

THE *NEW WORLD*
IN EARLY BOOKS

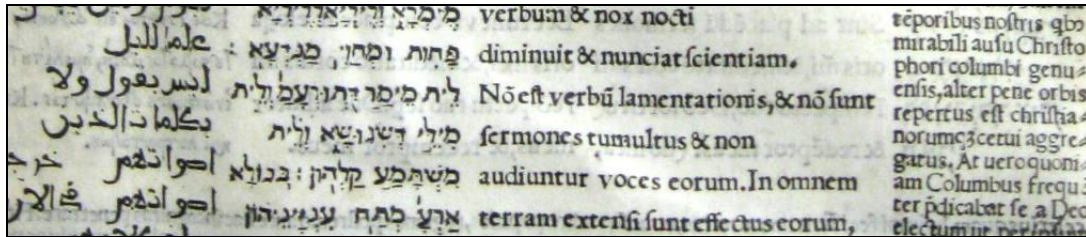
SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE

AN EXHIBITION IN ST JOHN'S
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A world at the margins

Description of Columbus's journey in marginal notes. *Polyglot Psalter*. Genoa : Agostino Giustiniani, 1516



In the 16th century scholars used new technology to compare biblical texts by printing them in parallel. This example is the first such publication. Seven columns show the Psalms in various versions in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Aramaic. The final column on the right is different, however. This is a commentary, and if you examine this you will see the name 'Columbus' about half way down. This note is the first printed account of Columbus's life and his second voyage to the Americas. It is occasioned by the phrase 'to the ends of the earth' in Psalm 19, and the Genoese editor's desire to trumpet the achievements of his compatriots in exploring these. Marginal though this seems, the account could have been lost. Columbus's son Ferdinand, who accompanied him on later voyages as a teenager, took exception to it, and used his influence to demand this book's suppression and destruction. Such action doesn't appear to have had the desired effect, as many copies are still extant, including this one, one of fifty luxury copies printed on vellum. *Cpbd.A.1.6*

Updating geography

First printed map to name America. Ptolemy's *Geography*. Vienna : Gaspard Trechsel, 1541



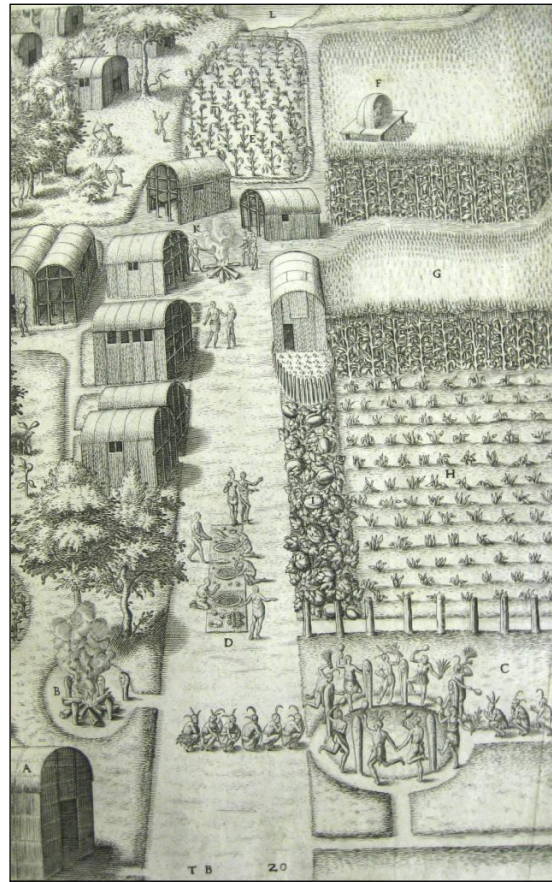
Ptolemy first wrote his description of the world in the 2nd century AD, and it was still a major geographical authority over 1,000 years later. In the 16th century, editions of his work continued to be augmented and updated as nations changed, and Europeans explored beyond their established boundaries. For example, the maps in this edition of 1541 show America, and the discoveries of Columbus are described in the text. Shown here is the first map to use the name America for the new continent, although the editor, Michael Servetus, first used this woodblock in his first edition in 1535, and it had originally been made for Lorenz Fries's 1522 edition.

Servetus was a Spanish polymath whose unconventional views managed to upset Catholics and Protestants. Both sides proclaimed him a heretic, a crime for which he had the dubious honour of being burnt twice: once in effigy when he escaped trial in Lyon, and then more substantially after straying into Geneva, where Calvin ordered his arrest and execution. *BT / F-26 / PTO*

Americans arrive in the Old World

The town of Secotan from Theodor de Bry's *America*, Frankfurt : Johannes Wechel, 1590.

Native Americans translated very successfully into European culture. The popularity of this highly illustrated, therefore expensive, and therefore risky, publishing venture bear witness to just how successfully. It ran to fourteen volumes, published from 1590 to 1630 by the Dutch engraver Theodor de Bry, and his sons after his death in 1598. The exotic content and quality of execution of the illustrations meant that *America* was widely appreciated, becoming a prestige item for any wealthy collector, although individual prints circulated amongst the less well off as well. The book's prized status is often indicated by the degree of customization evident – the engravings were frequently hand-coloured, amended and arranged to personal taste. Nudity could be concealed beneath painted clothes if the owner tended towards the puritanical. St John's copy is unusual because, whilst its illustrations remain untouched, its text bears marks of ownership, indeed of censorship, with large areas crossed through or scribbled out.



Although De Bry never visited America, his engravings are usually based upon drawings by first hand witnesses, notably John White and Jacques Le Moyne. The first volume was intended to be an account of a Huguenot attempt to colonize Florida, which Le Moyne had accompanied as an artist at the request of the French king. De Bry, however, was persuaded by Richard Hakluyt, a friend of Walter Raleigh's, to publish an account of the equally ill-fated English colony at Roanoke in Virginia, instead. It was accompanied by engravings based upon the watercolours of John White who had eventually ended up as governor. De Bry's renderings of White's pictures of local village life were close to the originals but not entirely neutral. They tended to emphasize the harmony of the Americans with their surroundings and natural bounty. So, for instance, in this well-ordered village there are plots of tobacco, sunflowers, pumpkins, and a hunting scene, none of which appear on White's original drawing, and which serve to make Secotan look more like an English estate. *Cpbd.A.1.7*

Mixing Memory and Desire

Map of Virginia from John Smith's *The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*, London: John Dawson & John Haviland, 1626.



A map from the first account of the establishment of Virginia, written by the first Governor of Jamestown, Captain John Smith, some fifteen years afterwards. Smith's life reads like a romance. Running away to sea at sixteen, he fought the Spanish for the French, then for the Dutch, before fighting the Ottomans in Hungary. Ennobled with arms bearing three Turks' heads after duelling three Ottoman commanders, he was then captured, enslaved, and sent as a gift to a Byzantine noblewoman who fell in love with him, before escaping. So it is perhaps unsurprising that when he

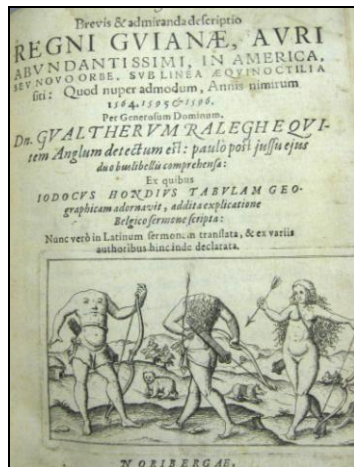
arrived in America it should continue in the same vein. Famously he was saved from execution, by Pocahontas, a princess of the Powhatan tribes, who threw herself in front of her father's club. How reliable Smith's accounts were is a moot point, as rescue by a handy maiden seems to be a recurring motif. In another book he recalls a very similar incident when he was captured by the Turks. To compound matters, Smith doesn't mention Pocahontas in his first reports of his experiences in Virginia. Even accepting Smith's story, it is difficult to say whether his interpretation of it was correct, and there has been speculation that the 'rescue' may have had ceremonial significance to the Powhatans.

The *General historie* was penned after Smith returned to England and found it necessary to write to make money. Like his writing, this illustration is a mixture of the first- and third-hand. The map is based on his account, but the natives are inaccurately plagiarized from De Bry's engravings of White's paintings. The illustration of Powhatan with his wives was originally a picture of a wooden idol, and the giant Susquehannock was simply a normal sized chieftain.
HB4/6.d.5.17

Travellers' Tales

Sir Walter Raleigh's *The discoverie of the large, rich and bewtiful empire of Guiana*, London: Robert Robinson, 1596 and a Latin translation printed in Germany, 1599.

The dramatic rise of Spain in the 16th century - apparently funded by limitless gold reserves



by chaunce I spake with a spanyard dwelling not farre from thence, a man of great trauell, and after he knew that I had ben in *Guiana*, and so farre directlie west as *Caroli*, the first question he asked me was whether I had seene anie of the *Ewaipanoma*, which are those without heades: who being esteemed a most honest man of his word, and in all thinges else, told me that he had seen manie of them: I may not name him because it may be for his disaduantage, but he is well known to *Monfieur Mucherons* sonne of London, and to *Peter Mucheron* marchant of the *Flemish* shipp that was there in trade, who also heard what he auowed to be true of those people. The fourth riuer to the west

from newly acquired American colonies - led to much speculation. Where was it all coming from? Were there cities of gold waiting to be discovered by Spain's competitors? One such speculator was the Elizabethan courtier, Sir Walter Raleigh. Seeking to rebuild his fortune after disgrace, following a clandestine marriage to one of the Queen's ladies, and accusations of atheism, Raleigh was beguiled by tales of El Dorado. Ignoring his new wife's better judgement and attempts to intervene with his investors, he cobbled an expedition together in 1594. After sacking the Spanish colony of Trinidad, he moved to the South American mainland and journeyed up the Orinoco. Although he was suitably impressed by what he found, penning this rather exaggerated account, his backers and the court were less so when he returned empty handed. Rumours circulated that he'd simply shacked up in

Cornwall for a year and fabricated the whole thing. In spite of the general scepticism, Raleigh's optimistic description of a land ready to yield golden tribute after a little more 'exploration' was popular, and German, Dutch and Latin editions appeared within five years. The example above left, produced by the Dutch printer, Levinus Hulsius, is decorated with the standard depictions of headless exotics, a theme going back to Pliny the Elder's account of Ethiopia, but resurrected by Raleigh when describing certain American tribes. *HB4/3.a.2.26 & Upsilon.4.47*



Raleigh is greeted by the King of the Arromaia, from vol. 8 of De Bry's *America* (1599)

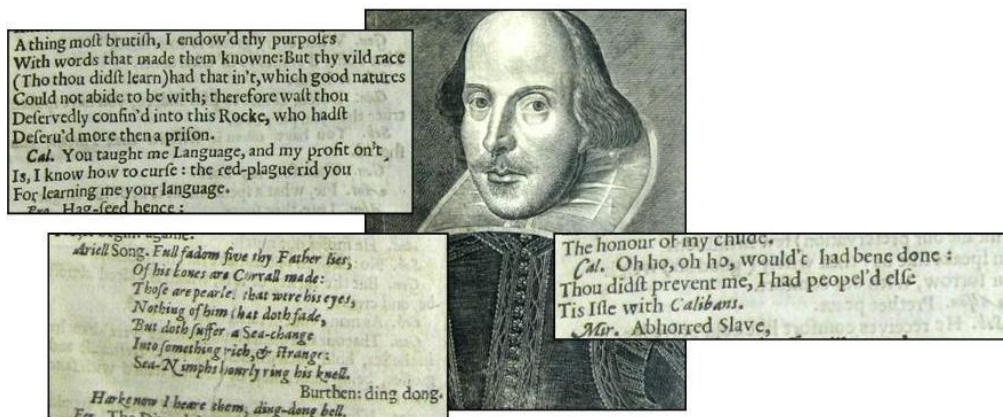
A New World of Words

(Case to the right) *The Tempest* in the 2nd Folio of *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, and tragedies*, London: Printed by Tho. Cotes, 1632.

Not until the mid 16th century were any English language accounts of the American explorations

of the preceding 60 years published. In 1555 Richard Eden produced his translation of Peter Martyr's *De orbo novo decades*, a series of reports on the journeys of Columbus, Balboa and others. This kindled an enthusiasm for exploration, nurtured by succeeding writers including Richard Hakluyt, that resulted in the exploits of the first English travellers, such as Raleigh. It also served, however, as a source for Shakespeare when he came to writing *The Tempest*. Whilst the play's island setting is unspecified it does seem to draw on these narratives, and has leant itself to post-colonial interpretation in recent decades. The closeness of the name of Shakespeare's fictional native, Caliban, to early forms of the word Caribbean, such as 'Carib' or 'Cariban', hints at this. Other sources may have included the accounts by two survivors, William Strachey and Sylvester Jourdain, of the shipwreck of the *Sea Venture* on Bermuda in 1609, just prior to the generally accepted date of the play's composition in 1611. Either way, *The Tempest*, which was first published in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works in 1623, seems to have been permeated by the discovery of the New World, although, of course, it is one of the island's inhabitants, Miranda, who uses this phrase to describe the world of the European interlopers.

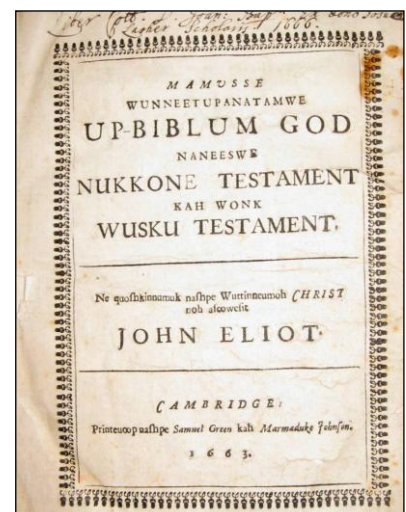
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The Word in the New World

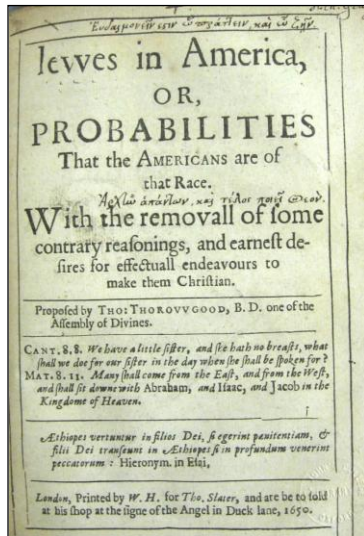
The First American Bible. Cambridge [Mass.], Samuel Green & Marmaduke Johnson, 1663.

A copy of the first Bible of any kind published in North America, printed in the native Massachusetts language. This was a result of the missionary work of John Eliot, "The Indian Apostle". Eliot's work and publications were enabled by the Pequot War of 1636-37. After being left leaderless, several native communities came under the protection of the English administration. Closer interaction with these Massachusetts speakers meant that missionaries began to learn their language. Eliot preached in the Massachusetts tongue and produced, from 1654, twenty titles in it. Reading and understanding scripture was a major part of Eliot's project. Unfortunately this was derailed by King Philip's War (1675-76), when the Native Americans rose up against further encroachments by European settlers. Although around a thousand copies of this volume were printed, the disruption of Eliot's "Praying Towns" (enclaves of native converts) during this war caused the abandonment and destruction of many, making this quite a rare survival.



The New World and the Old Testament

Thomas Thorowgood's *Jewes in America, or, Probabilities that the Americans are of that race*. London: William Hunt for Thomas Slater, 1650.



Presented with a New World, Europeans related it to existing frames of reference. One speculation amongst 16th century Spanish commentators regarded Americans as descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. This fell out of favour in Iberia but took on a stronger momentum in the English puritan world of the 17th century. Thomas Thorowgood spent most of his life as a Norfolk clergyman, his advocacy of this theory being his one claim to fame. In his version, the Lost Tribes had wandered across Asia and crossed to America via the Bering Strait. The text was written several years before, but events conspired to keep it from the press, until its publication was secured by another divine, John Dury. Dury added his own statement of support, inspired by correspondence with the Jewish scholar, Menasseh ben Israel, who supplied a sworn testament from an explorer describing an

encounter with Jews living in the Andes. Both Dury and Israel had a Millenarian agenda. For Israel, Jews had to disperse throughout every nation before regaining their homeland in Palestine and ushering in the Messianic era. For Dury, the mass conversion of the Jews, apparently being undertaken by the American mission led by John Eliot, was an indicator of the imminent Second Coming. Thorowgood was dismissive of these enthusiasms, but was a great supporter of Eliot's efforts, and included conjectures supplied by Eliot in the second edition of 1660. HB4/3.a.2.17

Letters from America

The beginning of the third letter from Hernan Cortes' *De insulis nuper inuentis Ferdinandi Cortesi ad Carolum V Imperatorem narrationes*, Koln: Melchior von Neuss, 1532



The image of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, also Charles I of Spain, dominates the opening to this letter from Hernan Cortes describing the siege of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, in 1521. Having rushed into his conquest of Mexico without the permission of his erstwhile mentor, the Governor of Cuba, Diego Velasquez, Cortes' position as Governor of 'New Spain of the Ocean Sea' was precarious. Although he now presided over the Aztec empire, filling the gap left by Moctezuma, his success had made him many

enemies. Chief among them was Velasquez, who considered him a mutineer. Such enemies undermined his position with the Emperor in whose name he acted, and so Cortes felt the need

to justify himself in a series of five letters sent to Charles. These were originally published in Spanish between 1520 and 1525.

They failed to bridge the distance to the imperial court, however, and Cortes was forced to return to Spain twice. The first time he had to defend himself against charges of poisoning the imperial officials sent to scrutinize him. He returned to Mexico with the endorsement of the Emperor as 'Marquis of the Oaxaca Valley' in 1530, but remained vulnerable to court intrigue. This Latin translation of his second and third letters was published two years later, and seems to protest Cortes' loyalty to Charles by including his portrait on the title page and at the head of each letter. Cortes went to Spain again in 1541 and was prevented from returning to Mexico until 1547, having to mount the Emperor's carriage to gain a hearing, and dying before he could make the journey back. *Phi.1.3*

The Official Record

Part 5 of Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas' *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del mar oceano*, Madrid: En Emprenta Real, 1615

Inca leaders such as Huascar and Pachacuti surround the title to this volume by the man chosen as the official historian of the Spanish colonies in the New World, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas. Originally secretary to the Italian diplomat, Vespasian Gonzago, Tordesillas was chosen by Philip II of Spain to immortalize the exploits of the adventurers sponsored by the Spanish monarchs from the time of his great-grandparents, Ferdinand and Isabella, to that of his father, Charles V. This included the voyages of Columbus, Cortes' conquest of the Aztec empire, and in this volume Pizarro's takeover of the Incas. Tordesillas was given privileged access to state papers and other source material from the time, making his history one of the more accurate. This didn't, however, prevent him brushing over any unsavoury details or lifting sections of other people's accounts. Philip didn't live to see the results of Tordesillas' labours, the first volume being published in 1601, three years after his death, and some 60 to 100 years after the events described. *Xi.3.39*



Land of Plenty

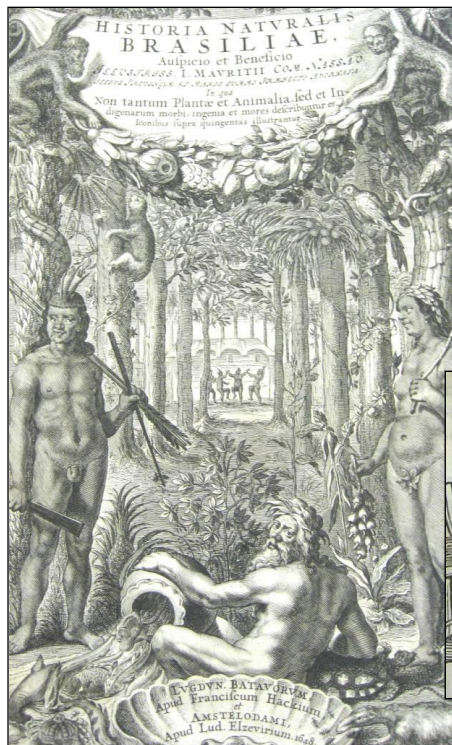
The virtues of Tobacco from an Italian translation of Nicolas Monardes's *Historia Medicinal*. Venice, 1575.

In 16th century Europe it was assumed that all plants had a use, usually medicinal, and so the discovery of a whole continent of new ones caused a great deal of excitement. Details of their

healing powers were rapidly disseminated in herbals and pharmacopeias. Perhaps the plant that caused most excitement on its arrival was tobacco. There had been reports of its usage by indigenous Americans in ceremonies and medicinally, but this treatise originally published in Spanish in three parts from 1565 until 1574, really made the case for it, and was one of the key works on the medicinal properties of New World imports. Monardes, a Spanish physician, had never been to America, but was also a businessman who dealt in slaves and cloth in return for leather and plants, thus giving him ready access to botanical specimens. His work was very popular and translated widely. In English it was retitled *Joyful Newes out of the New-Found World* and published in 1580. Amongst the virtues listed by Monardes were tobacco's healing properties for "paynes of the head", "griefe of the stone", "griefes of winds", "evill of the mother", "evill breath", "wormes", "chilblaines", "bitinges of venomous beastes", "venomous carbuncles" and "woundes that be rotten & cankered". Alarming smoking is recommended as a cure for chest infections. HB4/4.a.4.44



The processing of sugar from Piso & Markgraf's *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*. Leiden, 1648.



This, the first scientific work on Brazil, was compiled during a brief window of Dutch colonial enterprise in South America, from the period 1630-1661. In spite of Portuguese dominance of the area, under John Maurice of Nassau, the Dutch attempted to muscle their way in. Their colony didn't penetrate into the interior and was short-lived, but it did allow time for this ground-breaking survey, composed by the naturalist and astronomer Georg Markgraf, and the physician Willem Piso.



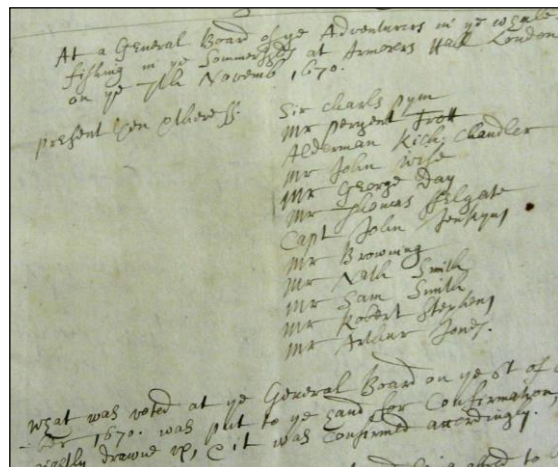
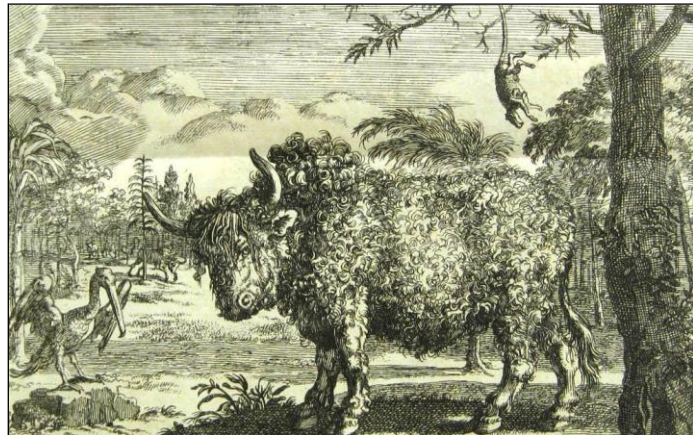
Markgraf composed accounts of the flora and fauna for the volume, as well as producing an important map of Brazil.

Piso contributed sections on tropical diseases and native remedies, leading him to become a founding figure in Tropical Medicine. He also compared the diet of the indigenous peoples and the Dutch, leading him to conclude that many of the sailors' health problems were due to the lack of fish and vegetables. At this stage natural history was as much about the exploitation of

natural resources as their description, as this section shows. Sugar was an introduction from East Asia, but European colonists were quick to capitalize on its potential as a cash crop, and imported African slaves to work on plantations, as the native population had already been decimated by diseases brought from the Old World. The commercial importance of sugar was demonstrated by Dutch refusals to take back New Amsterdam (later New York) in exchange for the plantations of Surinam, which they'd conquered from the English. Y.1.2

Buffalo from an English translation of a work by Louis Hennepin's translated as *A new discovery of a vast country in America, extending above four thousand miles, between New France and New Mexico*. London, 1698.

The interior of North America was still unknown even into the late seventeenth century. One of the first explorers to make contact with the nomadic, buffalo-hunting peoples of the plains, was a French Catholic missionary named Louis Hennepin. Accompanying Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, on an expedition down the St Louis and into the Great Lakes, Hennepin and two comrades were taken captive by a Sioux war party in 1680. For several months they were carried with the party, until an encounter with another French explorer, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, who eventually negotiated their release. The captives had had ample time to observe the customs of the Sioux, including their hunting of vast herds of buffalo, startling them with fire and ambushing the panicked animals, of which Hennepin gives an account here. He records the flesh as "very relishing and full of juice". Although written in French, his account was of such interest that this English translation was released almost simultaneously. There is some speculation that the population of buffalo may have increased dramatically during the 16th and 17th centuries because of the decimation of native populations by European disease, thus removing a brake



on their numbers and allowing the formation of huge herds familiar from images of the 'Wild West'.
 HB4/3.c.6.4

Minutes of 'The Adventurers in Whalefishing in the Sommer Isles', London, 1670-72.

These notes were discovered in 1931 amidst the "strata of rubbish" accreting in the Otranto stores (beneath this Library) "that had been brought from the President's Lodgings whenever a vacancy in the office occurred" by the then Vice-President. They

contain the minutes of a joint stock company set up to administer whaling in the Sommer Isles, as Bermuda was then known. Originally the Islands were administered by the Virginia Company, but later a Bermuda Company was formed. Whilst some members settled, others acted as absentee landlords, and later a number of subsidiary companies were formed to manage a variety of enterprises including the transport of clothing, equipment, tobacco, even “100 maids to Virginia to be made wives.” The Whalefishing company was one of these subsidiaries, granted rights to whaling for 99 years. The minutes detail its activities from 1670 until 1672, and mainly document its foundation, problems with its first secretary (who appears to have absconded with the account books), and what to do with 9,000 pounds of tobacco which was bought with the proceeds of whaling. Unfortunately Bermudan tobacco was of an inferior quality and only likely to find a market in “Wales and a few other places”, so although the Company lasted several years, it didn’t make a significant profit. *MS 219*

A 15,000 Kilometre Obstacle

Tierra del Fuego from James Cook’s *A voyage towards the South Pole and around the World*. London, 1777.

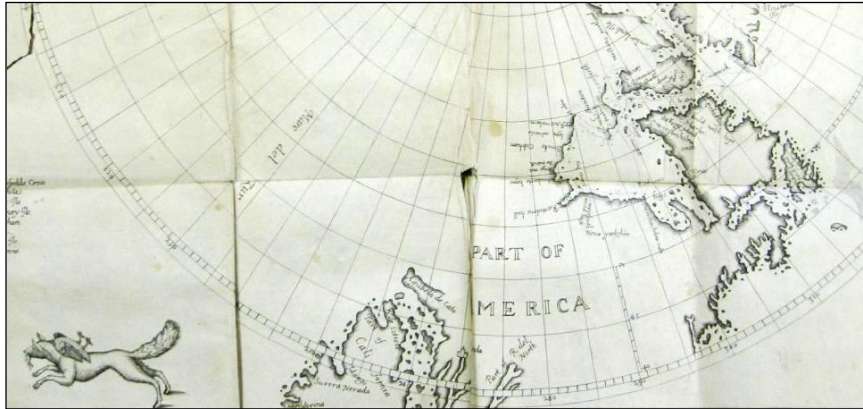
A major impetus to Columbus was the desire to short circuit the arduous land route to the wealth of China, which had recently been blocked by the ascendant Ottoman Empire. He set out believing there were only 3,700 km of ocean between the Canary Islands and Japan, a point of view at odds with most contemporary scholars, and indeed, the facts. The distance is around 19,600 km, and prior to the building of the Panama Canal, this was greatly extended by the need to sail south around America past Tierra del Fuego. From Magellan through to Darwin this inhospitable route played host to numerous circumnavigators. On display here is the first edition of Captain Cook’s account of his second voyage, during which he spent Christmas there. The plates are based on the work of the ship’s artist, William Hodges. Prior to photography, such illustration was a way of creating a scientific record, as well as being attractive to the buying public and a matter of pride to Cook himself, who said of the book that “it will be illustrated and ornamented with about sixty copper plates, which, I am of the opinion, will exceed every thing that has been done in a work of this kind”. The plate right records a native Fuegian. During his visit, Charles Darwin considered the gulf between the natives and ‘civilized’ man, to be greater than that “between a wild and domesticated animal”. Such attitudes



eventually resulted in the Fuegians' extinction, as Europeans seized land for gold prospecting and sheep ranching, literally hunting them down, for one pound sterling per body. *Phi.scam.11*

Going North

Map from Luke Foxe's *North-west fox, or, Fox from the North-west Passage*. London, 1635.



The search for an alternative route around America to the trip around Cape Horn led explorers into an even more extreme environment. The mythical North-West Passage had eluded generations of adventurers, leading several to their deaths. The first attempt was made by

John Cabot in 1497, and there were expeditions under Martin Frobisher in the 16th century. This account of a 17th century expedition was penned by Luke Foxe, a professional sailor from Hull, who had managed to successfully petition Charles I for a ship and funds to explore the Passage. He undertook his six-month journey during 1631, reaching the Hudson strait. On his way he undertook observations and christened various landmarks after his friends and patrons in a rather inimitable style, for example one island was named 'Briggs his Mathematickes' after the mathematician Henry Briggs, and another 'Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome Island'. After his return, which was achieved without a single loss of crew, Foxe set to writing his account. Although engagingly titled and written, and containing the important map displayed here (not often found with the book), this was overshadowed by the account published by his rival Captain James who got his book to press two years earlier, meaning that Foxe died in relative poverty and without recognition. *HB4/3.a.3.26*



The fascination with discovering a navigable sea route around the top of North America continued until Roald Amundsen's successful expedition in 1903-6. The illustrations here are from two 19th century accounts, those of (right) Sir William Parry in 1819-20, and (left) Sir John Ross's voyage of 1829-33. *Phi.scam.15 & Sigma.2.4*