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(Direction)

SENSING SPANISH AMERICA

European Sensory Records
from the Atlantic and South America
(XV - XVI centuries)

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*to Miguel Ángel De Marco and Nilda Guglielmi for promoting these meetings between
researchers from both sides of the Atlantic for years.*

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Christopher Columbus and the Beginnings of the Sensory Conquest of America

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David González Cruz

Without a doubt, the Discovery of America has been one of the most controversial historical issues over the past five centuries and has been the subject of debate by researchers who have approached it during the 20th century and, of course, it continues generating scientific discussions today. Certainly, the different aspects that surround the first Colombian trip have generated disparity of interpretations, mythifications of characters whose portraits have not always adjusted exactly to reality, hypotheses converted into 'historiographical truths' that have not been proven irrefutably, contradictory versions...¹.

About the conquest, discovery and colonization of the New World in general and about the first trip of Christopher Columbus and his *Logbook* in particular, renewed analyzes can still be considered, like the one I propose here: a sensory reading of the Colombian text that allows us to talk about "the sensory conquest of America".

Christopher Columbus and his Logbook

On Friday, August 3rd, 1492, the fleet of Christopher Columbus sailed towards the Canary Islands with the objective of reaching the Asian coasts, navigating towards the West, crossing the Mar Tenebroso to find, in its way, the long-awaited and elusive spices. Such a proposal of expedition required both preliminary preparations and maritime and geographic knowledge that would allow to reach a good port. It is possible to ask, then,

¹ “Sin duda, el Descubrimiento de América ha sido uno de los temas históricos más controvertidos a lo largo de los últimos cinco siglos y ha sido objeto de debate por parte de los investigadores que lo han abordado durante el siglo XX y, por supuesto, sigue generando discusiones científicas en la actualidad. Ciertamente, los diferentes aspectos que rodean al primer viaje colombino han generado disparidad de interpretaciones, mitificaciones de personajes cuyos retratos no siempre se han ajustado con exactitud a la realidad, hipótesis convertidas en ‘verdades historiográficas’ que no han sido demostradas fehacientemente, versiones contradictorias...” David González Cruz, “Prefacio,” in *Versiones, propaganda y repercusiones del Descubrimiento de América. Colón, los Pinzón y los Niño*, David González Cruz (dir.) (Madrid: Silex, 2016), 11.

for the territories, works and authors that served as the basis for this trip and Colombian geographies.²

Christopher Columbus used mainly *Historia Rerum ubique gestarum* of Pope Pius II, the *Imago Mundi* of French Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly and the Correspondence and Map that, in 1474, the Florentine sage Paolo del Pozzo Toscanelli had sent to Alfonso V king of Portugal. Of the first two works, true encyclopedias of the knowledge of the moment, he extracted very concrete references on biblical sites, located at the end of the East, as the Earthly Paradise, the Gardens of Eden, Tarsis and Ofir, the kingdom of Saba, the mountains of Sophora, the island of the Amazonas, which he would soon place in different areas of the Indies, because for him there was the extreme of Asia. From Toscanelli, who followed Marco Polo, Columbus picked up all concerning the Gran Can, the Asian mainland (Cathay, Mangi and Ciamba) and especially Cipango, an island 1,500 miles away from the Continent and famous for its wealth.³

To reach these distant lands one had to cross the Atlantic, then known as the Mar Tenebroso, according to Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, for several reasons.

First, by the constant shipwrecks to which the ships were exposed; from the currents and the strong winds that they had to resist; maritime inclemencies predisposed the navigators to an exaggerated vision or memory: the Sea was difficult to navigate due to its brave and tempestuous character. The myth of the Pillars of Heracles explains the fear of navigators to venture out to sea. In this way, the sea was seen as an obstacle that only great men could overcome.

Second, because of the emergence of the Catholic religion and its cultural hegemony. The maps were created in function of the Catholic faith. The maps and cartographic representations of the time included the sky, the hell and the earthly paradise. They were known as "T and O". The "O" was the circumference that surrounded the entire map that represented the earth and the "T" symbolized the three rivers that came out of the earthly paradise, dividing the earth in the three known continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. Therefore, the "Mar Tenebroso" was the conception of the border between the earthly world, Eden and hell. The concept of trinity, was influenced by the Catholic religious belief of the divine balance. The earthly world was made up of the three known

² María da Graça Mateus Ventura, "Cristóbal Colón y sus Indias equivocadas: geografía de su imaginario," in *Versiones, propaganda y repercusiones del Descubrimiento de América. Colón, los Pinzón y los Niño*, dir. David González Cruz (Madrid: Silex, 2016), 185-212.

³ Juan Gil, *Mitos y Utopías del descubrimiento, I Colón y su tiempo* (Madrid: Alianza, 1992).

continents; hell was where the sun was hiding and, following this logic, it was where the condemned were burned. In turn, Eden was in this unknown sea.⁴

Eduardo Aznar Vallejo affirms that the transmutation from Dark Sea to Ultramarine Ocean is the result of the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge of the time, fruit of the practice offered by the continuous exploration trips.⁵ The experience accumulated over the years by these travelers made it possible to change the predominant ideas about the characteristics of the Atlantic, of how to navigate it, of the possibility of transferring its borders, of the new wealth related to it and of the exploitation rights over them.⁶

Christopher Columbus ... was not the first to want to cross the Atlantic. Others tried, but uselessly, because this ocean has its 'round trip roads' and you have to know them not to fail in your journey. The fate of Columbus was to have brothers Pinzón and Niño, at the head of the best sailors of the time: the navigators of the region of Tinto-Odiel, with due respect for the Portuguese teachers. To go to America, they need the trade winds and to return, the anti-trade winds.⁷

All the details of this venturesome travel were collected in the logbook that Christopher Columbus wrote and that Fray Bartolomé de las Casas summarized in his *Historia general de las Indias*.

The original text of the logbook written by Columbus has been lost; in the same way, the Barcelonian copy of the Spanish version of the *Historia del Almirante* by Fernando Colón delivered to him by Fernando and Isabel, has also been lost. The main source that has reached us today of this transcendental document is a broad extract, which alternates with many textual paragraphs, made by Bartolomé de Las Casas and included in his *Historia general de las Indias*.⁸

⁴ Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, *Exploración del Atlántico* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992).

⁵ Eduardo Aznar Vallejo, "Del mar soñado al mar hollado. El redescubrimiento del Océano," *Cuadernos del CEMyR*, 15 (diciembre 2007): 175-195.

⁶ Michel Bochaca and Beatriz Arízaga Bolúmburu, "Conocimientos náuticos y representaciones del mar en la baja Edad Media: el ejemplo del Atlántico próximo," in *La percepción del agua en la Edad Media*, ed. María Isabel del Val Valdivieso (Alicante: Publicacions de la Universitat d'Alacant, 2015), 101-127.

⁷ "Cristóbal Colón... no fue el primero en querer cruzar el Atlántico. Otros lo intentaron, pero inútilmente, porque este océano tiene sus 'caminos' de ida y vuelta y hay que conocerlos para no fracasar en su travesía. La suerte de Colón fue contar con los hermanos Pinzón y Niño, al frente de los mejores marinos de la época: los navegantes de la comarca del Tinto-Odiel, con el debido respeto de los maestros portugueses. Para ir hasta América se necesitan los alisios y para volver los contralisios". Julio Izquierdo Labrado, "Versiones e interpretaciones sobre la ruta de la primera navegación a América," in *Versiones, propaganda y repercusiones del Descubrimiento de América. Colón, los Pinzón y los Niño*, dir. David González Cruz (Madrid: Silex, 2016), 71.

⁸ Bartolomé de las Casas had access to numerous documents of the Admiral, thanks to the friendship he had with his son Fernando. Among the documents that could be consulted was the copy of the Journal of Navigation that Columbus delivered to the Catholic Monarchs in Barcelona, from which he wrote a summary, in 1530, for his *Historia General de las Indias* - it appeared between 1552 and 1584 - and which

This logbook, which records what happened between the departure of the Colombian fleet and its return, occurred on Friday, March 15th, 1493, is the first testimony that has reached us about the inhabitants and nature of the American lands at the arrival of Europeans. Its pages reflect what the Admiral experienced during the voyage and it contains information that was not thought public, and that was intended for private use and knowledge of the Catholic Kings, as they had requested.

The Columbian logbook is more than a normal logbook, since in addition to annotations on routes, distances and objects seen in the sea and uncovered lands, Columbus includes descriptions of people, places, fauna, flora, personal reflections on cosmography, religion, economy, politics and more other aspects. However, it is no more than a logbook of a very rudimentary narrative technique.⁹

Thanks to this document, it has been possible to reconstruct in detail the first voyage of the discoverer, a travel that started the successive processes of exploration and colonization, which allowed the expansion of the European space and the birth of the so-called Atlantic civilization,¹⁰ a birth that brought about great changes for all the worlds and civilizations in contact,¹¹ of which it is interesting to point out those referred to sensory issues.

The beginnings of the sensory conquest of America

Enrique Tierno Galván states that after "the discovery of the South Sea and Elcano's circumnavigation, the conquest lost tension and greatness. The last motive that impelled it was stopped: the anguish of time and space".¹²

is the information of the logbook that has reached us today. Fernando Colón also consulted this copy, which was based on the history of the Admiral in 1538, published in Italy only in 1571.

⁹ Cristóbal Colón, *Diario de a bordo*, edited by Christian Duverger (Mexico City: Taurus, 2017). For this publisher, Columbus, when writing his logbook, navigates between silences and lies, due to both a wrong vision of reality and a precise calculation of his needs and conveniences. For this work I have consulted: Cristóbal Colón, *Diario de a bordo*, edited by Luis Arranz Márquez (Madrid: EDAF, 2006) and Cristóbal Colón, *Los cuatro viajes del almirante y su testamento*, Biblioteca Virtual Universal <http://www.biblioteca.org.ar/libros/131757.pdf>.

¹⁰ Eduardo Aznar Vallejo, "Exploración y colonización en la configuración de la Europa atlántica," *Historia. Instituciones, Documentos*, 35 (2008): 45-61.

¹¹ Guy Saupin, "L'impact sur les Anciens Mondes: essor non contracté des échanges, tensions et guerres, mutation de l'économie politique et lectures de l'esclavage," in *Africains et Européens dans le monde atlantique. XVe-XIXe siècle*, dir. Guy Saupin (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 439-445.

¹² Enrique Tierno Galván, "La conquista del tiempo y del espacio fundamento de la conquista de América," *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 47 (September-October 1949): 153-157.

The men who crossed the Atlantic did it with anxieties and expectations, with a late medieval / early modern way to feel the world, which gave the senses a preponderant place.¹³

I interpret the senses as representations, that is, as built-in, constructed, intellectual schemes supported by the interests of a particular group, which supposes tensions and conflicts between the different social actors. Thus understood, the representations generate multiple cultural practices, among which it is possible to find and distinguish those of the sensory field.¹⁴

Mark Smith believes that sensory studies have a promising future, given that their history is recent and their treatments unequal: while Antiquity or Modernity, from the 17th century, have deep studies —although not referring to all the senses—, the Middle Ages or Early Modernity lack them, hence the relevance of works such as here proposed.¹⁵

These centuries are central to the history of the senses, since a radical change operates in them: we go from a medieval scheme to a new vision, which we could call modern. The medieval times considered sight and hearing as superior and trustworthy senses, while touch, taste and smell are minor and imperfect;¹⁶ meanwhile, modernity forms a new sensory hierarchy, based on Platonic and Aristotelian theories of vision and on the gradual reevaluation of the sense of touch, as a consequence of the development of materialist philosophy.¹⁷

All the senses, beyond the importance they have in each epoch, maintain complex relationships and variables, named by Mark Smith as intersensoriality. Following this author, I propose an intersensory interpretation in a time of change and in a space where medieval and modern traditions are intertwined, giving rise to new experiences that form a constituent part of what I call "a sensory conquest of America", as Columbus records them when presenting his logbook: "... and for this I thought about writing all this travel very punctually from day to day everything I did and saw or it happened".

¹³ Cf. Gerardo Rodríguez and Gisela Coronado Schwindt, dir., *Abordajes sensoriales del mundo medieval* (Mar del Plata: Grupo de Investigación y Estudios Medievales - UNMdP, 2017); Gerardo Rodríguez and Gisela Coronado Schwindt, dir., *Paisajes sensoriales, sonidos y silencios de la Edad Media* (Mar del Plata: Grupo de Investigación y Estudios Medievales — UNMdP, 2016).

¹⁴ Roger Chartier, "La historia cultural redefinida: prácticas, representaciones, apropiaciones," *Revista Punto de Vista*, 39 (1990): 44-60.

¹⁵ Mark Smith, *Sensing the Past. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Richard Newhauser, ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages, 500-1450* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹⁷ Herman Roodenburg, ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance, 1450-1650* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

The sensory conquest of America deserves to be studied in greater depth, given that it has scarce investigations. Not even the vision of the conquest or the conquest of America has ever been presented from this perspective.¹⁸

In this line of analysis, it is worth mentioning the works of Elena Pellús referred to the sensory presence of the five senses in the *Crónicas de Indias*;¹⁹ Olaya Sanfuentes and his suggestive crossings between senses, species and culinary transformations;²⁰ Guillermo Turner, and his approach on novel subjects of the cultural history, from the importance of the oral culture that emerges in these writings, the expression of feelings of fear among the conquerors and the medical practices of the era²¹ that, in part, take up their sensory readings from Bernal Díaz del Castillo;²² Sandra Amelia Cruz Rivera, and the relationship with sensory conquest (smells and sounds) of Mexico-Tenochtitlán and the synesthesia of the senses;²³ Saúl Martínez Bermejo, who focuses on the sonorous conquest of New Spain;²⁴ and mine own, referring to the sonic and auditory universe present in the work of Fray Diego de Ocaña²⁵ as well as the work developed jointly with Mariana Zapatero and that account for the first sensory perceptions of the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic coasts of South America.²⁶

¹⁸ Cf. Gerardo Rodríguez, lecture: “La conquista sensorial de América (siglos XV-XVI),” in Centro de Estudios Medievales y Facultad de Letras de la Universidad de Murcia (España), Lorca, February 7, 2018.

¹⁹ Elena Pellús, “El enquiridión sensorial cortesiano: el Nuevo Mundo en la *Crónica de Indias*,” in *La literatura hispanoamericana con los cinco sentidos*, ed. Eva Valcárcel (La Coruña: Universidad de La Coruña, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2005), 545-553.

²⁰ Olaya Sanfuentes Echeverría, “Europa y su percepción del Nuevo Mundo a través de las especies comestibles y los espacios americanos en el siglo XVI,” *Historia*, 39, 2 (July-December 2006): 531-556.

²¹ Guillermo Turner, *Los soldados de la Conquista: herencias culturales* (Mexico City: Ediciones del Tucán de Virginia – Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2013).

²² Guillermo Turner, “Los ojos, los oídos y la escritura de Bernal Díaz del Castillo,” *Revista de la Dirección de Estudios Históricos del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, 31 (October 1993-March 1994): 21-30.

²³ Sandra Cruz Rivera, “Encuentro sensorial: olores y sonidos en la conquista de México-Tenochtitlán,” in *Jornada: La Conquista de América: Ayer y Hoy. Reflexiones desde el arte, las ciencias y los estudios culturales*, Bruselas, Maison de l’Amérique Latine, October 10, 2015.

²⁴ Saúl Martínez Bermejo, “SOUNDSILENCE: Sound and Silence in Early Modern Iberian Empires, 1480-1650,” in Proyecto 2015-2017, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Instituto UC3M: Instituto de Cultura y Tecnología Miguel de Unamuno.

²⁵ Gerardo Rodríguez, “El universo sonoro y auditivo de la Comedia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y sus Milagros de fray Diego Ocaña,” in *EuropAmérica: circulación y transferencias culturales*, dirs. Nilda Guglielmi and Gerardo Rodríguez (Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2016), 80-94.

²⁶ Cf. Gerardo Rodríguez and Mariana Zapatero, “Percepciones sensoriales del Atlántico y de los espacios litorales marítimos del Nuevo Mundo, de Colón a Pigafetta,” in *Décimas Jornadas Internacionales de Historia de España “Redes de poder, espacios culturales y actividades económicas en la Historia de España,”* Fundación para la Historia de España, Buenos Aires, September 7 to 10, 2016; Gerardo Rodríguez and Mariana Zapatero, “Sentir América. Registros sensoriales europeos del Atlántico y de Sudamérica (siglos XV–XVI),” in *II Workshop “Perspectivas Interdisciplinarias sobre relatos de viaje, representaciones y experiencia moderna (Siglos XVI–XVIII). Homenaje a Rogelio C. Paredes,”* Museo Etnográfico “Juan B. Ambrosetti,” Buenos Aires, March 16-17, 2017; Mariana Zapatero and Gerardo Rodríguez, “El mar visto desde la cubierta: diarios de abordaje y relatos de viajes (1492-ca.1550),” in

The discovery of the New World brought with it revolutionary changes both in objective terms as in the most subjective field of perceptions. That is why I propose to make a sensory approach to the logbook, since the senses contributed to forge the eyes of others, from which the subsequent interaction was possible.

This story records the conquest and colonization of the American continent that not only involved contact of geographical spaces and cultures on a planetary scale: it also involved the transformation of those places and areas on an individual scale. The widest new worlds are perceived individually, through the senses, that allow to find in unknown places similarities that appease the spirits:

“El agua de la mar hallaban menos salada desde que salieron de las Canarias; los aires siempre más suaves. Iban muy alegres todos”. (17 de septiembre)

(The sea-water was felt to be less salt than it had been since leaving the Canaries; the breezes were always soft. Every one was pleased [September 17th]).

That is why I insist on the opportunity to study "The sensory conquest of America", that is, the need to address this set of sensory and cultural phenomena as central to the process of the conquest and colonization of the American territory, an approach that has not deserved an overview to date, even though the environment surrounding the conquerors "results overwhelming in all its senses: the landscape they see overwhelms them, the customs of its people are strange, the language sounds foreign in their ears, the smells move them, the flavors surprise them".²⁷

Chroniclers and travelers alike left records in their text through what I call "sensory marks". With this notion, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile marks are recognized as elements present in texts, which identify the perceptions that hold a special significance for the sensory plot of a culture.²⁸ This concept refers to the soundmarks formulated by Raymond Murray Schafer, that is, those sounds that are important for a society, according to the symbolic and affective value they possess.²⁹

Christopher Columbus feels the Atlantic Ocean sensorially. He builds present sensory perceptions thanks to his memory and past sensory knowledge:

Colloque International "Ports Nouveaux, Ports Pionniers, XVIe-XXIe siècles," Université Bretagne Sud, Lorient, October 6 to 8, 2016.

²⁷ Elena Pellús, "El enquiridión sensorial cortesiano: el Nuevo Mundo en la *Crónica de Indias*," in *La literatura hispanoamericana con los cinco sentidos*, ed. Eva Valcárcel (La Coruña: Universidad de La Coruña, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2005): 546.

²⁸ A concept formulated by Gerardo Rodríguez and Gisela Coronado Schwindt, "La intersensorialidad en el *Waltharius*," *Cuadernos Medievales*, 23 (2017): 31-48.

²⁹ Raymond Murray Schafer, *El nuevo paisaje sonoro. Un manual para el maestro de música moderno* (Buenos Aires: Ricordi, 1969): 28.

“Navegó al Ouesudueste y andarían entre día y noche once lenguas y media o doce, si no está mentirosa la letra. Tuvieron la mar como el río de Sevilla; gracias a Dios, dice el Almirante. Los aires muy dulces como en abril en Sevilla, que es placer estar a ellos: tan olorosos son. Pareció la hierba muy fresca; muchos pajaritos del campo, y tomaron uno que iba huyendo a Sudueste, grajaos y ánades y un alcatraz...” (8 de octubre)

(The course was W.S.W and 111/2 to 12 leagues were made between day and night (if the handwriting is not deceptive). The sea was like the river at Seville; “Thanks be to God”, says the Admiral, “the air is very soft like the April at Seville; and it is a pleasure to be here, so balmy are the breezes”. The weed seemed to be very fresh. There were many land-birds, and they took one that was flying to the S. W. Terns, ducks and a booby were also seen ... [October 8th])

The sound marks referred to birds are a constant in the work and allow the Admiral to estimate hours of the day and night, proximity to the coasts, vegetation:

“Toda la noche oyeron pasar pajaritos... (9 de octubre)”.

(Throughout the night birds were heard passing [October 9th]).

These records allow him to estimate that the trip is in good course and to reassure, with confidence, the crew:

“Aquí la gente ya no lo podía sufrir: quejábbase del largo viaje. Pero el Almirante los esforzó lo mejor que pudo, dándoles buena esperanza de los provechos que podrían haber. Y añadía que por demás era quejarse, pue que él había venido a las Indias, y que así lo había de proseguir hasta hallarlas con la ayuda de Nuestro Señor”. (10 de octubre)

(Here, the people could endure no longer: they complained of the length of the voyage. But the Admiral cheered them up in the best way he could did the best he could, giving them good hope of the advantages they might gain from it. He added that, however much they might complain, he had to go to the Indies, and he would go on until he found them, with the help of our Lord. [October 10th])

Beginning with the Columbian voyage, the world changes in scale, as do the scales for the observers and travelers who register them, since everything seems more immense and big, as Columbus attests:

“Vieron salir gran fuego de la sierra de la isla de Tenerife, que es muy alta en gran manera”. (9 de agosto)

(They saw a great fire issue from the mountain of the island of Tenerife, which is of great height. [August 9th])

Clear visual and sound marks that refer to the comparison of sizes with known places:

“Toda esta isla le pareció de más peñas de ninguna otra que haya hallado: los árboles más pequeños, y muchos de ellos de la naturaleza de España” (6 de diciembre), o:

“Toda aquella tierra era muy alta y no de árboles grandes sino como carrascos y madroños, propia, dice tierra de Castilla... y vido por la tierra dentro muy grandes valles y campiñas y montañas altísimas, todo a semejanza de Castilla”. (7 de diciembre)

(All the island appeared to be more rocky than any that they that have been discovered. The trees are smaller and many of them of the same kind as are found in Spain [December 6th] or:

All that land is very high, not clothed with very high trees but with *ilex*, *arbutus* and other proper to the land of Castile ... he could see a very large valley, covered with crops like barley ... he saw many large valleys and plains and high mountains inland, all reminding him of Castile. [December 7th])

Trees and vegetation typical of the Iberian Peninsula in American territories, Columbus registers in his journal, as he also records the climatic similarities but in different months:

“Este día llovió e hizo tiempo de invierno como en Castilla en octubre... En frente del cabo hay unas vegas las más hermosas del mundo y casi semejables a las tierras de Castilla” (9 de diciembre) y también:

“Los aires eran como los de abril en Castilla, cantaba el ruiseñor y otros pajaritos como en el dicho mes en España”. (13 de diciembre)

(Today it rained and the weather was wintry like October in Castile... At the upper end there are the mouths of two rivers with the most beautiful campaign country, almost like the land of Castile [December 9th] and also:

The climate was April in Castile; the nightingale and other birds sang as they do in Spain during that month. [December 13th])

He points out that there are the same fish on both sides of the Atlantic:

“Pescaron muchos pescados como los de Castilla, albures, salmones, pijotas, gallos, pámpanos, lisas, corvinas, camarones, y vieron sardinas”. (11 de diciembre)

(They caught many fish like those in Castile —dace, salmon, hake, dory, gilt heads, mullets, sea basses, shrimps, and they saw sardines. [December 11th])

Knowing the environment, losing the fear it implied, meant, in a certain way, taming the new reality. This happens, even, being in the Atlantic: despite its immensity, despite the days that have elapsed, the land that is elusive and a navigation that seemed eternal, Christopher Columbus records that

“agua de mar hallaban menos salada desde que salieron de las Canarias; los aires siempre más suaves” (17 de septiembre) o bien
“la mar era como un río, los aires dulces y serenísimos”. (29 de septiembre)

(the sea-water was found to be less salt than it had been since leaving the Canaries. The breezes were always soft [September 17th] or the sea smooth like a river; the air was mild and agreeable. [September 29th])

This domestication of the sensorial runs in a parallel to greater technical or practical precisions to achieve the crossing of the Atlantic with great success, just as it is recorded in other authors of the time.

The sensory marks are confusing. The nudity means for Columbus, that Taínos are gentle and fearful people. However, he was wrong: the naked men, who received them, standing on the beach. They have their bodies painted red, black and white because they are prepared for war. The same happens as regards the arrangement of their hair, tied with a thick thread, like a braid, which is the attire dress of the warriors:

“Ellos andaban todos desnudos como su madre los parió, y también las mujeres, aunque no vide mas de una farto moza. Y todos los que yo vi eran todos mancebos, que ninguno vide de edad de más de treinta años: muy bien hechos, de muy fermosos cuerpos y muy buenas caras: los cabellos gruesos cuasi como sedas de cola de caballos, e cortos: los cabellos traen por encima de las cejas, salvo unos pocos de tras que traen largos, que jamás cortan. Dellos se pintan de prieto, y ellos son de color de los canarios, ni negros ni blancos, y de ellos se pintan de blanco, y dellos de colorado, y de ellos de los que fallan, y dellos se pintan las caras, y dellos todo el cuerpo, y dellos solo los ojos, y de ellos solo la nariz. Ellos no traen armas ni las conocen, porque les amostré las espadas y las tomaban por el filo y se cortaban con ignorancia”. (11 de octubre)

(They go as naked as when their mothers bore them, and so do the women, although I did not see more than one young girl. All I saw were youth, none more than thirty years of age: they are very well made with very handsome bodies and very good countenances. Their hair is short and coarse almost like the hairs of a horse's tail; they wear the hairs brought down to the eyebrows, except a few locks behind which they wear long and never cut. They paint themselves black, and they are the color of the Canarians, neither black nor white. Some paint themselves white, others red and others what color they find. Some paint their faces, some only round the eyes, others only on the nose. They neither carry nor know anything of arms for I showed them swords and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance. [October 11th])

In the stories analyzed, the transition has been a new worldview and directed towards a new hierarchy of the sensory, which takes elements typical of the late medieval periods and combines them with the novelties of the early modernity. An example of it: they are

medieval travelers in chimerical searches, in travels of pilgrimage, who are becoming Atlantic explorers with colonial domain intentions.

“Aquí nace en esta isla, mas por el poco tiempo no pude dar así del todo fe, y también aquí nace el oro que traen colgando a la nariz; mas por no perder tiempo quiero ir a ver si puedo topar a la isla de Cipango”. (11 de octubre)

(It is grown in this island though the short time did not admit of my ascertaining this for all certainty. Here also is found the gold they wear fastened in their noses; but, in order not to lose time, I intend to go and see if I can find the island of Cipango. [October 11th])

The search for wealth, especially gold and Cipango are a constant in the logbook:

“Partió de allí para Cuba, porque por las señas que los indios le daban de la grandeza y del oro y perlas de ella, pensaba que era ella, conviene a saber, Cipango”. (26 de octubre)

(I departed thence for Cuba, for by the signs of the Indians made of its greatness and of its gold and pearls I thought that it must be Cipango. [October 26th])

These authors feel the new world and shape it in writing, as the Columbian text demonstrates: smells, sounds, images, tactile and gustatory perceptions, nothing is alien to the pen of the Admiral.

“que nunca tan hermosa cosa vido, lleno de árboles, todo cercado el río, fermosos y verdes y diversos de los nuestros, con flores y con su fruto, cada uno de su manera. Aves muchas y pajaritos que cantaban muy dulcemente; había gran cantidad de palmas de otra manera que las de Guinea y de las nuestras, de una estatura mediana y los pies sin aquella camisa y las hojas muy grandes, con las cuales cobijan las casas; la tierra muy llana”. (28 de octubre)

(...he never beheld such a beautiful place, with tree bordering the river, handsome, green and different from ours, having fruits and flower each according to its nature. There are many birds that sing very sweetly. There are a great number of palm trees of a different kind from those in Guinea and from ours, of a middling height, the trees without that covering, and the leaves very large, with which they thatch their houses. The country is very level. [October 28th])

Even though the world changes in scale, as also the scales vary for the observers and travelers that record them, however, mentalities persist. After ten days to be in the Caribbean islands, Columbus writes:

“y después partir para otra isla grande mucho, que creo que debe ser Cipango ... Mas todavía, tengo determinado de ir a la tierra firme y a la ciudad de Guisay y dar las cartas de Vuestras Altezas al Gran Can y pedir respuestas y venir con ella”. (21 de octubre)

(I shall then shape a course for another much larger island which I believe to be Cipango...I am still resolved to go to the mainland and the city of Guisay and to deliver the letters of your Highnesses to the Gran Can requesting a reply and returning with it. [October 21st])

Reality, imagination, fiction, imaginary, conjugate to give place to the domestication of the sensory that runs in parallel to greater technical precision or practices to achieve with increasing success the crossing of the Atlantic, among them the dominion of the sky and the stars:

“Que las estrellas que se llaman las guardias, cuando anochece, están junto al brazo de la porte del Poniente, y cuando amanece están en la línea debajo del brazo al Noroeste, que parece que en toda la noche no andan salvo tres líneas, que son nueve horas, y esto cada noche”. (30 de septiembre)

(Note that the stars which are called Las Guardias (the Pointers), when night comes on, are near the western point and when dawn breaks, they are near the N.W. point; so that during the whole night they do not appear to move more than three lines or 9 hours, and thus on each night. [September 30th])

Nevertheless, knowledge of things results pretty inaccurate. At the beginning of the navigation itself, the pilots discuss how to get to the Islands:

“Hobo entre los pilotos de las tres carabelas opiniones distintas de dónde estaban”. (8 de agosto)

(Opinions respecting their position varied among the pilots of the three caravels. [August 8th])

Also comparisons with practical experiences are useful to describe the environment:

“Y desviado de tierra dos tiros de lombarda, hay en esta islas tanto fondo que no se puede llegar a él”. (15 de octubre)

(At a distance of two shots of a lombard, there is, on these islands, such a depth that the bottom cannot be reached. [October 15th])

And to present their animals:

“Halló caracoles grandes, sin saber, no como los de España”. (29 de octubre)

(He found large shells, unlike those of Spain. [October 29th])

Conclusions

In the logbook it is possible to appreciate the transition towards a new worldview and towards a new hierarchy of the sensory, which takes elements typical of the late medieval period and conjugates them with the novelties of the early modernity. An example of this arises from observing that they are medieval travelers in chimerical searches, in pilgrimage trips, that are being made Atlantic explorers with intentions of colonial rule:

“San Salvador tiene, en sus montañas hermosas y altas como la Peña de los Enamorados y una de ellas tiene encima otro montecillo a manera de una hermosa mezquita”. (29 de octubre)

(... San Salvador he describes its mountains as lofty and beautiful, like Peña de los Enamorados and one of them has another hill on its summit like a graceful mosque. [October 29th])

Idrissa Bâ considers that in those new looks / other worlds it is possible to identify different logics operating at the same time.

On the one hand, descriptive and integration logics, through which Europeans naturalize the disruptive experience. In the case of the previous example, the new geography of San Salvador assimilated according to their criteria and norms, what is seen resembles what is known, be it the Peña de los Enamorados, be it a mosque. In this same in this sense, the Admiral's reiterations can be interpreted as referring to the fact that the islands they travel are "flat" and that *"they lack mountains"*.

On the other hand, explanatory logics, which try to emphasize elements that allow integrating the other, more beyond the differences, even if this implies denying or ignore it.³⁰

“Esta gente dice el Almirante, es de la misma calidad y costumbre de los otros hallados, sin ninguna secta que yo conozca, que fasta hoy aquestos que traigo no he visto hacer ninguna oración, antes dicen la Salve y el Ave María, con las manos al cielo como le amuestran, y hacen la señal de la cruz. Toda la lengua también es una y todos amigos, y creo que sean todas esta islas, y que tengan guerra con el Gran Can, a que ellos llaman Cavila y a la provincia Bafan”. (1 de noviembre)

(These people, says the Admiral, are of the same appearance and have the same customs as those of the other islands without any religion so far as I know, for up to this day I have never seen the Indians on board say any prayer though they repeat the *Salve* and *Ave Maria* with their hands raised to heaven and they make the sign of the cross. The language is also the same and they are all friends; but I

³⁰ Idrissa Bâ, “‘Ahl Ghazal’, ‘Naçara’ ... : images et perception des Portugais et des Espagnols par les traditionnistes maures (XVe siècle),” in *Africains et Européens dans le monde atlantique. XVe-XIXe siècle*, dir. Guy Saupin (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 49-58.

believe that all these islands are at war with the Gran Can, whom they call Cavila and his province, Bafan, [November 1st])

The conclusion to which the Admiral arrives is clear and simple: the natives lack religion and accept quickly the Christian signs, so it will be easy to evangelize them both by means of signs and words.

In all these operations, as we see, the senses participate, expressed in sensory marks: the first generation of Atlantic travelers manifests a late medieval perception of the new territories, landscapes and interpretation of the other, that this encounter with that new space will evolve. An example of what has been said is the presence of the Gran Can in the Columbian story, even to generate fear and terror among the inhabitants of the islands and coasts, for their ferocity and for the strange inhabitants of their land:

“no podían hablar temiendo que los habían de comer, y no les podía quitar el temor, y decían que no tenían sino un ojo y la cara de perro, y creía el Almirante que mentían, y sentía el Almirante que debían ser del señorío del Gran Can, que los captivaban”. (26 de noviembre)

(... they feared to talk, thinking they were going to be eaten nor could they rid themselves of their fear. They declared that the Canibas had only one eye and dogs' faces. The Admiral thought they lied and was inclined to believe that it was people from the dominions of the Gran Can who took them into captivity. [November 26th])

These first stories, from the European perspective and interests —terrestrial, economic, cultural and evangelizing— begin the process of construction, transfer and exchange of Atlantic history.³¹

“Dice que halló árboles y frutas de muy maravilloso sabor; y dice que debe haber vacas en ella y otros ganados, porque vido cabezas en hueso que le parecieron de vaca. Aves y pajaritos y el cantar de los grillos en toda la noche que se holgaban todos: los aires sabrosos y dulces de toda la noche, ni frío ni caliente”. (29 de octubre)

(He says that he found trees and fruits of very marvelous taste and adds that they must have cows or other cattle, for he saw skulls that were like those of cows. The songs of the birds and the chirping of crickets throughout the night lulled everyone to rest, while the air was soft and healthy and the nights neither hot nor cold. [October 29th])

³¹ Pedro Martínez García, “Una primera mirada a Latinoamérica,” in *La reinención de Latinoamérica: enfoques interdisciplinarios desde las dos orillas*, coords. Ana Luengo and Sabine Schlickers (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012): 58-75.

The discovery of the New World brought with it revolutionary changes in both objective terms and in the more subjective field of perceptions. These Europeans toured the Atlantic Ocean and the New World; their experiences reveal a vast territory, from Central America to the southern tip of the continent, at the beginning of Atlantic colonial expansion; their stories testify their sensorial perceptions, of great value, which account for the intertwining of cultures and of the urgent need to communicate. It is because people of different languages were accompanying the ships of Columbus:

“sabía diz que hebraico y caldeo y aún algo arábigo” (2 de noviembre) o
“traer los hombres de Guinea para que deprendiesen la lengua en Portugal”. (12 de noviembre)

(... and had been a Jew, knowing Hebrew, Chaldee and even some Arabic [November 12th] or
the men of Guinea have been brought to learn the language in Portugal. [November 12th])

Usually, these encounters with the other are resolved according to peninsular criteria: sending languages, letters of presentation, ambassadors, whose results are not always the desired ones.

The sensory descriptions attempt to decode the found peoples codifying them according to their own cultural classification:

“Venid a ver los hombres que vinieron del cielo; traedles de comer y de beber. Vinieron muchos y muchas mujeres, cada uno con algo, dando gracias a Dios, echándose al suelo, y levantaban las manos al cielo, y después a voces nos llamaban que fuésemos a tierra”. (14 de octubre)

(... all men and women to come and see the men who had come from heaven; and to bring them to eat and drink. Many came, including women, each bringing something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground and shouting to un to come on shore. [October 14th])

This allows the domestication of the exotic, which is a substantial part of the sensory conquest of America.

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