

Revisiting Untraded Paths: Literary Revisions of Eighteenth-Century Exploration Journals

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Abstract

The present article proposes a revision of the American imperialistic, scientific, literary and historical origins as they were encoded and re-coded in the writings and rewritings of exploration journals. It theorises on the reciprocal influence that the official and the personal, the scientific and the fictional, the historical and the epical have in the production of a national referent as it is inscribed within the American travel-writing tradition. This article proposes an allegorical and literal reading of “line drawing” in its study of texts by William Byrd, Charles Mason and Thomas Pynchon, which merges experienced and reported realities into a complex multi-text.

[**Keywords:** exploration, journals, William Byrd, Charles Mason, Thomas Pynchon, travel writing, *Mason & Dixon*]

The recent academic interest in travel writing that Russell notices in the works of Kowaleswski, Caesar or Blanton (2-3) and that Musgrove connects with the rise of post-colonial theory (32), can in fact be extended to many others. Common to them all, there seems to be a—perhaps not so—paradoxical tendency to inscribe travel writing somewhere between concepts and notions that refer both to the factual and the merely possible. Paul Fussel remarks the simultaneous claim for both literal validity (in relation to *memoir*) and wonder (under the influence of, or influencing romance) in travel writing (105-6). A similar connection is also made by Campbell, who finds a double dimension in travel writing that points to both aesthetic pleasure and scientific experience (28). The imperial aspect of travel books so often brought into light by Postcolonial criticism was in fact presented as scientific expeditionary interest on behalf of natural philosophy in the 18th and 19th centuries. But reciprocally, speculative science creates “inaccessible new worlds” with a “peculiar ontological status” (Campbell 111) that perhaps remind a little too much of the imaginary places described by Mandevilleⁱ in the 14th c.

Musgrove also recalls Frye’s analysis of travel writing as a quest and relates it to the postmodern perception of travel reading as an “allegory of knowledge”(35-6) that Bhabha would rather interpret as the liminality that threatens “Western discourses on truth.”ⁱⁱ According to Roberson, recent interest in travel writing could be explained by the fact that there seems to be some relation between the essences of travel and postmodernism that allows for travel itself [to] “become a *metaphor of the postmodern condition*”ⁱⁱⁱ where conceptual boundaries are lured and the unfixed identity of the [...] postmodern individual who resists the illusion of unity [...] is alienated from society” (xxi). Geertz suggests that the current resurgence of interest in travel writing does not obey a redrawing of past or present cultural maps, but rather an “alteration in the principles of mapping” (20) that resists definition and might underlie the whole of postmodernity itself.

In this article, I would like to (re)read the (re)writings of two travel narratives at each other’s light with the purpose of exploring the interstitial space that I represent as

the width of the narrative (boundary) line. These texts are Thomas Pynchon's 1997 novel *Mason & Dixon*; its main reference text, Charles Mason's report of his and Jeremiah Dixon's survey of the Maryland-Pennsylvania boundary (1763–1768)^{iv} later published as *The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon*; and William Byrd's 1738^v *Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*. It could be argued that the composing processes of both works are mirroring images in the sense that Pynchon re-writes a fictional version of a previous official report (Mason's journal) whereas Byrd rewrites a second, non-fictional version of a (his own) previous fictional^{vi} journal. A re-reading of these works at each other's light leads to an interesting reflection on the fiction/fact opposite binary that is so frequent not only in Postmodern metafictional writing, but also in travel writing as genre.

The scientifically-based, geopolitical line-drawing between two American colonies is not only the main *motif* of all four works (two doubles), but also the purpose that starts narrative action and the target that would put an end to it. Thus, line drawing causes line writing although the later is such an integral methodological part of the former that it could be affirmed that both are inseparable, parallel and coincident at the same time. Both actions do not only produce the obvious geopolitical division, but many other narrative binaries between which lineal width shows itself.

Together with the religious and the mercantile, science is one of the most common purposes and main *motifs* of travelling.^{vii} All of them are conditioned by the expansive needs of the Western, Modern political vision, which most conveniently coincide with religious proselytism, expansive capitalism, and scientific evolutionism. The relationship between science and travelling is in fact, one of interdependence since travelling fosters scientific development whereas scientific purposes lie behind many travelling expeditions. Geology, Archaeology, Astronomy and Anthropology count among the most common disciplines requiring both expeditions to distant places and methodological reports that most of the times include the journal kept during the expedition and a later, more entertaining publication for the general reading public.

The curiosities from distant landscapes and societies described by scientists were sometimes so incredible that their middleclass readers back in Europe might have found it difficult to distinguish scientific fact from mere fiction. Greenblatt and Campbell coincide in pointing out that given the limited scope of the scientist's perception, what he cannot see, he complements with imagination. Greenblatt imagines in an act of (colonial) appropriation by virtue of metonymic expansion: "The discoverer sees only a fragment and then imagines the rest in the act of appropriation. The supplement that imagination brings to vision expands the perceptual field [...] and the bit that has actually been seen becomes by metonymy a representation of the whole" (1991, 122).^{viii} According to Campbell, the "philosophical work of Giordano Bruno [...] offers theoretical or ideological support to the concept of the plurality of worlds" and would contribute to scientific speculation on the possible ontological status of such "inaccessible new worlds," including both the macroscopic and the microscopic, that would be a little too close to imaginative literature in the 17th century (111). The development of speculative science did thus influence travel narrative speculations in interpreting or even imagining the physical realities that might have been beyond the explorer's comprehension or even sight and being able to present it as scientific truth.

At these early stages, scientific reasoning was not considered a synonym of fact yet, and was rather a challenge to the notion of absolute truth (May 1978).^{ix} Finally, Butor would connect exploration travel narrative not only with the possibility of

reaching beyond the “mental horizon” (78), but also with a colonial vision of Edenic literature that relates knowledge with appropriation by naming (the performative act by which naming does not only “produce” physical realities, but also property rights over it):

[T]he explorer will bring home the names taught him by native instructors, but even more often, he, the new Adam, will untiringly name each identifiable site; so, world maps will become covered with names, [. . .] Even before the conqueror, the explorer seizes with his language the land he crosses. (79)

The exploration journal might be the one among the many travel narrative categories that would better adjust to a Postcolonial analysis. It reached its peak of popularity during the 18th c., when religious proselytism, commercial interests and expansionist colonial policies were joined by scientific research in the list of most common purposes for travel writing. The diary/journal format provides a complementary mixture of personal, subjective perspective; and scientific, objective record that is typical of both travel narrative and scientific journals. This format cannot be methodologically skipped in the scientific report^x and is the most accurate possible one as travel writing is concerned. However, the spatio-temporal proximity of the author/reporter with respect to the reported facts prevents the distance required by both scientific objectivity and the so-claimed truthful account of events in travel narrative.^{xi} The relativist perspective of the scientific approach^{xii} adds to the travel-narrative inherent ambiguity between fact and fiction in the exploration journal.^{xiii}

The journal format also includes several formal requirements that affect the narrative flow and condition the presentation of characters and events. The first, and most obvious of these characteristics, is lineal development of plot. Journal entries are dated in a progressive, lineal, orderly way that prevents both temporal ambiguity as dating of facts is concerned, and the advance of later events. However, this progressive, sketchy linearity is often interrupted with historical digressions about the past of the region in question or related historical similes with distant regions and countries. But digression is not restricted to the merely historical. The author's erudition is often shown in scientific digressions on issues not strictly related to the exploration at hand (such as Botany in Byrd's case, or Magnetism and Mechanics—not to mention the too many scientific issues referred to—in Pynchon). Other typical erudite digressions include literary similes and even philosophical or moral reflections. But digression goes beyond erudition as well. Typical of all travel writing in general are also descriptions of the surrounding landscape and the physical aspect and customs of indigenous peoples (Adams 1983 207). The inclusion of anecdotal events and remarkable adventures is one more characteristic forms of digression that is used to make travel narratives more entertaining to its reading public. All these digression types interrupt the narrative flow of exploration narratives and contribute to the formation of their typical sketchy structure.

Exploration journals thus show the typical double static/dynamic kind of action that Adams uses to describe all travel narratives. According to Adams, dynamic action implies movement, adventure and obeys to a horizontal plotting that represents narrative time and direction. On the other hand, static action is descriptive in its digressions and obeys to a vertical plotting that provides width and height to the narrative line.^{xiv} Although horizontal plotting might seem more intrinsic to the structural organisation of travel narratives, its proportional presence in relation to vertical plotting is rather scarce. In fact, horizontal plotting often makes a very thin line drawn by

simple markers such as character identity (naming), purpose and dating;^{xv} whereas vertical plotting would occupy a much wider scope of the narrative flow, including narrative voice, perspective, action, setting, theme, character development, entertaining and instructive digression, and basically, nearly all the elements that allow for the horizontal line to move into a particular spatio-temporal direction. Horizontal and vertical plottings are thus complementary in travel narrative with all these “unnecessary [vertical] detail” (Adams 1983 183) becoming a most necessary interruption and contribution to the horizontal narrative line.

A last feature of exploration journals, and most relevant for this study, is the 18th century fashion of reworking and rewriting of first-person, first version of journals into third-person revised versions (Adams 1983 162-163). Third-person revisions of first-person versions would be supposed to add distance and objectivity to the latter by means of the above-mentioned erudite digressions, and to gain narrative distance while in most cases, newly-fabricated details and adventures were added to make narratives more entertaining and educative as tiresome listing of scientific data and actual events too compromising to be reported were erased.

Such is the case of William Byrd's *Histories*, the revised version of which was published but ten years after the *Secret History* was circulated. Thus, the revised version of Byrd's journal did not only “restrain his private sarcasms and delete dozens of scandalous revelations, especially about sex life” (Adams 1987 xiii)—when not completely erase all of his “doctoring activity” and witty humour—, but also professional incidents of personal relevance that directly affected the development of the task at hand. Conversely, it added elements from natural history that were not always scientific; including descriptions of how alligators swallowed rocks in order to make themselves heavy enough to pull down a cow, or how squirrels used their tails as sails when crossing rivers on barks (Adams 1987 xvi).

In Pynchon's case, the revised version of Mason's journal expands the width of the horizontal, narrative line by adding much fictional elaboration^{xvi} and much historical and scientific data to the original journal, but the distinction between them is not always evident even for academic research. In a fashion that many would not hesitate to classify as postmodern—in the sense that it deliberately intends to unease the readers as for whether the stories/data provided are actually historical or merely fictional/fantastic—Pynchon continuously amazes academic researchers in frustrating their expectations in this sense. Thus, absolutely crazy details the fictionality of which most would take for granted, prove after careful research to be either historically or scientifically founded,^{xvii} whereas well-known historical events and scientific matters are often presented as overtly fictional recreations.^{xviii}

Thus, both reworkings of original versions open up a question that can be recognized as typically postmodern, but is also at the core of travel writing; and that is the question of authenticity, verisimilitude and reliability. For, taken in isolation, first versions are fairly reliable. But when contrasted with their revisions, both the reiteration of the platitudinal claim of truthfulness and the erudite, fictional or fantastic additions at the vertical level of narration of the latter relativize both version by remarking their similarities and differences. In Byrd's *Secret History*, the claim for truthfulness is implicit in the conventional masking of real names since it takes for granted that the facts reported might be too delicate to reveal their true identities.^{xix} As for *The Journal* written by Mason, no claim of truthfulness is to be found at the beginning, but the first notes include both references to the wellbeing of instruments and their reparations, and to the

weather conditions that might affect stargazing; which reveals an interest to prove the accuracy and reliability of the measures that would be taken with such instruments and under such conditions. Moreover, it should be noted that both line-running expeditions make in fact platitudinal claims for truthfulness as a whole, since both were required to correct the errors claimed to exist in the measures taken by previous expeditions.

The true identities that Byrd hides in his *Secret History* are nevertheless provided in his *History*, which is of course, also a true account of the events that took place in the running, drawing and narrating of the line between Virginia and North Carolina. This Byrd supports with official documents attached to his narrative and forewording reported history of the boundary dispute. How is it possible then that Byrd reveals in 1738 the identities he hid ten years earlier? His doing so would certainly account for the higher authenticity of his second narrative in comparison with his first, secret one were it not because he erases in his second version full passages that he *does* include in his secret one (precisely because they are “secret,” which is not the same as “false,” but rather points at a higher accuracy of report). Moreover, much of the erudition added by Byrd in his *History* is borrowed from previous studies; much of his comparisons, from other travel writings; and many of his references even from literary sources.

Pynchon’s claim of authenticity comes from Rev. Wicks Cherrycoke himself; the narrative voice in the most frequent narrative level of the many that can be found in *Mason & Dixon*. Cherrycoke claims bearing witness of all the actions he describes—even those where Mason and Dixon were completely alone; a license that he can certainly take, considering that his narrative is aimed at entertaining his audience (the diverse members of the LeSpark family; mainly the children). Following the travel-writing tradition, Cherrycoke is much given to fictional—and even fantastic—digression, which he uses to entertain his audience. However, his digressions do not exclusively provide overtly fictional information. In an oscillation of narrative levels where narrative borders are wilfully confounded (Ortiz 128), anachronical information from events that will take place in the future of the temporal setting of the novel makes an implicit claim for truthfulness that leads readers to assimilate digressive narrative additions as historical truth.^{xx}

Byrd’s *Histories*, Mason’s *The Journal* and Pynchon’s *Mason & Dixon* do also include typical exploration-journal commonplaces, which might be understood as adaptations of the travel-writing tradition to the colonial context. The purpose of exploration journals being essentially the report of scientific findings, the above-mentioned “hipotactic” style is dominant in them. All details narrated thus obey to the scientific need to introduce antecedents, describe instruments and procedure followed, record the data collected and present results and conclusions. Both Byrd’s and Mason/Dixon’s works are preceded by previous (failed) attempts at conducting the same survey and in Byrd’s case, a foreword is included to explain the need and circumstances of running, drawing and narrating the line dividing Virginia from North Carolina. The description of the whole procedure followed—including peoples and means involved, political context, natural environment, personal relations or instruments required—make the narrative line go parallel to the run and drawn ones.

But if the writing of the journals obeys a scientific purpose, the running, drawing and narration of the lines obey to mainly economic, but also political ones. Once run, drawn and signed, both borderlines would determine which colony would receive the taxes of the territories involved in the contest for their property. The

activities of running, drawing and narration of the lines thus influenced and were influenced by colonial politics in the new continent and parliamentary alliances in England. If the place of departure or homeland is always present as in travel writing as a place to be escaped or to return to (Adams), for exploration journals, it is also the core of the imperial power that starts (compels) action. Imperialism expands through exploration journals since they work both as the scientific tools and narrative pictures that map the land to be appropriated—or that is appropriated in the act of mapping.

Brought up an Englishman,^{xxi} and a member of the Royal Society at twenty-two (Adams 1987 vi-vii), Byrd makes a most representative English colonial voice. To him, his native land is but a curiosity as rare as any Eastern country and thus he would describe it to his English readers^{xxii}. Byrd's journal format in his *Secret History* does not obey to Mason's scrupulous scientific data recording. Instead, his often too personal vision of the expedition rather shows the purpose of entertaining his audience as a main one; a side-effect of colonial expansionism better suited to light socialising that however hides other, more practical political and economic reasons. Conversely, his *History* adds a sketch of the English colonization of America, a most unfavourable characterization of North Carolinians, and a description of the flora and fauna of the region traversed by the expedition (Boyd xxvi-xxvii) that reveal his own economic and political interests in it.^{xxiii} And yet, he can still detach himself from an English colonizing project that he portrays as unethical and unfair to the Indians: "Besides, the poor Indians would have had less reason to Complain that the English took away *their* [my italics] Land, if they [the English] had received it by way of Portion with their [Indians'] Daughters" (*History* 4).

Mason's *The Journal* is more overtly colonial in this sense. It is not only commanded by, but also written for the Royal Society with the purpose of solving a colonial, long-held territorial dispute in a British Court. Mason and Dixon were not, like Byrd himself, personally involved in the dispute; they were only external, impersonal agents of the Empire's "impartial" interests.^{xxiv} England is not explicitly present, but each measure taken, each longitude calculated, is so in reference to Bradley's Meridian in London.^{xxv} Moreover, line-related tasks were simultaneous with the Royal Society project of measuring the distance of a Degree of Latitude and *The Journal* includes attached correspondence in relation to this as well as line-running matters.

It could be argued that the presence of England in Pynchon's novel might obey to the fact that it is a rewriting of Mason's journal and for this reason, at least some traces of colonial influence should be expected. However, Pynchon's typically postcolonial vision of their surveying expedition—including strong ethical positions in relation with imperial practices such as appropriation of Indian land or slavery—does not only include the English presence in his novel, but he does so in a very personal way that has nothing to do with Mason's text. English colonial interests (with strong chances for the Royal Society) are one of Mason and Dixon's best bets as for who they are actually working for.^{xxvi} Although the East India Company, The French, the Jesuits or even a colonial complot to gain independence from the British Crown make other possibilities among many, the English imperial forces and interests are certainly included in the paranoia of possible threatening "Theys" that Pynchon imports from *Gravity's Rainbow* into this novel. Opposite to Byrd, Mason, and Dixon; Pynchon is neither a born nor a raised Englishman. He is not even a colonist, but a citizen of the United States and his vision of 18th c England is widened with the passing of history. Although to him, such England is not the reference homeland it was for Byrd, Mason

and Dixon, a certain postcolonial return-look is present in his recreation of it in *Mason & Dixon*.

But to Pynchon, colonial future is more relevant than imperial past. Although two parts of his novel (“Latitudes and departures” and “Last Transit”) deal with adventures unrelated to the American colonies, Ramírez sees the novel as Pynchon’s “conceit for how euro-American settlers appropriate Indian land, dislocate native populations, and incubate notions of Manifest Destiny, rationalizing in perpetuity the theft of future land granted to Indians” (1). Within the exploration-journal tradition that Pynchon’s novel incorporates together with many other colonial (and non-colonial or even post-colonial) literary sources, Mason and Dixon’s adventures in America include descriptions of the objects and subjects of colonial appropriation that perform an inscription of property over the such objects and subjects described. However, this act of colonial appropriation is paradoxically performed through the travel-writing convention of estrangement.

The works of Byrd and Pynchon discussed in this article include the acts of running, drawing and narrating a line that is in fact many parallel and coincident dividing lines. There are the lines physically run by Byrd and Mason/Dixon in the 18th c. by measuring distances, marking trees, erecting posts and clearing the visto. These are imaginary ones running more or less straight from post to post.^{xvii} There are also the lines drawn on maps by the same above, which are already performing the geopolitical division between two colonies by virtue of which those two colonies are both cognitively and politically discriminated by naming and owned and ruled accordingly. Then, there are the narrative lines, including the scientific reports of the procedures followed and results obtained, and the descriptions of the conditions under which all of it occurred. The later are what we know as the travel narratives themselves, but all the previous lines are also containing and contained by them. Finally, there are the second versions of the original reports; two more parallel and coincident narrative lines that make the same claim of originality and truthfulness as the first ones.

Expedition journals such as Byrd’s and Mason’s make a most appropriate object of study for the nature of a geometry that would explain and overcome travel writing’s resistance to definition. Being a concept that belongs to the static, ontological ideal of a late 19th c notion of science, definition as a tool might be too limited and therefore inadequate for a task that involves the dynamism and contingency of movement. Since travel writing could not exist without the moment of border crossing, an expedition that takes place not only within such border, but also creates the border as the expedition develops, it might allow for a zoom in of travel writing that permits the explorer have a look at its nature. Under the powerful influence of a travel writing tradition that was at its peak of expression in the 18th century, and at an early moment in scientific development when the pluralism resulting from especulation was much more representative of the scientific experience than 19th century positivism, the scientific discourse that can be found in 18th c travel journals could freely fluctuate between data collection and imaginative speculation.

Pynchon notices and represents the inadequacy of definition—which is inscribed within lineal representation—for the expression and apprehension of a dynamic experience: “‘Nobody intends to live directly upon the visto,’ Mason speaking as to a Child. ‘The object being, that the people shall set their homes to one side or another. That it be a Boundary, nothing more’” (542). And yet the visto exists and

moves with its width and length, and action happens within it and around its uncertain and variable margins; or action wherever it happens, makes the *visto* as not only a long, but also a wide dividing line. The existence of the *visto* is too complex for Cartesian Geometry; the vector of action within the *visto* not only pointing West, but all *possible* spatiotemporal directions.

Narratively speaking, such fluctuation makes the artistic paradox possible by substituting the either/or binary dividing function of the line as defining instrument by the complementary inclusion of the many within a shared space-time continuum of the *visto*. Narrated facts might belong to the scope of the merely possible as possibilities materialize themselves by finding their way into the factual. The strange and even the marvellous are appropriated as personal experience whereas the perceptions of an individual might gain the status of universal truths transcending the merely anecdotal. Similarly, limited observations can gain the status of scientific truth by supplying with imagination whatever data lies beyond the scope of perception so that everything imagined may claim a similar status and even be observed with a different optics. It is not that uncertainty reigns supreme in travel writing, but that certainty can be found to be a property of the unreliable. The width of the line, the performance of travel writing, involves many more complexities than the horizontal and vertical complementarities of plot and digression, of literal report and aesthetic pleasure. It is intermittent and rhizomatic in the Foucauldian and Deleuzian senses; wave and particle.

The first and second versions of the exploration journals revisited in this chapter perform acts of colonial appropriation while implicitly or explicitly acknowledging the legal voids, geometrical inconsistencies, political contradictions, and ambiguous morality involved in them. The individuals running the line within the *visto* are and are not the subjects of colonial appropriation since they run, draw and narrate the dividing line while not being the real owners of the land appropriated by division. Those within the width of the line belong to the line and move with it; their identities multiplying—rather than blurring—between the interstices of the binary divisions they produce. Since it is they who push the *visto*, their possibilities become factualities as their actualities are historicalised or fictionalised by narration.

According to this complex geometry, if an attempt at defining travel writing is to be made, it should be by changing the discriminatory nature of definition into a multiple instrument by which discrimination can be made in an inclusive, complementary way. The threat of Western discourses of truth the Bhabha attaches to travel writing liminality would not here imply the destruction of such discourses, but their complementarity with other possible and factual discourses that can connect the mimetic and the ethical truths. Musgrove's apocalyptic prediction of conceptual boundary blurring would rather be conceptual dialogue and what he perceives as the individual's resistance to the illusion of unity would become their acceptance of the certainty of a complementary—not only diverse, but even contradictory—unity.

The complementary nature of ultimately performative, representative economy^{xxviii} reveals the workings of paradoxical functionalisms such as the materialisation of imaginary lines or the extemporal definition of movement (both physical and narrative). But it does so by challenging the use of traditional instruments of analysis that come from scientific discourses that, though outdated and not accounting for the latest scientific discoveries, are still used as methodological instruments of what is nowadays known as science. Analytic instruments such as the width of the line provide the perspective of a more adequate—and accurate—optics for

the study of phenomena of a complex, multiple nature. Travel writing being naturally ex-centric would therefore be more conveniently analysed with that kind of instrument.

Notes

ⁱ Jean de Mandeville or John Mandeville was the author of one of the most popular travel books in Medieval Europe. Originally published in Anglo-Norman French, it was translated into many languages and despite the extremely marvellous and fantastical episodes described in it, its author claimed their truthfulness on the basis of his own experience and it was a book of reference for later travellers such as Christopher Columbus himself.

ⁱⁱ In Philips (75).

ⁱⁱⁱ My emphasis.

^{iv} Although Pynchon's sources might extend to H.W. Robinson's 1950 article, or those by H. P. Hollis (1934), H. G. Dwight (1926) and John H. Latrobe (1855), together with the works of Edward Benett Mathews, Earl Schenk Miers, and the more recent novel by Barbara Susan Lefever, *The Stargazers*, Ortiz points at the 1969 edition of *The Journal* by the American Philosophical Society as the main primary source used in *Mason & Dixon* (133-134).

^v In his introduction to the first edition of *Histories* (1929) Boyd argues that the official version (*History of the Dividing Line . . .*) was probably written early in 1738 (xxviii) with the purpose of being published, whereas the secret one might have been written on the spot as the line was being run in 1728 and circulated as entertainment among Byrd's personal friends back in England.

^{vi} Although the events described in *Secret History* are supposed to have really occurred, Byrd gives characters fictional (nick)names that "in the tradition of the Restoration comedy of manners known so well by Byrd, revealed something about the man to whom it was given" (Adams 1987: xiii). Moreover, since the *Secret History* was aimed at mere diversion, Byrd could have added certain "details" that, in spite of departing perhaps a little bit from fact, would compensate by making his narrative more entertaining to his readers. Conversely, Byrd's rewriting his *History* about ten years after its previous, private version, allows for him both to add much digressive encyclopedic learning and to erase certain compromising, personal passages that would not match either the style or content of an official document.

^{vii} Other relevant purposes include learning and warring, but even those are so linked to the scientific, mercantile or religious purposes that sometimes it is difficult to tell one from another.

^{viii} In Musgrove 37.

^{ix} In Adams 1983: 165.

^x For a discussion of the arbitrariness of scientific observation in relation with the measuring instrument, see Bohr, Niels, *Nature*, 1928, CW, Vol. 6, 20-62. On the application of this perspective to linguistic mediation, see Fernández (307-309).

^{xi} Typical of 18th c travel writing is Mandeville's two-part structure where the personal perspective—including from curiosities about peoples and places to a relativist scientific interpretation of them—coexists with an objective report of the travel's itinerary (Adams 1983 168).

^{xii} Campbell undelines the relationship existing between scientific discourse and relativism already in the 16th and 17th c., and establishes a connection between relativism and the possibility of multiple worlds under the influence of the discovery of the New World (part ii 118-119).

^{xiii} Butor claims that spatiotemporal relativism (which is specially revealed when using temporal criteria to take spatial measures and is basically what the activity of surveying land consists of), when considered in discursive terms, produces the effect of blurring the distinction between fact and fiction (71). Campbell underlines how for Bruno and Koepler, poetic and scientific language would coexist and interpenetrate on the basis of the archaic sense of the word "poetic" as "making"(part ii 117). And more specifically, Adams puts relativity forward as an 18th c favourite theme of novels of education (1983 192), which reveals that at the time when the exploration journals studied in this chapter appeared (except for Pynchon's novel) relativism was a feature from scientific discourse that was permeating fiction.

^{xiv} Adams' glossing of Tzvetan Todorov (1983 183).

^{xv} In the case of exploration journals, I would also include scientific measuring data as horizontal plotting markers, since they signal the gradual accomplishment of purpose.

^{xvi} Although Mason is very concise in his style—following the “hipotsactic style” that Adams describes as the Royal Society style for exploration journals (1983 250)—he still includes funny anecdotes (67), the popular history of some places (66) and hearsay geographical descriptions of places he had never seen in person (175-176) which, although not being overtly fictitious, still cannot be considered strictly scientific data.

^{xvii} Such is the case of John C. Symme’s 1818 theory of the Hollow Earth (in *The Portfolio*, vol. VI, n° 6; available at <http://olivercowdery.com/texts/1818symm.htm>. Retrieved on April 8 2009), or Jacques Vaucanson’s 1738 mechanical duck.

^{xviii} The 1752 calendar reform is a clear example of a historical event that is presented as so overtly fictitious that it becomes supernatural, since those days—between 2 to 14 September—erased from the calendar are fabricated as having really existed for Mason. But in fact, the whole running of the line, together with its two main characters, is rewritten into a fictional version of *The Journal of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon*.

^{xix} Which in fact, they are; since they include sex, alcohol and quarreling in relation with the professional activity of gentlemen described as “The Flower and Cream of the Council” (*Secret History* 19) of both Virginia and North Carolina.

^{xx} Wall interprets anachronism in Mason & Dixon as “a critique of rationalism by a great many players in the Enlightenment scientific drama” which are portrayed as “forces of evil” (11). This implies that Pynchon would claim that his version of *The Journal* is more complete and accurate than Mason’s on the basis that the 18th c Enlightened rationalistic representation of facts was all wrong in its basis.

^{xxi} Although he was born in Virginia, William Byrd II was sent to England at the age of seven in order to receive an English education and become a Southern Gentleman in Virginia. He would study commerce in Holland and law in London, where he stayed as representative of the Virginia Assembly until he was thirty and where he returned eleven years later to stay ten more years and marry his second (this time English) wife (Adams 1987 vi-viii).

^{xxii} Both Histories were composed for an English reading public, (a closer circle for the earlier *Secret History*) and in style most appropriate for an English coffee-house (Boyd xxvii-xviii).

^{xxiii} Some years later, Byrd would purchase an extensive tract of land that he named “Land of Eden” and that he first eyed in the transcourse of this surveying expedition (Boyd xxxv).

^{xxiv} Although *The Journal* was not aimed at publication, its purpose is mainly scientific and no digressive elements are added for the purpose of entertaining, instructing or influencing any reading public.

^{xxv} Although the Greenwich meridian did not become the universal Prime Meridian until 1884, the 1824 Bradley meridian—5.9 metres west of 1851 Airy Meridian—was used as reference by the Royal Society in the 1760s, and is still used in the Ordinance Surveying today rather than the Airy Meridian from which Greenwich Mean Time is measured.

^{xxvi} In fact, Pynchon is reflecting more than his usual, general postmodern paranoia with respect to this issue, since the local surveyors employed for the task’s claim of being unable to complete it is but too suspicious, considering that the Penns and the Bradleys had been quarrelling about how to set that boundary line for about eighty years and there were too many interests involved.

^{xxvii} Both works coincide in underlining the difficulty of drawing an exact boundary line with the instruments available at the time. In fact, Byrd’s line had to be drawn on account of the controversy produced by the previous 1710 line drawn for the same purpose, which Byrd himself admitted to have been run using defective instruments (*History* 11). Also, during the 1728 line running, much discussion followed on account of surveyance calculations that make much of the plot of both *Histories*. Likewise, Pynchon puts a special emphasis on the many circumstances that might threaten the exactitude of line-running calculations including deficient instruments, external agents that might affect their use, personal circumstances and even mathematical errors (470-475).

^{xxviii} For a full discussion, check chapter 4 and conclusion. In Fernández 2005.

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