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## **The Politics of Voyaging and the Excess of Words**

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## The Politics of Voyaging and the Excess of Words English Travel Writing from 1589 to 1790

Given at the SPIRIT Research Method Seminar, march 2011  
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In the frontispiece to John Dee's "The Perfect Art of Navigation" from 1577, in its time a seminal work on navigation, we find a ship at sea. This is, however, no ordinary ship. Instead we can justly perceive it as a political ship, maybe even a 'ship of state', or at least a ship of community. It is a metaphorical ship which draws its strength from operating a wavering line between two interrelated conjunctions of the ship and politics. On the one hand the ship serves as an allegory for a large protestant community. On the other hand ships were seen as specific sites for politics in themselves.

The ship is on its way with its sails unfurled and a nice wind blowing. On its side we see the word 'Europe', and at the helm we see none other than Queen Elizabeth herself. Befittingly the entire stern deck has been turned into a throne with Elizabeth herself sitting elevated and ready to navigate. The rudder is decorated with the royal coat of arms. In the context of Dee's work the meaning on this level is of course clear. His text was part of a larger discourse bent on animating the British people to take to the sea in order to defy its popish rivals, who at the time enjoyed almost undisturbed dominion of trade outside Europe. Elizabeth, as the leader of the protestant community, was to lead this community towards glory by turning her attention to the sea. This animating zeal was shared by many of Dee's contemporaries, among them the founder of the historiography of exploration Richard Hakluyt and such prominent figures as Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh. In this sense the ship became an allegory for a community about to realise itself through exploration, trade and naval glory – an 'empire' as Dee himself would name it<sup>1</sup>.

But the picture also evokes community in a different, though related, sense. Elizabeth's elevated position at the helm makes her visible to the people on the main deck. There we find three men, two of which are looking directly at her. Furthermore Elizabeth has her right arm stretched out, but she is not pointing towards the horizon. Rather her arm seems raised in gesticulation towards the people in the ship. She is thus busy addressing a small shipboard community. She is giving an oratory or perhaps issuing a command. As such the ship becomes a scene for another conception of a smaller community that comes into existence as a performance of words and sight. Here the community exists as an ordering of the ship which becomes a site of a speech situation in which some talk while others listen.

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<sup>1</sup> Dee 1577: p. 53

These two images of community are obviously complementary. Perhaps even mutually dependent since one renders the other possible. The shipboard community itself would have nowhere to go without the mission of the political and religious community which, however, would have no means of realizing its objectives without the well ordered ship. And furthermore the allegory itself seems to rely on this double conjunction of the ship and community. If the ship was not a site of specific political organization, which in the image comes about as an order of speech, it would not serve as an efficient image of society in general. If the ship was not intrinsically locked to a notion of community and politics it would not really serve as an allegory for politics at large.

And of course the image did not rest on some ill-conceived jest pulled out of thin air. Not only was the ship of state (and with it, as I intend to demonstrate, questions of the relation of speech and community) a well-established figure inherited from the texts of ancient greek philosophers and poets<sup>2</sup>. The specific act of voyaging was also at the time seen as fundamentally tied to the art of government. The ship of state metaphor does not only figure in the words of philosophers and decisionmakers, it also figured in narratives of voyages as they portrayed the shipboard hierarchy and the management of crews as questions of government. In examining this language of travel at sea my work will focus on the voyaging ship as a site for community or perhaps more specifically, as in the case of Dee, a site for an ordering of speech.

But the well-ordered monologue of Elizabeth's shipboard community was rarely the case. As historians turn to travel accounts in the period of European overseas expansion we do not find just one voice confidently narrating causes and events. Instead we find a multiplicity of words instantly obscuring the prospects of locating the truth of voyages in the narration of the travelers themselves. There are simply too many words, one constantly interrupting the other. And not only as different narratives contest each other. Often each narrative itself will be cumbered by the presence of an excess of words as they turn into stories about conflicts in the forms of 'murmurs', 'discontentments' and 'forecastle conversation' that all turn the

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<sup>2</sup> I intend to make the first chapter of my thesis revolve around this figure as we find it in the writing of Plato where the ship becomes a space of contestation as the crew starts fighting over power in the absence of authority. The results of this democratic struggle are catastrophic. The ship's course becomes determined by arbitrary words and desires and the ship loses its direction and heads for destruction as it roams the seas in quest of whatever the person in power desires. This dissensual speech is also seen as blocking the possibility of the emergence of a true knowledge of navigation. Instead the term 'navigator' is used about whoever manage to grab power, obscuring the wisdom of the true navigator, who is on the contrary seen as a stargazer (Plato 2003: p 246-248). As such this allegory is an allegory of a struggle of contingent words, that disable the appearance of true knowledge, and in the socratic vision it is only a true and ideal knowledge that can possible found a good political community – by decimating the political struggle. The navigator is therefore equivalent to that ideal philosopher-king who Plato sees as the only potential for creating a community based on justice – that is a community in which each does what he is supposed to do and nothing else. A utopian thought of having a political community, in which there is neither conflict or confusion – that is in which no one does 'politics'. The idea is then to make this discussion the outset for a historiographical analysis of the way historians, from Hakluyt to postcolonialism, has handled the excess of words in the sources about voyaging.

ship into a dissensual space, where the founding utterance of the good community is at all times threatened by the slurred speech of a multitude already occupying the space of that longed-for unity. Travel accounts are thus marked by an excess of words that they themselves, from different positions within the shipboard community, struggle to put to rest. As I will discuss continually throughout my thesis this has made historians reluctant, perhaps even hostile, towards the stuttered syllables emerging from the deck. In their attempts to establish the true causes and the events that would follow from these, historians have often discarded these unfortunate differences, choosing instead to found their narratives on evidence untainted by the spittle of seamen.

My work is about those discredited words and all their dissonance in the story of British voyaging from 1589 to 1790. It is an attempt to open up the vision of the travelling body as a positive given. To see its constitution as a community, and not least examine how this constitution is undone in contingent speech acts. It turns the space of the ship with its focus on the sight and its outside, as in the vision of scholars from Hakluyt and onwards, into that heterotopic vision all too roughly sketched out by Michel Foucault in his lecture on "Different Spaces" in which the ship is a space itself inhabited by different spaces<sup>3</sup>. A multiplicity that makes the community of the ship an object for a disagreement, not between equal partners but about who can give meaning to the community as such. That there are several ships within the ship. The politics of voyaging as I conceive it, following a certain strain in contemporary political philosophy, is thus the politics of which words can give meaning to communities, and who is allowed to emerge as the orator before the rabble.

Of course the language of community is inherently dependent upon a metaphysical notion of 'presence' and in the wake of the deconstructionist tradition that means 'teleological', tending towards its own completion as a sutured totality. It is impossible to talk about it without at least implying the backdrop of a final unity. When addressing this type of politics we are, as an example, restrained to speaking of 'interruptions', 'suspensions' and 'displacements' of the language of community, but these conceptions all imply that community is as such still a unity, though a slowly and continually unravelling one. We cannot replace the language of community and from a deconstructionist standpoint we should not even try to either, since that would just mean the installment of yet another instance of a language vainly attempting to fulfill itself.

Instead there is a need to work the language and history of community, or perhaps we could even say 'unwork' it from within, in the deconstructionist meaning of such an operation. So, "We must begin wherever we are" as Jacques Derrida tells us<sup>4</sup>. This type of movement will hopefully show that when speaking about the community as one, it is in a certain sense also more than 'one'.

### *Theoretical approach*

It is perhaps already evident that my work will draw inspiration from a specific theoretical horizon. This horizon is the patchwork of poststructura-

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault 1998: p. 175-185

<sup>4</sup> Derrida 1997: p. 162

list political thought which has emerged in the wake of the generation of great french thinkers of texts and their failures: Derrida, Foucault and Lacan.

What can perhaps most accurately describe the generation that succeeded these iconographic figures is a will to insist on the affirmation of contingency in specific acts. Where their predecessors were fully occupied in seeing the way language worked in shaping the world while at the same time not adding up to the all-encompassing horizons it layed claim to, this later generation is bent on thinking this 'not adding up' as something that enables actions that are in this theoretical language 'political'. Deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Foucauldian interventions were obviously political in themselves, but it is the later developments of these approaches that has turned politics into its perhaps most pertinent subject<sup>5</sup>.

My work will draw its main focus from two such thinkers: Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Rancière. Proteges of Derrida and Foucault respectively, these two thinkers share a focus on the question of community, and more specifically an interest in the way words work towards establishing that which is at any given time seen as being common to the members of communities. They also share a critical dialogue with a certain moaning heard in the litanies of classical political philosophy. This is a moaning for fulfillment that has turned the definition of politics into a definition of an art meant to bring about completion of community in which each part would be in harmony with the whole, enabling a coherent identity of the community as such<sup>6</sup>.

Jean-Luc Nancy has, in a continuance of the thought of Derrida<sup>7</sup>, attempted to scrutinize this desire, which he perceives as inherently metaphysical. He sees this desire in the continual attempt of any community to bring about its own essence as 'work' in the double meaning of 'work of art' and 'labour'. This work strives towards a realization of myth as common essence<sup>8</sup>. Community attempts to deliver itself to itself through a work of language by continually telling the story or myth of its own fulfillment thus mobilizing community through this work of language. Such a fulfillment continually locates its essence outside of itself, but attempts to bring it about through a labor. Such an operation is inherent to all political ideologies, which thus become marked by myth.<sup>9</sup> Here we find the notion of community as the realization of an immanent essens which leaves nothing behind. Myth

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<sup>5</sup> Derrida lived long enough to see this development, and embraced it by turning his own work towards the question of politics in works such as *Specters of Marx* (1994).

<sup>6</sup> One finds this desire in the work of Plato as he lets Socrates bemoan that community has already established itself in non-identical fashion (Plato 2003: p 246-248), in Aristotle as he turns his work on politics into a manual on how to achieve a community of the right proportions enabling harmony (Aristotle 1984: p. 129), and in the trauma of Hobbes, whose 'state of nature' seems always too present (e.g. in the opinions of private people) to let any sovereign reign without a people (Hobbes 2008: p. 202 and p. 289).

<sup>7</sup> Much of Derridas own work revolves around deconstructing this desire which he terms 'mourning work' in *Specters of Marx*. This mourning is an attempt to locate the dead, and make sure they do not return as disturbance of contemporaneity – in other words an attempt at bringing about a harmony of words and things within community. Derridas tongue-in-cheek 'hauntology' is therefore closely related to Nancy's conception of 'compearance'. See Derrida 1994: p. 63 and Nancy 1991: p. 35

<sup>8</sup> Nancy 1991

<sup>9</sup> Nancy 1991: p. xxxviii-xxxix and 9-10

thus becomes an autfiguration of community that communicates itself and thereby brings about itself in this work of communication. A kind of performative loop that ties each member to its essence<sup>10</sup>. In the kind of wordplay so popular to deconstructionists this community is likened to a 'communion'.

Nancy contrasts this operative community by a different conception of community which is tied to contingency. Where the communication of the communal attempts to establish itself as necessity, this articulation, which Nancy labels as 'political', would be an exposure in the sense of a liminal experience of singularity and historicity. This would be a community of speaking beings as they appear in the world, not coming into being by realizing an essence, but by having a limit that exposes them to others. Nancy's anti-humanist stance becomes apparent as he refuses to call these being 'humans' since being is not a trait of any human essence, but rather an exposure to something one is not<sup>11</sup>. Where the communion of community would tend towards repetition of its own essence as myth, and thus outside of time, this community of being-in-common or being exposed is radically historical in the sense that it exposes being to its own finitude as it is an exposure to one's being outside of one self, and therefore being determined in relation to and together with the other<sup>12</sup>. One is, in conventional deconstructionist terms, part of an open-ended differential matrix, in which identity cannot remain fixed outside of time and articulation.

This community of exposure is, however, not an entity in itself. It cannot be produced as work and it cannot work towards a production of essence. Rather it exist only as an interruption of the working community as an articulation of an unworking. By turning community towards the shared limits of singularities it disrupts the attempts to produce the immanent essence as work and makes manifest the shared appearance constitutive of being<sup>13</sup>. In this sense it comes before the working community, and never ceases to appear as a disruption of the work<sup>14</sup>. The ontological premiss of being thus continually disturbs community as it itself appears exposed and in common<sup>15</sup>.

Of course, in regular deconstructionist fashion, this politics, the articulation of unworking, remains only a vague promise. As such the affirmative intention is constantly at the verge of being deferred and instead emerging as an indefinite appearing, yet not really appearing fully, in order to remain open to a radical 'otherness'. An argument in which the political is always perforating the fabric of language, but can never really become an act as such. This is where deconstructionist politics turns into Levinasian ethics<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 54

<sup>11</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 6-7 and 25-27

<sup>12</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 29

<sup>13</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 35 and 71-72

<sup>14</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 58

<sup>15</sup> Nancy 1991: p. 40-41. In this attempt to establish a political thought on the split ontology of a shared being Nancy is close to his peers such as Alain Badiou and of course Jacques Rancière although the latter is adverse to embracing any ontological premiss – even the disrupted variants as found in the work of the deconstructionists or the lacanians.

<sup>16</sup> The most systematic attempt to conceive of a political vision derived from such a stance is Laclau and Mouffes notion of antagonism.

This problem of the political as an 'act' or 'event' is something which motivates much of this wave of political thinkers. The solutions are manifold but often unsatisfying. Badiou's mathematical ontology promises to enable us to think the contingent as an event happening, but it derives this powerful drive from an argument that is in every way radically ahistorical and axiomatic. His truth happens outside of time and not by suspending it, but by eliminating it altogether. Žižek's notion of abyssal freedom is perhaps more promising, but it remains unclear how to do such a thing, and in the end the question is what the political consequence of such an embrace of one's finitude would surmount. To Žižek it at times seems to mean reverting to dogmatic marxism.

Perhaps it is because I am a historian that I find the conceptions posed by Jacques Rancière (himself somewhat devoted to history) the most promising. His work is obviously related to these strains of thought and very explicitly has much in common to especially the work of Nancy<sup>17</sup>. He does, however, reject all the pretensions of ontology posed by his peers<sup>18</sup>. To him contingency is nowhere if it is not an act performed. In it self there would be no liminal exposure if someone did not speak it. Instead his works on politics starts from specificity, and this specificity is always a 'disagreement'. It is, however, not a disagreement between two constituted parts of community. Instead he is interested in disagreements about what it is to be a part, and who can define what part-taking means. As such 'disagreement' is a disagreement about what it is to be a speaking being and as such a part of the common of community<sup>19</sup>. Therefore the disagreement is an interruption of the community by the co-existence of several communities at once appearing in a particular speech situation.

Politics is here conceived as words that pertain to the common. Articulating what it is to be in common. As with Nancy we find community tied to a tension between two opposing orders of articulation that respectively forecloses the appearance of contingency and makes it manifest. From the horizon of Rancière's insistence of the specificity of politics as speech events this tension turns into two distinct modes of speech. On the one hand politics exists as 'policing'. In conceiving of this type of articulation Rancière relies on a conception of community as an aesthetic configuration. A configuration of parts, in which some parts belong to certain places. He calls such configurations 'partitions of the sensible' aiming at the ways in which the world is configured by sets of distinctions that carve out certain ways of being and doing. Rancière himself emphatically puts it thus: "The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed."<sup>20</sup> As such 'policing' becomes a configuration of share in community, that tells us what community is, when and how it happens and to whom – a count of parts, voices and ways of speaking that makes a space of community. That community is thus aesthetic does not, however, make it something which is easily cast aside by accessing some 'real' behind it. Instead it is an aesthetics creating the fabric of the common, and ways to do it, as such<sup>21</sup>. An example would be the establishment of what belongs to

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<sup>17</sup> Rancière 1999: p. 142

<sup>18</sup> Rancière 2010: 205-219

<sup>19</sup> Rancière 1999: p. x-xii

<sup>20</sup> Rancière 2004: p. 12

<sup>21</sup> Rancière 1999: p. 27-29

the public and what belongs to the private and as such can no longer be the business of anybody nor an object of discussion. It is a distribution of who can do and say what in which spaces.

On the other hand there is a politics that makes manifest that such a distribution or count of parts is in one respect a miscount. This is the kind of politics that happen in disagreements of the kind outlined above. This politics is antagonistic to the first since it interrupts distributions by making manifest what they have ruled out as impossible. It is, for instance, the speech of those who have no voice within a given order of speech, but who by speaking count themselves in<sup>22</sup>. It thus takes the form of an excess of words since it makes manifest words that are not accounted for within a given configuration of words. Words that will appear as if they are out of place and have no time within the established ordering of voices<sup>23</sup>.

Of course such an act has to found itself on slippery platform. In confronting a reserved commonality it has to act as if there was a common world in order to make one come into being<sup>24</sup>. In this respect it can be said that this politics is always an expansion of the common through speech acts bringing issues that are out of question back into the sphere of discussion - a blurring of partitions<sup>25</sup>. Such interventions often happen as demonstrations of an equality (which in the terminology of Rancière is the same as 'contingency'). But this equality is not an end brought about by politics. Instead it is that impossible platform used as leverage in an argument, in which one part does not see the other as a part of the sphere of discussion. One such polemical equality can be brought about through the appeal of language in an argument that would go something like 'if you are speaking to me it must be because we share a language'. You can only tell somebody they are not part of a language by sharing that language, and politics means using such polemical universalities in manifest articulations of a common world<sup>26</sup>.

Perhaps what entices me most as a historian to this particular notion of the tensions of communities is that they are nothing if not performed. It is not sufficient for a philosopher to square the circle and establish that contingency is inevitable. It has to be 'done', and has been done throughout history, thereby leaving the historian with the difficult task of telling the stories of these semantic excesses, political disagreements and unworkings. And of course the task requires historians to constrain our great zeal of making words and statements symptoms of their times, thereby taking away the anachronistic quality of these disagreements that juxtapose different conceptions of communities and their times as such. Instead of giving these words a set place, the task would be to see how they have no place, and how this lack of location is the issue of the politics of words as they are performed. It is from this nexus of thought that my interest in the questions of communities emerge. By taking to the heap of words on voyages I would like to demonstrate the co-existence of different worlds within the ship as it erupts in political speech acts. Who has a part in the community of the ship and travel and how are these configurations challenged in specific political articulations of disagreement?

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<sup>22</sup> Rancière 1999: p. 31-33

<sup>23</sup> Rancière 1994: p. 30. That the political event is as such anachronistic shows how close Rancière actually is to Derrida.

<sup>24</sup> Rancière 1999: p. 52

<sup>25</sup> Rancière 2006: p. 55-57

<sup>26</sup> Rancière 1999: p. 53

By setting off from these theories on communities I hope to be able to grasp ways in which words and speech work in setting up different communities and to see these conceptions clash. The theories are not tools to locate a hermeneutic truth (motives etc.), or even in a certain sense 'meaning', behind the words. Neither do they lend themselves to attempts at explaining causes of words. Instead I hope that it will enable me to focus on what words do and how they relate to and attempt to dislocate one another. As such the theories act as a framework through which to think these discursive configurations and the way they perform community.

### *Sources: Travel accounts*

This study of the communities of voyaging will have discourse analysis of travel accounts as its main focus. It will start in the works of Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616) whose collections of travel accounts founded the historiography of the voyage and whose passionate promotion of British expansion helped create a new vision of English presence within the world. Part of this vision was concerned with the politics of communities, both national and shipboard, and who could articulate them. As such his seminal work was political in the sense that I am trying to discern. My analysis will end with the controversial accounts of the ill-fated expedition of William Bligh, which at the dawn of democracy was to be conceived in a new language of the political as such. Though a comparative study could prove satisfying I am restraining the analyses to Anglophone discourses, but since travel accounts often contained much sought-after knowledge they were often translated. In that way the maritime language was marked by much the same fluid mobility as the seamen themselves who would often take to the sea under different colors than their own. I am also limiting the analyses to studies of travel accounts that narrate of travel into territories considered 'frontiers'. Obviously such a conception has an unfortunate and distinctly imperial ring to it. In doing so I am, however, motivated by the prevalence which politics hold in these accounts of often long and tedious voyaging, in which community was tested and sometimes turned to questions of life and death.

Travel accounts can tell us about the way in which travelling as an activity was perceived in both society at large and by mariners and travelers themselves. This of course entails a specific approach to these texts. One can distinguish two different ways of looking at travel accounts within the historiographical traditions. These do not form fully constituted research paradigms. Instead we can see them as two different ways of configuring the relationship between the lived activity of travelling and the words that tell about this activity, which as such prefigure different sets of research questions.

The first and arguably older tradition is to see travel accounts as edited, after-the-fact constructions. This means taking them as fictions, which can on occasion be verified to tell us of historical events. The advent of scientific historical research brought this conception to the fore, but its notions of credibility can be seen even earlier. This means stressing the popular quality of travel narratives. These texts circulated within a wider reading public and this made them prone to satisfying the people's desire for the curious and the fantastical. As such this exposure to a popular taste would

compromise their ability to narrate truthfully<sup>27</sup>. Only rigorous source criticism could with much labour save these texts from their popular misdemeanors and their inflations of truth by making them reliable in telling what happened and what caused it.

With the advent of disciplines such as postcolonialism, new historicism and new branches of Atlantic history this conception of travel writing has been supplemented, yet not supplanted, by a different configuration of the texts and their truths. At its most radical this configuration means taking these fictions as part of reality itself. Though rarely so emphatic this view of travel accounts stress travel writing as being a somewhat integral part of the activity of travelling itself. As such the texts can no longer be discredited as being after-the-fact, but must instead be taken seriously as part of doing travel. This does not only mean focusing on the perlocutionary effects of the accounts, but also to link the constructed character of the texts to the constructed character of historical reality itself.

I intend to elaborate this distinction of traditions in a historiographical chapter of the dissertation, which will consider the relation between these conceptions of locating the truth and the words of community. For now it will have to suffice to point out that my work will be indebted to this latter notion of the texts as part of historical events. I also subscribe to the idea that this linkage between texts and reality is not only true regarding the constitution of the rather abstract 'meaning' of reality. We also find the act of textual production embedded within the act of travelling itself. As Mary C. Fuller has pointed out: "Being written was an important part of their [travels ed.] happening, and this is true in a strong sense. The voyage narratives came into being not only as after-the-fact accounts for ideological purposes, but as an integral part of the activities they documented."<sup>28</sup> Instructions for merchant travellers in the period of Hakluyt continually stress the need to keep records of everything from inventories to local manners, that might prove useful knowledge in later traffique. Navigators were encouraged to keep journals, and were dependent on the written words of predecessors. Exploration was virtually useless without the knowledge acquired being somehow preserved for later emulation and later in the period the rise of scientific empiricism would inflate this textual production even further. As such the act of travelling was tied to the act of writing, and these practices of writing would be embraced by the public. As such the travel narrative came into being in a linking of maritime selfcommunication and popular imagination, but they were not only read among the educated in English ports. They were brought back to sea and read and used. And part of this emulation of words was concerned with the political in the sense that I have tried to define it: concerned with questions of the meaning of community and its parts. All this of course serves to counter the notion that an analysis of the politics of travel accounts is 'just' a historiographical polemic – a story about stories.

That travel writing is thus communication to the travelling community about doing travel as a community is therefore an incentive to a performative reading of these text. Here, the selfconsciousness that historians have often seen as a problematic gloss covering historical reality itself becomes the object of analysis. How did these texts perceive of community? How did they tell of the act of doing travel within community? How did they deal

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<sup>27</sup> Adams 1962: p. 223ff. The title of Adams work *Travelers and Travel Liars* is worthy of its incessant commitment to this paradigm.

<sup>28</sup> Fuller 1995: p. 2

with the disagreements of the words of community? Such questions can from this position be posed in the analysis of travel accounts since these text were shaping the act of travelling. As such there is an intersection between historiography and historical events. Though the events did not happen as they are told, their being told was part of their happening as such.

The question of what these texts and their aesthetic interventions do, is also, in the context of the poststructuralist tradition from which I am trying to raise it, somewhat severed from its original ties to the motivations and intentions of the speaker as it figures in the groundbreaking work of Austin<sup>29</sup>. In a sense the Derridean notion of dissemination dislocates Austin's attempt to see the performative as tied to the intention of the speaker by stressing the facts that text also work when severed from their author, and sometimes even work against the intention of it being written. Instead we should simply ask *what is the text doing?*

### *Preliminary research design*

In linking my theoretical approach to community with my conception of these sources I am posed with the task of turning the rather abstract theoretical arguments into a set of research questions that can be applied and give structure to my analysis. This has resulted in five research questions that I would like to put forth in these last pages of this paper.

The first question is: *Who travels and who roams?* In the sources it becomes clear that moving through spaces does not in itself constitute travel. Travel was not any movement whatsoever, but instead a specific practice concerned with specific sets of actions. The word 'travel' itself came from 'travail', and was at the brink of the 17th century still tied to this preceding meaning of the term and often the two were even interchangeable. As such both meanings of the term were dichotomous to 'idleness'. Idleness at this time was part of a specific ideological construction in which it was made to explain why the english community at large did not 'add up'. In the work of Hakluyt the equation is something like the following: idle hands steal, idle tongues coin new opinions, and idle feet wander. And of course idleness was seen as abundant. The burden of a people ever more cumbersome to the nation. Travel was therefore conceived as a way of curing this disease of community. One organized form of mobility checking the jittery vagrant movements of the poor multitude. Legitimate travel, as opposed to idle forms such as displayed by vagabonds, nomads and pirates, was instituted by the words of royalty, which could give the travelling community a 'direction' that did not only prevent roaming by issuing a destination, but also distributed certain ways of seeing, doing and narrating in the act of travelling. It was also the royal power, or at least the hierarchy constituted by it that was the addressee of the accounts of travel when the travelling community returned. As such this question points towards hierarchies of speech. It also serves as a line of demarcation which will permeate through the rest of my research questions.

This is followed up by the question: *Who can see?* The aim of travel was often described in terms of vision and the travel narratives were as such full of 'sights'. Travel and its narration was the act of making visible. This ability was, however, not for everyone. To be able to faithfully narrate sights

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<sup>29</sup> Austin 1997

one had to be on the right side of the aforementioned line of demarcation. For instance buccaneering narratives were often discredited. Not because they were more errorprone or fabulous than most other narratives, but on the basis of their being articulated from within an illegitimate and egalitarian community without 'government'. These accounts were therefore by default idle tales from mouths more concerned with glutting desire than truth. Of course we find many disagreements about these claims to truth, and in some of these conflicts we find different conceptions of community clashing.

The third question is: *Where can you do what on the ship?* This is a question in which my inspiration shines through in a very obvious fashion. Rancière's notion of aesthetics as distributions of speech and actions seems extremely relevant in regard to ships. The shipboard hierarchy, even in the technical maritime language, was conceived in explicitly spatial terms with each 'room' in the ship being tied to certain ways of doing. Roughly speaking the hierarchy of the ship divided the crew across the deck with the captain at the helm and the common mariner doing the dirty work 'before the mast'. The community was therefore tied to a construction of a well-ordered space. Conversely, so was disorder. Mutinies were often described as the consequence of 'forecastle conversation' that could eventually become riotous scenes in which everybody would go wherever they liked in the ship. Symptomatically pirates were often described as lacking this order, sleeping wherever they pleased and captains sharing their cabins with their crews.

In connection to this distribution, the next question in line becomes: *What forms of speech exist in the ship?* Often we find the common mariner described as lacking the ability of expressing much else than pain and pleasure. Recalling the aristotelian definition of humans as political animals because they can go beyond such simple utterances, should make the importance of such a distinction evident. Hierarchy of work was therefore also a hierarchy of speech and as such a distribution of political 'parts'. Here one again finds the pirate as the ultimate figure of excess, continually blaspheming and wholly unable to use speech in setting up legitimate community. Such distinctions become ways of silencing the speech of disagreements, but once again change when seen from different perspectives. Therefore the stark opposition between silent duty and mutinous speech is often displaced in accounts by ordinary seamen, giving way to more fluid conceptions of the ship as a site of speech.

The last question is: *How is the travelling community constituted?* The royal imperative described in relation to the first question is gradually supplemented by different construction of legitimate travelling communities. The most pertinent perhaps being a kind of hobbesian variant in which the sovereign of community is seen as being instituted by a contract agreed upon by all parts of the community, who then through this act cease to exist as a 'people' with any sort of agency. Of course this construction, as in Hobbes, also means that opinions not issued by the sovereign commander constitutes an attack on the whole of community. Here we find the trauma of the state of nature that turns the distinction between travelling and roaming into the distinction between a functioning community and a state in which no community is possible since everyone is by definition the enemy of everyone else. The main difference between the two is that the people itself exist in this latter version as a speaking being necessary for the existence of community as such. It therefore opens for a kind of leverage in which the sovereign commander is given power on the condition of not abusing it. This last ver-

sion prefigures the Lockean use of the ship of state metaphor in which it portrays tyranny or despotism<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Locke 1993: p. 220ff.