother, and Sir Richard Grenville, a cousin of both. The texts share a series of premises on colonialism and mercantilism, noticeable from the very beginning through the use of identical terms in the titles: “report” refers to the intended factual nature of the writings; “true” validates and/or reinforces such nature (which, in the case of Hariot’s, is endorsed by Governor Ralph Lane’s foreword); “land” specifies each object under consideration; “discover,” “new,” and “found” share a broader meaning implying not only the literal sense of *terra nova* but also the right to “claim,” “possess,” and “explore” new territories. In fact, two apologies for settlement in different parts of the world are developed in these texts, making use of description, evidence and enumeration of resources, in order to justify, above all, the right of occupation and exploitation.

Peckham's text appeared in the aftermath of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's disastrous expedition to Newfoundland in 1583. The author reveals a good knowledge of the age, in terms of historical figures, events, and contexts, of geography, natural resources, policies, and strategies. He departs from Gilbert's discoveries, euphemistically discarding the nobleman's failure and eventual death, and develops both an analeptic and a proleptic argumentation of subtle contours. Most probably within the ethos of the Tudor propaganda, he grounds Elizabeth I's right to territories in the New World on the alleged twelfth century deeds of a Welsh Prince, Madog Ab Owain Gwynedd, who, according to legend, had sailed to America in 1170 (let us not forget that Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, had based the claim to the throne of England on his own Welsh ancestry). According to Peckham, the Queen's right was so solidly anchored that even one of the native leaders, the Aztec emperor Montezuma II, openly acknowledged it, while delivering a speech to his subjects in the presence of the Spaniards, whose hegemony in South America was already in motion. Then, fully aware of the Iberian nations' supremacy, mentioned several times in the report, Peckham states the reasons why the English colonisation should proceed (*malgré* Gilbert's mischance), justifies it and gives counsel to future colonists on how to deal, trade and traffic with the indigenous peoples. The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas gains yet another dimension, here and in the majority of early modern texts, namely in Caminha's *Letter*, when a dichotomy based on religious beliefs also divides the world in two broad halves and disregards ethnic specificities: the Europeans are always referred to as Christians, the native peoples as Savages.

In its turn, Thomas Hariot's apologetic report appeared in the aftermath of the 1580's failures to settle an English colony in North America. Sir Richard Grenville's expedition in 1585 aimed at the colonisation of Virginia, devised by his cousin Raleigh. However, due to other priorities, namely the conflict with Spain, the crown ceased to invest in the project, which eventually failed after two attempts of settlement. The work constitutes another rich repository of nomenclature, descriptions, definitions, explanations, and pieces of advice to prospective colonists; besides, it also goes beyond the literal listings, because of two specific, pertinent circumstances associated with the interrelationships afore mentioned. Intrinsic to the report are the author's background and point



of view. Hariot, a mathematician, astronomer, ethnographer, and translator educated in Oxford, was actively involved in Raleigh's plan to Virginia, as well. He became his accountant and navigational counsellor, having also participated in the design of the ships; furthermore, he conceived a phonetic alphabet in order to transcribe the Algonquian, a native North American language now extinct, which undoubtedly helped him a lot in the detailed reference to plants, trees, animals, minerals and manufactured products.

Extrinsic to the report but intimately related to it, is an artist's point of view, materialised in a large collection of watercolours by the painter John White, entrusted by Raleigh to draw the place and its inhabitants, the Algonkin Indians. The strong interaction of word and image, as well as the ethnographic dimension, would gain new, richer angles with the 1590 edition of the report by Theodor de Bry, who wrote an introduction and created a series of engravings based on White's watercolours. On the other hand, the editor's introduction discloses an uncommon position for the time, when he praises the native peoples' superiority, wisdom, and skills in certain fields. Such countercurrent attitude, somehow also subjacent in Hariot's report, appears to be the same shared by those authors who were previously mentioned here: de las Casas, Raleigh, Mendes Pinto, and Vieira. Concomitantly, in the twentieth century, two works in the field of cinematography would expand such approach: *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé, depicts the subjugation of the native dwellers and the Europeans' interaction among themselves in the exploitation of the New World; *Apocalypto*, directed by Mel Gibson, highlights yet another side of the human nature, while depicting the interaction of some South American tribes and exposing that slavery, plunder, and rapacity were not exclusive to the Europeans. Be that as it may and independently of the tribal conflicts that also existed in Africa, the arrival of caravels, carracks, and galleons in other lands literally meant the end of an archetypal era, more or less abruptly put to an end by a set of diverse, deep impacts of the Western civilisation.

The navigations westward to the Iberian Peninsula did unveil the rest of the planet and its dwellers. From then on, nothing would or could be the same as before. The varied reports were essential then and are essential now: on the one hand, they decisively contributed to the early modern

perspectivation of the planet; on the other hand, they are nowadays key elements to our own perception of the whole context, some of them being even the only traces of long-extinct environments and creatures— not only of the dodo, but also of native tribes, consequently of their cultures, habits, languages, myths, religions. The several texts and iconographic works here under consideration constitute therefore relevant pieces that highlight the proficuity and variety of records, when the peoples of the world were facing so many challenges. As we have seen, the relationship of human beings with the environment and with other human beings, so different in their features, traditions and ways of life, implied whole new perspectives from both sides: from the Old World travellers and from the New World dwellers. In Europe, the natural urge to record and reveal what was being experienced during the Age of the Discoveries generated a wide variety of items and an interesting symbiosis between word and image: oral and written narratives were the sources for iconographic works, while iconographic works became the visual materialisation of what had been observed in distant places and afterwards told.

The issue of communication must, once again, be emphasised, and some aspects recollected. At a time when the printing press was playing a decisive role in the production and circulation of works, when the vernacular languages were being promoted and studied, Latin remained the *lingua franca* in the dissemination of knowledge among scholars. Besides, inherent to the substantial changes in the reception of works, there was a certain degree of relativity, as the circumstances surrounding Garcia de Orta's text put into evidence: not everyone shared the same information at the same time, and several important writings became known only within the nations where they had been produced, or much later, as is the case of Caminha's *Letter* to his king. The more or less accurate, circumstantial, pragmatic, elaborate, or literary "charts," created by individuals of different backgrounds (merchants, seafarers, adventurers, courtiers, scholars, diplomatic envoys), took the form of letters, poems, logbooks, treatises, travel narratives, permeated with an immensity of new nomenclature and, frequently, with illustrations. Apart from their characteristics or authorship, they ended up by having a deep impact on erudition.

The disclosure of the rest of the planet changed forever the way each human being *is* in the world, *sees* the world and *deals* with the "Other."

Despite the negative impacts both on the environment and on other civilisations, the positivity intrinsic to the process of Expansion seems to be encapsulated in the title *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris* and must be here evoked: as the constant sea tides, so the fragile ships that departed from the coasts of Europe and managed to return became continuous carriers of news, samples and reports. Due to such adventurous voyages, “the clouds, and the mists, and the fogs did open and show riches.”<sup>15</sup> The mapping of the world would indeed disclose those riches by means of the wide circulation of printed works of multi-sided nature that so effectively captured the complexity of the age. Therefore, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the literal voyages on and through the Ocean gave origin to another sort of unending, peculiar voyages — “on such a full sea are we now [and still] afloat,” whenever we metonymically keep travelling through the written and iconographic records, catching glimpses of a unique world and worldview that, meanwhile, have radically changed.

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<sup>15</sup> My adaptation of Shakespeare’s line 144 in *The Tempest* (Act III, Scene 3): “The clouds me thought would open and show riches.”

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### ABSTRACT

For centuries, the Western notion of exoticism and otherness comprehended a relatively limited space, whose epicentre was the Mediterranean Sea. With the maritime expansion on the Atlantic, initiated by the Iberian nations in the fifteenth century and afterwards undertaken by other European countries, deep changes would occur in every domain. Horizons were broadened, geographically, and conceptually, to an unprecedented scale, and an immensity of amazing realities was disclosed. Vessels went far beyond the boundaries of a preconceived universe, at a unique time when innovation was wisely amalgamated with tradition.

In the aftermath of such an important human conquest, a natural urge was felt to register what was being witnessed. The complex notions of otherness —as well as of selfhood and identity— became consequently rather striking, once they involved not only the Europeans' interaction with the New World (and vice versa), but also the interaction among themselves, while disputing the oceans, the recently found territories and the natural resources. Early modern texts, many displaying invaluable illustrations, proliferated and would constitute important data, both on the maritime expansion and the worldview. Bearing in mind the early modern context and the different stages of the Discoveries, this essay is focused on diverse written and iconographic works by European authors of heterogeneous backgrounds— cartographers, engravers, travellers, courtiers, scholars— and on their contribution to the new understanding of the world.

### KEYWORDS

The New World; maritime expansion; literature; iconography; worldview.

### RESUMO

Durante séculos, a noção ocidental de exotismo e alteridade inseriu-se num espaço relativamente confinado, cujo epicentro foi o Mar Mediterrâneo. A expansão marítima, iniciada pelas nações ibéricas no século XV e prosseguida por outros países europeus, originou profundas mudanças em todos os domínios. Os horizontes

geográficos e conceptuais alargaram-se numa escala sem precedentes, e uma imensidão de novas realidades foi desvendada. As embarcações passaram as fronteiras de um universo pré-concebido, durante uma era única em que, sabiamente, a tradição foi amalgamada com a inovação.

No seguimento de tão importante conquista humana, sentiu-se um impulso, normal, de registar o que estava a ser testemunhado. As noções complexas de alteridade —assim como as de individualidade e identidade— tornaram-se particularmente proeminentes, uma vez que envolviam, não apenas a interacção dos Europeus com o Novo Mundo (e vice-versa), mas também a interacção uns com os outros, enquanto disputavam os oceanos, os territórios recentemente descobertos e os recursos naturais. No período pré-moderno, registou-se uma proliferação de textos, muitos deles com valiosas ilustrações, constituindo importantes dados sobre a expansão marítima e a mundividência. Tendo em consideração o contexto pré-moderno e as diferentes fases dos Descobrimentos, este ensaio centra-se em diversos trabalhos escritos e iconográficos de autores europeus de origens heterogéneas —cartógrafos, gravadores, viajantes, cortesãos, académicos— e na sua contribuição para o novo entendimento do mundo.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Expansão marítima; o Novo Mundo; literatura; iconografia; mundividência.

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