



## THREE OCEAN'S BORDERS

*Isabel Soler*<sup>1</sup>

*Jerónimo Pizarro*<sup>2</sup>

*Rodrigo Alexandre de Carvalho Xavier*<sup>3</sup>

The Portuguese dared to commit the great ocean sea», wrote the mathematician Pedro Nunes in his book: *Tratado em Defeção da Carta de Marear* (1537), and culminated the sentence: «they discovered new islands, new lands, new seas, new peoples, and what more it is: new sky, new stars». In the extensive Portuguese maritime travel literature of the Renaissance, there are many tempting sentences in which we can see expressed in a powerful style what the long decades of navigation through the world's oceans were like. But if there is one that concentrates the feeling of astonishment and amazement that these trips caused in Western thought, it is that of the experienced Pedro Nunes. The renowned cosmographer speaks of “o grande mar-oceano” as a single united ocean and communicator of novelties - islands, lands, seas, peoples - and, at the foot of this global immensity, he offers Nunes “what else is”: a new celestial immensity. He speaks this sentence of learning the world and the universe that contains and surrounds it.

Hence the trajectory of European history it is possible to understand the Renaissance as the great period of construction of a new perspective of knowledge — mathematical, cosmological, artistic, anatomical, political, philosophical, theological... —, the Renaissance voyages can be defined as a great school for grasping the reality of the world and its contents. In this perspective, inevitably, concepts such as the voyage itself, the navigator or even the term “discoveries” increase its complexity and its ambiguity, as it precisely responds to a fully identifiable idea, although this idea is also plural and heterogeneous, hybrid and miscellany, as kaleidoscopic and revolutionary is the Renaissance itself.

---

1 Department of Languages and Literature of Universitat de Barcelona; [isabelsolerq@gmail.com](mailto:isabelsolerq@gmail.com).

2 Department of Humanities and Literature of Universidad de los Andes; [jeronimopizarro@gmail.com](mailto:jeronimopizarro@gmail.com)

3 Department of Vernacular Letters of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; [rodrigoaxavier@letras.ufrj.br](mailto:rodrigoaxavier@letras.ufrj.br) .

The three-oceanic Portuguese experience — the great Portuguese contribution to the Renaissance revolution — is, in this sense, a representative symbol, because we understand that it was essential for the Western intellectual process to build the foundations of the modern world. If the West was irreversibly transformed because of the maritime voyage, this voyage also transformed not so much the Orient as the Western image of the Orient. Similarly, did evolve the old idea of Africa and, starting from the astonishment and bewilderment, Western thought was gradually constructing a kind of America's epistemological landscape. Then, equally ambiguous terms appear, and very recurrent in the historiographical discourse on the Renaissance continental relations, such as encounter, dialogue, contact, synonyms that in themselves bring their antonyms. And as important are these antonyms as their synonyms, once the Portuguese oceanic chronicles express the evident complexity of the encounter together with the constant presence of the mismatch; they collect the difficulty of understanding the reality of the Other found from the conflicting dialogue with that reality; they note in detail the contacts sought and achieved along with those desired and never consummated. In any case, this game of contrasts made the meeting, and its antonyms create in the West a new model of reading the world based on a multiple glance at a plural reality.

For Western thought, the challenge was enormous, since knowing and trying to understand other thoughts, other philosophies, other religions, other behaviors, other sciences and other policies forced the Western civilization to understand the world within the parameters of diversity. This exercise began a very difficult path of comprehension that persists today and that during these more than five hundred years has passed through periods of extreme drama or rare affinity.

What were these plateaus in the world? How were spaces transformed through the interconnection? What were the areas of Western knowledge in which true dialogues have been established? And finally, which types of voyagers, among the plurality of seaman, managed to understand the trip as a fruitful source of acquaintance about the reality of the world?

The essays contained in this issue are addressed from the perspective of the different areas of knowledge, fundamental in the Renaissance context to understand the reality of the world from the perspective of progression. But it is important to emphasize that the idea that runs through this dossier is antique: it was born from one of the many activities that took place at the FERIA Internacional del Libro de Bogota (FilBo) in 2013, whose guest country was Portugal.

At the Universidad de los Andes we celebrate the colloquium «Los viajes portugueses: fronteras de three océanos» and debate on the dilemmas of the image and the images of the world, the rhetoric of reality reporting, the fiction and the truth of the Other, the conflict of things known to those ignored within the framework of the three oceanic spaces. An important part of that colloquium is present in this volume that opens Rui Manuel Loureiro with the study of the innovative Portuguese cartography that showed Fernão de Magalhães before King

Carlos and his advisers at the Cancillería Real de Valladolid to defend not only his project of traveling to the Spice Islands even belong to these lucrative islands to the Crown of Castile. Zoltan Biedermann demand and detects the Portuguese travel literature of the sixteenth century the presence of a form of writing that responds to a cartographic conception of the descriptive account organization. Luis Maffei follows with his study, focused on the dialogues with the Other that the great poet-adventurer Luís Vaz de Camões wanted to highlight in some of the Cantos of his Portuguese epic, *Os Lusíadas*. Onésimo Almeida exemplifies the new empirical spirit that the novelties of sea voyages helped to create based on the case of the Azores where he met Gaspar Frutuoso. Cleber Vinicius do Amaral dedicates his study to the darkest and most dramatic chapter of Portuguese voyages, which is the dense tragic maritime history, rich in images and forms of rhetoric, which recounts the worst of maritime circumstances, the experience of the shipwreck. The dossier highlights two studies that reflect on contact with the Other found in Brazil: Fernando Arantes Ferrão analyzes the difficult experience of the bomber Hans Staden in the Tupinambá community to demonstrate the process of building the image of the anthropophagous Indian in the European imagination; and, in turn, Elizama Almeida focuses on the encounters and disagreements between Europeans and Tupinambás at the time of the constitution of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The text that closes the present volume is signed by Inês Espada Vieira, proposing a meditation on one of the stylistic drifts in which the literary genre of so-called “travel literature” has evolved, which is the personal travel notebook and its hybridity as a genre.

All these studies, each of their perspectives, converge in a common point which could be summarized in the plurality of learning scenarios of this new paradigm that little by little, during the Renaissance period, was building the foundation of modernity. These scenarios, although some very distant from each other, although radically different from each other, had a maritime wire union, a path, a transoceanic odyssey. About the novelty of the contents of three oceanic space, and its intellectual and emotional impact, speaks for itself the famous phrase of the mathematician and cosmographer Pedro Nunes, already presented at the beginning of this introduction: «they discovered new islands, new lands, new seas, new peoples, and what more it is: new sky, new stars».