

world he has stumbled upon. More than a century and a half later, in a Mexico with an established university and educated creole class, a girl child and intellectual prodigy explores new cultural territory of a different sort. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, as she is known, joins a convent in order to preserve herself from marriage, and amasses

an impressive collection of books. From her cell issues a steady stream of poetic meditations, witty and acerbic satires, verse dramas, and a defense of women's rights to knowledge and personhood that earned her the title she shares with Anne Bradstreet: "Tenth Muse of the New World."

Christopher Columbus 1451–1506

An accomplished merchant and seaman with more than twenty years of experience in the maritime commerce of Mediterranean and Atlantic trade routes, Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain in 1492 to enrich the treasury and expand the empire of a cash-strapped, militant Catholic monarchy. Explicitly framing his journey as an extension of Fernando and Isabel's defeat of the Moors and expulsion of Jews earlier that same year, Columbus's *Diario*, or journal, of the first voyage (1492–1493) articulates these economic and colonial rationales as it describes the land and peoples of the Bahamas, Cuba, and Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic). When hoped-for precious metals and other marketable commodities do not immediately appear on these Caribbean islands, Columbus works to place his "discoveries" within European traditions of travel writing, cartography, geography, and theology. He struggles to reconcile the new, "exotic," and unexpected of the Americas with the traditional, desired, and familiar of Europe's culture and economy.

Most of what we know today as the journals of Columbus are redactions made by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, perhaps as many as forty years after the death of Columbus. Although Las Casas presents himself as a faithful transcriber, some scholars question his influence on both the style and the substance of the journals. These

to descriptions of Indians, for whom Las Casas had much greater sympathy than did Columbus. Accurate estimates of Indian populations before Columbus arrived continue to elude historians, but the destruction of as much as four-fifths of the original population of Hispaniola in Columbus's lifetime provides an essential starting point for any reading of his written representations of Indians.

Columbus failed in his quest to discover a western route to the fabled riches of India or Cipangu (Japan), but his first voyage laid the foundation for Spanish control of potentially rich territories. To publicly authenticate their claims to the Caribbean, the Spanish monarchs established an enduring link between the politics of empire and the written accounts of explorers, by publishing excerpts from the journals along with a letter that Columbus had composed during his return trip. Fernando and Isabel quickly equipped Columbus for a second voyage (1493–1496), during which he explored Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Cuba, and the Lesser Antilles and attempted to establish a colony on Hispaniola. No journal of this trip survives, but extant records indicate that Columbus's poor management of the colony and his controversial decision to enslave Taino Indians for sale in Europe undermined his credibility in Spain.

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Columbus landed on Trinidad, formally took possession of the coast of Venezuela, and then sailed to Hispaniola, where he so alienated the Spanish colonists with his inflexible governance that he was arrested and sent back to Spain as a prisoner. In the journal, Columbus puzzles over unexpected compass readings recorded during his travels. Influenced by the cosmography of Pierre de Martyr's *Imago Mundi* (a copy of which he had heavily annotated), Columbus concluded that the Orinoco River must lead to the "Terrestrial Paradise," or Garden of Eden. Although Columbus had explored a similar idea during the return trip from his first voyage, this later articulation underscores the interpretive challenges that he encounters when he situates his new observations of sea, land, and stars within a pre-Columbian, European world view. From giving each landfall and sight-

ing a Catholic name to compiling religious texts in his "Book of Prophecies," Columbus frames his explorations not as the opening of a new world but as a Spanish Catholic fulfillment of Old Testament traditions.

Restored to good graces (but stripped of governing authority) by Fernando and Isabel, Columbus embarked on a fourth voyage (1502–1504), during which he explored Central America in search of a passage to the Indian Ocean. After being stranded on Jamaica for more than a year, Columbus returned to Spain with his already fragile health ruined. He died two years later (1506), a wealthy but bitter man who felt unappreciated by his monarchs and uncertain of his legacy.

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PRIMARY WORKS

Journal of the First Voyage to America by Christopher Columbus, 1825 (first voyage); J. M. Cohen, ed. and trans., *The Four Voyages of Columbus*, 1969 (third voyage); Oliver Dunn and James Kelley, ed. and trans., *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America*, 1989.

from *Journal of the First Voyage to America*, 1492–1493¹

Sunday, Oct. 21st [1492].² At 10 o'clock, we arrived at a cape of the island, and anchored, the other vessels in company. After having dispatched a meal, I went ashore, and found no habitation save a single house, and that without an occupant; we had no doubt that the people had fled in terror at our approach, as the house was completely furnished. I suffered nothing to be touched, and went with my captains and some of the crew to view the country. This island even exceeds the others in beauty and fertility. Groves of lofty and flourishing trees are abundant, as also large lakes, surrounded and overhung by the foliage, in a most enchanting manner. Everything looked as green as in April in Andalusia. The melody of the birds was so exquisite that one was never willing to part from the spot, and the flocks of parrots obscured the heavens. The diversity in the appearance of the feathered tribe from those of our

¹This extract begins with what Las Casas identifies as an extended direct quotation of Columbus.

²On October 12, Columbus landed on an island

referred to by its natives as Guanahani. He renamed it San Salvador. By October 21, Columbus was still exploring various islands of the Bahamas.

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country is extremely curious. A thousand different sorts of trees, with their fruit were to be met with, and of a wonderfully delicious odour. It was a great affliction to me to be ignorant of their natures, for I am very certain they are all valuable; specimens of them and of the plants I have preserved. Going round one of these lakes, I saw a snake,³ which we killed, and I have kept the skin for your Highnesses; upon being discovered he took to the water, whither we followed him, as it was not deep, and dispatched him with our lances; he was seven spans in length; I think there are many more such about here. I discovered also the aloe tree, and am determined to take on board the ship to-morrow, ten quintals of it, as I am told it is valuable. While we were in search of some good water, we came upon a village of the natives about half a league from the place where the ships lay; the inhabitants on discovering us abandoned their houses, and took to flight, carrying off their goods to the mountain. I ordered that nothing which they had left should be taken, not even the value of a pin. Presently we saw several of the natives advancing towards our party, and one of them came up to us, to whom we gave some hawk's bells and glass beads, with which he was delighted. We asked him in return, for water, and after I had gone on board the ship, the natives came down to the shore with their calabashes full, and showed great pleasure in presenting us with it. I ordered more glass beads to be given them, and they promised to return the next day. It is my wish to fill all the water casks of the ships at this place, which being executed, I shall depart immediately; if the weather serve, and sail round the island, till I succeed in meeting with the king, in order to see if I can acquire any of the gold, which I hear he possesses. Afterwards I shall set sail for another very large island which I believe to be *Cipango*,⁴ according to the indications I receive from the Indians on board. They call the Island *Colba*,⁵ and say there are many large ships, and sailors there. This other island they name *Bosio*,⁶ and inform me that it is very large; the others which lie in our course, I shall examine on the passage, and according as I find gold or spices in abundance, I shall determine what to do; at all events I am determined to proceed on to the continent, and visit the city of *Guisay*⁷ where I shall deliver the letters of your Highnesses to the *Great Can*,⁸ and demand an answer, with which I shall return.

Monday, Oct. 22d. Through the night, and today we remained waiting here to see if the king, or any others would bring us gold or anything valuable. Many of the natives visited us, resembling those of the other islands, naked like them, and painted white, red, black, and other colours; they brought javelins and clews of cotton to barter, which they exchanged with the sailors for bits of glass, broken cups, and fragments of earthenware. Some of them wore pieces of gold at their noses; they readily gave them away for hawk's bells and glass beads; the amount collected in this manner, however, was very inconsiderable. Any small matter they received from us, they

³Probably an iguana, a valued food among the Indians. Isla Española (known as Aytí or "mountainous land" to its natives).

⁴Marco Polo's name for Japan. Polo's *Description of the World* (1299) was the primary source for Columbus's ideas about the geography of Asia.

⁵Cuba.

⁶A variation of Bohío. Columbus translated this name as "abounding in gold." It most likely referred to the island that Columbus renamed La

⁷Hangzhou, China.

⁸A reference to the Mongol dynasty of Kublai Khan, which controlled China from 1279 to 1368. By 1492 the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) ruled China, but Europeans, isolated from China by Turkish control of trade routes, did not know this.

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held in high estimation, believing us to have come from heaven. We took in water for the ships from a lake in the neighbourhood of this cape, which I have named *Cabo del Isleo*: in this lake Martin Alonzo Pinzon, captain of the *Pinta*, killed a snake similar to that of yesterday, seven spans long. I ordered as much of the aloe to be collected as could be found.

Tuesday, Oct. 23d. It is now my determination to depart for the island of *Cuba*, which I believe to be *Cipango*, from the accounts I have received here, of the multitude and riches of the people. I have abandoned the intention of staying here and sailing round the island in search of the king, as it would be a waste of time, and I perceive there are no gold mines to be found. Moreover it would be necessary to steer many courses in making the circuit, and we cannot expect the wind to be always favourable. And as we are going to places where there is great commerce, I judge it expedient not to linger on the way, but to proceed and survey the lands we met with, till we arrive at that most favourable for our enterprise. It is my opinion that we shall find much profit there in spices; but my want of knowledge in these articles occasions me the most excessive regrets, inasmuch as I see a thousand sorts of trees, each with its own species of fruit, and as flourishing at the present time, as the fields in Spain, during the months of May and June; likewise a thousand kinds of herbs and flowers, of all which I remain in ignorance as to their properties, with the exception of the aloe, which I have directed to-day to be taken on board in large quantities for the use of your Highnesses. I did not set sail to-day for want of wind; a dead calm and heavy rain prevailing. Yesterday it rained much without cold; the days here are hot, and the nights mild like May in Andalusia.

Wednesday, Oct. 24th. At midnight weighed anchor and set sail from *Cabo del Isleo* of the island of *Isabela*, being in the North part, where I had remained preparing to depart for the island of *Cuba*, in which place the Indians tell me I shall find a great trade, with abundance of gold and spices, and large ships, and merchants; they directed me to steer toward the W.S.W., which is the course I am pursuing. If the accounts which the natives of the islands and those on board the ships have communicated to me by signs (for their language I do not understand) may be relied on, this must be the island of *Cipango*, of which we have heard so many wonderful things; according to my geographical knowledge it must be somewhere in this neighbourhood. . . .⁹

The Indians on board told them that the island of *Cuba* was distant from thence a voyage of a day and a half in their canoes, which are small things, made of a log, and carrying no sail. Departed for *Cuba*, which from the Indians signifying to them the abundance of gold and pearls there, as well as the magnitude of the island; they doubted not, was *Cipango*.

Sunday, Oct. 28th. Continued on S.S.W., in quest of the island of *Cuba*, keeping close to the shore. They entered a fine river, free from shallows and all other obstructions, which in fact is the case with all the coast here; the shore being very bold. The mouth of the river had a depth of water of twelve fathoms, and a breadth sufficient for ships to beat in. They anchored within the river, and the Admiral states that the prospect here exceeded in beauty anything he ever saw, the river being surrounded with trees of the most beautiful and luxuriant foliage of a singular appear-

⁹Las Casas ends his direct quotation of Columbus here and resumes his third-person narration.

ance; and catching most those of Gu moderate he their houses and found t owners had tained nets c for fishing, a of a large n touched, wh sia in April. They return Admiral says which prese fered a scen clares this to and deep riv as the grass; sea is rough. This isle, he extent, the streams, as t the ships, w such a size t the ships we in two cano towards the Indians told served muss further infor the main lan *San Salvador*

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ance, and covered with flowers and fruits of all sorts. Birds were here in abundance singing most delightfully. Great numbers of palm trees were noticed, different from those of Guinea, and ours, wanting their particular manner of bark; they were of a moderate height, and bore very large leaves, which the natives use for coverings to their houses. The land appeared quite level. The Admiral went ashore in the boat, and found two dwellings, which he supposed to be those of fishermen, and that the owners had fled; he found in one of them a dog unable to bark. Both houses contained nets of palm, lines, horn fish-hooks, harpoons of bone, and other implements for fishing, as also many fire-places; and each seemed to be adapted to the reception of a large number of persons. The Admiral gave orders that nothing should be touched, which directions were adhered to. The grass was as high as it is in Andalusia in April and May, and they found purslain and strawberry-blite in abundance. They returned on board the boat and ascended the river some distance, where the Admiral says it was exceedingly pleasant to behold the delightful verdure and foliage which presented itself, not to mention the birds in the neighbourhood; the whole offered a scene of such enchantment that it was hardly possible to part from it. He declares this to be the most beautiful island ever seen, abounding in good harbours; and deep rivers, with a shore upon which it appears that the sea never breaks high, as the grass grows down to the water's edge, a thing which never happens where the sea is rough. Indeed a high sea they had not as yet experienced among these islands. This isle, he says, is full of pleasant mountains, which are lofty, although not of great extent, the rest of the country is high, after the manner of Sicily, abounding in streams; as they understood from the Indians of *Guanahani*, which were on board the ships, who informed them by signs that it contained ten large rivers, and was of such a size that with their canoes they could not sail round it in twenty days. When the ships were sailing towards the island, some of the natives put off from the shore in two canoes, and perceiving the Spaniards entering into the boat and rowing towards the mouth of the river to sound for an anchorage, they took to flight. The Indians told them there were mines of gold here and pearls, and the Admiral observed mussels and other indications of these articles in the neighbourhood. They further informed him that there came large ships hither from the *Great Can*, and that the main land was distant ten days' voyage. The Admiral named this river and port *San Salvador*. 10

Thursday, Nov. 1st. At sunrise the Admiral sent the boats to land to visit the houses they saw there; they found the inhabitants all fled, but after some time they espied a man; the Admiral then dispatched one of his Indians on shore, who called out to him from a distance and bade him not be fearful, as the Spaniards were a friendly people, not injuring anyone, nor belonging to the *Great Can*, but on the contrary, had made many presents of their goods among the inhabitants of the islands. The natives having ascertained that no ill was intended them, gathered confidence, and came in above sixteen canoes to the ships, bringing cotton yarn and other things, which the Admiral ordered should not be taken from them, as he wished them to understand that he was in search of nothing but gold, which they call *nucay*. All day the canoes kept passing between the ships and the shore. The Admiral saw no gold among them, but remarks having observed an Indian with a bit of wrought silver at

his nostrils, which he conceived to be an indication of the existence of that metal in the country. The Indians informed them by signs that within three days there would come many traders from the interior to purchase the goods of the Spaniards, to whom they would communicate news of the king, who as far as could be learned from the signs of the natives, was about four days' journey distant. They informed the Spaniards also that many persons had been dispatched to inform the king respecting the Admiral. These people were found to be of the same race and manners with those already observed, without any religion that could be discovered; they had never remarked the Indians whom they kept on board the ships to be engaged in any sort of devotion of their own, but they would, upon being directed, make the sign of the cross, and repeat the *Salve* and *Ave Maria* with the hands extended towards heaven. The language is the same throughout these islands, and the people friends to one another, which the Admiral says he believes to be the case in all the neighbouring parts, and that they are at war with the *Great Can*, whom they call *Cavila*, and his country *Bafan*. These people go naked like the rest. The river here he describes as deep, and having a bold shore at the mouth, where ships may lay close to the land; the water of the river salt for a league upwards when it becomes very fresh. It is certain, says the Admiral, that this is the continent, and that we are in the neighbourhood of *Zayto* and *Guinsay*, a hundred leagues more or less distant from the one or the other. . . .

Sunday, Nov. 4th. Early in the morning the Admiral went on shore in the boat to shoot birds, and at his return, Martin Alonzo Pinzon came to him with two pieces of cinnamon, saying that a Portuguese on board his vessel had seen an Indian with two large handfuls of it, but was afraid to purchase it on account of the prohibition of the Admiral, and furthermore that the Indian had some reddish things resembling nutmegs. The boatswain of the *Pinta* declared he had seen cinnamon trees. The Admiral went to the place but found none. He showed some of the natives pepper and cinnamon which he had brought from Castile, they recognized it as he declares, and intimated to him by signs that much of it was to be found not far from thence to the southeast. He likewise showed them gold and pearls, and was informed by some old men that these existed in great abundance in a place which they called *Bobio*, being worn by the people at their necks, ears, arms and legs. They had, according to the same account, large ships, and carried on traffic, and this was all at the southeast. They further informed him that at a distance there were men with one eye only, and others with faces like dogs, who were man-eaters, and accustomed upon taking a prisoner, to cut his throat, drink his blood, and dismember him. The Admiral then determined to return to his ship and wait for the men whom he had sent into the country, when he was resolved to depart in quest of the regions which had been described to him, unless he should receive such accounts from the interior as would induce him to stay. He says "these people are very mild and timorous, naked as I have described the others, without weapons or laws. The soil is very fertile abounding with *mames*,¹¹ a root like a carrot, with a taste of chestnuts; beans likewise are here, very dissimilar to ours, also cotton, growing spontaneously among the mountains; I am of opinion that this is gathered at all seasons of the year, as I observed upon a sin-

gle, tree blossoms, pods unripe, and others burst open. A thousand other productions, which are doubtless of great value, I remarked, but find it impossible to describe them. . . .”

Tuesday, Nov. 6th. Last night, says the Admiral, the two men whom I had sent into the country returned, and related as follows: After having travelled a dozen leagues they came to a town containing about fifty houses, where there were probably a thousand inhabitants, every house containing a great number; they were built in the manner of large tents. The inhabitants received them after their fashion with great ceremony; the men and women flocked to behold them, and they were lodged in their best houses. They signified their admiration and reverence of the strangers by touching them, kissing their hands and feet, and making signs of wonder. They imagined them come from heaven, and signified as much to them. They were feasted with such food as the natives had to offer. Upon their arrival at the town, they were led by the arms of the principal men of the place, to the chief dwelling, here they gave them seats, and the Indians sat upon the ground in a circle round them. The Indians who accompanied the Spaniards explained to the natives the manner in which their new guests lived, and gave a favourable account of their character. The men then left the place, and the women entered, and seated themselves around them in the same manner, kissing their hands and feet, and examining whether they were flesh and bone like themselves. They entreated them to remain there as long as five days. The Spaniards showed them the cinnamon, pepper, and other spices which they had received from the Admiral, and they informed them, by signs that there was much of these in the neighbourhood at the southeast; but they knew not of any in this place. The Spaniards not discovering any great number of towns here, resolved to return to the ships, and had they chosen to admit the natives to accompany them, might have been attended back by more than five hundred men and women, who were eager to bear them company, thinking they were returning to heaven. They took none along with them but one of the principal inhabitants with his son; with these the Admiral held some conversation, and showed them great civilities; the Indian described to him by signs many countries and islands in these parts, and the Admiral thought to carry him home to Spain, but says he was unable to find whether the Indian was willing. At night he seemed to grow fearful, and wished to go on shore; the Admiral says that having the ship aground he thought it not advisable to oppose him, and so let him return, requesting him to come back the next morning, but they saw him no more. The Spaniards upon their journey met with great multitudes of people; men and women with firebrands in their hands and herbs to smoke after their custom.¹² No village was seen upon the road of a larger size than five houses, but all the inhabitants showed them the same respect. Many sorts of trees were observed, and herbs and odoriferous flowers. Great numbers of birds they remarked, all different from those of Spain except the nightingales, who entertained them with their songs; and the partridges and geese, which were found in abundance. Of quadrupeds they described none except dumb dogs. The soil appeared fertile and under good cultivation, producing the *mames* aforementioned and beans very dissimilar to ours, as

¹²The Spanish probably saw tobacco on October 6, but they first saw it smoked during this

well as the grain called panic-grass. They saw vast quantities of cotton, spun and manufactured, a single house contained above five hundred *arrobas*,¹³ four thousand quintals might be collected here per annum. The Admiral says it appears to him that they do not sow it, but that it is productive the whole year round; it is very fine with an exceeding long staple. Everything which the Indians possessed they were ready to barter at a very low price; a large basket of cotton they would give for a leather thong, or other trifling thing which was offered them. They are an inoffensive, unwarlike people, naked, except that the women wear a very slight covering at the loins; their manners are very decent, and their complexion not very dark, but lighter than that of the inhabitants of the Canary Islands. "I have no doubt, most serene Princes," says the Admiral, "that were proper devout and religious persons to come among them and learn their language, it would be an easy matter to convert them all to Christianity, and I hope in our Lord that your Highnesses will devote yourselves with much diligence to this object, and bring into the church so many multitudes, inasmuch as you have exterminated those who refused to confess the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so that having ended your days (as we are all mortal) you may leave your dominions in a tranquil condition, free from heresy and wickedness, and meet with a favourable reception before the eternal Creator, whom may it please to grant you a long life and great increase of kingdoms and dominions, with the will and disposition to promote, as you always have done, the holy Christian religion, Amen.

"This day I launched the ship, and made ready to depart in the name of God, next Thursday, for the S.E. in quest of gold and spices, as well as to discover the country." These are the words of the Admiral, who expected to sail on Thursday, but the wind being contrary, detained him till the twelfth day of November.

Monday, Nov. 12th. They sailed from the port and river *de Mares* at daybreak: they directed their course in search of an island which the Indians on board affirmed repeatedly was called *Babeque*,¹⁴ where as they related by signs, the inhabitants collected gold at night by torchlight upon the shore, and afterwards hammered it into bars. In order to reach this island they directed to steer East by South. Having sailed eight leagues along the coast, they discovered a river, and four leagues further onward, another, very large, exceeding in size all which they had seen. The Admiral was unwilling to remain, and put into either of them, for two reasons, the first and principal one, because the wind and weather were favourable to proceed to the above-mentioned island of *Babeque*; the other was, that were there any large towns near the sea, they might easily be discovered, but in case they were far up the rivers, they could only be reached by ascending the stream in small vessels, which those of his fleet were not. A desire, therefore, not to waste time determined him not to explore these rivers, the last of which was surrounded with a well-peopled country; he named it *Rio del Sol*.¹⁵ He states that the Sunday previous he had thought it would be well to take a few of the natives from the place where the ships lay for the purpose of carrying them to Spain, that they might acquire our language, and inform us what their country contained, besides becoming Christians and serving us at their return as interpreters, "for I have observed," says he, "that these people have no religion,

¹³Five hundred *arrobas* (twenty-five pounds) would be more than six tons.

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neither are they idolaters, but are a very gentle race, without the knowledge of any iniquity; they neither kill, nor steal, nor carry weapons, and are so timid that one of our men might put a hundred of them to flight, although they will readily sport and play tricks with them. They have a knowledge that there is a God above, and are firmly persuaded that we have come from heaven. They very quickly learn such prayers as we repeat to them, and also to make the sign of the cross. Your Highnesses should therefore adopt the resolution of converting them to Christianity, in which enterprise I am of opinion that a very short space of time would suffice to gain to our holy faith multitudes of people, and to Spain great riches and immense dominions, with all their inhabitants; there being, without doubt, in these countries vast quantities of gold, for the Indians would not without cause give us such descriptions of places where the inhabitants dug it from the earth, and wore it in massy bracelets at their necks, ears, legs, and arms. Here are also pearls and precious stones, and an infinite amount of spices. In the river *de Mares*,¹⁶ which I left last evening, there is undoubtedly a great deal of mastick, and the quantity might be increased, for the trees transplanted easily take root; they are of a lofty size, bearing leaves and fruit like the lentisk; the tree, however, is taller and has a larger leaf than the lentisk, as is mentioned by Pliny, and as I have myself observed in the island of Scio in the Archipelago. I ordered many of these trees to be tapped in order to extract the resin, but as the weather was rainy all the time I was in the river, I was unable to procure more than a very small portion, which I have preserved for your Highnesses. It is possible also that this is not the proper season for collecting it, which, it is likely, may be in the spring, when they begin to put forth their blossoms; at present the fruit upon them is nearly ripe. Great quantities of cotton might be raised here, and sold, as I think, profitably, without being carried to Spain, but to the cities of the *Great Can*, which we shall doubtless discover, as well as many others belonging to other sovereigns; these may become a source of profit to your Highnesses by trading thither with the productions of Spain and the other European countries. Here also is to be found abundance of aloe, which, however, is not a thing of very great value, but the mastick assuredly is, being met with nowhere else except in the before-mentioned island of Scio, where, if I remember rightly, it is produced to the amount of fifty thousand ducats' value in a year. The mouth of this river forms the best harbour I have yet seen, being wide, deep and free from shoals, with a fine situation for a town and fortification where ships may lie close along the shore, the land high, with a good air and fine streams of water. Yesterday a canoe came to the ship with six young men; five of them came on board, whom I ordered to be detained, and have them with me; I then sent ashore to one of the houses, and took seven women and three children: this I did that the Indians might tolerate their captivity better with their company, for it has often happened that the Portuguese have carried the natives from Guinea to Portugal for the purpose of learning their language, and when this was done and they returned with them to Guinea, expecting, by reason of the good treatment they had showed them, and the presents they had given them, to find great benefit in their use, they have gone among their own people and never appeared more. Others have done

¹⁶Located in the Bay of Gibara, the northernmost point of Cuba reached during the first voyage.

differently, and by keeping their wives, have assured themselves of their possession. Besides, these women will be a great help to us in acquiring their language, which is the same throughout all these countries, the inhabitants keeping up a communication among the islands by means of their canoes. This is not the case in Guinea, where there are a thousand different dialects, one tribe not understanding another. This evening came on-board the husband of one of the women and father of the three children, which were a boy and two girls; he intreated me to let him accompany them, which I very willingly granted; the natives whom I had taken from here were all so delighted at this as to induce me to think them his relations. He is a person of about forty-five years of age." All this is in the exact words of the Admiral; he also says that he found the weather somewhat cold, and being in the winter, thought it not advisable to prosecute his discoveries any farther towards the north. . . .

1825

from Narrative of the Third Voyage, 1498–1500

Each time I sailed from Spain to the Indies I found that when I reached a point a hundred leagues west of the Azores, the heavens, the stars, the temperature of the air and the waters of the sea abruptly changed. I very carefully verified these observations, and found that, on passing this line from north to south, the compass needle, which had previously pointed north-east, turned a whole quarter of the wind to the north-west. It was as if the seas sloped upwards on this line. I also observed that here they were full of a vegetation like pine branches loaded with fruit similar to that of the mastic. This weed is so dense that on my first voyage I thought we had reached shallows, and that the ships might run aground. We had not seen a single strand of weed before we came to that line. I noticed that when we had passed it the sea was calm and smooth, never becoming rough even in a strong wind. I found also that westwards of this line the temperature of the air was very mild and did not change from winter to summer. Here the Pole Star describes a circle of five degrees in diameter, and when it is at its lowest the Guards¹ point towards the right. It then rises continuously until they point to the left. It then stands at five degrees, and from there it sinks until they are again on the right.

On this present voyage I sailed from Spain to Madeira, from Madeira to the Canaries, and then to the Cape Verde Islands. From here, as I have already said, I followed a southward course in order to cross the Equator. On reaching a point exactly on the parallel which passes through Sierra Leone in Guinea, I found such heat and such strength in the sun's rays that I was afraid I might be burnt. Although it rained and the sky was overcast, I remained in a state of exhaustion until the Lord gave me a fair wind and the desire to sail westwards, encouraged by the thought that, on

¹Stars in the constellation Ursa Minor used to determine the relationship between Polaris

reaching the line of which I have spoken, I should find a change in temperature. On coming to this line I immediately found very mild temperatures which became even milder as I sailed on. But I found no corresponding change in the stars. At nightfall the Pole Star stood at five degrees, with the Guards pointing straight overhead, and later, at midnight, it had risen to ten degrees; and at daybreak stood at fifteen degrees, with the Guards pointing downwards.² I found the sea as smooth as before, but not the same vegetation. I was greatly surprised by this behaviour of the Pole Star and spent many nights making careful observations with the quadrant, but found that the plumb line always fell to the same point. I regard this as a new discovery, and it may be established that here the heavens undergo a great change in a brief space.

I have always read that the world of land and sea is spherical. All authorities and the recorded experiments of Ptolemy and the rest, based on the eclipses of the moon and other observations made from east to west, and on the height of the Pole Star made from north to south, have constantly drawn and confirmed this picture, which they held to be true. Now, as I said, I have found such great irregularities that I have come to the following conclusions concerning the world: that it is not round as they describe it, but the shape of a pear, which is round everywhere except at the stalk, where it juts out a long way; or that it is like a round ball, on part of which is something like a woman's nipple. This point on which the protuberance stands is the highest and nearest to the sky. It lies below the Equator, and in this ocean, at the farthest point of the east, I mean by the farthest point of the east the place where all land and islands end.

Ptolemy and the other geographers believed that the world was spherical and that the other hemisphere was as round as the one in which they lived, its centre lying on the island of Arin, which is below the Equator between the Arabian and Persian gulfs; and that the boundary passes over Cape St. Vincent in Portugal to the west, and eastward to China and the *Seres*.³ I do not in the least question the roundness of that hemisphere, but I affirm that the other hemisphere resembles the half of a round pear with a raised stalk, as I have said, like a woman's nipple on a round ball. Neither Ptolemy nor any of the other geographers had knowledge of this other hemisphere, which was completely unknown; but based their reasoning on the hemisphere in which they lived, which is a round sphere, as I have said.

Now that your Highnesses have commanded navigation, exploration and discovery, the nature of this other hemisphere is clearly revealed. For on this voyage I was twenty degrees north of the Equator in the latitude of Hargin⁴ and the African mainland, where the people are black and the land very parched. I then went to the Cape Verde Islands, whose inhabitants are blacker still, and the farther south I went the greater the extremes. In the latitude in which I was, which is that of Sierra Leone, where the Pole Star stood at five degrees at nightfall, the people are completely black; and when I sailed westwards from there the heats remained excessive. On passing the line of which I have spoken, I found the temperatures growing milder, so

²The change from the five-degree circles "described" by the Pole Star earlier in this journal entry to the ten- and fifteen-degree circles noted here contributes to Columbus's conclusion about the earth's shape.

³Classical Roman name for the Chinese.

⁴Arguin, an island off the northern coast of Mauritania in western Africa.

that when I came to the island of Trinidad, where the Pole Star also stands at five degrees at nightfall, both there and on the mainland opposite the temperatures were extremely mild. The land and the trees were very green and as lovely as the orchards of Valencia in April, and the inhabitants were lightly built and fairer than most of the other people we had seen in the Indies. Their hair was long and straight and they were quicker, more intelligent and less cowardly. The sun was in Virgo above their heads and ours. All this is attributable to the very mild climate in those regions, and this in its turn to the fact that this land stands highest on the world's surface, being nearest to the sky, as I have said. This confirms my belief that the world has this variation of shape which I have described, and which lies in this hemisphere that contains the Indies and the Ocean Sea, and stretches below the Equator. This argument is greatly supported by the fact that the sun, when Our Lord made it, was at the first point of the east; in other words the first light was here in the east, where the world stands at its highest. Although Aristotle believed that the Antarctic Pole, or the land beneath it, is the highest part of the world and nearest to the sky, other philosophers contest it, saying that the land beneath the Arctic Pole is the highest. This argument shows that they knew one part of the world to be higher and nearer to the sky than the rest. It did not strike them however that, for the reasons of shape that I have set down, this part might lie below the Equator. And no wonder, since they had no certain information about this other hemisphere, only vague knowledge based on deduction. No one had ever entered it or gone in search of it until now when your Highnesses commanded me to explore and discover these seas and lands. . . .

Holy Scripture testifies that Our Lord made the earthly Paradise in which he placed the Tree of Life. From it there flowed four main rivers: the Ganges in India, the Tigris and the Euphrates in Asia, which cut through a mountain range and form Mesopotamia and flow into Persia, and the Nile, which rises in Ethiopia and flows into the sea at Alexandria.

I do not find and have never found any Greek or Latin writings which definitely state the worldly situation of the earthly Paradise, nor have I seen any world map which establishes its position except by deduction. Some place it at the source of the Nile in Ethiopia. But many people have travelled in these lands and found nothing in the climate or altitude to confirm this theory, or to prove that the waters of the Flood which covered, etc., etc. . . . reached there. Some heathens tried to show by argument that it was in the Fortunate Islands (which are the Canaries); and St Isidore, Bede, Strabo, the Master of Scholastic History,⁵ St Ambrose and Scotus and all learned theologians agree that the earthly Paradise is in the East, etc.

I have already told what I have learnt about this hemisphere and its shape, and I believe that, if I pass below the Equator, on reaching these higher regions I shall find a much cooler climate and a greater difference in the stars and waters. Not that I believe it possible to sail to the extreme summit or that it is covered by water, or that it is even possible to go there. For I believe that the earthly Paradise lies here, which no one can enter except by God's leave. I believe that this land which your Highnesses have commanded me to discover is very great, and that there are many

⁵Twelfth-century theologian Petrus Comestor,
author of *Historia Secularis*

other lands in the south of which there have never been reports. I do not hold that the earthly Paradise has the form of a rugged mountain, as it is shown in pictures, but that it lies at the summit of what I have described as the stalk of a pear, and that by gradually approaching it one begins, while still at a great distance, to climb towards it. As I have said, I do not believe that anyone can ascend to the top. I do believe, however, that, distant though it is, these waters may flow from there to this place which I have reached, and form this lake. All this provides great evidence of the earthly Paradise, because the situation agrees with the beliefs of those holy and wise theologians and all the signs strongly accord with this idea. For I have never read or heard of such a quantity of fresh water flowing so close to the salt and flowing into it, and the very temperate climate provides a further confirmation. If this river does not flow out of the earthly Paradise, the marvel is still greater. For I do not believe that there is so great and deep a river anywhere in the world.

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