

Encounters with Animals in the New World

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the zoological representations created in New World texts by early European explorers working for the Spanish Crown from 1492 – 1557 CE. It examines the cultural frameworks and social knowledge of the human-animal relationship that impacted these writers before and after their arrival in the Americas, and how that knowledge influenced their own descriptions of indigenous fauna. Through my analysis of a variety of original texts, both written in Europe and in the Americas, I delineate the ever-evolving perception of the human-animal relationship through the depictions of New World animals by these Pre- and Early-Modern European writers. While I base my analysis in Ecocriticism, specifically Critical Animal Studies, my aim is to contextualize these authors as a bridge between the medieval and early modern understanding of fauna, and the subsequent representation of New World animals.

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Introduction: Animals Represented through Classical, Medieval, and Modern Perspectives

For much of human history, our curiosity has been piqued by the animals that inhabit the world with us. Our Neanderthal ancestors attempted to capture their numbers and movements in their cave paintings; early civilizations tried to tame them and use them for food, labor, and companionship; early philosophers tried to determine how humans and animals were both alike and different. Before Aristotle's *Historia animalium* and his *De mirabilibus auscultationibus*¹ (fourth century BCE), other ancient writers, such as Ctesias and Scylax, traveled the known world, from Europe to India and Egypt, collecting information about the natural world and the animals that inhabited it (Romm 86). Animals were mostly depicted in Classical and Medieval Western European literature in legal documents, translations of Classical natural histories, and fables² (Salisbury 26). However, as animal literature evolved, animals were described in both real-world and metaphorical terms, giving animals material and allegorical literary representations.

The early explorers and writers of the New World³ were faced with an interesting contradiction: while geographically and empirically moving forward, their animal

¹ *History of the Animals* and *On Marvellous Things Heard*; all translations in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted.

² The fable is a genre that originated in Antiquity and evolved over a millennium and was incorporated into a variety of religious faiths and cultures as didactic texts to teach social norms.

³ I realize that the terms "New World" and "Old World" can be viewed as pejorative and antiquated, much like using the terms "Dark Ages" and "Renaissance" in place of Pre- and Early Modern. For this dissertation I have chosen to include the stylizations of "Old World" and "New World" as they were the terms that were contemporary to these authors; they also enable me to generalize literary references of the various fauna that were located in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

descriptions were often formed from genres that had saturated European literature for generations. In this dissertation, I analyze the animal descriptions in the works of several New World writers and I show how this New World animal representation was influenced by the animal literature available during the medieval period. Ultimately, I use this information in my conclusion to answer these questions: what is the value of these early New World animal representations and the use of various animal genres, and what implications might they have in the context of Ecocriticism, specifically, Critical Animal Studies?

Outlining zoological literature that was available to Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century is specifically germane to my literary analysis, as the representation of animals by each of the four writers analyzed in this dissertation shows influence from Classical and Medieval sources. In this Introduction, I present the field of Ecocriticism and its offshoot, Critical Animal Studies, in order to frame the four zoological genres on which I focus that were available in the medieval period. Then, in Chapter One, I examine Christopher Columbus's *Diario de a bordo del primer viaje* and a sampling of his letters from and about the New World and compare the animal descriptions found in them to the bestiary tradition that was popular in the late Middle Ages (twelfth-fourteenth centuries CE). Next, I dissect the animal representation found in Ramón Pané's text *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* to show its connection to the marvelous descriptions found in the paradoxographies. In Chapter Three, I deconstruct zoological descriptions in the *Cartas de relación* written by Hernán Cortés within the context of the hunting manual tradition. Finally, I analyze the animal representations

found in the *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by Gonzálo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés to show their correlation to the natural history tradition. In each chapter, I show the literary, cultural, and educational conditions that influenced these writers and their manner of representing New World animals. Each of these four writers travelled across the Atlantic for different reasons and brought with them a cache of cultural and educational resources which influenced how they viewed and described the world. Zumthor and Peebles note that, “Every author, every traveler, constructs his object by virtue of his culture, his experience, the circumstances of his life”. While the literary inclusion of animals by early European invaders offers the reader an idea of how these writers viewed, valued, and contextualized New World fauna, these representations of animal bodies also gives scholarship further insight into the overall European perspective of the human-animal relationship. The use of various genres, amplified by the invader’s education, religiosity, social class, and purpose in the New World, identify key aspects about how Europeans understood the role of animals both within European society and within the framework of conquest.

Ecocriticism and Critical Animal Studies

Understanding the role of animals within human society is no simple task. Each culture appropriates animal bodies and represents them in a variety of different ways. In this dissertation, I focus on the Western understanding of the human-animal relationship, which falls under the general categorization of Ecocriticism and, more specifically, within Critical Animals Studies. Ecocriticism, as defined by C. Glotfelty, is an interdisciplinary “... study of the relationship between literature and the physical

environment,” which creates a mode of analysis that ties culture, science, history, and politics to an environmentally based agenda (xix). Garrard defines it more generally as the study of the “...relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history...” (5). Within these two definitions lies the study of animal representation in literature, or Critical Animal Studies, laid out by Terry Eagleton as the study of the organization and structure of discourse and representation of animals, as well as the effects these literary forms and devices have on readers and society (205). The term “ecocriticism” was not coined until after the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, a text that analyzes the environmental and animal impacts of herbicides and pesticides, in which the reader is immersed in an apocalyptic fable of a world in which the use of those chemicals continued to kill all living creatures in its wake (Garrard 1). After its publication, there was a small but noticeable cultural shift throughout the West that emphasized an environmentally conscious and morally aware political orientation. This shift grew with subsequent publications from other ecocritics such as Cheryll Glotfelty, Raymond Williams, Joseph Meeker, Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, and Greg Garrard.

Developing out of Ecocriticism and from the western social movement for animal liberation that began in the 1960s, Critical Animal Studies has grown into a multidisciplinary and intersectional social and academic movement that includes, but is not limited to, the literary, environmental, historical, linguistic, agricultural, feminist, and sociological disciplines. The field came to the attention of the academe in 1971 with the publication of *Animals, Men and Morals* by Rosalind and Stanley Godlovitch and John

Harris, which outlined the moral status of the non-human animal. Two years later, Oxford philosopher Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*, provoking debate about the position of animals within the human context, and generating scores of publications on the topic of animal commodification.⁴ Critical Animal Studies includes a variety of scholars, such as Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Karl Steel, Kelly Oliver, Peter Singer, Dawne McCance, and, to some extent, Michel Foucault. According to McCance, the field of Critical Animal Studies began as a specialization of analytic philosophy which “set out to both expose, and to offer ethical responses to, today’s unprecedented subjection and exploitation of animals” (3).

The vast majority of ecocritics and animal studies critics began much like Aristotle, through observation, experimentation, and analysis. Eye-witness accounts are a major aspect of Critical Animal Studies. Observation of animals in both their natural and industrialized environments is an essential tool of the field. However, in merely observing animals and remarking on their behaviors, humanity is, essentially commodifying them, and recategorizing the characteristics and behaviors of the few as the standard norm for any given species. In recent years, publications have moved beyond examining the mere exploitation of animals by humans to questioning the overall human-animal relationship.

Some critics, such as Jacques Derrida (*The Animal that Therefore I am*, 1997), argue that the foundations of literary and social animal commodification can be found in

⁴ The term “commodification” is debated in some circles of the academe. In the context of this dissertation, “commodification” refers to the use of an animal as an object, which encompasses both physical objects (as labor, transformed into goods, etc.) and as represented objects (as described in written work).

René Descartes' treaty *Discourse on the Method* (1637 CE), in which he states that animals feel neither pleasure nor pain, have no rationality, and no consciousness, and thus, they are basically machines. He labels the nonhuman animal *bête-machine* (beast-machine) to denote its automaton-like qualities (Descartes). In fact, the question of our relationship to animals and to what extent animals are like humans began much earlier than the seventeenth century, as evidenced by Aristotle's observations on animals and their use as human commodities in both the physical and metaphysical sense. Karl Steel, in his work *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (2011), incorporates pre-Cartesian writers, such as Saint Thomas Aquinas, Gregory the Great, and Louis the German, to support his theory that the human distinction between man and beast allows us to commit violence upon nonhumans and, as a byproduct, upon humans that are not like us. These Classical and Medieval sources are germane to this dissertation in that their representations of animals as commodified goods filtered through European society and culture, and became part of the common knowledge that late medieval writers used to represent the animals of the New World. Garrard asserts that throughout history, humans, including the four authors that I analyze, have viewed the natural world and the animals in it as a cornucopia of material and metaphysical resources, commodifying the material for physical survival and repurposing it metaphysically for cultural enrichment (19). In the following sections of this Introduction, I outline some of the metaphysical commodification of animals through the use of animal representation found in literature available to the general European educated classes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Throughout this dissertation, I analyze the New World animal representation of

Columbus, Pané, Cortés, and Fernández de Oviedo within the context of literary descriptions and physical commodification and, in my conclusion, I argue that animals represented in literature by any individual, viewed through the lens of Critical Animal Studies, is entirely dependent upon exterior prevailing forces, including education, society, culture, and social class.

Bestiaries

Bestiaries were manuscripts popular from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries throughout western Europe, and contained descriptions of the physical and behavioral characteristics of known and fantastic animals. Most of these texts were illuminated. The bestiary tradition derives from the medieval desire to represent the deeds of Christ allegorically through the existence and behaviors of animals. Bestiaries influenced the descriptions of New World animals found in Christopher Columbus's texts. Columbus was constantly searching for signs and symbols that his expedition was a divine one, and his representation of New World animals, as I outline in Chapter One, demonstrates this continual search.

In many respects, the bestiary tradition is built on the backs of the natural history,⁵ the paradoxography,⁶ and the fable traditions⁷ that came before it. Natural histories are represented through the physical and behavioral descriptions of the animals in the

⁵ Natural history is the study of animals and plants, with a focus on observation rather than experimentation. I discuss this in-depth further on in this Introduction.

⁶ Paradoxography is a genre of Classical literature that describes abnormal or unexplainable phenomena in nature. Like the Natural History, I discuss this in-depth further on in this Introduction.

⁷ I will not be discussing fables in this dissertation, but they influenced the bestiary tradition. Briefly: fables use personified animals as metaphors for proper everyday social behaviors in order to tell a story that had a moral ending. They originated during the Classical period, and they were popular in medieval Europe from the ninth century onwards and greatly influenced manuscript marginalia (Salisbury 87).

bestiary texts. The interest in fantastic and even non-existent animals in later bestiaries is characteristic of paradoxographies. The reflection of proper social behavior while personifying animals is a distinctive aspect of fables. The merging of the empirical works of Aristotle, Herodotus, Aelian, Pliny, and Isidore of Seville, among other writers, with emerging Christian morality created a space in manuscript culture for the development of the bestiary tradition. This merge produced the *Physiologus* (written between the second and fourth centuries BCE), the didactic, proto-bestiary text that combined animal behavioral observations with examples of Christian morality.⁸

While the original Greek text of the *Physiologus* has been lost, it was relatively popular, and there were many partial translations completed in Latin and vernacular languages throughout the centuries⁹ (Badke). As the *Physiologus* developed into what we now know as the bestiary (around the twelfth century CE), cataloguing each text and its origins became more difficult. Each translation of the original Greek text was edited by its translator based on his own determination of which animals to include. Later, those texts were translated into the vernacular and new animals were added to them. For the

⁸ Scholars apply the word *bestiarium* only to those texts which descend from the *Physiologus*. Academically, it is not appropriate to call just any text or work that describes animals written between the second and fourteenth centuries a bestiary (Clark 10). For example, Frederick II's *De arte venandi cum avibus* (thirteenth century CE) is a treatise on bird hunting in which the bodies and behaviors of many birds are described, but cannot be considered a true bestiary as it is not derived from the *Physiologus*. I make this distinction here as I do not comment on all the genres related to animals from the medieval period in this dissertation, nor do I make any claims in Chapter One that Christopher Columbus's work is a bestiary. I show, instead, how Columbus's animal descriptions were influenced by the allegories found in the bestiary tradition in correlation to his own religious beliefs, his obsession with signs and symbols, and his cultural background.

⁹ Likely the first translation from Greek into Latin was sometime in the third or fourth centuries, as two books from Saint Ambrose's *Hexameron* (386-388 CE) were influenced by the *Physiologus* (McCulloch 21). There are numerous existing translations (in their various forms) and they have changed hands frequently, so it is difficult to catalogue them. For example, the manuscript once labeled "Berlin, Hamilton 77" was once called "B⁶ in Carmody's *Versio B*", and is now labelled "New York, Morgan 81" (McCulloch 22).

sake of clarity, twentieth-century cataloguers leaned towards the simplified form of the “Four Families,” a system implemented by Montague Rhodes James in the 1920s¹⁰ (McCulloch 22). Bestiaries, then, were widely available in western Europe in both Latin and vernacular languages by the end of the fifteenth century CE. By 1492, the information contained in bestiaries was considered common Christian knowledge, expressed in art, sculpture, and church services, and used for both entertainment and education. Christopher Columbus was socially educated of the symbolic nature and characteristics of animals made common knowledge by the bestiaries.

The true author of the Greek *Physiologus* is unknown, but of the many suspected authors are Epiphanius, Peter of Alexandria, Saint Basil, John Chrysostom, Athanasius, Saint Ambrose, and St. Jerome (Badke). Scholars believe it may have been produced in Alexandria, Egypt, as many of the represented animals (it is likely that there were between 40-48 animals in the original *Physiologus*) inhabited that region, and other writers as late as the fifth century identified its origin as Alexandria (Badke). Also, the animals in the *Physiologus* are Christian allegories, and the allegory was a recognizable literary genre used by the Alexandrian school of Christian philosophy¹¹ (Salisbury 86). The Alexandrian tradition of this period frequently used allegorical representations of Biblical morals and mysticism to study nature (McCulloch 17). It is unknown if the

¹⁰ The First Family (tenth-thirteenth centuries) includes all the Latin translations of the Greek *Physiologus* and “transitional texts”, or those which show the gradual expansion, in Latin, of the original text (McCulloch 25-33). The Second Family is the group of texts that are recognized as the first bestiaries from the twelfth century and most are in Latin; the Third and Fourth families are bestiaries from the thirteenth century and all are in vernacular languages (McCulloch 38-40).

¹¹ Alexandria was known for its collections of folklore and traditional stories from the Far East, and it was a center of knowledge for the ancient Greeks thanks to Alexander the Great’s inheritor, Ptolemy (367-282 BCE).

original compiler of the text added the Christian moralizations, or if they were added later, and there is no known complete translation of the *Physiologus* (Clark 8; Badke). However, in existing Latin and vernacular translations, some authors limited their inclusion to a handful of the animals from the original text, while others included some of the original animals and added in new additions.¹²

The *Physiologus* (translated as “the naturalist”¹³) is a text that is not meant to be a study of animal behavior or an emotionless description of the marvelous. The *Physiologus* was designed to outline human Christian nature and moral behavior through allegory (Badke). Joyce E. Salisbury describes the text as a warning against the devil and his attempts to lure Christians into sin (56). Essentially, it is a collection of allegories meant to educate humankind in the Christian faith by using animal behavior as signs, symbols, and evidence of Christian morals.

As such, the *Physiologus* was influential throughout medieval western Christian Europe. According to Florence McCulloch, “The Latin *Physiologus* and its enlarged form, the bestiary, are among the best-known types of mediaeval didactic literature” (7). Although considered an empirical text in the early Middle Ages because it describes animal behavior, modern scholars consider its series of allegories as a didactic text on Christianity. While the animals in the *Physiologus*, much like animals in fables, take on “proper” social behaviors, unlike fables, these are specifically Christian allegories,

¹² Scholars have used the First Family bestiaries in order to determine which animals were likely original to the Greek *Physiologus*.

¹³ According to Michael J. Curley in his English translation of parts of the *Physiologus*, the greater meaning of the title is not simply “the naturalist”, but a term that implies “one who interpreted metaphysically, morally, and, finally, mystically the transcendent significance of the natural world” (Badke).

excluding those of all other aspects of society, such as the oppression of the lower classes, social hierarchy, intelligence, wit, and the sexuality of women (Salisbury 87). The entries in the *Physiologus* usually begin with a quotation from the Bible, followed by a physical and/or behavioral description of the animal in question, then a Christian moral/allegorical story follows, and either concludes there or with another Biblical quote (Salisbury 86). For example, Abbot Theobaldus of Monte Cassino (eleventh century), allegorizes the lion in his First-Family text. He writes two “natural history” points that describe the animal’s behavior: when the lion detects a hunter, he will use his tail to erase his footsteps so that he cannot be tracked, and when his cubs are born, they are dead, and will not live until the sun sets on the third day after their birth (6). He ends the allegory with the mysterious line, “Now whenever he sleeps his eyelids never are closed” (7). Theobaldus then glosses the allegory to describe how these two animal behaviors are Christian allegories: that God redeems sinners by erasing their sins upon confession, and that Jesus, after the crucifixion, rose at the end of the third day and went to Heaven (7). The final line that closed the natural history section is now clarified: “Shepherd, Thou guardest Thy flock evermore from assault of the Demons” (7). Thus, the lion’s behavior has a deeper symbolic meaning, outlining the strength behind confession and forgiveness, describing the Resurrection, and indicating the watchful eye of Christ over his flock.

The *Physiologus* should be understood, then, as a tool that helped medieval European Christians contextualize their behavior. The *Physiologus* can also be considered a transitional religious text that separates the bestiary from the natural history, the paradoxography, and the fable. As it was translated and added on to over

time, the behaviors and characteristics of the animals were further expanded upon and given more allegorical meaning. Artistic illumination strengthened both the didactic and religious symbolism found in the text. Ultimately, the animals of the *Physiologus* are not important as animals, but become vehicles for transmitting deep, metaphysical Christian truths.

Natural histories and the *Physiologus* remained popular among early medieval European intellectuals, and using pagan sources in Christian contexts was commonplace. Church Fathers believed that Classical heritage offered a wide sampling of animal motifs that they were able to use to both educate students about the natural world and inspire them religiously or artistically (Benton 40). After the turn of the first millennium, and probably due to increased contact with Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Asia, innovation became a core feature of the art found in illuminated manuscripts. Writers and artists began to expand the *Physiologus* and add paintings and marginalia (Benton 17). Based on the many available sources of natural history and religious animal-based texts around the millennium, there existed many different (and often contradictory) interpretations of any given animal's behavior, body, or metaphysical meaning (Benton 17-18).

An example of one of these influential texts is Saint Ambrose's¹⁴ *Hexameron*, written sometime between 387 and 389 CE, based on a work of the same title and subject matter written by Saint Basil, bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia seventeen years before (Ambrose vii). While not a bestiary itself, the animal descriptions and metaphors

¹⁴ Bishop of Milan (340-397 CE)

in this text had a great impact on the Second, Third, and Fourth Family vernacular bestiaries. This text is structured around the six days in which Christians believe God created the world; it is meant to explain Genesis and teach Christians about morality. Saint Ambrose mostly references the Old and New Testaments, but he also uses other voices of authority from the Classical period, such as Aristotle and Plato, to align Christian morality with scientific, intellectual thought (viii, 3-4). Books Five and Six, while not bestiaries themselves, influenced the growing bestiary genre through their animal descriptions which include information that is categorized as both natural history and as religious metaphor. The partridge, for example, is described by Saint Ambrose as both a cunning, lackadaisical mother, and as metaphor for the wayward Christian who is lured away by the devil but who will return to Christianity after hearing the Word of God (Ambrose 234-235).

Another author who influenced the content of the bestiaries was Isidore of Seville¹⁵ (560 – 636 CE). According to Florence McCulloch, “The *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville was the work which effected the first change in the content of the *Physiologus*” (28). Book Twelve of the *Etymologiae*, *De animalibus* became the first source of information for new additions to the Latin translations in the First Family, and Isidore’s categorization of animals (quadruped, fish, birds, serpents, etc) influenced the structure of the Second-Family Latin bestiaries (Isidorus 28; Clark 11).

Saint Ambrose and Isidore of Seville’s writings show that the literary references to animals were changing in the late Classical period due, in part, to the use of animals as

¹⁵ Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* was an early encyclopedia, and the animal descriptions within it had great influence on many animal genres, including the bestiaries.

Christian allegories. These authors, as well as other writers, such as Saint Basil and Saint Augustine, legitimized pagan animal literature through Christian allegory. Non-Christian writers, such as Solinus (third century CE) and Pliny the Elder (first century CE), also incorporated information about fauna into their works, which was later worked into both the Latin and vernacular bestiaries (MCCulloch 28).

The First-Family Latin bestiaries tended to be spiritual in nature but were not heavily theological (Clark 7). They were present in parochial schools as early as the eleventh century and, along with the Bible, Aesop's fables, Solinus' *Collectanea*, Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*, and Saint Ambrose's *Hexameron*, they became a part of the most important and accessible animal lore available for medieval European readers and writers (Clark 9-10). In addition to this, the bestiaries seem to be aimed at undereducated children and adults of the lay public, and the uncomplicated animal descriptions were followed by clear moralizations to provide a social education with a Christian emphasis (Clark 91).

Cultural developments in Europe during the twelfth century created an environment that served as a catalyst for the evolution of the bestiary. As translations of scientific texts originally written in Greek and Arabic became available in Latin, there was also an increase in trade products that were available to upper and middle classes, with manuscripts being an important commodity. Across Europe there was improved textile production, aided by new agricultural techniques and advances in animal husbandry. Governments were moderately stable in the twelfth century and populations steadily increased. All these points combined and created a foundation of wealth that

supported intellectuality and education among the members of the growing middle class (Clark 14). This allowed for an uptick in the creation of manuscripts that were beautifully illuminated and represented the morals of the growing middle class, which included the bestiaries.

The Second-Family Latin bestiaries emphasized the major ethical-moral teachings of the basic tenets of Christianity, focusing on the Holy Trinity, the Resurrection, and personal salvation (Clark 21). By the time these texts were produced in the early twelfth century, people of the Middle Ages were already familiar with animal allegories and metaphors. Willene B. Clark notes that

A medieval audience would have been familiar with some of the Second-Family's lore from Bible readings in Church, and perhaps from references in sermons to animal symbolism from Scripture and from writings of the Fathers. Educated people would know the lore in some detail through *Physiologus*, the *Etymologiae*, and Solinus, all canonical primary-texts. And everyone, including the unschooled, knew the animal lore of traditional folk wisdom, which is embedded in much of the lore. The symbolism even of exotic and fantasy animals was often common currency in word and image: the lion as king, the pelican representing the Resurrection, the unicorn as Christ, the serpent as the Devil, and so on.

(22)

In the early thirteenth century, the Church interdicted most of Aristotle's nature books, as well as those of other Classical nature writers, but this occurred too late in the

development of the bestiary to have any negative impact (Clark 21). As the middle class demanded literature, bestiaries began to be produced outside of monasteries, and some were included in other manuscripts, such as anthologies or empirical texts that can be considered medieval European science (Hassig 184). By the thirteenth century, there were commercial manuscript workshops in university towns, such as Paris, Bologna, and London (Jackson 7). The Classical revival that began in the early thirteenth-century in Italy and Spain helped to spur on the production of the bestiary across Europe, mostly in the north. Ovid's *Metamorphosis* has many animal references, Pliny the Elder, Solinus and other Classical writers were read widely in translation, and there was a resurgence of Classical art as well, including statuary, columns with capitals, and wall paintings, all with an emphasis on animal and plant forms (Clark 17). European menageries, both public and private, containing exotic animals, such as lions and bears, became popular among the wealthy, and there was an increase in the incorporation of animals as political symbols and emblems of heraldry (Clark 18).

The vernacular editions of the *Physiologus* were longer than the Latin ones and they included information extracted from the religious and Classical sources mentioned previously in this section.. By the twelfth century, there were over a hundred animals included in the bestiary tradition (Hooglyiet 199). Bestiaries tended to be physically small and they were easily found throughout the late medieval Europe, particularly in the north, in vernacular languages because of their overall popularity (Benton 70).

In addition, the authors and copiers of the bestiaries left space for artistic renderings of each animal, but it is unclear where the illuminators of the late Middle Ages

found reference material for the new marvelous and composite creatures that were added into the bestiaries, such as the *parandrus*¹⁶ (Hoogyliet 199-201). It is rare to find a vernacular bestiary that is not illuminated (McCulloch 75). Animals from the East were recognizable from images on silk fabric or woven textiles that incorporated common Asian animals into the patterns, and some illuminators might have seen these animals alive, displayed in menageries by emperors and kings who had them imported from both the East and Africa (Benton 95). For animals that had never been seen by the illustrator, they were drawn from animals that the illustrator was familiar with, such as elephants that resembled pigs, or crocodiles with bird's talons (Clark 8). Bestiary images were included in other manuscripts as marginalia, and animals were painted frequently into psalters, Books of Hours, and other illuminated manuscripts (Hassig 186-187). Intriguingly, the symbolic nature of animals was growing throughout medieval Europe, as evidenced by the art of heraldry. Before the twelfth century, animals were used as part of decorative patterns on shields or other heraldic devices and had little if any meaning beyond their decorative value. However, after the twelfth century, heraldic animal symbols came to represent family values and morals, and they were inherited by each subsequent generation¹⁷ (Clark 19-20).

¹⁶ The bestiaries described the *parandrus* as an ox-sized, hoven quadruped with antlers that could change colors to camouflage itself.

¹⁷ This medieval tradition is still in place; the herald on the coat of arms of the current ruling royal family of England, the House of Windsor, is a lion and a unicorn, representing courage and purity, and both animal symbols also represent Jesus Christ. Columbus himself was granted a coat of arms in May 1493 when he was ennobled by the King and Queen of Spain, and it includes a lion similar (although not identical) to that of the Catholic Monarchs. The lion is still in the current coat of arms of the Columbus family (Thatcher). In no way do I argue that this use of animals-turned-family-symbols was limited to Christian / European / Medieval contexts; animals as family and personal symbols are found in indigenous cultures all over the world, including Asia, Africa, and America.

Given that literary material evolves over time, the bestiaries varied from the original Latin translations of the *Physiologus*. Early bestiary authors tended to prefer wild animals, as did the original author of the *Physiologus*, but the later European writers also incorporated domestic animals into their texts. The most inclusive bestiary from the thirteenth century was composed of thirty-six wild animals and twenty-one tame ones (Salisbury 104-105). Also different from the *Physiologus* was the incorporation of composite and marvelous creatures, which ranged from the beautiful (such as the unicorn) to the bizarre (such as the griffon). Medieval Europeans showed a strong preference for these imaginary beasts over wild and domesticated animals (Benton 16). Clark suggests that this is because medieval Christians were particularly interested in *mirabilium*, or the marvelous found in the unknown, a cultural attitude that was inherited from Aristotle, Pliny the Elder, and Solinus (Clark 27). Considering that few medieval people traveled farther than the outskirts of their own towns or regions, their general acceptance and enjoyment of stories about strange beasts, pleasurable events, or diverse geography, all packaged nicely as “God’s work,” is hardly surprising. For writers of the Classical period, both fact and fantasy were intermingled, and medieval Europeans shared this mindset, believing that what these *mirabilium* and their counterpart, *miraculum* (miracles that cannot be explained but by the hand of God), made nature comprehensible (Clark 27). Both *mirabilium* and *miraculum* can be understood as “wonder”, a concept on which the bestiaries were based and a likely reason for the popularity of these animal descriptions.¹⁸

¹⁸ As I outline in Chapter One, Christopher Columbus frequently referenced the wonderful and the act of wondering (in the spiritual sense).

The bestiary tradition was not successful in the long-term. It fell into decline as a literary genre in the fourteenth century due, at least in part, to the increased production of vernacular encyclopedias and didactic texts by contemporary authors, which were, in turn, influenced by the bestiaries (Clark 114). This waning is evident in that the bestiaries of the fourteenth century tended towards the economical; the expensive pigments and the gold paint usually associated with the animal images and marginalia of the late-twelfth and thirteenth-century bestiaries was replaced by simple ink drawings or less expensive colors (Hassig 183).

While bestiaries were not popular when the New World was discovered, their cultural legacy remained intact. As I mentioned before, bestiaries were present in European parochial schools as means of learning moral lessons through the entertaining examples of animal metaphors and allegories, in concordance with religious texts containing animals used as literary devices (Clark 91). Even those people who were unable to read or who had no formal education experienced the symbolic interpretations of animals through the family hearth, church sermons, stained glass, and other decorative arts (Benton 109). For medieval Europeans, symbolism provided a means of interpreting the natural, supernatural, and religious worlds, as well as unexplainable phenomena (Benton 112). Western Europeans living in the late medieval period, such as Christopher Columbus, were familiar with literary devices that used animals to represent both humanity and proper Christian behaviors. Columbus used signs and symbols in order to support his pursuit for trade and treasure in the East and to define human characteristics,

and he often described New World animals within Christian allegorical and metaphorical contexts.

Paradoxographies

While animal allegories of the bestiaries reinforced Christian behavior, other writers from Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages were looking at animals from a less Christian standpoint, and their descriptions outlined the wonders and marvels of the world. Scholars trace the development of paradoxographical literature from Ctesias (fifth century BCE) and Aristotle (fourth century BCE). It was a widely popular form of European literature and, as such, I will only mention here the most influential texts and authors in terms of topic, structure, and significance. Paradoxography¹⁹ is a literary tradition that was born in natural history but branched off into “wonder-catalogues” or “marvel-books,” collections of xeno-centered mythology, mariner’s tales, and superstitions, all intertwined with elements of natural history and fact. While often intermingled with natural histories (as in the case of Aelian), paradoxographies are a separate and identifiable form of literature. The earliest paradoxographical writers were travelers, called by the Greeks *logographoi*, and they collected anecdotes and knowledge that had accumulated in the oral traditions of various cultures throughout generations (Magnus 36). Rachel Hardiman notes that

Like much ancient writing in the historiographical and related genres, paradoxography is produced by compilation and excerption, but unlike the

¹⁹ Rachel Hardiman states that the term “paradoxography” was coined in the twelfth century by Tzetezes and it was used commonly to differentiate this genre from the natural history after the publication of Westermam’s *Scriptores Rerum Mirabilium Graeci* in 1839 (“About Paradoxography”).

former resolutely refuses to place its pillaged data in any theoretical – or, frequently, even formal – framework. Paradoxography...constructs a conceptual space where, there being no given norm against which to measure them, the fantastic and unbelievable themselves become the norm...Yet these marvels are all ‘true’, all culled from ‘authorities’...Paradoxographical literature could not exist without the prior and contemporaneous existence of a body of ‘real’ knowledge of the human and natural worlds, based on careful empirical observation and rational analysis, for it is on such knowledge that it depends for its validation. The proliferation of such writing is predicated on the burst of scientific activity which was a feature of the Hellenistic era. This activity in turn stemmed immediately from the work of Aristotle and his school in the field of the natural and physical sciences, and from the new data made available by the conquests of Alexander. (“About Paradoxography”)

Paradoxography, then, is both a “...spin-off of Aristotelian biology”, as well as a catalogue “...of the most bizarre and intelligible phenomena of nature” forming collections that denote aspects of both the natural and the supernatural worlds (Romm 92). It varies from natural history in that natural historians attempt to investigate or explain the marvelous or strange descriptions that they either read about or they experience firsthand (Hardiman). Paradoxographers merely report the marvelous anecdotes that they have heard about or seen, often in brief paragraphs, and leave it for the reader to decide what to do with that information. In Chapter Two of this dissertation,

I demonstrate how Fray Ramón Pané's *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* (1500 CE) contains many animal descriptions that rely upon the fantastic rhetoric of the paradoxography.

While the genre was not named until the twelfth century CE (see footnote 19), paradoxographers were attempting to write in a form separate from the natural history. For example, Aristotle maintains a distinction between his two kinds of animal descriptions; his natural history, containing biological and behavioral information of animals (*Historia animalium*) is written and organized separately from his "marvelous" anecdotal animal information (*De mirabilibus auscultationibus*). Aelian (second and third century CE), one of the most famous paradoxographers and author of *On the Characteristics of Animals*, wrote that it was his intention to provide information in nontechnical language in the hopes that any person could learn from the material he had collected (9). He gives no indications that he intends to analyze the material that he has collected, merely that he wishes to provide it for readers in a simple format.

Two different descriptions of bees found in works by Aristotle show the differences between natural historical descriptions and those that are paradoxographical. In his natural history, *Historia animalium*, Aristotle describes the behavior of bees in a lengthy paragraph:

8. The bee will live for six years, some have lived for seven, and if a swarm lasts nine or ten years, it is considered to have done well.

In Ponsu there are very white bees, which make honey twice every month. In Therniscyra, near the river Thermodon, are found of

bees which make cells in the earth, and in hives with a very small quantity of wax, but their honey is thick. The cells are smooth and homogeneous. They only do this in the winter, and not all year round; for there is a great deal of ivy in the place, which flowers at this season of the year, and from this they carry away the honey. From the higher regions of Amisus a kind of white honey is procured, which the bees form upon the trees without wax. The same is also found in another place in Pontus. There are also bees which form triple cells in the earth; these form honey, but never have grubs. All such as these, however, are not cells, neither are they formed by every kind of bee. (130)

In this natural history excerpt, Aristotle gives detailed information that is stated factually, with an attempt to give causation, and contains no information that seems marvelous.

A work of paradoxography, however, contains simple statements of the available facts and, even if the facts are marvelous or far-fetched, the author does not attempt to explain them or give causation for them. Aristotle also writes about bees in his paradoxographical treatise *De mirabilibus auscultationibus*²⁰: “They say that bees are stupefied by myrrh, and cannot bear its smell; some say that bees sting violently those smeared with myrrh” (247). The paradoxography presents the information simply, with no attempts to explain the bee’s behavior and no causation. Aristotle does not explain

²⁰ *On Marvellous Things Heard*

why the bees dislike myrrh in his paradoxography, but in his natural history, he clearly explains why he believes that they make hives in the winter.

Simplicity and brevity are not limited to description alone; the tone of the paradoxography must also be simple and concise, and the information is presented in a way that displays the exoticism of the object being described without sounding exaggerated or pompous (Romm 92). These texts are categorized according to the nature of each item (animal, human, composite creature, geographical feature, etc.), and each entry relies on voices of authority and enough source information to make the text both comprehensible and believable (Romm 93). The voices of authority, previous authors and information collectors from Antiquity and beyond, are some of the key components of a paradoxographical text.²¹ As James S. Romm notes, there is always a formulaic structure to the description of each item, claiming that “Aristotle said x...,” “Callimachus said y...,” and “According to Ctesias...” Also, the common use of assertive language gives little room for the reader to doubt the veracity of any statement or description, such as, “In Cappadocia there exists x...” or “In Egypt there is y...”²² (92).

This heavy reliance of Classical writers on voices of authority was inherited by medieval paradoxographers. As Western European kingdoms and empires expanded their borders and colonized new spaces, writers who did not or could not travel to those places used other voices of authority in order to substantiate their own paradoxographical

²¹ This reliance on voices of authority is also found in the natural histories, and it was commonplace among writers who wanted their work to be perceived as truthful. Most Classical and medieval texts that were meant for didactic study relied on voices of authority as source material. This tradition is still used in the modern academe by way of a bibliography and in-text citations.

²² Ramón Pané is heavily reliant on voices of authority in his *Relación acerca de la antigüedades de los indios* (1500 CE) as there are no written texts for him to study. However, he makes it clear throughout his work that he does not always believe these authorities.

works.²³ Fray Ramón Pané was reliant on the indigenous people of Hispaniola as voices of authority in order to write his *Relación*, marking him as one of the first recorders of the supernatural beliefs and practices of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean.

As noted in the comparisons of Aristotle's bees, the paradoxographer makes little effort to explain why a belief is held, or why a medicine is given, or how an action is completed. Paradoxographers rarely attempt to explain or question the wonders of the natural and supernatural worlds; their focus is on reported information gleaned from one or more sources, which limits their work to cataloguing and not to reasoning. Returning to Aristotle's paradoxography, we can look at his simple description of the woodpecker:

13. They say that the woodpecker climbs up trees like a lizard, upside down and on its belly. It is said to feed on insects from the trees, and to dig so deep into the trees in search for its worms, that it actually brings them down.

(De mirabilibus auscultationibus 245)

Above, his paradoxographical reference gives no causation. In the entry from his natural history below, *Historia animalium*, he gives causation for the woodpecker's behavior:

The woodpecker does not settle upon the ground, but it strikes trees in order to drive out the worms and flies which they contain, and it picks them up with its tongue as they emerge. Its tongue is wide and large. It walks upon the trees in any position, even

²³ One late-medieval example of this is the ten-volume text entitled *Decades* by Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, a scholar and royal advisor to the Spanish crown who had never traveled to the New World, but whose work depends upon Columbus and Pané as the first authoritative voices of the New World.

beneath the branches, like the gecko. It has claws stronger than those of the coloeus, which provide for its safety in climbing trees; for it fixes them in the bark as it walks up the trees. There is one kind of woodpecker less than the blackbird, covered with small red spots, and another kind larger than the blackbird, and a third kind nearly as large as the domestic hen. It builds its nest upon trees as it has been observed, both on olive and other trees; and it feeds upon ants and worms which live in trees. It hunts for worms so diligently that they say it hollows out the tree so much as to throw them down. A tame bird has been known to place an almond in a crack in wood, to prepare it for the stroke of its bill, and break it with three blows, in order to eat the kernel. (242-243)

Notice in the paradoxographical text, there is a use of a voice of authority (“They said...It is said...”) and Aristotle describes the woodpeckers search for food. In the passage from the natural history, Aristotle explains behaviors and he can qualify some of them with an explanation. He describes why the woodpecker has strong claws (“which provides for its safety...for it fixes them in the bark...”), and he gives causation by stating “It hunts for worms so diligently”, which qualifies the bird’s desire to bore deeply. This explanation is missing from the paradoxographical passage.

Knowledge of both the natural and supernatural worlds accumulated throughout Antiquity and the early medieval period, and writers took to writing these “believe-it-or-not” paradoxographical texts to describe what existed at the edges of the known world.

The paradoxography is a sub-genre of historiography, and early paradoxographers usually organized content into individual, often decontextualized, segments (Johnson 400). These segments could be alphabetized, or separated by geographical regions, or grouped into thematic books (Johnson 400). The most common trait that all paradoxographies share is segmentation in some form and these segments (whether a chapter or a book) have no unifying thesis, theme, or narrative (Johnson 400). An example is the work of Damascius (sixth century CE), whose paradoxography is composed of 372 exotic marvels contained in four books (segments) classified by their individual content as "...fictional stories, histories of gods, ghost stories, and natural wonders..." (Johnson 401). However, none of these classifications unified the 372 marvels as a whole. Aelian, the second-century paradoxographer, divided up his work, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, into seventeen books, and the chapters in each book do not relate to one another through any sort of cohesive theme based on animal types, as one finds in natural histories and early encyclopedias. In Book One, there are chapters entitled, "The Bass and the Prawn," "Mutual Hostility of Certain Fishes," "The Jackal," and "The Birds of Diomedea" (Aelian 3). Another example is Aristotle's *On Marvellous Things Heard*, which is only divided into short chapters, with no further subdivisions; Chapters 1-30, 63-77, and 139-151 include zoological information, while the rest are an assortment of human, cultural, and geographical observations (Hardiman). The entries range from the simple and matter-of-fact to the bizarre and exotic. For example, Aristotle simply states, "25. In Cyprus they say that mice eat iron" (*De mirabilibus*

auscultationibus 249). In the same text, he varies his description which borders on the bizarre:

30. Among the Scythians called Geloni they say that there is a beast, excessively rare, which is called “tarandos”; they say that it changes the colour of its hair according to the place it is in... it is difficult to catch; for it becomes the same colour as the trees and the ground, and generally of the place in which it is. But the changing of the colour of the hair is most remarkable; other creatures change their skin like the chameleon and polypus...

(*De mirabilibus auscultationibus* 251)

Here, there is of causation or inquiry: Aristotle does not explain why the *tarandos* changes color to match its surroundings, only that it does and that this action is “most remarkable”.

Matter-of-fact or bizarre descriptions aside, paradoxographers often relied on works written by natural philosophers for information. For example, Aristotle cited several sources in his *De mirabilibus auscultationibus*, including Hanno, Polycritus, Xenophanes, and Callisthenes, whose texts only exist in fragments today (Hardiman). During his conquest of Asia (fourth century BCE), Alexander the Great was well-known for commissioning common people, such as beekeepers, to send information about their work and about regional animals to Aristotle,²⁴ which the philosopher then incorporated into own texts on animals (Friedman 6). Two other major figures who were influential on

²⁴ Aristotle was Alexander the Great’s tutor.

the early paradoxographical genre were Herodotus and Ctesias (both fifth century BCE). Herodotus picked up most of his reported information in Egypt, and several his anecdotes are considered marvelous, such as ants the size of foxes who dug for gold (Magnus 36). Ctesias, who worked in the Persian court as a physician while he wrote his paradoxography *Indika*, also describes the marvelous aspects of the Orient, such as the Indian elephants who broke down walls (Magnus 36-37). Later, in the fourth century BCE, Antigonus left an incomplete text that included short chapters largely composed of examples from Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, from Callisthenes (fourth century BCE), and from some of his own observations (Hardiman). While Antigonus and Aristotle focus mostly on the natural world, with some hints at the bizarre or exotic, Apollonius (second century CE) writes several chapters of fantastic anecdotes relating to the supernatural world within his *Marvellous Accounts*, in which he credits at least twelve voices of authority (Hardiman). Phlegon of Tralles (second century AD) wrote *On Marvels*, in which he recounts ghost stories, tales of hermaphroditism, monstrous and/or multiple births, and the finding of enormous bones around the world (Hardiman).

The paradoxographical genre spread with Greek exploration and continued as a literary tradition well into the Roman Empire. One of the most influential Latin paradoxographies was written by Aelian, the Late-Antiquity Roman writer and scholar who was born around 170 CE (Aelian xi). His work, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, describes specific animals and their behaviors, their relationship to humans, and, in a few cases, the animals stand in as similes or metaphors for common characteristics of people. In the prologue, the author states that, "...dumb animals should by nature possess some

good quality and should have many of man's amazing excellences assigned to them..."

(9). Aelian does try to ascribe some of these "good" qualities, although he mainly focuses on describing aspects of animal behavior and/or how an animal might interact with humanity. For this reason, Aelian's paradoxography has quite a few elements that relate to natural histories. An example of this can be found in one of his descriptions of fish:

36. The fish known as Torpedo produces the effect implied in its name or whatever it touches and makes it 'torpid' or numb. And the Sucking-fish clings to ships, and from its action we give it its name, *Ship-holder*. (55)

The description of these fish is clear, concise, and structured like an entry in a natural history or an early encyclopedia, and it is clear that the method used by the original source was observation. In opposition is the description of the Jackal. Aelian gives it no real scientific study whatsoever other than how it behaves towards people:

7. Men say that the Jackal is most friendly disposed to man, and whenever it happens to encounter a man, it gets out of his way as though from deference; but when it sees a man being injured by some other animal, it at once comes to his help. (23)

Here he credits a voice of authority ("Men say...") to a rather bizarre and slightly unbelievable anecdote. Aelian also cites credible sources by name, mostly Aristotle. One example:

24. Whenever there is plenty of mud the Swallow brings it in her claws and builds her nest. If however mud is lacking, as Aristotle

says...she souses herself in water and plunging into dust befouls
her feathers... (185-187)

However, bizarre elements that are found in other paradoxa are not difficult to find in Aelian. Here, he gives an anecdote on the behavior of the Hoopoe, an African bird:

26. It happened that this bird had raised a family in the deserted part of a fortress, in the cleft of a stone that had split with age. So the guardian of the fortress, observing the young birds inside, smeared the hole over with mud. When the Hoopoe returned and saw itself excluded, it fetched a herb and applied it to the mud. The mud was dissolved; the bird reached its young, and then flew off to get food.” (189)

Aelian explains that the bird was not only intelligent enough to know that its young are still alive behind the mud, but it is also clever enough to know which herb to use to dissolve the mud, something that the man himself did not know and had to learn from the bird.

A descriptive text like this offered great entertainment value to its reader, and *On the Characteristics of Animals* was a very popular and influential text from the third century through the Middle Ages (Salisbury 67). While early Christians struggled to deal with the many complicated pre-Christian texts that they inherited from the Classical period, Aelian's treatise was adapted by medieval Christians and it helped influence the *Physiologus* and later, through that text, other medieval works of natural history and, significantly, the bestiaries (Salisbury 69). The *Relacion acerca de las antiguedades de*

las Indias (written around 1500 CE) of Fray Ramón Pané, the fifteenth century Hieronymite, includes descriptions of the animal kingdom that have been influenced by the paradoxographical genre. It includes all the fantastic animal descriptions that Pané can garner from indigenous voices of authority in his attempt to create a simple, cohesive text organized like a paradoxography that seeks to showcase some of the rituals and the belief system of the local Taino tribes on Hispaniola. In structure and in description, his animal representations relate to the simplified and marvelous tones shared by the paradoxographical genre.

Hunting Manuals

Describing interactions with animals, whether fantastic or real, has long been part of human history. One of those forms of interaction, hunting, has been one of the two main forms of food collection for humankind. By the time explorers were heading for the New World in the fifteenth century, didactic hunting manuals were commonplace among the aristocracy. Hernán Cortés, in his four complete letters written about his invasion of Mexico and Central America, often depicted in the zoological features of the New World in terms of hunting. He also described the capture of new territories, people, and tribute in terms like those found in hunting manuals from the late medieval period. In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I analyze Cortés' language use and animal representation of New World fauna within the complex code of aristocratic hunting manuals.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Europeans hunted to gain meat and secondary animal products, such as leather, but hunting was also a sport and beloved pastime of the upper classes (Fradejas Rueda 2). It was central to people from all social groups, from

nobleman to humble peasant, and was practiced by both men and women (Pollard vii). After the fall of Rome in the sixth-century CE, aristocrats began to form seigneurial identities that were expressed in part through clothing, behavior, and foods, but also through the "...appropriation of indigenous and exotic animals species, particularly by incorporating them into visual display...", of which the hunt was a large part (Pluskowski 32). Hunting was also a training ground for war. The methods used to capture and kill both quarry and enemy are similar, and European nobility understood that by training a young man to hunt, he was also being trained to physically fight and mentally strategize in war (Fradejas Rueda 3). According to Richard Almond, hunting was "...an integral part of aristocratic culture and was encouraged, not only as a rehearsal for war but also as a symbolic substitute for combat..." (131).

Hunting was not shared evenly among the Three Estates of medieval Europe. Generally, forests and game lands belonged to the local ruling family and were administered by officials appointed by the ruler (Pluskowski 33). Often, a hunting license was granted to a visiting or foreign nobleman or a social-climbing gentleman of lower rank, but non-titled freeholders (land or building owners) were only allowed to hunt on unenclosed common lands (Almond 4-5). Those serfs or peasants who did not own lands or businesses often resorted to poaching as they had few legal rights to hunt or trap anything larger than hares, rabbits, and non-game birds²⁵ (such as songbirds or crows)²⁶ (Almond 4; 22).

²⁵ An exception to this is hunting for fur-bearing animals, which was not the goal of aristocratic hunting. Peasants and trained professionals were involved in hunting for the fur trade (Pluskowski 34).

²⁶ Wild animals were frequent nuisances for the Third Estate, as they disturbed cultivated lands, and predators, such as foxes and wolves, and could kill humans, livestock, and poultry. Generally, only

In the context of this paper, and particularly in Chapter Three, I focus on hunting and hunting manuals used by the upper and lower nobility.²⁷ Nobles and knights were expected to hunt as a means to practice warfare without engaging another person, to avoid idleness, and as a social activity that allowed them to interact and “network” with various members from their community (Almond 13; 27). For young noblemen, whether from the upper or lower nobility, hunting was considered an essential skill, and it enabled them to not only learn war tactics and maneuvers, but also to learn about the geography of their landholdings, management of weapons and proxies (horses, raptors, and dogs), as well as to learn to negotiate and compromise with their peers (Almond 15). Hunting was also considered a moral obligation for the upper classes in that, as a by-product of being educational and pleasurable, it also was a means of supplying meat for the table (Almond 26). Ultimately, however, the hunt was less about bringing meat to the table and more about demonstrating prowess, dominance, chivalry (and, as a byproduct of this, desire), and intelligence.²⁸

The secondary form of hunting, hawking, was also a significant sport for the upper classes, due in part to the many hours required to train raptors, as well as the heavy expense of their upkeep, domestication, and equipment. While they also did not provide much meat for the aristocratic table, they were used for entertainment and to show status

aristocrats hunted other predators, but if a peasant were forced to kill one, it was considered acceptable (Almond 17).

²⁷ Hernán Cortés, whose letters I analyze in Chapter Three of this dissertation, was raised among the lower (and poorer) nobility of Extremadura, Spain.

²⁸ While an entire-day’s hunt might only produce one stag carcass, most table meat came from either livestock or from wild quarry that was caught or hunted by game masters, huntsman, or other trained professionals in the employ of the nobles (Almond 18). However, during the medieval period, meat was an expensive commodity, and it also symbolized status and rank as mostly only the upper-classes and the wealthy middle classes could afford fresh venison and game birds on a regular basis (Pratt).

by those who could afford them (Almond 20). Hawking was a popular activity, particularly among women, as it was a leisurely pastime that required skill and education but lacked the personal danger associated with hunting bear, boar, or wolves (Almond 39).

A significant secondary aspect of the raptor, and to some extent the hunting dog (greyhounds, mastiffs, and spaniels) and hunting horses, is that they were often seen as symbols of their masters and mistresses, and were considered noble animals worthy of noble attentions²⁹ (Almond 34). Proxy animals in general were necessary and considered part of a hunter's equipment. A dog's breed was important and most hunters preferred greyhounds and spaniels (although mastiffs were also used), due to their speed and agility (Almond 58-59; 34). In contrast, the breed of the horse was less important than its training, and smaller, lighter horses were chosen for hunting, in opposition to the large destriers used in war (Almond 55-56). Horses were vital to hunting, whether chasing large quarry or while hawking. They were associated with knighthood, and a horse gave its rider status and rank due to its use in both war and pleasure-riding. Horses were the physical, living extensions of their riders, and, according to Richard Almond, they "...were the icons of social identification which differentiated the gentleman from the ungentleman. A man could not be publicly acknowledged as a gentleman without them" (54). Hunting on horseback with hounds, then, was both essential to hunting larger game and to maintaining social stature. It was depicted in various artistic mediums throughout

²⁹ Contrastingly, only certain prey was considered 'noble' or worthy of being taken by gentile folk, particularly harts and boars, and smaller animals were left to be hawked or to be killed by huntsmen (Almond 63; 66).

the medieval period across Europe, and the ritualization of this form of hunting was known as *par force de chiens*³⁰ (Pratt; Almond 73).

Like hounds and horses, specific weaponry used in the hunt also could also show rank and status. Acceptable (i.e. gentlemanly) arms were longbows, crossbows, javelins, hunting swords (different from swords used in battle, these were wider at the base and tapered to a point), and hunting knives. Often weapons were inherited and considered family heirlooms (Almond 52-53).

One important connection between social structure and hunting was the multitude of second sons and nobility with title and name but no money or land.³¹ Upper and lower nobility studied the language and technique of the hunt, and those among the lower nobility who were not wealthy still learned the art that was expected of their social class (Almond 72; 97). It was quite common for students, particularly those from the ranks of the lower nobility, to keep hounds and poach in local preserves or hunt in common lands (Almond 97). While it was illegal (as they had no license), members of the nobility, whether lower or upper members, were expected by their peers to hunt, regardless of their financial situation, and thereby reinforcing their social status and rank. Up-and-coming townsmen in Iberia, potentially from the growing middle class or the lower nobility, had rights to hunt in common lands depending on the town and local government, but not in enclosed or royal forests. The prevalence of questionable hunting on other people's land

³⁰ "*By strength of hounds*"; the entire process of hunting on horseback with hounds involved an entire day's worth of activity, aided by many trained hunting professionals who flushed out, trailed, and cornered quarry for the noblemen to kill.

³¹ Cortés came from a family of noble lineage but little wealth.

among the lower nobility and the upper middle classes indicates that it was a relatively common practice (Cummins 234).

While humanity's Neolithic ancestors left artistic images of hunting in the caves of Europe, the first few known hunting manuals come from the Greco-Latin era. The first is Xenophon's *Cynegeticus* (fifth century BCE), followed by works of the same title by the authors Gration (first century CE), Nemesianus (third century CE), and Oppian³² (third century CE) (Fradejas Rueda 3). After the fall of Rome in the sixth century CE, there were no didactic hunting works created until the tenth century, when the anonymous Vercelli book, a text with a focus on hunting with raptors, was published³³ (Fradejas Rueda 3). After the publication of this text, the genre of didactic hunting manuals grew popular, and with the emergence of the middle class in the thirteenth century, the production of hunting manuals grew rapidly³⁴ (Seetah 19). They reached the height of their popularity in the fourteenth century CE (Pratt).

There were various types of hunting manuals published after the tenth century, such as those that were focused on specific beasts, or trained a master on how to care for his falcon, and they were written in a variety of styles, such as prose, handbooks, dialogues, debates, and poems³⁵ (Fradejas Rueda 3-4). Among these texts are Albertus

³² This last one was a poem about hunting techniques and not the same structure as the other manuals, although it was still didactic in nature.

³³ This text is housed in Vercelli, Italy, but was written in Old English.

³⁴ After Guttenberg's invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century, hunting manuals were still mostly printed for nobles, although the rising middle class enjoyed them as well. They were none available to the common man until 1631, after the publication of the German text *Brief and Simple Report on Bird-Catching with Snares* by Johann Conrad Aitinger (Almond 91). However, information on how peasants trapped and poached animals was often included in aristocratic manuals in order to educate the upper classes on the hunting methods of the Third Estate (Almond 92).

³⁵ There are no allegorical hunting manuals as these were intended to be straightforward and didactic and instruct a nobleman on hunting and war tactics (Fradejas Rueda 4).

Magnus' *De faconibus et asturibus* and Emperor Frederick II's *De arte venandi cum avibus* (both from the thirteenth century CE), Alfonso XI of Castilla's *Libro de la montería*, Gaston Fébus' *Livre de chasse*, and Don Juan Manuel's *Libro de la caza* (all from the fourteenth century), and Juan Valles' *Libro de cetrería y montería* (1556), among many others (Fradejas Rueda 3-4). Not all published manuals had known authors, and some did not focus on hunting at all, but rather on the care of hunting proxies, the locations of good hunts, or they provided encyclopedic (not anecdotal) information about hunting and animals (Fradejas Rueda 4). Up to the twelfth century, these texts were all written in Latin, but throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages the texts were generally written in the vernacular (Fradejas Rueda 4). Many of these manuscripts and treatises were illuminated, and depicted animals in domestic (both on the farm and as food served at feasts) and wild (grazing, resting, or being hunted) settings³⁶ (Seetah 18).

In the later medieval period, there were three definitive types of hunting manuals: hunting-on-horseback,³⁷ hunting-by-proxy (dogs and / or raptors), and hunting pests³⁸ (Fradejas Rueda 4). (Fradejas Rueda 4). While these first two manuals described specific hunting styles, they were not limited to only imparting that information. These manuals also included veterinary information for the proxy animals involved in the hunt, as well as descriptions of different types of dogs, raptors, and prey, their common territories and

³⁶ Animals were also depicted in Books of Hours to indicate what was done to them during specific periods of the year; slaughtering of domestic beasts was depicted in autumnal images, drying meat was depicted in winter, calves, lambs, and piglets were shown with their mothers in spring (Seetah 19). In general, hunting scenes appeared in various kinds of art during the late Middle Ages, such as in marginalia, in frescoes, paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and psaltars, and hunting was so important a part of medieval life that it appeared in children's songs (Almond 1-2).

³⁷ Some of these texts include information about dogs, as dogs were considered extensions of their master.

³⁸ I do not focus on this third type of hunting manual in this dissertation.

geography, detailed information about behavior, mating habits, their identifying cries, time periods when they were abundant, etc.³⁹ Often a skilled hunter who wrote a manual, such as Emperor Frederick II or Edward of York, included anecdotes and narratives, such as tales of excellent hounds, which might be derived from personal experience or from historical texts, such as Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* (McNelis, 72). The writers of these hunting manuals included any information, big or small, that might help an aristocratic hunter catch his intended quarry (Fradejas Rueda 3).

Hunting manuals were not only significant how-to sources for those either learning or improving hunting skills. They were also noble social manuals that described two important aspects of animal commodification: the “breaking up” of the animal carcass after the hunt and the feast afterward. The *unbreaking* or *unmaking* of the quarry (the dissection and dispersal of the carcass after an aristocratic hunt) was especially ritualistic, with specific body parts being given to specific people, and the innards to the hounds as their reward (Almond 73-75). Aristocratic hunting manuals place great emphasis on the unmaking of the carcass, as well as the feeding of the hounds (called the *curée*) (Almond 80-81). Ritually separating and portioning out an unmade carcass based on hierarchy was not only a way to reward a good hunt but also to reinforce social status and inequality (Seetah 30). Animals that were considered noble fare, due to their beauty or difficulty to catch, were broken up to some extent in the field, then brought home, cooked, reshaped, and recovered in their own skin or plumes in order to make it look as if

³⁹ Like the bestiaries, the hunting manuals did not always correctly or clearly identify animals. For example, in some Spanish manuals of hunting by proxy the word *cuervo* is used to identify three different species of bird (Fradejas Rueda 4).

they were still living. Sitting on the table of a nobleman, these commodified creatures reinforced the concept of the social privilege of hunting: a nobleman could have the head of a wild hart on his table while a middle-class merchant might only have that of a domesticated pig. Having the luxury of free time and land to hunt socially distanced the nobleman from the merchant who had to either raise or purchase his meat, or be granted a license to hunt, thus making the recognizable physical form of the hart a means to reinforce social standing (Seetah 30).

The two most significant Spanish hunting manuals⁴⁰ are Don Juan Manuel's *Libro de la caza* and King Alfonso XI's *Libro de la montería* (both from the fourteenth century). Don Juan Manuel's hunting-by-proxy text is divided into twelve specific and various chapters including training and submission of birds, his proxy preferences, and the characteristics (both behavioral and hunting) of specific raptors. The last chapter incorporates hunting anecdotes, and don Juan Manuel's text does not vary significantly from other hunting-by-proxy texts. It follows the overall traditional genre, and conveys other pertinent observable data, such as geography and animal fecundity (Fradejas Rueda 5). King Alfonso XI's hunting-by-horseback manual is divided into three books that focus on hunters, dogs, quarry, and Castilian geography. This text is invaluable today as it outlines the biodiversity and geography of the majority of the Iberian Peninsula during the late medieval period (Fradejas Rueda 8). In my analysis of Cortés' four letters, I

⁴⁰ Although there were at least thirty-three known Spanish hunting manuals written before 1500, these two texts are considered the most well-known of those that came from Spain (Van Den Abeele 65). They are generally studied in opposition as each one provides a perspective on the hunting, geography, and zoology of Castilla and León that the other lacks: don Juan Manuel's text describes bird hunting and regional rivers where King Alfonso's describes boar, bear, and donkey hunting, as well as the geography of the peninsular mountains (Fradejas Rueda 5).

correlate these hunting manuals to his descriptions of New World animals. As he was a Spanish nobleman, he had access to at least one, if not both, of these texts written in the vernacular.

What makes these hunting manuals remarkable in the context of medieval European animal literature is that they not only describe quarry animals and give them symbolic value, but they also transform the animals from living things into ritualized and commodified goods. Their initial commodification begins by identifying them as different from humans, and then codifying them by species, behavior, gender, fecundity, and geographical terrain, among others(Pratt). The animals are listed in order of most noble and desirable, beginning with the stag (in the case of the hunting-on-horseback, or the peregrine (in the case of hunting-by-proxy), and ending with some small creature like the rabbit, the otter, or the ferret. The objectification continues with the ritualization of the hunt, the unmaking of the hunted quarry, and the *curée* (Pratt). By transforming animals into quarry in these manuals, humanity separates itself from other animals and dominates them linguistically, textually, and tangibly. Karl Steel states that this relationship only has value if the dominator views the dominated as worthy of pursuit; by separating the animals from each other, as if they are not also predator and prey amongst themselves, and controlling their symbolic value, the authorial voices give these animals far more than mere tangible value (89-90). They become symbols of the hunter, worthy of the efforts and ritualization of the chase. The creation of hunting manuals, therefore, hierarchizes quarry animals both by symbolic and tangible value to doubly-dominate them and legitimize the violence against them (89-90). It is through this perspective that I

argue how Cortés' letters contain descriptions of commodified animals that, within the context of conquest and domination, metaphorically describe the conquest of Mexico.

Natural Histories and Encyclopedias

Natural histories and encyclopedias were important texts for describing, cataloging, and legitimizing the natural world. European scholars during the medieval period often took their contents as certain truth. While their descriptions tended to focus less on the bizarre and more on observable knowledge, these texts were equally influential on the development of animal literature. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (1478-1557 CE) certainly found Pliny the Elder's natural history to be an exhaustive source of information, which he cited many times in his *Historia natural y general de las Indias* (sixteenth century). In Chapter Four of this dissertation, I analyze some elements of the natural history found in Fernández de Oviedo's text, as well as other types of animal descriptions found within the three parts of his *Historia*.

Before the tenth century CE, most of the animal literature found in Europe was derived from early Greek literature that had been translated into Latin, such as Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, or Latin works, like Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*. The first "official" natural history, recognized as such by philosophers of the ancient world and scientists of the twenty-first century alike, was the *Historia animalium* written by Aristotle before his death in 322 BCE, which was based on his observations and interactions with the natural world (Anderson 36). Aristotle was introduced to empiricism early in his life,⁴¹ and he later studied philosophy under Plato in Athens before traveling

⁴¹ His father was the personal physician to the royal Macedonian family and taught Aristotle during his youth (Anderson 29).

around Asia Minor, Lesbos, and Macedonia (Anderson 29-30). Although he first began to study the natural world around him in Lesbos, it was in Macedonia, as the tutor to Alexander the Great, where he was able to receive new information about Asia directly from Alexander as he conquered various parts of the Middle and Far East (Anderson 29-32). Aristotle's method, as noted by John G.T. Anderson, was interesting because

Aristotle approached many subjects in a manner remarkably similar to that of today's graduate student: first, look to see what else has been written on the topic. After you have consulted prior authors, consider what the present conception of the topic might be. Once you have satisfied yourself that there is something there worth studying, go out and make careful new observations and see whether what you have come up with fits into previous work or deviates sufficiently to be worth further study or publication. (30)

The *Historia Animalium* comprises ten books, with each book further divided into chapters, and each chapter then subsequently divided into numbered sections. The tradition of dividing up natural histories in a similar fashion continued throughout the medieval and early modern periods in western Europe. Aristotle began with studies of the physical features of the different classes of animals, such as terrestrial or aquatic, determining how to classify them by type, blood (red or not), and their reproductive habits (vii-viii). He also focused on humanity, our bodies, and behaviors, as well as our own reproductive organs and habits (vii). The most important of those books for this dissertation is his Book VIII, in which he delved into the character and habits of animals

as he had observed them or as he had been told them by various knowledgeable persons (viii).

After Alexander the Great and Aristotle died, there was a power vacuum in the ancient world and Alexander's empire was divided. Relevant to natural history, one of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy (367-283 BCE), took control of parts of North Africa, specifically Egypt, and based his kingdom in the city of Alexandria (Anderson 36). Ptolemy was in Macedonia with Alexander when Aristotle was there, and the general developed a taste for scholarship in his early years which was reflected in his kingdom. Alexandria became a center for the studies of philosophy and early science, with the establishment of the *Mouseion* (Museum) run by another student of Aristotle, Demetrios of Phaleron (Anderson 36). There, Ptolemy and his descendants collected as many original copies of any text that they could find, amassing a library of over a half a million documents⁴² (Anderson 36-38).

In the later centuries of the Classical period, Rome controlled most of the Mediterranean and Western Europe, giving Roman natural historians access to a larger world to study. Many Romans viewed the Hellenistic world as degenerate, but other scholars took advantage of the profound medical, philosophical, and natural studies that Romans inherited from the Greeks (Anderson 38). One such scholar was Pliny the Elder (23 CE – 79 CE), who produced his own work of natural history, the *Historia naturalis*. As a youth, Pliny the Elder left what is now northern Italy to soldier for the Roman army. He later took up law and went into government, working for Emperors Nero and

⁴² These documents, including innumerable natural histories, were lost to the world when the library burned down in 47 BCE (Anderson 38).

Vespasian by day, and studying and writing by night (Anderson 38). Pliny had access to information and accounts of the natural world from all corners of the Roman empire and, in Rome, Pliny was able to interact with travelers from all regions of the known world.

His *Historia naturalis* is a compendium of information about the natural world, including, among many other topics, humans, medicine, plants, and animals. The text is comprised of detailed and categorized information based on the observations of both ancient and contemporary authorities; there is no indication that Pliny himself included any of his own experimentation (Anderson 39). The final years of his life were devoted to assembling the text, which he divided into thirty-seven books contained in ten volumes. Each book contains chapters relating to a general topic, such as minerals.⁴³ In these, he categorizes animals as land animals, sea animals, birds, and insects. Unlike Aristotle, whose direct observations limited animals first to their individual body parts, then to the whole of their body, and later to their behavioral characteristics, Pliny categorizes each animal by the realm it inhabits (land, sea, air, or all three), and describes each one in terms of body, characteristics, and geography, and any known stories, mythology, or beliefs associated with that animal. This categorization is similar in style and structure to later encyclopedias of the medieval period.

After Pliny, there was a long period in which few new natural histories were produced. Texts that classified plants and animals for their medical use were in vogue during the late Antiquity, such as those written by Dioscorides (40-90 CE) and Galen

⁴³ While this text is generally classified as a natural history, it can also fit into the sub-genre of the early encyclopedia for its use of division and categorization of books and chapters (Anderson 39).

(129-200 CE), and many of these were built on the botanical work compiled by Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle⁴⁴ (Anderson 40).

The most influential encyclopedist of the early Middle Ages was Isidore of Seville (560 – 636 CE). He was born in the Iberian Peninsula and became bishop of Seville in 600 CE (Isidorus 5-6). As bishop, Isidore maintained a close relationship with, and political influence over, the Visigoth monarchs who elected him to his position. He was well-respected for his intelligence, and produced a large body of written work, including his most important contribution to the encyclopedic tradition, his *Etymologiae* (Isidorus 7). The *Etymologiae* was not an entirely original work. Like other scholars before him, Isidore depended on Classical voices of authority, including Pliny the Elder (Isidorus 11-12). As a conscientious transmitter of knowledge, Isidore “...preserved, in abbreviated form, the accumulated learning of the classical world...,” citing authorities (*auctores*) where he could to strengthen his points (Isidorus 13 -15). Thus, the connection to Pliny the Elder’s *Historia naturalis* continued through the reporting of other experiences and knowledge, but with the exclusion of first-hand experimentation.

Upon his death, Isidore’s friend Braulio, the archdeacon of Zaragoza, wrote that the *Etymologiae* was “...a codex of enormous size, divided by him into topics, not books. Although he left it unfinished, I divided it into twenty...books” (Isidorus 8). Isidore’s

⁴⁴ In the context of early science, I point out that Galen focused his medical expertise on combining direct experience with logic and information from other observers of the world (such as Pliny) to be better physicians. Like Aristotle, he attempted to fit the element to be studied, in Galen’s case his patient, within the context in which the element was found (his environment, work, relationships, food, etc.) in order to better understand both the ailment and its cure (Anderson 40). This shows the natural progression of empiricism that combines experimentation with observation, which comes to fruition in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés’ sixteenth century work *Historia general y natural de las Indias*.

book on animals (Book XII) is divided into seven sections by type of animal (for example, Livestock and Beasts of Burden, Birds, Serpents, etc.), and then subdivided into various animal descriptions. Each animal description contains the presumed (and often incorrect) etymological root of the animals' name, its physical descriptions, its relationship to humanity, and any known information about it, be it historical, geographical, mythological, or empirical.

While works of natural history stagnated from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries,⁴⁵ the tradition of the natural history and early encyclopedia was maintained through the act of manuscript copying and translation from Greek and Arabic into Latin⁴⁶ (Anderson 43). Perhaps because of this shift away from natural history writing, those writers who focused on animals tended to shy away from pure recitation of ancient voices of authority, adding in their own observations and empiricism. For example, in the thirteenth century, the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194 – 1250 CE), a man who adored animals and was known to have brought a traveling menagerie of exotic animals with him on Crusade, wrote a hunting treatise on birding, *De Arti Venandi cum Avibus (The Art of Hunting with Birds)*⁴⁷ (Benton 25; Anderson 51). The text shows the continuing influence of Aristotle, as it contains a classification system of birds based on habits and geography, as well as their behavior and anatomy. However, Frederick adds in his own information, outlining his ideas carefully, describing each step

⁴⁵ While the natural history genre was less popular among lay people, animals were being used regularly in fables and bestiaries during this time.

⁴⁶ There was only one “new” natural history produced during this period that scholars know of; *De Universo* was produced in the late ninth century by the abbot Rabanus Maura (776-856 CE). It is less significant as a body of new work as most of it is drawn from botanical translations of Pliny and Isidore (Anderson 45).

⁴⁷ Hunting manuals and treatises are further explained in the fifth section of this Introduction.

and action he takes, and he gives examples to support his arguments from both history and his experimentation⁴⁸ (Anderson 52). Frederick II only repeated those facts that he found in Aristotle's work which he himself was able to corroborate through empiricism (Benton 99). As such, we see a movement away from pure reporting of observation or the rehashing of known information, towards a growing interest in first-hand experimentation.⁴⁹

Around 1250 CE, Saint Albertus Magnus⁵⁰ began to systematically "...paraphrase and comment upon the whole of Aristotle's corpus..." transforming complicated entries into much more than simple explanations (Magnus 1: 18-19). He compared the Arabic-Latin and Greek-Latin translations to be sure that he had all the correct information and that nothing was left out that he believed to be important (Magnus 1: 19). Like Frederick II, Albertus continued to build on the knowledge of the ancients, and actively questioned it through verification, authentication, and empiricism.

The twenty-six books of Albertus Magnus's great work, *De Animalibus* are divided up in an innovative format: the first twenty-one books are structured like Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, with each book focusing on a physical aspect of the animal kingdom, such as body parts, blooded or bloodless animals, and reproduction; the final five books are structured like the animal books of Pliny and Isidore, with descriptions of animal bodies, their behaviors, and any information about them that was

⁴⁸ Frederick II was known to have bodies dissected for study. Whether he did this himself or had others do it for his research purposes is not entirely clear.

⁴⁹ We see a blend of first-hand experience and experimentation, as well as a reliance on voices of authority in Fernández de Oviedo's work.

⁵⁰ A well-known alchemist and botanist, this German Dominican friar became the teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who studied medicine, alchemy, and philosophy (Anderson 54).

known. It is these last five books that are of importance to this dissertation. In these books, Albertus often relies on information from ancient authorities, such as Pliny, but he is also certain to point out when he has had direct experience with an aspect of an animal himself, such as when he describes the *Asinus* (Donkey):

The ass's skin is a sign of the thickness of its humor. For if the soles of some shoes are made from the skin that comes from the place where an ass carried a burden for a long time, the shoes do not wear out even if the wearer continually in his wanderings traverses rocky terrain. They eventually become so tough that he can no longer endure it on foot. And this I have seen for myself firsthand. (2: 1451)

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the sixth century, natural historians began to expound on the information gathered by Classical voices of authority over the course of time. There was a growing desire among these medieval European writers to better understand the world, and that desire often required experimentation and exposure to the very world being studied. Fernández de Oviedo, in particular, understood that he was surrounded by natural spaces that the ancients had never known about, and he used his personal experiences and eye-witness accounts in order to represent the flora and fauna of the New World in both descriptive and anecdotal forms.

In Summation

Hierarchizing the animal-human relationship has been one of the overarching goals of humans who write animal literature. Describing and capturing animal bodies in

some form or another is significant in that animals are creatures that often live around or among humankind, or are commodified in some way, as food, as leather, or as metaphors. Animals, in their many roles, are a part of humanity's daily life and their inclusion in literature is rarely insignificant. In the next four chapters, I analyze each of the four authors in chronological order, starting with Columbus and ending with Fernández de Oviedo, and I correlate their animal descriptions to one of the above animal literary genres that would have been recognizable to or known by that author. Ultimately, I show that my analysis of the works of these four authors contributes to the overall fields of Ecocriticism and Critical Animal Studies in that it shows that animal representation by humans and the human-animal relationship are strongly based in education, social, and cultural backgrounds. The human-animal relationship found in literature is frequently discussed by critics and scholars focused on modern authors and works, with an emphasis on post-Industrial literature. My goal is to push the study of the human-animal relationship further back, through to the early medieval period, and demonstrate how some of the very characteristics that make us individuals among humanity, such as our cultural backgrounds and the literature we read, determine how we view our connection to and representation of the animal kingdom.

The diary and letters of Christopher Columbus are the logical jumping-off place for my analysis of these writers. The bold leap into the unknown on three small fishing vessels is followed by Columbus's furtive search for signs and evidence that he had arrived in Asia. Many of these signs, as noted in his documents, come in animal form, particularly birds, reinforcing Columbus's worldview that his pursuit was divinely

supported. In the next chapter, I analyze Columbus' animal descriptions within the context of the bestiary, noting the influence of Columbus's personal and religious educations on his perception of New World animals.

Chapter One

Animal Semiotics and Symbolism in the Writings of Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus's *Diario* and the letters that reference his four voyages not only contain descriptions of the New World, its flora, fauna, and peoples, but are also heavily framed by fervent religiosity and the belief in signs and symbols. This final aspect is especially important to consider when analyzing the zoological descriptions found in these texts within the context of the bestiary tradition. Often the animal references in the texts seem artificial, but it is this artificiality, in conjunction with overall religious devoutness, that imposes potential meaning on the New World animals that Columbus's texts describe.⁵¹ Bestiaries, which I outlined in the Introduction of this dissertation, were a popular literary genre throughout the Middle Ages, and were culturally well understood by the end of the fifteenth century to illustrate ideal Christian behavior through animal representation. While Columbus may not have owned a bestiary himself,⁵² the religious and educational practices of the day ensured that all Christians

⁵¹ *Artificial* in the sense that Columbus imposed Old World beliefs, ideals, and names on creatures that he had not encountered before. He essentially created composite creatures by imposing the Old World understanding of birds, beasts, and fish, on animals that he could not have known before or explained in a comprehensible way without direct comparison to creatures that he had either seen before, had read about, or had understood through his own cultural background and social experience.

⁵² Scholars do not know if Columbus owned a bestiary as there are none among his surviving books that are currently housed in the Biblioteca Colombina (Seville, Spain). In 2019, the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen digitized all of Fernando Columbus's *Libro de epitomes* (*Book of Summaries*) a book containing references to all the individual works in his own library, but it is still unclear if F. Columbus owned or inherited any bestiaries from his father. Bestiaries were a popular genre in France and northern Europe, and there is at least one extant bestiary in existence in Spanish in

had a general idea of the signs and symbols attributed to specific animals (Benton 112). In the context of this dissertation, it is important to understand that Columbus was not only a man focused on his enterprise, but also one who was looking for symbols and signs that indicated he was doing God's work. In his letters, animals were frequently depicted as commodity items when he had to manage his colony, depictions which are stark contrasts to the religious values medieval culture attributed to those animals. Whether at sea or on land, Columbus' animal descriptions were tied to his emotional states. In this chapter, I argue that Columbus's three types of animal descriptions, while largely linked to the religious signs and symbols of bestiary animals, also reflected his changing emotional states throughout the four journeys.

To better demonstrate how Columbus's *Diario* and letters show elements of the bestiary tradition, I outline the complex history and nature of the *Diario* itself, as well as the letters written by Columbus about his four voyages. The reader will better understand the idea of to whom, about what, and why Columbus was writing, so that his potential motivations for depicting animals in a symbolic way. Knowing the author is equally important, I include a brief historical and educational background of the Admiral. I argue that his education was above average for his time and social standing, and that his understanding of the world was conditioned by empiricism, rhetoric, personal experience, Christianity, and the cultures and societies in which he lived. His education was supported by his personal belief in signs and symbols, which I analyze within the context

Madrid. In the Introduction of this dissertation, I noted the wide influence that bestiaries had in general across Europe and I make the distinction that Columbus would not have needed to own a bestiary to be exposed to bestiary animal representation and its association to Christian symbology.

of his belief that divine providence enabled him to cross the Ocean Sea. My analysis of Columbus's writing is based on the correlation between his various types of education, his belief in signs and symbols, and his use of bestiary animal representation as a vehicle for his emotional and professional states throughout his four voyages.

The Literary History of the Columbine Archive, *Diario*, and Letters

The first of the two primary texts that I reference in this chapter is *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón*.⁵³ It contains the *Diario* and a number of letters that Columbus wrote that reference his four voyages, and it was originally printed in 1892 by the Biblioteca Clásica in Seville (I use the 2016 reprint available from Scholar Select). The anonymous editor(s) of this compilation note(s) in the prologue that they chose what they considered to be the most scientific, socio-political, and descriptive documents that detailed Columbus's experiences during and after the Discovery (vii). The second primary text I use is Columbus's *Libro de las profecías* (1501-1505 CE). It contains

⁵³ While it is not the newest published version of the *Diario* and the voyage letters available, I find it to be the one compilation that contains the least adulteration of Columbus's original spelling, grammar, and vocabulary; it also includes notations by both M. Fernández de Navarrete and Bartolomé de las Casas. While Bartolomé de las Casas is responsible for transcribing, editing, and, in parts, translating, the original *Diario*, Navarrete's edition, compiled, edited, and annotated between 1825 and 1837, adds nautical, geographical, and linguistic details that expand upon Las Casas' text (details which Las Casas was either ignorant of or which had not been discovered in his lifetime). The detailed and annotated text, under the name *Viajes de Cristóbal Colón*, is found in Navarrete's multi-volume work *Colección de viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles desde fines del siglo XV* (1825-1837 CE). Of this text, the editors have determined that the documents, "Reunidos en este tomo...se consideran indudables del célebre marino genovés, y que son el espejo donde con mayor fidelidad se refleja la fisonomía moral de Colón..." ("United in this tome...they are considered undoubtedly [written by] the famous Genovese mariner, and they are the mirror through which, with great certainty, is reflected the Columbus's morality") (vii). While Las Casas went on to publish his edited version of Columbus's diary, he did so with both direct and indirect, and often anachronistic, interventions. The version that Las Casas was working with was not the original *Diario*, but rather with a flawed copy (Bergreen 22). According to Margarita Zamora, the text is mostly reliable and authentic, however, she concluded that Las Casas may have altered the text to reflect his purpose to safeguard and evangelize the indigenous people (Zamora 43). There are many versions, compilations, translations, and texts that have published that are written by and about Christopher Columbus, some of which I mention in this section, but the version compiled by Biblioteca Clásica is the text that suits my particular research needs.

Columbus's analysis of Biblical quotations, stories, and psalms, as well as complex commentary on the writings of religious and historical figures, such as Saint Augustine. This text is useful in that it demonstrates his religious mindset after the initial transatlantic voyages.

According to Luiz Arranz Márquez, Christopher Columbus was his own first compiler,⁵⁴ taking great pains to copy all of his own letters and any that he received that he found significant, from which he created an archive that was put into the hands of his good friend, the Carthusian friar Gaspar Gorricio at the monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas in Seville, Spain (31). The completed archival list of what remains of these papers is available online through the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.⁵⁵ While it includes a list of many documents that are not related to Columbus directly (such as papal bulls), there is also a list of the letters and documents that Columbus recopied. Manuel Serrano y Sanz indicates that Columbus did not safeguard his papers in Spain while he traveled abroad, but took all of his important documents with him on his search for Asia, including the capitulations of Santa Fé, and he did not hand over his important documents and copies to Gorricio until 1499 (157-158).⁵⁶ Before his third voyage, Columbus had twenty-five documents recopied, and four more were added to them in Santo Domingo,

⁵⁴ While Christopher Columbus kept numerous copies of his letters and interactions with the Crown, his life was chronicled by his contemporaries using the various archives and books mentioned further in this section. Fernando Columbus (1488-1539), the Admiral's second son, Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566), a Dominican friar and *Protector of the Indians*, and Peter Martyr D'Anghiera (1457-1526), Italian humanist and instructor to the children of nobles in the Spanish court, are considered his first three chroniclers. In all, his person and his life were depicted positively by these writers.

⁵⁵ The archival list was republished as a digital edition in 2011: *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* (tomo 97, cuaderno 1). The original text was written by Manuel Serrano y Sanz and it was published in the July-September edition of 1930.

⁵⁶ Columbus specifically mentions the papers that he gave to Gorricio in a letter he wrote to Gorricio dated 4 January 1505 (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 362).

and this became what is now known as the *Libro de los privilegios*.⁵⁷ It was not until Columbus left for his final voyage that he had many of his documents notarized; he left those that legitimized his rights in the Indies in the Banco de San Jorge in Genoa for safekeeping (Serrano y Sanz 158). The collection given to Gorrício by Columbus remained at Santa María de las Cuevas until 1609, when it was handed over to the rightful heir don Pedro Nuño Colón of Portugal, whose descendants later disposed of the papers that did not directly refer to any honors, rights, or benefits to the Columbus family (Serrano y Sanz 170).

Other papers that related to Columbus were saved for the purpose of legal recourse against the Crown (the *Pleitos Colombinos*), when certain rights and privileges of the Columbus family were not respected by Spain after the death of the Admiral (Arranz Márquez 31). As a multitude of people had to work with these papers throughout the lawsuit process, many papers were lost or misplaced. Some ended up, over the course of time, in the personal collections and libraries of Columbus's descendants, namely those of the Casa de Alba in the eighteenth-century, and the Dukes of Veragua. This last collection, which included the *Libro de los privilegios*, was sold to the Spanish government in 1926 and was then deposited in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain (Arranz Márquez 32). Others, such as the collection that was gathered by Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1779 (known as the *Colección Muñoz*) and that of the Vargas Ponce family (*Colección Vargas Ponce*) in the same century, were copies of known papers and

⁵⁷ *Book of Privileges*

reports written by Columbus which were still considered useful and are now part of the archives in Seville and the Naval Museum in Madrid (Arranz Márquez 38).

Columbus was meticulous about copying all his documents (Delaney 178). Perhaps some of Columbus's anxiety related to his documentation resulted from the loss of many of his papers in Santo Domingo at the hands of Knight Commander Francisco de Bobadilla during Columbus's third voyage (1500).⁵⁸ Columbus was afraid of further losing his position, title, and settlements. In 1502 he updated the *Libro de los privilegios* and had four notarized copies made, two of which ended up in Genoa, one in Santo Domingo, and a final was left in Seville (Arranz Márquez 34). Most of the official Columbine documents in Spain are now housed in the Biblioteca Colombina and the Archivo General de Indias, although some are also housed in the Archivo de Simancas (Arranz Márquez 32). As I noted above, the Biblioteca Clásica version is only a short compilation of the most relevant of these surviving documents.

My second primary source, Columbus's *Libro de las profecías*,⁵⁹ was originally compiled in the winter of 1501-1502, with further additions and annotations added through 1505 (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 80). The manuscript was first mentioned in a letter from Columbus to Friar Gaspar Gorricio, and later was found in an inventory of Don Diego Columbus's property. The text was registered in the Biblioteca Colombina

⁵⁸ Bobadilla had been sent to the New World in the summer of 1500, at the request of Columbus, by Queen Isabella to investigate difficulties that Columbus had been having with rebel *hidalgos*. When Bobadilla arrived in Santo Domingo (Hispaniola), he immediately sided with the Spanish rebels and placed Columbus and his two brothers, Diego and Bartholomew, in shackles and sent them back to Spain. Bobadilla confiscated all the Admiral's personal belongings, gold, books, and documentation, destroying all of those that would have supported Columbus's claim of misbehaving rebels (Delaney 181-183). Columbus wrote that the loss of these papers was his biggest complaint through the entire ordeal (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 322).

⁵⁹ *Book of Prophecies*

in Seville as early as 1766 (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 80-81). It was published in Latin in 1892, then in Spanish in 1984, and an English version became available at the Quincentennial of the Discovery in 1992 (Delaney 190). The version that I reference was translated and annotated by Delno C. West and August Kling in 1992.

In this text, Columbus detailed his methodological approach via St. Thomas Aquinas's method of expounding on the Holy Scriptures, using history, allegory, tropology, and anagoge (taken from Aquinas's 13th-century work, *Summa theologica*) (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 101). The use of allegory, "...the given material is to be understood as standing for something else, which is a doctrine to be believed..." and anagoge, "...where the given material is to be understood as describing what is to be desired, namely the heavenly glory..." indicates that the Admiral believed that Holy Scriptures had multiple meanings⁶⁰ (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 101). I argue that Columbus's interpretation and use of allegory and anagoge were not limited to the divine Word, but were also applied to his life experiences, education, and his animal representation in his New World documents.

Columbus's intention with the *Libro de las profecías* was to compile Biblical and religious analysis into a long apocalyptic poem to remind the Catholic Monarchs of their duty to fulfill prophecies described in the Bible (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 5). He died before he could transform the compiled information into a poem. While many critics doubt Columbus's religious authenticity, West and Kling note that this text shows Columbus for what he was: "...intensely medieval and mystical in his deep

⁶⁰ All translations from this text were made by Delno C. West and August Kling.

spirituality...” (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 85-86). I analyze the text from this same perspective; Columbus was searching for signs and symbols in the New World that he was on the correct divine path, and that he was fulfilling his destiny to bring Christianity to the peoples of (what he believed to be) Asia. It is indicative of how Columbus used his own history, religious knowledge, and empirical perspective to perceive signs of his own, and Christianity’s, destiny. In relation to bestiary material, animals and their behaviors were symbolic of the idealized Christian. The *Libro de las profecías* is a text that outlines Columbus’s conception of his and the sovereign’s role in the pursuit of religious conquest through the portrayal and interpretation of Biblical and religious signs and symbols. I correlate this connection of Columbus’s perception of Christian signs and symbols, developed over the course of his personal history via his academic and cultural education, with his textual representation of New World animals further in this chapter.

Biography

While not a formally educated man, Christopher Columbus acquired most of his knowledge through experiential learning, picking up information from life experience, religion, and books alike. I unpack Columbus’s origins in order to demonstrate how his religious life, social desires, and overall education influenced his symbolic representation of New World animals.

Columbus was born in late summer, 1451,⁶¹ in the Republic of Genoa to Catholic parents. Fernando Columbus, the Admiral’s youngest son and biographer claimed that his

⁶¹ It is possible that Christopher Columbus was born on 25 June, which is St. Christopher’s day, or that his mother, in hoping to influence his fortune, named him for the saint when he was baptized (Delaney 21).

father had studied geography, astronomy, and geometry at the University of Pavia,⁶² but there is no historical documentation to support that (Bergreen 9). Christopher Columbus attended the grammar school for weaver's children on a street called Vico de Pavia, receiving an education in basic arithmetic, basic Latin, and enough writing knowledge to be able to read and compose commercial contracts in Latin (Delaney 31). Delaney proposes that he was partially educated in Savona alongside his wealthier friend, Michele de Cuneo,⁶³ who traveled with Columbus on his second expedition (31).

Columbus began his maritime career around age fourteen (Delaney 31). The Genoese merchants had many trading posts in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, and Columbus was able to learn navigation, watercraft management, and how to negotiate with merchants, suppliers, and financiers (Philips and Philips 92-93). He sailed quite a bit during his youth, and he was already navigating the Mediterranean by the time he was twenty-one (Delaney 33). A key point in his maritime career came in August 1476, when he was sent to England to trade mastic (Delaney 34). The vessel he was on, the *Bechella*, was part of a convoy of five ships that was attacked by French privateers off the coast of Portugal; Columbus survived the attack and swam to shore near the Portuguese city of Lagos (Bergreen 56). From there, he traveled to a Genoese colony in Lisbon to meet up with the remaining ships of the convoy, where he continued to England (Delaney 35).

The year is accurate, however, as evidenced by both his baptismal record and by the Asseretto document discovered in 1904 by Hugo Asseretto in the Genoese Colombine archive (Arranz Márquez 43-44).

⁶² F. Columbus wrote about his father's life in his book, *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by his son Ferdinand* (1571).

⁶³ De Cuneo wrote his own account of the events at the settlements of La Isabela and Nueva Isabela in the Dominican Republic (then called *Hispaniola*) from 1493-1496 CE in a letter to a Genoese nobleman, Gerolamo Aimari (now entitled *Letter of Michael from Cuneo*).

Columbus took up residence in Lisbon after his return from England, and began sailing for Genoese merchants in the colony, traveling to Iceland, the British Isles, the Azores, and other distant Portuguese trading posts (Bergreen 57). His experiences in the North Atlantic were vital for his westerly crossing; because of it, he was able to learn about the east-flowing currents that could bring a fleet back to Europe from Asia (Delaney 35-36). In Lisbon, he also learned to speak and write Castilian (Spanish), the language of the Portuguese elites⁶⁴ (Delaney 36).

In Lisbon, he married a Portuguese noblewoman of Genoese heritage, Doña Felipa Perestrello e Moniz (around 1479), the daughter of Don Bartholomew Perestrello, conqueror and governor of Porto Santo and the Madeira Islands (Delaney 37).

Columbus's marriage was a decisive turning point in his life, as it marked the beginning of his pursuit to find a western route to Asia and it gave him the means (politically, socially, and geographically) to gather information and to gain more Atlantic navigational experience. Fernando Columbus notes that his father believed that he could travel west for three specific reasons: "...natural reasons, the authority of writers, and the testimony of sailors" (15). I infer from Fernando Columbus's sixth chapter of his father's biography that his C. Columbus's "natural reasons" arose from observing and experiencing the world around him, such as he knowledge of east-west currents, his observation of the

⁶⁴ Much like the English who spoke French at court during this time, so the Portuguese nobility spoke Castilian as a prestige language. Christopher Columbus only ever wrote in Castilian and Latin. While he spoke the Genoese dialect of his family and Portuguese, he probably did not learn to write in these two languages. Spoken Portuguese and Genoese would have been necessary in Lisbon, but for contracts he would have used Latin (Philips and Philips 96). Bartolomé de Las Casas noted that Columbus's written Castilian was highly influenced by Portuguese, and Columbus probably learned pidgin languages during his maritime career for basic communication with traders and suppliers. His writing ability in Latin was limited and he often inserted hispanicisms into his Latin notations (Arranz Márquez 108-110).

stars, his expertise in cartography, and his ability to use a compass, as well as other professional and personal experiences and activities. These observations, experiences, and rumors, combined with informal education, and deep religious faith were all key elements that influenced Columbus's description of New World fauna.

Christopher Columbus's "natural reasons" for traveling west to Asia were based on his nautical observations and experiences that, at least from his perspective, became essential in the development of his plan to navigate the Atlantic Ocean. While sailing for the Portuguese, Columbus sailed by the Canary Islands and realized that there was a strong combination of westerly currents and winds that could take ships to Asia (Delaney 45). Combined with his knowledge of winds in the north Atlantic, he knew that there were strong enough currents and winds to carry ships back and forth to Asia. His knowledge of the islands, currents, winds, and shorelines of Europe and western Africa grew as he navigated more frequently for the Portuguese, and he learned to manage new seas and varying currents on the small Portuguese caravel ships (Philips and Philips 106).

Porto Santo, where Columbus made his home with Doña Felipa, is in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of present-day Morocco, just north of the Canary Islands. It was an important port of call for many merchant ships,⁶⁵ and there was a constant flux of immigrants, sailors, and traders to the island while Columbus lived there. From them, Columbus heard myths and rumors about land sighted west of Madeira. Fernando

⁶⁵ Through his contacts with merchants in the sugar trade on the Madeira Islands, he also knew that spices were highly sought-after and a good source of income for any captain. Potentially, a western route to Asia would be a lucrative investment for any sovereign willing to take on the financial risk of an Atlantic expedition (Philips and Philips 99).

Columbus writes that his father, "...was impressed by the many fables and stories which he heard from various persons and sailors who traded to the western islands and the seas of the Azores and Madeira. Since these stories served his design, he was careful to file them away in his memory" (23). The expression "since these stories served his design" is key in that it tells us two things about Columbus: he heard what he wanted to hear and he used it to his advantage. In terms of representing New World animals in ways that imbued them with religious and social significance, Columbus used his knowledge in a manner that fit his needs in order to show the divine nature/ destiny of his voyages (examples of this are found in my analysis in the sections below).

In one of these stories, a one-eyed sailor claimed to have glimpsed *Tartary* (central Asia) while on voyage to Ireland (Bergreen 16). In another story, Columbus was rumored to have taken in a dying sailor whose ship had been blown off course in the Atlantic, and who had subsequently discovered an island west of Europe. The sailor is thought to have described the location of the island to the Admiral in detail (Bergreen 65). Another rumor was that a Portuguese ship had been driven into the Ocean Sea and landed on an island where all the people were Christian and they already knew the rites of Catholicism (Columbus, F. 25).⁶⁶ There were rumors of floating islands west of the Canaries that had been spotted by sailors and which were reported by Pliny the Elder

⁶⁶ There had long been rumors about a Christian island to the west of Europe called Antilia, that was settled by seven Portuguese bishops who each founded his own city after the Iberian Peninsula had been overrun by the Moors in 711 CE (sometimes this island is called Island of the Seven Cities or St. Brendan's Island). It was so popular a rumor that apparently even Toscanelli drew the island to the west of the Canaries on the map that he sent to Columbus; it also appeared on a Venetian map from 1424. Supposedly, St. Brendan and fourteen monks stayed on this island for a while in the sixth century before the arrival of the bishops, and, to further the mystery of this island, it was believed that it floated around the Ocean Sea, remaining unfixed to any spot in the water (Delaney 77-78).

(Book 2, Chapter 96). The Admiral also believed tales of other floating islands off the Azores that were reportedly seen annually by many people⁶⁷ (Columbus, F. 25). The rumors of Atlantic islands went as far back as Aristotle, who noted that the Carthaginians found very fertile islands “In the sea outside the Pillars of Heracles” (also known as the Pillars of Hercules, or the Strait of Gibraltar) (Aristotle 271). Columbus’s *Diario* and his son’s inclusion of this information tells us that Columbus was susceptible to rumors and sailor’s tales (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 17; Columbus, F. 24).

It was commonly accepted by mariners that there was physical evidence of lands west of Europe. A pilot named Martín Vicente found a piece of wood that was carved with iron floating in the ocean about four hundred and fifty leagues west of Cape St. Vincent (the southernmost tip of continental Portugal), which he believed had been blown in from western lands (Columbus, F. 23). The husband of Columbus’s sister-in-law, Pedro Correa da Cunha, while serving as governor of Porto Santo, heard rumors of pieces of cane plants that were unknown to the Portuguese, and a strangely carved piece of wood washed up on the shores of the island. Other unfamiliar things, such as unknown species of pine trees,⁶⁸ strange boats and rafts, and islands were all rumored to have been spotted floating in the Ocean Sea west of the Azores and the Madeiras (Philips and

⁶⁷ In his *Diario*, Columbus noted on October 3rd that they did not see any seabirds because they were probably on the islands that he believed lay between Asia and Europe. These islands were painted on his map and, although his men wanted to find them in order to rest and re-provision the ships, Columbus did not want to wander about looking for them, particularly if they were floating in the ocean and difficult to locate (17).

⁶⁸ Fernando Columbus supports this physical evidence by a reference to Ptolemy’s *Geographia* (Chapter 17), stating that pines grew on the eastern coast of India (Columbus, F. 24).

Philips 101). Columbus expected to see islands between Europe and Asia, and he noted this several times in his *Diario*.⁶⁹

These eyewitness accounts corresponded well to each other, to the physical evidence, and, most importantly, to the information recorded by the ancient authorities such as Ptolemy, Pliny, and Aristotle, about floating islands and western lands (mentioned above). The authority of intellectuals and writers was extremely valuable to Columbus, particularly when he petitioned the Spanish crown for sponsorship for his expedition by citing and referencing authors such as Ptolemy and Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly. Most of his book knowledge and his references to voices of authority came from self-study and Columbus was well read on works of geography, natural history, cartography, and travel narratives, among other genres.⁷⁰ Columbus's organization of his *Libro de las profecías* indicates that he knew how to use the four scholarly methods of interpretation of biblical texts (historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical)⁷¹ (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 101). Living on Porto Santo with Doña Felipa and their son Diego (b. 1480), Columbus had access to the maps and papers that his deceased father-in-law had accumulated during his maritime career with the Portuguese. These included information pertaining to winds, currents, and the geography of various points along the Atlantic

⁶⁹ In his *Diario* on the 16th of September (1492), Columbus wrote, "...todos juzgaban que estaba cerca de alguna isla..." ("...everyone determined that it [some floating sea grass] was near some island..."); a few days later, on the 19th of September he wrote, "...á la banda del Norte y del Sur había algunas islas, como la verdad lo estaban y él iba por medio de ellas..." ("...between the Northern and Southern [belt] there were some islands, as there truly were, and he went between them...") (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 9; 12).

⁷⁰ E.G.R Taylor notes that much of Columbus's knowledge of the ancients was first learned through Pierre d'Ailly's references to those authorities in his *Imago Mundi* (lxxix). Gimmel notes that Columbus's references to works of science and the ancients became more refined after his second voyage (40).

⁷¹ These methods are attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas who devised the four ways medieval theologians were expected to expound and analyze Christian Scriptures (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 16).

coast, between Iceland and Africa (Philips and Philips 99). Fernando Columbus points out that his father knew that the planet was a sphere and was mostly composed of water. Combined with the knowledge that the earth was very small and mostly discovered, as expressed in the geographical works of Marinus of Tyre (1st-century CE) and Alfragan (9th-century CE), Christopher Columbus believed the Ocean Sea could be navigated in approximately two weeks (Columbus, F. 15-16). Ptolemy, in his *Geography* underestimated the size of the earth by one-sixth, which solidified Columbus's conception of the size of the world. Ptolemy's map was one that Columbus later used to support his expedition petition to the Iberian crowns (Bergreen 67).

The idea that the "Ocean Sea" was not an ocean but a small sea was reinforced by Columbus's interpretation of other voices of authority, such as Pierre d'Ailly (1351-1420 CE) and Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) (Columbus, F. 16-18). In his *Libro de las profecías*, he also references other ancient and medieval authors, such as Eratosthenes, Seneca, Solinus, Plato, Julius Caesar, Flavius Josephus, Diodorus, Julius Capitolinus, Bede the Venerable, Ovid, Pindar, Francis de Meron, King Alfonso X, Johannes Muller, Joachim of Fiore, Avicena, Ahmed-Bin-Kothair, Roger Bacon, and Saints Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, Isidore, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Thomas Aquinas, among many others (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 23). These sources are derived not only from the ancient Greeks and Romans, but from religious writers of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths, as well as foreigners and politicians.⁷² Columbus, while not formally

⁷² The influence of voices of authority is significantly notable in Columbus's descriptions of the New World. For example, his descriptions of the Caribe tribe as cannibalistic and his references to Amazons and other "monstrous" races are demonstrative of what he expected to see in the New World. Through the reports of those ancient authorities, his own voice becomes an authority of what he sees and experiences.

educated, was very well-read for a man of the late medieval period and his informal education greatly contributed to his understanding of the world and his representations of the animals that he described in the New World.⁷³

Columbus was also able to expand his intellectual knowledge through his family connections. Many of Doña Felipa's siblings were present at the Portuguese court, and Columbus learned about many of the events and topics that were occurring there through them (Philip and Philips 98-99). In 1481, Columbus procured a copy of the 1475 letter and map sent to King Alfonso V by Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (Bergreen 60). Toscanelli was a well-known mathematician living in Florence, Italy, who encouraged King Alfonso in undertaking a westward voyage to Asia that would be shorter than traveling around Africa (Delaney 47). While King Alfonso did not live long enough to organize an expedition, Columbus was inspired nonetheless (Bergreen 60). Columbus corresponded with Toscanelli and sent him a globe, hoping to impress the mathematician with his intelligence. Toscanelli then sent Columbus a letter in Latin that detailed his knowledge of China (Bergreen 65). Scholars have found, however, that this knowledge comes directly from Marco Polo's travel narrative⁷⁴ and that Toscanelli did not actually travel to

⁷³ Scholars know from the publication dates of books in Columbus's personal library that he had access to scientific information early on; for example, his copy of Ptolemy's *Geographia* is from 1478 (Rome), his copy of Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* (which is a rather large text and is available today in three volumes) was published between 1480 and 1483 (Louvain), and his copy of Pliny's *Historia naturalis* is from 1489 (Venice) (Philips and Philips 109). I consider Christopher Columbus's informal education "medieval" because the works he was reading were not generally written by his contemporaries living after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the year that is generally considered by scholars to be the end of the medieval period.

⁷⁴ Marco Polo (1254-1324) was a Venetian merchant and explorer who spent many years in Asia (1271 – 1295). His exploits were written and published by Rustichello da Pisa in an Old French romance entitled *Livres des Merveilles du Monde* (1300) (Italian: *Il Milione*) (Polo and Latham 15). Polo served as an inspiration to Columbus and Columbus often cited him as a reference when describing the presumed Asian lands that he encountered in the New World.

China⁷⁵ (Bergreen 66). His detailed map served as an inspiration to Columbus, portraying the Atlantic as a small waterway that separated Europe from Cipango (Japan) by five thousand nautical miles (Bergreen 70). Although Toscanelli had poorly underestimated the distance from Portugal to Asia, the Admiral believed it to be accurate based on the writings of other authorities, particularly Ptolemy (Bergreen 66). Toscanelli also preyed upon Columbus's religious predilections, stating that

It will also be a voyage to kings and princes who are very eager to have friendly dealings and speech with the Christians of our countries, because many of them are Christians; they are also very eager to know and speak with learned men of our lands concerning religion and all other branches of knowledge... (Columbus, F. 22)

Toscanelli used Marco Polo's experiences with the Gran Khan, who wanted the Pope to send priests to evangelize his people, in order to persuade Columbus that he (Toscanelli) had been to China. Columbus believed this information to be accurate as it was highly detailed and well-organized.⁷⁶

Toscanelli's reference to the evangelization of the Grand Khan was not Columbus's only religious impetus for westward exploration. Columbus was a lifelong devout Catholic. He grew up in a house leased from and near the monastery of Santo Stefano, where he was baptized, and his life was regulated by the bells of the canonical

⁷⁵ Toscanelli often paraphrased Marco Polo and the use of the city and country names, Quinsay and Cipango (Hangzhou (China) and Japan), indicate that Toscanelli had not actually traveled to those places, but instead used the names given to them by Marco Polo (Bergreen 66).

⁷⁶ It was not have been uncommon for a medieval educated man to believe exactly what he read; the ancient voices of authority were respected by the scholars and general readers of the period (Benton 67). Columbus saw Toscanelli as a voice of authority.

hours (Delaney 22). On ship, canonical hours were also used; sand clocks were flipped every thirty minutes to keep track of time and each turn "...would be accompanied by the recitation of psalms or litanies..." (Pérez-Mallaína 76). Columbus only used canonical hours to mark the passing of time in his *Diario* (Delaney 22). In medieval Europe, time was also marked by religious events; each year was highlighted by an array of Catholic holidays, including Lent, Palm Sunday, Easter, Christmas, and Epiphany, as well as a wide variety of saint's days. These religious dates were also included in Columbus's diary.

Columbus's early religious instruction lessons were given through Catholic services, through religious iconography that saturated the medieval European cityscape (such as stained glass windows and statuary), Biblical stories imparted from family and friends, as well as informal classroom knowledge that focused on both education and Christian behavioral norms (Delaney 22). Animal allegories were often used as examples of Christian behavior during the medieval period, and many of these allegories were pulled directly from bestiaries. As texts, bestiaries were out of fashion and were no longer printed during Columbus's lifetime, but they were still widely present in private libraries, and their public legacy survived in Christian moral tales and imagery. Christianized animal allegories were common knowledge in the fifteenth century. Bestiaries were available at schools and were used to teach Christian morality while also being relatable to other texts, such as the Bible or works by Saints Ambrose and Augustine (Clark 91). In fact, the Third and Fourth Family texts were aimed at children and undereducated adults among the middle classes, with uncomplicated animal descriptions being followed by

clear moralizations (Clark 91). Willene B. Clark notes that even the most uneducated people living through the medieval period had some knowledge of animal lore via folk wisdom and Christian allegories used in Church (22). Animal images were plastered all over churches, and found on statues, stained glass, misericords, etc. Without a doubt, Columbus was exposed to images of bestiary animals in the marginalia of illuminated manuscripts, on silks and textiles coming from the East, and a wide variety of animals throughout the Mediterranean and along the African coast were viewable for the average mariner (Hassig 186-187).

The Admiral's faith influenced many aspects of his life, which played a significant role in his pursuit of his first expedition. Delaney notes that Columbus met Doña Felipa while attending mass at the Convent of All Saints in Lisbon and, after their marriage and subsequent move to Porto Santo, Columbus spent a great deal of time at the Franciscan monastery near their home, where he dialogued with the monks and used the library (37-38). After King João II of Portugal refused to sponsor Columbus's proposed western expedition⁷⁷ and the death of his wife (both occurred in the period of 1484 - 1485), Columbus moved to Castile, where he hoped to be sponsored by the Catholic Monarchs⁷⁸ (Delaney 52). Columbus stayed in a Franciscan monastery, La Rábida,⁷⁹ for a

⁷⁷ King João II was interested in expanding his interests along the African coast. Although the king refused to sponsor Columbus, he sent out his own Portuguese ship to try to sail to Asia from a western route in secret, but nothing came of it (Delaney 48-49).

⁷⁸ Columbus did not limit his hopes to Spain, however, and later sent his brother Bartholomew to England to petition King Henry VII for sponsorship. In both 1490 and 1492, after his rejections from Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus planned on travelling to France to propose his expedition to King Charles VIII (Delaney 49).

⁷⁹ While Columbus often followed the court around Spain, he stayed at the monastery of Santa María de la Rábida when he could to spend time with his son, Diego, who was living there and being educated by the monks. It was rumored that a pilot named Pedro de Velasco visited the monastery and told Columbus of how he traveled with Diogo de Tieve to find the Christianized island mentioned previously, which was

few months and spent much of his time speaking with the head of the Franciscans in the Seville region, Antonio de Marchena. Through Marchena's connections, Columbus was granted a meeting with Queen Isabella (Delaney 53-55). Columbus owed much of his success to his various religious connections.

In May 1486 Queen Isabella met Columbus and then convened a commission of her advisors, and men of letters in Salamanca (named the Talavera commission) to consider Columbus's proposal (Delaney 58-59). While waiting to hear from this group, Columbus began a romantic relationship with an educated middle-class woman named Beatriz Enriquez de Harana who gave birth to their son Fernando in 1488 (Delaney 61). He also spent time fighting in Queen Isabella's reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, going to battle for her against the Iberian Muslims in Jaén and Baza in 1489 (Delaney 63). In late 1490, the Talavera commission rejected Columbus's proposal, basing their rejection on the works of St. Augustine, and declaring that the voyage to Asia would take three years (Delaney 63).

Columbus prepared himself to go to France to speak with Charles VIII and seek sponsorship (Delaney 64). The queen was urged by the new head friar at La Rábida, Juan Pérez (her former confessor) to reconsider the proposal, and she sent Columbus some money, asking him to meet with her in Granada while a second commission reviewed his proposal (Delaney 65). The second commission rejected his proposal on the same

rumored to have a lot of gold, and they sailed more than one hundred and fifty leagues from Portugal only to discover a different Atlantic island, named Flores, and near the Azores, in 1452. De Velasco claims that they followed birds, noting specifically that they were not marine birds, to the island (Columbus, F. 27). Columbus, in his *Diario*, frequently mentioned sightings of birds that he identified as not being marine birds.

religious grounds as the first⁸⁰ in the early spring of 1492. Columbus again prepared to go to France, but he received a message that the queen, by the urging of her treasurer Luis de Santángel, had decided against the advice of the commission and had chosen to sponsor his expedition (Delaney 66-67).

Columbus's first voyage, begun in August 1492, opened the door to conquest in the New World. Columbus's intent on his second voyage (1493-1496) was to set up a trading settlement, much like the Portuguese *factorias* along the African coast, and while there were two that were established (New Isabella and Santo Domingo), the trading posts fell into infighting among the settlers due, in large part, to administrative mismanagement by don Diego Colón, the Admiral's brother.⁸¹ In 1499, Columbus begged the king and queen to send an investigator to resolve these issues, but the man they sent, Knight Commander Francisco de Bobadilla, seized power and the trading posts fell into anarchy. Bobadilla had Columbus sent back to Spain as a prisoner in the autumn of 1500, at the end of Columbus's third voyage (Delaney 181). The Admiral was granted a fourth voyage to the New World by the crown on the condition that he never again set foot on Hispaniola (May 1502). His most unfortunate and miserable trip, beset by a combination of poor health, the hostility of indigenous tribes, worm-rotten ships and

⁸⁰ Some of the rejection of Columbus's proposal stems from the fact that Columbus was a foreigner who had worked for another government entirely, and that he was both a commoner and not formally educated (Delaney 55).

⁸¹ Without adding too many unnecessary details to this dissertation, I point out that Columbus was a good navigator, a devoted Catholic, and a sound negotiator, but he was a terrible administrator. His second and third voyages were fraught with rebellions led by hidalgos and workers who refused to cooperate and work the land in order to survive. The indigenous populations were often left to deal with Spaniards who abused, mistreated, and murdered them, while Columbus took handfuls of men to explore the Caribbean in the hopes of either establishing more trading posts or of finding evidence of the Grand Khan. While abroad, Columbus left his brother, don Diego, in charge, who bungled the governing of the outpost to the point of rebellion (Delaney 147).

shipwreck, ended in Columbus returning to Spain crippled with arthritis and nearly blind. He died on 20 May 1506 in Valladolid, Spain (Delaney 235).

The most important points of Columbus's life, within the context of this dissertation, are his informal and experiential education in so far as they illuminate his understanding and subsequent description of the world around him. Columbus had some formal education, but was mostly self-taught, and he also learned through discussions with educated individuals and religious figures. He had access to great libraries in monasteries, and connections to people at court, as well as some financial means to purchase books on his own, so he was able to acquire knowledge through various written materials. Some of what Columbus read about and discussed was supported by eyewitness accounts and presumed physical evidence. His first-hand experience negotiating both the sea and traders enabled him to understand ocean currents, winds, and the people who survived on trade. To Fernando Columbus's description of his father's worldly education, I would add the deep-seated concepts of religion and faith. Columbus was nothing if not devout, almost to the point of zealotry near the end of his life. After his second voyage, he only wore the brown habit of a Franciscan monk, and he wrote his *Libro de las profecías* in the hopes that it would inspire the Catholic monarchs to keep their word and use the gold and income from the New World to fund a new crusade to the Holy Land (Delaney 157; 201). Some scholars view Columbus's religious fervor as evidence of poor mental health, but, based on careful reading of his letters, his *Diario*, his *Libro de las profecías*, and modern Columbine scholarship, I argue that the true evangelization of the indigenous people (he wanted them to understand Christianity

before they were baptized and not just baptized for the sake of baptism), and the desire to conquer Jerusalem were some of the strongest motivating factors behind his desire to travel west to Asia.⁸² While there is no doubt that gold and glory were intermingled with God in Columbus's westerly pursuit, it is clear that Columbus believed in destiny, and that, as he followed the natural course of his life, he perceived divine signs and symbols that proved (to him, at least) that it was his destiny to be a messenger of God.

The Importance of Signs and Symbols

The will of God and the signs of divine providence were regularly on Columbus's mind. In his letters to the Catholic Monarchs, he often indicated his desire for the reconquering of Jerusalem and the spread of Christianity to the East.⁸³ He perceived signs and symbols of the coming apocalypse around him, and he was eager to spur it on through evangelization.⁸⁴ This perception, and his understanding of his own place in the world, are important concepts to unpack, in order to understand how bestiary animal imagery via Christian symbology related to the representation of some of the animals of the New World found in his *Diario* and his correspondence.

⁸² Columbus was not the first to note the strong correlation between conquest and evangelization. Michael Palencia Roth concludes that Columbus was carrying on the Reconquista of the twelfth-fifteenth centuries (49). Even among his many different peer groups, Columbus's fervent religiosity is notable in his texts, and he often allows his religious language and expressions to dominate his descriptions. Columbus, according to Palencia Roth, considered himself, at least in part, on a religious mission (48).

⁸³ Carol Delany, in her book *Columbus and the Quest for Jerusalem* (2011 CE), argues that Columbus was greatly influenced by Apocalyptic literature and perceived signs of the coming Apocalypse that were popular in the late medieval period, and that his real purpose for his enterprise was to get enough gold to reconquer Jerusalem, spread Christianity, and bring about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

⁸⁴ In his *Libro de las profecías*, Columbus wrote, "The Holy Scriptures testify in the Old Testament by the mouth of / the prophets, and in the New Testament by our Savior Jesus Christ, that this world must come to an end. The signs concerning the time when this must happen are given by Matthew, Mark and Luke. The prophets also predicted it repeatedly" (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 108-109).

Columbus was, above everything, a man of his times. During the Pre- and Early-Modern eras, the Christian way of life was the only true path, and "...The Christian faith was not just a moral guide to life; it also incorporated a worldview...in its widest (cosmological) context...space and time were circumscribed" (Delaney xiii). Columbus's world revolved first and foremost around his faith and he grew up in the shadow of several perceived Apocalyptic events: The Great Famine of 1315, the Great Schism (1305-1377), the rise of the Black Plague, and the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 (Delaney 1-17). The last event was especially disheartening, as Christian pilgrims and Genovese merchants lost their last outpost in the East (Delaney 1). Itinerant preachers and religious writers, such as Joachim di Fiore,⁸⁵ preached the glories of God, the salvation of the soul, and the coming of End Times, using devastating events to incite religious fervor (Delaney 39). Columbus was, "Deeply influenced by millenarian visionaries...As early as his first voyage, he suggested that all profits from his enterprise should be used for the Christian reconquest of Jerusalem from the Muslims" (Philips and Philips 5).

One important facet of the medieval worldview was the belief that the divine was present and acted upon the mundane. Columbus was influenced by divine signs from his early life on. One linguistic sign can be found in Columbus's Italian birth name, *Cristoforo Colombo*. Delaney points out that when a child is baptized, his baptismal name is believed to have an influence on his or her character, and

⁸⁵ Joachim di Fiore was an abbot from Calabria in the thirteenth-century whose work, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, described the world as moving through three historical ages, and that the third age (the Age of the Spirit) could not begin until Jerusalem was reconquered and every human on earth had heard the Word of God (Delaney 39).

The name Cristoforo (Christopher) means Christ-bearer and is derived from the story of a pagan man, Reprobus, who once carried a small child across a river. As they crossed, the child became heavier and heavier until he revealed to Reprobus that he was carrying the weight of the entire world...Reprobus realized he was carrying the Christ child. For his service Reprobus became a saint known as Christopher. (21)

While Columbus later changed his family name in the Spanish court to *Colón*, in its original Italian form it means *dove* or *pigeon*. Bestiary birds, in general, are believed to have been given wings by God so that they could fly between and connect heaven to earth⁸⁶ (Clark 165). Doves, particularly, are metaphors for preachers who shepherd and defend helpless souls (Clark 185). Jesus Christ is recognized by Catholics as the *Prince of Peace* and is often represented by a dove, a universal symbol of peace. As his birthname meant *Christbearer Dove*, Columbus indicates that his travels west, the intention of converting indigenous populations to Christianity in order to give them peace in the afterlife, and the search for enough gold to begin a new conquest of Jerusalem, were part of his divine destiny.

⁸⁶ Birds were frequently the subject of European symbolism; the symbolic practice of ornithomancy (also called augury), or the divining of bird cries and actions, was practiced all over the world and was highly important to mariners (Ingersoll 212-213, 218). Ornithomancy likely influenced bestiary authors in that they noted that many birds were often named for their cry, screech, or song (Clark 166). These sounds were also included in allegorical contexts in the bestiaries; for example, the dove was known to have "...for its song a sigh...So preachers...sigh for their own sins and those of others", thus taking on the burden of other people's sins (Clark 184). The bird's sounds became symbols for their behavior and contextualized their presence among humans.

Fernando Columbus certainly saw his father's name as a divine symbol of the Admiral's destiny as a messenger of God. Fernando Columbus noted that

...he changed the name to make it conform to the language...I was moved believe that just as most of his affairs were directed by a secret Providence, so the variety of his name and surname was not without its mystery...the Admiral's name foretold the novel and wonderful deed he was about to perform...we may say that he was truly Columbus or Dove, because he carried the grace of the Holy Ghost to that New World which he discovered, showing those people who knew Him not Who was God's beloved son, as the Holy Ghost did in the figure of a dove when St. John baptized Christ; and because over the waters of the ocean, like the dove of Noah's ark, he bore the olive branch and oil of baptism, to signify that those people who had been shut up in the ark of darkness and confusion were to enjoy peace and union with the Church. So the surname of Colón...was a fitting one, because in Greek it means "member," and which by his proper name Christopher, men might know that he was a member of Christ, by Whom he was sent for the salvation of those people." (4)

Bartolomé de las Casas also insists that Columbus was named for the Latin expression *Christum ferens* (Bergreen 47).

Columbus did not limit himself to only looking for signs, but he also attempted to create them. For instance, Columbus directly incorporated symbols into his known signature, which he used officially for the first time when on his first voyage.⁸⁷ More of a sigil than a signature, it resembles “a ship in full sail and consists of three rows of letters in the shape of a triangle...” (Delaney 110). What these three rows of letters mean remains a mystery, although scholars speculate that they are religious in nature: the first row contains only the letter S, the second is composed of the letters SAS, and the third, the letters XMY.⁸⁸ Columbus used neither the Italian nor the Spanish versions of his name below the sigil, but rather a combination of Greek and Latin words that mean “Christ-bearer”: *Xpo-ferens*⁸⁹ (Delaney 111). Some scholars further speculate that the three rows of letters relate either to the Holy Trinity or to the three ages proposed by Joachim di Fiore, and that the seven total letters reflect the presumed seven millennia of the world’s duration. As an artistic piece, the sigil is interesting in that as the “Christ-bearer,” Columbus symbolically seems to show himself (by way of his name, *Xpo-ferens*)

⁸⁷ “Before leaving [the Caribbean], Columbus gave a letter to Rodrigo Escobedo charging him to administer justice and to watch over a chest filled with some gifts Guacanagarí had given him. The letter was signed with a mysterious sigil that Columbus must have designed during the voyage. The letter to Escobedo is the first example of it, but henceforth this was the way Columbus signed all his letters and other documents. Later, when he was permitted to make a *majorat*, he instructed his heir, Diego, and those after him to sign in this fashion” (Delaney 110).

⁸⁸ In his *Institución del Mayorazgo* (Creation of Primogenitor) (22 February 1498), Columbus details that his inheritors were to use his signature, but does not explain the meaning behind the letters used: “...después de haber heredado y estado en posesión de ello, firme de mi firma, la cual agora acostumbro, que es una X con una S encima, y una M con una A romana encima, y encima della una S y después una Y griega con una S encima con sus rayas y vírgulas, como yo ahora fago...” (...after having inherited and been in possession of it, sign with my signature, that which I am in the habit of using, which is an X with an S above it, and an M with a Roman A above it, and above that an S and then a Y with an S on top with its diacritical marks, as I now do...) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 249).

⁸⁹ Sometimes he writes *El Almirante* rather than *Xpo-Ferens* below his sigil, with the metaphorical concept that an admiral commands his ship the way God commands souls.

carrying the sigil-ship on his back, as St. Christopher carried the infant Jesus⁹⁰ (Catholic Online). Columbus “...professed to believe implicitly in his own special vocation as the “Christ-bearer,” a missionary discoverer, divinely called and equipped for the task of announcing a new era of foreordained expansion and renewal for all Christendom”⁹¹ (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 3).

Aside from looking for and creating symbols, Columbus also attempted to symbolically interpret Scripture. Examples of his belief in religious symbols can be found in his known written documents. Columbus’s *Libro de las profecías*⁹² (1501-1505 CE), although compiled towards the end of his life, is a representation of his fervent belief in the system of Christian signs, symbols, and prophecy. It is a contextualized study of the Bible that takes on a two-fold approach: that of the mystical evangelist and that of the practical and practiced sailor. Columbus selected content from the Bible that he interpreted as prophesizing the Discovery (and his role in it), as well as the End of Days, the recovery of Jerusalem, and the spread of Christianity. He subsequently supported these excerpts with either historical references or voices of authority. The text itself was composed of four parts: an introduction to the prophetic themes (which included a

⁹⁰ Millie Gimmel notes, and I rather agree with her position, that this sigil was an “...obvious attempt to focus on the evangelical aspects of his voyages” (43). As Columbus wanted to travel west by ship to Asia and find the rich mines of Ophir in order to save Jerusalem, a sigil that reflected his significant role in this venture was appropriate.

⁹¹ Fernando Columbus pointed out that, “...as St. Christopher is reported to have gotten that name because he carried Christ over deep waters...so the Admiral Christophorus Colonus...crossed over his company that the Indian nations might become dwellers in the triumphant Church of Heaven” (4).

⁹² The full English title of this text is *Notebook of authorities, statements, pinion and prophecies on the subject of the recovery of God’s holy city and mountain of Zion, and on the discovery and evangelization of the islands of the Indies and of all other peoples and nations* (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 2). It was written over several years, with the main portions compiled between 1501 and 1502; these were added to off and on until 1505, during the most physically, financially, and emotionally difficult years of Columbus’s post-Discovery life (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 86).

description of his methodological approach and a letter addressed to the sovereigns), followed by a deconstruction of those themes into three major parts: *Concerning What Has Already Taken Place, On the Present and the Future*, and *Prophecies of the Future. The Last Days*⁹³ (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 81-82).

These four parts correlate well with Christian beliefs about the construction of the universe. Medieval Christians believed that God had made everything, and all aspects of life were an extension of His sagacity; the sciences and knowledge of the time were viewed as aids to reveal the secrets of God's world (Delaney 191). Columbus noted in the letter to the sovereigns that he included in the *Libro de las profecías* that his was

...a calling that inclines those who pursue it to desire to understand the world's secrets...I prayed to the most merciful Lord concerning my desire...He gave me abundant skill in the mariner's arts, an adequate understanding of the stars, and of geometry and arithmetic. He gave me the mental capacity and the manual skill to draft spherical maps, and to draw the cities, rivers, mountains, islands and ports, all in their proper places...During this time, I have searched out and studied all kinds of texts: geographies, histories, chronologies, philosophies and other subjects. With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it

⁹³ Columbian scholars such as HARRISSE, WEISSMANN, and ANDRÉ have long viewed this manuscript with skepticism. Some believe that Columbus wrote it to prove he was a Jewish converso, others believe it outlines his fall into mental illness, among many other perspectives. West and Kling note that fewer numbers of scholars, such as QUINET, accept the text for what it appears to be: an "intensely medieval and mystical" reminder that the sovereigns had promised to evangelize the indigenous peoples in the Indies and to try to reconquer Jerusalem (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 85-86).

would be possible to sail from here to the Indies, and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project”⁹⁴

(Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 105)

Columbus then determined that his Discovery was also divinely rooted and prophetically revealed: “The Lord proposed that there should be something clearly miraculous in this matter of the voyage to the Indies...it all turned out just as our redeemer Jesus Christ had said, and as he had spoken earlier by the mouth of his holy prophets...” (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 107).

Inferring divine meaning from the animals which crossed his path would not have been a stretch for a man so deeply determined to view himself as a messenger of God, and who viewed all the nature around him as part of God’s plan.⁹⁵ In the *Libro de las profecías*, Columbus explicitly explained that animals are used by God as Christian symbols: “I also believe that the Holy Spirit reveals future events not only in rational beings, but also discloses them to us in signs in the sky, in the atmosphere and in animals...” (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 107). Columbus was not alone in

⁹⁴ He repeated the idea that the Trinity gave him the intelligence to learn to navigate in his *Institución del Mayorazgo* (22 February 1498) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 245).

⁹⁵ In 1500, while chained on the *Gorda* and sent back to Spain after being arrested by Bobadilla, Columbus wrote to the sister of Antonio de Torres, at that time governess to the Infante and friend to his sons, doña Juana de Torres, emphasizing the fact that he believed himself to be God’s messenger on Earth who would participate in bringing about the Apocalypse by funding a crusade to Jerusalem with the gold from his Discovery (Delany 183-184). The quote is, “Del nuevo cielo y tierra que decía nuestro Señor por San Juan en el *Apocalipse*, después de dicho por boca de Isaías, me hizo dello mensagero y amostró en cuál parte...” (“Of the new heaven and earth, our Lord said through Saint John [who wrote] in the *Apocalipse* after having been prophesized by Isaiah, that He made me [His] messenger and showed me in which part [to find these lands]...” (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 311). In his letter to the Catholic Monarchs about his third voyage Columbus wrote, “...La Santa Trinidad movió á vuestras Altezas á esta empresa de las Indias, y por su infinita bondad hizo á mi mensagero dello...” (“The Holy Trinity moved Your Highnesses toward this Enterprise of the Indies, and in their [the Holy Trinity] infinite goodness made me messenger of it...” (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 268).

assigning animals agency as signs and symbols. In fact, well before Columbus compiled the *Libro de las profeçías*, animals, particularly real and imaginary exotic creatures, had already garnered a place in medieval symbology. The Third and Fourth families of bestiary manuscript production show that medieval Europeans already had a strong literary preference for imaginary and wild beasts in comparison to domesticated ones, and animals had been long been imbued with symbolic and allegorical meaning (Benton 16;104). Willene B. Clark suggests that this is because medieval people were particularly interested in *mirabilium*⁹⁶ an interest that was culturally inherited from the ancient world (27). For classical and medieval people alike, fact and fantasy often intermingled and lent a certain exoticism to any new animal, person, or object that had been previously unknown or which came from a distant region.

In Columbus's letters and diary, there is a sense of wonder that can be associated with the bestiary tradition in how he describes animals during his explorations.⁹⁷ In general, Christian medieval people who believed the Apocalypse was fast approaching

⁹⁶ The marvelous found in the unknown.

⁹⁷ According to Margarita Zamora, the letter that Columbus wrote to Luis de Santángel (15 February 1493) underwent some revision before its publication, "...summarizing various passages that are more elaborate in the letter to Isabella and Ferdinand" (12). Moreover, there is evidence that Columbus did not update his *Diario* daily, and therefore some of animal references were added after the actual events (Zamora 24). What is interesting about this is that many zoological references remained in the printed versions of his letters, even though they were basically a combination of his own re-readings of his journal, and the subsequent editing of each letter by another individual before publication. Columbus also understood that his audience, be they the religious Catholic Monarchs or others, were able to appreciate specific information that could be directly inferred from the zoological inclusions in his texts: animals had economic, social, and religious value in Europe and their inclusion, without mentioning any other aspect of their behavior or nature, had the potential to impress his audience. After his death, his work was revised by at least two different authors, his son Ferdinand, and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Both used his diaries to their own advantage; Ferdinand wanted to protect his family's rights in the New World, and Las Casas heavily borrowed from Columbus' 1492 diary while writing his *Historia de las Indias* (written between 1527-1561) (Zamora 42).

would have been looking for *mirabilium*, as well as *miraculum*⁹⁸ (Clark 27). Both *mirabilium* and *miraculum* can also be conceptualized as “wonder”, a common theme in bestiaries. Columbus was interested in both *mirabilium* and *miraculum*,⁹⁹ and in his *Libro de las profecías*, he expressed his belief that God and the Bible wondrously helped him to understand his life path, “...the Holy Spirit who encouraged me with a radiance of marvelous illumination from his sacred Holy Scriptures...” (Columbus, *Libro de las profecías* 105). Throughout his *Diario*, Columbus made numerous references to *mirabilium*, but he used the Castilian word, *maravilla(s)*.¹⁰⁰ For example, on 21 October 1492, he wrote about the animals he saw on the island that he named Isabela:

...aquí y en toda la isla son todos verdes y las yerbas como en el
Abril en el Andalucía; y el cantar de los pajaritos que parece que el
hombre nunca se querría partir de aquí, y las manadas de los
papagayos que ascorecen el sol; y aves y pajaritos de tantas

⁹⁸ The understanding that not all miracles can be explained, and must, therefore, be accepted as a positive act of God.

⁹⁹ While I do not explicitly describe *miraculum* in this chapter, it is worth noting that Columbus relied on the word more frequently towards the end of his life, and he mentioned miracles specifically during his difficult fourth voyage (“El navío se me anegó, que milagrosamente me trujo nuestro Señor á tierra”; “The ship flooded but God miraculously brought me to land”), and in his final will, written 19 May 1506, the day before his death (“...la Isla Española, que Dios me dió milagrosamente”; “...the Island of Hispaniola, which God miraculously gave to me”) (373; 424). He also mentioned that “...nuestro Señor me llevó allí milagrosamente...” (“...God had taken me there miraculously...”) in his 1499 *Carta del Almirante D. Cristóbal Colón á los Reyes católicos tratando del alzamiento de Francisco Roldán* (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 303).

¹⁰⁰ *Maravilla*, which is the word Columbus frequently used, is the evolved Castilian form of the Latin noun *mirabilia*, derived from the Latin stem *mirari* (to admire). Words derived from this root in Castilian include *mirar*, *admirar*, *mirador* and *milagro* (to see, to admire, a balcony, a miracle), and forms derived from *maravilla* in Castilian are *maravillar* and *maravilloso* (to enchant/delight, wonderful/marvelous (“Maravilla”). Most of these words have an obvious secondary religious meaning.

maneras y tan diversas de las nuestras que es maravilla...¹⁰¹

(Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 40)

This reference to *maravilla* after the long description of birds shows that Columbus felt a sense of wonder while beholding such diversity of birds that were so numerous they darkened the sky. Their song is as attractive as those of the bestiary sirens, making men never want to leave the island (Clark 179). Birds had long been considered the messengers between Heaven and Earth and it appears that Columbus was trying to represent them in such a way as to show that his arrival in the New World was a *miraculum* of a monumental and cacophonous sort¹⁰² (Ferber 26). By using the word *maravilla*, he gave a miraculous and divine dimension to the animal imagery, appealing to audiences comprised of religious and mercantile figures.

In another reference to *maravilla*, Columbus describes how he marveled in awe as he gazed on the many islands and the tall mountains of Cuba for the first time (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 65). On Cuba, the Admiral was struck by the freshness and pleasantness of the land, and that walking through the island “...fue cosa maravillosa...”, so much that it almost appeared an enchanted land (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 79). He also found that the kindness of the people of Hispaniola was worth marveling at, determining, “...los indios dieron á correr al pueblo...para traerle más comida y papagayos y otras cosas de lo que tenían,

¹⁰¹ “...and here, and all over the island, everything is green, and the herbs are like [those] in April in Andalusia; the song of the little birds makes it seem like a man would never want to leave from here; and the flocks of parrots darken the sky; and the birds and little birds are of all kinds and as diverse as ours [in Europe] that it is a wonder...”.

¹⁰² According to Ferber, birds were often seen as the intercessors between Gods and Man (26).

con tan franco corazón que era maravilla”¹⁰³ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 115). In the most interesting of ironies, Columbus claimed that he could not understand the indigenous peoples when they tried to describe the island of Cuba to him (which Columbus believed was *Cipango*, or Japan), but he understood through their hand gestures that there were “...cosas maravillosas...” to be found there (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 43). How that abstract interpretation was derived has been left off the page.

Away from land and working at sea as a navigator, Columbus would have understood that seabirds were often signs that land was near (Delaney 72). He frequently mentioned birds in his *Diario* during the first crossing, and often in conjunction with the farthest distance from land that these types of birds would travel. For example, on 14 September 1492, he wrote, “...dijeron los de la carabela *Niña* que habían visto un garjao y un rabo de junco, y estas aves nunca se apartan de tierra cuando más veinticinco leguas”¹⁰⁴ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 9). On 17 September, he followed up with, “...vieron muchas más yerbas, y que parecían yerbas de ríos, en las cuales hallaron un cangrejo vivo, el cual guardó el Almirante, y dice que aquellas fueron señales ciertas de tierra, porque no se hallan ochenta leguas de tierra...”¹⁰⁵ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 10-11). Again, on 19 September, he indicated,

¹⁰³ “...the Indians ran back to their town...in order to bring him [Columbus] more food and parrots and other things that they had, with such open hearts that it was a wonder”.

¹⁰⁴ “...those from the caravel *Niña* said they had seen a tern and *rabo de junco* [a type of seabird with a long tail, related to the mouse-birds of Africa], and these birds never go farther than twenty-five leagues from land.”

¹⁰⁵ “...they say many grasses, and they seemed to be river grasses, in which they found a living crab, which the Admiral kept, and [he] says that these are certain signs of land, because they [the crabs] are not found farther than eighty leagues from land.”

“Este día, á las diez horas, vino á la nao un alcatraz, y á la tarde vieron otro, que no suele apartarse veinte leguas de tierra...”¹⁰⁶ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal*

Colón 11-12). He made a longer reference on 20 September,

“Vinieron á la nao dos alcatraces, y después otro, que fue señal de estar cerca de tierra...después vino un alcatraz: venía del Ouesnorueste, iba al Sueste, que era señal que dejaba la tierra al Ouesnorueste, porque estas aves duermen en tierra y por la mañana van á la mar a buscar su vida, y no se alejan veinte leguas”.¹⁰⁷

(Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 12)

These references would have been general knowledge that any mariner would have learned through observation and navigational experience.

Along with his observations at sea, Columbus was searching for signs that he had arrived in Asia, which he had read about in ancient, travel, mercantile, and religious texts. Columbus mentioned biological and cultural information from texts by Ptolemy and Pliny, as well as Marco Polo, in his letters in order to justify his stance that he had reached Asia. Based on his annotations in his copy of Pierre d’Ailly’s *Ymago mundi* about the habitability of the Torrid Zone, and his descriptions of the kinds of people he was meeting and their clothing and behaviors, Columbus concluded that the Caribbean was the easternmost region of the Gran Khan’s lands in Asia (D’Ailly 1:97; Columbus,

¹⁰⁶ “This day, at ten o’clock [AM], a pelican came to the boat and in the afternoon they say another, [a bird which] does not go farther than twenty leagues from land”.

¹⁰⁷ “Two gannets came to the ship, and afterwards another, which was the sign that land was near...after came a gannet; it came from the West-Northwest and was going Southeast, which was the sign that land was to the West-Northwest because these birds sleep on land and in the morning they go to sea to earn its living [hunt], and they go no farther than twenty leagues.”

Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón 275). Included among these people are references to the monstrous races, those types of people who were, since the fifth century BCE, had been depicted as physically and culturally different from Europeans, and were believed to be living in the East¹⁰⁸ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 77; 144; 190-192). John Block Friedman wrote that, “The monstrous races were always far away, in India, Ethiopia, Albania, or Cathay, places whose outlines were vague to the medieval mind...” (1). He also believed that he had found the entrance to Eden (in modern Venezuela), which D’Ailley and other authorities believed was in the East (D’Ailley 1: 199; Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 287). Columbus documented these pieces of evidence in order to convince the crown that he had landed in Asia and had held up his end of his contract.

When Columbus navigated west in 1492, he was not merely looking for signs that he had arrived in Asia. He continued to search for signs that he, the *Christo-ferens*, was following his divine destiny. Interestingly, in his letter to Luís de Santángel (15 February 1493), he pointed out that the indigenous believed that he and his men had come from Heaven (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 189). I argue that Columbus, believing that his voyage was divinely inspired, included this in his letters because, in his world view, he was bringing the salvation of Heaven to these people, and thus, in a manner of speaking, he and his men were Heaven-sent. His absorption and interpretation of visual signs would be reproduced in his descriptions of many of the New World animals as signs that the Discovery, and his role in it, was divinely determined. Many of

¹⁰⁸ The average medieval European’s understanding of “the East” was very general and often limited by the religious constructs imposed by the Catholic Fathers.

Columbus's animal descriptions are imbued with the religious allegories that were associated with certain beasts during the medieval period, effectively transforming New World animals into divine signs for the purpose of supporting Columbus' expeditions in the Americas.

Columbus's Animal Representations

Columbus's animal representation was inconsistent throughout his letters and the *Diario*, but there are three distinguishable types of representation: animals which are imbued with religious attributes that can be associated with bestiary material, animals that are used as commodified goods, and animals which reflect Columbus's emotional state. While scholars cannot be certain if Columbus included these types of animal descriptions deliberately, I unpack Columbus' specific animal references through a contextualized historical and literary analysis. Upon closer examination, these three general categories correlate to both the time and place of Columbus's life in the New World. Between 1492 and 1504 CE, most of Columbus's Caribbean animal descriptions related to wonder and to bestiary descriptions of known and fictional creatures. While working as an administrator (1493-1500 CE), Columbus described animals as tools of necessity, survival, and commodification, and his animal descriptions appear to reflect his emotional state(s) relating to his vacillating social and financial situations in life.

Columbus's animal references that relate to bestiary material via religious symbolism are concentrated in his periods of exploration. In his *Diario*, the first living contact that Columbus had with the Caribbean was an ornithological one. On 17 September 1492, the diary states: "En aquella mañana dice que vido un ave blanca que se

llama *Rabo de junco*, que no suele dormir en la mar...”¹⁰⁹ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 14). He continued by declaring this a sign from “the west”, and all the victories granted by God would be found there (Columbus, *Viajes De Cristóbal Colón* 9). In this way, the expedition and the text are given a religious character to in relation to the westerly navigation. The birds themselves are used as evidence that the expedition was divinely accepted and encouraged, and that these birds, being land-based, would guide the mariners to shore (Columbus, *Viajes De Cristóbal Colón* 9). As Columbus was also a sailor and birds were often used as evidence of land, I contend that he believed that many of the animals he saw while on exploration were both symbols that his voyage was a part of God’s plan, and, also, that land was near.

While at sea, his language style was both descriptive and symbolic, and many of his early references to animals were written either before or after a reference to God. For example, he described on 17 September 1492 the capture and killing of a tuna, and directly after, he describes this as one of the signs of the west where, “...donde espero en aquel alto Dios, en cuyas manos están todas las victorias, que muy presto nos dará tierra”¹¹⁰ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 14). Later, on 2 October 1492, Columbus wrote, “...á Dios muchas gracias sean dadas...parecieron muchos peces, matóse uno; vieron una ave blanca que parecía gaviota”¹¹¹ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 17). He later repeated this idea, writing on 5 October 1492,

¹⁰⁹ “On that morning, he said that he saw a white bird called a mouse-bird, that does not sleep on the sea.”

¹¹⁰ “...where he trusted in that God on high, in whose hands lay all victories, who would soon give us land.”

¹¹¹ “...many thanks be given to God...many fish appeared; one was killed; they saw a white bird that looked like a gull.”

“...á Dios...muchas gracias sean dadas; el aire muy dulce y temprado, yerba ninguna, aves pardelas muchas peces golondrinas volaron en la nao muchas”¹¹² (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 18). On 8 October he noted, “...gracias á Dios...muchos pajaritos del campo, y tomaron uno que iban huyendo al Sudueste, grajaos y ánades y un alcatraz”¹¹³ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 19). Columbus, therefore, established early in his voyages a relationship between religion and animals, placing the literary appearance of fauna within the symbolic sphere of religious representation.

Much of Columbus’s symbolic representation centered on birds.¹¹⁴ Birds were included in the bestiary tradition and, as with all the bestiary animals, birds had both general and specific attributes (Clark 164). Relatedly, bestiary authors divided them into three groups: passerines, non-passerines, and “unidentifiable” birds (generally the fantastic birds, like the phoenix) (George and Yapp 121-123). Columbus wrote mostly about birds from the first two groups.

The way Columbus described these sea-travelling birds is important in relation to the bestiaries. Columbus did not often describe the bird’s behavior on their own but, in general terms, their relationship to the men and their ships (i.e. representations of humanity).¹¹⁵ The bestiary animals were always personified with Christian

¹¹² “...many thanks be given to God; the air was sweet and temperate, there were no weeds, birds, many sandpipers, and many flying fish came to the ship.”

¹¹³ “...thanks to God...many land-birds, and they captured one that was fleeing to the southeast, terns, ducks, and a gannet.”

¹¹⁴ In footnote 102 of this chapter (page 80), I indicated that birds were long considered messengers between Heaven and Earth (Ferber 26).

¹¹⁵ Relating animal and human behavior was quite common throughout the medieval period. St. Ambrose, in his *Of Paradise*, constructed his metaphors using animal behavior to comprehensibly outline the behaviors expected of a good Christian. For example, of cruelty he writes, “If you revel in ferocity, the

characteristics, and cultural information was often learned by medieval people through animal personification and folklore.¹¹⁶ Scholars believe that the use of animal figures was thought to have made lessons more interesting and memorable to their audience¹¹⁷ (Clark 30).

In an act of personification, Columbus also used the verb *venir* (to come) when relating that birds would fly to the ships. In his documents, he captured the actions of some birds with *venir*; on 20 September 1492, he wrote, "...vinieron al navío en amaneciendo dos ó tres pajaritos de tierra cantando, y después antes del sol salido desaparecieron"¹¹⁸ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 12). Later, on 4 October 1493, he wrote in his *Diario*, "...vinieron al navío más de cuarenta pardeles juntos y dos alcatraces, y al uno dio una pedrada un mozo de la carabela: vino á la nao un rabiforcado y una blanca como gaviota"¹¹⁹ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 17-18). Columbus, in effect, received divine messages in earthly form, which came to his ship voluntarily as signs of that God was pleased with his chosen route and that

dominant trait of savage beasts for which reason they are slain, see that you, too, may not become a victim of your own atrocious cruelty" (233-234).

¹¹⁶ In medieval Castile, *El libro de Calilia y Dimna* was representative of animal personification and moral values linked to animals. It was transcribed from the original Arabic into Latin, and translated into Castilian in the thirteenth century.

¹¹⁷ The description of the *hoopoe*, a bird that is often associated with the lapwing found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 in the Bible, provides an interesting example of symbolic meaning incorporated into daily life:

"When the bird that is called hoopoe sees its parents grow old and their eyes grow dim, it plucks out their feathers and lick their eyes and warms them, and their parents are restored, as if <the young> say to their parents, 'As you labored taking care of me, I do the same for you.' Moreover, if irrational birds do this for one another, how much more should rational men offer reciprocal care to their parents, because the law says, *He that curseth his father or mother shall die the death* (Ex 21:17), and that is just like patricide and matricide?" (Clark 177).

¹¹⁸ "...at daybreak, two or three little land birds came to the ship singing, and after before the sun disappeared."

¹¹⁹ "...more than four sandpipers came to the ship in a flock, as well as two gannets, and a lad hit one with a stone; a frigate bird came to the ship, and a white [one] that looked like a seagull."

land was near. These animals, the repetition and description of their behavior, appear as symbolic gestures of welcome for someone looking for signs of welcome¹²⁰.

Interestingly, this sense of welcome and pleasant greeting does not extend to the return trip to Spain on the first voyage (January – February 1493). In his *Diario*, Columbus does not use the verb *venir* to describe the actions of any of the seabirds on the way back to Spain. In fact, most of the action relies on the verb *ver*¹²¹ or other relatively passive verbs, such as *haber*.¹²² To name but a few examples: “...hobo alcatraces, rabos de juncos y rabiforcados...”¹²³ (19 January 1493), “Parecieron muchos rabos de juncos y pardelas, y otras aves...”¹²⁴ (21 January 1493), “Parecieron muchos rabos de juncos y mucha yerba...”¹²⁵ and “Vieron muchas aves y pardelas...”¹²⁶ (6 February 1493) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 156; 157; 158; 162). It is not until Columbus and his remaining ships are in the Azores that a bird which looks like an eagle comes to the ships (25 February 1493): “Vino á la carabela un ave muy grande que parecía águila”¹²⁷ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 176). The eagle was depicted in the bestiaries as a creature that, when tired and world-weary, would find a fountain, bath in it three times, and would become rejuvenated again (Clark 166). The allegory continues in the bestiary tradition that if an old man seeks the “fountain of the

¹²⁰ I note here that Columbus described other animals that he saw in the sea in brief, such as crabs. As he only briefly mentions these creatures and they are not comparable to bestiary creatures, I do not focus on them in this dissertation.

¹²¹ to see

¹²² to have or to be

¹²³ “...there were gannets, mousebirds, and frigatebirds...”

¹²⁴ “There seemed many mousebirds, shearwaters, and other birds...”

¹²⁵ “There seemed many mousebirds and a lot of [sea]grass...”

¹²⁶ “They saw many birds and shearwaters...”

¹²⁷ “A very large bird came to the ship that looked like an eagle.”

lord” then he shall feel rejuvenated and in good spirits (Clark 166). After the perilous journey that Columbus experienced on his return voyage, including three terrible storms and rotten ships, it is easy to imagine that Columbus would have felt as if he had bathed three times and come out renewed of spirit and hope for future voyages (Delaney 114). Representing the end of his difficult voyage with the image of an eagle, a symbol of Roman triumph still used on flags and national symbols to this day and one of the heraldic animals featured the Catholic Monarchs’ coat of arms, was a way to metaphorically summarize the triumph of his voyage.

Upon reaching what is now the Bahamas¹²⁸ in 1492, Columbus mostly described songbirds and parrots. He did not always name the songbirds, but he described them as singing in some form, and when he did name them he generally called them nightingales. In the bestiaries, the nightingales were usually referenced by their Latin name, *luscinia*, which came from *lucerna*, meaning ‘lamp’ (Clark 182). As they were believed to sing “...to signify the dawning day...” the bird itself was transformed into a sort of symbolic light. It was one of the few birds that the bestiaries note was not named for the sound of its call but, rather, for when it sang at the beginning of the day (Clark 166; 182). Medieval readers of bestiaries believed that the nightingale went to great effort to “...ease the sleepless labors of the long night with the sweetness of its song” (Clark 182). As it was one of the more popular caged birds in wealthy European households (blackbirds were the other), a singing nightingale would have been well known to Columbus after having spent nearly a decade at court (George and Yapp 177; Phillips and

¹²⁸ Columbus intermingles both the indigenous name for this island, Guanahaní, and the name he gave it, San Salvador, when he writes about it.

Phillips 131). The bird signaled both the comfort of civilization and the marvelous nature of the bird's song.

Nightingales, and songbirds in general, were beloved by Europeans for their song. Columbus nearly always described these nightingales in the midst of singing: "...ruiseñores que cantaban..."¹²⁹ (6 November 1492), "...oyó cantar el rruiseñor..."¹³⁰ (7 December 1492), and "...cantaba el rruiseñor..."¹³¹ (13 December 1492) are a few examples from the *Diario* (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 27; 94; 100). In his letters to Santángel (15 February 1493) and Rafael Sánchez (4 March 1493), he also included some lines describing the song of nightingales (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 186; 197). In Columbus's letter to Luis de Santángel, Columbus described the birds of *Juana* (present-day Cuba): "...y cantaba el rruiseñor y otros pájaros de mil maneras en el mes de Noviembre..."¹³² (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 186). This line is interesting in that he named the nightingale (among a mass of others), and describes it as if the song were louder than the other thousands of songbirds. Birds have long been believed to be the messengers between Heaven and Earth, and Columbus, essentially, described these messengers between heaven and earth as metaphors for Christians to emulate (Ferber 26). Janetta Rebold Benton noted that, "As a method of interpreting the natural and religious worlds, symbolism provided the medieval artist with a way to deal with the many things that

¹²⁹ "...nightingales that were singing..."

¹³⁰ "...he heard the song of the nightingale..."

¹³¹ "...the nightingale was singing..."

¹³² "...the nightingale and other songbirds of a thousand varieties were singing in the month of November..."

could not be explained in more concrete ways ...” (Benton 112). For all the knowledge that Columbus had, he was still a medieval Christian man trying to interpret the world around him and to impart meaning to it.

As Columbus did not always know the names of the birds he described, he tried to ascribe characteristics and names to those that he was able to represent. Bergreen concluded that, “Conditioned by medieval assumptions, his intellect and imagination labored to interpret these astonishing sights according to categories that he understood. The world... was both natural and supernatural; he needed only to divine the Creator’s intentions to exploit them to the hilt” (79). Columbus switches between the use of *ave* and *pájaro* when he describes birds. According to the bestiary tradition, an *ave* is any kind of bird, and the origin of the word is derived from the Latin *avia*, or the word for ‘route’ or ‘pathway’ (Clark 165). The origin of *pájaro*, however, is *passer*, which is rather specific in that it refers to passerine birds which, as a group, contain the songbirds (“Pájaro”; George and Yapp 122). Columbus, then, recognizes that there are different kinds of birds, and even described them together several times. In his *Diario* on 21 October 1492, he noted that there were, “...aves y pajaritos de tantas maneras...”¹³³ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 40). Later, on 3 November, he wrote, “...los cantos de las aves y pajaritos”¹³⁴ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 54). In his letter to Santángel (15 February 1493), he described that in the Caribbean there were, “...otros pájaros de mil maneras...é de muchas maneras de

¹³³ “...birds and songbirds of many varieties...”

¹³⁴ “...the singing of birds and songbirds...”

aves...”¹³⁵ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 186). The distinction that Columbus makes between these two generalized avian words, *ave* and *pájaro*, indicates that he is aware that there are many kinds of birds but only distinguishes these New World birds by size (*aves* being large, such as an eagle or a gull, and *pájaros* being smaller, such as songbirds) and their ability to sing in a way that he finds pleasant. Columbus did not only write down the names of the creatures he believed he was encountering, but he also named some of the places he visited after bestiary creatures. Geographic features were named for the animals Columbus believed them to look like, such as Elephant’s Cape¹³⁶ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 89). Elephants populated the bestiaries and it is notable that pools of water figure heavily into their bestiary descriptions (they were believed to be born in pools of water) (Clark 128). In another instance, Columbus traversed the two difficult and dangerous waterways around Trinidad Island, only to find himself sailing in front of what he believed was the entrance to Eden.¹³⁷ Columbus named these two waterways *boca de la Sierpe* and *boca del Drago*,¹³⁸ both of which are pre-Christian and bestiary creatures. In pre-Christian Western European cultures (“pagans”), snakes and dragons were viewed as the protectors of sacred spaces (Isidorus 255). Dragons are included in this overarching pagan concept of snakes as protectors, although they were distinguished by the fact that they could “soar aloft” (Isidore 255). In the Christian tradition, the Second-Family bestiaries classify

¹³⁵ “...other birds of a thousand varieties...and many other [types] of birds...”

¹³⁶ This is in stark contrast to the name choices of other islands that he recorded in his *Diario* and his letters, which were given the names of the royal family and Spain (for example, Juana or Hispaniola), or names related to the Catholicism (for example, Trinidad).

¹³⁷ Pierre d’Ailly had described the existence of the Garden of Eden at the east of the world, Columbus expected to see it (D’Ailly 1: 199).

¹³⁸ *Mouth (entrance) of the Snake* and *Mouth of the Dragon*, respectively.

dragons as snakes, and all snakes were considered a type of fish¹³⁹ which could creep around on land (Clark 194). Interestingly, the dragon varies from the serpent in that the latter has both poisonous blood and venomous bite, while the dragon has neither poison nor venom, but wraps itself around its prey and constricts it to death (George and Yapp 191; 200). These two reviled creatures become symbols of the deadliness and danger to humans who try to enter the Earthly Paradise, while they also become metaphors as protectors of the entrance to Eden.

The bestiary descriptions of these two creatures are definitive religious metaphors. The serpent was described as seductive and slippery, and it proposed evil deeds while preying upon women, notably Eve. The bestiary passage relating to serpents specifically mentions Eve, determining that "...Adam was deceived by Eve, not Eve by Adam..." and that her weakness led to his fall (Clark 196). The bestiary dragon was a form of the Devil. It distracted its potential prey with its teeth, but its real weapon was its tail, which was used to lure, entwine, and crush souls. The bestiary dragon waited for elephants along their normal paths (elephants here representing wayward souls), tricked and captured them, and brought them into sin and, later, to Hell (Clark 195). There is an obvious contrast between these two creatures and the name of the island, Trinidad, which was meant to represent the Holy Trinity. Visually, the representation is stunning: the mouths of the rivers from which one might ascend to the Earthly Paradise are guarded by a Serpent and a Dragon, and hemmed in by the Holy Trinity. Columbus writes that these two freshwater river mouths were in combat with the salt waters of the gulf,

¹³⁹ Some bestiaries refer to it as a reptile (George and Yapp 190).

metaphorically attempting to enter the perceived geographical space of Eden while unable to by the sheer force of the flow of the rivers from the Tree of Life. Columbus painted a beautiful and metaphorical geography showing that Eden not only existed on Earth, as he always believed, but that there were also metaphORIZED forces both protecting mankind and Eden from each other.¹⁴⁰

In addition to naming locations after bestiary animals, Columbus also believed that he saw fantastic bestiary creatures.¹⁴¹ On 9 January 1493, he wrote in his *Diario* that he saw, "...tres serenas que salieron bien alto de la mar, pero no eran tan hermosas como las pintan, que en alguna manera tenían forma de hombre de cara. Dijo que otras veces vido algunas en Guinea en la costa de la Manegüeta"¹⁴² (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 144). Columbus tells us three things in this short passage: that he had already seen mermaids before in another part of the world,¹⁴³ that these mermaids were unexpectedly ugly, and that he believed in the existence of these, and likely other,

¹⁴⁰ Columbus's only other references to New World snakes were described in his *Diario* on 16 October (he did not see it, but a boy saw a small snake), and 21 and 22 October 1492, when he and Martín Alonso Pinzón found very large snakes, the length of seven handspans (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 34; 40-42). Likely Columbus was indicating that these were the same large snakes that Pierre d'Ailly indicated would be found in India, or he was specifically relating Pinzón, whom Columbus viewed as treacherous, with snakes (D'Ailly 2: 267). The meaning is not entirely clear.

¹⁴¹ I differentiate these from the monstrous races as these creatures are named and he claimed to witness them himself, instead of vague descriptions of potential Plinian people that the indigenous people told him about. An example of this comes from his letter to Rafael Sánchez, in which Columbus described the locals telling him of a people in another province who were born with tails (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 201). Columbus admitted that he never saw any "monsters" (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 202-203).

¹⁴² "...three mermaids came high out of the high sea, but they were not so beautiful as they were depicted, and in some fashion had the face of a human. He said that at other times he saw some [mermaids] in Guinea [Eastern Africa] on the coast of Manegüeta."

¹⁴³ Many of the writers and voices of authority that Columbus was reading, such as Pierre d'Ailly, Aristotle, Pliny, Solinus, etc, claimed to have seen fantastic creatures (or have had them described to them by first-hand eyewitnesses) in India and/or Asia, and this mere claim was often enough of a voice of authority to be a confirmation of the existence of these beasts (Clark 28). The Second, Third, and Fourth Family bestiaries were heavily dependent on the natural histories of Pliny and Aristotle for the physical and behavioral descriptions of animals, which were later used as allegories for "proper" Christian" behavior.

fantastic bestiary creatures.¹⁴⁴ Mermaids (sirens, in the bestiary and Classical traditions), were supposed to attract and beguile sailors and put them to sleep with their lovely songs. Once asleep, the sirens would attack and eat the sailors. The bestiaries also indicate that the sirens are responsible for the luxuries of the world, such as art, poetry, music, and theatre, entertainments which lure men away from the word of God through the pleasures of the earthly world (Clark 179). By describing these fantastic creatures, Columbus was again pointing out that he had reached the East by a westerly route.

From the outset of the first voyage, Columbus was looking for natural items that could be commodified and exploited. Before he sailed west, he believed that he would be able to trade in Asia and bring back spices, precious metals, and jewels (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 61). Columbus knew, however, that in order to convince the crown to continue backing further enterprises and support any future settlements, he had to show that there were other economic products that could be exploited by the Spanish to sustain and support both settlements and trade. Many of the products that Columbus described were derived from the native animal populations.

Columbus's letters and documents written during and about his four journeys are full of descriptions of commodified animals. For example, in his *Diario*, he described bones and horns used as fishing implements by the indigenous groups, indicating that there were fish that could be eaten to sustain Europeans; he later described fish teeth being used as arrowheads (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 46; 48;

¹⁴⁴ While the implication is there that he believed in bestiary animals and in monstrous races, it is heavily documented by scholarship that these "mermaids" were manatees.

153). Columbus wrote about fish several times in his diary, recounting that a mullet once jumped into his ship in the same line that he mentioned there were no fish in Hispaniola that looked like those from Castilla (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 94). The mariners fished out some of these, as well as sole, and near the island of Tortuga Columbus noted an abundance of fish that the mariners saw, which included dace, salmon, hake, dory, pompano, congers, shrimp and sardines (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 94; 96). Columbus also noted that the indigenous people served fish and cassava bread to their European guests (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 99; 119). Clearly, there was an abundant source of food that would prevent European settlers from starving.

Columbus also described the availability of turtles and their eggs as a food source (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 144). He noted fat geese in Hispaniola, shrimp, and “other meats”, as well as shark and porpoises that were all used for human consumption (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 118; 127; 159). He mentioned big snails that he himself tasted, and he claimed that they were “...sin sabor...”¹⁴⁵; sometimes snail shells were used as interior decorations for indigenous homes, and other times snails were described as being fished from the sea (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 49; 86; 67). Numerous times, Columbus wrote that the locals had pearls, or that they knew how and where to get them from oysters, indicating not only the presence of the desired jewels but also of oysters to eat (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 47; 54; 67). Columbus also had

¹⁴⁵ “...without flavor...”

his men look for mother-of-pearl inside of shells because he believed that this was where pearls grew during May and June (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 67). Pearls were such a precious commodity that Columbus mentioned them as often as he could. During his third voyage, he noted that the indigenous people in the Paria Peninsula had pearls that had been brought to them from the north (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 278; 280). While there were no pearls in the Paria region, Columbus named the gulf between the peninsula and the island of Trinidad *Pearl Gulf* (its modern name is Gulf of Paria) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 286). Columbus mentioned pearls again in a letter to the nurse of the Crown Prince, Juan, written around the end of 1500, when he described how he had pearls gathered in the Paria Peninsula (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 312). In a letter written to the Pope about the island of Hispaniola in February of 1502, Columbus again noted the significant presence of pearls (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 349).

While oysters were included for their valuable pearls, other animals were documented out of curiosity, particularly those animals that Columbus could not name. For example, he described an animal that he thought looked like a badger, but was probably a coati, and a strange fish that he had salted down for the Catholic Monarchs, which was probably a trunkfish (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 67). He also noted giant rats, probably *hutias* or *agoutis*, and enormous crabs, all of which could have been consumed by both the local people and the Europeans (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 67-68).

While not an unknown animal, the parrot was considered a luxury good of immense value in Europe¹⁴⁶ and Columbus first mentions parrots as trade goods.¹⁴⁷ In his entries from the eleventh and thirteenth of October 1492, Columbus wrote that the local people of Guanahani brought parrots to the Europeans (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 14, 26). In the same entry, Columbus noted that, “Ninguna bestia de ninguna manera vide, salvo papagayos en esta isla”¹⁴⁸ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 23). Columbus included these particular birds in his texts to show their economic and social value. Las Casas interrupted the Admiral’s narration by describing, on 13 December 1492, how Columbus wanted to get one of these New World parrots. Columbus indicated this to the people on Hispaniola and they brought him some of the birds¹⁴⁹ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 99). On 21 December, still on Hispaniola, the locals again brought parrots, this time in conjunction with some food that they also brought for the Europeans (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 115). Later in the *Diario*, Columbus noted that these birds were also being commodified by some of the local populations, who used their feathers as decorations for their hair (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 148; 150)

¹⁴⁶ Renate Pieper also tells us that parrots were perceived as “cultural mediators” between the Old and New Worlds, an animal that was already considered exotic at the time of the Discovery but also easily recognizable to Western Europeans (Veracini and Teixeira 26).

¹⁴⁷ Bergreen points out that Columbus expected his men to trade for any items, rather than just demanding or taking anything from the local people, as Columbus considered them vassals of the Spanish monarchs and potential Christians. The mariners traded trinkets of little value in Europe, such as glass beads, brass rings, and small hawk’s bells (79).

¹⁴⁸ “No beast of any kind did he see on this island, except for the parrots”. Later, on 21 October, Columbus described large amounts of parrots in flocks on Cuba (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 40).

¹⁴⁹ Columbus stated that he communicated with the local populations through an indigenous person (probably multiple people) that he had “brought with him” (from Guanahani / San Salvador) (99). Previously, on 4 November, Las Casas had noted that Columbus had went out to hunt some of the birds that he (Columbus) had seen the day before (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 54).

Beyond the immediate and superficial commodification of Caribbean animal life, Columbus was also interested in the settlement of the region for trade.¹⁵⁰ In his *Diario*, he noted on the island of Fernandina that there were “...perros mastines y branchetes...”,¹⁵¹ which were dogs used in shepherding¹⁵² (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 36). In Cuba, he believed that he had seen evidence of livestock as he saw what he believed were cow skulls on the island¹⁵³ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 48-49). On 16 December 1492, Columbus, pointed out the lack of local *bestia*¹⁵⁴ on Hispaniola, and he wrote, “Era cosa de maravilla ver aquellos valles y los ríos buenas aguas; y las tierras para pan, para ganados de todas suertes...”¹⁵⁵ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 104). On Hispaniola on 31 December 1492, Columbus indicated that he had traveled down the coast to find good locations for the transport of livestock from Castilla to the island (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 133). He reiterated his desire to raise livestock in Hispaniola in his letter to Santángel summarizing the first voyage (15 February 1493): “*La Española es maravilla: las sierras y las montañas y las vegas y las campinas y las tierras tan ferrosas y gruesas para plantar y sembrar, para criar ganado de todas suertes...*”¹⁵⁶ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de*

¹⁵⁰ In the Capitulations of Santa Fé, Columbus was granted the rights to govern any lands he discovered (Phillips and Phillips 133-134).

¹⁵¹ “...mastiffs and hounds...”

¹⁵² In a letter fragment from 1498, Columbus also detailed that indigenous people used dogs for hunting as well, implying that the local dog’s had other useful skills beyond shepherding (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 260).

¹⁵³ This turned out to be false; there was no traditionally European livestock in Hispaniola until 1493, when Columbus brought them on his second voyage (Gimmel 40).

¹⁵⁴ Columbus also noted on 6 November 1492, that there was a lack of *bestia*, or four-legged mammals (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 58).

¹⁵⁵ “It was a marvelous thing to see those valleys and those rivers of good water; and the lands for grain and for livestock of all kinds...”

¹⁵⁶ “Hispaniola is a wonder; the ranges and the mountains and the meadows and the countryside and the lands are so beautiful and thick for planting and plowing, for raising livestock of all kinds...”

Cristóbal Colón 187). With all these scattered entries, he indicates that, even in the early stages of contact with the New World, or what he believed initially to be Asia, that Columbus was already thinking about animal husbandry and the future commodification of animals in the New World.

Years later, animals were still necessary for the long-term survival of the Hispaniola settlements of La Isabela and Santo Domingo. Either in 1497 or 1498, Columbus wrote a letter¹⁵⁷ to the Spanish crown about the animals and goods that were necessary to send over the Atlantic in order to maintain the settlements. In particular, he noted the need for animal products, such as pork, cheese, and salted fish, as well as nets to catch fish, honey to eat, cows and goats from the Canary Islands, and riding equipment for horses (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 241).

Columbus was also thinking of cultivating the land; he twice mentioned bee products in his *Diario*, as wax and as a hive, implying that there were insects to pollinate and honey for food and trade¹⁵⁸ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 82, 85). He indirectly stated, “...donde cera hay también debe haber otras mil cosas buenas,”¹⁵⁹ connecting bee products to the fertility of the land¹⁶⁰ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 82). The adjective *buenas*¹⁶¹ indicates that he took a positive

¹⁵⁷ This letter is undated, but is addressed to the Catholic Monarchs.

¹⁵⁸ I point out here that honey as a trade good was important enough for him to note in the *Diario*, as well as both of his letters about the first voyage, the first to Luís de Santángel (15 February 1493, about Hispaniola), and the second to the treasurer, Sr. Rafael Sánchez (4 March 1493, about the island of Juana) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 186; 187-198).

¹⁵⁹ “...where there is wax there should also be a thousand good things.”

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, there were no honeybees in the Americas or the Caribbean at that time. While it is still unclear what kind of bee, wax, or honey that Columbus refers to, his letter is colored with information that indicated he was in Asia, as there were types of honeybees that existed in Asia (Hadisoesilo et al. 399).

¹⁶¹ *Buenas*, according to the grammarian Antonio de Nebrija, has a multitude of translations; I use the meanings that best align with the context of each sentence.

stance to the idea of an ample amount of bee products, impressing upon his audience the appearance of confidence in the Discovery.

Positivity was only one of the emotions that animals represented for Columbus. Some of Columbus's animal references related clearly to his emotional states over the duration of his four voyages. In his early letters and the *Diario*, Columbus mostly expressed sentiments of *maravilla*, and interest in the world around him. His tone was light and mostly positive. This tone changed as he faced reoccurring and negative social and financial issues; for example, there was a briskness about his animal descriptions during his second voyage (1493-1496), while he attended to the needs of his settlement on Hispaniola, La Isabela, and the difficulties he had in governing his people. The drudgeries of administrative life weighed upon him and his animal descriptions became limited to what could be commodified for the well-being and profit of both La Isabela and the crown. By the fourth voyage, nearing the end of his life and having lost his land and his reputation, Columbus's tone was almost despondent and hopeless. These feelings were sometimes reproduced in his animal descriptions.

In Columbus's *Diario*, the animal descriptions at both the beginning and the end noted, in positive terms, the plenitude of animal life. Beginning in September of 1492, his journal entries were filled with the birds and beasts of the sea. Columbus wrote about tuna that had been spotted and killed by the mariners on the *Niña*, and his positive tones were implied in his description of the plenitude of trappable fish (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 11). On 18 September 1492, Martín Alonso Pinzón, the captain-owner of the *Pinta*, told Columbus that he saw a "...gran multitude de aves ir

hacia el Poniente...”¹⁶² and that this made him hope to see land (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 11). As his men grew anxious about the length of time the voyage had already taken, Columbus included more specific and detailed descriptions through the first months at sea, stating that the men saw various seabirds and field birds, as well as a turtle, crabs, gulls, tuna, gurnards, and they heard many birds passing throughout the night (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 19). While returning to Spain in January and February 1493, he pointed out the multitude of animals between the Indies and the Atlantic Portuguese islands, starting on 17 January 1493 with, “Aquí vino un alcatraz a la carabela y después otro...”¹⁶³ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 156). He used repetitiveness to represent the multitude of fauna present on his journey back to Europe: on 18 and 19 January he noted floats of tuna, and between 19 January and 25 February, he mentioned various types of birds no less than 24 times, as well as several kinds of sea creatures (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 156-164).

Columbus continually mentioned animals as “plentiful,” which is not surprising given that some fish and birds are social animals whose survival depends on traveling within a group. However, that he incorporated a qualifier like *muchos(as)*, alongside creatures whose existence was a sign of land or of movement towards the land displayed a positive outlook filled with expectation. The descriptions of plentiful animals also

¹⁶² “...a great multitude of birds going towards the West...”

¹⁶³ “Here came a gannet to the ship and then another...”

seemed to indicate his interest in placating his mariners who were on the point of mutiny¹⁶⁴ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 13).

Columbus regularly qualified his early animal descriptions with descriptive and positive adjectives, modifiers, or supplemental sentences. For example, on 21 September, he wrote, "...vieron un alcatraz, la mar muy llana como un río, y los aires los mejores del mundo. Vieron una ballena, que es señal que estaban cerca de tierra, porque siempre andan cerca"¹⁶⁵ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 13). That he qualified the appearance of a marine bird and a whale with a smooth sea, the type of water always desired by a mariner, and the perceived relationship between whale and land with the "best airs in the world", Columbus supported his animal description with a sense of positivity. He reproduced this same positivity in a later entry, on 29 September, describing animals in conjunction with the sweetness of the air:

"Vieron un ave que se llama *rabiforcado*, que hace gomitara á los alcatraces lo que comen para comerlo ella, y no se mantiene de

¹⁶⁴ By 22 September 1492, heading toward the Indies, Columbus's men were getting nervous that they had not sighted land (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 13). I believe that Columbus referenced birds so often in his *Diario* (and probably voiced the same to his men out loud) because he wanted to settle their nerves, stop the talk of mutiny and lessen fears that they were all lost at sea (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 13). This became more apparent in his entry from 7 October 1492: "Como en la tarde no viesen tierra la que pensaban los de la carabela *Niña* que habían visto, y porque pasaban gran multitud de aves de la parte de Norte al Sudeste, por lo cual era de creer que se iban á dormir á tierra ó huían quizá del invierno...Por esto el Almirante acordó dejar el camino del Oeste, y poner la proa hacia Ouesudueste con determinación de andar dos días por aquella via" ("In the afternoon they did not see land, as those from the *Niña* thought they had seen, and because a great multitude of birds passed from north to southeast, which was believed [they did so] because then when to sleep on land and were perhaps fleeing winter...For this reason the Admiral agreed to leave the western route and point the prow towards the west-southwest with the determination to travel in that direction for two days" (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 19). By following the birds, Columbus was not only trying to reach land but to assuage his mariner's fears of not having found it.

¹⁶⁵ "...they saw a gannet, the sea as smooth as a river, and the airs the best in the world. They saw a whale, which is a sign that they were near land, because they are always travel near [land]."

otra cosa: es ave de la mar, pero no posa en la mar ni se aparta de tierra veinte leguas...después vieron dos alcatraces: los aires eran muy dulces y sabrosos...”¹⁶⁶

(Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 16)

On the trip back to Spain, he modified his descriptions to give them a sense of abundance and positivity. For example, he described the tuna fish that he saw as “small” and “infinite”, and he described terns and unspecified birds as “many” (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 157; 158; 160;162). Columbus noted that there were, at one point, few fish due to the coldness of the water, but that later some dories came to the ship, determining that they must be abundance in warmer waters (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 157; 160).

During Columbus’s second voyage, his tone became stark. His concerns were no longer limited to exploration but to the difficulties of governing a settlement. In his *Memorial* about the first few months of the second voyage (written 30 January 1494), Columbus first used animals to qualify his position of need. As there were no *bestias*, or beasts of burden to help carry gold from the mountains and rivers, he had no way to get

¹⁶⁶ “They saw a bird that is called *rabiforcado* [man-o’-war bird], that makes the gannets vomit what they have eaten so that the *rabiforcado* can it it, and it maintains itself on nothing else: it is a sea bird, but it does not sleep on the sea nor does it go further than twenty leagues from land...after they saw two gannets: the aires were sweet and flavorful”. *Gomitar* is Portuguese for the Spanish *vomitar*, and, using the bird metaphorically, Columbus subtly indicates that perhaps someone on the voyage was trying to steal what was not rightfully his. It is well documented that throughout the weeks leading up to 29 September 1492, the Pinzón brothers who were manning the other two ships of the expedition, were unhappy with their situation altogether, and there was a continual power struggle between the three of them and Columbus. In this passage, Columbus appears happy to be fulfilling his perceived destiny, with its sweet aires and the hope for seeing land growing, but upset that his voyage is being usurped.

the gold back to Spain to fulfill part of his contract (or so he claimed)¹⁶⁷ (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 207). Columbus proposed selling those indigenous people he believed could never be converted to Christianity while in the Caribbean, the cannibals, and using those funds to pay for regular shipments of cattle and beasts of burden to colonize and develop the land (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 213). Food was the major problem as many of the Spaniards were unwilling to eat foods native to the islands (Columbus had not considered this until the arrival of the hidalgos on Hispaniola) (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 209). Some laborers were too weak to work, due to this refusal, as well as due to illness, and there were, again, no beasts to do the heavy tasks involved in building the settlement (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 209). Columbus hinted that the men needed “fresh meats”, and then directly asked that the Catholic Monarchs send him “...tocinos, y otra cecina¹⁶⁸ ...” that the men might fare much better (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 208; 210). He requested that there always be livestock sent to the New World in every fleet from Spain, such as sheep and cows for food, donkeys and mares for labor, and to be sure to send more female animals than

¹⁶⁷ I point out that Columbus had brought horses and livestock on this voyage (Gimmel 40). However, Columbus complained that the good horses that were supposed to be loaded onto the ships were switched out for weak and poor ones in Seville, and that of those horses who had survived the crossing, many of the hidalgos had taken them and refused to send them out to work (or to do any work themselves). Columbus asked the Catholic Monarchs to purchase the horses from the hidalgos to use them as beasts of burden (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 218-219). In another letter, instructions that he wrote to Pedro Margarit (9 April 1494), Columbus noted how important it was to preserve the few horses that they had and to try to keep them in good health by not having them traverse difficult paths (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 229).

¹⁶⁸ “...bacon and salted meats...”. Interestingly, he also asked the Catholic Monarchs to send honey, although during his first voyage he had mentioned that honeycomb was available (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 211).

males (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 210). There is a sense of frustration that the needs of La Isabela are not being met, and that his fruitless plans for the Spanish to eat the native foods and to use their horses for labor were preventing the settlement from moving forward.

In his letter about his third voyage, written in 1498 long before the trip was over, Columbus's animal inclusions during his explorations are less varied and less descriptive. On the island of Trinidad he noted there were numerous animals that had the hooves of a goat and that none of them were dead (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 275). In bestiary lore, the goat was associated with Jesus Christ wandering along the high points of the mountains and looking down on all the souls below that he would eventually save. The goat's excellent eyesight associated it with the all-seeing sagacity of God¹⁶⁹ (Clark 37, 136-137). On the same island, he described lands that had clearly been cultivated by people but that the people had fled, and the only visible animals were *gatos paules* (macaques) that covered the mountain (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 277-278). The mention of the macaque monkeys is intriguing as monkeys and apes were represented in the bestiaries as the animals closest to mankind (Clark 132). However, they are also creatures that symbolize the Devil. Like Satan, they have a head but no longer have a tail, which Satan lost when he fell from grace, according to the Second-Family bestiaries (Clark 133). Relatedly, it was common thought throughout the medieval period that mountains, much like the mountains inhabited by these macaques, were thought to be full of evil spirits. In Juan Ruiz's fourteenth-century

¹⁶⁹ Goats were also associated with Pagan cultures and linked to Classical mythology, but in the bestiaries they are linked to Jesus Christ.

classic, *El libro de buen amor*,¹⁷⁰ the narrator runs from the evil spirits he feels are in the mountain that he is journeying through: “Syenpre ha la mala manera la sierra E la altura¹⁷¹” (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 250). Columbus alludes to the evil nature of the place by incorporating these animals into his description.

The fact that Columbus generally named animals that he saw on expedition with a name corresponding to a European or Asian animal is well known. He specifically avoided stating that he indeed saw goats, but rather that he saw animals like goats. He refused to name a creature, and the loss of the name left a negative space and a negative impression on the type of animal that it might be. By not naming it, he negates this creature’s existence to Europeans who were familiar with the goat. The lack of the name for the goat-like animals contrasts directly with the naming of the monkeys.¹⁷² Columbus refused to name the creature that was associated with God, but readily identified the animal closely associated with the Devil. Ultimately, neither of these descriptions were qualified by positive adjectives and the reader has the sense that Columbus was using these animal descriptions to express some of his negative feelings that were beginning to develop.

During the same trip, after having returned to Hispaniola in 1498, Columbus’s animal descriptions showed the fruitfulness of the land and the animals that he had originally brought to Hispaniola, in which he provided a detailed description of the abundance of animals:

¹⁷⁰ *The Book of Good Love*

¹⁷¹ “The mountains and ranges always have an evil atmosphere.”

¹⁷² Interestingly, both animals, the goat and the monkey, are described in the bestiaries as having the same negative physical characteristic: a flat ugly, repulsive nose (Clark 133).

“...esta tierra es abundosa en todas las cosas, en especial de pan y carne; aquí hay tanto pan de lo de los indios, que es maravilla, con el cual está nuestra gente más sanos que con el de trigo, y la carne es que ya hay infinitísimos puercos y gallinas, y hay más alimañas que son atanto como conejos, y mejor carne y dellos hay tantos en toda la isla ...”¹⁷³

(Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 260)

These descriptions are more detailed and rather like the descriptions of the abundance of avian and sea animals recounted during his first voyage. There is a note of positivity in the use of qualifiers such as *infinitísimos* and *mejor*, and many of these creatures were recognized as known, European animals.

By the next year, however, Columbus’s descriptions of events took on a tone of fatigue and worry, and the animal descriptions in the two letters relating to these events are ones of complaint and frustration. At this time, Columbus was forced to deal with a rebellious group of Spaniards on Hispaniola led by Francisco Roldán. In his letter to the Catholic Monarchs about the revolt (1499), Columbus wrote that Roldán and his men were complaining of a lack of food, although the Admiral pointed out the availability of local island flora and fauna (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 301).

¹⁷³ “...this land is abundant in all things, especially bread and meat; here there is so much local bread that it is a wonder, which by [eating] our people are healthier than by [eating] our own [bread made from] wheat, and the meat is such that there are infinite pigs and chickens, and more reptiles, as many as rabbits, and [they are] better meat, and they are so many of them on the island...”

Columbus's *Lettera rarísima*,¹⁷⁴ written while he and his crew were marooned in Jamaica (7 July 1503), demonstrates a dark change in Columbus's overall attitude about the fourth journey. Before being marooned, Columbus had dealt with terrible storms, angry indigenous people in what is today Central America, rotten ships, and the worry for the lives of both his brother, Bartholomew, and his youngest son, Fernando, who were travelling with him. Columbus was so distraught that he compared his miserable situation to that of Job (Job 74). He recounted that, earlier in the narrative, he had explored what is now Panama, and his ships became trapped in a river at the temporary settlement he established called Río Belén. The first instance in which he mentioned an animal during this voyage was as a simile and in a negative sense, when he described his ships as being so worm-eaten that they looked like the inside of a beehive (Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón* 373).

His next animal description during the fourth voyage was completely different from those of the rest of his voyages. He wrote of a hunting episode led by members of the local people of Cariay (what is now an island off Costa Rica):

“Animalias menudas y grandes hay hartas y muy diversas de las nuestras. Dos puercos hube yo en presente, y un perro de Irlanda no osaba esperarlos. Un balletero habia herido una animalia, que se parece á gato paul, salvo que es mucho mas grande, y el rostro de hombre: tenía le atravesado con una saeta desde los pecho á la cola, y porque era feroz le hubo de cortar un brazo y una pierna: el

¹⁷⁴ “Very unusual letter”

puerco en viéndole se le encrespó y se fue huyendo: yo cuando esto ví mandé echarle *begare*, que así se llama adonde estaba: en llegando á él, así estando á la muerte y a saeta siempre en el cuerpo, le echó la cola por el hocico y se la amarró muy fuerte, y con la mano que le quedaba le arrebató por el copete como á enemigo. El auto tan nuevo y hermosa montería me hizo escribir esto. De muchas maneras de animalias se hubo, mas todas mueren de barra. Gallinas muy grandes y la pluma como lana vide hartas. Leones, ciervos, corzos otro tanto, y así vide aves”¹⁷⁵

(Columbus, *Relaciones y cartas de Cristóbal Colón 375-376*)

The difference in tone is note-worthy: it was the first hunting description Columbus gave and it is visceral. His feelings towards the New World had changed from religious and pleasant to brutal savagery. In addition, Columbus added that all the animals in this region died from disease, and included a list of animals that he did not see himself but were supposed to exist on this island. This quote interesting in that it represented the state of his life at the moment: his governorship and viceroyalty were taken from him, the legal requirements of the Capitulations of Santa Fé were not being taken seriously by the

¹⁷⁵ “There are many small and large animals, and very different from ours. I saw two hogs at that time that no Irish dog would have dared to challenge. A crossbowman wounded an animal that looked like a monkey, but which was much bigger and had the face of a man [it was probably a peccary, according to Cecil Jane (101)]; it had been pierced by the arrow from the chest to the tail, and as it was ferocious they had to cut off an arm and a leg: the hog, seeing this, bristled and fled; when I saw this, I ordered that they throw the *begare* [the peccary] as it is called where I was, to the hog; upon reaching it [the *begare*], being almost dead and the arrow still in its body, it [the *begare*] wrapped its tail around the [hog’s] snout, tightened around it very firmly, and with its remaining hand hit it on the head as if it were an enemy. The action was so novel and fine a hunt that I had to write it down. There were many animals there, but all die from *barra* [Cecil Jane believes this to be a type of skin disease (101)]. I saw many large chickens with feathers like wool. Lions, stags, deer, and I also saw many birds.”

crown, and he was himself physically ill and suffering. He was dispatched to the New World, unseen and ignored by the crown, left to disappear into the wilds of Jamaica. His feelings of being beaten down politically, broken financially, and physically worn down from years of travel, are all metaphorized in this final hog-hunting scene of destruction and despair. However, there is a brief hint of hope in his final inclusion of animals associated with noble rank (lion, deer, stag), indicating that, while he was frustrated with his current situation, there remained hope of something more worthy to be conquered.

Columbus and Animal Representation

Garrard indicates that animal representation is one way in which humans continually otherize the natural world and create a space in which we can remain separate from the animal kingdom (151). Columbus, in fact, used animal descriptions to define human characteristics, much like the animals in the bestiaries were stand-ins for moral behavior. The animal representations in his texts were invariably linked to his own culture, education, and life experiences as he used his descriptions of animal bodies as proxies for his own representation of humanity and the Christian god. Columbus's anthropomorphizing of animals gave them characteristics that were less animalistic and more human: dragons and serpents became guards to the entrance of Eden, peccaries and snakes battled for survival, and macaque monkeys became demons. Columbus continually anthropomorphized animals to fill both symbolic and emotional voids; birds became symbols that God meant for him to find the New World, and the variety and types of animals found in the Caribbean became associated with the positive and negative emotions Columbus felt throughout his four journeys. In a sense, these

anthropomorphized animals became commodities; the descriptions of their existence and behaviors filled up space in his writings which were then published for human literary consumption. Animals represented in his texts were metaphorically and literarily consumed as part of the overall treasure and wealth to be found in the New World. These descriptions of the cornucopia for the taking led to a rise in the numbers of men volunteering to travel to the New World (Delaney 127). In Columbus's worldview, animals lost their agency to simply exist as animals and their behaviors became representative of human religion and human emotions. This is highly indicative of the bestiary genre, a literary form which anthropomorphizes and Christianizes animal behavior while stripping fauna of its own existence and agency.

Columbus also described animals as items to be physically commodified. He had to "sell" the New World as an investment to the Crown and he had to prove that he had arrived in the East. Describing the plenitude of available animal flesh and feather available all but guaranteed to Europeans that the fauna of the New World was there for human consumption. In order to maintain his own significance within the context of his Discovery, Columbus had to show that something of value had been discovered. His continual references to parrots, to oysters and pearls, and to hunting quarry are intended for a noble audience who would have been interested in the possession of these items. Columbus others the New World animals through his representation of them as consumable goods, stripping them of their agency as living creatures and turning them into objects for physical commodification.

Columbus creates a space in which animals do not co-exist with Europeans in the New World. Rather, their relationship to humanity is one in which they are present to represent the desires and emotions of humankind. Essentially, it is a hegemonic centrism that revolves around the social, financial, and geographic needs of mankind to dominate nature. Columbus anthropomorphizes fauna to dominate it symbolically, and commodifies animals to dominate them physically. The human-animal relationship found in Columbus's work informs scholarship that he viewed animals as both physical, usable objects and representations of human emotions.

In Summation

Christopher Columbus was able to imbue the animals that he described with the religious, material, and emotional aspects of his life. Representing human behavior, ideal or otherwise, through the bodies of animals had long been a part of the Western literary tradition, as outlined in the Introduction of this dissertation, and the bestiaries were particularly focused on the behavior of the ideal Christian. Columbus, while not an ideal Christian from the perspective of the twenty-first century, was a man of his own times and followed the symbols and signs of his faith as he believed were true. By following what he believed to be his destiny, his writing infused the local fauna of the Atlantic and Caribbean regions with symbolic, metaphoric, and emotional qualities.

Clark proposed, and I mentioned above, that animal descriptions from the ancient world and religious sources, such as Pliny or St. Augustine, were believed by medieval people to be fact (28). Columbus heavily relied on these sources and believed in them so much that he set off into the unknown with relative certainty that he would find land.

Over the course of time, however, his understanding of the world became eroded, and he began to question what the ancients had written. By the third voyage, Columbus no longer took the words of ancient authorities as absolute truth, and as his knowledge of the world expanded, so did his skepticism of the knowledge of the ancients. Based on a close analysis of his writings, I believe that the realization that his knowledge base was not sound contributed, in part, to the deterioration of his emotional state, as he began to realize, but seldom acknowledged, that he had not really found India, that he would not find the Grand Khan, and that the world (and the animals in it) that he was describing would not fulfill his contract with the Catholic Monarchs.

Not all travelers to the Caribbean were looking for signs of divinity in the natural world. In Chapter Two, I analyze the writings of Ramón Pané, a Hieronymite working under the direction of Christopher Columbus on Hispaniola. He collected some of the mythological beliefs of the Taino people and transcribed them into Spanish. While Pané was unable to understand most of their beliefs and associated religious practices, he left scholarship an array of stories that linked the Taino people to their divine beliefs, and transcribed descriptions of indigenous animals within the context of the marvelous. Pané was not looking for the divine in the natural world, but he recorded it in the myths and religious practices of the late fifteenth-century Taino people.

CHAPTER TWO

Paradoxographical Descriptions of New World Animals in Fray Ramón Pané's *Relación*

Based on the way he described the fauna of Hispaniola, I argue that Ramón Pané's *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios*¹⁷⁶ (1500 CE) contains elements of the paradoxography.¹⁷⁷ Transcribed from indigenous reports by the missionary and Hieronymite Fray Ramón Pané in the last decade of the fifteenth century, the text is a short collection of myths and curiosities of the Taino people in the north-central portion of Hispaniola (today, the Puerta Plata region of the Dominican Republic). In the context of this dissertation, the most significant elements of the *Relación* are those of the animals described by Pané as they reflect elements of the paradoxographical tradition continued from antiquity. While Pané presented a collection of natural and supernatural mythology, medicine, and religion from the Taino culture of Santo Domingo, he also incorporated the concise descriptions of animals and chapter segmentation found in paradoxographies. Included in this is Pané's lack of descriptive curiosity or inquiry into the Taino animal folklore. Pané's background as a Hieronymite would have supplied him with an ample education, both religious and secular, which I argue contributed to his knowledge of the paradoxographical genre. In turn, his animal descriptions appear influenced by these paradoxographies, and he continued this wonder-catalogue tradition in his representations of both the existing fauna of Santo Domingo and the marvelous realm of the supernatural. By linking the animal descriptions in the *Relación* to the paradoxographical tradition, I

¹⁷⁶ *Relation About the Antiquities of the Indians*

¹⁷⁷ Popularly known as "wonder-catalogues."

show the influence that medieval knowledge had on Pané's descriptions of fauna from the New World.

In order to understand his place in this paradoxographical tradition, it is useful to understand the background of both the text and the author. While proving Pané's exact knowledge is impossible, as the Spanish did not preserve much of his biographical information in their historical records, it is useful to analyze the important role of education within the Hieronymite order and how that influence affected Pané's inclusion of paradoxographical elements. The text itself has been classified as a work of anthropology and ethnography, but I argue, based on my analysis of his life, his education, and the animal descriptions inherited by Pané through medieval literature, that the allomorphic¹⁷⁸ zoological representations found in the *Relación* can also be linked closely to paradoxography.

The Literary History of *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* (c. 1500)

The *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* has long been titled a *relación*, but it is much more than that. Roberto González Echevarría defined the *relación* as a “report, deposition, or even a confession...”, which is true in that Pané compiled the text at the behest of Christopher Columbus. However, Pané's text contains very little information about indigenous daily activities and focuses more on the culture's mythology (56). It is certainly not a confession, as Pané did not admit to anything. Although the text itself is very short, there is a great amount of detail relayed in both the transcription and the narrated portions. He did not report much of his own action among

¹⁷⁸ Allomorphy is defined by Garrard as the representation of animals as different from human beings. There are no negative connotations associated with this (208).

the Tainos beyond the evangelical, and neither did he report the actions of other Europeans on Hispaniola.

The original text has been lost to history, but there were three copies made which kept the work in existence: Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Apologética historia de las Indias*¹⁷⁹ (1560), Fernando Columbus's *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand* (1571), and Pedro Martyr's *Decades* (1504). After Pané handed over his *Relación* to Columbus or to one of his officials (around 1500 CE), it was taken to Seville, where Martyr, Las Casas, and Fernando Columbus were able to copy it (Arrom 338).

In his own work, Las Casas does not confirm the language in which Pané wrote the *Relación*, mentioning only that Pané was Catalan (2: 178). Further to this, he never directly concluded that Pané *did not* write the *Relación* in Castilian, which is something that he would have indicated when he described Pané as being "...simple y de buena intención, que sabía algo de la lengua de los indios..."¹⁸⁰ and who wrote "Algunas otras cosas dice confusas y de poca sustancia, como persona simple y que no hablaba del todo bien nuestra castellana lengua..."¹⁸¹ (1: 633; 2: 178). Finally, Pedro Martyr simply indicated that Pané "...composed a small book in the Spanish tongue..." (Bourne 339). I therefore conclude that the text was composed by Pané in Castilian, based on Las Casas' and Martyr's first-hand knowledge of Pané's original text.

¹⁷⁹ *Apologetic History of the Indies*

¹⁸⁰ "...simple and of good intention, who knew something of the language of the Indians..."

¹⁸¹ "He says some other things that are confused and of little substance, as a simple person [does], and he did not speak our Castilian language well..."

After his death in 1539 CE, Fernando Columbus's manuscript was taken to Italy by his nephew, Luís Columbus, where it was translated and published by Alfonso de Ulloa in 1571 CE (Arrom 339). According to José Juan Arrom, Columbus's text was a "...defectuosa traducción al italiano, inserta en un libro del cual hasta se puso en duda su autenticidad..."¹⁸² (337). Each of the three copies are problematic in some way. Las Casas and Martyr paraphrased the work and altered it by including their own thoughts and interpretations of Pané's descriptions, as well as information gathered from other sources (Arrom 441). Both Ulloa's and Martyr's translations were problematic due to their own poor translations of Taino lexicon and Pané's unskilled Castilian. However, many of these errors have been analyzed and deemed corrected in the most recent translations and publications, notably in Arrom's 1988 annotated edition (338).

The *Relación* was written in three distinct parts: a description of indigenous mythology, another description of indigenous religious practices, and a summary of Pané's efforts (both successes and failures) to evangelize the Tainos. Throughout the work, Pané wrote simply, transcribing information that he was told by Tainos, while also imparting some of his own commentaries and opinions about what was being described or what he had experienced. What is left of the original text is short (for example, the Red Ediciones version that was published in 2014 is thirty pages long) and each chapter is brief, but the information that Pané relayed was significant in that it told the story of the Taino people from both their own perspective and from Pané's lived experience among

¹⁸² "...a defective translation into Italian of which he [F. Columbus] even doubted its authenticity..."

them. It is not only a transcription of Taino mythology, and a brief account of Taino daily life, but a narrative written from Pané's perspective as well.

In my analysis of Pané's work, I relied on two editions of his *Relación*: an online version of the text found in the *Colección de Libros Raros o Curiosos que tratan de América*¹⁸³ (Ediciones Letras de México, 1932), and the printed version by Red Ediciones¹⁸⁴ (Barcelona 2014). In recent history, the text has been labelled both a work of anthropology and ethnology by leading scholars. Edward Gaylord Bourne, a nineteenth-century historian at Yale University, recognized the *Relación* as the first treatise written in the New World, even though it was never a treatise in itself (311). González Echevarría determined that Pané's text was an ancestor of later texts of anthropology in the Americas, and further argued that anthropology first developed in the early years of the colonial period, around the time period when Pané was living on Hispaniola (144). José Juan Arrom described at length the cultural and religious meaning behind many of the elements of Pané's text in his work, *Fray Ramón Pané, descubridor del hombre americano* (1992), asserting that the *Relación* is "...la primera indagación etnográfica en el Nuevo Mundo"¹⁸⁵ (353).

Other authors have argued against labelling the text as one of anthropology or ethnography. They argue that Pané's overall goal was evangelical; he wanted to change the culture from within by converting indigenous people to Christianity. According to Meghan McInnis-Domínguez, Pané's writing is paradoxical because of this evangelical

¹⁸³ *Collection of Rare or Curious Books on America*. This text contains annotations that include information about Hispaniola found in Las Casas' *Apologética historia de las Indias* (1566).

¹⁸⁴ It contains no annotations but is based off José Juan Arrom's corrected version of the text.

¹⁸⁵ "...the first ethnological investigation of the New World"

intent in the New World, “Lo paradójico del proyecto de Pané es que pretende dar voz exclusiva a los Tainos, pero a través de un formato textual español que, por su naturaleza, excluye tal posibilidad”¹⁸⁶ (“La violencia”). McInnis-Domínguez furthered this idea: “Pané no busca un diálogo etnográfico con los Tainos. El autor es incapaz de transcribir, sin agregar su propia perspectiva porque ello implicaría un menoscabo a su autoridad como redactor del texto y como representante de los colonizadores españoles en el Nuevo Mundo”¹⁸⁷ (“La violencia”). Janiga-Perkins argued that Pané’s *Relación* is not the original text at all, and that the subsequent translators have re-interpreted Pané’s interpretation of what he was told and what he transcribed. The resulting text is an “autoethnography,” that reflects the understanding of the translator(s) and the reader(s) more than the original writer (8). As an “autoethnography,” the *Relación* depends upon the reader’s interpretation and correlation of signals and signs (Eco 48). If the original writer and the subsequent translators did not have all the grammatical and linguistic pieces of the Taino or Castilian languages, there are an infinite number of misinterpretations that could occur with each subsequent reader and translator. Included is the understanding that Pané’s work itself is superficial; what was once a richly developed oral tradition of indigenous cosmology, mythology, and culture was transcribed by a person who had no true knowledge of the culture. His cultural perspective is skewed mostly since his not a native to the people he studies and cannot

¹⁸⁶ “The paradoxical [aspect] of Pané’s project is that he claimed to give voice exclusively to the Tainos, but through a textual Spanish format which, by nature, excludes that possibility”

¹⁸⁷ “Pané does not look for an ethnographic dialogue with the Tainos. The author is incapable of transcribing, without adding his own perspective because that would imply a loss of his authority as editor of the text and as [the] representative of the Spanish colonizers in the New World”

fully learn all of the complex cultural nuances that come with spoken and body language. Also, he is there with a purpose: his goal is to evangelize the indigenous people while learning their customs and writing down their folklore. Pané acknowledges that he does not understand everything the indigenous people tell him, and he only writes down that which he was able to “figure out”¹⁸⁸ (11).

Problematically, López-Baralt universalized Pané’s work, describing it as being both Amazonian and Andean, and implying that the cultural heritage of the Caribbean Tainos (specifically of those on Hispaniola) was the same as that found in South American indigenous groups, marking the multitude of indigenous cultures as a singular unit, the Other to be compared to Spanish culture (45). There is absolutely no truth to this, as no two cultures are identical. Pané specifically avoided this type of cultural blending when he wrote, “Estos de los que escribe son de la isla Española, porque de las demás islas no sé cosa alguna...”¹⁸⁹ (11). His text was meant to distinguish the indigenous populations of Hispaniola as unique and describe only aspects of their particular culture. Of his own admission, Pané did not intend for his text to be interpreted as a pan-cultural anthropological study.

Pané himself did not even seem to even seem to know what kind of text he should have been writing or what it would be when he finished it, and he labelled the text by various names, calling it a *relación*, a *libro*, and an *obra*¹⁹⁰ (11; 25; 30). I add that Pané

¹⁸⁸ Specifically, he writes, “...escribo lo que he podido averiguar y saber...” (“...I write that which I was able to figure out and know...”).

¹⁸⁹ “These of whom I write are from the island of Hispaniola; I do not know anything of those [peoples] on the other islands...”

¹⁹⁰ “a relation”, “a book”, and “a work”

openly acknowledged that he did not know much about the information he was trying to transmit: “Esto es lo que yo he podido entender y saber acerca de las costumbres y los ritos de los indios de la Española, por la diligencia que puse...”¹⁹¹ (29). It was likely not even a completed text, as José Juan Arrom noted that there were lacunae in Fernando Columbus’ text which seemed to indicate that Pané (or perhaps Columbus) was going to add more information (340). What is clear, however, is that anthropology as a science was not in existence at the time of Pané’s transcription, and it was impossible for Pané, an educated Christian missionary, to fully leave behind the prejudices of his cultural relativism in order to accept and appreciate the Taino oral and social traditions.¹⁹² His text was not only a transcription of the behaviors and mythology of a people, much of which was based on careful observation, but it was also a medieval wonder-catalogue of the Other in which he posed no questions, demonstrated little-to-no curiosity, and recorded bizarre¹⁹³ anecdotes and beliefs in concise chapters. As I indicated in the Introduction, all of these same elements were literary tools used extensively by authors of paradoxographies.

Biography

There is not much that is known about Pané’s early life, but the few facts that we have are as concise as his *Relación*. His name is not even certain, as it may have been mistranslated by Fernando Columbus (Bourne 315). The biographical information

¹⁹¹ “This is what I have been able to understand and know about the customs and rites of the Indians of Hispaniola, por all the diligent [work] I have done...”

¹⁹² This is not to imply that all modern anthropologists are able to fully leave behind their own cultural relativism, only to demonstrate that in Pané’s time, that would have been unheard of.

¹⁹³ “Bizarre” in the medieval sense of “the marvelous”.

available comes both from his own testimony in the *Relación*, as well as from other historical and biographical sources, such as Las Casas and José Juan Arrom. Before he arrived in the New World on Columbus's second voyage in 1494, Pané took orders with the Hieronymites, who followed in the steps of St. Jerome (340-420 CE), the translator of the Old Testaments from Hebrew into Latin ("Jerome, St"). As St. Jerome was considered very educated, the Hieronymites promoted education both within and without of the order ("Jerome, St"). A later example of the Hieronymites devotion to education was Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the famed seventeenth-century Mexican poet whose intelligence and level of education are undisputable. While from a scholarly order, Pané humbly insisted that he was a "...pobre hermitaño..."¹⁹⁴ and Bartolomé de las Casas described him as "...un catalán que había tomado hábito de ermitaño, y le llamaban fray Ramón..."¹⁹⁵ (Pané 11; Las Casas 1: 633). The dates of Pané's stay on Hispaniola vary from historian to historian, but in general, we know that Pané arrived on the island of Hispaniola around the end of 1493 and gave his text to Columbus probably in 1498, although it may have been closer to 1500. Pané first lived in Fort Magdalena, in the north-central portion of Hispaniola, until he managed to pick up some of the local dialect (Pané 9). He then lived in the province of Macorís, a small region populated by the Ciguayo people. The Ciguayo spoke a different minority dialect than the indigenous people around Fort Magdalena, and Pané likely realized that, by continuing to live amongst them, he would never achieve the goal set by Columbus to learn the general language (Arrom 338). This "general language" has been named Classic Taino by

¹⁹⁴ "poor hermit"

¹⁹⁵ "...a Catalonian who took the habit of a hermit, and who they called Friar Ramón..."

linguists Julian Granberry and Gary S. Vescelius, and it was, based on their research, highly comprehensible among speakers of the various Taino dialects from the central islands of the Caribbean (Granberry and Vescelius 7-9). For two years Pané lived with chief Guarionex, but after the chief abandoned Christianity, Pané lived with chief Mabiatué for several years (Pané 9). Las Casas noted that despite all of Pané's time amongst the Tainos, "...de las lenguas...no supo sino la de una chica provincia que arriba dejimos llamarse Macorix de abajo, y aquélla no perfectamente, y de la universal supo no mucho, como los demás, aunque más que otros..."¹⁹⁶ (1: 633). However, Pané went beyond just trying to learn Classic Taino and proselytizing the Christian faith; he also learned about and recorded some of the customs, myths, cultural practices, and history of the indigenous islanders (Merrim 95). Those items that he recorded formed his *Relación*, a work that was rich in both Taino culture and in the European paradoxographical literary tradition.

While Las Casas described Pané pejoratively as "simple", he also noted that, unlike other ecclesiastics in the New World at the time, Pané had "...celo y deseo bueno...de dar cognoscimiento de Dios a estos indios, puesto que como hombre simple no lo supo hacer, sino todo era decir a los indios el ave maría y paternóster..."¹⁹⁷ (1: 634). Whether Pané was lacking in the education so admired by the Hieronymites, or he was indeed simple, he nevertheless had the zeal and the desire to learn the necessary

¹⁹⁶ "...of the languages...he did not know any except that of the small province which we above called lower Macorix, and that [language] he did not speak perfectly, and of the universal [language] he knew little, as the others [Europeans present on the island], although more than the others..."

¹⁹⁷ "...zeal and good desire...to give knowledge of God to these Indians, although, as a simple man who did not know it [that he was simple], he was only able to tell them the Ave Maria and the Paternoster..."

language skills in order to evangelize. Because of this, he tried to learn more Classic Taino than other Europeans during the first years of Caribbean exploration. He also had the good fortune of working with his first Christian convert, Guatícaba (whose Christian name was Juan Mateo), a Macoris speaker who helped him to spread Christianity to the Tainos, and who likely taught Pané the Macoris dialect (MacDonald 23).

In his *Relación*, Pané expressed his frustration with the act of transcription from time to time, noting in Chapter Thirteen, “Como los indios no tienen letras ni escrituras, no saben contar bien estas fábulas, ni yo puedo escribirlas con exactitud”¹⁹⁸ (Pané 13). Pané was discouraged by the lack of a writing system, which he could have transcribed more clearly and abundantly, as written language is easier to translate and transcribe than the spoken word. Relatedly, he heard these mythologies and histories from several sources and with little understanding of their chronological order. He notes his frustration in Chapters Five and Six, indicating that because there is a lack of written record and he has to rely on the spoken word, the indigenous “...no pueden dar buena información de lo que saben acerca de sus antepasados, y por esto no concuerdan en lo que dicen, y menos se puede escribir ordenadamente lo que refieren...”,¹⁹⁹ and “...creo que pongo primeramente lo que debía ser lo último, y lo último lo que debía estar antes. Pero todo lo que escribo es según me lo contaron, y por tanto, yo lo refiero como lo supe de los indios”²⁰⁰ (12; 13-14). Pané’s frustrations with the inaccuracy of his language skills, the

¹⁹⁸ As the Indians have neither letters nor literature, they do not know who to tell these fables well, nor can I write them precisely”

¹⁹⁹ “...they cannot give good information about what they know of their ancestors, nor can they agree on what they say, and one is less able to write in an orderly fashion to that which they have referred...”

²⁰⁰ “...I believe that I have put first that which should be last, and last that which should go before. But all that I write is as they told it to me, and therefore I reference it as I found it out from them”

lack of written historical records, and the inability of the tribal members to give a clear and precise oral history are evident throughout the text.

Frustration for ecclesiastics and adventurers alike was not a new phenomenon in the late medieval period. Continued study and learning, however, as a Hieronymite, would have been expected of Pané, despite any setbacks. As we know practically nothing about his early life, I cannot speculate on his elementary or secular educations. However, as a member of the Order of St. Jerome during the fifteenth century CE, he received some formal education (Tormo and Monzó 41). The most talented young Hieronymites were sent to school to study, supported by their monastery, and each was tasked with learning a profession that could better the Order (Tormo and Monzó 28-29). These became the *frailes* (friars), and everyone else, those who received a minimal religious education in order to read, write, and copy religious texts in Latin, formed the *coro* (chorus) of the Order (Tormo and Monzó 40). From this, I understand that Pané must have been one of the educated members of the Order, as he introduced himself as “fray Ramón”, or “Friar Ramón” in his *Relación*. He received an education in philosophy (the Classical writers) and theology (the Bible and religious writers, such as St. Augustine), based on the principals of Scholasticism. Pané did not receive a university degree as this was not permitted for Hieronymites until after 1610 CE (Tormo and Monzó 41-42). That he left Spain and travelled to the New World in service of Columbus indicates that he had received an upper-level education. After a century in the New World, the Hieronymites began to lose their powerful role as teachers of Christian doctrine in the Caribbean, and in 1610 the Order shifted its focus away from evangelism and public life, embracing both

monastic seclusion and the doctrine of quiet contemplation with a focus on natural theology (Tormo and Monzó 41).

I feel certain in stating that Pané had access to both a religious and a humanist education based on the importance of both religious and secular education within the Order of Hieronymites during the late medieval period. He most certainly read Aristotle, and probably read Aelian's *On the Characteristics of Animals*, as well as the works of other paradoxographers and natural historians. His religious background with the Hieronymites affected his perception of the Tainos to some degree, which he communicated through his general distaste of the people and disbelief of their religion, all based on his strong cultural bias. The text that Pané left to posterity is one of some erudition, composed of transcription, narration, religious insight, language explanations, and attempts at translation.

General Paradoxographical Aspects of the *Relación*

A few aspects of the paradoxography can be found in Pané's text, specifically through his presentation of the animal figures of Taino mythology.²⁰¹ In the Introduction of this dissertation, I outlined the identifiable traits of the paradoxography: concise chapter segmentation, decontextualization, a reliance on voices of authority, no indication of causation for actions or beliefs, and consistent references to the bizarre or marvelous. In the *Relación*, each chapter is short and concise, with no causation or reasoning given for the actions and beliefs. Pané relies on indigenous voices of authority in order to

²⁰¹ Throughout this chapter, and specifically in this section, I do not argue that Pané was attempting to write a paradoxography. Instead, I analyze the elements associated with the paradoxographical genre found in his text. Despite the common acceptance of the text as an early work of anthropology, the work should not be only classified as such when there are clear Classical links found throughout it.

substantiate the information he relays, information which is then laid out in bizarre anecdotes that Pané neither questions nor fully contextualizes within Taino mythology.

Pané wrote only the one text, with hardly enough information to label it a book in the same sense of length or content by which Aelian and Aristotle created books. However, his text does have a structure similar to the paradoxographies in that it is divided into three clear parts, which are broken down into mythology, religious practices, and his attempts at evangelization. Each of the twenty-six chapters is uniquely titled, like the chapters of paradoxographies, to give a clear indication of what information is be detailed in each short chapter. For example, his first chapter is entitled *De dónde proceden los indios y de qué manera*²⁰² (11). Pané's individual chapters are clustered into three sections delineated into segments based on their theme and content. Stephanie Merrim describes this text as a *mestizo* text, beginning with a Taino logic and ending with a Spanish one (97). In this sense, I believe that all paradoxographies are *mestizo* in their own individual fashion, as the early paradoxographers were never true members of the cultures or lands being described, and later paradoxographers merely transcribed other voices of authority. While physically present on the island, Pané never seemed to fully adapt nor attach emotionally to the Tainos. He only seemed fond of those Tainos who adapted to his religion, such as Juan Mateo, and his chapters reflect his frustration with his linguistic and religious situation (Pané 29).

Pané openly acknowledges the indigenous sources he relies upon *en masse*, never naming any one individual but using all of their voices as agents of authority. He varies

²⁰² *Where the Indians come from and in what way*

his writing and uses different expressions in his transcriptions when detailing what these voices say, such as “Dicen que...,” “como los indios...” and also “...según contaban los viejos...”²⁰³ (13; 13; 14). In Chapter Six, he writes, “...todo lo que escribo es según me lo contaron, y por tanto, yo lo refiero como lo supe de los indios”²⁰⁴ (13-14). Working with a language that had no written sources was frustrating for Pané. He writes in Chapter Five, “Como los indios no tienen escritura ni letras, no pueden dar buena información de lo que saben acerca de sus antepasados, y por esto no concuerdan en lo que dicen, y menos se puede escribir ordenadamente lo que refieren”²⁰⁵ (12). Neither does he seem to want to entirely believe these indigenous voices of authority, and his text is slightly tainted with by his incredulity. An example of this comes from Chapter Twenty-Two when Pané transcribes the tale of a house spirit who did not want to stay in the house, and who disappeared entirely after the Christians arrived (23-24). At the end of this description, when the house spirit had scuttled off into a laguna, Pané, believing his audience to be as incredulous of this story as his was, both summarizes his feelings and releases himself of the responsibility of normalizing the bizarre tale, “Como lo compré así lo vendo”²⁰⁶ (24). I understand this to mean, “Do not shoot the messenger.” Pané’s own opinion is seldom heard throughout the text, and he maintains a distant narrative voice. When he does express his personal feelings about what he is transcribing or what

²⁰³ “They say...as the Indians...according to the elders...”

²⁰⁴ “Everything that I write is according to what they told me; therefore I recount it as I learned it”

²⁰⁵ “As the Indians have not writings or literature, they cannot give good information about what they know of their ancestors, and because of this they cannot agree on what they say, and even less is one able to write down in an orderly fashion that which they recount”

²⁰⁶ “As I bought it, I sell it”

he has experienced, it is always with a sense of disbelief: "...se engañan algunas veces..." and "...a éstos creen en tales fábulas con mayor certidumbre..."²⁰⁷ (17).

Pané, like the Classical paradoxographers, becomes a voice of authority within his text. Initially, Classical paradoxographers were compilers and not active researchers, and generally relied on texts and oral traditions as a point of reference (Room 86). Pané had no written Taino texts to work with, and his reliance upon the indigenous story-telling process limited how much information was relayed and confirmed at any given time. Commanded by Columbus to live among the people, learn their language, and write down everything he was able to learn about them, Pané becomes an external voice of authority about them. However, he is not entirely confident in his skills as a voice of authority, writing, "...poco vale lo que llevo escrito..."²⁰⁸ (16). He goes so far as to state to his readers that he, like the indigenous storytellers, is not a quality voice of authority. He conveys what he can, but knows his *Relación* is lacking in information and clarity, and he attempts to defend his feelings of inadequacy: "Como yo escribí de presura, y no tenía papel bastante, no podré poner en un lugar lo que por error llevé a otro; pero con todo ello no me he equivocado, porque ellos lo creen todo como lo llevo escrito"²⁰⁹ (Pané 14).

Pané provides linguistic information to clarify his text by translating Taino vocabulary for his European audience. For example, when he describes the woodpecker,

²⁰⁷ "...they trick (others) sometimes..." and "...they believe in such fables with sheer certainty..."

²⁰⁸ "...what I write is of little value..."

²⁰⁹ "As I wrote hastily, and I did not have sufficient paper, I could not put what I had written in the wrong order in the correct place; but in all of this I am not mistaken, as they believe everything as I have written in"

he first cites its indigenous name and then rephrases it for his European audience, “Buscaron un pájaro que se llama inriri, y antiguamente inrire cahubabayael que agujerea los árboles, y en nuestro idioma se llama pico”²¹⁰ (14). Later, when transcribing a story about Caracaracol,²¹¹ Pané provides a direct translation, “...dijeron: <<Ahiacabo Guarocoel, que quiere decir: conozcamos a nuestro abuelo>>”²¹² (16). He sometimes informs his audience about what objects are used for, such as, “Cuando van a visitar a algún enfermo, antes que salgan de su casa toman hollín de los pucheros o carbón molido, y con él se ponen negra toda la cara, para hacer creer al enfermo lo que quieran acerca de su dolencia”²¹³ (18). This act of translating was not uncommon in other texts that developed out of the paradoxographical tradition. In the description of Marco Polo’s travels, there are often translations provided that give deeper understanding about the people or places being described. One simple example comes from the section titled *Here is told of the province of Acbaluc Manji*. Benedetto, paraphrasing Marco Polo, writes, “The capital is called Acbaluc Manji, words signifying “the White City on the frontier of Manji” (176).

By translating, Pané relays information that only he can provide at that moment, which falls in line with his concern for cataloguing information as properly as he is able to. This concern for cataloguing supersedes any need to ponder over or question the

²¹⁰ “They look for a bird which is called *inriri*, and in the past was called *inriri cahubabayael*, which makes holes in trees, and in our language we call *pico*” (I am unsure if he translates *pico* from Catalan or from Castilian)

²¹¹ Caracaracol is a significant Taino figure, and is the only named son of the Mother Earth figure.

²¹² “...they noted that he was carrying a head [*cassava*, see above], they said: ‘Ahiacabo Guarocoel, which means *we know that this is our grandfather*’

²¹³ “When they went to visit some sick person, they took soot from a [cooking] pot, or ground charcoal, and used it to blacken their faces, in order to make the sick person believe what they [the medicine men] wanted them to believe about their illness”

information that he transcribes. For example, Chapter 1, Pané gives the origin of the Taino people of Hispaniola and he transcribes their relationship with the sun:

Cuando vivían en aquella gruta, ponían guardia de noche, y se encomendaba este cuidado a uno que se llamaba Mácoael, el cual, porque un día tardó en volver a la puerta, dicen que lo arrebató el Sol. Viendo, pues, que el Sol se había llevado a éste por su mala guardia, le cerraron la puerta y fue transformado en piedra cerca de la entrada. Dicen también que otros, habiendo ido a pescar, fueron cogidos por el Sol, y se convirtieron en arboles...²¹⁴ (Pané 11)

Pané gives no reason for why the Sun snatches or transforms people, leaving us to wonder how the Tainos culturally understood the place of the Sun within their society. Was it a force of good or one of evil? Was it life-giving or death-bringing? Pané gives us no causation to the sun's actions, leaving scholars to wonder about the reasons for the importance of this myth.

Pané rarely gives explanations as to why the Tainos behave as they do or believe what they did. Pané transcribes particular social and religious behaviors of the Tainos and comments on them from his outside perspective, but he does not question why these behaviors occur. Neither did other paradoxographers question why certain beliefs were

²¹⁴ “When they lived in these caves, they kept watch at night, and one [person] named Mácoael was tasked with this job, who, because one day he was late returning to the door, was carried off by the Sun. Seeing, then, that the Sun had carried him off for being such a bad guard, they shut the door on him and he was transformed into stone by the entrance. They say also that others, having gone fishing, were taken by the Sun and were transformed into trees...”

held or actions done by the groups they described. An example of this comes from Aelian, who describes humankind's interaction with some fish:

If a man with the juice of silphium on his hands seizes the Torpedo, he avoids the pain which it inflicts. And should you attempt to draw the Great Weever from the sea with your right hand, it will not come but will fight vigorously. But if you haul it up with your left hand, it yields and is captured. (329-331)

Aelian neither questions why silphium is used rather than another pain-reliever, nor does he explain why the Weever needs to be caught with the left hand. He relays information and leaves the reader to determine the reasons why.

Pané presents the bizarre and marvelous in a manner similar to paradoxographical texts, which were notable for their strange (i.e. foreign) content and anecdotes. As Scott Johnson writes, "Early paradoxographies appear to be mainly pseudo-scientific works, collections of stories about bizarre plants, geographical formations, and the like. Gradually the content became more fluid including social customs and sexual oddities" (401). Strabo (first century BCE) noticed that the distance of a geographical location from the reader contributed to the wonder and "bizarreness" of a paradoxography, as information about plants, animals, and people from non-Western European regions was scarce during his time period, and seemingly fantastic (Romm 99). For example, Aelian describes the "Ants of India" which "...guard the gold will not cross the river Campylinus" (163). He also describes the hedgehog as "prudent and experienced in providing for its own wants...it rolls among fig-crates (they say), and such dried figs as

are pierced...it quietly removes..." (167). To the modern scholar, these may seem like odd and/or unbelievable behaviors to ascribe to animals, but for a medieval reader, these words, written in texts by the Ancients, were accepted as truth (Zumthor and Peebles).

The factor that keeps these marvelous details both realistic and believable is the manner in which they are conveyed. The facts, such as they are, are presented in short, simply phrased paragraphs. Pané also achieves this same brevity and clarity when describing the bizarre nature of things in Hispaniola. An example can be found in Chapter Nineteen, *Cómo hacen y guarden los cemíes de madera o de piedra*²¹⁵:

Los de madera se hace de la siguiente manera: Cuando alguno va de camino y le parece ver algún árbol que se mueve hasta la raíz, aquel hombre se detiene asustado y le pregunta quién es. El árbol responde: <<Trae aquí un behique; él te dirá quién soy>>. Aquel hombre, llegado al médico, le dice lo que ha visto. El hechicero o brujo va luego a ver el árbol de que el otro le habló...y le dice: <<Dime quién eres, qué haces aquí, qué quieres de mí y por qué me has hecho llamar...>>. Entonces aquel árbol o cemí, hecho ídolo o diablo, le responde diciendo la forma en que quiere que lo haga. El brujo lo corta y lo hace del modo que se le ha ordenando...²¹⁶ (21-22)

²¹⁵ *How to Make and Care for the House Gods Made from Wood or Stone*

²¹⁶ "Those of wood were made in the following manner: when someone goes for a walk and it seems that he sees a tree move at the roots, that man will stop short, be startled, and ask who is there. The tree responds, 'Bring hither a shaman and he will tell you who I am.' That man, arriving at [the home of] the shaman, tells him what he has seen. The wizard or witch will go later to see the tree of which was spoken...and he will ask it, 'Tell me who you are, what you are doing here, what do you want of me, and why have you asked

Pané presents the marvelous in a clear way that is both understandable and almost believable. He cannot help decorating his commentary about witchcraft with his cultural bias, however, calling the shaman *médico*, then *hechicero* and *brujo*.²¹⁷ His audience understood the religious implications of his vocabulary, particularly when he calls the religious idol *diablo*. However, the marvelous details of the chapter are outlined matter-of-factly and concisely, much like the clear references in Aelian's paradoxography.

While these five general literary aspects loosely link the *Relación* to paradoxography, it is Pané's animal representations that best demonstrate the concept of the *marvelous* that is so commonly found (and expected) in paradoxographies. What makes these representations important when faced with all of the animal representations written by Europeans in the New World is that Pané does not try to find a space for them within his Euro-centric perspective. He relays the fantastic animal-based information as it was told to him, and does not alter it with Christian references, nor does he use it to represent the commodification of the New World. Instead, Pané's zoological representations reflect the literary commitment made by paradoxographers to relay pure information, as it was given to them by voices of authority, to a wider audience with as little personal interference or cultural contamination as possible. In turn, Pané marks the text with the conventions of the paradoxographical methodology.

for me.' Then that tree, or house god made idol or devil, responds to him, indicating the shape that he wants to be made into. The warlock cuts it [the tree] down and makes it in the way which he had been ordered..."
²¹⁷ doctor, wizard, warlock

Pané's Paradoxographical Representation of Animals

Pané's transcriptions of animals in his paradoxography are all centered around the marvelous theme of transformation. These transformations come in various forms, and link life and death to magic. Like other paradoxographers, Pané depicts the foreign animal world through both its natural and supernatural elements. Transformation was a common theme in paradoxographies. An example is the case of Pontus honey, which was believed to make sane men crazy and to cure epileptics (Aristotle 245). A further example comes from Aelian, who describes cranes which, after reaching old age, go to the islands of Ocean (the Atlantic) and take on the shape of humans as a reward for being faithful children to their parents (185).

Pané's references to birds show them to be agents of transformative magic. In the first reference, found in Chapter Two, Pané describes the initial separation of men and women on the island, beginning with an incident that occurred between two Taino male mythological figures:

Sucedió que uno, que se llamaba Guahayona, dijo a otro, de nombre Yahubaba, que fuese a coger una hierba llamada digo, con la que se limpian el cuerpo cuando van a bañarse. Este fue delante de ellos, más lo arrebató el Sol en el camino y se convirtió en pájaro que canta por la mañana, como el ruiseñor, y se llama Yahubabayel. Guahayona, viendo que éste no volvía cuando lo envió a coger el digo, resolvió salir de la gruta Cacibajagua.²¹⁸ (12)

²¹⁸ "It happened that one [man], who they called Guahayona, said to another [man] Yahubaba, that he should go and collect an herb called *digo*, with which one cleaned the body while bathing. This one

Pané describes the Sun snatching up Yahubaba and changing him into a bird. It is this transformative magic which also transformed the lives of the Taino people of Hispaniola forever, after Guahayona made the decision to leave the region based on Yahubaba's disappearance. Interestingly, Guahayona never questioned what happened to Yahubaba, and instead he left the region without searching for the disappeared group member.

In the second bird reference, found in Chapter Eight, a woodpecker becomes an important transformative agent in the cosmology of the Tainos after the local women left the island with Guahayona and abandoned their children. In the preceding chapter, Pané explains that the men on Hispaniola were filled with desire for women, and they went out after it rained in the hopes of tracking down females. Instead, the men watched some creatures fall from the trees that were "...ni hombres ni mujeres, pues no tenían sexo de varón ni de hembra..."²¹⁹ (14). After a successful attempt to catch these sexless creatures, the men deliberated on how to make them into women and finally hit upon an idea:

Buscaron un pájaro que se llama inriri, y antiguamente inrire
cahubabayael que agujera los árboles, y en nuestro idioma se llama
pico. Juntamente tomaron aquellas personas sin sexo de varón ni
de hembra, les ataron los pies y las manos, cogieron el ave y se la
ataron al cuerpo; el pico, creyendo que aquellas era maderos,
comenzó la obra que acostumbra, picando y agujereando en el
lugar donde ordinariamente suele estar la naturaleza de las

[Yahubaba] went ahead of everyone else, and the Sun snatched him up along the way and turned him into a bird that sang in the mornings, like the mockingbird, and it is called Yahubabayel. Guahayona, seeing that this [man] did not return from being sent to pick the *digo*, resolved to leave the Cacibajagua cave"

²¹⁹ "...neither men, nor women, and therefore had no male or female sex [organs]..."

mujeres. De este modo dicen los indios que tuvieron mujeres...²²⁰

(14)

The woodpecker transformed these sexless beings into women by pecking a hole at the apex of their thighs and giving the indigenous population new females. There are four points here that relate these two passages to paradoxographies. The first is that both texts are concise, clear, and without unnecessary details. Every word seems to have been chosen to explain the story without making it too detailed or unclear. Secondly, the element of magic gives the text a sense of the mysterious, essential to the wonder-catalogues. Third, the first passage gives no causation. The actions proceed without any explanation as to why the events are unfolding; Pané does not explain why the Sun took Yahubaba, nor why he was transformed into a songbird, and neither does Pané explain why Guahayona did not look for Yahubaba. Finally, in the second passage, Pané substantiates the text with two voices of authority. He writes, “De este modo dicen los indios...”²²¹ to give credence to the story, and Pané interjects his own voice of authority by translating the bird’s name into *our* language (Castilian), “...en nuestro idioma se llama pico...”²²² (14).

²²⁰ “They look for a bird which is called *inriri*, and in the past was called *inriri cahubabayael*, which makes holes in trees, and in our language we call *pico*. Together they took these sexless people, tied their feet and their hands, then took the bird and tied it to their [the captive sexless people] bodies. The *pico*, believing that those [people] were made of wood began the task to which it was accustomed, making holes in the place where ordinarily lies the nature [sex organs] of women. In this way, the Indians say they got their women...”

²²¹ “In this way, the Indians say...”

²²² “...in our language, it is called *pico*...”

Similar to these marvels described by Pané is an interesting marvel described by Aristotle in his paradoxography, *On Marvellous Things Heard*.²²³ The paradoxographical elements of the anecdote are similar to those of Pané's:

79. They say that in the island of Diomedea in the Adriatic there is a remarkable and hallowed shrine of Diomedes, and that birds of vast size sit around this shrine in a circle, having large hard beaks. They say moreover that if ever Greeks disembark on the spot they keep quiet, but if any of the barbarians that live round about land there, they rise and wheeling round attack their heads, and wounding them with their bills kill them. The legend is that these birds are descended from the companions of Diomedes, who were wrecked near the island, when Diomedes was treacherously murdered by Aeneas, the king of those parts at the time. (267-269)

The text is clear and concisely written, and Aristotle gives a voice of authority through “they say” and “the legend”. We see not only the transformation from man to bird through the descendants of the wrecked mariners, but there is also no causation given for the transformation. Finally, there is a mysterious air about the tale due to a lack of information that might incline a reader to want to know more information about the story of Diomedes.

Transformation is not only limited to birds in Pané's paradoxography. Water is an important element of transformation, as well, and both snails and fish are represented as

²²³ This text is found in a compilation of Aristotle's shorter works, *Minor Works*

objects of transformation within the water. Pané transcribes an incident in which Guahayona tricked Anacacuya, a cacique,²²⁴ into looking into the water from the edge of a canoe. Guahoyana drowned him and stole all the women from Anacacuya's tribe:

También se fue un cuñado de Guahayona, llamado Anacacuya, que entró en el mar con él, y dijo Guahayona a su cuñado, estando en la canoa <<mira qué hermoso cobo hay en el agua>> el cobo es el caracol del mar. Cuando Anacacuya miraba el agua para el cobo, su cuñado Guahayona lo cogió por los pies y tirólo al mar; luego tomó todas las mujeres... ²²⁵ (13)

Guahayona used the image of a sea snail that may or may not have actually been present in the sea in that moment in order to distract his brother-in-law and steal all the women. While the snail itself is neither existing nor inexistent, Guahayona uses it as a form of trickery, marking it as an involuntary agent of change. Again, Pané turns himself into a voice of authority by explaining what a *cobo* is.

This is not the only reference made by Pané about snails, however, and these are imbedded references based on Pané's transliteration of the Taino language. Later, in chapters Nine and Ten, he writes about the creation of the sea and a man named Caracaracol. He defines the word *Caracaracol* as "sarnoso," which can be understood as either someone who is scabby or someone who is immoral. However, Caracaracol did not

²²⁴ An indigenous chieftain

²²⁵ "Also, there was a brother-in-law of Guahayona, named Anacacuya, who went into the sea with him [Guahayona]. Guahayona told his brother-in-law, while in the canoe, 'Look what a beautiful *cobo* there is in the water'(the *cobo* is a snail of the sea). When Anacacuya looked into the water for the sea snail, his brother-in-law Guahayona grabbed him by the feet and threw him into the sea; later he took all of the women..."

behave immorally, nor was there any other reference in the text to him having any skin irregularities, so the transliteration of the name is even more curious when, in Castilian, it translates directly to “snail face”. Is this a transliteration of the sound of the name on the part of Pané? Or is it also Pané’s word-for-word translation of a name that also had a secondary meaning? I take the leap that Pané uses two identifiable Castilian words when transcribing the name in order to give further information about the personage being signified. This was not a new literary device in Pané’s time; in his medieval text *El libro de buen amor*,²²⁶ Juan Ruiz used the same kind of aptronym when he writes about the overly friendly nun, Trotaconventos, whose name literally means “convent-trotter” and who runs from convent to monastery acting as a go-between to help others in their sexual pursuits (183).

According to Pané’s transcription, Caracaracol was partially responsible for the creation of the ocean, by way of the story of Yayael. Pané describes an incident in which Yaya, a farmer or a landowner of some sort, killed his son Yayael, and saved his bones in a pumpkin that he had hung up. One day, Yaya’s wife turned the pumpkin over and the bones transformed into fish. Yaya’s wife, Caracaracol, and his three unnamed brothers then ate these fish. After finishing their meal, the feasters wanted to hang the pumpkin back where it belonged before Yaya came home from tending his lands and discovered what they had done. The brothers hung it up poorly and it fell, breaking into pieces from which so much water and fish poured out that it created the sea (Pané 15). Interestingly, if compared to the reference of the sea snail in Chapter Five, Caracaracol (Snail Face)

²²⁶ *The Book of Good Love* (completed in 1343 CE)

helped to create the sea in which Anacacuya was killed while looking into it to see a sea snail (Pané 12-13). The transformative story marks water, and with it the snail and fish that inhabit that realm, as part of the Taino cycle of life and death.

I feel that it is worth mentioning the transformative nature of water for the creatures existing in it, as described in Pané's transcription, is very intriguing because of Catholic beliefs about water. Not only is water used in the baptismal rite, but it is also considered cleansing, as in the case of the Great Flood, and the fish within it are a symbol of Jesus Christ. As a metaphor of both life and death, this Taino myth corresponds to metaphors found in the Catholic faith.²²⁷

Other aquatic creatures are also agents of transformation in Pané's text. In Chapter Nine, as I previously recounted, the human bones were changed into living fish, a marvelous life-out-of-death story. In Chapter Ten, the bones continued to generate in the pumpkin and then pour from it to become part of the living aquatic system (Pané 15). The turtle, another aquatic creature, accorded a special place in the Taino cosmology, was created from the flesh of a human. Caracaracol received a blow on his back when he entered his grandfather's house to ask for some casaba bread. His grandfather threw a container that held a psychedelic drug called *cohoba* at Caracaracol's back (Pané 16). Afterwards, his back swelled and his three brothers could only relieve the swelling by cutting the lump with a stone ax. Out of the incision came a female turtle, and the men built a house for her to live in (Pané 16). The turtle is a creature whose life begins on land

²²⁷ Within the European cultural framework, the idea of water as transformative was not uncommon. One example comes from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the story of the nymph Cyane, who, at seeing Proserpina raped and carried off by Pluto, cries so much that she dissolves within a pool of tears (111-113).

and ends in the sea, much like the life of Anacacuya. Pané transcribes not only elements of Taino mythology, but also a cultural tendency to see life form out of death. This is not unlike the description of the fly found in Aelian who, upon drowning, can be brought back to life if sprinkled with ashes and left in the sun (129). The magical element in Aelian's paradoxography is a combination of the sun and the ashes, working in tandem to bring life from death.

Another interesting use of animal words comes from Pané's transliteration of the name of a cave from which the Sun and Moon emerged, called *Iguanaboina*. The first part of the word, *iguana*, can be understood as the four-legged amphibian found in the Caribbean and the Americas. A *boina* is a dark-colored serpent found in the Caribbean. The Iguanaboina itself is represented in Taino pictographs as a humanized serpent or lizard ("Taino Cave Paintings"). Pané does not say much about this composite creature, other than, "Dicen también que el Sol y la Luna salieron de una gruta, que está en el país de un cacique llamado Mautia-TeNuel, a cuya gruta, que llaman Iguanaboina, la veneran mucho, y la tienen toda pintada a su modo..."²²⁸ (16). The cave, then, is named for this composite creature, and it is also the origin of the Sun and the Moon. As an interesting contrast, both iguanas and snakes are cold-blooded creatures which lay eggs, but the Sun and the Moon were "birthed" from the Iguanaboina in the same way that mammals birth their offspring, through the feminine *gruta*. All of the mythological supernatural elements in this transcription of some of the Taino origin story (Iguanaboina, Sun, and Moon) have

²²⁸ "They also say that the Sun and the Moon left a cave, one that is in the country of a chieftain named Mautia-TeNuel. His [the chieftain's] cave, called *Iguanaboina*, was venerated very much, and they [the indigenous] painted it in their way..."

been personified through the “birth” of the Sun and Moon into the world. Pané may not have known or understood the metaphorical aspects of the mythology that he was transcribing, but as part of the whole, the idea of the life-giving sun and moon being born from a place named for a composite creature adds to the perspective that this text is, indeed, a wonder-catalogue.

Animal bones and flesh are also depicted by Pané as being used as part of shaman ceremonies.²²⁹ Pané describes the use of bones and flesh as tricks to deceive those indigenous individuals who were ill into believing that they had been cured:

Cuando van a visitar a algún enfermo... toman algunos huesecillos y un poco de carne, y envolviendo todo aquello en algo para que no se caiga, se lo meten en la boca... y sorbe [aspira] al enfermo por el cuello, el estómago, la espalda, las mejillas, el pecho, el vientre o por otras partes del cuerpo. Hecho esto, comienza a toser, y a poner mala cara, como si hubiese comido alguna cosa amarga, escupe en la mano y saca lo que ya hemos referido que se puso en la boca en su casa o por el camino, sea piedra, o hueso, o carne, como ya es dicho. Si es una cosa de comer dice al enfermo: <<Has de saber que tú has comido una cosa que te ha producido el mal

²²⁹ Pané associates the *behiques*, the equivalent of a shaman in Taíno culture, with trickery and treachery, and uses his experiences with the *behiques* to discredit them to his Christian readers. He mostly refers to them as *médicos* (17-18).

que padeces; mira cómo te lo he sacado del cuerpo, donde tu *cemí*
te lo había puesto porque no le hiciste oración...²³⁰ (19)

While transformative in the sense that the animal bones and flesh were changed into an element of healing, they were also portrayed by the *behiques* as part of the illness of the invalid. Removing the animal parts, even if it were part of a ruse pulled off by the shaman, was an attempt to at least alleviate the psychological stress associated with whatever ailment the patient had to deal with. In other wonder-catalogues there are instances of biological altruism that are similar to the anecdote about the shaman and his patient. As the shaman needed the patient and vice versa, so the crocodile needs the plover. According to Aelian, the crocodile swims with his mouth open to catch prey, but often ends up with his mouth filled with leeches instead. Rather than suffer the pain of them, the crocodile comes out of the water and opens his jaw. The plover flies into his mouth and eats the leeches, thus alleviating the pain for the crocodile and filling the plover's belly. The relationship is so important that the crocodile never eats the birds who clean him, not unlike the *behique*'s relationship with his client, which was so important that he tried to alleviate his patient's stress (Aelian 167-169). The animal bones and flesh became an intermediary that both the shaman and the patient could blame for the illness.

²³⁰ "When they [the shamans] go to visit a sick person...they take some small bones and a little meat, and wrap it all in something that keeps it from falling, and then they put in in his mouth [to hide it from sight]...they sniff the sick person's neck, stomach, back, cheeks, chest, and belly, or other parts of the body. That done, [he] begins to cough and pull sour faces, as if he had eaten something bitter. He spits in his hand and takes out that which we have already referenced that he put in his mouth while at his home or while on the road [to the house of the ill person]. It could be a stone, or a bone, or meat, as I already said. If it is a foodstuff, he says to the sick person, 'You must know that you ate something that has produced this evil that you are enduring; look how I have taken it out of the body, where your *cemí* [house god] had placed it when you did not make prayers [to him]...'"

An anecdote about snakes and shamans was also included in Pané's New World wonder-catalogue. Pané transcribes an episode in which a shaman had lost a patient and the family of the dead sought revenge. The family beat the shaman with sticks, and "...le rompieron las piernas, los brazos y la cabeza, de modo que lo muelen..."²³¹ (21). They left him for dead but, miraculously, "A la noche dicen que van muchas sierpes de diversas clases, blancas, Negras, verdes y de otros muchos colores, las cuales lamen la cara y todo el cuerpo del médico..."²³² (21). A few days later, the shaman was cured and was walking around again (21). The creatures transformed him from injured and dying into a living and viable human being.

The wonder-catalogues also detail the mysterious power of snakes. Aelian describes them in detail:

24. The poison of serpents is a thing to be dreaded, but that of the Asp is far worse. Nor are remedies and antidotes easy to discover, however ingenious one may be at beguiling and dispelling acute pains. Yet after all there is in man also a certain mysterious poison, and this is how it has been discovered. If you capture a Viper and grasp its neck very firmly and with a strong hand, and then open its mouth and spit into it, the spittle slides down into its belly and has so disastrous an effect upon it as to cause the Viper to rot away.

²³¹ "...they broke his legs, arms, and head, in such a way that they pulverized him..."

²³² "At night, they say that many snakes of different types, white, black, green, and many other colors, came and licked the face and all of the body of the shaman..."

From this you see how foul can be the bite of one man to another
and as dangerous as the bite of any beast. (123-125)

Equally as marvelous as the anecdote of the snakes and the shaman is that of the children being zoomorphized into creatures akin to croaking frogs. In Chapter Four, Pané discusses what happened to the children after their mothers were led away by Guahayona. The children demanded milk, but their fathers could not feed them. “Llorando así y pidiendo la teta, y diciendo <<toa, toa>>...fueron transformados en animalillos, a modo de ranas, que se llaman tona, por la petición que hacían de la teta...”²³³ (12). By transforming them into crying amphibians, Pané’s transcription removes the humanity from the indigenous children. Whether this was intentional on the part of Pané or on the part of the indigenous storyteller(s) is uncertain. However, what we have is a demonstration of dehumanization and zoomorphism of the children. In wonder-catalogues, there are often references to anthropomorphism,²³⁴ or to non-human animals who work in the service of humans. For example, Aelian writes about the frogs of Seriphus:

... you will never hear the Frogs croaking at all. If however you transport them elsewhere, they emit a piercing and most harsh sound. On mount Pierus in Thessaly there is a lake; it is not perennial but is created in winter by the water which flows

²³³ “Crying in this manner and asking for the breast, and saying “toa, toa” ...they were transformed into little animals, such as frogs, which they called Tona*, because of their asking for the breast...” (*Bourne determined that ‘tona’ is likely a word meaning ‘breast’, and perhaps ‘toa’ is the way that little children pronounce the same word)

²³⁴ animals becoming humans

together into it. Now if one throws Frogs into it they become silent, though vocal elsewhere. Touching the Seriphian Frogs the people of Seriphus boast that Perseus arrived from his contest with the Gorgon after covering an immense distance, and being naturally fatigued rested by the lake side and lay down wishing to sleep. The Frogs however worried the hero with their croaking and interrupted his slumbers. But Perseus prayed to his father to silence the Frogs. His father gave ear and to gratify his son condemned the Frogs there to everlasting silence... (197-199)

In Pané's reference, the children are dehumanized but given a voice at the loss of their mothers. In Aelian's text, the frogs lose their voice in their own land, only regaining it through forced migration. In both texts, there is a sense of wonder and a sense of loss through transformation.

A final point to make in relation to animals and transformation in Pané's *Relación* is that of the *cemí* Opiyelguobiran. This house spirit was described as quadrupedal, like a dog, and it would flee at night and hide in the woods, only to be found the next morning (Pané 23). After the arrival of the Christians to Hispaniola, "...dicen que éste huyó y se fue a una laguna; que lo siguieron por sus huellas, pero no lo vieron más, ni saben nada de él..."²³⁵ (23-24). While Pané transcribes this creature as being like a dog, and it is unknown if this description is an assumption based on how the house god is described to him, or if the islanders themselves state that it looked like a dog. Interestingly, the

²³⁵ "...they say that this [house god] fled and went off to a lagoon; they followed his tracks, but they never saw him again and know nothing more of him..."

moment the Europeans arrived, the *cemí* disappeared and was never seen again. The creature was transformed into nothingness upon the arrival of Christianity, as if Pané is trying to tell the reader one of two things: first, that he is not fooled by any trickery and that the islanders cannot prove their gods were able to talk and eat (which Pané expresses some doubt over in Chapter Fifteen), so they must be forcibly disappeared. Or, that the power of Christianity's arrival squashes the belief in this house god. Either way, Pané uses the Taino's own beliefs against them (18).

The most interesting aspect of these animal transcriptions, beyond the mystery or the brevity of each transcription, is that Pané never openly questions them and he does not question the established Taino belief system. He compiles and transcribes, and provides references and definitions where needed, but he never attempts to explain why these events unfold nor does he question the myths that he is told. He makes no attempt to transcribe morals or messages; he simply writes what he is dictated by the Tainos, as he had been commanded by Columbus. As I indicated previously, this form of transcription is a very common attribute of paradoxographers.

Pané and Animal Representation

Pané's inclusion of animals within his *Relación* prove him to be a good transcriber of the information provided to him by the Taino tribe members. His allomorphic animal inclusions leave little to the imagination about the animals itself, othering them as elements separate from himself and his own culture. In using animals as allomorphs, he is not only othering the animals but the indigenous people who are forever linked culturally to the animals through their tribal creation stories. That separation,

however, creates a space in which Pané can transcribe animals from a distance with no need to try to explain the descriptions, actions, or motivations of the animal, which is a key aspect of paradoxography. Pané himself is so radically different from the culture which he finds himself transcribing that his attempts to relate to the animal descriptions he hears is often unpalatable. More than once he emphasizes that these stories are what the indigenous people believe, and leaves unstated that these are not his own beliefs (12, 13, 14). The space his animal transcriptions create in turn forms a boundary that his own educational and cultural backgrounds do not allow him to cross; he is able to inject elements of his personality into the text but never fully embraces the culture of the Taino people.

An interesting aspect of Pané's work is that he, as transcriber, salvages the record of the human-animal relationship between the Taino people and the animals that inhabited Hispaniola. Without Pané's work, there would be less information about Taino cosmology and the place of animals within it. While Pané distanced himself from the fantastic animal legends within the text, he created an opportunity for the Taino people to not only have their legends recorded, but to have them recorded in the disjointed, unchronological manner of the traditional oral history (Pané 12). Pané, in transcribing and explaining a cosmology that he himself is distant from, has saved not only the oral history of an entire people, but also that people's relationship to animals.

In Summation

Roberto González Echevarría writes, "The act of writing seeks self-presence through compliance with the rhetorical mold" (59). I believe that Pané's *Relación* shows

not only his presence within the text through descriptions of his personal and religious frustrations, but also through the structure and manner of his descriptions, which are his attempt at creating an informative and historical text. While the origins of the paradoxography are found in Antiquity, Pané would have been familiar with them because of his university education, an atmosphere in which Aristotle's work was taught as an example of rhetoric by scholars throughout the Middle Ages. While paradoxography evolved during the late Middle Ages, the roots of the tradition remained unchanged. Understanding Pané's animal references as part of the paradoxographical tradition is important in that it not only gives scholars another perspective and mode of analysis of a well-known New World text, but it also demonstrates that medieval animal descriptive literature still had a place in early modern European society. Pané's animal descriptions were read, understood, paraphrased, and translated, implying that his animal descriptions were significant enough to be imparted to a literate European society.

That elements of paradoxography can be found in Pané's animal representations is indisputable, and his writing shows a clear influence from Classical literature. I do not believe that he intended to write a paradoxography, but that, in following the orders of his Admiral, he employed the writing style and rhetoric that was familiar to him from his Hieronymite education. While his text was mostly overlooked by scholars until the nineteenth century, and the original was lost to time, what remains of the text through translation is nothing short of a New World paradoxography. While he did not manage to evangelize the Taino groups of Hispaniola, Pané accomplished a marvelous feat for his time: he transformed the oral traditions of those peoples into part of the European literary

tradition. His own form of magic was that he broke through the wall of communication and transcribed a rich mythology for future generations to study.

In opposition to Pané, Hernán Cortés describes the natural world as an object to be hunted, torn apart, reconstructed in an acceptable way, and then turned into goods for eating or using. His four letters link the natural world of Mexico and Central America to the hunting manuals that were popular among the medieval aristocracy. Unlike Pané, Cortés removes all agency from New World animals, stripping them of their relationship to the natural world and commodifying them both in the flesh and on the page.

Chapter Three

Hunting the New World through Hernán Cortés' Correspondence from Tierra Firme

The four letters written by Hernán Cortés from the New World to Emperor Carlos V between 1519-1526 document not only the conquest of Mexico and the relationship between dominators and the dominated, but the animal references contained within give insight into how animals were viewed by the Captain. Effectively, he describes them as both tools and fruits of conquest, which is like the animal representation in medieval hunting manuals. As I expressed in the Introduction of this dissertation, hunting manuals were written for and, frequently, by the aristocracy, and noblemen²³⁶ of all economic situations had knowledge of them and practiced the art of hunting. Traditionally, it was also a way to train a young nobleman for warfare (Fradejas Rueda 3). The ritualized

²³⁶ Throughout this chapter, I use the terms “nobleman” and “noble” to signify male members of the upper class and the established norms of behavior that these members exhibited. While a *nobleman* is any man who is born into the nobility, whether upper or lower, and conforms his behavior to the expected norms of his social class, *noble* can be used as a noun to signify a member of that society, or as an adjective to encapsulate the chivalric ideals associated with that class (such as honor and vassalage).

unmaking of the quarry at the end of an aristocratic hunt often symbolized the prowess of the hunter, along with the status and rank of those who received pieces of the parceled corpse (Seetah 30). The horse was an essential tool in both hunting and warfare, and was an extension of a man's social status (Almond 54). Cortés' background as a member of the lower aristocracy meant that he had known how to hunt, and he had direct access to at least one hunting manual, such as Don Juan Manuel's *Libro de la caza*.²³⁷ His fighting skills and military prowess attested to both his aristocratic origins and his knowledge of hunting techniques. As much as hunting manuals instructed the aristocracy in the arts of hunting and hawking, so, too, do Cortés' letters instruct the emperor on the process of conquest and domination.

Not all of Cortés descriptions in his letters were about war. His descriptions of animals in the New World extended to all fauna, both local and those animals imported from Spain. His descriptions are often short, lacking the impressive details offered by Columbus, and missing Pané's recognition of unfamiliarity. Cortés represents animals as elements of conquest; the animals that he describes are often removed from their native environments and they are used as either tools with which to commit war, or quarry that is commodified in some way.

In order to better recognize the influence of hunting manuals in Cortés' animal descriptions, one should understand the origins of both the Captain and his letters. While knowledge of his educational history is scant, we know that he was educated for two years at the University of Salamanca and that, as a noble and as the son of a former

²³⁷ *Book about Hunting*

military officer, he was trained in the art of war. As the hunting manuals naturally fit into both of those contexts, Cortés had access to hunting manuals during his youth in Spain. I support this argument through a general overview of the links between hunting and warfare that can be found in Cortés' letters, demonstrating how hunting manuals influenced both his descriptions of fauna and his perception of conquest.

The Literary History of Cortés' Letters about the New World

Hernán Cortés wrote five known letters during his experiences in mainland New Spain from 1519-1526. Written to the Emperor Carlos V, these lengthy messages, called *cartas de relación* or *cartas-relaciones*, read like long monologues, with wordy but repetitive vocabulary that both humbled Cortés before his Emperor while making his actions seem bigger than life. He is a master of the under-statement with his ability to express war and conquest in reductive and simplified terms (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xli). The letters were published individually as they arrived in Spain and Germany, but the hand-copied versions of the original letters disappeared from public view for centuries (Cortés, *The Despatches of Hernando Cortés* iii). The first republication of the second, third, and fourth letters appeared in 1749, in Barcia's *Historiadores Primitivos* (Cortés, *The Despatches of Hernando Cortés* iii). Currently, no surviving originals of the letters have been found, however, there are two surviving manuscript copies; the manuscript at the National Library in Vienna has a copy of the first letter, and the National Library in Madrid has a copy of the last four letters (Pagden lxxii-lxxiii).

The first letter was written right after Cortés' arrival in Mexico in either June or July 1519 (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xli). The original letter by Cortés has long

been lost,²³⁸ and the letter that we have today seems to have been copied in large part from the first Cortés letter by the Justiciary and Council of Veracruz (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xli-xlii). While I do not analyze this letter in the analysis sections of this chapter, I acknowledge that there is, perhaps somewhere, a lost letter that describes the conquest and colonial events in Mexico from 1517-1519.

The second letter, which is probably the most well-known of the five, describes the invasion of Mexico by the conquistadores and *Noche Triste*.²³⁹ It was printed in Seville in 1522, then translated into Latin and republished in Nuremberg in 1524 (Cortés, *The Despatches of Hernando Cortés* iv). The focus of the third letter is the second advance on Tenochtitlán, the assault and capitulation of the capital, and seizing of power by Cortés throughout Mexico against both the indigenous people and other Spaniards. It was published in Seville and Nuremberg in 1523 (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xliv). The fourth letter, the shortest of the five, details the expansion into Central and North America, as well as the administration of the newly won territories. It was published in Toledo and Zaragoza in 1526 (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xlv). The second, third, and fourth letters were translated and published in Germany in 1550, and then in Italian, in the collection of Ramusio's *Voyages and Travels* in Venice in 1556. The three were then published in French at Paris in 1776 (Cortés, *The Despatches of Hernando Cortés* iv). These three letters are currently housed in the Archives of the Indies in Seville.

²³⁸ As it is considered lost and there are no manuscript copies of the letter, historians and scholars presume it was never published like the other four letters (Cortés, *The Despatches of Hernando Cortés* iii).

²³⁹ *Sad night*, the initial flight of the Spaniards out of Tenochtitlán (June 30 – July 1, 1520).

The fifth letter was completely forgotten to history until its discovery in the Imperial Archives of Vienna in the nineteenth century²⁴⁰ (Gayangos v). Subsequently, a copy of the letter was found in the National Library at Madrid by Don Juan Bautista Muñoz in the same century (Gayangos xvi). The letter was printed several times in the nineteenth century, first by Don Enrique de Vedia (*Biblioteca de autores clásicos*), and translated into many languages (Gayangos vi). It details Cortés' expedition from Tenochtitlán to Honduras, the quelling of indigenous uprisings, the seizure of Cortés' possessions and lands by power-hungry hidalgos, and the creation of a settlement in northern Honduras (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xlii; xlv-xlvi).

Cortés' letters are unique in that they do not follow the normal structure of a *relación*, detailing information in a perfunctory or itemized account of events, culture, and interactions (Pagden xlix). They are aggrandized letters that act as propaganda to impress the reader with the strength, religiosity, and will of the Spanish to “pacify” and convert the locals through bloody battle, while limiting the description of the involvement of the indigenous populations. While Cortés addressed his letters to Emperor Carlos V, he understood that they, like Columbus's letters, were considered historical and legal documents and would be copied and placed in the imperial library (Pagden xlix-l).

The primary text that I use for this analysis is entitled *Cartas de relación al Emperador Carlos V* and was printed by Ediciones E. F. Rueda in Madrid in 2017. It contains all five letters in modern spelling and punctuation. I chose to only use the last four letters as Cortés was not officially the author of the first letter from Mexico,

²⁴⁰ The Council letter of 1519 was found with it in the *Documentos inéditos para la historia de España* (Gayangos v-vi).

although scholars understand that he did have an influence on its writers (Pagden lxxiv). The final four letters contain numerous animal and hunting references that are useful to analyze in the context of medieval hunting manuals.

Biography

To appreciate how Cortés' animal references in his four letters are similar to the animal representations and ideals of hunting manuals, I outline his early life and education before he travelled to Mexico in 1519. His education and upbringing as a noble impacted how he viewed and described both domesticated and wild animals.

Hernán Cortés was born in Medellín, Estremadura, Spain in 1485, near the end of the Spanish Reconquista, to Martín Cortés of Monroy, a hidalgo and former soldier, and Doña Catalina Pizarro Altamirano (Pagden xli; Helps 17-18²⁴¹). Estremadura was, at this time, "...tierra de hidalgos, es decir, descendientes de caballeros empobrecidos..."²⁴² (Vasconcelos 13). As was common in medieval Spain, Hernán Cortés traced his lineage back for generations in all four branches of his family which, according to López de Gómara, showed his bloodline to be "very ancient, noble, and honorable"²⁴³ (7). He has been described as a sickly child by Arthur Helps, and he was often at the point of death (Helps 18). José Vasconcelos notes that Estremadurans were people born of the Romans, "...el mas fuerte de los que por allí pasaron..."²⁴⁴ who left traces of their dignity and

²⁴¹ While this reference text was published in 1871, the biographical information on Cortés is still up to date and, according to the librarians at the Newberry Library in Chicago who helped me during the early stages of this dissertation, Arthur Helps is still considered a reliable source.

²⁴² "...land of hidalgos, that is to say, descendants of impoverished knights...". It is not clear how Cortés' family became part of the poor noble class, but there is documentation that his parents owned a wheat farm, an apiary, and a vineyard, which indicates that they were noble, although not wealthy (Vasconcelos 18).

²⁴³ According to J. Bayard Morris, Cortés was only noble on his mother's side (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* ix).

²⁴⁴ "...the strongest of those who had passed through there..."

pride in the architecture, language, and the courageous behaviors of their descendants (13). Although he was poor, members of Cortés's class were raised to believe that their noble blood superseded poverty in terms of social standing.

At fourteen, Cortés enrolled at the University of Salamanca where he studied grammar for two years²⁴⁵ (Helps 18-19). At this time, "grammar" was understood to be courses in Latin, Greek, and rhetoric, which were to help prepare Cortés for the degree of bachelor-at-law (Helps 18-19). He is described as a sickly but ambitious young man, who was weak at Latin but a voracious reader of history (Vasconcelos 17-18). He was also living during a glorious age for Christian Spain: Columbus had already visited the Caribbean, the sons of Christian hidalgos in Salamanca and Alcalá were replacing the educated and exiled Jews and becoming cartographers, astronomers, administrators, and religious figures, and Cardinal Cisneros was uniting all the hard-won peninsular territories under the Spanish Crown (Vasconcelos 17-18). As religious intolerance grew in the unified nation, mass expulsions of Jews and Muslims diminished population numbers. In effect, Spain was expanding geographically and scientifically while it contracted socially. It was a time when a young, Christian man of limited means but great ambition and intelligence was able to do much more for himself abroad than continue the family tradition of ennobled poverty in Spain.

While his motives for leaving university after two years are unknown, we know that he left school with neither the permission of his parents nor the university and

²⁴⁵ Pagden calls this education into doubt, noting that Cortés' writing is unlike that of a university-trained scholar (xliv). He also believes that Cortés' preferred reading was the popular chivalric romances and Ancient mythology and stories, and for this reason he sent off Francisco Cortés in 1524 to find the Amazons (xlv). These romances frequently contained descriptions of hunting and battle.

returned to his childhood home in Estremadura²⁴⁶ (Helps 19). His two options for earning a living at that age were to either to serve under Gonsalvo de Córdoba in Italy, or to seek his fortune in the New World (Vasconcelos 16; Helps 19). Cortés had originally planned to travel with Nicolás de Ovando, an Estremaduran of “distinguished personage,” to the Caribbean, but his desire to spend time with a lady robbed him of the opportunity. After creeping from her house, the back wall he was walking on collapsed below him and he was injured (Helps 19-20). That lady’s husband was only prevented from killing Cortés by the intervention of her mother (López de Gómara 8-9). By the time Cortés had recovered from his injuries and a subsequent illness, Ovando had already set sail for the Caribbean (Helps 20).

Cortés then decided to go to Italy with Córdoba and made his way to Valencia where, again, he fell ill and spent an entire year in financial hardship (Helps 20). Upon returning to Medellín, his parents gave him the financial means to gain passage aboard the merchant vessel of Alonso Quintero of Palos de Moguer, headed for Santo Domingo on Hispaniola (López de Gómara 9). While aboard, some unknown incident caused Cortés to distinguish himself in a positive way²⁴⁷ and he when he arrived in Santo Domingo in 1504, he was well-received by the new Governor of the Indies, Nicolás de

²⁴⁶ He was not well-received by his parents, as they had expected that he would become a lawyer, “...the richest and most honorable career of all, because he was very intelligent and clever in everything that he did” (López de Gómara 8). At home, he was prone to restlessness, fighting with others and showing disdain to those around him (López de Gómara 8).

²⁴⁷ According to Arthur Helps, Cortés had shown his bravery in an unspecified manner throughout a voyage fraught with bad weather in which the ship was almost wrecked (20). However, López de Gómara asserts that when the ships became lost and the mariners and passengers aboard became desperate about their situation, going as far as confessing, a dove flying on Good Friday led them to shore by the grace of God (9-10). Both anecdotes may be complete fiction and it might be that Ovando received Cortés favorably simply because they were both Estremaduran and Ovando knew the Cortés family (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* x).

Ovando (Helps 20). He was nineteen years old and, according to Vasconcelos, he was knowledgeable in law, rules, and historical figures (such as Caesar and Scipio) (20). He was known for “His qualities as a tactician and a general reveal themselves plainly during the narrative of his various campaigns in Mexico...he was fighting against a primitive people, but they were warlike and vastly superior in numbers...Discipline was enforced at once with tact and severity” (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xxi). He participated in quelling several indigenous rebellions on Hispaniola and was rewarded by Ovando with an *encomienda* and a position as town notary in the newly formed city of Azúa²⁴⁸ (Helps 20-12). Cortés also engaged in trade for five or six years (López de Gómara 10).

Cortés wanted to go on expedition with Diego de Nicuesa to modern Costa Rica in 1506 but an abscess of the knee prevented him from going²⁴⁹ (Helps 21). Not satisfied with provincial life, Cortés accompanied Diego Velázquez to Cuba as his secretary,²⁵⁰ where he helped conquer the territory and received, in recompense, a portion land and indigenous people to cultivate it (Helps 21-22). He settled in Santiago de Baracoa and

²⁴⁸ Cortés did not want to be a farmer and the notary position allowed him to interact more with merchants, mariners, urbanites, and nobles (Vasconcelos 21).

²⁴⁹ The expedition was a disaster and many Spaniards died (Vasconcelos 22).

²⁵⁰ The relationship between Cortés and Cuban Governor Diego Velázquez was one of off-and-on affection. López de Gómara goes as far as to say that, “His influence and authority with Diego Velázquez were so great that the latter entrusted him with his affairs and the supervision of the erection of several buildings, including a smelter and a hospital” (11). Vasconcelos indicates that Cortés was trusted by the Governor, and he was one of Velázquez’s accountants who worked closely with the treasurer, Miguel de Pasamonte (22). However, Arthur Helps notes that in two instances their relationship was fractured by the pride of both men; in the first, Cortés complained about Velázquez to some newly arrived Judges of Appeal and when Velázquez heard of this, his first instinct was to hang Cortés (Helps 22). Cortés shipped off to Hispaniola where he escaped and hid for a time in a church (Helps 24). By the time he was discovered, his many friends had interceded on his behalf and Velázquez commuted his sentence and Cortés was fired from his position as secretary (Helps 24). In the second fracture, Cortés is said to have sullied the name of Doña Catalina Xuarez, a sister-in-law of Velázquez and part of the vice-royal court. He led her to believe that he would marry her, then refused to do so, only to be forced into the matrimonial obligation by the governor (Helps 25-26). Whether or not this is true, Cortés was rumored to have been ultimately pleased with the match, and Velázquez went on to be the godfather to Cortés’ children (Helps 25-26).

used his slaves to raise "...cattle, sheep, and mares, and was the first to own a herd and a house" (López de Gómara 11). On this island there were some precious metals and Cortés made a small fortune by investing in new construction (Vasconcelos 22).

By 1518, Cortés was the alcalde of Santiago and no longer struggling financially or socially, but still wanted to conquer territories and find gold (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xiii). Velázquez agreed to allow him to travel to Mexico as Cortés had a clear understanding of Velázquez's management style of colonial government (Helps 37-38). While Velázquez originally agreed to allow Cortés to lead the expedition, he stipulated that Cortés must fund at least half of it. Later, Velázquez rescinded his half and his permission. Despite this, Cortés decided to set sail anyway, and disregarded the commands of the governor entirely (Helps 39-40). López de Gómara does note that Cortés paid in gold for a lot of his purchases; he paid for swine and sheep with a gold chain (21), and that "...he went to Trinidad and bought a ship from Alonso Guillén, and from private citizens he bought three horses and 500 loads of feed...1,500 fitches of salt pork, and many fowl, for which Cortés gave them in payment several knots of gold and other pieces..." (22). Whether he was entirely impoverished after footing the expedition or had partial funding is not made clear. Ultimately, Cortés slipped out of Cuba on 10 February 1519, and headed toward Mexico.²⁵¹ There, he conquered the capital, Tenochtitlán after a long siege in 1521. Later, from 1524-1526, he rode into Central

²⁵¹ Bernal Díaz del Castillo refutes this and insists that Cortés left Santiago with official ceremonies (Cortés, *Five Letters 1519-1526* xiii-xiv).

America in order to fight groups of indigenous people and Spaniards²⁵² (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 200).

While Cortés had a limited formal education, and most of his learning took place through experiential training, his association with the noble class meant that he had access to hunting manuals and the traditions of hunting. Vernacular humanism, or “...the translation and adaptation of classical works for the instruction and entertainment of nobles and others unable to read Latin well...”, had spread across the Iberian Peninsula by the end of the fifteenth century (Bultman 298). Those nobles and hidalgos who were able to afford schooling in fifteenth-century Spain saw their education greatly influenced by these translations as they allowed aristocrats to talk intelligently about the growing fields of science, navigation, and medicine, among others, without having learned Latin. While Cortés had studied Latin in Salamanca, his day-to-day reading and fascination with history was influenced by vernacular translations as his Latin was not particularly good (Vasconcelos 17-18). As I noted in the Introduction of this dissertation (41), hunting manuals had been written mostly in the vernacular since the twelfth century, and the two important hunting manuals for Spaniards, those of Don Juan Manuel and King Alfonso XI, were written in the vernacular in the mid-fourteenth century (Fradejas Rueda 4; 8). Bernal Díaz del Castillo notes that Cortés was an excellent rider, and was skilled at using weapons, and his capabilities as a soldier and commander are well-known attributes commonly associated with upper-class hunting techniques²⁵³ (Helps 3-4; Cortés, *Five*

²⁵² Notably, a hidalgo named Cristóbal de Olid who had served Cortés in battle against the Mexica and later betrayed him.

²⁵³ Bernal Díaz was more than a little biased and in favor of Cortés.

Letters 1519-1526 xix). It is unsurprising then, that Cortés' letters are littered with animal descriptions that indicate a mind focused on hunting, capture, unmaking and commodification, both in terms of the New World itself and the animals that populate it.

Elements of Old-World Hunting in Cortés' Letters

Much of Cortés' letters show how influential hunting was in his life. While his descriptions of proxies and battles can be chalked up to the arts of war, they also belong to the arts of chivalry, in which hunting is a major aspect. Cortés was known to be enthralled by historical descriptions of war, and was fascinated by chivalric literature (Vasconcelos 17-18). Hunting manuals were an interesting combination of both the mechanics of war and the codes of noble chivalry. Although the proxies and battle strategies that Cortés used in the New World were derived from the Old World, I feel that they are strong pieces of evidence that show how Cortés used and described animals and strategies in battle in the New World much in the same way that he would have used and described them on the hunt in Spain.

Horses are one element of hunting that were both a necessary tool and a status symbol. In fact, the Spanish expression used when describing horsemen, *de caballo*²⁵⁴ is interesting in that it removes any word related to humanity, such as *soldado*, *peon*, or *hombre*,²⁵⁵ and reduces both rider and horse to one living being.²⁵⁶ Cortés' inclusion of horses is not far from the symbolic use of the horse as an extension of his rider. In his

²⁵⁴ *Of horse*

²⁵⁵ *soldier, foot-soldier, man*

²⁵⁶ An interesting note is that Cortés specifically does not use the word *caballero*, which in the sixteenth century meant a man of the upper class who was a vassal to the king, and who lived by the knightly and feudal codes of loyalty, generosity, and honesty (a knights) ("Caballero"). Likely Cortés did call these men *caballeros* as they were not knights, but working military men like himself and his father.

Libro de la montería,²⁵⁷ Alfonso XI wrote that hunting on horseback was honorable and that it was as close to going to war as one could get without going to war:

...el caballero debe siempre usar toda cosa que tanga á armas, et á caballeria, et cuando non lo podiere usar en guerra, débelo siempre usar en las cosas semejantes á ella. Et es cierto que de las cazas non hay ninguna que mas sea semejante á la guerra que esta...²⁵⁸

(Alfonso XI, 3)

He notes that war and hunting make a man suffer, and lack of sleep, lack of good food, the increase of fear, and the harshness of the weather were all essential tools that made a man a better warrior and, by extension, a better hunter (Alfonso XI 3). He further comments that a nobleman takes pleasure in hunting, particularly if the pursuit is time-consuming and the quarry is large (Alfonso XI 4).

Young men of the upper classes were required to know how to ride horses, and their use in the hunt was especially important (Almond 15). It was also expected that they be both skilled in and accustomed to riding a horse in diverse weather and geographic conditions (Almond 18). Horses were so essential that a gentleman was not considered part of the upper classes without one (Almond 54). Horses both physically and socially separated the nobles from the commoners who could not afford a horse for leisure activities²⁵⁹ (Salisbury 22). In Spain, the warhorse (*destrier*) was particularly symbolic.

²⁵⁷ *Book of Hunting (on Horseback)*

²⁵⁸ "...the gentleman must always use everything that he has for weapons, and the cavalry, and that which he cannot use in war, he should always use in things similar to it. It is true that there are there is nothing more similar to war than hunting..."

²⁵⁹ The lower classes could own and ride horses, but the cost of buying and maintaining a horse was often too expensive for commoners. Those among the lower classes who did own horses often only owned

While the animal's use as a tool of war had been inherited by the Spanish from the Roman Empire, the symbolic connection between horse and noble rider came to Spain via the Arabian conquest of the Peninsula (eighth century CE), based in the idea that a horse represented the faith, strength, and confidence of the knight²⁶⁰ (Rogers 631).

In medieval chivalric poems and romances, the physical descriptions of knights nearly always include a reference to or a description of his horse. In fact, knights are more frequently depicted in the saddle than on foot, as a knight traveling by foot or without his horse was considered ignoble, jarring, and even disruptive to the class structure (Rogers 631). In this light, Cortés' inclusion of horses helps readers to understand how valuable horses were to the Spanish. While the warhorses Cortés and his men used in the New World were larger, heavier, slower, and less agile than the average hunting horse, they were no less prized for their symbolic value as extensions of the warrior²⁶¹ (Almond 54-55). The impressive nature of large warhorses was not lost on Cortés. Buddy Levy notes that Cortés, upon arriving on Cozumel island, saw that the local islanders were initially curious of the horses. He had them brought from the ships, dressed, and paraded around the beach while the Spaniards shot off canons and flaming arrows. This left a positive impression, and Levy reports that the islanders were willing to

packhorses (not of fine breeding, and smaller than a warhorse), and they were used for agricultural labor (Salisbury 16).

²⁶⁰ In contrast to Spain, horses in the New World, particularly in the grasslands Tierra Firme and in South America, created an equine population boom throughout the sixteenth century. Horses were so commonplace that many went wild. Horses could be purchased very inexpensively or captured in the wild (Crosby Jr 82).

²⁶¹ As there was a great deal of Arab influence in the Iberian Peninsula from 711-1492 CE, there were also many hunting and warhorses on the market. Arab horse breeders had been around for centuries before the Islamic invasion of the Peninsula and they brought their tradition of horse breeding with them (Almond 55).

get close enough to the Spaniards to touch their beards²⁶² (11). Later in the Conquest, Cortés used the same technique to impress the Mexica people: “He ordered the cannon to be heavily charged, and all his horsemen, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, to prepare for exercise. The horses were to have their poytrels, with bells attached to them”²⁶³ (Helps 54-55). The horses were also frightening to the indigenous peoples, and Cortés used this to his advantage to ward off night attacks²⁶⁴ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 44).

While the inclusion of the horse in Cortés’ letters demonstrates their importance as tools of social representation, Cortés also references them as tools of survival and conquest. He frequently mentions the quantity of horses he has at his disposal²⁶⁵ throughout his descriptions of war and travel. In his second letter, he notes the amount of horses he has left after conquering Cempoal,

...me parti de la ciudad de Cempoal que yo intitulé Sevilla, a diez
y seis de agosto, con quince de caballo y trescientos peones lo

²⁶² In the fifth letter, Cortés even allows a local leader, Aspaspolon, to ride one of his horses. Cortés reports that this made the indigenous leader very happy (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 254-255).

²⁶³ *Poytrels* are decorated breastplates for the horse that are also functional, serving to protect a horse in battle.

²⁶⁴ With few exceptions, such as the incident in Veracruz noted above, Cortés indicates that the indigenous people were mostly afraid of the horses during the first few years of the Conquest. He notes that the Mexica only return to their towers and plazas at Tenochtitlán when the horsemen are gone, and that other indigenous people run away at the mere sound of hoofbeats (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 156; 172-173).

²⁶⁵ Arthur Helps notes that the expression *de caballo* is ambiguous because it does not properly count the actual horsemen, just the number of horses that are being ridden. Helps alludes to the fact that men did die during battle but if the horse was still standing, another man would ride it in place of the dead *caballero* (41-42). A point to note is that Cortés’s numbers on the amount of horses he has during his invasion of Mexico and incursions of Mesoamerica are not always specific. Often he referred to the number of riders he had (“dos de caballo,” “con tres o cuatro de caballo,” “cuarenta de caballo”), or to a certain kind of horse (“y yegua”) (96; 97; 118). Rarely does he give a specific number of horses that he has, but when he does he labels them as horses and not horsemen (“ya no había caballo de veinticuatro que nos había quedado,” “les habían matado siete caballos”) (98; 104). Buddy Levy indicates that Cortés arrived in Mexico with sixteen horses (25).

mejor aderezados de guerra que yo pude... y dejé en la Villa de la
Vera Cruz ciento y cincuenta hombres con dos de caballos...²⁶⁶

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 36)

His detailed numbers of the horsemen he sends off to fight, his many purchases of horses,²⁶⁷ and his annotations of those horses and horsemen which die in battle or in travel, account for most of his animal references. Cortés' four letters are littered with phrases like "...y yo con hasta seis de caballo..."²⁶⁸ "...pueden ir por cada ella ocho de caballo a la par..."²⁶⁹ "...fueron ciertos de caballo siguiendo el alcance y victoria..."²⁷⁰ and, "...nos mataron dos caballos e hirieron otros tres y a dos de caballo..."²⁷¹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 42, 58, 95, 35). This counting of the horsemen and horses is not arbitrary²⁷²; it allowed him to show off the small amount of men and horses that he had available in any given time period, impressing on his sovereign the many efforts taken to win battles and gain territory²⁷³ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 222).

²⁶⁶ "...I left the city of Cempoal, which I named Seville, on the sixteenth of August, with fifteen horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers (the most seasoned in war that I could [find])...and I left fifty-five men with two horsemen in Veracruz..."

²⁶⁷ Cortés' continual need to reinforce his troops is significant as he lost many in both battle and traversing the landscape. The loss of each horse is significant enough for him to mention and he regularly includes how the horse died. For example, in a failed ambush at the siege of Tenochtitlán in 1521, two mares were killed in retreat, as well as another horse ridden by a young man, Cristóbal de Guzmán, who died trying to rescue Cortés (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 167-168).

²⁶⁸ "...and I with six horsemen..."

²⁶⁹ "...they can go through it [road to Tenochtitlán] eight horsemen in pairs..."

²⁷⁰ "...there were certain horsemen following importance and victory..."

²⁷¹ "...they killed two horses and injured three or two horsemen..."

²⁷² Relatedly, Cortés nearly always describes how many horsemen and/or horses he has before he describes how many men he has. The hierarchy of battle lists horses and horsemen before foot-soldiers and indigenous warriors (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 100).

²⁷³ Cortés often complains to the Emperor that he carries a lot of debt from buying horses and provisions (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 206). It is worth noting that these inclusions of numbers of horses and men advanced the myth that these were exceptional men who won against tides of indigenous warriors when, in fact, it is well known that Cortés took advantage of the interplay between warring indigenous tribes to serve the Conquest.

Cortés probably only mentions the numbers of horses to inform the Emperor of the costs of conquest, as much of Cortés' invasion was self-funded, and in the hopes of reimbursement. Cortés regularly talks about the costs of the horses and provisions while in Mexico. However, I feel that his connections to horses goes beyond that, as he himself notes that the horses are more than tools for financial and courtly gain. He never alludes to the direct cost of an individual horse above, but he mentions their supremacy in battle against indigenous peoples multiple times. In the attack mentioned above on the road to Tlaxcala, Cortés credits the survival of the Spanish to the fact that "...como todos éramos de caballo, arremetíamos a nuestro salvo y salimos ..."²⁷⁴ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 42). Later after losing five or six horsemen and retreating from some angry indigenous warriors, Cortés notes, "...si no fuera por los de caballo fuera imposible de no recibir mucho daño los españoles..."²⁷⁵ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 156). In the first quote, he credits the fact that they are all on horseback; in the second, the deeper sentiment is that if there had not been fighters on horseback, the men would have been severely injured. In battle, the horses proved to be more than objects of financial value, but they are transformed into weapons of salvation and tools of survival. Again, Cortés shows that he understands the physical and social significance of these animals beyond their financial value.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ "...as we were all on horseback, we undertook our own salvation and we left..."

²⁷⁵ "...if it were not for the horsemen, it would have been impossible for the Spaniards to not receive a lot of injuries..."

²⁷⁶ Restall points out that horses were not valuable in the long-term to the conquest of the New World. In most instances, it is apparent that it was an advantage to fight hand-to-hand combat off the back of a horse (142-143). In this instance in Tenochtitlán, a massive horse was both an advantage and a disadvantage. In small, canal-lined streets a large horse might fill up a small street and allow the conquistador more room to swing his sword and land blows. However, the horses were a burden when it came to the crossing of canal-filled and impassable streets.

As a symbol of nobility and as a functioning tool of conquest, the death or injury of a horse was significant enough that Cortés noted it many times throughout the four letters. Salman Akhtar indicates that the horse was associated with two great aspects of Western human life: power and death. Power, in that humans had control over horses and, therefore, control over men without horses (78). Injuries to a hunting horse were commonplace in hunting and in battle, and notable hunting manuals had some general veterinary tips for the care of hunting animals (Hohenstaufen 190). While Cortés only once mentions the care of a horse, outside of finding food and water, he regularly comments upon their potential and actual injuries. For example, before traveling to Churultecal, the Spaniards are informed that the main road has been closed off by Montezuma's cronies, and that another has been opened with traps meant to kill and maim the horses (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 49). In another instance, some prisoners at Guacachula told the Spaniards that Montezuma's men had set up lances in the paths and dirt to kill the horses as they Spanish attacked²⁷⁷ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 110-111). It was commonplace for Cortés to note injuries to horses, including those that he did not directly witness (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 178). In documenting their injuries, Cortés is also demonstrating some foresight through foreshadowing; if he had ultimately been unable to capture Tenochtitlán, he could have indicated the many reasons why his hunt for the city failed, including injured horses, and thus extricating himself from any possible blame. The death of horses is also regularly noted in Cortés' letters. In some

²⁷⁷ Cortés sometimes notes when roads and paths are passable for the horses, as they frequently were difficult to travel with the large destriers. Frequently, he has to repair the roads, as he did when trying to protect his rear guard on the road to Tenochtitlán (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 156).

instances in Western culture the horse was depicted as a bringer of death: in ancient Greece, the Trojan horse brought down an entire city, and in Christian culture, the apocalypse is thought to begin with the arrival of the four horsemen (79). Christian nobles believed that horses lamented the loss of their owner as much as the owner lamented the loss of the horse, and that the beast was able to cry real tears to express his or her sadness (Isidorus 249). With such feelings of social connection between horse and man, it is not surprising that Cortés includes horse deaths in his own letters. In one example, Cortés describes the Spaniard's first flight from Tenochtitlán in 1520, Cortés manages to make it across the laguna with five horsemen and one hundred foot-soldiers, but indicates that all his other horses and fighters in the city have been lost to the enemy (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 97). Another *de caballo* dies along the way to Tacuba while continuing to flee the cities loyal to Montezuma (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 97). In total, the initial flight from Tenochtitlán costs Cortés forty-five mares and horses, a significant number for someone who is running away from his attacker rather than facing him in battle (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 98). In another instance, a horse is lanced in the neck while the servant riding him is attempting to rescue Cortés in battle (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 167). During the siege of Tenochtitlán, Cortés describes a very good day of attack in which a mare was injured and confused and ran towards the enemy, but which died later that evening in friendly hands. He notes, "...y aunque peso mucho porque los caballos y yeguas nos daban la vida, no fue tanto el pesar como si muriera en poder de los enemigos..."²⁷⁸ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 176). In another battle, the indigenous kill a

²⁷⁸ "...and although it was very sad because the horses and mares give us life, it was not as sad as if she had died in the hands of the enemy..."

horse with a weapon fashioned from a captured Spanish sword (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 181). The deaths of these noble creatures were worth remarking, and Cortés notes his losses frequently.

However, even in death the horses proved to have value for the Spaniards. After an ambush by indigenous peoples on the road to Tlaxcala, the local tribal leaders blame the attack on some of their rebellious tribesmen and, according to Cortés, these leaders promise to pay for the horses that had been killed (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 42). When horses were killed, the Spaniards often did not waste the horseflesh and made a meal of the animals, a gesture that can be seen as both survivalist in the most basic of senses, and symbolic, in that eating the horse gave them a sense of security. Cortés notes this symbolic unmaking of dead horses in one instance when he writes, “... no teníamos después de Dios otra seguridad sino la de los caballos, nos consoló su carne, porque la comimos sin dejar cuero ni otra cosa de él, según la necesidad que traíamos...”²⁷⁹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 99). Cortés acknowledges that the death of the horse causes the Spaniards emotional pain, as it is the only security that they have as an invading force, as well as the nobly connection to his status, but they eat the entire horse anyway as they are starving.²⁸⁰ The horse, then, becomes not only the living embodiment of their battle prowess and survival, but also the ingested, and symbolic, embodiment of the needs of the flesh surpassing the social importance of status and nobility.

²⁷⁹ “...we had no other security after God but that of the horses, whose flesh consoled us, because we ate it without leaving leather nor any thing else of it, as we were in great need...” Cortés includes several moments of desperation in his letters which make him appear to the reader as if he is surmounting monumental odds in order to conquer Mexico.

²⁸⁰ In the fifth letter, he notes the loss and consumption of a horse after he and his men are ambushed while traveling through a town (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 207).

The injury or death of horses, however, can also be viewed as a subversion of power, if their injury is caused by someone viewed by nobles as “lesser”. Horses, along with their symbolic meaning, provide height, allowing a horseman to fight above his quarry, striking down the enemy from above with sword or crossbow, and giving him a better view of his surroundings and any immediate onslaughts (Almond 74-75). When a horseman loses his horse, he loses his physical dominance and social standing, and is reduced to a common foot-soldier. In terms of hunting, the hunter is symbolically removed from his noble status, although temporarily, and he must hunt with the rabble on foot. In Cortés’ letters, readers are plunged into this struggle for dominance and power through horseflesh. For example, on the road to Tlaxcala, Cortés has six horsemen with him. Two of them ride ahead and see some indigenous people who flee because they “...vieron los de caballo...”²⁸¹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 42). Fifteen indigenous warriors return and attack them, killing two horses in the fracas. The enemy is soon defeated after the arrival of four other horsemen. Cortés’ letter makes the claim that is able to gain and maintain his dominance over the indigenous peoples²⁸². In thirteenth-century Italy, Jordanus Rufus wrote about horses and their care in *La Marechaucie des chevaux*, in which he directly expressed that owning and caring for a hunting (i.e. non-agricultural) horse was what physically and emotionally separated nobles from the commoners, as horses are large beasts and the domesticated animal granted the highest

²⁸¹ “...saw the horsemen...”

²⁸² Restall has proven this to be untrue, but the position I take in this dissertation is not the truth behind the history but the way Cortés represents the horses in his correspondence.

status (Salisbury 22). The horse, then, represents both physical and social dominance in both battle and the hunt.

It is worth noting that horses did not always serve as tools of hunting or battle for their masters. One of the most interesting aspects of the horse descriptions in Cortés' letters are those instances in which he notes the Spaniards' inability to use them as an extension of nobility. There are two significant types of descriptions which relate to the hunter-horseman's ineffectiveness to use the horse in any hunting or war capacity.²⁸³ In the first instance, the streets of the cities and towns in which Cortés travels through, as detailed in the second and third letters, were never built for horses. At times, the Spaniards were forced to dismount, either due to the small width of the road or the lack of one altogether (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 142-143). In other instances, such as in the island-city of Tenochtitlán (Mexico), there were canals on the sides of the roadways, or canals crossed over roads, which made traversing them with horses very difficult (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 133).

Often the horses become a hinderance as the roads narrowed down into small paths, or became entirely impassible for the horses due to obstructions created either by nature or as traps set by indigenous warriors to maim or kill the horses (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 150, 298-299). The paths and roads leading between cities in Mexico were narrower than those found in the Iberian Peninsula. In one instance, while pushing

²⁸³ Interestingly, Cortés rarely mentions using dogs in battle, although it is well known and documented by other writers, such as Bernal Díaz de Castillo, that Cortés had trained mastiffs that were used against the indigenous people. Dogs were commonplace in noble hunting and, while not as valuable as the horse, their presence was generally considered necessary tools of the hunt by noble writers of hunting manuals (Almond 73-75). Cortés does note in the fifth letter that his men use dogs to capture a scout near the province of Taiza (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 261).

towards Tenochtitlán, Cortés notes that the road is relatively poor, thick with brush and trees, and difficult for the horses to travel. He sends four horsemen ahead who have such difficulty cutting down the trees and bushes in order to ride their horses that, "...no se podían aprovechar de los caballos, cuanto más adelante iban, más el temor se les aumentaba..."²⁸⁴ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 120).

In the second instance, Cortés and his men consistently force the horses into dire straits that are unrelated to battle. Frequently he must force the horses to swim or, if the waterways are too wide, he must find alternative means of getting across. For example, when he and his men head south towards modern Honduras, they initially cross three large rivers. The first two are small, and the Spaniards can make the horses swim across them while holding on to their bridles.²⁸⁵ The third river is very wide and the men are forced to build a bridge in order to cross the equipment and horses (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 241). Sometimes the bridges are not well-built and can only be used to move equipment and saddles, forcing the horses to swim across dangerous and deep waterways (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 248). Other times Cortés has no choice but to build bridges as the waterways are too wide, the terrain on either side too difficult to walk in, or the currents are too strong (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 251). In a few instances, Cortés is forced to stop for days on end to ferry horses and men across wide waterways in canoes and make-shift rafts (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 270). This type of travel is not without

²⁸⁴ "...they could not take advantage of the horses, and the further along they went the more terrified they became..."

²⁸⁵ Cortés also noted that sometimes the men clung to the saddle trees instead of swimming, which is clearly much easier than swimming against a current (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 244).

risk, and Cortés indicates that sometimes the horses drowned or are so badly injured that he must leave them behind (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 251, 263).

The Central American²⁸⁶ terrain is also filled with risks. In late 1524 and into 1525, Cortés traveled through the Yucatan and into Central America.²⁸⁷ The land in this region is marshy and laden with swamps, and Cortés notes that the horses frequently walk through muck that gets as high as their cinches, and sometimes even up to their ears (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 244, 243). At one point the muck is so thick and deep that the horses become stuck and cannot be freed until the next day (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 248-249). In another instance, the horses cannot get out of the marshes until the Spaniards place reeds and grasses below the water so that they have stable ground to walk on (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 252). In other parts of the region, the land is so mountainous that Cortés tells us many horses fall off the sheer mountain paths. In the fourth letter, he leaves for Honduras with 150 horses and 68 either fall off the mountain, or become so injured from the rough terrain that they soon die or must be put down²⁸⁸ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 240, 265). All the horses left alive must be reshod and it takes

²⁸⁶ As noted above, Cortés traveled to Central America from Tenochtitlán in order to quell some rebellions and to find some of his men who had not sent him news of their exploits.

²⁸⁷ In the fifth letter, Cortés acknowledges several times that the local indigenous populations do not usually walk along trails or roads, as the terrain is rather terrible, but travel by canoe along the rivers (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 248). However, he has his horses to consider and is unwilling to give them up, and thus chooses to travel overland.

²⁸⁸ At one point, during a four-day streak of mountain travel, several horses died by falling off the mountain trails, and Cortés' nephew, Juan de Avalos, fell off the side of the mountain with his horse. The horse died, but the young man only broke his arm, and he was saved from worse damage by his armor (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 269)

three months for them all to recover from their injuries²⁸⁹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 265).

Passing through these difficult terrains leaves not only horses and men fatigued, but also with few provisions. The well-being of the horses is so important that Cortés includes information about when they are able to find food for the animals to eat (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 249). He stresses the importance of finding pasture ground for the horses, even when there is little food for the men to scavenge (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 248, 268). However, there is little that he can do about the lack of water in the mountains, indicating that the only way to survive their thirst is to collect water in containers whenever it rains (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 265-266).

These two main points, the lack of appropriate roads for the horses, and their use in dangerous, non-battle situations, figuratively and physically separates horse and rider. The nobleman is not noble without his horse. Salisbury tells us that medieval artistic representations of men and their horses (she specifically describes the Bayeux Tapestry) seldom show a conquering hero off his horse, defining these animals as a part of man's physical and social power (32). By separating himself and his men from their horses, Cortés transforms the animals from beasts of battle to beasts of burden, preventing both the Spaniards and the horses from being associated with the noble class.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Cortés' timelines can be difficult to follow as he often refers to incidents happening on "another day." His exploits in the mountains occurred in the first few months of 1525, before Easter (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 266)

²⁹⁰ It is worth noting that European social structures frequently broke down in the New World. The men arriving from Spain were mostly members of the lower class and poor hidalgos of the upper class who received their military training through battles in the Americas (Restall 34). The distance from Spain proved too much for many of these men and they turned to rebellion against their leaders, in the instance of Roldán and Columbus, in pursuit of their own fortunes.

In many ways, the entire conquest of Mexico became one great hunt for the lost hart, with that noble quarry being Tenochtitlán: “...se perdía la mejor, más noble y mejor ciudad de todo lo nuevamente descubierto del mundo...por ser la cabeza de todo...”²⁹¹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 90). Tenochtitlán becomes Cortés’ target; after his first landing and the founding of Veracruz, most of his battles are fought along the way to the great Mexican city. Tenochtitlán, as the greatest city in central Mexico must be captured, unmade, and remade into something Spanish. Metaphorically, it also becomes the literary white hart, the mystical and intangible creature that lures men from far-flung places either to their deaths or to their personal gain.²⁹² Cortés first hears of the Emperor Montezuma and Tenochtitlán from a cacique near Vera Cruz, from whom Cortés receives some precious stones and feathers in trade for some small trinkets (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 39). Later, when Cortés travels inland from Veracruz to Tenochtitlán, he frequently runs into obstacles, jumps into battles, and has messengers bring him gifts from Emperor Montezuma in the hopes that he can be persuaded not to continue to the city (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 48). However, Cortés does continue, persuaded by the wealth and power that the Emperor clearly holds, and when he finally reaches the city for the first time,²⁹³ he stays on for several months, from November of 1519 to May of 1520. He is then forced to leave to take care of some political difficulties in Veracruz, where he

²⁹¹ “...[we] had lost the best, the most noble and best city of all that was newly discovered in the world...as the head of everything...”

²⁹² The white hart was a popular theme in medieval literature, notably *Guigemar*, in the *Lais de Marie de France*, and the legends of King Arthur. In these texts, the white hart is a worthy and noble creature and always lures men into the forest during the chase, and the men become lost and, subsequently, start an adventure.

²⁹³ He was received as a guest (although he took the Emperor and his family hostage) in November 1519, and would not fully conquer the city until 13 August 1521.

passed several months exploring the city and its architectural beauty (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 82, 77). Upon his return to Tenochtitlán, he and his men are chased out of the city²⁹⁴ for committing various atrocities (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 92). Diego Velázquez sends Narváez to find Cortés and hang him, leading Cortés to battle against Narváez (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 86-87). Interestingly, like the conquest of Tenochtitlán, Cortés physically and metaphorically hunts down Narváez and his men, sending letters to Narváez and making a lot of “noise” as a distraction (in a literary sense), and then cornering him and his men (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 88). Cortés has a lot of spies in the region and these spies and his men act like trained yeoman who help their noble seigneur on the hunt (Almond 117).

Cortés loses most of his men in their flight from Tenochtitlán, but he never gives up his desire to capture the city. Like a hunter, he lies in wait, besieging the city and making daily incursions in the hopes of gaining ground, slowly trapping his prey by both land and water by closing off bridges and maintaining ships in the lakes.²⁹⁵ His incursions into the lakes and the city begin after nearly a year of recovery from the *Noche triste*, in April 1521, and are spurred on by the arrival of fresh horsemen and troops (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 137-138). His men surround the laguna and conquer the cities nearest the bridges that allowed the island-dwelling Mexica to cross to the mainland (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 154, 163). The allied indigenous tribes build huts along the larger

²⁹⁴ The *Noche triste*. This flight is well-documented and will not be discussed in-depth here. It is significant to note that Cortés has accumulated a mass of wealth in Tenochtitlán and knows that there is plenty more both in the city and coming in as tribute. While fleeing from Tenochtitlán, he loads up his horses with as much gold as he can, most of which is lost during the flight (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 96).

²⁹⁵ Cortés directly uses the term *caza* when describing his military maneuvers on the laguna against the warriors in canoes. He writes, “Con los bergantines fuimos bien tres leguas dando caza a las canoas...” (“With these brigantines, we hunted canoes for three leagues...”) (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 152).

bridges that have been captured by the Spanish, and Cortés and his men move ever closer to the heart of the city by simply not allowing the Mexica to leave their island-city²⁹⁶ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 162).

Cortés' battle strategies are like those of nobles hunting quarry in groups. Cortés lays traps in which the Spaniards hide in a circle and then surround and slaughter the enemy when they enter that circle (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 135). He attacks on ships that he has had built, sailing down canals and in between buildings and lighting them on fire while attacking warriors in canoes (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 162, 173). The Spaniards fill in some of the canals every morning before the first attack so that the horses might run on them safely and at a higher advantage, but he notes that the Mexica undo this laborious task after the Spanish retreat every evening (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 160-161).

The Mexica frequently chase the horsemen, knowing that the horses will be turned around and the Spaniards will kill a few Mexica with every turn (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 160-161). If there are no horsemen present, they attack the Spaniards relentlessly (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 163). They rip up streets and place large impediments along the roads to prevent the horses from easy travel (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 174). The Mexica are determined to not make themselves quarry and fight to regain their city.²⁹⁷ At one point, Cortés plans an attack in the hopes of reaching the central marketplace through

²⁹⁶ These same allies brought the Spaniards cherries and fish to survive on while they were besieging and fighting the Mexica (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 162).

²⁹⁷ I acknowledge that the transmission of Old-World diseases also decimated the indigenous populations. There is no evidence that, during that time period, the Europeans were specifically trying to spread disease, which is why I do not focus on this aspect of the Spanish conquest. There is no doubt, however, that disease brought in by Europeans destroyed and decimated the multitude of indigenous cultural groups in the Caribbean and in the Americas (Crosby Jr. 38).

the use of decoys and subterfuge, and effectively capturing the city. However, the Mexica are able to fight back using their greatest advantages, their canoes and their ability to swim, and manage to valiantly repulse the Spaniards from the city center and kill many of them (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 166-168).

Cortés, however, very slowly wears the Mexica down. When Cortés first arrives in Tenochtitlán in November 1519, he notes that if the bridges are lifted, it will be easy to starve out the people inside of it (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 72-73). During the early weeks of the siege, he sends out his men to round up all of the food growing in the areas around the laguna, both to feed his own men and to starve out the Mexica trapped on their island city (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 150). The siege and raze strategy that he employs allows him to cut the Mexica off from both food and fresh water (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 164). When the Mexica show outward signs of ferocity and display their food to prove that they are not starving, Cortés moves on to psychological warfare, destroying Montezuma's menagerie, ambushing the Mexica warriors, and killing those among the starving masses who go to fish at night (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 172, 159, 174-175, 176-177). After seventy-five days of siege and near-daily battle, the Mexica retain one-eighth of the original city and gnaw on tree bark and roots to survive.²⁹⁸ The leaders finally give up and make peace with Cortés on 13 August 1521 (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 178-179, 185). After the capitulation, Cortés shows off his military might with displays of his horses' prowess, having them skirmish and complete maneuvers in order

²⁹⁸ I note here that the indigenous who did survive the Spanish battles and who were sickened by Old-World diseases could not farm, nor gather/capture food. This obviously had an impact on food shortages and further illness due to lack of nutrition.

to celebrate the win and to strike fear in the hearts of any rebellious survivors (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 187, 190).

Essentially, Cortés hunts and traps his quarry, brings it to submission, and then celebrates the event with festivities. The strategies Cortés uses of surrounding and waiting out his quarry are similar to some of the methods described in Chapter Forty-Three of Alfonso XI's *Libro de la montería*, which describe similar hunting practices for chasing animals, such as wild boars and stag (51-53). According to Richard Almond, there are often parties and festivals associated with hunts, particularly successful ones, where the hunters celebrate the carnage that their quarry undergoes (Almond 27).

Whatever a hunter's quarry was, after being killed it was often "unmade" and then "remade" in both hierarchical and ritualized ways (Pratt). When unmaking an animal, the nobles (who were not involved in the physical process) had the quarry dissected and doled out to the hunting party based on hierarchy. Often the skin and the outer portions of the corpse would remain untouched in order to be "remade" into a visually stunning display of the animal's appearance in life, and presented at a feast or a banquet celebrating the hunt (Pluskowski 39). Cortés includes small mentions of the unmaking of physical objects, including animals. In more than one instance, he indicates that the gold he receives from the indigenous is melted down and transformed into Spanish pesos²⁹⁹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 71, 201, 231). He further details the splitting up of the treasure, particularly the *quinto*, or the fifth, that is separated from the total horde first

²⁹⁹ The melting of Mexican gold and its remaking into Spanish pesetas is so significant that Cortés includes information about the arrival of the foundry overseer from Hispaniola, Cristóbal de Tapia (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 190-191).

and set aside for the Emperor.³⁰⁰ After this, the rest of the wealth is divided up according to the hierarchy of the men involved in the conquest³⁰¹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 201, 234). Cortés also describes the division of land among the Spaniards, as well as the divvying up of the indigenous people, all doled out in terms of social and military hierarchy through the *encomienda* system³⁰² (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 196). In direct relation to animals, he regularly mentions receiving gifts of feathers, gifts that indicate that the animal has already been unmade by other hunters (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 71). Cortés' descriptions of unmaking contain similar features to the unmaking of quarry

³⁰⁰ Just as the hunting grounds and the quarry all ultimately belong to the noble landholder, so the New World belongs to Emperor Carlos V (Almond 90). In his third letter, Cortés notes his possessions, titles, money, etc actually belongs to the Emperor (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 195). Cortés expands this idea in his fourth letter, telling the monarch that all the navigation in the New World touches the Emperor's rein, implying that all the landholdings that will be divided up among the *vecinos* are the Emperor's to do with as he likes (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 228). *Vecino* is a word for *landholder* during Cortés's time.

³⁰¹ After the taking of Tenochtitlán, Cortés melts down all the gold and has it smelted into 130,000 castellanos, and is certain to indicate that a fifth of the gold is set aside for the Emperor. However, he details that what is left is divided up between he and the other Spaniards, "...según el servicio y calidad de cada uno..." (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 186). In this way, Cortés unmakes the golden objects already created by the Mexica and remakes them into objects that represent the Spanish valuation of their worth, and then divides them among the participants in a hierarchical manner. Cortés did not split any of the treasure with the indigenous allies, as he notes that they take what they want throughout the battles (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 183). Cortés is careful throughout his letters to not only indicate what luxury goods exist in Mexico for the taking, such as feathers, slaves, and other things, but clearly writes down what of those items he is sending back to the Emperor (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 71; 196; 186).

³⁰¹ In an interesting twist, Cortés indicates that the indigenous people are also involved in ceremonial unmaking of the one of the Spaniards' greatest possession, the horse. In the city of Tesuico, he comes across a temple in which five captured horses have been slaughtered, and their skin is made into leather pieces that still have the hooves and horseshoes attached (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 131). The most fascinating part of this description is that Cortés describes the horse skins before he describes the displayed personal items and blood of murdered Spaniards, implying that the horses' corpses have more emotional value to him than those of the dead Spaniards. In nearly all his lists of horses and men, he lists the horses and horsemen first, and then, hierarchically, all the other foot-soldiers, those men trained in arms, and everyone else. Cortés rarely strays from hierarchical lists when noting the amounts of men and horses that he has, that he sends out to war, that have died, or that he expects to arrive by boat.

³⁰² In reference to this description, I understand that this conquest procedure used by Spain was common, and I do not claim that the only reason that this pattern of capture, unmaking, and remaking is limited only to the act of hunting. In this description, I point out the innate parallels between hunting and war, and the act of ritualized violence and division of the indigenous territories, nature, and people.

animals at a noble hunt; they are hunted down, cornered, conquered, and ritually divided up through the standard hierarchical process.

The politics and cityscapes that Cortés conquers are also “unmade” and “remade” in a manner like hunted quarry. Several times Cortés notes that when a city, region, or province is taken, it is unmade through physical destruction, as well as through division of property, politics, and people, via the *encomienda* system. The destruction of Tenochtitlán is a prime example of the unmaking of a region. Cortés turns Montezuma’s allies against their leader over time, or their cities are destroyed and those indigenous who are left decide to capitulate and join Cortés’ forces (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 129). Cortés tells us that he must capture and kill warriors from Guaxuta and Coatinchan, smaller cities in the central regions of Mexico, as they ambush his men and try to capture the indigenous allies of the Spaniards. He has his men burn down part of their cities until the leaders beg them to stop the destruction (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 129). In effect, Cortés is in the process of unmaking the physical locations and the inhabitants of the cities that he captures, unmaking what was already a living city. Relatedly, the absolute destruction of Tenochtitlán, along with the repetitious descriptions of other cities and regions that are destroyed, becomes almost ritualistic. Cortés includes these instances because the destruction is essential, and because, like the hunter, he wants to show off his defeated quarry.

Cortés tries to remake the places that he has unmade through warfare, as if by remaking them in a similar way under Spanish dominance, he can recapture the architecture and natural beauty of Tierra Firma that are lost to fire, war, and greed. Upon

taking the city of Tuxtepeque, Cortés commands it be renamed Medellín, and he names new officials to take over its administration (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 189). After capturing Tenochtitlán, he writes of remaking it:

...viendo que la ciudad de Temixtitan...parecídonos que en ella era bien poblar, porque estaba toda destruida; y yo reparti los solares a los que se asentaron por vecinos, e hízose nombramiento de alcaldes y regidores en nombre de vuestra majestad...De cuatro o cinco meses acá, que la dicha ciudad de Temixtitan se va reparando, está muy hermosa, y crea vuestra majestad que cada día se irá ennobleciendo en tal manera, que como antes fue principal y señora de todas estas provincias, que lo será tambien de aquí en adelante, y se hace y hará de tal manera que los espanoles estén muy fuertes, seguros y muy señores de los naturales.³⁰³

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 189)

Soon after the division of Tenochtitlán, Cortés travels a neighboring city, Coyoacán, which he had previously sacked (1521) and had wanted to return to its splendor (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 186). As with quarry animals, the lord dictates to whom the parts of the animal are given and how they are divided, but he himself is not physically involved

³⁰³ "...seeing that the city of Tenochtitlán...seemed to us ready to inhabit, as it was all destroyed, and I distributed the lots to those who settled as landowners, and made appointments of mayors and councilors in the name of Your Majesty...In four of five months from now, Tenochtitlán will be repaired. It is very beautiful and believe, Your Majesty, that every day it will become more noble and in such a way that, as it was before the principal city and mistress of all these provinces, it will also be from here on out, and is and will be done in such a way that the Spaniards might be very strong, safe and the lords of indigenous people..."

in the process of the unmaking. In his fourth letter (1524) he writes about the distribution of Cuyoacán³⁰⁴

...como siempre deseé que esta ciudad se reedificase, por la grandeza y maravilloso asiento de ella, trabajé de recoger todos los naturales...hice a un capitán general que en la guerra tenía y yo conocía del tiempo de Mutezuma, que tomase cargo de tornarla a poblar...A otras personas principales, que yo también asimismo de antes conocía, les encargue otros cargos de gobernación de esta ciudad...y a los demás les di señorío de tierras y gente, en que se mantuviesen, aunque no tanto como ellos tenían, ni que pudiesen ofender con ellos en algún tiempo...Y les he dado libertades y exenciones...así como carpinteros, albañiles, canteros, plateros y otros oficios; y los mercaderes tienen muy seguramente sus mercaderías y las venden y las otras gentes viven de ellos de pescadores, que es gran trato en esta ciudad y otros de agricultura, porque hay muchos de ellas que tiene sus huertas y siembran en ellas toda la hortaliza de España...³⁰⁵

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 224-225)

³⁰⁴ Modern spelling: *Coyoacán*

³⁰⁵ "...as I always wanted this city to be rebuilt, as it is a great and wonderful seat of government, I gathered all of the indigenous people...I made a captain who I have known since the time of Montezuma and who I have been to war with, take charge of returning to the city to populate it...To other principal people, who I also knew before, I entrusted with other positions of the government of this city...and to the others I gave them land and people, so that they would remain, although not as much as they had, nor which could offend them over time...and I gave them liberties and exemptions...as well as carpenters, masons, stonecutters, silversmiths, and other trades; and the merchants will have their merchandise secure and sell them, and other people live off of them and the fishermen, which is an important trade in this city.

Cortés and his underlings³⁰⁶ unmake the city and he wants to piece it back together so that it looks as it did before he and his men destroyed it. However, he does indicate that there should be some notable differences to the new political structure, such as a change in leadership and the introduction of the *encomienda* system. He continues further, distributing building sites in Cuyoacán to conquistadors in the hopes that they will become settlers and build beautiful houses (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 225-226). Effectively, he wants them to remake the city for the convenience of Spaniards, but with the labor and fine workmanship of the indigenous craftsman. This overall desire for conquest, unmaking, and remaking is a constant theme in Cortés' letters, showing off not only his sense of pride in his actions but also appealing to Carlos V's ego. In the third letter, after taking Tenochtitlán and making agreements with the lord of the neighboring region, Cortés talks of sending men to the Southern Sea. This was thought to be a sea that lead to Asia, and of which he knows they will find riches, including pearls and precious stones, and spices. He sends off four men to find it to declare it for the Emperor. In this, we see that Cortés, having captured the great quarry that was Tenochtitlán, is ready to hunt down his next quarry³⁰⁷ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 187).

For others [live off of] agriculture, because there are many of them that have orchards and sow in them vegetables from Spain...”

³⁰⁶ It was expected that Cortés redistribute the land, and he even distributed some of it back into the hands of trusted local leaders, as in the instance when he returned the city of Calco and the province of Aculuacan to the deceased leader's brother, don Fernando (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 128). In most instances he excluded the indigenous populations altogether, except as laborers destined to be doled out to newly minted landowning Christian Spaniards (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 205).

³⁰⁷ He repeats this idea at the start of his fifth letter, describing how even though he was wounded, he felt that he needed to be engaged in some task in the name of the Emperor, and so he left Tenochtitlán on 12 October 1524, taking with him horsemen, servants, fighting men, and the leaders of Tenochtitlán (Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 237).

Cortés describes horses and the New World cities and regions in a way that reflects the hunting manuals so popular in his time. Horses were vital in both hunting and war, and his four letters are overflowing with succinct descriptions of them being used and qualified in many of the ways that the hunting manuals described them. His representations of the capture, unmaking, and remaking of cities is like descriptions of hunting quarry animals, particularly the prized hart, in the same kinds of manuals. His representations of New World animals are slightly different, and focusing on the quarry aspect of the hunt through the capture, containment, unmaking, and remaking of their bodies. The commodification of animal bodies is certainly not unique to Cortés, but his descriptions are unique in that their inclusions not only indicate how Cortés viewed the natural New World, but also show us his perception of the world through a lens of objectification.

Analysis of Cortés' Representations of New World Animals

Cortés commodifies New World animals in limited ways; he includes anecdotes about hunting wild animals, about the fencing-in of animals, and the use of animals as “unmade” or processed objects. These descriptions give his letters a further sense of the capture, control, display, and sale of the New World through the representation of animal bodies.

Cortés only mentions direct hunting three times, and all those instances occur in the fifth letter.³⁰⁸ Likely this is because he is given, trades for, and/or steals food from the

³⁰⁸ Cortés does note that the Spanish, when hungry enough, will fish for themselves. He specifically points out in the fifth letter that they come across a river that has a multitude of shad and none escape their nets (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 264). He also tells us that when he comes across a group of Spaniards that Gil González de Ávila had abandoned, they are in the midst of fishing (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 270). Fish

locals during his time in Central and Coastal Mexico. In the fifth letter, he is gifted food from time to time, and usually from a chieftain who has already run into Christians before Cortés arrives. This direct gifting is a relatively rare occurrence.³⁰⁹ In contrast, the first hunting event occurs when the Spaniards finally come across land that is not marshy,

...torné a salir a unos muy hermosos llanos, y en saliendo a ellos envié muy delante ciertos de caballo y algunos peones...y en estos llanos se hallaron muchos gamos y alanceamos a caballo dieciocho de ellos, y con el sol y con haber muchos días que los caballos no corrían, porque nunca habíamos tenido tierra para ello, sino montes, murieron dos caballos, y muchos estuvieron en harto peligro. Hecha nuestra montería, seguimos el camino adelante...³¹⁰

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 263-264)

are believed to be common property and, as they are caught by commoners, there is nothing noble about catching them (Almond 105). Fishing is included in other types of manuals, but not in hunting manuals, as it is not considered an aristocratic activity (Almond 92). It is, rather, a very devalued form of hunting animals and there are no known texts from the medieval period in which fishing techniques are described in the same manner as hunting techniques (Van Den Abeele 33). Cortés also mentions at one point that some Spaniards, shipwrecked on a small island near Mexico “maintained themselves with many seals”, which I understand to mean that they hunted them (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 208). However, as these animals live in the sea, it is unclear how Cortés perceived them. He may have believed them to be fish, as it was common for all sea life to be classified as fish in natural histories and encyclopedias from both Antiquity and the Middle Ages. I include these details about fishing as a foil to what is considered an aristocratic hunt.

³⁰⁹ For example, a local lord near the sea in present-day southern Mexico is been converted to Christianity by one of Cortés men who he had sent out on expedition after the fall of Tenochtitlán in 1521 (probably Gil González). This lord is pleased by what he has heard about Cortés’ conquests, and orders poultry and honey be given to the Spaniards (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 263). In another instance, envoys from larger towns (Papayeca and Chapagua, specifically) send them corn, fruit, and birds as gifts (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 290).

³¹⁰ “...I turned to go out to some beautiful plains and, in leaving for them, I sent ahead some horsemen and some foot soldiers...and in these plains were found many fallow deer and we, on horseback, speared eighteen of them, and with the sun and it having been many days since the horses last ran (because we had no land for it, but mountains), two horses died and many were in danger. Thus, we finished hunting and we followed the path forward...”

A little further on, they kill another seven deer on a plain and eat them (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 264-265). In the same section of that letter, he also notes that, after sending out scouts with indigenous hunters, they return bearing a dead lion and some iguanas (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 264).

Hunting for food is a logical enough occurrence when humans are on the move and have no time or ability to cultivate or harvest the land.³¹¹ The fact that Cortés only mentions this direct hunting these three times and not until the final letter is relatively telling in that the demands of his warmongering in Tierra Firme are making hunting a necessity rather than a pleasure activity. Richard Almond tells us that different classes of medieval society approached hunting differently, and their techniques were indicative of their class (5). Cortés is still on horseback, he is still hunting for deer, and he is still a noble warrior, but he is no longer hunting for pleasure. Alfonso XI is very clear when he writes that noble hunters and their dogs³¹² only hunted for the pleasure of doing so, which made the hunt honorable, as hunting out of hunger, in his opinion, made the hunt less than honorable³¹³ (2). Don Juan Manuel also notes that people may hunt, but that it must be done with elegance and art in order to be considered noble (12). Cortés' three descriptions, two in which the men hunt on horseback, and one in which the men are

³¹¹ This is a good moment to point out that Cortés and other conquistadores usually travelled with livestock, including pigs, cows, horses, and sometimes sheep. These animals were usually guarded and herded by captured or hired indigenous people who travelled with the expeditions with the animals in tow. The animals were not eaten regularly, but allowed to breed and increase in number so that if the need arose, some could be eaten to prevent starvation (Crosby Jr. 77).

³¹² Bloodhounds and mastiffs were the preferred hunting dogs, and they were on par with the horse in terms of hunting. They were necessary tools and were viewed as an extension of the nobleman. In fact, the breed of the dog was generally more important than the breed of the hunting horse (Almond 56-58).

³¹³ Almond indicates that the ideal of hunting for sport rather than for food is derived from the upper-class concept that the poor trap and catch food out of hunger, while the nobles only hunt for sport. Everyday meat was supplied by the huntsman working in service of the nobles (Almond 18).

dependent on non-nobles for food, indicate that, as the long journey through southern Mexico wears on, the demands of the body grow more important than social status.

Social status, however, was linked to the ability of European landholders to “fence-in” wild game. Fencing-in periods for animals, which allowed them to propagate undisturbed, was not only a tactic used by farmers of domestic beasts.³¹⁴ Noble hunters regularly gave their quarry a “fence month”, or a free period in which they were not hunted and allowed to repopulate (Almond 85). Each period differed based on the type of animal and the growth of their young, but generally the periods would last a few months. Interestingly, the hunting manuals do not record the exact fencing-in period, but rather the period when they were not fenced-in. For example, from May to mid-September red deer stag were hunted, but not females, and all wolves were open game from Christmas to the first day of Spring, unless they were a specific nuisance³¹⁵ (Almond 87). Interestingly, these lands were either enclosed by fences to keep humans out, or, if not physically enclosed, there was a cultural barrier that nobles respected in order to allow quarry animals to breed. Both physical and cultural boundaries proved effective for Cortés in the “fencing-in” of the New World and its fauna.

Cortés is almost in awe of the indigenous fencing-in tactics. In the city of Iztapalapa, he describes a large orchard and garden in the middle of which is a large

³¹⁴ While it was common to enclose animals in domestic medieval farming, both for the protection and the maintenance of the animals, these animals were all domesticated and were generally either always fenced in or watched over by a shepherd during favorable seasons (Salisbury 10). Cortés really does not specify which kind of animals he wants to fence in, and an argument for both domestic and wild animals could be made. In this section I choose to focus on his interest in fencing in animals in general, but I do note that Cortés did not like farming and this is one reason why he left Cuba to find his fortune in Mexico.

³¹⁵ According to Almond, as hunters identified with many of their quarry, and that “beasts of venery” were, in fact, considered noble extensions of the hunter, this fencing-in period was considered a gentleman’s courtesy, allowing the hunter to demonstrate his good manners and behavior towards his prey (Almond 88).

water tank full of many fish and waterfowl, such as mallard ducks, which are so numerous that they cover nearly all the water on the surface of the tanks³¹⁶ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 58). In the province of Malinaltebeque, Cortés asks Montezuma to build an estate for Carlos V that includes cultivating beans and corn, building four houses, and the construction of “...un estanque de agua y en él pusieron quinientos patos, que acá tienen en mucho, porque se aprovechan de la pluma de ellos y los pelan cada año y hacen sus ropas con ella y pusieron hasta mil quinientas gallinas...”³¹⁷ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 66).

His descriptions of the fencing-in of animals near Tenochtitlán are detailed, and he is clearly impressed by the multitude of animals that are fenced-in, as well as the amount of manpower to care for them.³¹⁸ He writes,

En esta casa tenia diez estanques de agua, donde tenia todos los linajes de aves de agua que en estas partes se hallan, que son muchos y diversos, todas domesticas; y para las aves que se crían en la mar, eran los estaques de agua salada, y para los de ríos,

³¹⁶ While it is true that most waterfowl (swans, for example, were an exception) were not considered noble, Cortés is, nevertheless, in awe of the totality and efficiency of all the animal enclosures. His detailed description and detailed inclusion of them indicate that they held his interest (he does not spend much time describing living indigenous New World fauna, in general), and, upon the destruction of Tenochtitlán, he finds the destruction of the enclosures and the loss of the animals tragic (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 58, 159).

³¹⁷ “...a pond of water in which they put five hundred ducks, which they have a lot of here, because they [the Mexica] take advantage of their feathers and pluck them yearly to make their clothes with them, and [also] they managed to put in fifteen hundred hens...”

³¹⁸ It can be argued that enclosing waterfowl is not the same as the European concept of *fencing-in*. I argue that, according to Almond, fencing-in really only implies that boundaries are set between humans and animals, often physical and psychological, and the nobleman does not hunt animals at that time out of respect for the animals’ need to breed and raise its young (Almond 87). Many different kinds of animals in Western Europe were fenced-in and allowed to propagate, including the less noble animals, such as wolves and rabbits (Almond 88).

lagunas de agua dulce, la cual agua vaciaban de cierto a cierto tiempo, por la limpieza, y la tornaban a henchir por sus caños, y a cada género de aves se daba aquel mantenimiento que era propio a su natural y con que ellas en el campo se mantenían. De forma que a las que comían pescado, se lo daban; y las que gusanos, gusanos; y a las que maíz, maíz; y a las que otras semillas más menudas, por el consiguiente se las daban... Había para tener cargo de más aves trescientos hombres... Había otros hombres que solamente entendían en curar las aves que adolecían.³¹⁹

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 78)

Just beyond the bird tanks and houses is a zoo of sorts, in which Cortés marvels over the various quadrupeds that live in cages there. He noted that there are cages filled with a multitude of lions, tigers, wolves, vixens, and cats of all kinds, and these all eat chickens and are cared for by three hundred men (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 79). Cortés' interest in these animals links him not only to the noble custom of hunting, but it also shows his interest in physical control of animal bodies and territory through enclosures.

Representations of control can be found in Cortés' descriptions of the raptors and hunting birds that were kept in Montezuma's aviary:

³¹⁹ "In the house there were ten ponds (tanks) where they had all the types of waterfowl found in these parts, which are many and diverse, and all domesticated; and for the seabirds, there were saltwater ponds, and for river birds, there were freshwater lagunas, from which the water was emptied from time to time for cleaning, and refilled with [water from] the pipes, and each kind of bird was given the maintenance that was proper to its natural way of maintenance [how it would care for itself in the wild]. Those that ate fish were given it, and those that ate worms, worms, and those that ate corn, corn, and those that ate small seeds were given that... There were three hundred men to take care of the birds... There were other men who only practiced caring for the birds as they grew older."

...y en cada una de estas casas había un ave de rapiña; comenzado de cernícalo hasta águila, todas cuantas se hallan en España, y muchas más raleas que allá no se han visto. Y de cada una de estas raleas había mucha cantidad y en lo cubierto de cada una de estas casas había un palo como alcandra y otro fuera debajo de la red, que en el uno estaban de noche y cuando llovía y en el otro se podían salir al sol y al aire a curarse. Y todas estas aves daban [79] todos los días de comer gallinas y no otro mantenimiento.³²⁰

(Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 78-79)

Caring for the raptors was considered essential to the art of the hunt. Alfonso XI believes hunting with raptors to be less noble than hunting on horseback, as the prey is smaller, less noble, and less worthy (3). However, Don Juan Manuel indicates that the birds themselves, like the horses and big quarry, are also noble animals and ranks them in a hierarchical order that corresponds to their cost, their size, and the size and type of prey that they can kill (15). Caring for them is equally important and Don Juan Manuel dedicates ten of the twelve chapters of his *Libro de la caza* to explain the raptors' worth, their abilities, their care, and even what to feed them for breakfast. It is unsurprising, then, that Cortés dedicates a page to the care of New World raptors (or what he

³²⁰ "...and in each of these houses there was a bird of prey, starting from kestrel to eagle, all of which are found in Spain, and many other breeds which have not been seen there [in Spain]. And of each of these breeds there were a lot [of birds], and in the cover of each one of these houses there was a stick, like a perch, and another outside under the net, so that at night or when it rained they could use one, and when they wanted to go out into the sun or go out in the air be dressed [used for hunting]. And all these birds were given chickens to eat every day and no other upkeep."

considered raptors), as they were noble, expensive creatures who were part of the European chivalric order.³²¹

Lands that have potential for raising animals are also of interest to Cortés. In the city of Churultecal, he describes the lands as uncultivated, although there is accessible water in which waterfowl can be raised (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 53). Later, in his fifth letter, he notes that the town of Iztapan has a beautiful river along which are very good grazing lands (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 247). Towards the end of the fifth letter, he notes that he and his men travel through an excellent and abundant land in which one might “...criar en ella todo género de ganado...”³²² (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 295). Land is also of concern to the writers of the hunting manuals. While fenced-in land is generally left fallow, those hunting lands are clearly detailed in the manuals, demonstrating their importance to the noble hunters. Don Juan Manuel spends the entire final chapter of his *Libro de la caza* discussing the lands in which it is best to hunt with raptors, clearly explaining why a place is good or bad for the hunt. For example, he notes that the region of Murcia is not good for hunting on horseback due to the difficult landscape, but it is an excellent place to hunt by raptor for rabbits (86). Alfonso XI, in his *Libro de la montería*, similarly notes the qualities of different landscapes and the animals that are found there. A good representation is his description of Mount Locovin, where he states that it is good for bear-hunting all year round, and then he describes his own

³²¹ Sadly, while laying siege to Tenochtitlán, Cortés relates in his third letter that he willfully, yet regretfully, burned down all the large animal houses in the plaza and, with them, all these fenced-in animals. He believes that it was a necessary evil to help root out the enduring spirit of the Mexica and give the indigenous people a psychological shock, which, in part, he accomplished (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 159).

³²² “... raise every type of herd...”

experience hunting a bear there (295). As descriptions of landscapes are not uncommon in hunting manuals, it is to be expected that Cortés, a nobleman looking to conquer in the name of his Emperor, would also include descriptions of landscapes fit for animals that would, in part, be in service of the Emperor.

Fencing-in of landscapes is just one way to control animal bodies. In another, more literal type of control, Cortés often describes animals in their unmade forms, either as objects for consumption (living and dead), or as unmade animals remade into other objects, such as jewelry.³²³ Cortés, as a conqueror and a former *vecino*,³²⁴ was looking for symbols of sustainability, such as meat and wealth, which included the materials provided by the commodification of animal bodies, such as feathers and leather. Early on in his invasion, he compares the city of Tlaxcala to Granada³²⁵, describing it as bigger and better than its Peninsular counterpart, and better supplied with “...cosas de la tierra, que es de pan, de aves, caza, pescado de ríos...”³²⁶ and the market sells all kind of animal products, including decorative jewelry made of feathers (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 47).

Cortés’ description of the marketplace of Tenochtitlán is highly detailed. Although it was the market of the largest city in the region, Cortés describes it simply, in terms of what one might purchase there. This included,

...todos los géneros de mercaderías que en todas las tierras se hallan, así de mantenimientos como de vituallas, joyas de oro y de

³²³ Cortés includes brief information about finding pearls but it does not seem that this is his main interest. In fact, he points out where the pearls are known to be found (for example, Tututepeque), but does not seem interested in going to investigate (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 115, 201).

³²⁴ Landowner, neighbor, citizen

³²⁵ Spanish conquistadors regularly compared New World cities to Old World counterparts, to not only give an estimation of their size and worth, but also to emphasize their own accomplishments as conquerors.

³²⁶ “...things from the earth, such as bread, and birds, game, and fresh-water fish...”

plata...de huesos, de conchas, de caracoles y de plumas...Hay calle de caza donde vende todos los linajes de aves que hay en la tierra, así como gallinas, perdices, codornices, lavancos, dorales, zarcetas, tórtolas, palomas, pajaritos en cañuela, papagayos, búharos, águilas, halcones, gavilanes y cernícalos; y de algunas de estas aves de rapina, venden los cueros con su pluma y cabezas y pico y uñas...Venden conejos, liebres, venados, y perros pequeños, que crían para comer, castrados...Venden miel de abejas y cera...Venden cueros de venado con pelo y sin él; tenidos, blancos y de diversas colores...Venden pasteles de aves y empanadas de pescado. Venden mucho pescado fresco y salado, crudo y guisado. Venden huevos de gallinas y de ánsares, y de todas las otras aves que he dicho, en gran cantidad; venden tortillas de huevos hechas.³²⁷ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 73-74)

Both above descriptions show the control that humans had over animal bodies, both living and dead, and humankind's ultimate unmaking of those bodies and their remaking into other products.

³²⁷ "...all types of merchandise that are found in all the lands, as well as things like victuals, jewelry of gold and silver...of bones, shells, snails, and feathers...There is a street in which game of all kinds is sold, all types of land birds, as well as chickens, partridges, quails, mallards, flycatchers, widgeons, turtledoves, pigeons, cane birds, parrots, eagles, and eagle owls, falcons, sparrow hawks, and kestrels; and they sell the skins of these birds of prey with their feathers, heads, beaks, and claws...they sell rabbits, hares, deer, and small dogs, which they breed to eat, [all] neutered...They sell honey from bees and wax...They sell deer hides with and without hair, dyed white or diverse colors...They sell bird cakes and fish patties. They sell a lot of fish, fresh, salted, raw, and stewed. They sell chicken and duck eggs, and [eggs] from all the other birds I described, in great quantity; they sell tortillas made of cooked eggs."

Buying New World animal products in the marketplace was not the only way for the Spanish to acquire them. Cortés regularly tells his audience that the indigenous populations give the invaders gifts of living and remade animals. For example, they give gifts of honey to the Spanish, which is an animal product that Cortés makes note of several times, particularly while traveling south to Honduras in his fifth letter, and Cortés describes the city of Acalan as being abundant in honey³²⁸ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 250; 257). Clearly, the sweet animal product was important enough to mention several times.

More than once Montezuma's men try to buy Cortés off with gold, clothes, bread, chocolate, and turkeys (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 53, 61, 253). The Spaniards often receive decorative feathers, feathered bedclothes, and in one instance, Cortés receives what he believes to be a tiger skin³²⁹ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 60, 71, 67). When he finally meets Montezuma, Cortés is given two necklaces that he describes as, "...dos collares de camarones envueltos en un paño, que eran hechos de huesos de caracoles colorados, que ellos tienen en mucho y de cada collar colgaban ocho camarones de oro de

³²⁸ Throughout the fifth letter, Cortés notes that many of the towns are abandoned but that there are often still supplies left that the Spanish take, such as honey, poultry, corn, and beans. In a rather indirect way, Cortés spends most of the trip to Honduras, as described in his fifth letter, "hunting down" food supplies as his own were constantly dwindling, including the pigs that he had brought along and had been moving with him across the land (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 269). He has few options but to take the food from the indigenous people who run away from the Spaniards (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 259). He does note the general types of food animals that he comes across, including chickens, doves, partridges, pheasants, and even dogs that are raised for food (which he finds delicious) (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 275, 278). Ironically, he does not mention God when taking these food items, but he does believe that God sent him a boat filled with horses, pigs, salted meat, and bread when he happens across one coming from the Caribbean Islands and is able to purchase it (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 272-273). It seems the familiar foods and animals that relate to the Old World are more worthy of thanks than the local ones.

³²⁹ Cortés also receives a wooden blowgun from Montezuma that is decorated in bird, animal, and plant motifs. While not necessarily an animal product, it is interesting to point out that, like Europeans, the indigenous people used the natural world to decorate items of utility (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 71).

mucha perfección...”³³⁰ (Cortés, *Cartas de relación* 60). While the gold was probably the most attractive aspect of the necklace to Cortés, his description about the necklaces’ shape are detailed, indicating to his readers that he admires the animal motifs and the craftsmanship that went into creating them.

While there are few direct references to hunting, and Cortés’ indirect references are scattered throughout long descriptions of battle, travel, and hardship, he does describe New World animals in ways that are relatable to animal descriptions in hunting manuals. His precise and blunt animal descriptions have clearly not been influenced by the intellectual sciences or the allegorical animal literature present in his lifetime. There remains a clear connection between war and hunting and his depictions of indigenous captured and unmade animal bodies. Cortés’ need to hunt for survival renders animal flesh into food, transforming a noble sport into a survivalist skill. His interest in the enclosure of animals, both wild and domestic, indicate a keen interest in controlling the animal bodies and the environment of Tierra Firme. His descriptions of the capture, unmaking, and remaking of indigenous animal bodies show the aftermath of the hunt, and emulate his designs to capture, unmake, and remake the New World in the Spanish image.

Cortés and Animal Representation

Hernán Cortés’ interest in the New World was to hunt, capture, control, reform it into a Spanish colony and thereby make his fortune. His representation of indigenous fauna is limited to descriptions of their abundance, their capture, their unmaking, and

³³⁰ “...two necklaces of shrimp wrapped in a cloth, which were made of the bones of colored snails, of which they have a lot, and from each necklace hung eight golden shrimp of great perfection...”

their remaking. His relationship to animals is one of pure commodification. Not only did he view the territory and the people as fair game to be hunted down and exploited, his representation of animals as objects to be used and commodified shows that this same attitude applied to all species in Tierra Firme, both imported and indigenous (Huggan and Tiffin 9). Humankind's desire to capture and tame nature was already established in noble European culture by the sixteenth-century: the Renaissance influenced the rise of pleasure gardens and the control of nature through ornamental shapes and planting designs, personal menageries grew into zoos in which nobles entertained themselves by viewing chained exotic species and trained dancing beasts, and wild animals were allowed "fencing-in" periods to breed and create more animals for noble pleasure hunts (Huggan and Tiffin 36). Cortés' representation of animals as goods to be exploited was not a new representation of animals among the upper classes, and probably the same sentiment extended to the lower classes as well. There is no information on how the Crown viewed the animals in these territories, as either objects to exploit or to protect, and there were no animal advocates at the time as there were for indigenous people, such as Bartolomé de las Casas. As Cortés was a member of the noble classes, there is nothing to say that his perspective and representation of animals was any different than that of other European hidalgos and Europeans.

Significantly, it was not only lands and people that Cortés conquered and forced to submit to the Spanish invasion; animals present and native to the New World also experienced the impact and burden of the Spanish conquest. The European domesticated livestock, and predatory animals such as cats, rats, and even dogs, thrived in all but the

most extreme climates of the New World and directly competed for resources with indigenous fauna and people (Crosby Jr. 75, 95, 97, 99). Huggan and Tiffin state that this ecological imperialism is still felt today in the destruction of the environment for the purposes of animal husbandry (3). Crosby Jr. concludes that colonial cattle and horse-raising practices were one of the reasons, along with enslavement, murder, and illness, that the indigenous people died en masse, and these practice are the source of much of the environmental issues and loss of native fauna that Mexico is still feeling today (99). Cortés does not comment on the impact that these animals had on the environment or the indigenous living creatures; he only imparts information about what exists, not what is not or ins no longer present. He notes in his letters that sometimes these Old World animals were useful and at other times not, such as the horse, but he only mentions them in terms of conquest and not in terms of their impact on the land, people, and animals that he is capturing. Much like the noble hunter in the medieval hunting manual, Cortés' interest in the New World lies in pursuing, conquering, and commodifying the natural elements that exist as his quarry in Tierra Firme. His relationship to animals is one of dominance, whether he depicts himself on the back of a horse, trading for animal products, hunting indigenous animals, or touring indigenous waterfowl tanks and menageries. At the center of all of the animals and animal products that he describes is his own person; his writing dominates and controls animal bodies, hunting them down as he moves from one place to another across Tierra Firme.

In Summation

Cortés' representation of animals as commodified elements of conquest fits largely within the sixteenth-century Spanish imperial narrative. His description of animals as either tools of hunting and war, as hunted quarry, as object to be unmade, or as trapped beasts set aside for the sensory pleasures of their human owners indicates the importance of the hunting manuals to the noble audience who best understood human dominion over wild animals. Cortés' early education was not entirely formal, but as a lower noble he practiced the arts of chivalry and those of war. His descriptions of horses and the capture of cities is indicative of a mind trained in military maneuvers and strategy. His depictions of New World animals in the throes of capture, unmaking, and remaking denote a man whose mind is focused on commodification and, overall, the final reward. He looked at the New World with the eyes of a hunter looking at the greatest quarry known to man at the time, and he pursued it, unmade it, and remade it to suit his needs.

While Cortés' lens focuses on quarry, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo captures the animals of the New World in a variety of ways. Their inclusion in his text was his excellent attempt at a natural history, but his descriptions of fauna waver across various genres, and they ultimately lean towards the commodification of animal bodies. In contrast to Cortés, Fernández de Oviedo's textual representation of animals does not depict animal bodies as mere objects to be hunted and controlled, but he does still represent them as consumable goods via other literary genres. In the next chapter, I analyze the three parts of Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia natural y general de las Indias*,

and determine the influence that various types of animal literature had on the outcome of the animal descriptions found in his work.

Chapter Four

Beyond Natural History: Animal Descriptions in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés' *Historia general y natural de las Indias*

In his three-part *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo describes the known natural world and political events of the New World in terms that were understandable for the average sixteenth-century reader, highlighted by eyewitness authority and references to Classical Greek and Roman authors. The text, as indicated in the title, is not solely a natural history, but also a general one (i.e. the history of human activities), and Fernández de Oviedo combines descriptions of both historical events and nature to show the scope of what the Spanish had explored and were exploiting in their colonies. In this sense, Fernández de Oviedo's animal descriptions are not pure animal descriptions, but are ones that rely on both his and other's opinions, as well as the animal's relationship to humankind. The three parts of the *Historia* weave together the story of Spanish domination over geography, local human populations, and nature itself. Within the three parts, Fernández de Oviedo devotes several books³³¹ to the flora and fauna of the New World known at the time.³³² The animal descriptions from the four animal books are copious, highly detailed, and well-organized, and they have been well-studied by scholars, such as Antonelli Gerbi, Miguel Asúa, and Roger French. The

³³¹ Books 12-15 from part one (Volume 1).

³³² Fernández de Oviedo wrote the text throughout the mid-sixteenth century, editing and adding where necessary and publishing the first part during his lifetime. The first section of the second part was published just before his death. The remainder of the second part and the third part, while incomplete, were published posthumously. This is explained in greater detail later in this chapter.

material found in these chapters is incredibly relevant to animal studies today, particularly in connection with Critical Animal Studies. While I devote some pages of this chapter to defining some of the key aspects of the natural history genre found in Books Twelve-Fifteen of the first part, the main focus of my analysis in this chapter are Fernández de Oviedo's animal descriptions that fall outside of those animal books.³³³

As these “other” animal descriptions are distributed throughout the four volumes, scholars have largely ignored them, choosing to focus instead on those books devoted to the natural world that are found in the first part. By analyzing these “other” descriptions, I identify the other types of literature that potentially influenced Fernández de Oviedo during the time in which he was writing the *Historia*. While Fernández de Oviedo himself called his work a general and natural history, I find that the animal descriptions that he did not include in Books Twelve to Fifteen³³⁴ are often contextualized within the

³³³ There have been several analyses of the animal books that have been incorporated into the larger body of animal literature, among them Asúa and French's *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America* (2005), Salisbury's *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (2011), Bruce Boehrer's introduction to the fundamental *A Cultural Study of Animals in the Renaissance* (2007), and Francescato's *Bestiarios y otras jaulas* (1977). While I do not discredit the importance of Fernández de Oviedo's animal books, in the context of this paper, and in the hopes of furthering scholarship, my general focus is on the various types of literature that influenced Fernández de Oviedo's animal descriptions. As the author himself entitled his texts as a natural and general history, and notes that Books Twelve-Fifteen are devoted to natural history, I find it relevant to examine his other animal descriptions more in-depth, those not specifically labelled “natural history,” to discover other literary influences on their descriptive form.

³³⁴ The *Historia* is structured in three parts, consisting of fifty total (and incomplete) books, and each book is further divided into a varying number of chapters. The first nineteen books are included in the first part, and are an expansion of Fernández de Oviedo's original text about the flora, fauna, and people of the New World, his *Sumario de la natural historia de las Indias* (1525). The second part continues the general history of the Spanish invasion, although the early parts, from Columbus through the historical events of 1525 in the Caribbean and on Tierra-Firma. The third part, while incomplete, outlines other historical aspects of the conquest, such as Magellan's voyage around the world, and other noteworthy shipwrecks. The three parts were later published in four volumes by the Real Academia de la Historia, edited by Don José Amador de los Ríos, between 1851 and 1855. Books 12-15 of the first part focus on animal life, starting with land animals found in the New World (Book Twelve), sea animals (Book Thirteen), birds (Book Fourteen), and insects (Book Fifteen). The primary texts that I use of *Historia general y natural de las Indias* are the edited and annotated volumes of José Amador de los Ríos.³³⁴ For my analysis, I use the

narrative of the general history but, at the same time, often demonstrate influences from other forms of animal literature. In this chapter, I argue that Fernández de Oviedo's texts show key elements that relate to natural history and to other types of available animal literature found in Europe during the author's lifetime that have been previously analyzed in this dissertation, namely, the bestiary, the paradoxography, and the medieval hunting manual. Through my analysis, I have come to understand that Fernández de Oviedo was not only continuing these literary traditions within his text, but he was also remarking upon the dominant feature of conquest, namely the commodification of the New World.

In order to better understand how Fernández de Oviedo's overall animal descriptions, I give an overview of Fernández de Oviedo's education and biographical background, including his possible exposure to genres and types of animal literature, as well as the background of the production of his texts. I argue that Fernández de Oviedo's advanced education and observational experience affected those animal descriptions that he left out of those specified books on fauna found in Part One. I show how one can find other literary animal genres that appear within those other books. I support my literary analysis of Fernández de Oviedo's other animal descriptions found in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by contrasting and comparing them with those natural histories of Pliny and Aristotle, as well as his own natural historical sections, bestiaries, paradoxographies, and medieval hunting manuals.

Biography

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés was born in Madrid in August of 1478, four years into the reign Isabel I of Castile (Chalupa 188). His parents, Miguel de Sobrepeña and Juana de Fernández de Oviedo, were of Asturian and noble ancestry (Myers and Scott 12). In 1488, he was made a page to the nephew of King Ferdinand, the duke of Villahermosa, but three years later he was placed in service to the Crown Prince Juan, as his personal chamber helper.³³⁵ Five years later, in 1496, he was made Keeper of the Chamber Keys of Prince Juan until the heir's untimely death the following year (Chalupa 188). During his time serving the royal family, he witnessed many Spanish triumphs, including the fall of Granada and Columbus's dealings with the Catholic Monarchs (Myers and Scott 13). His time as a youth at court was quite educational; as chamber helper to the young prince, Fernández de Oviedo was present when the heir studied under such tutors as Peter Martyr, the then-royal chronicler, and Lucio Marineo Siculo, also a chronicler (Stuart 221; Gerbi 238). In this manner, he received an informal, but thorough, education, learning some Latin, history, music and the Classics. It was in this time that Fernández de Oviedo was exposed to Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* (Chalupa 188). After Prince Juan's death in 1497, Fernández de Oviedo went to Italy to serve some noble households there, among whom were the Duke of Milan, Isabella

³³⁵ Fernández de Oviedo met Christopher Columbus a few times at court and worked with his sons as pages to the prince (Gerbi 136-137). In the first part of the *Historia* (Book Nine, Prohemio; Volume 1), he states that he met Columbus many times, along with his brother, Bartolomé Columbus, the navigator Vincente Yáñez Pinzón, and other sailors from Columbus's first voyage (1: 330). Fernández de Oviedo was always an enthusiast of Columbus and used positive descriptions of him in the *Historia*. (Gerbi 154-155).

d'Este of Mantua, and the Borgia family (Myers and Scott 13). While in Italy he studied and read extensively, and there he was influenced by Italian humanism (Chalupa 189).

In 1500, he went to Rome with the exiled niece of King Ferdinand of Spain, Juana, Queen consort of Naples, and, after spending time with the royal family in Sicily, he returned with her to Spain in 1502 (Myers and Scott 13). Upon his return, he was assigned by King Ferdinand to serve the Duke of Calabria.³³⁶ This was, apparently, not a time-consuming position, as he also served as a notary public, as a notary to the Inquisition, and worked a variety of odd jobs that required writing skills (Chalupa 189; Myers and Scott 14). Around 1505, King Ferdinand asked Fernández de Oviedo to write a history of the Spanish royal family, which took him nearly three decades to complete³³⁷ (Myers and Scott 14). In 1512, he was no longer serving the Duke of Calabria (Myers and Scott 14). There is not much known about what Fernández de Oviedo was doing during in Spain from 1502-1512, but Gerbi notes that he spent much of that time reading and writing about the nobles of Europe (153). While he did not produce much written work during this period, his presence at court later aided him in his pursuits of royal appointments.

³³⁶ The duke, Ferdinand of Aragon, was a prisoner of the Spanish from 1502 – 1523 (Gerbi 147-150). Fernández de Oviedo had a great respect and admiration for the duke, and dedicated his *Claribalte* to Don Ferdinand, who allowed Fernández de Oviedo to access and study from his vast library (Gerbi 152).

³³⁷ *Catalogo real de Castilla, y de todos los Reyes de las Españas e de Napoles y Çecilia, e de los Reyes y señores de las casas de Francia, Austria, Holanda y Borgoña: de donde proceden los quatro abolorios de la Cesárea Magestad del Emperador don Carlos, nuestro señor: Con relación de todos los Emperadores y Summos Pontifices que han subcedido desde Julio Çesar, que fue el primero Emperador, y desde Apóstol Sanct Pedro, que fue el primero Papa, hasta esta año de Christo de MDXXXII* (1535, “Royal Catalogue of Castilla, and of All the Kings of Spain, Naples and Sicily, and All Kings’ and Lords’ Houses in France, Austria, the Netherlands, and Burgundy: From Where Our Caesarean Lord Your Majesty the Emperor Don Charles’ Four Ancestries Come: Naming All the Emperors and Supreme Pontiffs Who Have Succeeded from Julius Caesar, the First Emperor, and from Saint Peter the Apostle, the First Pope, to This Year of Christ MDXXIII”)

Fernández de Oviedo's time at court serving Prince Juan allowed him to learn the nuances and customs of courtly life, which helped him later as a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. He was able to compose many different texts, including a treatise on heraldry³³⁸ and a book about the management of Prince Juan's royal household³³⁹ (Chalupa 188). His time in Italy was equally influential on his later writing; he claimed to have met many Renaissance artists, including Leonardo da Vinci,³⁴⁰ the humanist author Giovanni Pontano, and the poet Jacob Sannazzaro.³⁴¹ He was exposed to numerous Italian and Roman authors, including Ovid, Virgil, Petrarch, Dante, Caesar, and Cicero (Myers and Scott 13-14). He read the fifteenth-century humanist works of Francesco Filelfo, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Leonardo Aretino, and Saint Antoninus of Florence³⁴² (Gerbi 161-162). These two periods of his life enabled him to negotiate life and position at court and to have a larger intellectual understanding of the world.

³³⁸ *Libro de blasón: Tractado general de todas las armas e diferencias dellas, e de los escudos e diferencias que en ellas hay, e de la orden que se debe guardar en las dichas armas, para que sean ciertas no falsas, e de los colores e metales que hay en armería, e de las reglas e circunstancias a ese efecto conviniertes* (circa 1551, "Book of the Coat of Arms: General Treatise of All the Arms and Their Differences and of All the Shields and Their Differences, and of the Order That Such Arms Must Have to be True and Not False, and the Armory's Colors and Metals, and the Appropriate Rules and Circumstances")

³³⁹ *Libro de la camara real del principe don Juan e officios de su casa e servicio ordinario, compuest por Gonçalo Fernandez de Oviedo* (1546, "Book of Prince John's Royal Chamber, the Trades and Ordinary Services of His House, Composed by Gonçalo Fernandez de Oviedo")

³⁴⁰ He makes this claim in the Preface to Book Ten (1:362).

³⁴¹ Fernández de Oviedo's descriptions of the New World were equally influential to the Italians. He kept in touch with people he knew in Venice, including Giovanni Battista Ramusio, who inserted a paraphrased version of Fernández de Oviedo's *Sumario* in his *Venetian History*, and Cardinal Bembo, who summarized the *Sumario* and called it *History of the New World Discovered by the Portuguese* (1556). Ramusio also created a map of the New World based on Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia* in which the world was divided into two hemispheres for the first time (Gerbi 165-167).

³⁴² Aretino wrote a universal chronicle, *El Aguila volante*, that Gerbi believes influenced Fernández de Oviedo's writing style and the construction of some of his works. Saint Antoninus, a universal historian, provided Fernández de Oviedo with descriptions of Eastern peoples which influenced his descriptions of indigenous American populations (Gerbi 162).

Upon his return to Spain, he married his first wife, Margarita de Vergara, who died in childbirth several years later.³⁴³ By 1509, he was married to Isabel de Aguilar and had a son, Francisco González de Valdés. Isabel gave him several more children, but all died in Tierra Firme by 1536³⁴⁴ (Myers and Scott 14-15, 17). He left for the New World on the expedition led by Pedrarias Dávila in 1514 after having been named *veedor* and *escribano general*³⁴⁵ for Tierra Firme (the western continental region of the Caribbean). This would be the first of six round-trip transatlantic voyages that Fernández de Oviedo made (Gerbi 140). While the expedition led to disastrous deaths of famine and disease among many of the conquistadors, it enabled Fernández de Oviedo to return to Spain in 1519 with documentation of Pedrarias's terrible administration of the Darién colony,³⁴⁶ and to build a name for himself as a capable notary abroad. It was during this first return trip to Spain that Fernández de Oviedo published his only fictional work, *Claribalte*, a chivalric romance that he had written while in the West Indies³⁴⁷ (Myers and Scott 15; Chalupa 189).

³⁴³ In fact, Fernández de Oviedo himself devotes a short chapter (Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Nine) to Margarita de Vergara in which he tells us she died six or seven months after a difficult birth to a still-born son. He makes his deep affection for her very clear (1:230).

³⁴⁴ Fernández de Oviedo later married Catalina de Ribafranca in Santo Domingo after the demise of his family, and together they had a daughter, Juana (Myers and Scott 17). Gerbi notes that her name might have been Catalina de Riva Flechas y Burguillos (143).

³⁴⁵ An inspector of mines and official notary

³⁴⁶ *Relación hecha por Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo de los males causados en Tierra Firme por el gobernadora Pedrarias* (circa 1524, "Account Related by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo of the Bad Deeds Caused by the Governor Pedrarias")

³⁴⁷ *Claribalte: Libro del muy esfoçado y invencible Cavallero dela Fortuna propiamente llamado don claribalte q segu su verdadera interpretaciō quiere decir don Felix o bienaventurado: Nuevemente escrito y venido a noticia dela lengua castellana por medio de gonçalo Fernandez de Ouiedo alias de sobrepeña* (1519, "Claribalte: Book of the Very Valiant and Invincible Knight of Fortune Appropriately Known as Don Claribalte Whose Name According to Its True Translation Means Don Felix of the Blessed and Again Written in Castilian Language by Gonçalo Fernandez de Ouiedo")

After King Ferdinand's death in 1519 and Carlos V's rise to power, Fernández de Oviedo returned to Tierra Firme (1520) and began to write about the New World itself (Myers and Scott 16-17). While Carlos V offered Fernández de Oviedo the governorship of Darién sometime during 1519 and 1520, Fernández de Oviedo declined the position as there were few soldiers to help him maintain power (Myers and Scott 16). Fernández de Oviedo kept his position as *veedor* until 1532 (Myers and Scott 18). In 1530, on another visit to Spain, Charles V appointed Fernández de Oviedo as Royal Chronicler of the Indies upon the suggestion of the Council of the Indies³⁴⁸ and, in 1531, he was also made garrison commander of the fortress at Santo Domingo. Both positions were life-long appointments (Myers and Scott 18). In 1532, Carlos V commanded the officials of the Indies to hand over all the documents about the events and natural world of the Indies to Fernández de Oviedo, and to acquiesce to Fernández de Oviedo's future requests for information³⁴⁹ (Gerbi 120).

In Santo Domingo, he continued to collect eyewitness accounts of the events of the conquest and he organized them into his *Historia*.³⁵⁰ Between 1535 and 1557, Fernández de Oviedo travelled back and forth between Spain and Santo Domingo, printing his publications as time and money allowed, writing about both the New World

³⁴⁸ Pedro Martyr had held this position until his death in 1526.

³⁴⁹ Fernández de Oviedo was also granted the right to have an office and an established library, and he spent much of the next sixteen years there. To better support himself (he was not paid as much for his work as chronicler as he had been as *veedor*), he asked for the right to bodyguards and to a repartimiento (land with forced indigenous laborers) (Myers and Scott 19).

³⁵⁰ Fernández de Oviedo was furnished with a fortress, six soldiers and a gunner in Santo Domingo and, as the city was already in decline when Fernández de Oviedo arrived, and the arrival of ships were few and far between. As such, Fernández de Oviedo was able to interrogate all soldiers, sailors, conquistadors, and merchants who set foot on the island. He spent the time in between confirming accounts and studying the natural world around him (Gerbi 248).

and the lineage of the Spanish crown. Fernández de Oviedo had intended to write a fourth part to the *Historia* but died in 1557 in Valladolid, Spain, before he had the opportunity to begin it (Myers and Scott 20-22).

From 1515 until the time of his death in 1557, Fernández de Oviedo was writing prolifically while working as a crown administrator. While very versatile, his writing moved away from fiction as he pursued works in order to secure himself further royal patronage or funding (Chalupa 189). His knowledge of political, social, and literary history was profound, and he was able to display his education through various genres. Fernández de Oviedo not only produced literature,³⁵¹ but it is thought that he had a vast library, and scholars agree that he had contacts among many learned people who had access to or owned libraries themselves. Myers and Scott note

Although he did not master Latin, he quotes many classical texts in Latin in the *History*, and others were probably based on Italian or Spanish translations or summaries...He had contact with such great Spanish humanists as Hernán Núñez and Antonio Nebrija and, according to some scholars, was trained alongside his masters in various courts, especially that of Don Juan. But Fernández de Oviedo clearly was not a university man and therefore often attempted to compensate for this lack by proving his bookish knowledge. His works reflect a didactic impulse. (25)

³⁵¹ "...three of his nine works were published or partially published in his lifetime, and two were widely translated. Subsequently, all but two have been published, at least in part... Fernández de Oviedo's choice of genres span the gamut from legal depositions and historical narrative to octosyllabic poetic verse and translation" (Myers and Scott 23).

While he never did learn Latin³⁵² or Greek well, he learned a Tuscan dialect, and probably French, which allowed him to access original and translated texts written by the likes of Petrarch, Pliny, Isidore, Solinus, Abulensis, and Boccaccio, as well as the plethora of other voices of authority that he references in his *Historia*.³⁵³ While Fernández de Oviedo's education was well-imbued with the humanism of the day, the animal descriptions found throughout the three parts of the *Historia* demonstrate that a lot of his education and readings were based in medieval thought. As he was a noble and a servant of the royal household, he was exposed to animal materials found in bestiaries, and hunted and/or read hunting manuals while serving Prince Juan. His interest in natural history exposed him, through Aristotle, to the paradoxographical genre. Due to his lack of an education in the trivium and quadrivium, I contend that Fernández de Oviedo was influenced by the medieval literature that was still available in the libraries of the noble households in Spain and Italy, giving him the ability to describe the animals of the New World within the parameters of the literary animal genres available during his lifetime.

The Literary History of the *Historia general y natural de las Indias*

The *Historia* originated in Fernández de Oviedo's work, *Sumario de la natural hystoria delas Indias* in 1526 in Toledo. This text was founded on Fernández de Oviedo's observations and experiences, as well as other eye-witness testimonies, in the New World

³⁵² Fernández de Oviedo was always very annoyed that he never learned Latin well, and many of his contemporaries, such as Fernando Columbus and Las Casas, viewed him as inferior for his ignorance of the language (Gerbi 233). While he was not considered a scholar, Fernández de Oviedo was considered a "learned man", which was enough of a qualification to gain positions at court (Gerbi 234).

³⁵³ In the *Historia*, Fernández de Oviedo mostly references fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian and Spanish humanists, as well as Classical writers and the Bible, but his Greek and Latin quotes, such as those from Aristotle or Livy, were probably gleaned second-hand from Italian sources (Gerbi 156-157).

after his arrival in the Caribbean in 1514. He wrote it from memory³⁵⁴ while visiting Spain as part of his administrative work for the crown, in order to inform the king of the flora, fauna, curiosities, and people found in the new territories (Chalupa 192). The *Sumario*, written at the behest of Carlos V upon Fernández de Oviedo's arrival in Spain in 1523, was very popular and a great success³⁵⁵ (Gerbi 214; 129). It was lauded by Cortés' chronicler, López de Gómera, and was praised for his clear categorization and precise descriptions of plants and animals unknown to Europeans, as well as farming techniques and descriptions of indigenous societies (Gerbi 131). The 1526 version of the *Sumario*, originally constructed of eighty-six chapters, was later revised and expanded into the first part of the *Historia*, which eventually grew into a three-part manuscript containing fifty books and, in the Amador de los Ríos' transcription, more than twenty-four hundred pages.

Fernández de Oviedo oversaw the publication of the first part of the *Historia* in 1535 in Seville, which he later amended in 1547 to include information about the conquest of Peru, entitled *Coronica de las Indias. La historia general de las Indias, agora nuevamente impresa, corregida y emendada. Y con la conquista del Perú*³⁵⁶ (Chalupa 193; Myers and Scott 21). This first part, like the second, contains nineteen books, and the third part contains the final twelve (Chalupa 195). Fernández de Oviedo

³⁵⁴ He had left his notes in the Caribbean and had to write the *Sumario* from memory. It was later used as the basis for the first part of the *Historia*. According to Chalupa, the *Historia* is a re-editing and expansion of the *Sumario* (Chalupa 193).

³⁵⁵ While the *Sumario* was very successful, Fernández de Oviedo had difficulty publishing the *Historia* due to the way he represented the corruption and violent behavior of the Spanish in the New World (Gerbi 130).

³⁵⁶ *Chronicles of the Indies. The General History of the Indies, Now Newly Printed, Corrected and Amended. And with the Conquest of Peru*. This version was published in Salamanca. The 1547 reprint was subsequently translated into French (1555) and Italian (1550-1556) (Gerbi 129).

wrote the second and third parts between 1535 and 1542, but it took until 1556 or 1557 for the King to grant Fernández de Oviedo permission to publish them³⁵⁷ (Myers and Scott 24). While the second part was in the printing process, Fernández de Oviedo died (1557), leading to the publication of only Book Twenty (the first book of the second part) in Valladolid (Chalupa 195).

After Fernández de Oviedo's death, what are presumed to be his original codices were preserved in the Convent of Monserrat in Catalonia, Spain. In late 1563, many other manuscripts, letters, and documents that Fernández de Oviedo had written were given to the Council of the Indies by Andrés Gasco, inquisitor of Seville, who held them in his protection. Later, at the start of the seventeenth century, these documents, along with what were likely Fernández de Oviedo's original codices, were placed in the Casa de Contratación³⁵⁸ in Seville, Spain, for organization and evaluation. In 1629, Antonio de León Pinelo, using them as a source for his *Epítome*, found these documents to be incomplete or unfinished. In 1775, another and near complete manuscript of the *Historia* was found in the Ministry of Grace, Justice, and the Indies (Gerbi 130). In the early nineteenth century, the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid had obtained all the known Fernández de Oviedo documents and manuscripts, which were used for the

³⁵⁷ From 1535 until 1556, Fernández de Oviedo struggled to publish the second part, either due to a fire which burned his manuscripts or to interference from Bartolomé de Las Casas, and/or the reluctance of the crown to endorse a text that criticized the behavior of the Spanish and the Church in the Indies (Gerbi 130-131). Las Casas and Fernández de Oviedo were continually in conflict about how the indigenous populations were to be treated, and their debates usually argued the position of these populations within Christianity and European politics (120-121). Las Casas fought against the repartimiento system, of which Fernández de Oviedo was in favor, and Las Casas did not like Fernández de Oviedo's often negative and disparaging depictions of the indigenous people (Myers and Scott 21).

³⁵⁸ Custom's House

publication of the *Historia* that was completed by Amador de los Ríos in the middle of that century (Gerbi 133). The original documents are still housed in the Royal Academy of History in Spain.

The structure of the three parts is similar to the Classical natural histories of Aristotle and Pliny the Elder. Each part contains a long prologue, which includes such information as the patron, the reason(s) for writing the text, and the genre of the text. The prologues also contain other information that is specific to Fernández de Oviedo, such as the comparison of his work to that of Pliny, his need to justify his role as royal chronicler, and his musings on the events and descriptions included in the books that follow each of the three main prefaces. Each book focuses on a specific theme, such as land animals or the actions of a conquistador. Thirty-nine of the fifty books begin with an individual mini prologue, followed by chapters divided into specific subjects that relate to or expand upon the overarching theme of the book, such as descriptions of a type of animal, a military event, or of a Spanish nobleman's origins. These chapters are usually headed with a short, one- or two-line summary of what information the individual chapter contains. This structure allows Fernández de Oviedo to collect and accumulate details which often lack unity, enabling him to construct a multitude of and connect differing accounts and descriptions of the New World (Rabasa 140-141).

The contents of the three parts vary based on eyewitness reports, first-hand experiences, and the circumstances in which Fernández de Oviedo found himself while writing. The first part (Books One-Nineteen), is a re-editing and expansion of the original

1535 *Sumario*.³⁵⁹ While Fernández de Oviedo focuses on the natural history of the Caribbean region of the Empire, he also includes information of pre-1520 general history as well. His portrayal of the conquest depicts the events in a positive light, glorifying the Spanish while degrading the indigenous peoples (Myers and Scott 20). In the second and third parts, Fernández de Oviedo is drawn away from natural history and turns his lens instead on the history of the conquest from 1520-1549. Fernández de Oviedo uses a variety of writing styles, including narrative and dialogue, and includes his personal drawings as well³⁶⁰ (Chalupa 195). Fernández de Oviedo, unlike many other Spaniards in the New World, was familiar with and had access to the official reports and correspondences of the pilots, merchants, conquerors, and colonizers who had been in the New World. He not only had connections with all the important and pertinent contemporary parties living and working in the colonies, but Fernández de Oviedo also had access to the writings of the earliest documenters, such as Columbus, Cortés, and Vespucci (among others) (Gerbi 125). These documents gave him both information and context to better depict the natural world and the Spanish activities within the New World territories.

The published books of the *Historia* were widely read in both Spanish and in translation. They were quoted extensively in other texts of geography and history, as well as in debates and conversations at court over political and territorial concerns (Gerbi 131). This was exactly as Fernández de Oviedo had intended; while he dedicated these

³⁵⁹ Carlos V specifically asked that information about the historical events of the conquest be added to the original text (Chalupa 195). The information about Peru added to the 1547 amendment to the *Sumario* was included in the second and third parts of the *Historia*.

³⁶⁰ José Rabasa notes that Fernández de Oviedo was trained in art as a child (146).

texts to Charles V and the Council of the Indies, Fernández de Oviedo personally oversaw and paid for its publication so that the general literate public had access to his work (Myers and Scott 20). The text is designed to map-out and legitimize the new territories of the Spanish empire while, at the same time, cementing Fernández de Oviedo's role and fame as Royal Chronicler of the New World. Indeed, his participation in the text as both author and first-person narrator ensured that he constructed his identity within the narrative microcosm, and he also, from his own perspective, reconstructed and developed sixteenth-century Spanish political and social identity.

Ultimately, critics disagree as to what kind of a writer Fernández de Oviedo was; was he a historian, a scientist, an artist, a philosopher, a medieval writer, a renaissance writer? Edmundo O'Gorman finds him to have medieval tendencies because of Fernández de Oviedo's Christian perspective on the events and nature of the New World (Chalupa 195). Others, like Antonello Gerbi, agree, concluding that the science and innovations of the Spanish Renaissance were still heavily dependent upon medieval cultural and religious practices (306). Gerbi also argues that Fernández de Oviedo was more of a naturalist than a historian, who also "...adopts a historicist approach to nature and a naturalist's approach to the history of the events of the New World"³⁶¹ (242). More pejoratively, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo considers Fernández de Oviedo's writing weak and his history incorrect (88-89). In contrast, other writers, such as José Rabasa, claim that Fernández de Oviedo's text is encyclopedic in nature³⁶² (140). Enrique Álvarez

³⁶¹ Gerbi also notes that Fernández de Oviedo's political history is overshadowed by Fernández de Oviedo's own preference to write about nature rather than events (245).

³⁶² The influence of the encyclopedias can be moderately seen in Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia*. Isidore of Seville frequently interjected strong opinion and personal reflection, as Fernández de Oviedo does.

López believed Fernández de Oviedo to be more of a naturalist and a philosopher than a writer of historical narratives (85). What critics do seem to agree on is the importance of the text in framing the multifaceted natural and historical elements of the New World within the context of sixteenth-century Europe.

A Brief Analysis of Fernández de Oviedo’s Animal Descriptions in Part One, Books Twelve – Fifteen

While my majority of my analysis will focus on the animal descriptions found in the other books of Fernández de Oviedo’s *Historia*, I find it relevant to briefly discuss his approach to the natural history in this section. An analysis of this material creates a space to better analyze those other animal descriptions that lie outside of Fernández de Oviedo’s zoologically focused books.³⁶³ Fernández de Oviedo’s heavy emphasis on Pliny the Elder and his *Historia naturalis* is not unexpected; according to Asúa and French, there were no true natural histories produced during the medieval period, marking his as one of the first to be produced in Spain about the New World at the beginning of the Early Modern period (183).

Fernández de Oviedo’s zoological books, which detail New World animals and insects, are the centerpiece of the first part of the *Historia*. These animal descriptions are

While Isidore focused on etymology and lexicon, Fernández de Oviedo focused on phonetic writing of indigenous words (Isidorus 22-23, Fernández de Oviedo 1: 10). Myers and Scott note that, “Reflecting philosophical and linguistic debates about the relationship between a thing and its name, the chronicler deliberately chooses to use Native American words for certain objects and practices that do not have a close equivalent in the Old World” (36). Osler tells us that the encyclopedic tradition was thriving during Fernández de Oviedo’s life, and describes the mostly encyclopedic plant and animal reference works by such authors as Conrad Gessner (1516-1565) and Andrea Alciati (1492-1559) (133).

³⁶³ Fernández de Oviedo’s animal books have been analyzed carefully by scholars over the past four decades. I include a brief analysis of the natural history elements to point out that this genre is heavily included in these four books, but also to demonstrate the differences between these animal descriptions and those which Fernández de Oviedo did not include in those animal chapters. The basis of comparison, I feel, is necessary in order to complete a full analysis of his non-animal books.

found in Books Twelve through Fifteen, beginning with, in Book Twelve, the animals that inhabit Hispaniola, the Caribbean region, and Tierra Firme. Book Thirteen is centered on the sea animals (1: 423), Book Fourteen describes the New World birds, and Book Fifteen focuses on insects (1: 449). Fernández de Oviedo indicates in his prologue to Book Twelve that he intends to differentiate between those animals that are native to the Caribbean and Tierra Firme, and those which were brought over from Spain and which flourished in the fertile lands (1:386). He notes that some New World animals are similar to those known in Europe and Spain, but that every species is different and he wants to describe them each as they are (1: 386-387). Fernández de Oviedo writes this as he compares his own work to that of Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, indicating to his audience the source of the structure and the nature of the descriptions of his zoology books. (1:386). However, there are differences in Fernández de Oviedo's approach which, while not altering the natural historical value of the text, do expand the genre through differentiation.³⁶⁴

From the very beginning of his zoological books, Fernández de Oviedo tells us that he intends to describe the world from a Christian perspective (1:387-388). Pliny does not describe animals from a religious point of reference at all, and mentions religion(s) as mere elements of description and not the foundation of his text.³⁶⁵ Relatedly, while Pliny never mentions why he places the zoology parts of his text in Book Eight, Fernández de

³⁶⁴ Fernández de Oviedo does not exactly follow Pliny's narrative structure in his zoological books, adding prologues, commentary, and personal experiences, which I detail further on in this section

³⁶⁵ For example, when he describes the elephant, Pliny notes that "Elephants are also credited with an understanding of another's religion...They have been seen, when exhausted by sickness...lying on their backs and throwing grass towards the sky as though beseeching the Earth to answer their prayers" (108).

Oviedo notes that he himself writes about land animals in Book Twelve as a reference to the importance of the number twelve in the sacred history of the New Testament (such as the twelve apostles and the twelve years Christ wandered in the desert). Fernández de Oviedo believes that Pliny places the animals in Book Eight of his natural history as a reference to the Old Testament (such as the eight people saved on Noah's ark, which is a veiled reference to all of the animals that were saved from the flood)³⁶⁶ (1: 387-388). It is highly unlikely that Pliny would have done this, however, as he was neither Jewish nor Christian, and Christianity was a relatively new religion in his lifetime (he died in 79 CE). Thus, from the beginning of his zoology books, Fernández de Oviedo indicates to his audience that all of his descriptions are colored by his Christian perspective.

In general, Pliny and Fernández de Oviedo describe the animals similarly, with some exceptions. In their depictions of these animals, the physical body and behavioral characteristics are usually described first. For example, Pliny describes the lion as being known in his time as two different species, one more timid than the other with a shorter, curly mane. All lions have a strong odor, and their tails and ears give away their mood. Lions rarely drink, eat every other day, and are not a danger to humans after having eaten (Pliny 114-115). Likewise, Fernández de Oviedo describes a type of lion³⁶⁷ as being low or small, tawny-colored, non-bearded, and rather cowardly compared to African lions, who climbs trees and flees from other predators unless it is provoked (1: 406). These

³⁶⁶ Pliny the Elder never indicates why he places his zoological material (including mankind) in Chapter Eight of his *Historia Naturalis*, but it does seem to have a connection with Aristotle's Book Eight in his *Historia Animalium*, which focused on the behavior, habits, and health of animals in general.

³⁶⁷ Probably a cougar or a jaguarundi, based on the description.

types of general physical and behavioral descriptions were traditional and the reading audience of both writers expected such inclusions.

Both Pliny and Fernández de Oviedo maintain the tradition of describing animals in respect to the humans who inhabit or invade the regions in which those animals live. In both the *Historia naturalis* and the *Historia general y natural* there is a significant amount of human interference in the descriptions of animal in that they are described as they are perceived by humans, and, often, as they relate to humanity. The animals are depicted by eyewitnesses and voices of authority as living within the realm of humankind, and they are granted less agency in the works of Pliny and Fernández de Oviedo than they are by other natural historians, such as Aristotle or Aelian. Pliny's depiction of the lion repeatedly places the animal within the human realm: of the ten sections describing the lion, there are eight human and human-history related inclusions, squarely placing the lion within the human context (Pliny 114-116). Fernández de Oviedo relates how humans kill the South American cat with guns while the beasts rest in trees, and he describes how the lions kill indigenous people who go off alone into the forest (Fernández de Oviedo 406). Interestingly, in linking the natural history of the New World to the lived experiences and history of humankind, Fernández de Oviedo ties into the theories on natural history offered by Paul Smethurst, which focus on the paradox of describing the natural world from the perspective of one who is trying to conquer it (17). In his work *Travel writing and the natural world, 1768-1840* (2012), Smethurst notes that contemporary theoretical models and studies of the natural world, particularly the expansion into and description of lands unknown to Europeans before, were often marked

by the contemporary worldviews of the Europeans, reflecting a disjuncture between natural order and European civilization that immediately “othered” the foreign natural world while still attempting to define it within Old World contexts (17). Fernández de Oviedo regularly describes or includes animals within his texts, but they are always related to mankind’s actions or existence in some way.

Fögen points out that often Pliny the Elder interjects anecdotal material into his animal descriptions, which Fernández de Oviedo frequently does as well (Fögen 186). In his study of Pliny’s elephant description, Fögen notes that the anecdotal material, particularly that which relates to the human-elephant relationship, is much more dense than the actual natural history narrative (186). Similarly, in Fernández de Oviedo’s Book Twelve, he regularly injects anecdotes into his descriptions, generally focused on the interactions between the animals and the Spanish, although he does include information about the indigenous human populations’ interactions with the animals as well. For example, when describing the *gatos monillos*³⁶⁸ he claims that many that are brought back to Spain and that he will say little about them as they are well known in Europe, but he then writes an entire page and a half describing them and their relationship to humanity (1: 414-416). He notes that these creatures, when they see Spaniards travelling through the woods prepared for battle, begin calling and screaming at the Spaniards, jumping on tree branches so that leaves and wood rain down on the invaders. Fernández de Oviedo then describes an incident between a rifleman and a monkey in which the rifleman was trying to shoot the animal, but ultimately failed to kill it (1: 416). While

³⁶⁸ Probably howler monkeys.

Fernández de Oviedo's interjections and anecdotal information were not novel to the natural history genre, his references are often derived from his first-hand accounts, something which Pliny seldom does.

Another aspect of Fernández de Oviedo's natural history that differs slightly from that of Pliny is direct experimentation through consumption. Throughout his zoological books, Fernández de Oviedo frequently describes the flavors of the wide variety of New World meat. While Pliny the Elder frequently indicates the foods consumed by the animals he describes, such as the fondness of hedgehogs for fallen apples, he does not describe how an animal tastes when consumed³⁶⁹ (119). Fernández de Oviedo, in contrast, often describes the foods people eat in the New World, among them the animal flesh he himself consumes, or the disgust he feels at seeing the indigenous people eat certain animals. Two examples of these descriptions come from Books Twelve and Thirteen. In Book Twelve, Fernández de Oviedo eats a small local dog and notes "...he comido de algunos dellos y es muy buen manjar..."³⁷⁰ (1: 391). He did not realize that it was dog when he ate it, but he notes that in Tierra Firme it is a common practice and that flavor was something like that of mutton (1:3 91). Later, in Book Thirteen, Fernández de Oviedo describes aquatic creatures, among them amphibians. Throughout the entirety of Chapter Ten Fernández de Oviedo describes the toads and frogs that the indigenous people eat in Tierra Firme, ending in the decisive determination, "Yo los he visto comer algunas veces á los indios en aquella tierra, é no ví en mi vida manjar que mas asco me

³⁶⁹ Pliny the Elder may not have had the opportunity to taste a wide variety of foods, but, regardless, his work rarely included first-hand experiences.

³⁷⁰ "I have eaten some of them and they are very good food."

diese ni que peor me paresçiesse...³⁷¹ (1: 438). He acknowledges, however, that these amphibians are a staple food for the local people, comparing them the bread and beef of Spain (1: 438).

While Fernández de Oviedo himself categorizes his books as a natural and general history of the Indies, his work uses the existing animal literature available during the early modern period in order to describe the natural history of the New World to its fullest measure. Although his text is based on and is structured similarly to Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*, Fernández de Oviedo is expanding the genre by moving beyond the observational and descriptive reliance on voices of authority into experimentation. While Books Twelve through Fifteen are predominantly focused on natural history, there are elements of other animal literature in Fernández de Oviedo's other books that are strikingly different from those natural descriptions. Fernández de Oviedo's reliance on his voice as one of authority throughout the entirety of the fifty books gives him the freedom to shift beyond the natural history, incorporating literary elements that showed different aspects of the human-animal relationship.

Literary Analysis of Fernández de Oviedo's Non-Zoological Books

Throughout the three parts of the *Historia* we can link some of Fernández de Oviedo's animal references to other, non-natural historical literary genres found in early modern Europe. The human-animal relationship as described by Fernández de Oviedo often gives the animals little agency of their own. In terms of literary analysis, this is

³⁷¹ "I saw the natives of that land eat them [frogs and toads] sometimes, and I never saw in my life a more repugnant food that they gave me nor saw [any other food] worse..." Ironically, Fernández de Oviedo is repulsed by the idea of eating frogs and toads but enjoyed eating iguana (1: 396).

significant. By not granting animals agency, he essentially strips them of their true nature and existence and commodifies them as living extensions of humankind. As such, these animals can be commodified for their physical attributes, such as meat, leather, and tools, and also as elements of literature and art.³⁷² In this section, I analyze a handful of Fernández de Oviedo's non-natural history animal descriptions in order to show the influence that other animal literature had on his writing.

Like Columbus, Fernández de Oviedo included animal imagery from bestiaries, including both domestic and fantastic images. Most of his symbolic animal references are found wedged into other descriptions, generally of events or of people. In one instance, Fernández de Oviedo uses a horse to describe the public sentiment towards Pedrarias Davila in Acla, Panama.³⁷³ In 1519, the conquistador and son-in-law of Pedrarias, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, was captured trying to return to the governor (at Pedrarias's request) and falsely arrested for attempting to seize power in Castilla de Oro³⁷⁴ (modern Panama). He was tried in Acla and was subsequently convicted and beheaded (3: 58-60). Shortly after the beheading, some of the more prominent men in the town of Alca, Panama, had left mass and were standing in the plaza. A recent announcement had been posted in the plaza indicating that Pedrarías and the mayor of that town, Espinosa, were staying in Panama City and that those who needed to speak with them would find them there

³⁷² Valenzuela et al. note that humans have been consuming animals in non-material ways since our Paleolithic days, as evidenced by the cave paintings in Spain and France and the zoological rock art found in the Atacama Desert (251). Animals representation is a type of consumption, whereby the animal itself has no input as to how it is represented by humanity, and humans "consume" this representation and often, the animal's image or description is used in a context that refers or defers to humanity (Barvinksa). Outside of his four zoology books, Fernández de Oviedo's animal descriptions are included almost entirely in reference to some aspect of humanity.

³⁷³ Pedrarias Davila (1440-1531 CE) was a conquistador and politician who became governor of Panama.

³⁷⁴ This aspect of general history is found in Volume Three, Book Twenty-nine, Chapter Twelve.

(Fernández de Oviedo 3: 86). In this plaza, fifteen to twenty work horses were eating the grass found there (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 86). From among them a horse emerged holding its head high, passing easily through the other horses and walking well over one hundred steps directly to the announcement post. The horse then, after two or three attempts to grab the announcement with its teeth, pulled the paper off the post and chewed it to pieces. It then returned to the other horses and began to eat grass with them. This horse was none other than that of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. The men in the plaza took this to be a sign that this horse was demanding that the mayor of the city return to the city to live there, and that the men themselves should be complaining of the fact that he was not in residence (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 87). Not long after a complaint was made to the Council of the Indies in Spain about Pedrarías and Espinosa (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 87). The horse, as explained in Chapter Three of this dissertation, was long believed to be a civilizing force, and the bestiaries indicated that hunting and war horses reflected the manners and behaviors of their masters (Clark 157). This particular horse belonged to a man who was unjustly ordered beheaded by Pedrarías in order to gain power (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 67). By behaving in a collected and calm manner in order to eat the very order that declared the figures of authority of the region, the horse was seen by the men in the plaza as a stand-in for his dead master and, as such, critical of the absent authority. Swift and steady horse legs were seen as a sign of boldness and courage (Clark 158). Fernández de Oviedo makes it clear that these are not necessarily his own feelings or his own interpretations of the event, but rather an event and an interpretation that was explained to him by more than one person (3: 87). The domesticated horse, then,

becomes a stand-in for the master, acting in boldness, courage, and judgement where his master could not (Clark 158).

In a similar example, Fernández de Oviedo writes of an incident after a hurricane when an earthquake destroyed Guatemala City in 1541³⁷⁵ (Fernández de Oviedo 4: 24). Francisco Cava, a local landowner, was trying to rescue a noblewoman, Doña Beatriz de la Cueva, from her flooded home. In the middle of the nearly destroyed house was a large cow that had one broken horn and the other with a rope around it. Twice the animal charged Cava and he fell beneath the mud and thought that he might die. The people of that region believed that particular cow to be a demon, as she walked around the decimated city and made a lot of noise, making many people afraid of her. Later that night, she found her way into the central plaza and did not allow rescuers to cross it to help anyone in need (4: 30-31). Fernández de Oviedo notes that there were a lot of noisy animals that came into the city that night, but that this cow was the only one believed to be possessed by the devil. Fernández de Oviedo indicates that the people of Guatemala City believed that Doña Beatriz had committed a sin against her husband in her home and, because of it, God sent the hurricane and earthquake to wash away the sin (4: 31). Indeed, a raging female quadruped is a likely sign or symbol that someone had committed a sin, especially when it chose to stand in only one particular house and chased away those crossing the main plaza who tried to help the wounded. In the bestiaries, cows are not mentioned to a great extent, but the bestiary writers did make a point to determine that bovines were created by God to serve and aid mankind (Clark

³⁷⁵ This entire anecdote is found in Volume Four, Book Forty-One, Chapter Three.

153). In this context, this cow can be interpreted as a symbol of God or Nature's rage at the wife's possible indiscretion.

In more exotic descriptions, Fernández de Oviedo relies on the fantastic to describe established norms in the New World. Fernández de Oviedo makes a brief reference to the fact that the indigenous populations have no books or drawings of their gods, but that there remain some old painted carvings, all of them different, and some of them have the fiery eyes of the dragon and of the ferocious serpent³⁷⁶ (1: 125). These two animals in particular are interesting, and I point out that Columbus used the same two animals to name the difficult passageways around the island of Trinidad (page 96 of this dissertation). The dragon was believed to be “likened to the Devil, who is the most monstrous serpent...”, while the serpent itself represents trickery, evil and death (Clark 140). While not a direct reference to bestiaries themselves, Fernández de Oviedo's many descriptions of the indigenous people often portray them as devils (based on their non-Christian beliefs), therefore it was not difficult for him to associate and incorporate known Christian animal imagery with depictions of local people whose behaviors Fernández de Oviedo believed were idolatrous and beastly (1: 105).

The best example of Fernández de Oviedo's inclusion of animals relating to the bestiaries is his description of the *cocatriz*.³⁷⁷ Fernández de Oviedo uses the term *cocatrices* to describe a cayman³⁷⁸ (1: 233-234). However, he does not use the proper

³⁷⁶ This reference is made in Volume One, Book Five, Chapter One, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some of the rites and rituals of the indigenous people on Hispaniola.

³⁷⁷ This information comes from Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Forty-Two, in which Fernández de Oviedo compares the Huyapari River with the Nile.

³⁷⁸ At this point in time, intellectuals had no understanding that alligators and crocodiles were different subfamilies of the crocodylian order.

vernacular for this animal (the Spanish called the animal that looked closest to a cayman, the alligator, *cocodrilo*, from the Greek *Krokodīlus*) (Clark 140). One explanation for this mistake can be understood by Pedro Tafur's description of the crocodiles in the Nile in Chapter Eight of his travel narration, *Andanzas y viajes* (1454). Tafur describes these creatures as rather fearful and lazy beings that are more at home in the water than on land (Tafur). The name *cocatriz* (derived from the Latin *cocatrix*) refers to a mythological serpentine creature, on par with a dragon or a basilisk, but with a rooster's head and claws (it was also known as *Gallus serpens*, or cock snake). This creature was believed to be very aggressive, lived in caves and other abandoned places, and ate snakes. Late-medieval Europeans believed that the *cocatriz* could not fly but that it could float, perhaps leading to Tafur's and Fernández de Oviedo's use of the incorrect name for the crocodile (Shinso).

While these are only three short descriptions, their inclusion by Fernández de Oviedo into the *Historia* show that the animal descriptions found commonly in bestiaries still had some influence on how humans perceived the animal world during the sixteenth century. While they are not full of the religious or deeply personal symbology as those references found in the works of Columbus, Fernández de Oviedo's bestiary references tell us that Europeans still viewed animals as mystical elements of the natural world.

Like Pané, Fernández de Oviedo does include short descriptions of the marvelous and the paradoxography. Paradoxography is grounded in the idea that a marvelous anecdote, animal, or object is presented in a non-contextualized, simple, and objectified way (Hardiman). Fernández de Oviedo generally gives a context in his animal

descriptions, such as his justifications for why the anteater has hair that grows in the wrong direction, or why the sturgeon has scales in the wrong direction³⁷⁹ (1: 225). However, Fernández de Oviedo also includes an uncontextualized marvel. He describes several animals in which he notes the curious differences between members of their species found in different locations. He describes that along one branch of the Angasmayo River there are many deer and livestock who, while beautiful, are different from the deer in another part of the same region.³⁸⁰ The latter are much smaller than the former, and Fernández de Oviedo attributes it to the fact that there is a small mountain between them and that the former never ventured across the river (1: 218-219). He determines that “Estas cosas é secretos de la natura, son ocultas las causas, puesto que los efectos son visibles...”³⁸¹ (1: 219). He also notices the differences between New and Old-World animals, but does offer any reasons why they are different. One example is that of the chicken.³⁸² Fernández de Oviedo’s description is similar to Pliny’s, describing the animal’s habits in Christian Europe, “Los gallos en España é otras partes muchas de los chripstianos (é aun assi pienso yo que en Europa toda y en la mayor parte de lo que se sabe) canta á media noche y quando quiere amanecer, é aun algunos é los mejores cantan tres veçes ó en tres partes de la noche...”³⁸³ (1: 194). He then compares these

³⁷⁹ Fernández de Oviedo contextualizes these animals by claiming that Nature is trying to make creatures in the water conform with those on land. These references are found in Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Four.

³⁸⁰ This information comes from Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Thirty-One, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes interesting aspects of animals that live near the equator.

³⁸¹ “These things are the secrets of Nature; the causes are hidden but the effects are visible.”

³⁸² This description comes from Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Ten, which Fernández de Oviedo devotes entirely to comparing New World and European chickens.

³⁸³ “The roosters of Spain and in many other Christian parts (here I think of all of Europe and in the major parts of known places), it sings at midnight and when the sun rises, and even the best sing three times or at the three parts of the night...”

European chickens to their Caribbean counterpart,³⁸⁴ noting, “En estas nuestras Indias hacen su oficio ó cantar de otra manera; porque algunos dellos cantan á prima noche, o dos horas despues de anochescido, y otra hora antes que amanezca, ó sea de dia; pero nunca á media noche”³⁸⁵ (1: 194). Fernández de Oviedo makes no attempt to explain why these chickens behave differently, and merely reports their actions. These observations are a true testament to Fernández de Oviedo’s data collection skills, which is an essential tool of both the paradoxography and the natural history.

Like Cortés, Fernández de Oviedo regularly mentions aspects of hunting. The horse, as I explained in the Introduction of this dissertation, was fundamental to both hunting and invasion. Fernández de Oviedo regularly mentions horses, particularly when including information about their numbers in the New World. To give the reader an idea, Fernández de Oviedo references two hundred men on horseback who were sent to explore the southern coast of South America, and that, between three conquered Tierra Firme cities (Cartao, Sancta Ana, and Anthiochia), there are another two hundred horsemen³⁸⁶ (4: 18; 4: 142). Fernández de Oviedo also describes interactions with the indigenous populations, and frequently includes references to horses in times of battle and times of peace. He first mentions the use of the warhorse when describing an incident in 1496 on Hispaniola, when Alonso de Hojeda used men on horseback (*de caballo*) to

³⁸⁴ Chickens arrived in the Americas at least five hundred years before the arrival of Columbus, according to remains that have been excavated. They came over the Pacific with Polynesians mariners (Storey et al 103).

³⁸⁵ “In our Indies, they do their job or sing in another way; because some of them sing early at night, or two hours after sundown, or an hour before sunrise, or if it is daytime, but never at midnight.”

³⁸⁶ This information comes from, respectively, Volume Four, Book Forty, Chapter One (in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the discovery of new lands in New Spain), and from Volume Four, Book Forty-Five, Chapter Three (in which the author describes a dispute over land between two men on Hispaniola).

fight off the attacking local tribes and to hunt down escaped slaves³⁸⁷ (1:59, 109).

Fernández de Oviedo also notes that in order to combat the female cacique Anacaona, seventy Spanish horsemen gathered with Captain Diego Velázquez to hunt her down while she was in hiding in secret in the Jaragua province of the island of Hispaniola³⁸⁸ (1: 89-90). In this sense, the horsemen were hunting non-European people as much as they would any other prey.³⁸⁹

Horses were not the only European animals used as hunting and war implements and depicted by Fernández de Oviedo. Hunting by proxy with raptors and dogs was of central importance within the context of European survival and conquest. Fernández de Oviedo includes hunting with raptors as part of his descriptions of the New World due to the popularity of the sport in Europe. He describes how a hidalgo working for Francisco Pizarro caught a sparrow hawk and trained it to hunt smaller birds during the time that the Incan leader Atahualpa³⁹⁰ was imprisoned by Pizarro. Atahualpa was so delighted by the bird's training that he paid the hidalgo two thousand pesos for it, dressing the bird in bells and other regalia "...como ave de tan gran principe..."³⁹¹ (1: 221). Fernández de Oviedo later takes a moment to describe a raptor that he admires, the *açores de agua*,³⁹² which it

³⁸⁷ This information comes from, respectively, Volume One, Book Three, Chapter One (in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the war between Alonso de Ojeda and the indigenous chief Caonabo), and from Volume One, Book Four, Chapter Four (in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the rebellion of the African slaves on Hispaniola).

³⁸⁸ This anecdote comes from Volume One, Book Three, Chapter Eleven.

³⁸⁹ Fernández de Oviedo notes that, in opposition, the Guarani people of South America also hunted the Spaniards in the same way and with the same instruments with which they hunted deer (1:226).

³⁹⁰ In the text, Fernández de Oviedo calls him Atabaliba (1: 221). This anecdote comes from Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Two (in which the author recounts some aspects of Atahualpa's captivity).

³⁹¹ "...like a bird of a such a great prince..." In a related anecdote, Atahualpa is impressed by a cat that a Spaniard trained to hunt rodents, and he bought the cat from the soldier for more than a thousand gold pesos (1: 221).

³⁹² A type of goshawk.

is found on many of the islands in the Caribbean. He describes how it hunts on both land and at sea, and while its coloring is similar to a sparrow hawk, its left foot looks like a duck flipper (so it can support itself on water), and the right has the expected raptor claw, with which it attacks its prey.³⁹³ It also hunts small birds and lizards on land (1: 226).

As mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation, hunting with dogs was both a sport and a mechanism of war, but Fernández de Oviedo describes them as necessary for survival (Almond 73). While it was common for nobles to use hunting dogs in war, what is particularly interesting is Fernández de Oviedo's inclusion of a specific type of hunting dog, the greyhound (3: 31). Greyhounds, although they were used in times of war when the need arose, were highly prized as hunting animals due to their strength, agility, and size, and nobles raised them specifically for hunting.³⁹⁴ (Almond 58, 93). Trained greyhounds were accustomed to receiving blood and meat for their part in the hunt, and Fernández de Oviedo tells us multiple times that the dogs often were allowed and encouraged to eat the indigenous people³⁹⁵ (Almond 7; Fernández de Oviedo 3: 32; 3: 37; 3: 40; 3: 46). He labelled this the “caça o montería infernal”³⁹⁶ (3: 37). Indigenous people had dogs set on them for various reasons, including in the pursuit of gold and jewels, for

³⁹³ This information comes from Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Four, in which Fernández de Oviedo discusses raptors found on Hispaniola.

³⁹⁴ An example, Vasco Nuñez's hunting dog, Leonçico, Fernández de Oviedo traces the dog's lineage to Beçerrio, another quite famous dog. Leonçico is known to fight the indigenous people, ensuring that none escaped him, and did not hesitate to rip a resistant indigenous person to shreds if he or she resisted the Spaniards (3: 9-10). Tracing a hunting animal's lineage itself was not very common, but the breeding and lineage of the hunting dog was much more important than that of a hunting or war horse (Almond 56-57). This anecdote is recorded by Fernández de Oviedo in Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Three, in which the author describes various battles between Spaniards and indigenous people in Panama.

³⁹⁵ From, respectively, Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapters Seven, Nine, and Ten, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes historical events relating to Pedrarias's governorship in Panama.

³⁹⁶ “diabolical hunting or (diabolical) hunting with horses”

homosexual activities, for refusing to submit to Spanish rule, or for killing and eating horses³⁹⁷ (3: 18; 3: 20; 4: 133; 4: 100). Still other indigenous people were toyed with, given a small paddle to fight off several unskilled, young hunting dogs.³⁹⁸ Eventually the dogs grew bold and confident and killed and ate the individuals³⁹⁹ (4: 100). Those indigenous people who did submit sometimes grew to live in relative peace with the dogs, going as far to ask for and/or raise them⁴⁰⁰ (4: 107). Despite all the documented cruelties, the governors and officials in the New World continued to send dogs to the conquistadors throughout the first half of the sixteenth century⁴⁰¹ (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 40-41). The dogs were also used to protect both Spaniards and their livestock, as in Fernández de Oviedo's description of a man named Áviles whose dog protected him and his pigs from being eaten by puma⁴⁰² (4: 64). The dogs themselves were not always paid back in kindness for their work. According to Fernández de Oviedo, when hunting on Hispaniola at the start of the conquest, the Spanish "...se caçaban con los perros que se avian traído de España, é desque ovieron acabado los de la tierra, comiéronse á ellos tambien, en pago de su servicio"⁴⁰³ (1:50). Thus the hunting-dog-turned-war-dog was often hunted down and turned into food during times of human desperation.

³⁹⁷ This information comes from, respectively, Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Five (about Vasco Nuñez de Balboa's actions in Darién, Panama), and Volume Four, Book Forty-Four, Chapter Three (about the historical events in Tierra-Firma that occurred around the death of Payo Romero, a lieutenant)

³⁹⁸ Fernández de Oviedo specifically mentions hunting dogs in this incident, i.e. greyhounds and mastiffs.

³⁹⁹ From Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Eleven, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the people and customs of Nicaragua.

⁴⁰⁰ From Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Twelve, in which the author describes the housing and customs of the indigenous Nicaraguans.

⁴⁰¹ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Nine, in which the author describes some of the events in Panama that involved Vasco Nuñez de Balboa).

⁴⁰² From Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Four, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some of the lagunas found in Nicaragua.

⁴⁰³ "...hunted with the dogs that they had brought from Spain, and as soon as they [the Spanish] had finished with everything in the land [all the edible animals], they ate them [the dogs], too, in payment of

The flesh of hunting dogs, however, was not among the most common forms of meat for Spaniards in the New World. Fernández de Oviedo also includes many references to hunting native animals throughout the *Historia*. Fernández de Oviedo notes that the fertile lands of the Caribbean and Tierra-Firma offer plenty of hunting of wild pigs and deer, as well as many good fisheries⁴⁰⁴ (3: 63). There are other types of animals that he mentions, such as wolves, lions, skunks, ants, cows, tapirs, and a wide variety of birds⁴⁰⁵ (4: 104). Fernández de Oviedo specifically uses the noun *montería* (hunting on horseback) in many instances⁴⁰⁶ (4: 104; 4: 132). Spaniards in Tierra Firme had access to an abundance of food animals, and Fernández de Oviedo notes that while traveling from one place to another the Spanish often hunted animals, such as hares, along the way⁴⁰⁷ (3:30). Fernández de Oviedo’s descriptions vary from the hunting scenes depicted by Cortés, and are not focused on the strategic methods of hunting itself. Rather, they are merely informative anecdotes, showing that the men did not always hunt for meat. Fernández de Oviedo mentions a humorous incident in which a Spaniard near León, Nicaragua, was riding with his men and his dogs, and threw a lance to kill a “çorilla

their services.” From Volume One, Book Two, Chapter Eight, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some of the battles between Diego and Bartholomew Columbus and the local people on Hispaniola.

⁴⁰⁴ Fernández de Oviedo notes that the natives in the island areas around Nicaragua were accustomed to hunting and eating deer, pork, fish, and frogs (3: 110). This information is found in Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Eight, which describes the political issues between Pedrarias, Espinosa, and Vasco Nuñez de Balboa in Central America.

⁴⁰⁵ From Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Twelve, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some of the houses and costumes of the local Nicaraguans.

⁴⁰⁶ From Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Twelve (see footnote 384) and Volume Four, Book Forty-Four, Chapter One, which includes information on the travels of Pasqual de Andagoya into Panama’s interior.

⁴⁰⁷ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Seven, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some of the events around Pedrarias invasion of Central America.

dessas hedionas”.⁴⁰⁸ The dogs went to bite the animal that everyone believed to be dead, but almost immediately they ran off sneezing and vomiting while the injured skunk made its escape. The horsemen and the horses also vomited as the scent was very strong, and Fernández de Oviedo notes that the dogs and horses did not eat for several days after (4: 114). In another instance, Fernández de Oviedo notes that on Hispaniola, the men with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa hunted for birds, either for meat or to capture and train them⁴⁰⁹ (3: 6-7).

Fernández de Oviedo regularly mentions fishing by both the Spaniards and the indigenous people. While fishing was not considered noble by the upper classes,⁴¹⁰ it is relevant that Fernández de Oviedo includes it. Fishing allows both indigenous and Spaniards a means by which to survive when other protein sources were unavailable. Also, by depicting the abundance of fish available, Fernández de Oviedo is cataloging the natural bounty available for consumption in the New World. According to Fernández de Oviedo, the indigenous populations along the San Juan River in Hispaniola live in the trees and only leave them to work the land and to go fishing⁴¹¹ (3: 8). Fernández de Oviedo mentions that the fish in Lake Xaragua (probably Managua) are good to eat and for this reason the regions around the lake are densely populated by indigenous groups⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ “An odiferous skunk”. This anecdote comes from a description of a soldier’s interaction with a skunk in Nicaragua, found in Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Sixteen.

⁴⁰⁹ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter One, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the early actions of conquistadors in Nicaragua.

⁴¹⁰ Catching fish and small birds was commonplace among the lower classes on public lands, and there were manuals on fishing techniques, but these were not considered noble types of hunting as these small animals did not reflect the grandeur of the nobility (Almond 105-106).

⁴¹¹ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Two, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the discovery of the San Juan River in Nicaragua.

⁴¹² From Volume One, Book Three, Chapter Five, a description of Lake Nicaragua.

(1: 66). Upon landing in Darien in June 1514, Fernández de Oviedo notes that the fishing in the river is exceptionally good⁴¹³ (3: 33). In Santo Domingo, the river Ocama supplied Spaniards with abundant amounts of mullet and manatees⁴¹⁴ (1: 175). On Hispaniola, Fernández de Oviedo mentions other rivers that contain many fish (he specifically mentions the Cotuy, the Cibao, and the Macorix), indicating that the Spanish were fishing in the interiors of the island while they conquered and colonized⁴¹⁵ (1: 176). In Tierra-Firma, Fernández de Oviedo describes how the Spanish regularly hunted eels just to see them give off a charge⁴¹⁶ (1: 224).

Hunting for animals in the New World with horses and by proxy was a means to not only survive but to maintain social traditions for the elites while furthering the conquest agenda of the Spanish crown. While that hunting was not always limited to animals, and not always limited to “noble” animals or styles of killing prey, Fernández de Oviedo documented it both factually and anecdotally, fleshing out the Spanish historical experience in the New World through survival tactics and violence.

While Fernández de Oviedo’s descriptions show the various relationships between New World animals and Old-World literature, he mostly describes animals in terms of physical consumption. Fernández de Oviedo continuously commodifies the New World animals, much as Columbus and Cortés did in their assessments of the financial value of the Caribbean and the Americas. Animal commodification itself was not a

⁴¹³ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Seven, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the arrival of Pedrarias in Darién.

⁴¹⁴ From Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Seven, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the principle rivers of Hispaniola.

⁴¹⁵ See footnote 393

⁴¹⁶ From Volume One, Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Four, in which the author describes animals that were seen on Tierra-Firma.

literary form, but has been included in all forms of literary documentation, from counting heads of animals at the end of summer, inclusions of the consumption of flesh in poetry and prose, to the descriptions of clothing and decorations made from animal bodies. For this reason, I include some of Fernández de Oviedo's descriptions of animal consumption in this section.

To consume something, we must have evidence of its existence. Fernández de Oviedo's three parts of the *Historia* are replete with information about what is present in the natural environment of the New World, detailing the existence of known and new flora, fauna, and people. In order to indicate what was available to eat in the natural world, Fernández de Oviedo documents what exists and where to find it. In Panama, Captain Francisco Becerra told Fernández de Oviedo about the abundance of local fauna, among which he claimed tigers, lions, deer, and pigs⁴¹⁷ (3: 44). On an island that Fernández de Oviedo calls *Pocosi*, he notes an abundance and variety of seafood, including pearl-laden oysters and other shellfish, a fish called *pie de burro*,⁴¹⁸ and other multi-colored fish⁴¹⁹ (3: 110). In Nueva Granada,⁴²⁰ the savannahs are home to deer, rabbits, pigeons, doves, and quail (4: 143). He remarks that Guatemala is known for having the same animals as all the rest of the Tierra-Firma, but also a lot of birds, honey, and beeswax (4: 33). In Nicaragua, there is also abundant honey and beeswax, as well as

⁴¹⁷ Fernández de Oviedo is skeptical of the inclusion of lions, however, but he does note that “Estos é otros animales son communes en la Tierra-Firma...”⁴¹⁷ (“These and other animals are common on Terra-Firma”), choosing not to specify what these other animals are. This comes from Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Ten, in which the author describes the actions of various captains in Central America.

⁴¹⁸ “donkey's foot”

⁴¹⁹ From Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Twenty-One, which describes some of the actions and decisions taken by the Spanish government against Governor Pedrarias.

⁴²⁰ The northern regions of South America. This reference comes from Volume Four, Book Forty-Five, Chapter Three, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes some notable particularities of this region.

“much a montería de puercos é venados é otras salvaginas é conexos é otros animales, é muchas é buenas pesquerías...”⁴²¹ (4: 34). In 1529, Fernández de Oviedo talks about a laguna near Leon de Nagrando (Nicaragua) that it is filled with large and diverse fish, including those from the sea, such as sharks, lizards, and cocatrices. He also notes that he himself saw a large fish that had a long snout and fangs⁴²² (4: 63). Essentially, Fernández de Oviedo documents a world waiting to be consumed for food or for material gain.

Fernández de Oviedo includes descriptions of the consumption of local animals throughout his work, and he regularly gives first-hand descriptions as he describes himself as always eating any foods he comes across. On Hispaniola, he tastes many things, including snakes and lizards⁴²³ (1: 50). Small indigenous dogs called *xulos* are smoked and eaten in Central and North America by locals and Spaniards alike⁴²⁴ (4: 108). In Nicaragua, he tastes small fish pulled from Lake Lenderi that can only be eaten if mixed into a Spanish tortilla⁴²⁵ (4: 65). Fernández de Oviedo describes how Magellan’s crew anchored in Puerto San Julián (modern Argentina) from March-October 1520, as the weather was poor but the fish and birds there were delicious⁴²⁶ (2: 11). Over the

⁴²¹ “a lot of hunting by horseback of pigs and deer and other wild creatures and rabbits and other animals and a lot of good fishing...” These two references about Guatemala and Nicaragua come from Volume Four, Book Forty-One, Chapter Four, in which the fertility of the region is analyzed by the author.

⁴²² This information is found in Book and Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Four, a description of the lagunas of Nicaragua.

⁴²³ Found in Volume One, Book Two, Chapter Eight, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the battles between the indigenous people in Hispaniola and the Spanish (under the leadership of Diego and Bartholomew Columbus).

⁴²⁴ This anecdote is found in Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Seven, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the houses and customs of local people in Nicaragua.

⁴²⁵ This information is found in Volume Four, Book Forty-Two, Chapter Four, which includes descriptions of the lagunas of Nicaragua.

⁴²⁶ From Volume Two, Book Twenty, Chapter One, a description of the Strait of Magellan and the voyage to the western coast of South America.

course of the three parts, Fernández de Oviedo depicts the New World as a cornucopia of fauna ready to be killed and consumed.

Although food consumption is Fernández de Oviedo's main depiction of animals, he also includes detailed information about the creation and use of animal bodies as consumer products. A few examples are the decorative use of feathers from exotic birds, such as the parrot and the quetzal (3: 29-30; 1: 201-202); the trade in trade and transport of live exotic birds to Europe (3: 53); and deerskin that became parchment, clothing, and shoes (4: 33; 4: 38). Pearls, a by-product of oysters, were a coveted animal product. During the early colonial period, the Spanish living on Hispaniola, according to Fernández de Oviedo, disregarded their obligation and, instead, go in search of oysters laden with pearls⁴²⁷ (1: 86). Pearls were of such value to Spaniards that the Crown accepted them as part of the royal fifth⁴²⁸ (1: 191). In one instance, a pearl was found on Isla Rica that was large and pear-shaped. Governor Dávila's wife, Isabel de Bobadilla, kept that pearl and sold it to the Empress upon her return to Spain⁴²⁹ (Fernández de Oviedo 3: 49-50). New World animals supplied the settlers and indigenous with more than just sustenance; their bodies could be transformed into luxury goods that created wealth in the New World and in Europe.

⁴²⁷ This information is found in Volume One, Book Three, Chapter Eleven, in which the author describes differences between some of the islands found in the Caribbean.

⁴²⁸ The tax that the crown of Spain collected, equivalent to twenty percent, although Fernández de Oviedo tells us that the crown often demanded more (1: 191). This description comes from Volume One, Chapter Six, Book Eight, in which Fernández de Oviedo describes the metals and mines found on Hispaniola.

⁴²⁹ While it is unclear if the average mariner understood that pearls were a byproduct of a living mollusk, Fernández de Oviedo did understand that they were sea animals and refers to the action of retrieving them as "fishing". This description comes from Volume Three, Book Twenty-Nine, Chapter Ten, which describes some of the action taken by captains of Pedrarias in Central America.

In terms of conquest, animal commodification was, in large part, essential to the survival of the early settlers, giving them both food and goods to use themselves or to trade. The domesticated beasts brought from Europe to be raised in the fertile American lands became an essential aspect of life for colonists. Raising livestock appears was the measure of a man's civility throughout the early colonial period on Hispaniola, and the Spaniards viewed the open, uncultivated lands as fair game.⁴³⁰ During the rebellion of Don Enrique (1519-1533 CE), Captain Francisco de Barrionuevo brokered peace with the indigenous rebels, and one of their demands was livestock to raise⁴³¹ (1: 149). Fernández de Oviedo mentions the presence of herds of cows in Hispaniola as early as 1509, during the leadership of Diego Columbus⁴³² (1: 109-110). Their fertility and numbers were so great, Fernández de Oviedo tells us, that some owners slaughtered the cows in the field, leave the meat to rot, and then send the skins back to Spain⁴³³ (1:85). Crosby Jr. supports this through his research, noting that the grazing lands and lack of natural predators allowed cows to calve more frequently than normal in the first decades after the conquest of Mexico and the invasions of Central and South America (85-86). Their numbers were

⁴³⁰ Fernández de Oviedo includes many references to livestock and, according to Huggan and Tiffin, this is because the Spanish viewed the New World as "empty" due to the lack of cultivated land and the raising of livestock (5).

⁴³¹ From Volume One, Book Five, Chapter Seven, Fernández de Oviedo describes the events that occurred between Captain Barrionuevo and the chieftain Enrique on Hispaniola.

⁴³² From Volume One, Book Four, Chapter Four, a description of a slave rebellion on Hispaniola. Fernández de Oviedo mentions several times the importance of good land for grazing, for instance the riverbanks of the Nigua River (Nicaragua) on which he believed the land around the riverbanks would support a lot of livestock (1: 175).

⁴³³ From Volume One, Book Three, Chapter Eleven, a description of the differences between some Caribbean islands. Fernández de Oviedo readily includes numbers and figures, and tells us that in the decade before the publication of the *Sumario* (1526), there were between eight and twenty thousand head of cattle, although some estimates were as high as forty thousand (1: 85-86). While his numbers may have been wildly varying on the account, it seems that at least Fernández de Oviedo believed there were numerous cattle.

so great that cows had little value in the New World for their meat, and were worth more for their skins and their fat (which was made into tallow for candles) (Crosby Jr. 86). Fernández de Oviedo's descriptions of imported and indigenous fauna, then, showed not only consumed the consumption of animal meat, but he represents animal bodies as necessary and luxury goods.

Animals also become equalizers in Fernández de Oviedo's writing. He describes how Pedro Margarite was offered two turtledoves by an indigenous man during a time when the Spanish were very hungry (1496) on Hispaniola. Instead of eating them himself, as they were quite small, he let the birds go free so that he and his men might starve together as a unified force, with no one man being favored over another⁴³⁴ (1: 50-51). Fernández de Oviedo notes that animal flesh is shared between the Spanish and indigenous groups when they meet for the first time or gather together, sharing foods such as chickens, ham hocks, and beef⁴³⁵ (1: 154).

Fernández de Oviedo's inclusion of animal descriptions that fall outside of the natural history genre is not a literary mistake but, rather, an important insight into his mind and educational background. Fernández de Oviedo's descriptions mostly strip animals of their agency, and relate them to humanity in some fashion, whether as a symbol, a point of curiosity, a tool, or a consumable good. He is not describing the natural world as an individual object, or even as a group of individual objects. Instead,

⁴³⁴ From Volume One, Book Two, Chapter Eight, a description of the battles between the indigenous people and the Spaniards in Hispaniola.

⁴³⁵ This reference is found in Volume One, Book Five, Chapter Nine, in a meeting between a rebellious indigenous leader and the Spaniards on Hispaniola. Fernández de Oviedo informs us that often dining with the indigenous people was not always to the benefit of the Spaniards. In one incident in Darien, a landowner named Martín de Murga went to his lands and dined on very good fish with a local cacique, who then hacked the Spaniard to death with an axe and fed him to the local birds (3: 72).

Fernández de Oviedo is describing the natural features of the New World as it fits within the general history of Spain's invasion of it.

Fernández de Oviedo and Animal Representation

Fernández de Oviedo was in the unique position to document the existing flora, fauna, and peoples found in the New World, as well as the historical actions of the Spanish within that natural context. Throughout the three volumes of the *Historia*, he paints a story in which the Spaniards are regularly at odds with the natural world. From a theoretical perspective, Fernández de Oviedo struggled to represent the natural world as it existed because of the heavy influence of his cultural and educational backgrounds, as well as the interventions of the Spanish within the New World. How can one accurately depict a "New World" when there is continual Old-World interference? How can one accurately depict animals and their behaviors when they are framed within the human historical narrative? Garrard argues that it is difficult for an observer to be wholly objective, and that observers unconsciously categorize an animal based on their own world view (11). There is a tension that lies between the observer, the observed, and the descriptive material created by the observer that does not allow for a complete representation of animals as they truly exist, creating instead a simplistic ecomimeticism⁴³⁶ that allows the observer to dominate the way the observed is described.

⁴³⁶ Ecomimeticism is defined by Garrard as nature writing that attempts to directly represent nature but which ultimately fails due to the unconscious interference or bias of the observer (11, 207). For example, the BBC and Animal Planet produce many television programs about animals and the natural world, but the editing of those videos due to time or lack of elements of interest effectively fails to capture any one individual animal's true existence.

Fernández de Oviedo attempted to resolve this tension by moving beyond the mere descriptive narration of the natural and general history, and he incorporated more anecdotal genres into his work. His descriptions of animals vary uniquely, just as every species of animal in the New World is unique, and they transform the text from an in-depth catalogue of the territory and summary of events, into a highly literary text, dependent on other animal genres to round out the calculated descriptions. Garrard labels this type of description as “pollution,” in which the culture and education of the observer unconsciously pollutes the description of the animals with other features, in this case literary genres, to the point that the description becomes a polluted form of ecomimeticism (9).

Fernández de Oviedo attempted to represent the natural world as clearly and accurately as he could, but his text is ultimately polluted by the Spanish historical narrative and his own unconscious bias, resulting in a text that represents animals in informative descriptions that are not entirely unbiased and reliable. While Fernández de Oviedo generally depicts animals as goods for eating or consumption, there are links to the bestiary tradition, the paradoxography, and the hunting manuals that existed in libraries in Italy and Spain. His relationship to animals is clear: he sees them as accessible aspects of the natural world that can be exploited for descriptions, anecdotes, and for products, but which cannot escape the pollution caused by the worldview and experience of the observer.

In Summation

Fernández de Oviedo depended so greatly on his humanist background that he deformed the very nature of the natural history, at least in terms of the natural history on which he based his own, Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*. This is not to say that a deformation is negative in any way; my analysis of Ramón Pané's *Relación* in Chapter Two of this dissertation shows that literature is always evolving. While Pané's work can be considered a segue between the paradoxography and a work of modern anthropology, Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia* is a developed form of the natural history based on personal experience, eye-witness testimony, religion, and the animal-human relationship. His own purpose, as he notes many times throughout the *Historia*, is to serve the Spanish crown by documenting the actions of the Spanish within their new territories. Interestingly enough, while deforms the genre of the natural history to conform to the political needs of the crown, he also offers insight into a genre that is meant to evolve and diversify as human knowledge of the world grows: "...esta materia es grande, é que en otras partes del mundo hay assi mismo otras muchas cosas, de que se pueden tanto ó mas maravillar los humanos, como de las que se han dicho destas Indias..."⁴³⁷ (1: 219).

Fernández de Oviedo not only justifies and supports his natural history by merely having written it, but he is also noting that there are things left to be discovered and uncovered. That is what makes his text special in its own way, as Fernández de Oviedo recognizes the usefulness of cataloging the world, but also declares that our knowledge and ability to catalogue it will never be as vast as what exists in the universe. Our

⁴³⁷ "...this subject [of the New World] is vast, and in other parts of the world there are also many other things that humans can marvel over, like those that have been said of these Indies..."

representations of the world are always evolving, reforming, and becoming something new.

All literature evolves over the long term, and often it is reshaped to fit the changing needs of the society that writes it. In the conclusion of this dissertation, based on my analysis of these four author's documentations of New World animals, I evaluate the importance of late medieval and early modern animal representation within the context of Critical Animal Studies. These texts, although not contemporary to the Critical Animal Studies movement, are still essential tools with which to study animal representation in literature. The transitional nature of these texts, as written by European men of varying educations about a natural world which Europeans had never experienced before, is an essential element of Critical Animal Studies that show the ever-evolving human-animal relationship within literature.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation, I posed the questions: What is the value of these early New World animal representations and the use of various animal genres, and what implications might they have in the context of Ecocriticism and Critical Animal Studies? To answer the first question, I analyzed the New World animal descriptions of Columbus, Pané, Cortés, and Fernández de Oviedo within the context of literary representation and physical commodification. The origins of their perceptions can be traced through the author's individual background and culture. These men's descriptions of fauna, like their descriptions of precious metals, the flora, and the indigenous people of the New World, are all filtered through a lens that was heavily influenced by their access

to literature, their life experiences, and their contemporary society. Through this lens, scholars can understand how knowledge and life experience gained by explorers previous to leaving Spain for the New World affected their perception and representation of the animals existing there.

I make no assertion that Columbus was relying on the bestiary tradition, Pané on the paradoxography, Cortés on the hunting manual, nor Fernández de Oviedo on the use of all three genres. Instead, what I conclude through my analysis of these letters and relayed information is that the authors were clearly influenced by those literary genres, and that there are clear links between those genres and the subsequent representation of New World animals by these Old World writers. The value of these texts that I have analyzed in particular goes beyond the scope of historical events and indicates a clear dominator-dominated relationship in which the animals were represented in terms of the human narrative and not the other way around.

These four particular authors are valuable in that they act, through their representation of New World animals, as bridges between the European understanding and use of animals previous to Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean and the subsequent depiction in western literature of the animals that existed in the New World. The indigenous fauna in the western hemisphere was depicted as an extension of conquest. The individual animals were assessed for their value and their use, although each author characterized that use differently. Columbus used the animals for their symbolic Christian value; Pané capitalized on their inclusion in Taino cosmology to cobble together his report for Columbus; Cortés used animal bodies as representations of commodification of

the New World itself; Fernández de Oviedo included them both factually and anecdotally as part of the dowry that was the New World's forced shotgun wedding to Europe. These animal representations did not, in fact, further the human-animal relationship developed in western literature from Aristotle through the fifteenth century. Rather, they continued the literary traditions that treated animal bodies and behaviors as irrational and in need of contextualization within the human narrative. My analysis of these representations of New World animals has led me to understand that the human-animal relationship and the perception of fauna during the Early Modern period had not changed drastically from the Classical and Medieval periods. These texts have value in that they demonstrate the ongoing and stabilized relationship between dominating human and dominated domesticated and wild beasts.

To answer my second question, what implications might these texts have in the context of Ecocriticism and Critical Animal Studies?, I acknowledge the shift in the relationship between animals and humans that has occurred since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the texts depict animals in consequence to the Discovery and the subsequent conquest, they suggest that animal representation in literature is complex and multi-layered, and is dependent not only on the writer's skills of observation, but also his education, the kinds of texts he was exposed to, his religiosity, and his social class. More importantly, nature writing is dependent upon the reason(s) for writing; if the writer is involved in the capture, colonization, and commodification of a new territory, his animal representation naturally depicts that. Huggan and Tiffin imply that, in fact, nature writing itself is a form of conquest in that humankind has the final say in the depiction of

an animal, and the animal is completely stripped of individual agency to be described outside of the human narrative (5). Further, nature writing creates a boundary between man and animal; the act of representing another creature from a human perspective makes it simple to both objectify and subjectify the creature. Karl Steel notes that by creating this literary boundary and describing animals as objects, humankind then gives itself permission to subjectify the newly created object. Thus, if we read about an animal's use as a symbol for divinity, or as food and leather, we then feel that we should always depict it as a symbol for divinity, or as food and leather (14). The representation of an animal in a certain manner then sets the precedent for the animal to always be represented in the same way. This is the human-animal relationship we see in the writings of Columbus, Pané, Cortés, and Fernández de Oviedo. They read about animals in the various genres available in the Old World, and they learned about animals through the available artistic and religious representation in their European cultures. Later, in describing the New World animals, these writers unconsciously incorporated those representations to suit their purpose for writing: Columbus used animals to depict his journey as divine, Pané transcribed the marvelous inclusions of animals in Taino folklore, Cortés depicted his knowledge of the hunt to outline the capture of Mexico, and Fernández de Oviedo incorporated the various forms of literature to create a larger-than-life natural history. These conquistadores, despite having never seen these types of creatures before, cannot help but describe them in European terms. For Critical Animal Studies, this implies that even when humans see something new and raw, our representation of it is tainted by our cultural and individual backgrounds; our descriptions

of animals, ultimately, have not yet escaped our human perspective in order to accurately portray any animal as it exists.

Not until the latter half of the twentieth century did writers begin to grant animals more agency and autonomy. The animal liberation movement of the 1960s created a social space in which the human-animal relationship developed beyond the utility of the animal and focused on its existence as a sentient being. Children were reading books, such as Richard Adam's *Watership Down* and E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, written from the animal perspective about the animal-human relationship. Nature programs represented animals in the wild, rather than from behind the bars of a cage. Clips of enclosed animals being abused for the sake of eggs, milk, and meat were circulated around the Internet. In the span of fifty years, the millennia-long dominator-dominated relationship between humans and animals began to be represented quite differently through art, literature, and the media. Humankind began to reflect this representation outwardly, through books on Ecocriticism, organizations like PETA and Mercy for Animals, and documentaries such as *Black Fish* and *Dominion*. Humanity has only just begun to question its exploitation and physical commodification of animals, and many people are finding the traditional human-based narrative as less than desirable.

While my four authors demonstrate a high propensity for a human-dominated relationship with animals, there were already some cracks forming in the human-centered narrative in the sixteenth century. Fernández de Oviedo documented not only the existence of animal life in the New World but also its extinction. This is significant in that he is really one of the first writers in the New World to show the impact that the

Spanish were having on their newly acquired territories. He gives the example of Diego Columbus, the brother of the Admiral, was in control of Fort Saint Thomas on Hispaniola while his brother was dealing with some rebels in the south of that island.⁴³⁸ At the time, the Spaniards in the fort faced starvation, and they began to consume all of the animals in sight, including local dogs, and small animals called *hutias*, *quemis*, *mohuy*, and *coris*, causing the *hutias* and *quemis* to go extinct (1: 50). Their extinction was so significant and so rapid that Fernández de Oviedo mentions it in both Books Two and Twelve (1: 389). While the relationship is still human-centered, Fernández de Oviedo becomes a very early ecocritic, indicating that there is already species extinction within the first few years of the invasion of the Spanish.

For the modern ecocritic, species loss is a constant threat and reality. Humankind's relationship to wild and exotic animals has been one in which the impact of our personal choices indirectly affects them, even when they are thousands of miles away, populating the ice fields of the arctic, or the small islands of Polynesia. While the choices made by the conquistadores directly affected the species with which they interacted, such as Columbus's men catching seabirds for food, or Cortés' importation of Old World species into the Americas, the effects of the Industrial and Technological revolutions have impacted wild and domestic animals far and wide. The average consumer of beef is so far removed from the unmaking process that he cannot understand the devastating and far-reaching consequences that his decision has. He cannot equivocate the small package of ground beef that he buys in the store with the rising

⁴³⁸ From Volume One, Book Two, Chapter Eight.

demand for grazing lands in Brazil and the loss of habitat and animal life in the Amazon rainforest. In the last fifty years, the gap between human and animals has begun to close through representation and exposure to representation. Humanity's intentions for depicting animals is less based in objectivity and subjectivity. Instead, the intention has evolved into the attempt to create arenas, in literature, art, music, and physical places, in which humans and animals can inhabit the same spaces in which neither the one exploits the other.

The implications of the works of Columbus, Pané, Cortés, and Fernández de Oviedo on Ecocriticism and Critical Animal Studies are clear. Every writer depicts the natural world through his learned cultural values and education. If his culture and his education teach him to dominate, this is how he will depict objectified creatures. If his culture and education teach him to view himself as part of natural world, he will depict nature as different but equal to himself. Analyzing the work of these authors helps ecocritics and scholars to further understand the influence that education, culture, class, and intention for writing have on the representation of animals, particularly when humankind is confronted with a new species or a new natural environment. As humans evolve, so does our perspective of the world, our literature of it, and our subsequent rewriting of that literature. The opportunity we have now is to rewrite our relationship with animals, with nature, and with our own future selves.

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