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In this essay, I would like to analyze the ways in which certain Portuguese and British texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries articulate European perceptions regarding the Native peoples and the landscapes of the New World. At the outset, however, and as a sort of *caveat lector* stance, I should like to emphasize the fact that the methodological strategies deployed here owe a great deal to the theories of post-structuralist historian Hayden White. According to White (and as would seem more than obvious to most contemporary scholars) interpretation is a vital part of historiography. However, total objectivity in the interpretation of historical texts or data is impossible. Clearly, the individual historian is conditioned by her/his own background, opinion and prejudices when interpreting a set of data; indeed, not only the definition of exactly what constitutes a "fact" or bit of data is highly subjective,<sup>1</sup> but the choice of which "facts" to foreground or gloss over is an individual one which may be related to political or aesthetic criteria but which only considerable hypocrisy or arrogance would seek to represent as the disembodied voice of Truth or Authenticity.

As White points out in the Introduction to his book *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, historiography is a narrative science, both because it deals with historical texts or data and because historians interpret texts and data and articulate their own conclusions in textual terms. He thus focuses his inquiries into the metaphorical nature of historical representation by analyzing the linguistic tropes recurring throughout historical documents and texts.<sup>2</sup> In this sort of approach, the main constraints on the interpretation of data are related to plausibility and to the credibility (as well as to the academic and editorial clout) of the individual historiographer. Obviously, if I as a rather obscure Portuguese academic and Literary Person (and not, say, a tenured professor of history at an Ivy League university) were to interpret certain texts as proof that Brazil was colonized by extra-terrestrials, it would be rather difficult to find an audience for my conclusions, except perhaps among certain professionals in white coats.<sup>3</sup> The example is of course a facetious and

1. For an incisive (and highly amusing) analysis of the way supposedly objective Truths are constituted in the physical sciences, see Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, Harvard UP, Cambridge, Mass, 1987. Claude Levi-Strauss has pointed out in *The Savage Mind* that historical "facts" are not absolute givens but are rather constituted by the historian himself/herself through abstraction, through which the historian "chooses, severs or carves up" His material in order to construct a credit narrative.

2. Post-structuralists have on occasion been accused of writing obscurely. In Milan I was told the following riddle: Question: "What do you get when you cross a Mafioso and a poststructuralist?" Answer: "Someone who will make you an offer you just can't understand." Nonetheless, I must confess that I found it bizarre in the extreme when the term "trope" was denounced in 1992 in Milan as "post-structuralist jargon"; Aristotle and his kin would no doubt spin in their graves at the mere thought. It would seem to me that any university graduate, however sketchily educated or wilfully obscurantist, would be aware that the term is a staple of Greek and Latin rhetoric and refers to the figurative use of language in texts.

3. This is not to say that the same affirmations made by this putative Ivy League professor would automatically be accepted by fellow historians. At least, one would suppose not.

extreme one, but I use it to attempt to make the following points: a) texts (historical or otherwise) are produced by concrete historical individuals, who no matter how hard they may strive for impartiality are influenced by their own foibles, beliefs and obsessions; b) these same texts can generate an indefinite number of interpretations, though some may be more creditable (and/or marketable) than others while others are dismissed as absurd; c) the critical reception of these interpretations is conditioned by the plausibility of the narrative the historiographer constructs as well as by social, political and economic factors related to the reader, the context, and the professional status of the historiographer herself/himself. For all these reasons, in my own recent research into European perceptions of the Native peoples and landscapes of the New World, I have attempted to present the texts I analyze (and my own conclusions about them) not as eternal immutable verbal artifacts brilliantly represented and selflessly articulated by Yours Truly, but rather to state my own theoretical premises as explicitly as possible and to focus on the rhetorical strategies and figurative language through which certain individuals have sought to make sense of their perceptions of the peoples and landscapes of the New World.

In this essay, then, I examine apparently disparate accounts written by Portuguese and English (Puritan) travellers. It should be noted that despite the obvious differences between the texts in question, certain common assumptions seem to underlie these accounts. In both Portuguese and Puritan texts, one senses a need to come to terms with the unknown, to bind and capture the Other in discursive terms in order to render alterity less threatening. Two of the texts which seem to me to be most emblematic in regard to the initial Portuguese and Puritan perceptions of the New World are the letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha to King Manuel I of Portugal, and some passages of William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*. I shall thus go on to analyze the disparities and similarities in these accounts, and the ways in which they can illuminate how each culture constructed its own visions of the New World. Finally, I shall attempt to pinpoint some of the rhetorical features of the perceptions of Portuguese and English Puritan explorers and colonizers, and their consequences for the peoples and lands they encountered.

The motives behind Portugal's maritime expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have been extensively debated by historians;<sup>4</sup> in the interest of brevity one can group them in three clusters. The first set of factors is related to Portuguese prowess in seafaring and shipbuilding. It has been observed that the country's unique geographical location and cultural features enabled Portuguese shipbuilders to incorporate elements of nautical design from the Atlantic, Christian Mediterranean, and Moslem areas in order to build ships suitable for long-distance voyages. There were as well a considerable number of skilled seamen, given the dimensions of the Portuguese fishing trade. In addition, technological refinements such as the compass, rudder and portolan chart made it possible for Portuguese ships to venture beyond the traditional coastal fishing grounds.

4. See, for example, William Greenlee, *A Viagem de Pedro Alvares Cabral ao Brasil e A India*, trad. Antonio A. Doria, Livraria Civilizacao, Porto, 1951, and A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *History of Portugal*, Columbia UP, New York, 1972, among others.

The second set of reasons encouraging expansion can be linked to ideological factors. The mythical appeal of uncharted seas and undiscovered lands can be traced in part to Arab historiography and its tales of the "Adventurers", who presumably left Lisbon and discovered a group of inhabited islands prior to the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup> Another legendary account which had a powerful effect on the Portuguese popular imagination was the myth of Prester John, a vastly rich and powerful Christian emperor who was said to rule over vast dominions in the East. Also, the crusading ideal had been prominent among the Portuguese since the eleventh century; besides saving the souls of the Infidel, the Crusaders saw themselves as the defenders of Christendom from Moorish depredations, thus ensuring the prosperity of Christian Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Thirdly (and perhaps most important) were a number of economic motives. The debasement of the Portuguese currency, due to the gold shortage in fourteenth-century Europe, had reduced the revenues of the king and the nobility, who saw in the conquest of foreign territories a way out of their financial difficulties. Other factors included the chronic shortage of grain, the need for spices and dyestuffs, and the enormous profits to be obtained in the incipient slave trade.<sup>7</sup>

The abovementioned factors led the Portuguese court to sponsor a series of voyages whose purpose was to explore the African coast and to find a sea route to India, in order to wrest control of the lucrative spice trade from Venetian and Moslem merchants; the most noteworthy expeditions were those of Diego Cão (1482), Bartolomeu Dias (who rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1487) and Vasco da Gama, who finally reached India in 1498. Da Gama's voyage was highly successful, in that it demonstrated the potential profits that the spice trade could bring to the Portuguese, as well as providing logistically valuable information about the characteristics of the ports along the African coast. Da Gama was also convinced of the existence of Christian communities in India, which provided an additional incentive for future missions: that of coming to the aid of fellow Christians and of converting the Infidel. It is important to remember as well that this endeavor had been legitimized by the papal bull of 1497, which allowed King Manuel II to keep for the Portuguese crown any lands conquered from the pagans, with the condition that efforts should be made to spread Christianity in the territories under his dominion.<sup>8</sup>

It was in this historical context that a fleet of thirteen ships under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral set sail from Lisbon on March 9, 1500. The expedition departed in an atmosphere of popular rejoicing, after a mass in the presence of the King; the ships were bedecked with gaily colored flags, and the caravelles set sail to the music of flutes, drums and trumpets.<sup>9</sup> Five days later the fleet sighted the Canary Islands, and on the twenty-second of March reached the Cape Verde Islands. For reasons that are still unknown, Cabral headed west after leaving the Cape Verde Islands. On April

5. See A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *op. cit.*, p. 136. Future references will designate this text as *History*, followed by the page number.

6. See *History*, pp. 137, 141.

7. See, for example, Luis de Albuquerque, *Os Descobrimentos Portugueses*, Alfa, Lisbon, 1985, pp. 12-18

8. A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *History*, pp. 221-223.

9. See Jaime Corteso, *A Expedicao de Pedro Alvares Cabral e o Descobrimento do Brasil*, Lisbon, s.d., pp. 164-169, and William Greenlee, *A Viagem de Pedro Alvares Cabral ao Brasil e a India*, Livraria Civilizapao, Porto, 1951, pp. 23-24. In future references, this text will be designated *Viagem*.

21, land was sighted, and on April 23, Cabral's men disembarked on what they initially believed to be an island, which they named the Land of the True Cross. There they remained, trading with the Native populations and resupplying their ships with water and firewood until May 2 when they continued their voyage, heading for the Cape of Good Hope and finally to Calcutta.<sup>10</sup>

The main sources of information about Cabral's voyage are to be found in the *Letter* narrative of Pero Vaz de Caminha; the letter of Master John, a Galician astronomer, regarding methods of navigation; and the *Account of the Anonymous Pilot*, which is especially informative in regard to the contacts of Cabral's fleet with the merchants and rulers of communities in Africa and India.<sup>11</sup> Of these three documents, however, Pero Vaz de Caminha's *Letter* is by far the most valuable as a source of information about the Portuguese perceptions of the landscapes and peoples of the New World. One can point out the existence of two currents in Portuguese historiography of the period: the first deriving from the tradition of clerical historiography in Latin, and characterized by an impersonal, solemn tone, and the second originating in popular oral romance narratives, which were marked by detailed, eyewitness accounts of events and by the vivid portrayal of the individuals and groups involved.<sup>12</sup> It is clear that Vaz de Caminha's account, given its stylistic characteristics, belongs to the second group.

Pero Vaz de Caminha was the son of Vasco Fernandes de Caminha, a minor knight linked to the Duchy of Guimaraes. When the fleet of Vasco da Gama returned with news of the wealth to be gained in India, Caminha accepted the post of scribe with the expedition of Alvares Cabral; on reaching Calcutta, he was to take part in the commercial activities of the "factory" or trading post which the Portuguese intended to found in this city. Little is known about his early life; according to the historian William Greenlee, he was the possessor of a solid education, although he had not studied Latin.<sup>13</sup> What does come across in his *Letter*, however, is the personality of a highly sophisticated man with extraordinary gifts of observation and narrative clarity, not to mention a genuine sense of wonder at the scenes he was recording for his King.

The first clues to the presence of the New Continent observed by Caminha were a sort of plant called "donkey's tail", seen floating on the waves in large quantities, as well as flocks of land birds which were known to the sailors by the rather grisly name of "stomach drillers". On the evening of this same day, according to Caminha, a "large, round mountain, which the captain named Monte Pascoal (Easter Mountain, due to the proximity of Easter Sunday) with lesser mountains and flatlands to the south"<sup>14</sup> was sighted. The following day the Portuguese anchored their ships close in to the coast, where

10. See Greenlee, *Viagem*, pp. 24-25.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-47.

12. See Antonio Jose Saraiva and Oscar Lopes, *Historia da Literatura Portuguesa*, Porto Editora, Porto, 1989, p. 76.

13. *Viagem*, pp. 88-89.

14. Pero Vaz de Caminha, *Carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha ao Rei D. Manuel II*, pp. 91-92, (my translation), in Greenlee, *Viagem*. Future references will designate Caminha's text as *Letter*.

we glimpsed men walking on the beach, about seven or eight in number according to those who went ashore first...the Captain ordered Nicolau Coelho to go ashore to explore the river. When the skiff reached the mouth of the river, there were eighteen or twenty men, dark, all naked with nothing to cover their shame, carrying bows and arrows. Nicolau Coelho made a sign to them to put down their bows, which they did. We could neither hear them nor talk to them because of the noise of the breakers. He gave them a red cap, and the lined hood he was wearing, and a black hat. And one of them gave him a hat made of long feathers, with the top made of red and grey feathers like those of parrots. Another gave him a long string of beads that look like pearls.<sup>15</sup>

With that, the Portuguese sailors departed, as it was growing late. Continuing their voyage along the coast in search of fresh water and firewood for their ships, they found a safe harbor for the following day. There, Cabral's men again encountered about fifty Native Brazilians, who although armed with bows and arrows, made no show of violence. At this point, the Portuguese took two young men aboard the captain's ship, where in the words of Pero Vaz de Caminha, they were received with "pleasure and celebration".<sup>16</sup> Our chronicler describes them in the following terms:

They were dark and reddish-brown, and go naked without any covering; it is nothing to them whether they cover or exhibit their shame, which they show with the same innocence with which they show their faces...Both had holes in their lower lips, into which they had inserted white bones about the breadth of a hand and as thick as a spool of cotton...this does not distort their speech, nor does it make it difficult for them to eat and drink.<sup>17</sup>

From this description, it has been deduced that these two men belonged to the tribe of the Tupiquins, who had originally lived in what is now the center of Brazil but at the time of Cabral's expedition occupied large extensions of the coastal areas.<sup>18</sup> The captain received the two Amerindians seated on a dais, with a carpet at his feet and a gold chain around his neck, possibly to impress his guests with the superior wealth and power of the Portuguese. According to Vaz de Caminha, one of them, on seeing the Captain's gold chain, pointed to it and then to land, as though to say that gold could be found there. The same gesture was repeated with a silver candelabrum and with a grey parrot. The captain then showed them a hen, which they found frightening and would not touch, and served them bread, cooked fish, honey, and figs, of which the two men ate little. One of the Native Americans, on seeing the white beads of a rosary, asked to be given them and put them around his neck. Then, says Vaz de Caminha,

he took them off and put them around his arm and nodded toward land and then to the beads and to the captain's chain, as though they would give gold for them... *we interpreted it that way because we wished it to be so* [my emphasis] for if he had meant that he would take the beads and the chain, this we did not wish to understand because we did not mean to give them.<sup>19</sup>

15. Caminha, *Letter*, pp. 93-93.

16. *Idem*, p. 97.

17. *Idem*, pp. 97-98.

18. See V. A. Metraux, *La civilisation materielle des tribus Tupi-Guarani*, Gallimard, Paris, 1928, p. 322.

19. Caminha, *Letter*, p. 101.

Here Vaz de Caminha is showing a hermeneutic sophistication and dry humor which is truly exceptional for his time. Interpreting signs according to one's own wishes and desires is nothing new, but being aware of one's own propensity to do so shows a degree of wit and honesty rare in any era.

It is significant that the Portuguese understood from the very beginning the importance of being able to communicate with the Native peoples. In order to achieve this aim, they followed a curious but highly intelligent policy: that of leaving convicts who had been condemned to death with the natives in order to learn their language and customs. If they were successful, they were pardoned and the Crown was able to profit from their store of firsthand information; if they failed (or died) the authorities had one less problem to deal with. Vaz de Caminha records the presence of the convicts, one of whom was named Alfonso Ribeiro, "a servant of dom joham teelo".<sup>20</sup>

One of the notable characteristics of Vaz de Caminha's text is the openness with which he admires the beauty of the male and female Amerindians. He speaks of the men's "handsome faces and well-made noses",<sup>21</sup> describes in minute detail the ways in which they paint their faces and bodies and dress their hair, and compares them to

birds or mountain creatures, whose feathers and fur grow stronger than those of tame ones...Their bodies are so clean and plump and handsome that it defies belief, which leads me to the conclusion that they do not live in houses and that the air in which they grow makes them like this.<sup>22</sup>

Later, however, he records a description of the dwellings of the Indians provided by the condemned men who had been ordered to spend the night with them on shore.<sup>23</sup> He portrays four Amerindian women whom he had observed as "very young and graceful, with long black hair hanging down their backs, so rosy and so clean", and then goes on to describe another woman in the following terms:

Her waist was so plump and well-made, and her shame (of which she had none) was so lovely that many of the women of our land, on seeing such features, would be ashamed that their own were not more like hers.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout his *Letter*, Pero Vaz de Caminha, recurs to tropes of parallelism or contiguity, particularly similes comparing the peoples and Nature of the New World to those of his native land. Thus he observes that the doves of the New Land are larger than those of Portugal, and that the climate is like that of the province of Entre-Douro-e-Minho; he compares one Tupiquin chief who is covered with feathers to an image of Saint Sebastian, shot through with arrows<sup>25</sup> (the image of this saint, who was held to have miraculous powers against the plague, was a common one in Portuguese churches of the period, particularly after the epidemic of the fourteenth century).

20. See Greenlee, *Viagem*, p. 102.

21. Caminha, *Letter*, p. 98.

22. *Idem*, p. 112.

23. *Idem*, p. 113.

24. *Idem*, p. 113.

25. *Idem*, pp. 113, 105.

Vaz de Caminha's *Letter* is also noteworthy in that it sheds light on the motivations underlying Portuguese maritime expansion. Ideological elements are certainly present; he describes how the Amerindians imitate the actions of the Portuguese when an open-air mass is celebrated and adds,

they seem such innocent people that if we could understand them and they us [again the preoccupation with being able to read one another's signs] they would become Christians at once...as God gave them good bodies and good faces and brought us here, it was not without cause, and as Your Highness wishes so much to spread the holy Catholic faith, you should be aware that their salvation would please God and would be easy.<sup>26</sup>

The only time that Vaz de Caminha recurs to Biblical typology is to compare the Natives to Adam, but he does so in order to reinforce an ideal of prelapsarian innocence and not of Original Sin. He does, however, remark that if the Indians approach to watch a carpenter erecting a cross, it is in order to observe his metal tools and not because of the cross itself. At another point in this *Letter*, he adds drily, "they are more our friends than we are theirs".<sup>27</sup> Lamentably, this remark would be, at least in part, prophetic, as the seventeenth-century chronicles of the Jesuit priest Antonio Vicura describing the exploitation of the Amerindian population of Brazil would attest.

Vaz de Caminha's *Letter* is full of interesting vignettes. Perhaps the most delightful one of all, however, occurs when the captain encounters a tribal elder with a green stone in his lower lip. When the captain asks to see it, the old man removes it and attempts to put it in the captain's lower lip. This in turn causes the sailors to laugh, which makes the captain angry. Nevertheless, he allows Diego Dias, brother of Bartolomeu Dias and commander of one of the caravelles, to go ashore. In the words of Vaz de Caminha:

Diego Dias of Sacavem, who was a charming, pleasure - loving man, took with him one of our pipers with his pipes then he danced with them [the Indians], taking them by the hands, and they frolicked and laughed to the sound of the pipes...after they danced he turned somersaults and cartwheels, which startled them and they laughed and frolicked a great deal.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps more than any other passage, this episode captures the mood of delight and wonder and mutual discovery which permeates Vaz de Caminha's text.

It is indeed difficult to imagine the austere Puritan, William Bradford, turning somersaults and cartwheels in the sand to make the Indians laugh. Bradford, the orphaned son of a yeoman farmer, had distinguished himself in his youth for his piety. At the age of sixteen, he became part of a clandestine separatist group that met regularly in the neighboring village of Scrooby. The groups eventually moved to the Low Countries in search of religious freedom in 1608 and Bradford joined them, working as a weaver in the city of Leyden. In the following years, he learned Dutch and French, as well as Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and continued his study of the Bible.<sup>29</sup>

26. *Idem*, p. 119.

27. *Idem*, p. 120.

28. *Idem*, pp. 111-112

29. See Shirley Barket, *Builders of New England*, Dodd, Mead Company, New York, pp. 6-9.

Due to economic difficulties and the fear of assimilation into Dutch society, the Separatists decided to settle in the New World, obtaining a charter in 1620 from the Virginia Company to establish a settlement in America. Along with 101 other men, women and children, Bradford set sail on the ship Mayflower in September 1620. Approximately two months later, land [Cape Cod, Massachusetts] was sighted, and after the rigor of the voyage the group decided to settle there rather than continuing south to Virginia.<sup>30</sup>

In all fairness to Bradford, it should be noted that a slight difference exists between the Brazilian coast in April, with its palm trees, parrots, and tropical climate and the Massachusetts coast in the month of November. Bradford himself acknowledges this fact in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, remarking ruefully, "For summer being done, all things stand upon them with weatherbeaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue".<sup>31</sup> He sees the land in terms, not of what it is, but of what it lacks, such as houses, towns, and inns, or friends to welcome the travellers, and characterizes the landscape and peoples of the New World as "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men".<sup>32</sup> Bradford recurs to Biblical typology to characterize Native Americans, citing the episode in Acts 28:2 in which St. Paul, shipwrecked en route to Rome, is assisted by "the barbarous people who showed us no little kindness", in contrast to the behavior of the Indians, characterized as "savage barbarians...readier to fill their sides with arrows than otherwise".<sup>33</sup> Bradford reacts to what he perceives as a hostile and near-demonic reality by, once again, citing Biblical precedent and comparing the Puritan emigration to the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

Bradford describes one of the initial contacts between Englishmen and Indians in the following terms:

when they had marched about the space of a mile by the seaside, they espied five or six persons with a dog coming towards them, who were savages; but they fled from them and ran up into the woods, and the English followed them, partly to see if they could speak with them, and partly to discover if there might not be more of them lying in ambush. But the Indians seeing themselves thus followed, they again forsook the woods and ran away on the sands as hard as they could.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted that Bradford makes no attempt to describe the Native Americans, except to characterize them as savages; his tone strikes a curious balance between curiosity and dread. The Englishmen, attempting to pursue the Indians, end up getting thoroughly lost and thrashing around in the thickets. Finally they come across the site of a deserted Indian village where they find corn, which they immediately steal. Bradford justifies this action by once again recurring to Biblical typology, namely the episode in which Moses sends scouts to the Valley of Eshcol, who return laden with grapes, saying, "...so, like the men from Eshcol, carried with them the fruits of the land and showed their brethren".<sup>35</sup> Presumably, recourse to the

30. *Idem*, pp. 10-14.

31. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, in *Concise Anthology of American Literature*, ed. George Mc Michael, Macmillan, New York, 1985. Future references will designate Bradford's text as *Plymouth*.

32. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 31.

33. *Idem*, p. 31.

34. *Idem*, p. 32.



Mosaic antecedent was meant to provide an authoritative justification for acts of petty larceny.

One of the episodes in *Of Plymouth Plantation* which is most shocking to present-day sensibilities is the oft-quoted one in which Bradford describes a Puritan attack on a Pequot village at the height of the Pequot War:

[Those] that first entered found sharp resistance from the enemy who both shot and grappled with them; others ran into their houses and brought out fire and set them on fire, which soon took in their mat; and standing close, with the wind all was quickly on flame, and thereby more were burnt to death than was otherwise slain; it burnt their bowstrings and made them unserviceable; those that scaped the fire were slain with the sword, some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatched and very few escaped...they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they have the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them.<sup>36</sup>

In this notable example of christian charity and gentleness, Bradford once again recurs to Biblical typology; the phrase "sweet sacrifice", for example, echoes the injunction in Leviticus 2:2, "The Priest shall burn the memorial...upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord". Again, Biblical precedent linked with the Puritan concept of America as the New Israel, land of the Puritans themselves as the Chosen People, is used to legitimize indiscriminate slaughter. Historians like Andrew Delbanco have commented on how easy it is to fall into Manichaistic generalizations here, opposing perfidious Puritans to doomed Noble Savages (or vice versa); he remarks that the Pequots were an aggressive tribe who had made raids on Puritan villages.<sup>37</sup> Delbanco's point is a valid one and should be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, what seems most noteworthy about Bradford's text is the way in which he uses Biblical topoi to camouflage unpalatable realities which, more often than not, constitute direct violations of the Christian ethics he claimed to profess.

The differences in the perceptions of the New World and its inhabitants in the texts of Pero Vaz de Caminha and William Bradford are notable, as we have seen, perhaps not least because these two texts were produced in different historical contexts and were addressed to different audiences. Vaz de Caminha's *Letter* is impregnated with Renaissance zest and curiosity about the natural world; he is impressed with the beauty of the new continent and its peoples, and the Arcadian language with which he describes them is full of tropes of contiguity or parallelism, especially similes, through which he attempts to assimilate the New World by comparing it with phenomena of his own country. It should also be noted that the *Letter* is directed to Vaz de Caminha's King, and that Vaz de Caminha had every interest in encouraging King Manuel I to colonize the new land (and thus enrich his courtiers) by making it intelligible to him in terms to which he could easily relate. Bradford, on the other hand, prefers tropes of substitution, namely metaphor and allegory in the form of

35. *Idem*, p. 33.

36. *Idem*, pp. 38-39.

37. See Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, Harvard UP, Cambridge, 1989, p. 106.

Biblical typology. This may partly be due to the fact that his *Journal* was not aimed at a contemporary audience, but was purportedly a private document; it is clear that Bradford is writing for posterity, and seeks to convey his view of the Puritan community as the Chosen People of God and of America as Promised Land. It should also be noted that for twentieth-century writers to characterize Bradford as the devil incarnate would be to follow Bradford's own rhetorical tactic of allegorizing and demonizing one's adversaries. Bradford was indeed capable of reactions of compassion, as when he describes Indians dying of smallpox:

For want of bedding and linen and other helps they fall into a lamentable condition as they lie on their hard mats, the pox breaking and mattering and running one into another, their skin cleaving by reason thereof to the mats they lie on. When they turn them, a whole side will flay off at once as it were, and they will be all of a gore blood, most fearful to behold. And then being very sore, what with cold and other distempers, they die like rotten sheep. (*Plymouth*, pp. 270-271)

Here he uses a trope of contiguity, concretely a simile, to compare the bleeding bloated bodies of the Indians to those of rotten sheep. This might be interpreted as meaning that Bradford is seeing Indians as fellow human beings, who like the Puritans are mortal and thus subject to deadly disease.<sup>38</sup> But then he slips back into allegory on attributing the low number of smallpox cases among the British colonists to divine Providence. As John Winthrop would conclude on observing the high mortality rate of Indians due to European diseases, as "for the natives, they are near all dead of the smallpox, so as the Lord hath cleared our title to what we possess".<sup>39</sup>

It should also be taken into account in a discussion of the differences underlying Vaz de Caminha's and Bradford's texts that Bradford's text was written nearly a century and a half later; thus, a certain Calvinist gloom and mistrust of the delights of earthly existence permeates his text. For Bradford, the people and landscapes of North America were of interest only insofar as they could contribute to realizing the Puritan vision of the City on the Hill. It is thus virtually impossible, for example, to find detailed descriptions of the flora and fauna of the New World in his text, much less to imagine him describing the beauty of the bodies of Native American women and remarking that those of his English countrywomen would compare unfavorably with them. Another difference is the unabashed glee with which the Portuguese writer discusses the financial profits to be obtained from the New World. This candour about economic motives is noticeably absent from Bradford's text, although the Puritans of later generations (and even of Bradford's own) were not averse to accumulating what were supposedly the earthly signs of divine favor. But perhaps the most important difference of all between the Iberian and British colonial mentalities is the one pointed out by Sacvan Bercovitch in *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*

38. It is curious that tropes of contiguity such as similes appear when certain common human frailties of Europeans and Amerindians are being described. One example is the 1636 text of Paul Le Jeune, a Jesuit, who describes the windy aftermath of an Indian banquet: "God knows what kind of music follows this banquet... As to the odors that are then exhaled in their Cabins, they are stronger than the perfume of roses, but not so sweet". Gabriel Segard, *Histoire du Canada*, Gallimard, Paris, 1865, pp. 379.

39. John Winthrop to Sir Nathaniel Rich, May 22, 1634, in Everett Emerson, ed., *Letters from New England*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1976, pp. 115-116.

The Puritans, despite their missionary pretenses, regarded the country as theirs and its natives as an obstacle to their destiny as Americans... The Spanish, for all their rhetoric of conquest, regarded the country as the Indians' and native recruitment as essential to their design of colonization.<sup>40</sup>

Bercovitch's observations regarding the Spanish are equally valid for the initial colonization efforts of the Portuguese, for whom (generally speaking) the Amerindian peoples of Brazil were not seen as obstacles but rather as instruments in their grand design for the New Continent.

It would be misleading, however, to allege that the texts have no points in common. The most notable of these would be the sense of mission. As Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out his study of the discourse of the Spanish colonization effort, *The Conquest of America*, Europeans tended either to perceive the Indian as similar but not equal, which would lead to assimilationist attitudes (as exemplified by the Iberian view of the Indian as instrument); or, on the other hand, to view him as radically different (as in the Puritan view of the Indian as obstacle) and thus an inferior against whom any violence is legitimate. It seems to me that Todorov's observation is equally valid for the Portuguese and Puritan texts we have observed here, in relation not only to the peoples but also to the landscapes of the New World. Pero Vaz de Caminha tends to characterize the native peoples in terms of his own values and ideals, and as likely candidates for conversion; the land itself is viewed in light of the profits (from the trade in gold, pearls and exotic fauna) that it can bring to his King. Perhaps for this reason, tropes of assimilation and contiguity recur constantly throughout his text. Significantly, in the accounts of subsequent Portuguese adventurers and missionaries, tropes of substitution similar to the ones found in Bradford's texts (allegory, metaphor, etc.) come increasingly into play, in direct proportion to the violence employed in subjugating the native populations and exploiting the natural resources of the new continent. Bradford, as we have seen, perceives Native Americans as little more than wild animals, and the American landscape as the embodiment of Satanic chaos: both represent an impediment to the construction of the City on the Hill, and as such are seen as obstacles to be eliminated at any cost. Thus it could be argued that the use of tropes of substitution to camouflage unspeakable realities and to justify unlimited violence would emerge as the logical consequence of the gap between Bradford's rhetoric and praxis.

In conclusion, it should be noted that though Vaz de Caminha's tone and actions are apparently less violent than Bradford's, it is clear that both attitudes have as their ultimate consequence the denial of genuine alterity. In view of subsequent events in both Brazil and the United States, it is painfully obvious that the tropes of colonialism were instrumental in not merely reflecting but actively shaping colonial reality, in capturing and destroying the very peoples and landscapes the colonizers allegedly wished to "civilize" and protect.

40. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1975, p. 141.