

Alejandro Geraldini. *Periplo hasta las regiones ubicadas al sur del equinoccio*. Ed. Carmen González Vázquez and Jesús Paniagua Pérez. Trans. Carmen González Vázquez. Colección humanistas españoles 35. León: Universidad de León, 2009. 510 pp. index. bibl. €25. ISBN: 978-84-9773-482-0.

On April 1522, the first bishop to set foot on Santo Domingo to assume his post there dedicated to Pope Leo X a relation of travels to lands south of the equinox. His ultimate goal: to make manifest the pope's success in extending his sovereignty and empire over the Antipodes. A member of the circle of Italian clerics and intellectuals in the service of the Catholic Monarchy, Peter Martyr d'Anghiera and Lucio Marineo Sículo among them, and supporter of the Columbian venture of exploration, his work is an example of humanism writing the experience of early modern European expansion. Geraldini brings together medieval traditions and Renaissance innovation, in its unusual itinerary through both Africa and the Indies. In his pen, the fantasy of exotic worlds meets classical erudition and firsthand experience, integrated into a persuasive argument to obtain permission to build the first cathedral in the episcopal seat of the New World.

Through an imaginary itinerary of Africa, the author takes thirteen (out of sixteen) chapters to direct readers to the landscapes and peoples of Cabo Verde,

Mauritania, and Ethiopia. Following conventions of early modern historiography, he gives special attention to monuments and other relics of Roman dominion. Epigraphy and antiquarianism serve as witnesses to the noble civic life and grandeur of the urban setting in ostensibly uncharted lands in Southern Africa; Portuguese presence and commerce are eclipsed. Extensive descriptions of the regions' flora and fauna originate in the readings of Pliny and Luis de Cadamosto — the Venetian explorer in the service of the Portuguese Crown — among others, crafting exotic landscapes laden with riches. Geraldini punctuates his depiction of natural marvels with speeches on local customs and beliefs placed in the mouths of kings and sages he encounters on his fantastical travels. Following Aristotle's *Poetics*, verisimilitude serves as a constitutive part of historical evidence. Reticent on the cosmographic situation of the region, he conceives the Antipodes as the habitable region argued by Columbus and his supporters.

Geraldini's description of the Indies, in contrast, not only engages classical sources (Pliny, Ptolemy) and contemporary descriptions of the Indies, but also includes his own eyewitness testimony. Starting with the cosmographic situation of the region, he frames the New World as an island (still a common perception; the eventual circumnavigations initiated by Magellan and Elcano were in their early stages the year Geraldini left for his post in Santo Domingo). Contrasting the savagery of Carib society to the civility of the inhabitants of Hispaniola, and by analogy to the description of African city-states, Geraldini conveys a sense of the Antipodes of the Indies as a difficult region to inhabit, but a feasible space for conquest nonetheless. Furthermore, the author's emphasis on monuments and urban structures as witnesses to Roman glory in Africa finds a parallel in his advocacy of a cathedral as the seat of a Christian empire in the New World. Geraldini's concern with the governing of the Indies comes to the fore in his censure of the extermination of the native population of Hispaniola. On the other hand, he is reticent to the point of silence about the conflicts arising out of Cortés's expedition, the *encomienda*, and local slave rebellions.

The editors accompany this new Spanish translation of text with the original Latin, as well as letters to Charles V and other religious authorities. The Latin text is furnished after the translation rather than on facing pages — in effect, as an appendix — and includes the useful feature of marginal notations referring the reader to the corresponding pages of the translation. The learned introduction rightly locates Geraldini within the political and historiographical circles from which his work emerges. In keeping with the interdisciplinary editorial approach, this edition by González Vázquez and Paniagua Pérez of the University of León succeeds in presenting a volume of high scholarly value that will be of considerable use to students of history, geography, biology, and (if to a lesser degree, as they themselves acknowledge) philology. This volume is a welcome contribution to the study of early modern historiography and the influences of humanism beyond Iberia.

ELIZABETH M. PETTINAROLI
Rhodes College