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# Prefatory Poems and the Openings of Poetry: The Interpoetics of Epistemic Incorporation in the Atlantic World

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Article abstract

The French, English, and Spanish wrote poems about the “New World” to represent it as known rather than unknown in the interpoetics of epistemic incorporation—to take the unknown of the Americas between and among these European cultures to make them known in terms of earlier knowledge. This article focuses on prefatory poems (paratext) and the main poem (text), and especially the threshold between these poems, their interpoetics. It also focuses on beginnings as another threshold and moving across and on. To recognize the recognizable, anagnorisis within the known framework—that is what the texts of exploration and encounter, including poetry, tend to do—can involve misrecognition. Examining dedicatory poems, lyric, pageant, and epic, and how the known and the unknown work in the poetics of representation, this article argues that the interpoetics is between poems, between paratext and text, work and world, a mimesis that involves poems begetting other poems and representing reality.



# Prefatory Poems and the Openings of Poetry: The Interpoetics of Epistemic Incorporation in the Atlantic World

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*The French, English, and Spanish wrote poems about the “New World” to represent it as known rather than unknown in the interpoetics of epistemic incorporation—to take the unknown of the Americas between and among these European cultures to make them known in terms of earlier knowledge. This article focuses on prefatory poems (paratext) and the main poem (text), and especially the threshold between these poets, their interpoetics. It also focuses on beginnings as another threshold and moving across and on. To recognize the recognizable, anagnorisis within the known framework—that is what the texts of exploration and encounter, including poetry, tend to do—can involve misrecognition. Examining dedicatory poems, lyric, pageant, and epic, and how the known and the unknown work in the poetics of representation, this article argues that the interpoetics is between poems, between paratext and text, work and world, a mimesis that involves poems begetting other poems and representing reality.*

*Les Français, les Anglais et les Espagnols ont écrit des poèmes sur le « Nouveau Monde » pour le représenter comme connu plutôt qu’inconnu dans l’interpoétique de l’incorporation épistémique – soit prendre l’inconnu des Amériques entre et parmi ces cultures européennes pour les faire connaître en termes de connaissances antérieures. Cet article se concentre sur les poèmes liminaires (le paratexte) et le poème central (le texte), et plus particulièrement sur le seuil entre ces poètes, leur interpoétique. Il porte également sur les commencements comme un autre seuil et les déplacements à travers ce seuil et au-delà, pour reconnaître le reconnaissable, une sorte d’anagnorisis dans le cadre connu – ce que les textes d’exploration et de rencontre, y compris la poésie, tendent à faire (et ceci peut impliquer une méconnaissance). Cet article examine différents genres poétiques (poèmes dédiatoires, lyriques, épiques et entrées royales) et les relations entre le connu et l’inconnu dans la poétique de la représentation pour montrer que cette interpoétique se situe entre les poèmes, entre le paratexte et le texte, l’œuvre et le monde – une mimésis impliquant des poèmes qui engendrent d’autres poèmes et qui représentent la réalité.*

Europeans tried to frame the new lands in the Western Atlantic, often in terms of themselves, to incorporate into their worldview other lands and peoples. After a brief discussion of this framing in prose and other works, I will focus on prefatory poems and on openings or beginnings, as they are frames within frames. Language is important in exploration, settlement, and colonization, including in the Americas. Anthony Pagden discusses the principle of

attachment, that is Europeans, like Christopher Columbus, who confronted the unknown by attaching to it the known, likening, for instance, Indigenous and Christian practices that show incommensurability because this similarity would be incomprehensible to the Indigenous peoples. This attempt to know or take possession of the Americas seeks, but cannot achieve, to make the incommensurable commensurable.<sup>1</sup>

Walter Mignolo examines the darker side of the Renaissance, including analyzing the book as one of the means of European expansion and the colonization of languages during the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> An expanding Europe uses language in significant ways, suggesting the ambivalence and contradictory nature of texts about the Western Atlantic world. By examining prefatory or front matter, I focus on poetry rather than prose works with some poetic examples.<sup>3</sup> By interpoetics, I mean the liminal or threshold space between Europeans and others, a betweenness or limen discussed by Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, and Marshall McLuhan.<sup>4</sup> This is a matter between cultures. In some ways, the poets try to make poems that incorporate the new lands and peoples in a representation and misrepresentation, with insight and blindness, a fabrication of knowledge, what I call epistemic incorporation. The poems embody and disembody the lands and peoples, and the prefatory poems and the openings frame the body of their works as a whole. There is a threshold, a crossing of the boundary between paratextual or prefatory poem and the main poem or prose text itself, between these poems and poems outside the text, the poems and other works, the poems and the world.

The middle comes between the beginning and the end. Frank Kermode speaks about a sense of an ending, and Edward Said responds with beginnings, but my discussion of the poetic front matter and the openings of poems concentrates on the poetic, and not the prose worlds that Kermode and Said examine in their books.<sup>5</sup> In examining beginnings, Said emphasizes where

1. Pagden, *European Encounters*.

2. Mignolo, *Darker Side of the Renaissance*.

3. See, for instance, Hart, *Representing the New World*; Hart, "Language, European."

4. See van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*; Turner, *Ritual Process*; McLuhan, "Canada." For a more detailed view, see my introduction in this special issue.

5. Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*; Said, *Beginnings*.

to start in criticism (practical and theoretical).<sup>6</sup> In discussing ends, Kermode presents a theory of fiction and making sense, but despite his interest in poetry, he gravitates to novels here.<sup>7</sup> He connects poetry and fictions, beginnings and endings: “Men, like poets, rush ‘into the midst,’ *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and poems.”<sup>8</sup> Kermode’s insight about beginning, middle, and end is a refraction of Aristotle, who in his *Poetics* sees action in tragedy having that three-part structure.<sup>9</sup> Epics are to have such a shape and begin in the middle of things. Life and art intersect in mimesis.

My concern is with front matter and the beginning of the work, mostly of poems here, so paratext and text, which I see as being part of the work. Gérard Genette’s use of paratext in *Seuils* (1987) was a key moment in calling attention to the framing devices that authors, printers, and publishers employ to situate, explain, and promote the main text—a matter of persuasion or influence in making interest or attempting to affect the reception of the work.<sup>10</sup> In a footnote, Genette picks up on J. Hillis Miller’s view of the multiple doubleness of paratext, in English as well as in French: for instance, near and far, similar and different, inside and outside, “something simultaneously this side of a boundary line, threshold, or margin, and also beyond it.”<sup>11</sup> Jane E. Lewin’s translation adds another dimension in the English-speaking world, another threshold or boundary crossed, and she translates Genette thus: “For us, accordingly, the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or—a word Borges used apropos of a preface—a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large

6. Said, *Beginnings*, 6.

7. See Leo Bersani’s review of *Sense of an Ending*, where he points this out (Bersani, “Variations on a Paradigm”).

8. Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*, 7.

9. Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Halliwell and Hamilton Fyfe, 54–55.

10. Genette, *Seuils*.

11. Miller, “Critic as Host,” 219, quoted in Genette, *Paratexts*, 1n2. On thresholds, see Miller, “Critic as Host,” 243; Bloom, “Breaking of Form,” 23, 25, 27, 29, 33–34, 36; de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” 70; Hartman, “Words, Wish, Worth,” 204.

the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back.”<sup>12</sup> The emphasis is on the threshold or limen, and then Genette turns to the undefined space: “It is an ‘undefined zone’ between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world’s discourse about the text), an edge.”<sup>13</sup> Genette continues to elaborate the many aspects of paratext, while in a footnote Lewin explains to English readers: “The French title of this book is *Seuils*, which means ‘thresholds.’”<sup>14</sup> I see, as Lewin does implicitly, and Kathryn Batchelor observes generally and explicitly, that the translation becomes a text with its own paratext, so there is a configuration of figures or texts.<sup>15</sup> Genette’s *seuil* or threshold, which he publishes with a publisher with the same name, both names and erases the liminal boundaries between inside and outside, paratext and text, book and world. These qualities of threshold speak to the interpoetics of prefatory poems and main poem, including the transitional and even translational (carrying across) aspect of the opening of the main poem.

Translation studies relate closely to Renaissance poetry and other fields. Gideon Toury and others expand the purview of translation studies, including a sense of paratext, biblical studies, world literature, and other fields and periods, such as the Renaissance and the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> More needs to be done on paratexts in the poetry of the Renaissance. A recent contribution is intriguing and adept, but it focuses on a single aspect: Federica Pich argues that in Renaissance manuscripts and printed books, short prose headings (*rubriche*, “rubrics”) sometimes introduce or accompany lyric poems and are “charged with an informative, explanatory, or more clearly exegetical function,” and when that occurs, and the authors set this up or agree with them, “these textual frames might be interpreted as forms of self-commentary.”<sup>17</sup> Discussing the Italian tradition, Pich argues that “*rubriche* can overlap with similar paratextual devices, namely *argomenti* (brief expositions of the ‘content’ of

12. Genette, *Paratexts*, trans. Lewin, 1–2.

13. Genette, *Paratexts*, 2.

14. Lewin’s note: Genette, *Paratexts*, 2n3. See also Genette, “Introduction to the Paratext.”

15. Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 20.

16. See, for instance, Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies*; Alvstad, “Strategic Moves”; Altmann et al., “Fact vs Fiction”; van Dijk, “Margins of Bookishness”; Andrist, “Toward a Definition”; Readloff, “Recent Approaches.”

17. Pich, “On the Threshold,” 99.

the relevant texts) and prose glosses such as *dichiarationi* ('explanations') and *espliationi* ('explications'), involving a form of explanatory glossing of the relevant text."<sup>18</sup> Pich admits that rubrics are a minor and even marginal element of the Renaissance paratext and have not been studied systematically, which she proposes to do. My own approach is to focus more on the poetry, the between poems or poems introducing or prefacing a prose text rather than the prose, as Pich does in paratextual relation to the poetry.

Also important is the collection *Renaissance Paratexts* (2011), edited by Helen Smith and Louise Wilson. Their discussion is helpful in my contextualization of Renaissance interpoetics: "*Paratexts* is the final volume of Genette's trilogy on transtextual poetics, coming after *The Architext* (1979) and *Palimpsests* (1982). It is thus a late stage in Genette's project to generate a 'general poetics of transtextuality' which accounts for intertextuality in a transcendent way, incorporating all relations within and between texts and between texts and their readers."<sup>19</sup> Smith and Wilson attempt to develop Genette's analysis of seemingly marginal spaces and bring together others to explore this matter in rooted ways. Some of the contributions engage with Renaissance books as objects, visible and legible. Moreover, Smith and Wilson claim that all of the contributors "are aware of the book as an object which is handled by particular readers, and whose physicality is constructed through the processes and operations of the printing house," and that their collection "reveals the importance of investigating the particular paratextual conventions in play in different historical periods"—here, the Renaissance.<sup>20</sup> While I am interested in the history of the book and its material culture in manuscripts and print, I am focusing here on the poetry itself and how the poems become a threshold between prefatory matter, as Genette saw it, and the main text, as well as the porous borders between book and world, poetry and reality.<sup>21</sup> There is a wider context to the European expansion into the Western Atlantic and its attendant texts, in which the poems I shall discuss are situated.

Coming to terms with Columbus's landfall in the so-called New World (although the Norse had done so about 500 years before) had cultural and material

18. Pich, "On the Threshold," 99.

19. Smith and Wilson, "Introduction," 2. See also McGann, *Textual Condition*; Allen, *Intertextuality*.

20. Smith and Wilson, "Introduction," 2–3.

21. As a supplement to Genette, William H. Sherman speaks of something that might puzzle Genette: a "terminal paratext" (Sherman, "Beginning," 65).

consequences in Europe beyond religion and politics into realms like poetry. The French and the English had not taken up Columbus's enterprise as Spain had and tried to catch up to the Spanish, but, in doing so, they had to contravene the wishes and the gift of the pope, set out in the bull of 4 May 1493, which divided the parts of the world yet unknown to Christians in two between the Spaniards and the Portuguese. Catholic England and Catholic France commissioned their own explorers but instructed them not to seize lands the Iberian powers had already claimed and thus, to some extent, ignored this bull. After the Reformation, Protestants questioned this and other related papal donations.<sup>22</sup>

This article will discuss French, English, and Spanish poems about the New World, which, like the papal donations, tried to place these "discovered" lands into the framework of Christian and Western European cultures, to know them as known rather than to uncover them as unknown, in what I call the interpoetics of epistemic incorporation: that is, to take the unknown of the Americas between and among these European cultures and make them known in terms of earlier knowledge. To recognize the recognizable, a kind of anagnorisis within the known framework, is what the texts of exploration and encounter tend to do, as I will show with poetry. But there is also a recognition of novelty and the unknown, so there is tension, ambivalence, and contradiction in the poetic representations. There are inklings, and sometimes more, of ignorance and moments of doubt and incertitude in the very difference between Europe and the Western Atlantic, so the language of representation becomes mixed and intricate. Despite the rivalries among Spain, France, and England, the poetry and poetics of these three nations share not only this incorporation but also the wounds and edges of the poetic body. I shall examine different genres, such as dedicatory poems, lyric, pageant, and epic, and how the known and the unknown work in the poetics of representation. Poetry makes its own world in a wider context, and I shall look closely at moments in those poems that try to make the body of the Americas part of the body of Europe, a kind of poetic incorporation.

The first voyage of Columbus will provide a couple of examples of how the explorer saw the lands he came across in terms of what he knew—that is, Christianity and gestures or signs that made him think he was communicating with the Indigenous peoples he encountered. He brought with him received ideas and epistemic certainty rather than epistemic doubt as he immediately

22. Davenport, *European Treaties*, 1:21, 77–78; Pagden, "Ius et Factum"; Hart, *Representing the New World*, 18–20; Hart, "Papal Donations"; Adelman, "Mimesis and Rivalry."

tried to incorporate these new peoples and lands into his old ways of being, thinking, and knowing. The *Letter of Columbus* (1493) traces Columbus's first voyage from Europe to this unknown country.<sup>23</sup> Columbus incorporates the Indigenous peoples into his worldview, and the European world picture also illustrates what I am suggesting occurs in prose and poetry in the European "discovery" of, or encounter with, the lands and peoples new to him and Europeans.<sup>24</sup> This Columbian frame of knowing or unknowing is a key moment in representing the lands in the Western Atlantic in an attempt to incorporate the lands and peoples of the so-called New World into the religious and secular epistemology. This misrecognition and recognition is not simply in the prose of Columbus but also in the poetry in the wake of Columbus, including in the poems I discuss here in Spanish, French, and English.

In *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser alludes to the New World and the Americas, to Peru, the Amazon, and Virginia. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is comparable to poems by other poets representing the New World, such as the French poets Étienne Jodelle, Pierre de Ronsard, Pierre Poupo, and Guillaume Du Bartas, and poets who voyaged to the New World, like Jean Parmentier and Marc Lescarbot, who wrote about New France. It also bears resemblance to the work of the Spanish poet Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, whose *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610) tries to incorporate the "New World" into the epic tradition through translation—translation of study and translation of empire. These poets from England, France, and Spain/New Spain bend these genres to the unknown, to these new lands, just as they remake the ancients in Europe. This is a poetics, or interpoetics, of epistemic incorporation. How does the unknown become part of the artistic or poetic field? How does the previously unrepresented become represented, the unknown become known?

The main focus of my analysis is prefatory poems and the beginning of an epic poem. These poems deserve more attention, especially the prefatory poems, which are less known than the poems they preface. Poets also wrote in relation to the voyages of Roberval and Cartier. For example, in *Le Babilon, aultrement la Confusion de Lesclave fortune* (153?–154?), Michel d'Amboise, seigneur de Chevillon, son of Charles d'Amboise, Admiral of France and author of many

23. Jane, *Select Documents*, 1:2–3, 10–11. On Columbus and the Americas before and after Columbus, see Sale, *Conquest of Paradise*; Deloria, "Afterword"; Flint, *Imaginative Landscape*. See also Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*.

24. Jane, *Select Documents*, 1:10–11.



books of poetry and one prose work, *Le Guidon des gens de guerre* (1545), calls attention to writing, genre, paradise and hell, and life and death; it is not some one-sided vision or representation.<sup>25</sup> The literary framing of Roberval is not a univocal and propagandist ideological discourse but a searching, oblique, and symbolic poetics. The shield of France the poet translates for the explorer who translates himself. The translation of poetry is part of the translation of empire. The last line, with its Latin tag, “Dabit deus” (God will give), seems to echo Virgil in *Aeneid* 1.198–99: “O socii (neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum), / O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque o passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem,” which I render, “O companions (for before this we have not been ignorant of evils [misfortunes]), / O more serious sufferings, god will end this too.”<sup>26</sup> This allusion and literary and poetic incorporation of Virgil—an interpoetics—is part of this front matter framing the voyages and expeditions of Roberval and Cartier to North America, something of the classical Mediterranean world that Shakespeare later makes in his own allusions to Virgil, as well as in his references to Bermuda in *The Tempest*, in a kind of typology of Europe and the Americas.<sup>27</sup> The prefatory poems frame and speak to each other, even if they are paratexts for the prose text.

There are other prefatory or paratextual verses such as those of Clement Marot.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in “Epistre pour le Capitaine Bourgeon,” Marot represents sorrow.<sup>29</sup> The poem, which includes Clio, the Muse associated with history, depicts a personified despair that is nothing unless one thinks about it, for otherwise it will be a bud and never a grape, so perspective matters. For instance, the last four lines of the poem provide an example of one aspect of the imagery:

25. Amboise, *Le Babilon*, fols. xlii–xliv. It also appears in Biggar, *Collection of Documents*, Appendix A, 565–67. “Dabit deus” is on p. 567.

26. My translation. The English translation in the Fairlough and Goold Loeb edition is good but uses the archaic “ere.” All English translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

27. See Quint, “Epic and Empire”; Quint, *Epic and Empire*.

28. Marot, *Les oeuvres de Clément Marot*. See also Marot, “Epistre pour le Capitaine Bourgeon,” fols. xlv v–vi, in Biggar, *Collection of Documents*, Appendix BI, 568. I use both sources for accessibility for the reader. The pagination makes it hard to find in the original. I have used Biggar’s transcription, which does not include the long *s* and accents in the Rouen edition.

29. Marot, “Epistre pour le Capitaine Bourgeon,” 568.

Car aultrement iamais ne cessera  
 De tourmenter le bourgeon, qui sera  
 Tousiours bourgeon, sans Raisin deuenir,  
 Sil ne vous plaist de luy vous souuenir.<sup>30</sup>

(For otherwise it will never end  
 To torment the bud, which will be  
 Always a bud, without becoming a Grape,  
 Please remember him.)

This is not the tone or atmosphere of triumph to frame French exploration and expansion but an urge to overcome despair. This is not the poetry or poetics of overconfidence but a framing of possible obstacles and tentativeness. The use of natural imagery, of the grape, as in the Bible, implies the harvest and how wisdom and advice are anchored in nature. The concrete expresses the figurative.

Knowledge and the lack of it become part of the theme of framing this going beyond France or Europe to new lands.<sup>31</sup> Ways of knowing, the relation of I and other, speaker or voice and the reader/addressee, are important to the poem “*Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin*,” and to the poems I am discussing throughout. The prefatory poem can also introduce prose texts, approaching the Americas in both modes of expression across the threshold between the paratext and the main text. Marot addresses Roberval in a lyric or verse epistle (*epistre lyras*).<sup>32</sup> He constructs his poem partly in terms of Greek mythology, of Venus and Bacchus, and the speaker says that no one can gain profit in “*guerre feminine*” (women’s war), as their ardour is as harsh as possible (“*Car leur ardeur est aspre le possible*”).<sup>33</sup> Marot includes received ideas or tropes about women, another frame from France and Europe as France is exploring overseas. After such a context for representing Venus, Marot turns to “*le gentil Dieu Bacchus*” (the kind God Bacchus) and “*O Bacchus puissant Dieu*” (O Bacchus mighty God).<sup>34</sup> These representations of the feminine and

30. Marot, “*Epistre pour le Capitaine Bourgeon*,” 568.

31. Marot, “*Les oeuvres*,” fols. xlvi–vii; Marot, “*Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin*,” in Biggar, *Collection of Documents*, Appendix B2, 569–70.

32. Marot, “*Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin*,” 569.

33. Marot, “*Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin*,” 569.

34. Marot, “*Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin*,” 569–70.

masculine are conventional. This description celebrates Bacchus and wine and feasting and is part of an extended metaphor and simile. Part of the poem is the geography of the Americas and Europe.<sup>35</sup> The imagery of drinking, feasting, and travelling is an aspect of this verse epistle to a friend, which reinforces the theme of friendship: “Ou declare par lettre a ses Amys” (Or declare by letter to his Friends).<sup>36</sup> There is also an appeal to God: “Tu es des miens le meilleur esprouue: / A Dieu celluy, que tel iay bien trouue” (You are of mine the best experience: / To God the one, that such I have found).<sup>37</sup> The divine, rather than Fortune, reinforces friendship and expedition: “Soubz lestandard de Fortune indignee” (Under the standard of Fortune unworthy).<sup>38</sup>

The poems of the front matter to André Thevet’s works also help to frame his cosmography, which includes incorporating the Americas into the known mapping of Europe. Thevet’s work, especially as a cosmographer, was controversial even in his own day, and his relation with Jean de Léry is an instance of a controversy, and has remained so since.<sup>39</sup> Lestringant views Thevet’s *Singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1557) and *Cosmographie universelle* (1575) as not having a metaphysical frame, combining the quantitative Ptolemaic and the qualitative local experience—which Lestringant sees as incommensurable and showing a severing of the ties between craft and science—and a contradiction, which Denis Cosgrove and Andrea Frisch think is an opening for the elaboration of cosmography into the late 1600s.<sup>40</sup> Frisch distinguishes her argument from the work of Tinguely, who says that Thevet does not acknowledge how incomplete his discourse is.<sup>41</sup> Frisch thinks, rather, that Thevet is aware and unapologetic about how provisional his cosmography is; this is also against the opinion of Lestringant, whom Frisch says views cosmography as a self-destructive genre. But Frisch sees Thevet’s cosmographical knowledge as provisional and legitimate and argues for a reconsideration of the value and function of

35. Marot, “Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin,” 570.

36. Marot, “Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin,” 570.

37. Marot, “Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin,” 570.

38. Marot, “Epistre faicte pour le Capitaine Raisin,” 570.

39. See, for example, Lestringant, “Andre Thevet, cosmographe”; Lestringant, *Jean de Léry*; Conley, *Self-Made Map*; Besse, *Les grandeurs de la Terre*; Baselis-Bitoun, “Near and Far”; Labalette, “Andre Thevet.”

40. See Lestringant, *L’Atelier du cosmographe*; Frisch, “Passing Knowledge”; Cosgrove, “Global Illumination.”

41. Tinguely, “Le vertige cosmographique.”

what she calls “passing knowledge” in the history of the discourse of cosmography.<sup>42</sup> I do not propose to try to resolve the differences between those who praised or criticized Thevet among his contemporaries or those having opposing views since, but I would suggest that the prose and poetry in French, as well as in English and Spanish, are intricate, and that to conceive of one view of knowledge or representation in this European expansion will not do full justice to this discourse, just as there is no one Indigenous knowledge or view of the encounter with the Europeans.

Étienne [Estienne] Jodelle’s prefatory ode in Thevet’s *Singularitez de la France Antarctique* is a key example.<sup>43</sup> The imagery is of writing and voyaging as a harvest, but the poem is also a way to frame Thevet’s work within the divine, human, and royal order of France, as well as within the wider mythological world of Neptune and Ulysses to show how Thevet’s voyage goes beyond that classical world. This voyage demonstrates how Aristotle was wrong about the torrid zone, so that the poem is trying to understand the new lands in terms of France and Europe, but also realizing that these new places are modifying received ideas and furthering new knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Experience corrects metaphysics.

Jodelle personifies the sky as being angry and annoyed at us, “nostre ingrate France” (our ungrateful France), in “ce temps vicieux” (this vicious time), and addresses Thevet through a typology between Europe and the Americas. The poet uses New France to call Old France up short, Old France being more monstrous and barbaric than the new lands: the “barbares” (barbarians) “marchent tous nuds” (walk all naked), but we, the French, “marchons incognus” (walk unknowingly); that is, the French go forth without knowing, ignorant. Jodelle adds: “Ces barbares pour se conduire / N’ont pas tant que nous de raison” (These barbarians to conduct themselves / Do not have reason as much as we do). The French lack knowledge, the barbarians, reason. These observations, a mix of recognition and misrecognition, attempt to make sense of the new geography that Thevet’s voyages and book have helped to establish. The God that the French have, but the barbarians do not, has banished hope

42. Frisch, “Passing Knowledge,” esp. 52, 67. And see Lestringant, “Andre Thevet, cosmographe.”

43. Jodelle, “ESTIENNE.” The original does not have line numbers. See also Thevet, *André Thevet’s North America*; Lestringant, *André Thevet*; Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World*; Conley, “Thevet Revisits Guanabara”; Frisch, “Passing Knowledge.”

44. For more general discussions, see Grafton, *New Worlds*; Romm, *Edges of the Earth*; Martin, “Experience of the New World.”

and “Aura de sa France pitié” (Will of his France have pity) and seems to see the birth of Thevet’s book as a cure for ignorance in this life. Jodelle’s poem embodies the known and unknown, Europe and America and the threshold between, and a representation of Thevet’s work as a movement to knowledge.

The preliminary poems are one side of the limen, and the prose works of Thevet are the other. Both sides are involved in the between of these prefatory poems and the cosmological text in prose, an interpoetics of trying to make the unknown known. Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle* has an even more elaborate front matter with more poems than that in his *Singularitez*, first in Hebrew, then in Greek, and then in Latin before the French poems appear.<sup>45</sup> The poems in Hebrew have as their authors those with royal appointments. The weight of the king and court is still behind Thevet; there is authority behind the author. The quality of the poets also gives weight to Thevet, the prefatory verse being of value in and of itself—in the learning and virtuosity of the art of poetry in the four languages, but also as a bridge or threshold to the prose work. The learned poets are part of the fulcrum of learning to the learned Thevet, cosmographer. Biblical, classical and vernacular languages in the poems prepare for Thevet’s vernacular prose. Ronsard’s French poetry leads to Thevet’s French prose.

Pierre de Ronsard’s French poem, his ode, is also an important part of this framing in the vernacular, the language that Thevet uses in his own prose text of his book.<sup>46</sup> The French supplements the poems in the ancient languages in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and is part of the establishment of French and its prestige in relation to the ancient languages. Ronsard begins with the images of a carpenter and forest, and then follows with a series of allusions to classical Greece to help frame this French cosmography in a time of expansion, exploration, and coming to terms with new peoples, lands, and knowledge. Moreover, Ronsard seems to compare Thevet to others like Jason, whom he apostrophizes and appears to address as “tu” (you), the ancient voyages being analogized to modern voyages. Ronsard’s image of the fir in the forest transformed into a mast leads to the sea and to Neptune, Thetis, Jason, and the Golden Fleece (“la laine doree”), the honour of all of Greece (“de toute la Grece honoree”), the Tritons, Phorcys (his offspring with Ceto being the Phorcydes or Graeae). The trio “portoient ta nef deffus les ones” (carried your [Jason’s] vessel above the wave), and “Orphé deffus la Prouë” (Orpheus above

45. Thevet, *Les Singularitez*; Thevet, *La cosmographie universelle*.

46. See Ronsard, “AV SEIG. A. THEVET.”

the prow) with his fingers plucking his lute. In *Metaphormoses*, Ovid represents all these gods and humans to express themes of change, transformation, and quest on land and on sea, something Ronsard uses as a vocabulary and grammar of exploration in Thevet, a cosmos of the old and new. Voyages and expansion overseas are part of the mythology of Jason and the Argonauts and Poseidon (or Neptune), and the story of Jason was also represented in the epic poem of Apollonius of Rhodes, the *Argonautica*. Ronsard uses the images of sailing the oceans and ports to represent Thevet, voyager and writer, “qui comme vn sçauant Ptolomee” (who like a learned Ptolemy) amassing books from past centuries (“les liures des fiecles passez”), spread renown (“empaneza la renommée”). Ronsard represents Thevet in terms of fairness and truth and against vice, someone loved by the people, by God, and by the French court, an image of justice. Being learned in virtue and caring for the learned while honouring knowledge, Thevet has almost alone gone beyond the Iron Age in which he and his readers currently live. Ronsard uses the weight of the divine and the human to frame and praise the royal cosmographer; he employs the myths of the ancient world to praise him and his work as he sees and writes his universal cosmography. Poetry and the classical world frame this endeavour. The interpoetics is ancient and modern, European and American, here and there, the threshold being temporal and spatial, between poems but also in service of Thevet and France in knowledge and exploration.

There are more poems in the paratext that prefaces Thevet’s prose. The figure of Jason continues to be part of this interpoetics between Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay as well as between them and Thevet, a bridge figure in and on the threshold of knowledge, between the known and the unknown. In his sonnet, Joachim Du Bellay adds to this poetic framing of knowledge and this praise of Thevet.<sup>47</sup> My analysis involves interpretation and translation, a translating that represents an image of a transformation into a flaming star (“en aftre flamboyant”). The speaker says, “Pour auoir voyagé d’vn chemin ondoyant, / Qui va du Theffalique au riuage Colchide” (For having travelled on an undulating path, / Which goes from Thessalic to the Colchis shore). Du Bellay is representing the geography of Jason and his search for the Golden Fleece. Jason’s uncle, Pelias, had usurped the throne in Thessaly, which was rightfully that of Aeson, Jason’s father, a son of Cretheus and the founder of Iolcus. Pelias said that Jason would be king, however, if he could bring back

47. See Du Bellay, “SONNET”

the Golden Fleece from Colchis. The allusion to the shores of Thessaly and Colchis are part of the ancient Greek world and mythology and come to frame Thevet in this poem. Du Bellay muses, “Combien doit nostre France à c’est autre Aefonide” (How much our France owes to this other Aesonides), and talks about the Ocean, land, and Sun, asking, “A veu tout ce qu’enceint ce grand epace vuide?” (Have you seen everything that surrounds this great empty space?). Aesonides is another name for Jason, and France owes something to “this other Aesonides.” Du Bellay develops the comparison between Thevet and Jason:

C’eft T H E V E T qui fans plus des rocs Cyaneans,  
 N’a borné fon voyage, ou des champs Medeans;  
 Mais a veu nostre monde, & l’autre monde encore;  
 Dont il a rapporté, non comme fit lafon  
 Des riuages du Phafe, vne blonde toifon.

(It’s T H E V E T that without more than Cyanean rocks,  
 Has not limited his journey, or the Medean fields;  
 But has seen our world, and the other world again;  
 Which he reported, not as Jason did  
 From the shores of Phase, a golden fleece.)

Jason had to pass through the Symplegades, or Cyanean rocks, and thanks to Athena, his ship, the *Argo*, slipped by unscathed. In this extended comparison, Du Bellay portrays Thevet, who is and is not Jason. Du Bellay’s Thevet does not limit his journey, the fields of Medea, Medea who is part of the myth of Jason and the Argonauts and who helps him before they fall in love, a story that appears in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and in Euripides’s tragedy *Medea* and Apollonius’s epic, as well as book 4 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Du Bellay’s Thevet may go beyond Jason while being framed by him: “Mais tout ce qui se void fur les champs du l’Aurore” (But all that is seen in the fields of Aurora). In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Eos or Aurora personifies dawn and is the daughter of Hyperion and Theia and the sister of Helios, the sun god, and Selene, the moon goddess, so that Du Bellay’s sonnet gestures to Thevet being of and beyond Jason and Greek mythology. Du Bellay incorporates the new or “empty” spaces that Thevet explores and writes about, classical knowledge reconfigured in what we came to call the Renaissance. This rediscovery or reconfiguration of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin,

as can be seen in the arrangement of the poems in the front matter of Thevet's *Cosmographie universelle*, is part of the framing these poets, such as Du Bellay, perform. Poetry reaches back to earlier poems in ancient times to make sense of an expanding new world while understanding that these classical images, metaphors, comparisons, and stories cannot describe these voyages beyond this new poetic art, as exemplified in the poems of Du Bellay and others. The front matter also includes other poems or odes in French, including that by Jodelle and by Guy le Fèvre de la Boderie, who uses nine sets of strophe, antistrophe, and epode, an ancient Greek form.<sup>48</sup> The intricacy of the paratext is something I have suggested, the poems intrincating themselves and Thevet's prose text in figuration and configuration.

The matter of the poetic paratext in these key French prose texts of expansion is significant. There are also liminary poems in Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (1578). There are three liminary sonnets in this edition, two by two ministers of the reformed religion, Lambert Daneau and Pierre Melet, and an unsigned sonnet, "Tu fus par cy deuant la fidelle trompette," which figures in Pierre Poupou's *La Muse Chrétienne*, as Marie Christine Gomez-Geraud notes.<sup>49</sup> She also observes that the list of the three sonnets is extended by one in the edition of Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* in 1580, then by another again in the third edition of 1585—which is also enriched with a quatrain and an eight-line poem. From then on, as Gomez-Geraud says, the quasi-mathematical progression of the number of sonnets over the course of the publications breaks, the sonnet introduced in 1585 disappearing from the publication of 1594 but reappearing at the centre of the series of nine sonnets in the editions of 1599 and 1611. These details give us a window into how the luminary poems relate to the main prose text, and how intricate and changeable the front matter and editions are in the liminal relations and in the representation of Brazil and the lands unknown to the Europeans in an ever-changing and travelling epistemology. These changes embody the epistemic incorporation that can also be between while ever redefining both sides—preliminary poetry and the main prose text, the French and the Indigenous peoples.<sup>50</sup> In his sonnet, Lambert Daneau also recognizes the newness of the region to which Léry travels: "De Lery, qui nous peins vn monde tout nouveau" (Of Lery, who paints for

48. Jodelle, "ESTIENNE"; Le Fèvre de la Boderie, "A MONSIEVR THEVET."

49. Sonnet 58 in Poupou, *La Muse Chrétienne*, 30. See Gomez-Geraud, "Du Verbal au visuel," 216, 222n4.

50. See Gomez-Geraud, "Du Verbal au visuel," 216, 222n4.



us a world all new).<sup>51</sup> Compared to the liminary verse in Thévet's *Singularitez* and *Cosmographie universelle*, this poem is less interested in allusions to ancient Greece and the classical past to frame the unknown in the present and future. The sonnet ends: "Qui fans naufrage & peur nous rends en l'Amerique / Deffous le gouvernail de ta plume conduits" (Who without shipwreck and fear returns us to America / Under the rudder of your pen led). As in the earlier poems discussed, the addressee (here Léry, but before Thévet) is a voyager and a writer: the pen creates a work that allows the reader to travel without the actual voyage, without a shipwreck. Here, the pen becomes a rudder for the textual ship in both a possible or fictional world and the real or actual world.

In another context, in the edition of 1585, Pierre Poupo's sonnet to Léry also shows the typology of the so-called Old and New Worlds, Europe and the Americas, with all its ambivalence and contradiction.<sup>52</sup> Poupo addresses Léry directly, saying that he was here before the faithful trumpet, which summoned this Antarctic world ("ce monde Antartiq") to our faith ("à nostre foy"). Using images of blood, Poupo's speaker also represents France, a France barbarous to its own, and states that its people will take you ("te," that is, Léry) as their leader ("chef") and will go with you ("toy") to search there for some peaceful port. Using Léry's name explicitly in the address in the middle of line 12, Poupo stresses the knowledge of knowing how, without any mercy, the French each each other ("nous nous entremangeons"), the Indigenous people fearing that they came to dispute with them the title of savage ("le tiltre de Sauuage").<sup>53</sup> The real savage is the French person and not the so-called savage in America. There is an Italian phrase after the poem: "Felice l'alma chè per Dio sofpira" (Happy the soul who sighs for God). Religion is part of the framework to try, in crossing the threshold, to understand the new lands, a search between the preliminary poem and the main prose text. The attempt of embodying knowledge is a questioning of the typology of France and the new lands, of what is civilized and barbarous, the preliminary poem with a conceit that makes Léry into an explorer, perhaps like Jason.

Prefatory poems build one on the other, the paratext having interpoetics and relating to the main prose text. Du Bartas's poetry shows ambivalence in his representation of exploration and the "New World," characterizing explorers

51. See Daneau, "A Iean de Lery."

52. Poupo, "SONET"

53. Poupo, *Poésies*, 29.

as having “ventres goulus,”<sup>54</sup> or greedy bellies, and also expresses wonder in the Americas—“Et que diray je plus? C’est ce monde nouveau” (And what can I say more? It’s this new world)<sup>55</sup>—while also talking about subjects that include “Caribes cruels” (cruel Caribs)<sup>56</sup> “dans le cruel Brazil” (in the cruel Brazil),<sup>57</sup> ascribing cruelty to both peoples and lands.<sup>58</sup> What is old and new, what is here and there, what is known and unknown live in tension in this typology. French and European greed coexists with Indigenous cruelty. Du Bartas’s Americas are full of wonder and violence.

The French could be critical in prose and poetry, as can be seen in the works of Jodelle, Montaigne, L ry, and Poupo, who see the barbarity of the French civil wars, or the Wars of Religion, framing knowledge with experience, and establishing a typology of Old World and New World in a questioning of the violence and injustice in France. They represented a world that might be framed as one of the golden age and one of uncivil violence.<sup>59</sup>

English poets and poets in the service of England frame their representations of voyaging by using the past and present in different ways. As in the French examples, the English paratextual poems build one on the other, but they also preface, introduce, and frame the prose texts that follow. Ireland and the New World are “colonies” that become the subjects of English poets. Humphrey Gilbert was involved with both places. In 1578, Thomas Churchyard writes, “Sir Humfrey Gilbert sure, / and all his troupe is gone,”<sup>60</sup> and in 1582, Stephen

54. Du Bartas, “La Judit, Livre Sixiesme,” l. 10, in Du Bartas, *Works of Guillaume de Saluste*, eds. Holmes, Lyons, and Linker, 2:116.

55. Du Bartas, “La Premiere Sepmaine Le Troisieme Jour,” l. 276, in *Works*, 2:276.

56. Du Bartas, “La Premiere Sepmaine Le Sixieme Jour,” l. 289, in *Works*, 2:387.

57. Du Bartas, “La Second Sepmaine Les Colonies,” l. 459, in *Works*, 3:161.

58. Du Bartas, *Works*. See volume 1 for background. One version has “Je crain cest animal la terre sanglante / Des Caribes produit” (I fear this animal that the bloody land / Of the Caribs produce), and the other G version is “Des Caribes cruels la province sanglante / Produit un animal” (The cruel Caribs [of] the bloody province / Produce an animal”; “La Premiere Sepmaine Le Sixieme Jour,” ll. 289–90, in *Works*, 2:387). For an important contribution that discusses Poupo, Du Bartas, Lescarbot, and others, see Lapp, “New World,” 158–60; and, on those pages, some more extensive quotations that include some of those I quote in the main text. For a discussion of religion in writers like L ry and Du Bartas, see Shifflett, “Confessional Fragments.”

59. See Lapp, “New World,” esp. 164 for an elaboration of a similar view.

60. Churchyard, “A matter touching the Journey of Sir Humfrey Gilberte Knight,” in *Discourse of the Queenes Maiesties Entertainment*.

Parmenius, a Hungarian in the service of England, says in a Latin poem (here in its English translation), “The sails which England’s Humphrey Gilbert sets / Towards a world our fathers did not know / In seas they scarcely saw.”<sup>61</sup> Gilbert seeks a world that earlier generations did not know in seas unseen and, therefore, lacked knowledge and could not have been eyewitnesses to the past. The present goes beyond the past. The Churchyard volume also includes a poem on Martin Frobisher, who sought a northwest passage in the north of the Americas in what is now Canada. The poem begins:

Flue hundreth times, moste welcome home  
my friendes that farre haue bin,  
When thousands thought, that all was loste  
your fleete came safely in:  
To glad their harts, that long bewailde  
your toyle and hazard great:  
O giue me leaue, in English verse  
a whyle on this to treat,  
That doth dezerue, such worldes renowme  
and come to such good end,  
As forceth friends to fauour much  
and foes may well commend.<sup>62</sup>

Such voyages are dangerous and cause worry at home; thus, the author celebrates this return, these friends with great toil and hazard, and calls attention to this theme, through an apostrophe, by asking leave to treat “in English verse” what deserves “such worldes renowne” about the good end of this voyage. Verse celebrates this exploration, this voyage out and the return from across the Atlantic. As Francis Meres mentions in 1598, “Elizabeth our dread sovereign and gracious Queene is not only a liberal patrone unto Poets, but an excellent Poet herselfe, whose learned, delicate and noble Muse surmounteth, be it in Ode, Elegy, Epigram, or in any other kind of Poem Heroicke, or Lyricke.”<sup>63</sup>

61. Parmenius, *De Navigatione*, ll. 10–11. The English translation of Parmenius’s Latin poem comes from Parmenius, *New Found Land*, eds. Quinn and Cheshire. See also Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*.

62. Churchyard, “A welcome home to Master Martin Frobusher,” in *Discourse of the Queenes Maiesties Entertainment*.

63. Meres, “Comparative Discourse,” fols. 279–87.

Elizabeth I, who had colonial interests in Ireland, Newfoundland, Virginia, and elsewhere, was a poet who also had subjects who were colonist-poets, including Walter Raleigh and Edmund Spenser, whom I will discuss here. For the Elizabethans, including Humphrey Gilbert, his half-brother, Raleigh, and Elizabeth I herself, there was a typology between the old and the new, Europe and the Western Atlantic, Ireland and the Americas.<sup>64</sup>

As a transition from paratext to text, prefatory poetry to poem (more specifically, epic), I mention Spenser's poetry, which is ambivalent about empire. He represents the so-called New World, but Ireland is his main focus.<sup>65</sup> Spenser first mentions *The Faerie Queene* in his letter to Gabriel Harvey in 1580, the year Spenser found himself in Ireland.<sup>66</sup> Spenser was a colonial administrator in Ireland. Elizabeth I is important to Spenser, who in his epic seeks Elizabeth I's origin in Arthur, a poetic, mythological, and historical grounding of the present and the past as England sought to expand its power to Ireland and beyond, a threshold between then and now, here and there, known and unknown. America haunts book 1 in small traces. In book 2, Spenser mentions the Americas.<sup>67</sup> He suggests that the unexplored lands of Peru, the Amazon, and Virginia are like a "lond of faerie": new worlds expand our knowledge, imagination, and points of view.<sup>68</sup> Virginia and America are traces that haunt the poem, but they are not central. In book 5 of his epic, Spenser defends Arthur Grey (Lord Grey de Wilton), who was sent in 1580 as Lord Deputy of Ireland to quell the Second Desmond Rebellion (1579–83).<sup>69</sup> There is also a historical and a political threshold and not simply a poetic or mythopoetic dimension in representing or incorporating the known into the unknown in book 5. In 1598, during the Nine Years' War, Spenser had to flee his dwelling, which Hugh O'Neill's forces burned, and in

64. See Hart, "Riding Westward"; Brady, "Spenser, Plantation and Government Policy"; Brady, "Coming into the Weigh-House"; Herron, *Spenser's Irish Work*; Covington, McGowan-Doyle, and Carey, *Early Modern Ireland*.

65. Satterthwaite, *Spenser, Ronsard, and DuBellay*; Welch, "Anthropology and Anthropophagy."

66. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2. I used two editions of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in this research, the original 1596 edition (*Faerie Queene, Disposed into Twelve Bookes*) and one of the great modern editions by A. C. Hamilton, cited here. The modern edition will likely be more accessible to the reader.

67. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 169.

68. Spenser, *Faerie Queene, Disposed into Twelve Bookes*, 345; Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 27.

69. Spenser, *View of the Present State of Ireland*.

1599, Spenser died in London. *The Faerie Queene* was unfinished business. Spenser's endless work ends without its intended ending, and the vicissitudes of life and death in Ireland and England appear to be part of that composition and decomposition. The unfinished poem is a ruin in time, itself and its mutability being a kind of terminal paratext, to echo William H. Sherman.<sup>70</sup>

Here, I shift from paratextual poems to the opening of another epic, thus the beginning of the main poem. The Spaniards also used poetic devices and traditions from antiquity to represent expansion and colonial enterprises. Although Columbus drew on Marco Polo and other sources from Europe, Spanish-speaking poets from Spain or ones born in the Americas, like Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà (a Creole who studied at the University of Salamanca), drew on classical poetry to describe historical events in the Americas. This is another aspect of interpoetics, between Europe and the Americas, antiquity and the Renaissance. Villagrà wrote an epic, *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610), about the Spaniards coming to New Mexico.<sup>71</sup> The opening of the *Historia* is Virgilian, even more so than the allusions to Virgil in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). The gestures and conventions from the Latin epic are used to frame not the founding of Rome, as with Aeneas, but the founding of a Spanish colony north of the Rio Grande. As well as religious and legal frameworks, there are also poetic or literary networks to make the unfamiliar familiar, the Americas part of Europe, to incorporate New Spain into Old Spain, as the empire expands.

The epic opens in canto 1 with the line, "Las armas y el varón heroic canto" (I sing of arms and the heroic man), an echo of the opening verses of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.1–3): "Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit / litora" (Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy, / exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores). In its representation of its hero, Oñate, and his many challenges, this opening echoes Virgil's portrayal of Aeneas and his adversities.<sup>72</sup> Like Virgil, Villagrà

70. Sherman, "Beginning." Jason Scott-Warren mentions the front matter, which is all at the back in the 1590 edition. The "Letter to Raleigh" is relegated there, so this appended letter puzzles readers and creates a headache for editors, as Gordon Teskey discusses, because it did not appear in the six-book edition of the poem in 1596, just to give a few twists in this story. See Scott-Warren, "Unannotating Spenser," 155. For Teskey on the New World and on myth-telling, see Teskey, *Spenserian Moments*, esp. 348, 478.

71. Villagrà, *Historia*, eds. Encinias, Rodríguez, and Sánchez. See also Miguélez, "Comentario histórico-literario"; López, "Disputed History"; Chang-Rodríguez, "Literatura"; López-Chávez, *Epics of Empire*; Martín-Rodríguez, "Epic Return(s)."

72. Villagrà, *Historia*, 3n3.

also uses the imagery of navigation, as can be seen in line 4: “Por vn mar de disgustos arrojada” (Though cast on a sea of cares). Villagr , in the first person, sings of Juan de O ate, who

Los hechos y proezas va encumbrando  
De aquellos espa oles valerosos  
Que en la Occidental India remontados,  
Descubriendo del mundo lo que esconde,  
“Plus Ultra” [...] (canto 1, ll. 6–10)

(Is raising to new heights the feats,  
The deeds, of those brave Spaniards who,  
In the far India of the West,  
Discovering in the world that which was hid,  
“Plus Ultra” [...])<sup>73</sup>

While emphasizing the valour and bravery of the Spaniards, who “descubriendo del mundo lo que esconde,” Villagr  calls the Americas “la Occidental India” and mixes the Virgilian sea voyage with the experiences of the explorers of the Americas, making the epic of Europe into the epic of the “New World.” This “discovering” of a hidden world, at least out of sight for the Spaniards and Europeans, is part of the “further on,” or the going beyond, of those who travelled past the geographical bounds of the ancient world and the “Plus Ultra” on the Castilian coat of arms, which is still on the current version for Spain that Felipe VI adopted in 1981. Villagr  dedicates the poem, as seen in line 14, to “Christian ssimo Felipo” (the most Christian Philip), that is, to Philip III, the son of Philip II, who was still the king when O ate set out on his expedition.<sup>74</sup> Christianity is central to European expansion, as can be seen in the papal donations, and Villagr  stresses the Christian dimension in the opening of the poem.

In addressing the king, Villagr  speaks of “el evangelio santo y Fee de Christo” (the evangel holy and the Faith of Christ) and calls O ate “aquel Christiano Achilles” (that Christian Achilles; canto 1, ll. 28–29), identifying this Christian epic hero with Homer’s Achilles, a feature often found in “New World” epics, especially those about the conquest of Mexico, such as Lobo Lasso

73. Villagr , *Historia*, 3.

74. Villagr , *Historia*, 3nn5–7.

de la Vega's *Mexicana* and Saavedra Guzmán's *El peregrino indiano*, which have their origins in Tasso's Christian epic.<sup>75</sup> Villagrà's Renaissance epic moves from Europe to America and represents continuity and change, the known and the unknown, an incorporation of a poetics between. Classical imagery punctuates the opening of this Christian epic as Villagrà describes the Aztec founding of the city of Mexico in terms of the founding of Rome, a direct typology of Europe and the Americas:

Eterna su memoria perdurable,  
 Imitando quell Rómulo prudente  
 Que a los Romanos muros puso tassa,  
 Cuya verdad se saca y verifica  
 Por aquella antiqúisima pintura  
 Y modo hieroglífico que tienen. (canto 1, ll. 90–95)

(Memorial eternal of their name, and lasting,  
 In imitation of wise Romulus  
 Who put in measure to the walls of Rome,  
 Whose truth is drawn from and is proved by  
 That extremely ancient painting  
 And hieroglyphic method which they have.)<sup>76</sup>

In this poetic mythology, in a kind of typological allegory, Villagrà reads back the Aztec founding of Mexico as if it were in imitation of Rome, a place the Aztec, unlike the Spaniards, did not know. In bringing the mission of Christian Rome, the Spaniards return to the founding of pagan Rome in order to incorporate the Mexican and Aztec empire into their own empire. In this interpoetics, or this similitude, Villagrà also signals the difference in writing between the Aztec and the Spaniards and the classical Romans. In this passage, Villagrà brings together the legend of the founding of Rome, as Ovid depicts in book 14 of the *Metamorphoses*, with a signalling of difference in the Aztec glyphs (hieroglyphic or pictorial) from the typographical or written Castilian, as Bernardino Sahagún (1499–1590) discusses in *Historia Antigua de México*.<sup>77</sup> Although

75. Villagrà, *Historia*, 4n9.

76. Villagrà, *Historia*, 6.

77. Villagrà, *Historia*, 6nn22–24. See Sahagún, *Historia general*.

relating the founding of Mexico to that of Rome, which from a Catholic and Western European view is high praise, even in the twists of the legendizing and mythologizing, Villagr , in matters of language, favours Castilian over Aztec: “Del escribir illustre que temenos” (Of the noble writing of which we have; l. 101).<sup>78</sup> As with Romulus and Remus, there are two brothers in Villagr ’s account of the origins of the Aztec world, but here they divide the region.<sup>79</sup> Here is a founding myth of the Aztec in a Spanish epic, in which the poet creates a typology of Rome and Mexico, and of early Iberia and the lands of the Aztec.

And so ends the first of thirty-four cantos. It suggests the introduction of lands new to the Spaniards that Villagr  explains in terms of Europe, but also with distinctions from it. This between poetry brings together past and present, here and there, in an attempt to incorporate the unfamiliar lands into the familiar in European terms, to know the unknown and sometimes unknowable, and to do so not simply in terms of poetry but also in terms of religion, politics, and other matters. History and fiction merge in this Renaissance epic of the Western Atlantic.

In 1606, Marc Lescarbot went to New France with Jean de Poutrincourt, governor of M ry-sur-Seine, lieutenant-governor of Acadia, the commander of the settlement in Acadia, and he wrote lyrics, including a Pindaric ode and a masque, classical and courtly forms.<sup>80</sup> In representing “New France,” Lescarbot uses a classical form from classical Europe to address the king in 1607, beginning with an apostrophe to Neptune to give him the verse to resonate the glory (“la gloire”) of the greatest king that the universe has produced in long memory (“de longue memoire”), and drawing on Pindar, whose odes used the triadic structure of a strophe, two or more lines repeated, then an antistrophe with a harmonious metre, then an epode or a summary line in a different metre. In the masque, *Le Th atre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*, Lescarbot once more represents Neptune and the typology between France and New France, which appears in a speech of la Troisi me Sauvage (the Third Savage):

Ce n’est seulement en France  
Que commande Cupidon,

78. Villagr , *Historia*, 6.

79. Villagr , *Historia*, 6–9.

80. Ryder, “Beincourt de Poutrincourt.”



Mais en la Nouvelle-France,  
 Comme entre vous, fon brandon  
 Il allume [...] <sup>81</sup>

(It is not only in France  
 That Cupid commands,  
 But in New France,  
 As between you, his brand  
 He lights up [...])

The speaker mentions Cupid (“As between you”) and an image of the brand, something seen in the last two sonnets in Shakespeare’s sequence (sonnets 153 and 154), and he offers his gift to Poutrincourt at the request of his beloved, a tribute in New France expressed in terms of the courtly love of France.<sup>82</sup> At one moment, like some of his compatriots, the speaker speaks up for the Indigenous peoples: “Ce peuple n’est brutal, barbare ni Sauvage, / Si vous n’appellez tels les hommes du vieil Age” (This people is not brutal, barbaric or Savage, / If you do not call these the men of the Old Age).<sup>83</sup> Lescarbot is using the French word “savage,” or wild, and relates them, without naming them, to the wild men in earlier ages in Europe. This is trying to know from earlier knowledge, to incorporate this wildness into a typology of past and present, France and New France. By implication, he is saying, in this trope and comparison that others among the French used, that the wild people among his ancestors are like the wild men of the Western Atlantic.<sup>84</sup> This typology is important in the poetry here discussed, a key part of the interpoetics of recognition and misrecognition, knowing and unknowing, that coexist in the representations.

In my experience with texts of the Renaissance and the Reformation that represent the Americas, there is ambivalence and contradiction, and this is true of the poetry I have discussed here. The poems that the French, the English, and the Spanish make in and of the Americas incorporate and do not incorporate

81. Lescarbot, *Les muses*, 24.

82. Shakespeare, “Sonnets 153 and 154,” eds. Blakemore Evans and Tobin, 1871. See also Welch, “Performing a New France,” 456.

83. Lescarbot, *Les muses*, 37. See Lapp, “New World,” 160–61.

84. Baudry, *Marc Lescarbot*; Emont, *Les muses*; Welch, “Performing a New France”; True, “Strange Bedfellows”; Hebbinckuys, “Les échos”; Mougín, “La Sublimation.”

the lands and peoples of the Americas. They attempt and question, assert and doubt, the typology between the “Old World” and the “New World.” Like Jean de Léry, these poets and their readers attended to and found attractive that which eluded European ordering or control, the empathy for difference through imagination, something that Janet Whatley argues is “at the heart of the critical consciousness that the New World developed in the Old.”<sup>85</sup> The poetry, even as it might be a part of Western European expansion, asserts and questions itself, and there was a mix of the certain and the tentative. The Europeans, despite bravado and myths of triumph, mission, redemption, and paradise, represent the doubt that otherness creates even in knowing.

Poetry represents that which is between word and world. Thus, unfamiliar peoples and lands defamiliarize European poetry and poetics, creating doubt in a kind of interpoetics, a poetry between and among the French, English, and Spanish poets, poets who frame their poetry in a European poetic tradition but cannot make it strictly of Europe. After Columbus, neither the “Old World” nor the “New World” was the same, in art or in life.

Both the interpoetics of prefatory poems in and of themselves and their relation to the prose texts they frame and introduce have qualities of the limen or threshold, crossing borders that assert and erase themselves, both paratext and text having intricate and porous borders. Beyond examining the prefatory poems and the paratext, I also discussed briefly book 1 and more of Spenser’s epic and the opening of Villagrà’s epic, which frames and unframes the rest of his epic. Interpoetics has much to do with prefatory poems calling attention to other prefatory poems, as well as introducing what follows in prose, much as the beginning of an epic poem functions as its own pretext.

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85. Whatley, “Impression and Initiation,” 24.

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