"By a Course Never Sailed Before": Exploration and Metafiction in Daniel Defoe's *A New Voyage round the World*

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Abstract
Building on earlier analyses of propagandistic themes and travelogues in Defoe's fictional and non-fictional writings of exploration and discovery, and elaborating on the rich surge of criticism which has followed the publication of the masterly Pickering and Chatto sixty-three-volume edition of *The Works of Daniel Defoe* (2000-2011), this essay sets out to re-inscribe Defoe's last novel, *A New Voyage round the World* (1725), within a literary dimension. After discussing the authorial stance of the anonymous narrator, the essay will focus on the most innovative section of the work, the narrative of an unprecedented overland trek across the Andes to the Atlantic coast and the narrative invention, as it were, of a strangely domesticated 'Andean sublime'.

Key-words: British colonization, Daniel Defoe, eighteenth-century travel fiction, literature of discovery, South Sea trade.

1. Introduction

Daniel Defoe's *A New Voyage Round the World, By a Course Never Sailed Before* (1725) has long been considered as little more than a flawed attempt to capitalize on the increasing readership of mariners' logs and travel accounts over the first decades of the eighteenth century, or, at best, as a fanciful *roman à thèse* (Jack 1961) giving voice in fictional form to Defoe's lifelong commitment to a mercantile vision of British expansionism. Throughout his career, from his early essays in *The Review* to the cluster of works centred on geography, colonization and trade published between 1724 and 1728, Defoe consistently sustained this vision by repeated appeals, in pamphlets, letters, articles and treatises, for Britain to increase its international trade and plant new settlements, especially in the South Seas.

What is now generally considered to be Defoe's last sally into the genre of the 'novel' – a genre which he eminently contributed to shape and define out of the instability and polymorphism of what Lennard Davis (1983: 42-70) called the "undifferentiated matrix" of the "news/novel discourse", and Michael McKeon (1987) powerfully examined and theorized as a dialectic and extremely dynamic process responding to the evolving attitudes towards "questions" of "truth" and "virtue" in the face of crucial social changes and epistemic revisions – borrows its title from William Dampier's *A New Voyage round the World* (1697). A major editorial success, it presented the accounts of the latter's factual journeys and buccaneer adventures in the Spanish Caribbean and the Isthmus of America, the South Seas and the Far East. Dampier's work, soon followed by *A Voyage to New Holland* (1703), the journal of his second voyage of discovery, served to whet the readers' appetite for travelogues and exploration literature. Along with the publication of the first, eighteenth-century collections of travels (such as John Churchill's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1704) and John Harris' *Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca* (1705), it triggered a whole line of authentic and fictional, or semi-fictional, travel narratives deploying variations on the trope and title of the 'voyage round the world'.

Defoe's own *New Voyage* is a first-person account by an unnamed "I" (fulfilling the roles of sea captain, privateer, narrator and would-be explorer), which, in the absence of biographical and psychological characterization, draws on the fortunate tradition of factual circumnavigation literature in order to foreground a dual agenda. Its first objective consists in imaginatively opening a new speculative trade route. Based, in part, on actual routes (such as the one traced by Willem Schouten and Jacob Le Maire in 1625-1627) imagined in reverse, it was designed to reap the greatest economic advantage by disrupting the established thoroughfares of Spanish protectionism and international trade in the Caribbean and the Far East, often by defying the *status quo* through piratical actions[1].

[1] For a detailed analysis and attentive evaluation of Defoe's sources, as well as an exhaustive survey of existing criticism, see: McVeagh (2009: 9-18), Markley (2006), and, on the influence of Sir John Narborough's exploration voyage to the South Seas in 1669-1671, Vickers (2006: 143-147). See also Capoferro (2007).

The second aim, representing the rationale for the trek across the Andes from the coast of Chile to the plains of Patagonia which occupies the second part of the novel and is the main focus of this essay, was to provide an 'emplaced' and imaginatively fleshed out argument for the desirability and feasibility of Defoe's scheme for establishing twin English colonies on both coasts of South America. Dating back to 1711, when Defoe's letter 171 to Robert Harley of July 23 included an attachment consisting in a "Proposall for Seizing, Possessing, and forming an English Collony on The kingdome of Chili in the South Part of America" (Healy 1955: 346), Defoe's now polished and expanded plan suggested that through the above mentioned inland passage the Atlantic settlement, thriving on the breeding of livestock and agriculture, would supply the trading colony on the Chilean coast with fresh provisions, allowing for longer and safer voyages and an unprecedented expansion of British maritime traffic and profits[2].

Following the publication of John McVeagh's faultless 2009 edition, which outlines the changing geography of the work's critical reception, and in line with the growing attention currently devoted to Defoe's non-fiction as an essential key to his 'major' works, *A New Voyage* is being increasingly rediscovered for its fruitful intermingling of ideological assumptions and narrative strategies.

Still mixed are recent comments, such as John Richetti's, who, while lamenting the author's neglect "to develop a central subjectivity" and the tedious 'circumstantiality' of the book (2005: 222), praises Defoe's "defining energy" and "imaginative projection" (2005: 224). Ilse Vickers (2006) has also helped to re-institute the centrality of this novel in defining Defoe's position in relation to the scientific and empirical narrative protocols of his time. Against such often lukewarm reception, McVeagh praises the "undigressive concentration" and "structural unity" of this novel, and draws attention to Defoe's unrelenting "interest in moral and political analysis refracting adventure through a moral lens" (McVeagh 2009: 1).

A new and very promising line of argument has also been inaugurated recently by Robert Markley (2014). A 'pioneer' in the

[2] On the historical and political backgrounds of Defoe's long-standing dream of establishing the twin colonies, see McVeagh (2009), Markley (2014: 303-306), and De Michelis (1995: 28-35).

study of Defoe's *A New Voyage* and what he has called "the romance of the South Seas" (Markley 1994, 2006), Markley has now suggestively re-oriented his reading of Defoe's maritime and terrestrial fictional expeditions in the South Seas through the lens of climate ecologies and ecocriticism. In particular, he elaborates on the established view of rhetorical 'domestication' and 'familiarization' as pervasive tropes characterizing travel and discovery literature since the beginning of European colonization. He shows how recurrent "analogical substitutions and displacements" (Markley 2014: 296), such as Defoe's comparison of the plains of Patagonia to the countryside around Salisbury (McVeagh 2009: 254), go well beyond a mere formula convention in the description and 'invention' of imagined space. On the contrary, Defoe's narrative entails – and at the same time participates in mapping out – the fantastic coordinates of "a global climatology" based on "complex analogies between known and unknown regions" (Markley 2014: 295), which aims to "project the 'normative' climatic conditions of 'home' onto the blank spaces on maps of the South Seas" (Markley 2015: 296).

In describing the fertile agricultural imaginary of the Atlantic side of the Andes near Rio Camarones, or the idyllic lives of the natives in the Cordillera (referred to, in one case, as an "Emblem of complete Felicity" (McVeagh 2009: 201), Defoe almost ends up by evoking the "image – at once climatological and political – of an antipodean Scotland" (Markley 2014: 304), and gives shape to an "eerily prescient anticipation" of the science fiction genre of "alternative history" (p. 310). This idea of an "antipodean Scotland" is even more evocative if one considers how the narrator's first trips to the foothills of the Andes are oddly consonant, in some passages, with the description of the central Pennines in "Letter VIII" of the almost contemporary *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1725-1727), in particular in the way both texts downplay travellers' hyperboles about the beauty (or horror) of the places and the difficulties of travelling across the mountains. And, in another passage, the portrait of a "poor industrious Chilian" (McVeagh 2009: 198) leading a blessed life amidst the harshness of the Andean region might itself be seen as an 'antipodean' mirror to the poor family living contentedly in a cave that in the same letter, Defoe singles out as a "real" wonder, to be preferred to the "imaginary" ones famously advertised as the unmissable attractions of "the Peak" (Defoe 1978: 463).

Markley's current eco-critical turn represents an organic and suggestive elaboration on his long-standing research on Defoe's writings of voyage and adventure. His analyses have influentially highlighted the process by which, in Defoe's work, "'the novel' and 'economics' become mutually constitutive fictions" in order to shed light onto "the inner logics of capitalism" (Markley 1994: 148). In *A New Voyage*, in particular, Markley traces a novelization of Locke's ideology "of abundance", and shows how Defoe's celebration of the idea that natural resources are "inexhaustible" provides the rationale for promoting the dream of "an imaginary world of abundance", where "wealth does not depend on the strictures of the Protestant ethic to justify the exploitation of a fallen and corrupt world" (1994: 149).

A utopian vein and a propagandistic thrust are major characteristics in many of Defoe's fictional and non-fictional works focusing on trade, piracy and adventure. They allow him to experiment with structure and genre while producing, at the same time, ideological tales which – by negotiating the boundaries between fact and fiction, probability and "truth" and problematizing these shifts through the lenses of empirical experience and morality – provide a new kind of readership with compelling imaginative 'technologies' for understanding and coming to terms with the changing cultural and epistemic environment of the early eighteenth-century[3].

The recurrence and re-modulation of these themes across different rhetorical modes and prose genres mark out the years 1725-1728 as a moment of pressing convergence for Defoe's life-long advocacy of British expansionism. *A New Voyage round the World* appears to belong, in this light, to an ideological as well as 'poetic' cluster which also comprises *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (1725), *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1725-1727), *The Compleat English Tradesman* (1726), *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis* (1728), *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1728), and the unfinished *The Compleat English Gentleman*. At the same time, as I have argued elsewhere[4], *A New Voyage* looks back to earlier works by Defoe: it actually expands into full novel-length

[3] I am elaborating on Erik Bond's idea of literary genre "as an imaginative, experimental tool for organizing readers" (Bond 2007: xiii).
[4] See De Michelis (1995; 2005) and Defoe (1993).

episodes from Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* that he had already emphasized in *An Historical Account of the Voyages and Adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1719), and is evocative of the trek through darkest Africa in *Captain Singleton* (1720), although in a way that is much more concerned with persuasion and propaganda than with the (inchoate) construction of personal identity. All this clearly points to Defoe's consistent commitment, throughout his life, to a projectual approach to an expansive world of new 'discoveries' and 'possibilities' viewed as a yet uncharted site in which to narratively explore, and experiment with, challenging social and political imaginaries, and possibly engage readers in a like attempt to probe and imagine the future.

Building on these premises, and while fully endorsing the primacy of the imperial theme in this novel, in this essay I shall focus on the narrative strategies and conventions aligning Defoe's *A New Voyage* with the 'main track' of his fiction, which by no means entails playing down the ideological agenda and persuasive structure underpinning Defoe's formal experiment with the aesthetics of the plausible in this work. I shall, first, discuss the authorial stance of the anonymous narrator – which, far from merely paying homage to the paratextual conventions of the genre, seems to me to be making a meaningful case for Defoe's idea of narrative as a performative enterprise, meant to produce moral and factual change and action. I shall turn, then, to the most original and thematically 'adventurous' section of the work, the narrative of the unprecedented trek across the mountains, in order to discuss what I consider Defoe's invention, as it were, of a strangely domesticated 'Andean sublime', and the way it is functional to the persuasive template and ideological design of the plot.

2. Defoe's New Voyage and "the manner of relating"

The increasing critical interest in Defoe's non-fiction has placed in sharp relief the extent to which the tracts and didactic works characterizing his later years are purposefully cross-fertilized by dialogue and novelistic cameos. The same may be said of the rich intertextual relationship between Defoe's novels and his immensely varied sources, which include, of course, his own works. This is particularly evident in the novels which thrive on the nurturing

nexus between travel and knowledge in order to outline an infinitely expansive map of personal and national improvement which, at the same time, aims to divert, reform, persuade, instruct and, as intrinsic to Defoe's thought, become a catalyst for action. Regardless of how 'tedious' or repetitive *A New Voyage* may appear, especially the first part of it, its undoubtedly loose and yet original, paroxystic structure is also designed to serve as an ingenious form of conduct book for all readers inclined to embrace Defoe's fantasy of proliferation and abundance and to engage with that "plenum, a world full to bursting and almost beyond imagining in its rich possibilities" (Richetti 2005: 224) that, under the first-person narrator's firm textual guidance, is opened up to a British dream of commercial hegemony and control.

Authority, vision and control are, indeed, defining elements of the long 'aesthetic blueprint' which, instead of being confined to the conventional space of the paratext, marks the actual beginning of the novel, gliding almost seamlessly into the account of the preparations for the voyage and of the phony exercise in moral and commercial tightrope-walking underpinning the scheme of the expedition. The continuity between the two sections is worth noting in so far as, unlike in other novels, the main argument in the narrator's defence of the particular 'value' of his own relation largely sidelines issues of *truth*, or *verisimilitude*, to the advantage of highlighting *difference*, with respect to his predecessors, as to:

> the *nature of the Observations*, as well as *the manner of relating them*: And as this is perfectly *new in its Form*, so I cannot doubt but it will be *agreeable in the Particulars*, seeing either no Voyage ever made before, had *such a Variety of incidents* happening in it, *so useful and so diverting*, or no Person that sail'd on those Voyages, *has thought fit to publish them after this manner*. (McVeagh 2009: 31; my italics)

While *A New Voyage* lavishly draws on the accounts of earlier voyages, the narrator's self-promotion of his work relies on arguments that may well be considered "metafictional" (Markley 2012: 202), in so far as relations of style, form, variety, usefulness and entertainment are made to cohere by invoking narrative design and prowess. This aesthetic concern is compounded by the *incipit* of the novel, belittling, and making fun of the alleged extraordinariness of circumnavigation voyages and marking out the narrator as a 'modern'

man, in line with the most advanced knowledge of his times. At the same time, the narrator pretends to decry the revolving-door system, encouraged by the book trade's sensationalist exploitation of the increasing contiguity between journalism and fiction, which means that "as soon as Men have acted the Sailor, they come a-shore and write Books of their Voyage", and "set up for Teachers and Chart Makers to Posterity", regardless of the fact that "a very good Sailor may make but a very indifferent Author" (McVeagh 2009: 29).

Crammed with mere "Directions for Sailors", "tedious Accounts of their Log-Work", and botched narratives which "are told superficially and by Halves" and "have nowhere a full Relation", such books – the narrator complains – "have *little or nothing of Story* in them, for the use of such Readers who never intend to go to Sea, and yet […] may desire to hear how it has far'd with those that have, and how Affairs stand in those remote Parts of the World" (McVeagh 2009: 30; my italics). While this is evocative of Defoe's praise in his unfinished *Compleat English Gentleman* (1728-1729, first published in 1890) of the gentleman-merchant as someone who may "make the tour of the world in books" and "go round the globe with Dampier and Rogers" (Defoe 1890: 225), it is also a forceful claim by the protagonist/narrator to his own moral leadership and responsibility as an author.

The opportunity to "kno' a thousand times more in doing it [circumnavigating the globe through books] than all those illiterate sailors" (p. 225) is directly indexed to the ability of the text to elicit active engagement from the readers, and transform them into subjects who have "knowledge of things, not words" (p. 212), and are therefore fit, in both imaginative and practical ways, to 'conquer new worlds'. From this empirical perspective, it must be noted how the protagonist's authorial concern is by no means decoupled from his capacity as a sea captain and explorer, since the decision to go on a voyage round the world "by a Course never Sailed before" is presented as synchronous and consonant with the narrative project of providing a new "manner of relating" it (McVeagh 2009: 31):

> For these Reasons, when first I set out upon a cruising and trading Voyage to the *East*, and resolv'd to go any where, and every where that the Advantage of Trade or the Hopes of Purchase should guide us, I also resolv'd to take such exact notice of every thing that past within my Reach, that I would be

able, if I liv'd to come home, to give an Account of my Voyage, differing from all that I had never seen before […]"(p. 30)

For, even though Defoe strictly mimics the formal instructions and empiricist matrix recommended by the Royal Society regarding the proper ways to organize journals and ethnographic observations, he simultaneously draws on his own ability to steer between the opposite conventions of "naïve empiricism" and "extreme skepticism" (McKeon 1987) in order to bend the genre in line with his performative and persuasive agenda. On the one hand, the protagonist's adherence to the narrative conventions of the logbook – also made explicit in his command that, in their preliminary trip to the entrance of the Andes, the future leaders of his "army for discovery" (McVeagh 2009: 220) should "keep each of them distinct Journals of those Things", so as to "be able to find that Way afterwards themselves and without Guides" (p. 194) – is consistent with the aim to "make facts" by accurate recording and "plain descriptive language" (Ogborn and Withers 2005: 23) which characterizes the genre. On the other hand, the protagonist requires his men

to make Land-marks, Bearings and Beacons, as we might call them, upon the Points of the Rocks above them, and at every turning of the Way below them, also at the Reaches and windings of the Rivers and Brooks, Falls of Water, and every thing remarkable" (McVeagh 2009: 194).

By encrypting their observations into the landscape, the men form a new kind of map which seems to partake of both the materiality of the land and the symbolic nature of the atlas, also trespassing, in a way, on the boundaries between discourse and fact, as the narrator hints in a consciously ironic comment: "Such a Journal, I believe was never *seen* before or since" (p. 194: my italics). Without dismissing their practical relevance, the metafictional nature of these instructions clearly stands out if we consider how the successful decoding of those material symbols provides the pretext for a self-contained episode in the last part of the novel. Having lost their way, the men manage to get back on the right track precisely by their ability to recognize these signs and reinvest them with meaning (p. 233).

3. The Andean Trek as Atlas of Desire

This is, in all senses, familiar 'Defoe country', and is in tune with the novelist's well established practice of engaging the reader in a sequence of interpretive challenges which provide a foundation for the pleasure afforded by the story, while at the same time fulfilling the didactic function of showing how to overcome difficulties, and learn to develop strategic thinking, by trial and error[5]. It is worth noting, however, that the 'Beacons' left by the sailors during their first expedition are not the only signs marking out the Andean landscape as an ideal atlas of desire. As the protagonist and his men proceed on their trips, they find that almost every rock and every bend are made conspicuous and recognizable by the numberless lumps of gold washed up on the rivers' shores or glittering in the stone. The intellectual and entertaining thrill of decoding and problem-solving underpinning the 'contract' between the narrator and his audience is inextricably intertwined, in this novelization of colonial propaganda, with the acquisitive fantasy of a yielding and all-embracing geography of abundance.

Just as consonant with Defoe's fictional practice is the recurring Robinsonian 'ruse', in *A New Voyage*, of telling the same story all over again at different times and from altered perspectives. This provides the novelist with a flexible narrative tool, which proves to be invaluable in engaging the readers and conquering their disbelief. This strategy is made even more complicated in the case of the 'new voyager'. Keeping faith with his assignment, he remains in charge of the ship sailing the conventional route around Cape Horn, so that, while keeping a journal of his own experiences, he cannot provide a first-person narrative of the opening of the new trade route across the Andes carried out by his men. In this way, not only is the 'projectual' nature of Defoe's scheme safeguarded by preventing speculation and truth from actually overlapping, but the narrator, also, is obliged to weave together the voices and relations of multiple observers, made in different conditions and at different times. This technique has the apparent effect of amplifying and hammering home the key notions and overall persuasive message of the text, but it lends itself,

[5] On this characteristic of Defoe's narrative style and utopian thinking, see Bignami (1993).

in addition, to a metafictional interpretation, highlighting the role of intertextuality even while subjecting it to the unifying focus on 'story' and plot warranted by an overarching author(ial)ity.

In *A New Voyage*, a lack of "central subjectivity" (Richetti 2005: 222) does not give way, in fact, to a downplaying of the importance of 'storying'. Quite the contrary: in a text where the story is designed to give substance and imaginatively flesh out what might otherwise be received as no more than the visionary scheme of a 'projecting mind' (or at best a piece of tedious propaganda), the author (and the narrator) both turn to the "coherence of story" (White 1978: 44-45) and the "symbolic significance of a comprehensible plot-structure" (p. 53) in order to create a narrative which is not mimetic of "the events it describes", but performative. Indeed, it "tells us in what directions to think about the events" (p. 52) and requires the readers to pronounce judgement on the plausibility of the Antipodean world portrayed in the novel and, on the grounds of its "feasibility", hopefully to take up the project of planting new colonies in the South Seas.

Such construction of 'the plausible' relies on a number of elements, ranging from the exploitation of actual sources, such as journals, maps and chronicles, to an emphasis on gathering news about gold, staples, the nature of territory and the presence of Spanish troops by questioning sailors, merchants, Spanish settlers and 'Chilean Indians'. Another device consists in plain argumentation: the most pressing questions that the readers (envisaged as prospective 'subscribers' to the narrator's "Grand Design" [McVeagh 2009: 218] of establishing new colonies) would be likely to pose, are played out through unrelenting question-and-answer sessions between the protagonist and the rich Spaniard whom he befriends and who accompanies him on his trips to the mouth of the Andean passage. In a narrative move that resembles the dialogic scaffolding of Defoe's conduct books (some of which are almost contemporary to *A New Voyage*), the narrator creates a space for political and ethnographic reasoning which, instead of hindering the progress of the story, comes, in this way, to be inscribed within the plot. This 'outsourcing', as it were, of the foundations of English colonial propaganda to the Spaniard provides a further narrative advantage: namely, it endows his arguments with the knowledgeability of the insider, while projecting the narrator's dream of future English expansion onto

the backcloth of amicable relations and mutual understanding, that is to say, a removal of international competition.

But the most important feature in winning over the reader to the re-routing of overseas trade and settling of a Patagonian colony advocated in the novel lies in the fictional rendering of the inextricable elements of landscape and travel. While both of them belong in the narrative continuum of factual and imaginary voyages, and need therefore to serve the acquisitive, classificatory logics of the map and the inventory, as well as the reproducible knowledge of the log-book and the manual, they must also fulfil the aesthetic requirements of the still inchoate genre of the novel, and attempt to imaginatively 'make space' by providing avenues for marvel and identification, suspense and calm, desire and control.

Not unlike *Captain Singleton*, *A New Voyage* too hinges its making of territory and adventure on the juxtaposition of motion and stasis. But whereas Singleton's trekking across Africa is meant to represent an extreme site of otherness, the persuasive agenda of the later novel requires that the space and language of 'adventure' be circumscribed within the limits of a reassuring, though at times exciting, normality. While this is in line with the alternate use of techniques of familiarization and estrangement, characteristic of expansionist tracts, it is also often evocative of the domestic circuits of *A Tour*. This feeling is further compounded by the use, in *A New Voyage*, of familiarizing comparisons such as the one between an Andean peak and "the Top of the Cupulo of St. Paul's" (McVeagh 2009: 196), or the description of a waterfall "as falling sometimes from a Height of Twenty Times as high as the Monument" (p. 195).

But, beside these rather conventional formulas, the invention of the Andean landscape as a place of marvel and desire (and, more to the point, a kind of open-air repository of gold) relies mainly on a reassuring sequence of gentle, well-farmed slopes and fertile, verdant valleys that afford engaging views and pleasant crossings between the few passages connoted by the sublime 'horror' of the peaks. Even though complying with the demand for the picturesque and 'extraordinariness' on which travel literature is premised, the narrator is primarily concerned with stressing the analogies, not the differences, between England and Patagonia, while showing at the same time how this country – which is unreclaimed by either the proud and slothful Spaniards, or the ignorant, and "so

harmless" Indians (McVeagh 2009: 191) – "is, as it were *singled out for Englishmen*; not only to live in, but to live *just after the manner of English People's living*" (Furbank 2001: 212; my italics).

This point is also borne out through the different attitudes of the narrator and the Spaniard towards travelling and exploring the country: while the Englishman insists on reaching the divide of the mountains, and taking at least "a Prospect of the World on the other Side" (McVeagh 2009: 192), the Spaniard more than once has to concede that he can provide only conjectures about the "Country without End" lying east of the Cordillera: "What is farther, I know not" (p. 176). It is telling how he attempts, at first, to discourage the protagonist from taking a trip to the entrance of the Andes merely on grounds of discomfort and an inability to tune in with the fascination of "wild and uncouth Places" (p. 193), where there is "little to be seen but steep Precipices, unhospitable Rocks, and unpassable Mountains", where the waterfalls make "a barbarous and unpleasant Sound" (p. 192). In fact, as he is ready to assure the Englishman, the feeling of horror does not translate into actual obstacles or difficulties, for "there's nothing difficult or impracticable" in the crossing of the mountains, "nor is it any thing but what the Country People, and even some of our Nation, perform every Day" (p. 193). This is in sharp contrast with the reactions of the Englishman, eager to take up the challenge of exploring a new world, "provided it [the Andean passage] could be master'd at last" (p. 193).

In *A New Voyage*, too, a sense of movement and adventure – with its coterminous creation of projectual spatialities and temporalities – is produced mainly through Defoe's uncontested ability in recording "the anxiety of creating space" (Davis 1987: 70). The use of "performing description", which entails the structuring of "adventure as problem solving" (Cohen 2010: 78) and helps "to drive the action forward even as it brings about a novel's imaginary world" (p. 76), is also an effective and pervasive resource. By contrast, the more conventionally descriptive cameos that are designed to render the sublime fascination of the Andes and the experience of being confronted with 'the extraordinary', stand out as rather static if highly evocative and bewitching *tableaux* in which the protagonist momentarily discards his own identification with the epics of travel in order to take up the more relaxed subject position of spectator.

This is particularly evident in his first encounter with an erupting volcano, which he sees at a distance from the Spaniard's mansion, and initially mistakes for a fire threatening the house. Once reassured, he tells us how he "sat almost all of the Night staring out at a Window at the Eruption of Fire upon the Hills", comparing the view to a "Bonfire" (McVeagh 2009: 185) of which he had never seen the like. This kind of spectatorial attitude is resumed in a later episode, where, nearer to the heart of the Andes, he is taken by his host on a kind of guided 'night tour' in the midst of the volcanos:

> But who can express the Thoughts of a Man's Heart, coming on a sudden into a Place where the whole World seemed to be of a light Fire, […] the sides of the Mountains were shining the Fire itself; the Flame from the Top of the Mountain on the other Side, casting its Light directly upon them, from thence the Reflection onto other Parts look'd Red, and more terrible; for the first was white and clear, like the Light of the Sun; but the other being, as it were, a Reflection of Light mix'd with some darker Cavities, *represented the Fire of a Furnace*; and in short, it might well be said, here was no Darkness; But certainly, at the first View it gives no Traveller any other Idea than that of being *at the very Entrance of Eternal Horror* (p. 204; my italics).

4. Conclusion: 'Storying' Discovery and Propaganda

While achieving a powerful visual effect, this passage seems to me to rely more on Defoe's experience of 'travelling with books' in the steps of Virgil's description of Pelorus and Milton's comparison of hell with Aetna than on actual journals by historical explorers. Much more characteristic of Defoe's narrative strategy is the way this passage is soon followed by the protagonist's inquiries about whether those volcanos produce "a kind of Liquid Fire, as I had seen an Account of on the monstrous Eruptions at Mount Aetna" (p. 205)[6].

Against the backcloth of the *New Voyage*'s not-so-exotic world of infinite abundance, it is not surprising that not only is the

[6] One is tempted to identify this "account" with *Paradise Lost* (I, 227-238), which includes references to both "thundering Aetna" and a "Lake with liquid fire". For a more detailed analysis of these analogies and extended quotations, see De Michelis (1995: 132).

narrator taken to watch the spectacle of the streaming lava, but is also informed that "There was a great deal of melted Gold ran down with the other inflamed Earth in that Stream, and that much Gold was afterwards found there; *but this I was to take upon Trust*" (p. 205; my italics).

The same happens with the reader, who, having been entertained with "a variety of incidents [...] so useful as so diverting" (p. 31), is taken – along with the protagonist and his men, and at the end of innumerable circuits and detours by land and sea – to the coveted site selected by Defoe for his expansionist dream: "A noble Champian Country, the Plains all smooth, and cover'd with Grass like *Salisbury* Plain", an "excellent Country for feeding and breeding of Sheep and Horses" (p. 225), a country almost singled out by God for colonization by the English. As the narrator finally states, "I never saw a Country in the World so like England" (p. 226). But this, again, is to be taken "upon Trust", and rests on the willing suspension of disbelief brought on by the author's innovative "manner of relating", an expression which refers not only to story-telling techniques, but also to ways of 'relating' with the readers.

Defoe's audacious attempt to open a productive new narrative 'course' for advocating the 'feasibility' of establishing English hegemony over the "unbounded", and "undiscover'd Ocean of business" laid open – to the projecting writer as well as the enterprising reader – by the ever widening atlas of newly discovered, or colonized lands, cannot exist outside his life-long fascination and engagement with the instability, both in fact and fiction, of the relation between "questions of truth" and his projecting mind.

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