Otherness and the Question of Authority

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Comparisons among cultures open up new perspectives. This paper is a comparative discussion of western Europeans and how they came to terms with the otherness of Natives in the New World and how that called into question their own authority as authors and indeed their worldview. This representation of the Natives is a recurrent theme. Often this representation and "translation" involved an overcoming of or coming to terms with other "barbarous" cultures as well as an inheritance from a previous empire or a rival. Questions of being there, of the rhetorical contract between writer and reader, and the typology of the Old and New World are among my concerns over the truth and lies that the authors and readers of travel accounts must negotiate. This might be an ethnology of reading or a use of ethnology to see the otherness within or the dramatic tension between self and other that writers and readers then and now experience.

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Comparisons among cultures open up new perspectives. Here, I shall present a comparative discussion of western Europeans and how they came to terms with the otherness of Natives in the New World and how that called into question their own authority as authors and indeed their worldview. This representation of the Natives is a recurrent theme. Often this representation and "translation" involved an overcoming of or coming to terms with other "barbarous" cultures as well as an inheritance from a previous empire or a rival. Figures like Columbus, Caminha, Las Casas, Vitoria, Montaigne, Léry, Ralegh, Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and others raise issues of their own authority in terms of being eyewitnesses to encounters with Natives and slaves or as those who represent the strangeness of the Americas. Making familiar the strange and the strange the familiar occur simultaneously in some texts. Customs, women, cannibals all recall Herodotus, Pliny, Tacitus and other antecedents. Theorists like Tzvetan Todorov and Michel de Certeau have discussed otherness in the context of new world travel accounts, but I shall attempt to do so from a more overtly

comparative point of view. Moreover, I shall try to widen the discussion beyond their interests in Cortés and Montaigne. Questions of being there, of the rhetorical contract between writer and reader, and the typology of the Old and New World will be among my concerns over the truth and lies that the authors and readers of travel accounts must negotiate. This might be an ethnology of reading or a use of ethnology to see the otherness within or the dramatic tension between self and other that writers and readers then and now experience. First, I wish to provide some context for otherness.

Background

Otherness is something we can come to recognize in ourselves. We are sometimes alienated from ourselves in the sense that we are conscious of our estrangement from nature or the precariousness of life and the untold certainty of death. Even if we were to stay in the same place and not go far, we would see the cycle of life and death and understand our being a part from, while being a part of, nature.

If a person were to live in a circumscribed space and was to observe nature, he or she would see birth, growth and death, witness peace and violence, especially in the countryside. Nature is a book that yields many points of view and can give evidence for many ideas about life. The same would be true about observing people alone and in groups. None of this is surprising, but it is worth remembering that otherness is not in and of itself exotic or distant but constitutes an aspect of ourselves.

When a child learns to read, he or she encounters in print a re-enactment in a different mode of the acquisition of language. Infants encounter the world without being able to articulate words for the first months of their lives. They hear sounds and then imitate and apply them to the world about them. In time they build sentences, paragraphs and narratives in speech and writing. They come to learn that words represent and refract the world symbolically but are not the world.

In a sense language attempts to integrate us into the world through description and understanding, but it also reminds us of our alienation from the world. If our thoughts and being were one and the same with the world, we would not need language. Language is, then, a tool to understand the world, but is also a means of expressing the estrangement that human consciousness feels from the natural environment. In learning to read, if a child had only two books, and assuming this was a child who grew up with a Western education some time in the past five hundred years, then he or she might read the *Bible* and a book of Greek and Roman myths, so let us suppose this volume to be Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In those two books, the child, who might have more basic redactions of those works until a certain age, could find the fall of Adam and Eve, who came to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the various transformations in life and death of figures among the Greek and Roman mortals who play out a drama of transformation. These changes in the *Bible* and Ovid show that life is not stable, secure and unified, but, rather, unstable, insecure and divided. But in the *Bible* and Ovid there are transformations that try to mend this Judeo-Christian and pagan sense of alienation. In Ovid, transformations occur that save the mortal from a situation or death and may even take a human and make him or her an animal or plant that can escape a dilemma or threat in the human world. The stories of Philomela and Adonis are such instances.

In the *Bible,* the tragic fall in the Garden of Eden reveals alienation from nature in which sin and the shame of the human body as something estranged in nature are discovered. Yet the *Bible* is a divine comedy even if it also contains many human falls and tragedies in the *de casibus* sense. The shape of the *Bible* is both typological and comic. The typology is, for example, between the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem that heaven promises. Jesus of Nazareth is the new Adam. The cross of the crucifixion is a new version of a tree of sin and death like the tree whose fruit so tempted Adam and Eve. But the killing of Christ on a cruciform, a human-made shape like a tree and derived from a tree, is a sin that brings death in order to free humans from lasting shame and death in the natural world because God enables Christ's redemption of that sin and death.

The human fall from grace in the garden is a kind of othering of the person from the person. Because of this division of the self from the self, what we might call the divided self, estrangement is part of the personality, at least as it is constructed in Western culture and in Christianity in particular. A sense of shame and guilt, for better or worse, enters into a child's view of the world. Quite possibly, adults inculcate this remorse, consciously or not, into their children.

The re-enactment of the fall is puberty or adolescent, which intensifies any milder or more latent sexual feelings a child might have. This sexual awakening, if it may be called that, is like Eve and Adam discovering the awkwardness of their bodies as they are revealed through their disobedience toward God in the garden. The body comes to mean shame, which is a very difficult thing in the face of the overwhelming urge of sexual desire. How can this body, so alienated from nature, want to seek another body to reproduce another body, which will also be born into innocence but also into original sin? It is the death of the body of Christ as a human sacrifice as the son of Man, but also in the development of theology, as the son

of God, that redeems the fallen human body that began with the choice of Eve and Adam in a solitary then social act of disobedience and rebellion against the unalienated garden into which God had planted them.

The Fall becomes a matter of knowledge (epistemology) and being (ontology) and has a moral dimension (good and evil). The betrayal and killing of Christ is also an instance of humans betraying humans and, in their later tellings and theology, a human turning against God. By crucifying the son of God and the son of man, Pilate, a representative of the political power of the Roman empire, allows for the violence of division among people. This is an evil deed that comes from human sin. The death, paradoxically, is a redemption and purification that enables God through Christ to allow a sacrifice to redeem humankind. Typologically, God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and here He sacrifices his own son. The second coming of Christ at the Last Judgement means an atonement, an unothering, of those who will be saved. The damned, of course, go on in the hell of alienation for eternity, but those who achieve salvation become part of a divine comedy as they overcome the otherness and self-division of fallenness and sin.

But there is a pagan side to Western culture. And the child struggles with the pleasures of the body and desires that adults will, and certainly in the doctrine of Christian religion, try to downgrade, discipline or even demonize. Sex becomes a form of negative otherness. It is something, especially outside the institution of marriage, that is seen as a shame, sin, and aberration. But for the pagan, especially for pagan gods like Zeus, who is described as taking the form of a swan when raping Leda, the violence and the pleasures of sex and sexual conquest are seen in another light. In the pagan world, and this is how in *Leda and the Swan* W. B. Yeats represents the "feathered glory" of Zeus' act, as rape is a prerogative of the god of gods, but Tarquin's rape of Lucretia (Lucrece), even if he is a king, means banishment and the end of the Roman monarchy in favour of the republic.

In shame, Lucrece kills herself, and Brutus, more than her husband Collatine, at least in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, avenges this heinous act. The reader of Shakespeare's poem is, however, not only introduced to the moral lesson and indignation of the rape but also experiences the rhetoric of seduction that Shakespeare uses in representing the temptation and lust of Tarquin. In fact, Tarquin knows that his lust for Lucrece is wrong but cannot help himself. She feels tainted and violated and becomes a sacrifice for Rome. Why she has to die is a matter of ideology and depends on views of rape and sex that are made to make women feel alienated from themselves through no fault of their own. And so the young reader, like

the adult reader, sees that we can become others to ourselves, divided from what we are, are said to be, or hope to be in many different ways.

In Ovid as well as in the *Bible,* knowledge is sexual almost from the start. The gods seduce mortal women, and Eve gives in to the urge to eat the fruit. Temptation is everywhere and the structures of narrative, theology and society are set up in such a way as to lecture children and adults in their shortcomings, their fall from the world and themselves. Innocence and experience allow for an ambivalence of pleasure and displeasure. Uncovering the body is, like discovery generally, a movement from ignorance to knowledge. Columbus' uncovering of the New World is often expressed in terms of clothed European bodies and naked Native bodies. There, desire and innocence are mixed together.

How much is recognition and how much misrecognition is always difficult to say. So much depends on points of view. The child is innocent but fallen from nature. Culture teaches him or her to revel in the body and to feel shame for having a body and certainly one that has sexual urges. The pagan and Christian selves are divided. In many cultures, there may be equivalents in different refractions and configurations. Here, I shall concentrate on ethnographic otherness, something more to do with travel to other places and peoples. It is good to remember that this hypothetical person who barely travelled and read only two books was already a stranger to himself or herself. Now to be a stranger in a strange land intensifies the question of otherness. It is to such a brief discussion that I now turn.

Being There and the Eyewitness

I have made much of childhood, and it is possible to say that what constitutes a child has changed a good deal over time. In the nineteenth century, Victor Hugo said: "Christopher Columbus only discovered America. I discovered the child" (qtd in Heywood 26). This was part of the Romantic invention of innocence in childhood that is also found in William Wordsworth and that William Blake explores in relation to what follows in *Songs of Innocence and Experience.* But here we begin with marvels and eyewitness reports of adults in strange places set out by Herodotus.

The strangeness of experience of other countries is something that Herodotus reports in his *Histories.* He is very much what we might call and ethnographer, discussing the customs of others. In one case, he highlights the breaking of usual gender roles among the Greeks among one group of women. In Book 4, his description of the Amazons is one that stresses difference and alterity:

> It is reported of the Sauromatae, that when the Greeks fought with the Amazons, whom the Scythians call Oior-pata or "man-slayers," as it may be rendered, *Oior* being Scythic for "man," and *pata* for "to slay" – It is reported, I say, that the Greeks after gaining the battle of the Thermodon, put to sea, taking with them on board three of their vessels all the Amazons whom they had made prisoners; and that these women upon the voyage rose up against the crews, and massacred them to a man. (4.110)

Here are women who can overcome men in an overwhelming and ruthless fashion, something that Herodotus explains with their name – man-slayers. Although they do not know how to sail and drift after the Greek men are dead, they take control when they arrive in Scythia: "the first herd of horses which they fell in with they seized, and mounting upon their backs, fell to plundering the Scythian territory" (4.110). Having massacred, the Amazons plunder. The strangeness of all this Herodotus emphasizes: "The Scyths could not tell what to make of the attack upon them – the dress, the language, the nation itself, were alike unknown whence the enemy had come even, was a marvel" (4.111). The marvellous and the wondrous are part of facing the unknown. The Scyths make assumptions about the Amazons and act accordingly: "Imagining, however, that they were all men of about the same age, they went out against them, and fought a battle" (4.111). What happens is a surprise to them, so that they come to see their own misrecognition.

What they found on the battlefield was something quite different from what they expected. Herodotus reveals this with understatement and discretion: "Some of the bodies of the slain fell into their hands, whereby they discovered the truth" (4.111). Their reaction might be conventional in one sense, that these men, having discovered that their adversaries were women, considered the question in terms of kindness to the opposite sex and not a recoiling in horror or shock or a desire to dominate them through physical or sexual violence. "Hereupon they deliberated, and made a resolve to kill no more of them, but to send against them a detachment of their youngest men, as near as they could guess equal to the women in number, with orders to encamp in their neighbourhood, and do as they saw them do" (4.111). The strategy is one of balance and traction, but there is also another twist that avoids confrontation: "when the Amazons advanced against them, they were to retire, and avoid a fight – when they halted, the young men were to approach and pitch their camp near the camp of the enemy" (4.111). There is almost a comic element to the men fleeing and then coming near again so they can get used to each other. Herodotus makes the strategy of the mating ritual explicit: "All this they did on account of their strong desire to obtain children from so no-

table a race" (4.111). Ultimately, the Scyths pay the ultimate complement to these women, so strange to them, at least in the economy of sex and reproducing the group or nation. Their very difference from other women makes them "notable".

This initial strangeness leads to a rapprochement. As the Amazons realized the youths meant them no harm, they find the camps approached nearer to each other each day. This allows them to make the discovery: "both parties led the same life, neither having anything but their arms and horses, so that they were forced to support themselves by hunting and pillage" (4.112). In otherness comes sameness or at least difference in similarity.

Well before Columbus said that he and his men communicated with the Natives by speech or signs, Herodotus relates the two. Scyths and Amazons have to negotiate in a situation of strangeness: "At last an incident brought two of them together – the man easily gained the good graces of the woman, who bade him by signs (for they did not understand each other's language) to bring a friend the next day to the spot where they had met – promising on her part to bring with her another woman" (4.113). Sign language is a part of the encounter with radical difference early on. There is a sense of shared communication and of trust in it: "He did so, and the woman kept her word. When the rest of the youths heard what had taken place, they also sought and gained the favour of the other Amazons" (4.113). She is as good as her unspoken pledge, and this became an example for the meeting and mating of the Scyths and Amazons.

From this difference a new culture arises. They seem to be equals: "The two camps were then joined in one, the Scythians living with the Amazons as their wives" (4.114). But if anything in this narrative, Herodotus has made the women more unusual and capable. Here is another instance: "and the men were unable to learn the tongue of the women, but the women soon caught up the tongue of the men" (4.114). Without the women, there could be no full communication. "When they could thus understand one another, the Scyths addressed the Amazons in these words – 'We have parents, and properties, let us therefore give up this mode of life, and return to our nation, and live with them. You shall be our wives there no less than here, and we promise you to have no others'" (4.114). And so while the men promise to have them as wives alone, they underestimate the otherness of the Amazons when they think they will go home with them and change their way of life. Herodotus highlights the alterity: "But the Amazons said – 'We could not live with your women – our customs are quite different from theirs. To draw the bow, to hurl the javelin, to bestride the horse, these are our arts of womanly employments we know

nothing'" (4.114). The nature of their status as warrior and hunter comes up again. In rejecting the idea of being domesticated in Scythia, they show that the Scythian men will have to come closer to the Amazon culture: "'Your women, on the contrary, do none of these things; but stay at home in their wagons, engaged in womanish tasks, and never go out to hunt, or to do anything'" (4.114). These men have to give up on the gender roles with which they have been raised: "'We should never agree together. But if you truly wish to keep us as your wives, and would conduct yourselves with strict justice towards us, go you home to your parents, bid them give you your inheritance, and then come back to us, and let us and you live together by ourselves'" (4.114). This new domestic and cultural arrangement is a new situation without traditional domesticity. The Scythians have to leave behind their notions of gender roles and see things anew. They have to accept a new otherness within them and their group.

The women are not finished with their conditions even though the young men complied with their earlier ones. The Amazons tell their young returning husbands: "'We are ashamed, and afraid to live in the country where we now are. Not only have we stolen you from your fathers, but we have done great damage to Scythia by our ravages. As you like us for wives, grant the request we make of you. Let us leave this country together, and go and dwell beyond the Tanais'" (4.115). These young men also comply to this request, so that the Amazons set out how and where they will live. Their home will become a stranger to them.

Crossing the river they found a new land in three days and this new home became something stable. Herodotus is presenting a history and a tradition: "The women of the Sauromatae have continued from that day to the present to observe their ancient customs, frequently hunting on horseback with their husbands, sometimes even unaccompanied; in war taking the field; and wearing the very same dress as the men" (4.116). There is no sense of weakening of the otherness of the Amazons. They are not contained or assimilated into a Scythian male world. Instead, they have been warriors who set the terms for their new culture and homeland and continue to avoid conventional gender roles and domesticity. Herodotus does not put this into the past as a myth but as a living tradition to which he turns his ethnographic eye even if he is taking this from the reports of others.

Being interested in ethnography, Herodotus ends this section on the Amazons with observations about language and customs: "The Sauromatae speak the language of Scythia, but have never talked it correctly, because the Amazons learnt it imperfectly at the first" (4.117). Even though Herodotus has made the Amazons into better linguists than the male Scythians, they were not speaking their Native language and so build

that into the language of their new home. It is a little curious that the Scythians themselves could not have corrected this shortcoming because it was originally their language and one might assume that children would learn their mother tongues from their fathers as well. Herodotus is adept with the detail: "Their marriage-law lays it down that no girl shall wed till she has killed a man in battle" (4.117). This is a strange condition of marriage, and would be in Greek or Scythian society, but makes some sense in the context of a society of women warriors who have been threatened by and have had to fight men. Rather than comment on this or censure the Amazons, Herodotus adds another detail: "Sometimes it happens that a woman dies unmarried at an advanced age, having never been able in her whole lifetime to fulfil the condition" (4.117). This observation is more factual, and the otherness here is accepted within the logic of Amazon society. They have their husbands, who have listened to them, but they must still kill men in order to marry men. This strangeness rests like a contradiction, but as long as the men listen and agree, as they have in Herodotus' narrative, then all is fine. The men bend and compromise, and in turn they have been linked in a new arrangement with the Amazons. Herodotus does not include any ravings of threatened masculinity or any attacks on women who would not be women. They may be marvellous and strange, but they are notable. Alterity need not be something terrible to be denounced.

Columbus also comes to terms with others who do not share the same dress and customs and who seem to have a different way of looking at the body and war. In writing about his first encounters with indigenous peoples, he says: "The people of this island, and of the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, although some women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose". (6) This is the boldness of being naked and the somewhat modesty of taking some cover. As if Eve had realized she were naked after eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Columbus switches from nakedness and cover to war: "They have no iron and steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them, not because they are not well built men and of handsome stature, but because they are marvellously timorous" (6). Their character is pliable and not fierce, quite unlike the Amazons in Herodotus. According to Columbus, "They have no other arms than weapons made of canes cut in seeding time, to the ends of which they fix a small sharpened stick. And they do not dare to make use of these" (6). Their weapons are not threatening to Columbus, who finds innocence and pliability in them. They are not fierce, which is perhaps

prelapsarian, but they also do not pose much of a threat in war if their technology is taking into consideration.

Columbus has his ethnographical side. He tries to express in sometimes as an eyewitness. He writes about the topics of women, monsters, property, race and climate. In Columbus' account, men, except the king, seem content to be with one woman. He also, perhaps quite conveniently, thinks that the Indians share and do not seem to value property as a private possession. Having expected (as others did) to see monsters, Columbus admits that he has not (14). But Columbus reports something he has not witnessed: the mating of Cannibals and Amazons, those that eat men and those who can do without them: "As I have found no monsters, so that I have had no report of any, except in an island 'Quaris', the second at the coming into the Indies, which is inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh" (16). The danger of these fierce flesh-eaters is combined with the threat of women warriors, which does not seem to have concerned Herodotus as much as it does Columbus: "These are those who have intercourse with the women of 'Matinino', which is the first island met on the way from Spain to the Indies, in which there is not a man." (16) Columbus then does get into a kind of ethnological zone which seems more descriptive and dispassionate, so the registers of language and tones shift within sentences and passages. He continues: "These women engage in no feminine occupation, but use bows and arrows of cane, like those already mentioned, and they arm and protect themselves with plates of copper, of which they have much" (16; see Hart 1994). Like Herodotus, Columbus tries to make sense of other cultures and genders while establishing the authority of his own text. For Columbus, the echoes of Herodotus, however intended, create a network of textual authority and even tradition that place his text of the shockingly new – this is the New World after all and it got in the way of Asia – within a familiar framework that Herodotus helped to establish with his history and ethnology.

There are other eyewitness accounts that also call attention to textual authority and writing.

Pedro Álvares Cabral is another good example. His voyage included a journey to the New World, Africa and Asia. Brazil was to be a key colony for the Portuguese, who claimed it during Easter week of 1500. Pero Vaz de Caminha, one of the crew of Cabral, recorded the events of the voyage. Caminha represents themes that Columbus had reported in the New World. For instance, he brings up the innocence that made it easy to convert the Natives, the nakedness of the inhabitants, the Native signs that indicate gold and other riches, the will of God and salvation. Even before

Cabral's ships left Brazil for India, Caminha, who held the position of writer for the fleet, wrote a letter to King Manuel. Here, he described the stay in Brazil. Caminha, who seems to have sailed on Cabral's ship, says that he is taking the middle way: "may Your Highness take my ignorance for good intention, and believe that I shall not set down here anything more than I saw and thought, either to beautify or to make it less attractive" (Caminha 5). He presents himself as a reliable eyewitness, a stance much taken at this time (see Caminha, Hart 2003, rpt. 2008). Another instance of an early explorer is Binot de Paulmier de Gonneville, whose relation of the voyage to Brazil in 1504, is the oldest account in French concerning an eyewitness report of the New World. This narrative wrestles with some of the same issues as Columbus' writing does. For Columbus, in the account of his first voyage, the Natives thought the Spanish gods. Gonneville thought that the indigenous people he encountered considered the French to be angels. Like the aboriginals that Bernal Díaz described in his account of Hernán Cortés' conquest, those Gonneville meets were much taken by the power of writing. Moreover, Jacques Cartier maintained that the Natives thought the French to be gods. Like Gonneville, Cartier planted a cross as a sign of possession. There becomes a ceremonial use of the audience. The French pattern of taking possession, which Gonneville used, involved Natives symbolically or literally as part of the audience during the ceremony of planting the cross. The authority of the text was political as well as ethnographical and was as much for rivals as well as other peoples encountered anew The French were making claims in face of the Spanish and Portuguese and Spaniards (see *Les Français* 1946; *Voyages au Canada* 1981).

Other important ways of considering otherness is translation, that is, the assimilation of the work of another culture into another. For instance, Richard Eden used translation to advocate English colonization and then the imperial union of Spain and England. Another instance of considering alterity is the use of eyewitness accounts of the conflict between the French and Spanish in Florida, such as Thomas Hacket's translation of Jean Ribault and Nicolas Le Challeux's narrative. Translations can be used for different political, religious and other ideological purposes. Eden explores potential alliance of England with Spain. Ribault and Le Challeux are French Protestants whose texts helped to produce the Black Legend of Spain.

The Black Legend and Columbus were two important aspects in creating and questioning authority, antecedents and origins in texts about the New World. The charges Richard Hakluyt the Younger took from Bartolomé de Las Casas against the Spaniards in the Americas were dire. They included

allegations of depopulation and devastation of between 12 million men, women, and children over the course of 40 years. These accusations were familiar because they appeared in earlier European sources. Among these texts were English and French versions of Las Casas. Hakluyt translated passages from Las Casas's description of Hispaniola, cruelties that included the author's testimony. Las Casas's condemnation also occurred in a marginal heading that stressed his status of an eyewitness to the cruelty: "I haue seene all the aforesaide thinges and others infinite" (Hakluyt, *Discourse,* 56). Hakluyt's section on Las Casas left off with the Spanish attacking the Indians with their dogs and making a pact to kill 100 Natives for every Spaniard they killed. Hakluyt also understood that even in his own Anglican world and with his ties to French Protestants like Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, he needed to be balanced in matters of religion in relation to European and international politics. Thus, Hakluyt supplemented this description of atrocities, by turning to another authority, this time Johannes Matellus Sequanus, a Catholic, who confirms the words of Las Casas, a member of a Catholic religious order (Hakluyt 59, see Hart 2001).

André Thevet was important among the French for providing early knowledge of the Indies. Like Oviedo, a Spaniard who wrote a key text in the 1520s, Thevet emphasized eyewitness accounts. Often writers after Columbus in various western European languages showed the anxiety over originality. Who was there first became a motivated question for explorers and writers after Columbus. There were many responses to Columbus. For example, his successors praised him and supplemented him. They also claimed to have additional kinds of knowledge and undermined him as the discoverer of the New World. Sometimes they attempted to ignore him (see Hart 1996). Truth and lies, the lack of reliability and the claim of authority worked in tension in the texts of Thevet and his predecessors, contemporaries and successors.

Other Issues and Conclusions

The rhetorical contract between the writer and the reader is something key to the context of these ethnographical texts. Rhetoric was used to persuade others, whether monarchs or courtiers or readers, for or against exploration, expansion, settlement, and empire (see Hart 2005). Rhetoric, or art of persuasion, is also the relation between speaker and audience, writer and reader. What that connection is, depends on a tension between authority and the play the reader has, that is, how much give and take is involved in the textual interplay of production and reception.

It is not as though the audience always approved of expansion or plans to change patterns from the past. A royal council in Spain rejected Columbus' petition. During December 1486 and January 1487, the Columbus commission, composed of *letrados* (mainly university-educated lawyers at court) and *sabios* (men learned in cartography and astronomy) rejected Columbus's arguments for the support of his voyage. Moreover, they passed their findings along to Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish sovereigns. The audience was not always receptive to persuasion. The learned and leaders in Spain, or Europe did not necessarily embrace expansion and empire and when they did so, they approached the idea with care. Even after the landfall in the western Atlantic, Columbus and the Crown of Spain fought over governance, ownership and profits in regard to the new lands. The writers of these accounts also show ambivalence in European representations of the lands and peoples of the New World, representing the Natives as fierce and paradisal. Verrazzano is as much like this than Columbus. The idealization of the land and its peoples is redolent of paradise. Sometimes the indigenes appear as barbarians. There is a kind of mix of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and the riches of Asia. At other times, the New World is an innocent place that helps to judge in a kind of typology the corruption and shortcomings of the Old World. This could take the form of a Christian critique of riches and power. Some church intellectuals used this tradition to call up the absurd and cruel aspects of European expansion into the New World. During December of 1511 in Hispaniola, one of the members of the Dominicans, Antón Montesino, preached two sermons that were critical of the abuses of the Natives in the place where Colombus had first landed. The sermon attacked the governor and the established settlers of the colony as infidels. Montesino enraged the son of Christopher, Diego Columbus, who appealed to the king, who ordered the Castilian provincial of the Dominican order to correct the situation. This actual reaction is different to a parallel fictional account of a similar context but written later. Lope de Vega's *El Nuevo Mundo descubierto por Cristóbel Colón* (c. 1598–1603) represents the Indian king, Dulcanquellín saying to Columbus' brother, Bartolomé, that a gentle, peaceful Christianity is a kind of advocacy that will convert the Natives (see Hart 2005 ch. 3). Words, oral and in texts, became a ground of contention in interpreting the New World.

Each of the texts of the New World involves the authority of earlier learning, the status of the author or the patron, or the eyewitness. There is in all this a typology of the Old and New World. In *Utopia* (1516), Thomas More uses Vespucci's voyage as part of the context for Raphael Hythlodaeus' account. One aspect of the fiction of finding Utopia is that

Raphael and his friends stayed behind at the fort in Brazil after Vespucci left. Thomas More emphasizes how the generosity of a Native ruler allowed these Europeans to survive and what excellent institutions the aboriginal commonwealths had. More also uses a typology between the Old and New Worlds to satirize Europe. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Natural History of the West Indies* (1526) addresses Charles V. In this work, he also emphasizes the importance of experience and eyewitness accounts and supports his view with an appeal to classical authority. Oviedo advocates an observation of nature rather than on other books. Still, he appeals to the authority of Pliny, who, in his *Natural History*, included firsthand observations and accurate scholarly citations of the sources for the stories that he had read or heard.

In *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* Las Casas speaks of himself as a witness and an eyewitness to the terrible events in the Indies. In the Synopsis, he says: "Some years later, he observed that not a few of the people involved in this story had become so anaesthetized to human suffering by their own greed and ambition that they had ceased to be men in any meaningful sense of the term" (Las Casas 3–4). Jean de Léry's *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1580 ed.) presented the Natives in Brazil as a way to criticize the French at home. During the Wars of Religion, Brazil became something of a touchstone for Léry. In 1574 Léry had published his account of the siege of Sancerre. He had been there during those horrors. The typology was thus: he was an eyewitness who had lived through hardship in the Old World and New. In "Des Cannibales" (1580), Montaigne uses Plato's representation of Solon's account of Atlantis, to criticize French and European expansion and commerce in the New World. In the exploration of cannibals, Montaigne concentrates on the French and Europeans in relation to the New World. In "Des Coches", Montaigne focuses on the Spanish and asks why the new lands could not have been conquered under the Greeks and Romans. That way the Europeans would have brought the peoples virtue rather than teach them European avarice and cruelty. Montaigne motive sometimes aims for a plain and true narrative of the New World. This stance sometimes led him to qualify the use of rhetorical and narrative embellishment. In one instance, he establishes the credentials of someone who worked for him as a witness. "This man who I had, was a simple and plain man, who was in a proper condition to bear true witness, for refined people are more curious and notice more things, but they gloss them, and to add to the value of the interpretation, and to persuade, they cannot prevent themselves from altering the History a little." (Montaigne, *Essais*, I, 169) It is possible that Montaigne mimics the travel literature he discussed. This is

the view of Michel de Certeau, who thinks of Montaigne's essay on cannibals as having the same structure as a travel account. De Certeau says that this essay includes the "outbound journey", the depiction of "savage society", and the "return voyage" (de Certeau 69–70; see Hart 2005). The relation between then and now has many layers of interpretation as writers are readers who are also read and written about. Authors have as their other the readers within them, not to mention those without, so authority has a readerly dimension.

There is, of course, extensive scholarship on other among these figures and so the questions of authority and authorship and the nature of their texts are much debated. Oviedo can serve as an example. Oviedo attracted controversy. Tzvetan Todorov describes him as a historian who is a conquistador (Todorov 1992: 148) and a xenophobe and racist (151). J. H. Elliott represents an Oviedo as someone who thinks Columbus deserves better recognition (Elliott 1992: 11); who is a natural historian full of wonder (21) who respects Pliny too much (32); who supports direct personal observation over traditional authority (40); who is a sceptic, like Léry, about Amerindian conversion (43). For Anthony Pagden, Oviedo is an example of a European observer who describes things that looked alike as identical (Pagden 1986: 11) and a natural historian who has a low opinion of the Natives and whom Humboldt calls the Pliny of the New World (Pagden 1993: 56). There are layers upon layers, then, in relation to author and audience then and now (see Hart 2005).

As we have seen there were controversial figures like Oviedo and Thevet, who was cosmographer to the king of France. Oviedo had lobbied for a similar post in Spain three decades before. Thevet claims to provide valuable advice and insisted on his unique ability to combine astute observations of the New World with strong scholarship.

Whereas Jean de Léry and François de Belleforest ridiculed his scholarship and character, Ronsard and Du Bellay esteemed his work. In so many ways, Spain had led the way in the discussion of the New World. Francisco de Vitoria was a key figure in asking difficult questions of his country's involvement in the New World. For instance he asked by what right (*ius*) the barbarians were subjected to Spanish rule. He also considered what powers in temporal and civil matters did the Spanish monarchy have in regard to the "Indians". He also explored spiritual and religious matters what powers the monarchy or church had or did not have in relation to the "Indians". This self-criticism complicated the notion of the authority of church, sovereign and state (in this case Spain). Walter Ralegh also shows ambivalent and intricate attitudes in *The Discouerie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana* (1596). Here, he tends toward the anti-

Spanish and pro-Native position of the literature of the Black Legend. He argues that the Spanish conquest was an illegal act that killed twenty millions. Still, his argument is also one of out-conquesting the Spaniards and finding even more gold that they did. In the body of this text, Ralegh developed the need to observe the Spanish example of colonization while using its own methods to subvert it.

More than nine decades later, in 1688, Aphra Behn published a novel, *Oroonoko*, which showed another dark side of colonization. This book exposes the inhumanity of slavery. This work is a defence of a noble African prince who was enslaved and is full of ambivalence. The narrator and the characters create an ambivalent narrative landscape.

It seems to invite the question whether the narrator is a character or an expression of Aphra Behn in something approaching a memoir in the form of a novella, romance, or travel narrative. The Dedication claims to be a representation of Behn's experience in Surinam. Personal experience and fictional expression mix and are part of a social as well as literary movement.

Truthfulness, fictions and outright falsehoods are some important things that the authors and readers of travel accounts must negotiate. In *Gulliver's Travels* Jonathan Swift has the king of Brobdingnag call the English vermin. Olaudah Equiano's *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789; rpt. 1814) autobiography is also critical of Europeans. In the Dedication of 1792, Equiano (ca.1745–ca.97), addressing the House of Lords and the House of Commons, sounds like Gulliver describing the Europeans, and especially the English, as vermin because he remembers with horror the first sight of a European. Even at the conclusion of his narrative, Equiano continues to press for the end of the cruel practice of slavery.

The truth of one culture or empire can be called into question. Narratives of helping others or of superiority can be turned on their heads. The authority of the authors comes under scrutiny in representations of the other in the encounter with new cultures. In Western Europe and in the Atlantic World, authors and readers came to question the authority of Europeans at home and away in a typology that complicated textual, cultural and political life. The awakening of otherness in the child and in sexuality, the otherness from within, can also be intensified in the ethnological urge of texts about other cultures.

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