
Of New Worlds and Old Words: Cultural Geography and the Linguistic Discovery of America

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In his 1982 Nobel Lecture, the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez remembered Antonio Pigafetta’s sixteenth-century account of Magellan’s first circumnavigation of the globe. There, the Italian explorer had related how, upon a stopover on the tip of the South American continent, the expedition had encountered many monstrosities, including a creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel’s body, the legs of a deer, and the whinny of a horse. In “a strictly accurate work that nonetheless resembles a venture into fantasy,” García Márquez suggested, Pigafetta’s account already contained “the seeds of our present-day novels in the Americas,” where the “crucial problem” has been a lack of objective linguistic means to render subjective experience believable. It was this chasm between new things and old words—what he called the “solitude” of the Americas—that García Márquez believed to be at the bottom of the “insatiable creativity” in (Latin) American literatures ever since. For sixteenth-century Europeans, America was a world “so recent”—as his narrator Melchíades put it in A Hundred Years of Solitude—“that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.”

Although García Márquez’s Nobel lecture was primarily concerned with the history of Latin American literature, I think it holds important implications also for the history of Western literature more generally. The early modern European encounter with the New World put a considerable amount of stress on Old World languages and received traditions of knowledge, as it was gradually revealed to Europeans that the world was vastly larger and considerably more diverse than what the Old World languages had room for or
what the ancient and medieval authorities had believed. Yet, text-based knowledge proved remarkably resilient throughout the early modern period in absorbing what has been called the “shock of discovery.” Thus, the period of European expansionism during the early modern period saw not only the rise of the empirical sciences but also a resurgence of humanist learning that turned to language and textual knowledge in an effort to find answers to the questions posed by the new geographic discoveries. The increasing tension between textual and empirical knowledge became the source of great literary creativity in the early modern period, as the “voyage into new worlds” became a powerful literary trope for countless fictions that satirized the truth claims of the traveling empiric. At the same time, the cultural anxiety about new empirical knowledge that challenged the received authorities, and the problem of trust and verifiability across vast spatial distances, resulted in an effort to discipline the traveler’s account of “shocking” networks that imposed certain scientific rules on scientific observation generally and geographic language particularly.

In this essay, I want to explore the role of language in Europe’s encounter with the New World from the point of view of geography on two different levels. On the one hand, I will focus on what might loosely be called European “geographical discourses” about the New World—early modern descriptions of New World landscapes and peoples in the languages of the Old World. On the other hand, I want to adopt “cultural geography” as an analytical paradigm in making sense of the rhetorical form of these early modern geographical discourses. In other words, I want to ask, What role did geography play in writers’ rhetorical decisions about how to translate New World plants, animals, and peoples into the languages of the Old World? Why, for example, did an indigenous New World plant enter the English language as maize in one cultural location (i.e., in early modern metropolitan Britain) but as [Indian] corn in another (i.e., in colonial America)? As I will suggest, the rhetorical choices writers made when translating the New World into the languages of the Old were contingent not only on their individual stylistic innovation or “modernity” but also on who and where they were in the early modern sociology and geography of knowledge production about the New World—by their cultural location relative both to the New World “contact zones” as well as to the centers of knowledge production (at court, in church, or in the academy). From the point of view of cultural geography, Europe’s linguistic “discovery” of America presents itself less as a “revolution” in the face of new experience than as a spatial reordering of tropes and rhetorical practices that are geopolitically inscribed both vis-à-vis the New World peripheries and the centers of empire in Europe. My primary example here will be the textual history of one of the earliest firsthand accounts about the New World originally written in English—Thomas Harriot’s A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588/90)—but I would like to place this text within the wider literary and transcultural geography of an early modern discourse of the “discovery” of the New World. Thus, in the first part of this essay, I revisit the question of the linguistic impact in light of early modern lexicography. In the second part, I address the problematic epistemological status of the early modern travel account about the New World. And in the last part, I discuss the transmission history of Harriot’s Report in light of its cultural geography.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF A NEW WORLD OF WORDS

William Spengemann, in an important book entitled A New World of Words: Redefining Early American Literature, has argued that the European discovery of America inaugurated a “semantic revolution” in which new words for American things previously unknown to Europeans infiltrated European languages—words such as maize, tobacco, opossum, and tomato. This linguistic encounter had larger epistemological ramifications with the effect that even English words assumed new meanings—words such as discovery, experiment, or ambition. Thus, whereas in premodern usage, to discover meant “to uncover” (i.e., something already known to exist) or “to invent,” in its modern usage it comes to mean to discover something not previously known. The “new world of words” that flowed along with the returning explorers back to Europe broke open the Europeans’ closed medieval Circle of Knowledge, forcing them to “make room,” linguistically and mentally, for the idea of a “new” world, hereby revealing “to its readers the origins of their modermity.”
Yet, if we take a closer look at early modern lexicography, particularly Edward Phillips's *A New World of Words*—the "general dictionary" of the English language first published in 1658 from which Spengemann derived the title of his book—it becomes apparent that the process in which Old World languages "made room" for the New World was more complex and subterranean than Spengemann's account would suggest. Even though Phillips's dictionary does contain a number of neologisms originating with Amerindian languages, the overall content makes plain that the title, "A New World of Words," does not at all refer to America and American languages but rather to words derived from other Old World languages that have infiltrated the English language. As its subtitle explains, the dictionary "Contains the proper Significations, and Etymologies of all Words derived from other Languages, viz. Hebrew, Arabick, Syriack, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, Brittish, Dutch, Saxon, & c. useful for the adornment of our English Tongue." Nor is there any mention made of America and the presumed impact of its discovery in the dictionary's prologue. Of those words that did derive from Amerindian languages and that were included in *A New World of Words*, none originated with the relatively recent direct encounters between Englishmen and the Algonquin groups in Virginia and New England, recorded in texts by Arthur Barlowe, Thomas Harriot, John Smith, and others. Possibly, these words were the casualties of Phillips's declared lexicographic policy of excluding words "so monstrously barbarous and insufferable that they are not fit to be mentioned."

Phillips's dictionary underlines that a linguistic approach to literary history generally—the historical study of texts—and the literary history of the New World particularly must have its starting point not with the "linguistic system" (or langue) but rather with rhetorical and discursive practices (parole). This literary history is inscribed in the social and geographical space of early modern expansionism, which was still multilingual and prenational even as it was invested in a budding nationalism in the service of which much of the literature of geographic discovery was produced. While modern historians and critics have been quick to expose the geopolitics of American English in late eighteenth-century revolutionary lexicographers such as Noah Webster, less attention has generally been paid to the politics of British lexicographical practices during the early modern period, as they have all too readily been assumed to reflect a "standard" from which colonial forms deviated. However, as Phil Benson has recently shown, the very notion of a "standard English" is the product of a historical process that began during this very period of British expansionism, with the articulation of a geographic "center-periphery metaphor" that pervaded early modern metalexicographic discourse in dictionaries such as Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary of Syr. T. E. Knight* (1583), Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabetical* (1604), and Henry Cockerman's *English Dictionarie* (1623). British lexicographers such as Phillips articulated the notion of a "standard" by "imposing[ing] their own influence on the shape of the developing language, whether by pushing forward or holding back the pace of neologisation." As Phillips was aware, the lexical additions to the English language he introduced in his dictionary were the products of decisions, made by men such as he, to use them in print that were highly contested, rhetorical, and political. Indeed, the very language Phillips uses in explaining his linguistic enterprise abounds in the metaphors of invasion, conquest, and empire. In the preface to the 1671 edition of *A New World of Words*, he writes: "Whether this innovation of words deprave, or enrich our English tongue, is a consideration that admits of various censures, according to the different fancies of men. Certainly, as by an invasion of strangers, many of the Old Inhabitants must needs be either slain or forced to fly the Land, so it happens in the introduction of strange words, the old ones in whose room they come, must needs in time be forgotten, and grow obsolete." Phillips clearly understood that his role as a lexicographer was not so much a detached recorder of linguistic changes but rather a shaper and policeman of the English language. Thus, while his general aim was to explain neologisms derived from other European languages, he also introduced the lexicographical tradition of "branding" words considered unsuitable for general use with an asterisk, such as neologisms that he deemed excessive. "I have set my mark upon them," he wrote, "that he who studies a natural and unaffected stile may take notice of them, either in discourse or in writing." Phillips's metalexicographic discourse rationalizing the exclusion of certain words as being too "monstrously barbarous" for representation as well as
branding others with his “marks” initiates a long tradition in lexicographical practice of articulating a “standard” by way of value judgments, relegating certain words as geographically peripheral or socially deviant.16

The failure to acknowledge the European contact with the Americas in Phillips’s A New World of Words underlines the considerable resilience of the “Old World of Words” in the face of the European discovery of America. The European encounter with the New World had equally effected a surge of the humanist effort to understand the expanding world through the languages of the Old World (and in particular the classical languages)17 and challenged humanist linguistics and epistemology and prepared the rise of the empirical sciences. This “renaissance” of the humanist study of (Old World) languages had, as Walter Mignolo has argued in an analysis of the first Spanish dictionary produced by the Spanish humanist Antonio de Nebrija, a distinctly colonialist dimension—what he calls “the darker side of the Renaissance”—as Europeans reinvented their classical past in order to make commensurable cultural difference in terms that “justified colonial expansion.”118

Interestingly, the entries in Phillips’s A New World of Words that did derive from Amerindian words invariably originated from Caribbean languages that had found their way into the English language by way of translation from Iberian texts during the course of the sixteenth century.19 Apart from direct textual transmissions from Spanish and Portuguese, they had gained entry into the English language also by way of a distinctly oral register that had emerged in the Iberian encounter with the New World—a language that is sometimes referred to by linguists as an Iberian trade pidgin, which incorporated both Iberian (often heavily Basque) and Native American words and that had “an amazing worldwide distribution by the seventeenth century” after having served as “the lingua franca” during the European age of reconnaissance also for English explorers, travelers, merchants, and settlers.20 Yet, while this “shore jargon” or trade pidgin occasionally survives in colonial English texts—as in William Bradford’s repeated use of the word barricado21—it flourished primarily as an oral register. English settlers would invariably have had contact with this multicultural maritime and merchant culture—as did the Pilgrims not only on their transatlantic passage but also through their translator, Squanto, a local Indian who had been captured to be sold into slavery into Spain or Spanish America but escaped en route to England.22 However, they did not necessarily share this maritime Creole culture. Thus, as Dillard points out, this trade pidgin “was not always the clearly dominant language in any of the areas in which it was used.” In general, it appears that the closer Englishmen lived to the colonial contact zones, the more they seemed to have resisted linguistic change. This resistance appears to have in part been responsible for the divergence of metropolitan and colonial forms of English. While modern linguists have sometimes described this divergence in terms of a colonial lag,23 eighteenth-century nationalist linguists such as Noah Webster saw it in it a sign of the greater purity of colonial English. Thus, he famously wrote in his Dissertation on the English Language, “The . . . New England common people . . . Have . . . been sequestered in some measure from the world, and their language has not suffered material changes from their first settlement to the present time. Hence most of the phrases used by Shakespear, Congreve, and other writers who have described English manners and recorded the language of all classes of people, are still heard in the common discourse of the New England yeomanry.”24 While colonials did adopt Native American words—such as tobacco, raccoon, opossum—in some cases Englishmen adopted Native American words more readily than colonials. Thus, to cite only one famous instance, on July 1, 1774, Thomas Hutchinson, the Massachusetts historian, had an audience with King George III during which he explained that the colonists “live upon coarse bread made of rye and corn mixed.” “What corn?” a confused George III asked. “Indian corn,” Hutchinson explained, “or, as it is called in Authors, Maize.” “Ay, I know it,” said the King.25

Rhetorically, we might say that Indian corn operates metaphorically by familiarizing the new and by emphasizing similarity between the new and the known while the importation of the Native American word—maize—operates metonymically by defamiliarizing and by emphasizing its difference.26 Metaphor had of course played a crucial role in apprehending the New World since the sixteenth century. As Eric Cheyfitz has argued, the role that metaphor played in the linguistic discovery was hereby not entirely innocent but had a “foreign policy” in the colonialist attempt
empirical facts that were geographers and astrologer Ptolemy and entailed the century and even beyond. Each new expanded by adding new mathematical and rationalist mapping of the world, the making of mappae mundi. The in the wake of the early modern discoveries, the authority of Ptolemy’s Geography continued among geographers unabated through much of the sixteenth century and even beyond. Each new edition was simply expanded by adding new chapters that incorporated the new empirical facts that were arriving with each new voyage but to expropriate and appropriate the New World in the act of translation. However, although metaphor played a crucial role in these acts of colonialisat translation, it had also become an object of considerable skepticism and suspicion in the European literature of exploration about the New World, as it raised questions about truth, trust, and veracity in geographically expanding cultural systems. It is to this problematic status of metaphor as a hermeneutic strategy to which I want to turn in the next section.

Metaphor, Marvel, and Trust: Geography and Fiction

In 1512, thirty years after Columbus’s landfall, the Nuremberg humanist Joannes Cochlaeus wrote in his preface to yet another unaltered edition of Pomponius Mela’s authoritative Cosmographia, “Whether it is true or fabricated,” the discovery of America “matters not at all or very little to the knowledge of Cosmography and History.”27 Although this sounds absurd to us today, Cochlaeus could make this assertion because, during the sixteenth century, history and cosmography belonged primarily to that enterprise of textual scrutiny to which humanism was as dedicated as had been scholasticism. Intellectuals lived, as Anthony Pagden has written, in a mental world without the possibility for immediate and authoritative knowledge outside a fixed “structure of norms” provided by the canon. When “experience directly contradicted the text, it was the experience, which was unstable because of its very novelty, which was likely to be denied or at least obscured.”28

Indeed, European geography had during the early modern period existed in two major strands that were largely separate. On the one hand, geography proper (or “cosmography”) reached back at least to the famous Alexandrian geographer and astrologer Ptolemy and entailed the mathematical and rationalist mapping of the world, the making of mappae mundi. In the wake of the early modern discoveries, the authority of Ptolemy’s Geography continued among geographers unabated through much of the sixteenth century and even beyond. Each new edition was simply expanded by adding new chapters that incorporated the new empirical facts that were arriving with each new voyage but otherwise left the basic imagus mundi intact.29 On the other hand, there was another tradition of geography—what was then called “chorography”—that reached back to the tradition of Strabo and denoted the empirical description by travelers.30 Sailors in the Mediterranean, in particular, had a long tradition of producing this sort of geography in the form of cruising charts, so-called portolanos, that were made from direct observations of coast lines and that reached back to at least the fifth-century B.C. Greek navigational records, known as periplous (sailing around). These navigational records served as an important model for much early modern travel writing. From the sixteenth century, geographers began to consolidate the empirical knowledge contained by this tradition in increasingly popular travel collections, which were primarily aggregative rather than synthetic in their approach to Europe’s rapidly changing horizon in geographic knowledge. They originated with the imperial court histories commissioned by the Habsburg crown during the sixteenth century, such as Peter Martyr d’Anghera’s De Novo Orbium (1511–39, English trans. 1555), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s Historia general y natural de las Indias (1535), and Juan López de Velasco’s Geografía y descripción universal de las Indias (1571–74), as well as the works of Italian collectors such as Gian Battista Ramusio’s Navigationi et viaggi (1556) and the German Sebastian Münster’s Cosmographiae (1550). Many of these works were soon translated into English, either in full or in part, by English promoters of empire such as Richard Eden (1521–76), who published his translation of Peter Martyr’s history in 1555 as The Decades of the Newe Worldes or West India and in 1577 (along with other documents) as The History of Trauayle. Similarly, the literary career of the great Elizabethan polymath and Anglican minister Richard Hakluyt (1552–1616) had begun with his translations from Spanish and Portuguese narratives of the discovery and exploration of America, which he published in 1582 as the Diverse Voyages Touching the Discovery of America in order to incite the English spirit of adventure in emulation of the Spanish achievements in the New World. As had their Italian and Spanish models, Hakluyt’s intensely nationalistic works followed the “order of the map, and not the course of time,” as Hakluyt put it,31 meaning that the travel narratives they contained were arranged according to geographic subject matter rather than chronology. Hakluyt’s
Protestant anti-Catholic rewriting of the history of New World travel found its culmination in the massive collection entitled *America*, produced by the Flemish engraver Theodor de Bry in Frankfurt in 1590. This magnum opus of Protestant New World historiography interpreted the Spanish discovery and conquest of America in terms of a belated biblical fall of an Edenic New World. Hakluyt's and de Bry's enterprises were finally followed in the early seventeenth century by the works of the Anglican minister Samuel Purchas, whose gargantuan collections entitled *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (published in several ever-growing editions between 1613 and 1626) and *Haklytus Posthumous: Purchas, His Pilgrimes* (1625) aimed to consolidate British geographical knowledge of the world partially in the context of a new geopolitical rivalry with the Dutch.

Yet, for all the increasing popularity of collections such as those of Purchas among the reading public, the truth claims in the early travel accounts about “New Worlds” were often greeted with a great deal of skepticism by European humanists, reaching back to the earliest literary reactions to the Columbian discoveries. Thus, in Sebastian Brant's mock epic *Das Narrenschiff* (1494) [The Shippe of Fooles], for example, a lot of ridiculous traveling knaves epitomizes the humanist notion of “folly”—of striving to venture beyond the known. Vespucci's letters themselves, in which he had portrayed the “new world” natives in a quasi-edic state, were mentioned at the beginning of Thomas More's *Utopia*, which, as was Lucian's *True History*, was in part an epistemological attack on the authority of the traveler and his claim for the “new.” Not only does Vespucci's “new world” here turn out to be altogether “Nowhere,” but the character of Hytholodaeus—whose name means the “dispenser of nonsense”—who is no longer merely a “seaman,” the narrator declares tongue in cheek, but who pretends to travel as “a philosopher”—is a caricature of the explorer “Americus Vespuций” and a parody of his claim that there was something new under the Sun.

More's condescending reference to the nonaristocratic standing of most of the New World explorers underlines the sociological aspects of early modern expansionism—the problematic epistemological status of eyewitness testimony provided by individuals who did not belong to the early modern elite, especially when their accounts were in contradiction to received structures of knowledge as guarded by church, state, and the academies. Unlike most of the classical and medieval precedents in imperial expansionism, which were led by the nobility or even the monarch or emperor himself, the early modern European expeditions to America were typically “liberal” enterprises that were conducted with state sanction but sponsored by private individuals and carried out by the nonaristocratic classes—some petty nobility but most of them merchants, sailors, and artisans. The mercantile world of this class operated not primarily on bookish knowledge of the classical authorities but on empirical knowledge, firsthand experience, and improvisation.

Yet, when announcing that “those new regions” should “be called a new world”—a world that “our ancestors had no knowledge of”—Vespucci, a Florentine merchant though solidly trained in humanist learning, asserted that it was “certain proof that practice is of greater worth than theory.” Yet, he felt that he had to “whisper this,” fearful that some might find heresy in claims of his, such as one that there are “not only seventy-seven languages in the world” but “more than one thousand,” of which he had himself heard during his travels “more than forty.” Munds Novus, the letter that announced that “the Indies” were not part of Asia but “may rightly be called a New World,” had to be published without dates and without the printer’s name in its early editions. “What I have written thus far is the truth,” he asserts there, “and if the provinces, kingdoms, names of cities and islands in the ancient writers do not appear here, it is a sign that they have changed, as we see in our own Europe, where it is a great rarity to hear an ancient name.”

Thus, these earliest New World travel accounts therefore already contained the seeds of the “Querrele des anciens et des modernes” that would gain momentum during the second half of the sixteenth century and explode two centuries later in Enlightenment France, where the discovery of America invariably became the first argument employed by the “moderns” as proof not only of the superiority of one scientific procedure to another but also of the superiority of the modern age to the ancient.

The epistemologically problematic status of the lowly New World traveler's testimony was further aggravated by the fact that explorers, when confronted with the hermeneutic problem of translating the New World, often sought
semantic recourse through metaphors derived from popular folk legend when translating exotic experience. In Vespucci’s Letters to Lorenzo Pierfrancesco de Medici, for example, the Italian traveler reported having found “the most marvelous” things he ever saw. He reports seeing people who were “taller kneeling than I am standing: in sum, they were of the stature of giants.” Accounts of Vespucci’s journeys based on his letters were later included in Sebastian Münster’s Cosmographiae and entered into English in 1553 with Richard Eden’s translations from Münster as A treatise of the newe India, which adds that the Spaniards, “departinge from thence, call that Iland, the Ilande of Gi‐auntes.” Similarly, Antonio Pigafetta’s 1522 account of Magellan’s circumnavigation, also included in Eden’s translation of Münster, reports that on the Patagonian shore, where they encountered Tehuelche Indians, he saw “a giant who was on the shore, quite naked, and who danced, leaped, and sang, and while he sang he threw sand and dust on his head. He was so tall that the tallest of us only came up to his waist.” Magellan’s coinage of the place-name Patagonia seems to derive from the giant Patagón, a character in popular stories in sixteenth-century Spain who allegedly was five cubits and a half tall and had enormous feet.

The New World travelogue thus translates exotic experience through semantic recourse to the language of the popular legend. However, there is an important difference between the popular legend and the exotic travel account in their respective modes of representing reality. As Max Lüthi explains, the popular legend is characterized by a “bi‐dimensionality” in its representation of reality—where two distinct and coherent codes of reality coexist but where the super‐ or extranatural is recognized as disturbing, problematic, and less valid. The New World travelogue, by contrast, collapses this bidimensionality in the category of the marvelous. The unidimensional representation of reality in the New World travelogue—what might be called its “exotic realism”—operates there as a hermeneutic strategy for conveying objectively problematic, though subjectively “true,” experience.

Not surprisingly, the traveler’s appeal to firsthand experience and his hermeneutic strategies were frequently the object of epistemological controversy. Especially Pigafetta’s Patagonian “giants” continued to stir debate in the transatlantic world. During the sixteenth century, firsthand travel accounts describing the Patagonians included those of the Dutchman Admiral van Noort and the Englishman Sir Thomas Cavendish, who measured the Americans’ monstrous size—as Robinson Crusoe would later—by placing his foot in their feet’s prints. In the seventeenth century, they appeared again in Admiral van Spilbergen’s published naval reports and in Samuel Purchas’s Purchas His Pilgrimes, which included, once again, Richard Eden’s translation of Pigafetta’s original narrative. The controversy finally climaxed in the eighteenth century with the publication of Captain Shelvock’s account of his circumnavigation in 1719 and with John Byron’s famous 1765 letter to Lord Egmont, which described the voyages of the royal frigate The Dolphin in the Straits of Magellan: “Such was their extraordinary size,” he wrote of the natives, apparently echoing Vespucci and Pigafetta, that while sitting down “they were almost as high as the Commodore when standing.” The controversy over the authority of this account would come to involve the French minister of foreign affairs, the Royal Society Club, and the president of the French Académie de Sciences, which included also the naturalist de la Condamine. “We are cured of our taste for the marvelous,” wrote finally the abbé Coyer, in a letter to the secretary of the Royal Society (1776), when interviewing the author of the latest report on the Patagonian giants. “I looked upon him earnestly, to see if I could discover nothing crazy in his looks, that might betray his head to be a little turned.” Thus, if the New World encounter had gradually eroded age‐old certainties and decentralized the European production of knowledge about the world, the firsthand testimonies of this encounter were often perceived as profoundly disturbing documents. There is “no state more immoral,” said Diderot in the abbé Raynal’s Histoire philosophique et politique de deux Indes, “than that of the continual traveler.” “The greater the distance from the capital, the further the mask of the traveler’s identity slips from his face. On the frontier it falls away altogether: . . . From one hemisphere to another . . . what has he, the traveler, become? Nothing! Once past the equator a man is neither English, nor Dutch, nor French, nor Spanish nor Portuguese. All that he preserves of his homeland are the principles and prejudices which authorize or excuse his conduct.” However, the debate surrounding the authority
and character of the traveler proved greatly inspiring to the "novelistic" literary production in the transatlantic world, which, as Michael McKeon has argued, parodied the "naive empiricism" of so-called true histories of travel from outside the ancient circle of knowledge. Indeed, the theme of the New World travel satire forms a thread through early modern European literary history from Rabelais to Cervantes and from Swift to and Raspe. By definition, these travel satires deceived no one. They were written not to deceive but rather to expose through the introduction of conspicuously incredible elements, which effected a clash between two opposing codes in their representation of reality—the credible 'over here' versus the incredible 'over there.' In David Lloyd's *Legend of Captain Jones* (1631), the author prefaces the narrative entitled "The Wonderful and Surprising Voyages of Captain Jones to Patagonia" with a mock poem in which he discredits the authority of traveler-authors such as Captain Jones.

> When I do read thy Travels, Jones, and see
> Thy Fights, thy victories, thy all and thee,
> I stand engag'd 'twixt wonder and delight,
> That I can neither think, nor speak, nor write.
> My faith thou puzzl'st, and invention too,
> 'Tis monstrous strange! but these things though did'st Alcides,
> Hector, are out-done by thee,
> Thy History has soil'd all poetry.
> Poor Hector! he by his own valour's lost,
> But though surviv'st, and dost thy triumphs boast. Herc'les,
> we know, hath his Non ultra found,
> But to thee, Jones, nor earth, nor sea's a bound;
> The world from east to west, form north to south,
> 'To echo forth thy fame's but one wide mouth."

In the eighteenth century, the abbé Coyer also published *A Discovery of the Island of Frivola: or, the Frivolous Island*, which parodied the marvelous elements customarily included in New World travel accounts and their hermeneutical strategies. Everything the expedition finds on the island turns out to be insubstantial and unreal. Thus, the fruits they find resemble peaches but when eaten were "soon perceived to be without nourishment, for tho' very beautiful and red, its substance was hollow, or rather only the Image of a substance"; its "trees were also of the Airy nature of their fruit"; and the "Tygers" of the island had "claws and teeth being nothing but flexible cartilages." Perhaps the greatest of all travel satires during the eighteenth century, of course, was Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, where the epistemological issues at stake in the European encounter with the New World and the "giantist" hermeneutical strategies of the New World travelogues are turned on their head. Thus, a puzzled Lilliputian informs an apparently gigantic Gulliver that "there are other kingdoms and states in the world, inhabited by human creatures as large as yourself, our philosophers are in much doubt, and would rather conjecture that you dropped from the moon, or one of the stars; ... Besides, our histories of six thousand moons make no mention of any other regions, than the two great empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu." If the New World travelogue translates exotic reality through semantic recourse to the language of the popular legend, *Gulliver's Travels* and other fictional travel satires parody the New World travelogue by exaggerating its giantism into the unequivocally fantastic. We might say that the fictional travel parody "splits" the unidimensionality of the New World travel account's exotic realism into two separate codes of reality. From an epistemological point of view, the self-evidently fictional travel parody is therefore an inherently "conservative" literary mode in its engagement with the New World. It establishes what Amaryll Beatrice Chanady has called an "unresolved antimony" between the natural and the extranatural while hierarchically privileging the truth value of conventional codes of reality over that of exotic reality. Rhetorically, the European travel satire hereby presents an antithesis to the exotic realism prevailing in the New World travel account in a spatial dialectic that underlies the history of modernity, in the course of which canonized authority had been gradually decentered since the sixteenth century, when it had come under attack with the New World travelers' appeals to the authority of subjective firsthand experience in the encounter with America.

**TRANSLATION AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF AUTHORSHIP IN EARLY VIRGINIA**

The cultural anxiety about trust in an outwardly expanding world resulted, by the second part of the sixteenth century,
in a concerted effort to discipline travelers and to “police” the poetics of their writing in prescriptive scientific treatises such as Jerome Turler’s *The Traveler* (1575) and Thomas Palmer’s *How to make our Travails Profitable* (1606), as well as Francis Bacon’s *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), which called for certain “rules” and “methods” to be observed by the travel writer when recording his or her experiences. Whereas the Jesuits were the leading force in the Catholic world in imposing scientific discipline in their global networks of information exchange, in England it was Sir Walter Ralegh who first began to employ scientifically trained staff on the colonizing and exploration expeditions he sponsored in order to challenge Spain’s undisputed hegemony in the New World. One of the earliest and most fascinating English texts that resulted from these endeavors was Thomas Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, an account of England’s first colony in the New World, established in 1585 at Roanoke under the leadership of Sir Richard Grenville and with a patent to Ralegh, who commissioned Harriot, a mathematician with a reputation also for sorcery, as a scientific adviser. Aware of the limitations of verbal language in describing a new world of plants, animals, and peoples, Ralegh commissioned also the artist John White to produce drawings and paintings of Virginia. It was through nonverbal representation, these men of science hoped, that the hermeneutic gap between the New World and the Old would in part be transcended.

Harriot’s *Report* was first published without illustrations and as a modest quarto volume in 1588. However, two years later it was republished by Theodor de Bry as a folio edition that was richly illustrated by printed engravings that de Bry had prepared from White’s watercolors. As critics have noted, there are interesting differences between White’s surviving watercolors and de Bry’s engravings. For example, the representations of Algonquin Natives in White’s watercolors tend to emphasize the racial difference of their features, while de Bry’s engravings tend to Europeanize them. Also, whereas White’s watercolors emphasize the particularity of the observed object, de Bry’s engravings contextualize it by placing it in a landscape that frequently resembles a European agricultural landscape, rather than Virginia’s lush, thick forests. Finally, even the explanatory captions reveal interesting differences. For example, White’s painting of a Native American shaman is called *The Flyer*, while Harriot’s caption of the de Bry engraving is entitled *The Conjurer*. In general, it can be said that White’s representations tend to defamiliarize the New World and to emphasize its strangeness, while the Harriot/de Bry text aims to achieve verisimilitude through metaphor and language. In their respective translations of the same objects, the two representations hereby point to very different ideas about their authorial presence: while White’s “defamiliarizing” metaphors imply immediacy and transparency, de Bry/Harriot’s “familiarizing” metaphors call attention to the role of language, metaphor, and art in the act of translation.

How can we explain this divergence in the conception of authorship between these two records of Britain’s first colonial enterprise? In a suggestive analysis, Julie Solomon has seen the differences between White’s and de Bry/Harriot’s
translations of the New World as a fundamental difference in “reading” the world that points to an important historical transformation that would lead to the Baconian reforms and the “scientific revolution” in seventeenth-century England, which favored the sort of transparent knower and ethnographic realism represented by White. Harriot, she argues, exemplifies a “pre-Baconian mode of scientific reading, most often powered by self-investment, self-imposition, and cognitive making.” White, in contrast, prefigures Baconianism, which promotes a “prescriptively self-distanced, non-imposing, and receptive way of reading the world, one that paradoxically produces itself as non-productive.” Thus, White’s translation of “flyer” seems to invoke the classical messenger of the gods, Hermes, and points toward White’s own conception of himself as a passive, Hermes-like recorder of the New World. By contrast, Harriot’s translation of the Native shaman as a “conjurer” seems to invoke
Mercury, the classical god of magic and art, and point toward Harriot's and de Bry's own mercurial presence as translators and producers of the New World. To this we may add that the "mercurial" authorial presence in de Bry/Harriot's text is further enhanced by the images of Mercury and the Algonquin god Kivvasa on the frontispiece, as well as by a cryptic threat to potential plagiarizers and pirates of his book in which de Bry explicitly lays claim to ownership. Thus, he writes in the address "to the gentle Reader" introducing the section "The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America" that "yf any seeke to Contrefact thes my bookx, (for in this days many are so malicious that they seeke to gayne by other men labours) thow wouldest give noe credit unto suche counterfeited Drawghte. For dyvers secret marks lye hiddin in my pictures, which wil breede Confusion unless they bee well observed." Thus, de Bry/Harriot's printed text articulates a claim to authorial
ownership of and self-investment in the New World that appears to be absent from White's watercolors and drawings, which fashion him as being merely the humble, Hermes-like transmitter of things observed.

Yet, it is worthwhile noting that Hermes and Mercury were, of course, but two faces of the same god—Hermes being the Greek and Mercury the Roman incarnation—and that, similarly, Harriot and White were both members of the same Elizabethan scientific enterprise in knowledge production about the New World that had formed around the figure of Ralegh. Moreover, even though it is usually taken for granted in the history of science that the sort of knower represented by Harriot/de Bry would be supplanted by the sort of knower represented by White, it is significant that White's "Baconian" (and thus presumably more "modern") scientific posture actually precedes the courtly (and presumably "older") scientific posture of Harriot/de Bry. That is to say, Harriot/de Bry deliberately fashioned themselves in the mercurial image in counterdistinction to White's authorial presence in his representations. While all three men—White, Harriot, and de Bry—were thus involved in the same Protestant scientific enterprise and culture, they apparently conceived of their roles within this enterprise in markedly different ways. This difference, I would argue, may be accounted for less in terms of a historical distance between Harriot/de Bry on the one hand and White on the other than of the cultural geography of their respective texts and in light of the cultural anxiety regarding trust in New World travel literature discussed earlier. White's watercolors were produced "on the spot," proceeding from firsthand observation on the New World frontier for consumption back in Europe, while de Bry's edition proceeded from a "textual" source (White's paintings) and was produced in the center of European knowledge production—in "Francoforti ad Moenum" (Frankfurt on the Main River), the center of European printing and book publishing in the sixteenth century. They therefore emphasized their accomplishment (and reputation) in the liberal arts and sciences—mathematic, magic, rhetoric, technology. By contrast, White's watercolors were produced with a nod toward the "close, naked, natural way of speaking" that was increasingly demanded of travelers' writings and that would be formalized by Bacon's new poetics of scientific discipline.

Thus, while White fashions himself as the self-effacing "deliverer" of a New World of things from the location of colonial periphery, de Bry/Harriot fashion themselves as the appropriators of the New World through the art of language and the magic of print in the imperial center.

This duality in conception of authorship still pervades Harriot's own text, as published in both the 1588 and 1590 editions. It is divided into three parts: first, "commodities [that] there already found or be raised," by which he meant mainly natural resources already known and valued by Europeans such as silkworms, flax, hemp, spice, wood, metals, furs, and dyes; second, "commodities which we know the country by our experience doth yeld of it selfe for victual, and sustenance of mans life," such as maize, beans, squash, melons, roots, foul, and fish; and, third, "such other commodities . . . as I shall thinke behoofull for those that shall inhabite," which includes mainly an account of "the nature and manners" of the Native Americans. In the second part, Harriot introduces the reader to a host of New World plants, giving both the indigenous Algonquin name and what he deems to be the English equivalent. Thus, he writes that "Pagatowr is a kinde of graine so called by the inhabitants; the name in the West Indies is called MAYZE: English men call it Guiney wheate or Turkie wheate." Yet, the text strangely oscillates between a merely descriptive cataloguing of American "commodities," written in the ethnographic present tense, and narrative passages written in the past tense and clearly from the geographical point of view of the Old World. Thus, he relates how "We our selves during the time we were there used to suck it [an herb called by the Natives "Vppowoc"] after their manner, as also since our return, & have found maine rare and wonderful experiments of the virtues thereof; of which the relation would require a volume by it selfe" (16; my emphasis). Harriot hereby makes it clear to the reader that the text is written, printed, and published in the Old World, after his return. It is this "European" Harriot who resorts to metaphors not derived from folk legend but rather from Britain's own ancient past in order to make the strange customs of Virginia's Native American more intelligible to his English audience. He thus aimed to show that "the Inhabitants of the great Bre­tannie have bin in times past as sauauge as those of Vir­ginia." Moreover, the second edition ended with a section
of “Som Picture[s] of the Pictes which in the Old tyme dyd habite one part of the great Bretaine.”

Harriot’s verbal text thus combines the two different authorial rhetorics that separate White’s from Harriot/de Bry’s (mainly visual) representations of the New World. While the latter construct a self-imposing and proprietary authorial presence from the geographical point of view of the Old World by drawing attention to their humanistic learning, the former constructs his authorial presence from the geographical point of view of the New World by stressing his immediacy as well as the transparency and “authenticity” of his delivering medium. While modern scientific ideologies would increasingly privilege the rhetoric of ethnographic realism in White’s watercolors and drawings for scientific observation on the colonial periphery, Harriot/de Bry’s Renaissance rhetoric of verisimilitude continued to play an important role in the discourse of natural philosophy—from Francis Bacon in the early seventeenth century to William Robertson during the eighteenth century, “men of science” who prided themselves on never having left their desks and armchairs when constructing their scientific theories, in which they saw evidence of their “disinterestedness” and scientific “detachment.” *6* The difference is thus primarily rhetorical and contingent on geographic location.

In order to investigate more closely White’s authorial rhetoric of transparency and its place in Protestant British natural history of the New World, it is pertinent here finally to consider briefly also those of White’s watercolors that were not reproduced in de Bry’s edition. For example, White produced a painting of a Native Caribbean plant that has come to be known in English as a “pineapple,” though he called the painting “The Pyne-frute.” Similarly, he produced a painting of an animal that has come to be known as a “flying fish,” a tropical sea fish that can jump out of the water and move forward supported by long winglike fins. He called it “The Flyeing Fishe” below the actual image but above it called it “Bolador.” In his choice of the name *Pyne-frute*—which meant, in the sixteenth century, the fruit of a pine tree, or, in modern-day English, a pinecone—as well as in his choice of the Spanish name *Bolador* (*volador* which means “The Flyer”)—White seems to have been tacitly inspired by the great sixteenth-century Spanish natural historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, who not only

*“The Pyne-frute.” John White, Watercolors and Drawings © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.*
was the first European to paint a pineapple but also had named this plant *piña* in his *Historia natural y general*, and later in his *Sumario de la Historia natural*, which was partially translated by Richard Eden into English. In his *Sumario* he wrote, “There is one fruit that they call piñas . . . that is produced on plants like thistles in the manner of the aloe, and longer and spiny.” Later, he went on to describe a “flying fish, really a wonderful sight to behold. As ships sail the Atlantic they often encounter many flying fish *[peces voladores]*, the largest being as large or larger than sardines and there are smaller ones. Sometimes they rise in such great numbers that it is a wonder to behold, and again there are only a few. They often fly one hundred paces or more, and frequently they fall in the ships.” Despite the immediacy implied by White’s choice of watercolors as his medium for representing a New World that was “so recent”
that “many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point,” his representations were thus in fact already translations of translations—mediated by his reading of Oviedo’s natural history and the wider Atlantic maritime world, as translated by Richard Eden. His rhetoric of delivering a New World of things yet unknown served to naturalize the British appropriation of territories already named and claimed by Spaniards—as the British “discovery” of a “New” World—after Spanish chroniclers and natural historians such as Oviedo had themselves availed themselves of similar rhetorical strategies in appropriating America from its rightful Native American lords.

David Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers, in their important collection Geography and Enlightenment, have called attention to the close interrelation between geographic discovery and modernity. In their account, “Enlightenment” should be understood not so much in terms of fixed “periods” but as “the movement of ideas across borders and over time; it [Enlightenment] was about encounters with particular places . . . however much it was also about the assumed universal nature of human society.”

In other words, modernity must be understood not only historically but also geographically. For example, they call for an extension of the recent inquiry into the sociology of knowledge undertaken by Stephen Shapin and others that would explore “the relationships between local situated geographies of knowledge. “[I]F we can talk of a practically constituted social history of truth . . . , then we may be able to talk of social geographies of both warranted assertibility in general, and of science in particular, in ways sensitive to the context-dependent nature of meaning and to the negotiated transfer and movement of ideas between sites.”

Even though the authors that contributed to Livingstone and Withers’s collection were primarily concerned with the eighteenth century and the geographic discoveries in the Pacific, their insights open, I think, important perspectives also on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European linguistic and geographic encounters in the Atlantic New World and the literature that resulted from them. In this essay, I have aimed to adopt their insights by suggesting the role that geographic location and spatial distance played in conceptions of authorship in early modern discourses of geographic discovery and in the making of scientific modernity more generally. By doing so, I have also aimed to place their inquiry into the geographical underpinnings of Enlightenment during the eighteenth century in a broader historical context by asking how many of the questions specific to the connection between geography and Enlightenment that they saw were already implicit some two hundred years earlier—in the sixteenth-century encounter between a new world of experience and an old world of words. Moreover, I hope to have suggested the role that cultural geography may have to play in (colonial) American studies as a methodological and conceptual approach. When approached from the point of view of cultural geography, early American cultural formations become intelligible not primarily as a point of “origin”—a tabula rasa from which later periods of American history and culture sprang—but rather as the product of the larger, transnational circum-Atlantic culture of which it was an integral part. While there persists a certain progressivist (or “Whiggish”) tradition in the historiography of America and of modernity at large in which the story of the European encounter with the New World is told in terms of a “hard fact” over which medieval European minds stumbled only to be reborn to a “modern” world of scientific empiricism and progress, I have suggested that, from the point of view of cultural geography, the encounter between the New World and the Old presents itself less as a scientific “revolution” in the face of new experience than as a spatial reordering of tropes and rhetorical practices that are geopolitically inscribed vis-à-vis both the New World peripheries and the centers of empire in Europe.

NOTES

1. Marquez, “The Solitude of Latin America” (http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1982/marquez-lecture.html); and One Hundred Years of Solitude, 1.
2. For a discussion of the tensions between textual authority and empirical knowledge, see Grafton, 1-58.
3. For excellent accounts of the ideological and epistemological underpinnings, see McKeon 65-89, as well as Percy Adams’s Travel Literature and Travelers.
4. For a discussion of these “trusting networks” in early modern England, see Shapin. In The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures 1-29, I have explored the question of how these “trusting networks”
operated not only on firsthand scientific testimony traveling through early modern social space but also on travel and colonial writing traveling through geographic space in early modern empires.

5. It would lead too far here to engage in an extended discussion of the history and methodology of cultural geography, but for a useful historical disciplinary overview, see Livingstone; for discussions of post-structuralist cultural geography, see Soja, Lefebvre, and Doel. For discussions of the questions and methods of cultural geography in particular, see Wagner and Mikesell, as well as K. Foote et al., Re-Reading Cultural Geography.

6. Spengemann, 49. See also O’Gorman.

7. Spengemann, 49. Generally, historians of English lexicography have found that “the linguistic contact involved in these early overseas enterprises had little immediate impact on the English language” and that the contents of many of the contemporary dictionaries give “little indication that they were even taking place.” See Benson, 67. For an overview of the complexity of this response, see the essays collected in Kupperman, and Pagden.

8. The entry for the word America, which entered the English language via Richard Eden’s mid-sixteenth-century translations from Sebastian Münster’s Cosmographia (after having been coined by Waldseemüller in honor of Amerigo Vespucci), reads, “the fourth part of the World discovered about the year 1492, by Americus Vespucius a Florentine, and Christopbus Columbus a Genoese.”


10. Spengemann, 37.

11. For a few examples of such critiques of the “politics” of American English, see Spengemann, 47–50; see also, Simpson.

12. See Benson, 43–52. For other historical accounts of the English dictionary, see also McArthur and Green.


14. “Preface,” 1671. Phillips’s apprehension of the contentiousness of the lexicographical battlefield was not unjustified, for only two years after the publication of A New World of Words, the rival lexicographer Thomas Blount published A World of Errors Discovered in The New World of Words, or, General English Dictionary, in which he attacked Phillips’s linguistic project and pointed out what he held to be numerous mistakes in Phillips’s dictionary. See Blount, A World of Errors. Blount had published his own Glossographia in 1696.


16. For a discussion of this early modern lexicographic practice, see Osselton.

17. For a discussion of the historical relationship between the discovery of America and the resurgence of humanism, see Fitzmaurice.

18. See Mignolo, vii, as well as Pagden and Fabian.


20. See Anthony Naro; also R. Morse, and Dillard, 8. For a cultural history of this Atlantic “Creole” culture, see Berlin.


22. Ibid., 36.
The Dividing Line of American Federalism: Partitioning Sovereignty in the Early Republic

Eric Slauter

A cause, in all respects, so conspicuous and interesting, should be carefully and accurately surveyed and measured from every possible point of sight.

—James Wilson, manuscript of opinion in Chisholm v. Georgia given to Alexander James Dallas

A cause so conspicuous and interesting should be carefully and accurately viewed from every possible point of sight.

—James Wilson, as reported by Dallas in Chisholm v. Georgia, 2 Dallas 419 (1793)

In a significant series of recent decisions the Supreme Court of the United States has focused on conceptions of federalism and sovereignty in the early republic and especially on the 1793 case of Chisholm v. Georgia. In doing so, majority and dissenting opinions have offered competing histories of the dividing line of American federalism, the line partitioning delegated sovereignty between the federal and state governments. These histories have sometimes been grounded on the interpretation of silences in the text of the Constitution of the United States and in discussions during its ratification, and they raise questions about the relationships among constitutional language, history, and power. This essay briefly examines one recent case and then returns to the early republic in order to consider debates over constitutional silence and expression. More particularly, it explores how and why discussants of sovereignty and power sought solace from the problems of verbal expression and interpretation in the rhetoric of geography. Late eighteenth-century politicians often described the

54. Swift, 84.
55. For an extended discussion of this, see chapter 3 in my The Cultural Geography.
56. Solomon, "To know, to fly, to conjure," 539–41.
57. Solomon, 528.
58. Harriot, 41.
59. As recent social historians of science have shown, the scientific posture that Solomon calls the "productive" way of knowing and discovering (loosely, the idea of "inventing" or "revealing") continued to play an important role in science well into the second half of the seventeenth century. They have pointed out, for example, that alchemy—one of the alleged casualties of this "decline of magic"—continued to be practiced by the very people who attacked it, people such as Bacon or Newton; see, for example, P. Smith, The Business of Alchemy.
60. For a discussion of the early modern connections among rhetoric, technology, and power, see Cheyfitz.
61. Bacon, 4:431–32. For a fuller elaboration of this, see Bauer and Shapin; in fairness to Solomon, it should be pointed out that she also adopted such a more nuanced approach in her later book Objectivity in the Making.
62. On Harriot’s narrative, see also Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion”; and Chaplin, Subject Matter.
63. Harriot, 13.
64. Ibid., 75.
65. For discussions of this hermeneutical strategy, see Wolf, Pagden, Fabian, and Hulme.
66. On the role of rhetoric in Bacon’s prose in particular, see Vickers.
68. Ibid., 114.
69. Livingston and Withers, 4.
70. Ibid., 15–16.
71. For some historical overviews of English geography during that period, see also Taylor, McCann, and Bowen.