

Another Look at Verrazzano's Voyage, 1524

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IN A SPIRITED EXCHANGE which appeared in *The Literary Review of Canada* (1994), historians William J. Eccles and Ramsay Cook debated their disagreement as to the reliability of one of the most revered sources of early Canadian history, Breton navigator Jacques Cartier's *Relations*.¹ Similarly, Samuel de Champlain's narrative of his alleged West Indian voyage of 1599-1601 is also controversial, and several historians have accepted the manuscript almost at face value simply because Champlain's name appears in its frontispiece.² Problems of interpretation increase as we proceed backwards from the 17th century. Indeed, it seems that the less documentary evidence we have, the less we question our few available sources and the more we tend to rely on the written word.

From this point of view, one of the most interesting cases is that of Florentine navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano.³ Except for the small, albeit significant, new pieces of evidence provided by American librarian Lawrence C. Wroth, British historian David B. Quinn, American historical geographer Norman Thrower, and French historians Michel Mollat du Jourdin and Jacques Habert,⁴ all we know about Verrazzano and his 1524 enterprise originates in a short, 11-folio manuscript, discovered in 1909 and now known as the Cellere Codex. This document is the report

1 William J. Eccles, "Saint-Malo Sailor", *The Literary Review of Canada*, III, 2 (February 1994), pp. 20-3; Ramsay Cook and Eccles, "Interpreting Jacques Cartier: An Exchange", *ibid.*, III, 4 (April 1994), p. 19.

2 Luca Codignola, "Samuel de Champlain et les mystères de son voyage aux Indes Occidentales, 1599-1601. L'état de la recherche et quelques routes à suivre", in Cecilia Rizza, ed., *La découverte de nouveaux mondes: Aventures et voyages imaginaires au XVIIe siècle. Actes du XXIIe Colloque du Centre Meridional de Rencontres sur le XVIIe Siècle (Gênes, 23-25 janvier 1992)* (Fasano, 1993), pp. 45-58. Eccles points out that "without his [Champlain's] published journals we would know very little of what transpired during those early years": Eccles, *The French in North America, 1500-1783* ([1972] Toronto, 1998), p. 16.

3 A preliminary version of this article was read at the John Carter Library in Providence, Rhode Island. The author wishes to thank its Director, Norman Fiering, and its cartography specialist, Susan Danforth, for their precious assistance.

4 Lawrence Counselman Wroth, *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano 1524-1528* (New Haven and London, 1970); David Beers Quinn, with the assistance of Alison Moffatt Quinn and Susan Hillier, eds., *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612* (New York 1979), I, pp. 280-90; Norman J.W. Thrower, "New Light on the 1524 Voyage of Verrazano", *Terrae Incognitae: The Annals of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, XI (1979), pp. 59-65; Michel Mollat du Jourdin and Jacques Habert, *Giovanni et Girolamo Verrazano navigateurs de François Ier: Dossiers de voyages établis et commentés* (Paris, 1982).

that Verrazzano wrote to France's king, Francis I, upon his return from North America.⁵ The Cellere Codex is now known inside out, and it is to date our only reliable source on the 1524 voyage. It has been used and cited over and over by scholars of 16th-century North America, who regarded the report, in Wroth's words, as the "earliest geographical, topographical, and ethnological survey of North America between the Florida peninsula and Newfoundland".⁶ Mainly for the lack of other written sources, historians have made too much of this document. Ever since it was discovered, Verrazzano's report has become a sort of 16th-century encyclopedia from which to pick evidence at random to illustrate navigation problems, vegetation patterns, native customs and European mentalities. Indeed, too much has been taken at face value, especially with regard to Verrazzano's relations with the aboriginal peoples of North America.

The record of Verrazzano's first known transatlantic voyage begins on 17 January 1524 at one of the deserted islands southeast of Madeira, at what Europeans had long considered the western end of the Old World. He had left France before the end of December 1523. Verrazzano was a member of a Florentine community active in France, particularly in Lyon and Rouen. His family came from Greve in Chianti, some 28 kilometres from Florence — this being his probable place of birth, the less likely alternative being Lyon. By 1522, when for the first time documents mention his name, Verrazzano must have had some experience of navigation in the Eastern

5 The Cellere Codex is entirely reproduced in facsimile in Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 97-120, which also contains a transcription by Frederick B. Adams, Jr. (pp. 121-32), and a translation into English by Susan Tarrow (pp. 133-43). All citations from the Cellere Codex are from the Tarrow translation. It is also transcribed and translated into French in Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*, pp. 13-49. Other full versions, of varying accuracy, are in Luigi Firpo, ed., *Colombo Vespucci Verrazzano: Prime relazioni di navigatori italiani sulla scoperta dell'America* (Turin, 1965), pp. 137-87; Carlo Pazzini, *L'avventuroso navigare di Giovanni da Verrazzano* (Bologna, 1970), pp. 49-84, 135-47; Mario Farina, ed., *I navigatori: La scoperta dell'America nelle lettere di Colombo de Cuneo Vespucci Verrazzano* (Turin, 1971), pp. 145-80; Camillo Menchini, *Giovanni da Verrazzano e la Nuova Francia* (Montréal, 1977), pp. 15-75, 227-44; D.B. Quinn et al., eds., *New American World*, I, pp. 281-89, 891-906; Gino Barbieri and Gabriella Airaldi, *Dal Verrazzano al Cartier: Alla scoperta del Canada* (Verona, 1988), pp. 71-91; Andrea Miroglio, "Giovanni da Verrazzano", in Paolo Collo and Pier Luigi Crovetto, eds., *Nuovo Mondo: Gli italiani 1492-1565* (Turin 1991), pp. 393-408. See also Jacques Cartier, *Voyages au Canada. Avec les relations des voyages en Amérique de Gonneville, Verrazano et Roberval*, ed. by Charles-André Julien, René Herval and Theodore Beauchesne ([1946] Paris, 1981), pp. 29-31; Bernard Gilbert Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier: Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America 1497-1550* ([1961] Toronto, 1968), pp. 105-07; Firpo, ed., *Colombo Vespucci Verrazzano*, p. 136; William F.E. Morley, "Verrazzano, Giovanni da", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, I (Toronto, 1966), p. 658; William Patterson Cumming, Raleigh Ashley Skelton and D.B. Quinn, *The Discovery of North America* (New York, 1971), pp. 70-3, 80-4; D.B. Quinn et al., eds., *New American World*, I, pp. 280-90; Giuliano Lucchetta, "Alla scoperta dell'America del Nord: i Caboto e Giovanni da Verrazzano", in *Storie di viaggiatori italiani. Le Americhe* (Milan, 1987), p. 49; Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, ed. by Marica Milanese (Turin 1978-1988), VI (1988), pp. 887-88; Gino Barbieri, "Dalla scoperta colombiana alle spedizioni francesi nell'America del Nord," in Barbieri and Airaldi, *Dal Verrazzano al Cartier*, p. 21; Miroglio, "Verrazzano", p. 390; Pino Cimò, *Il Nuovo Mondo. La scoperta dell'America nel racconto dei grandi navigatori italiani del Cinquecento* (Milan, 1991), p. 165; Raymonde Litalien, *Les explorateurs de l'Amérique du Nord 1492-1795* (Sillery, 1993), pp. 58-59.

6 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. x. The same concept can be found in B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, p. 112, and Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*, p. 16 n. 13.

Mediterranean.⁷ The 100-ton ship he commanded on its way to North America, the *Dauphine*, probably a caravel, had a crew of 50 men and provisions for eight months. Verrazzano's voyage in search of a rapid passage to Cathay "and the extreme eastern coast of Asia" was sponsored by a group of businessmen active in France and approved by King Francis I.⁸

In early March 1524, after about 40 days, the crew sought land near Cape Fear, in present-day North Carolina. During the following 11 or 12 weeks the *Dauphine* explored the North American coastline. It first went south, towards Florida, until Verrazzano decided that they were getting too close to Spanish waters and headed north. The ship passed Cape Fear again and proceeded along the coasts of present-day Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island. In what he called "Refuge[,] on account of its beauty", probably the peninsula of present-day Newport on Narragansett Bay, Verrazzano and his men rested for 15 days (21 or 22 April to 6 May), their longest period on land during the whole enterprise.⁹ They were surprised that the climate was, in May, "somewhat" colder than Rome, the latter being on the same parallel — an observation that was to become all too familiar to northern explorers and settlers. The *Dauphine* then sailed north again, coasting present-day Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and Nova Scotia, possibly Newfoundland too, and then steered for home. No human loss was reported. A kidnapped boy from the Delmarva Peninsula, probably a Nanticoke, had been added to the crew. His destiny is unknown. The vessel reached Dieppe during the first week of July 1524.¹⁰

To his contemporaries, Verrazzano's 1524 voyage was a failure. The passage to Cathay was not discovered or explored, although he reported that he had seen the Pacific Ocean from a place he baptized "Annunciation". In fact, Verrazzano's false

7 On Verrazzano's early years, see Morley, "Verrazzano", pp. 657-60; Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 6-70; Pazzini, *Avventuroso navigare*; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, pp. 51-88; Miroglio, "Verrazzano", pp. 387-91; Francesco Surdich, *Verso il nuovo mondo: La dimensione e la coscienza delle scoperte* (Firenze, 1991), pp. 47-9.

8 Giovanni da Verrazzano and his brother Girolamo also took part in other transatlantic ventures. A second voyage, that might have taken place in 1526-8, our knowledge of which is based on circumstantial evidence only, touched upon the Caribbean, Brazil, the southernmost tip of Africa and the Indian Ocean (see Barbieri, "Dalla scoperta colombiana", p. 31). A third voyage in 1528 took the two brothers to South America and the Caribbean, where Giovanni was killed by the natives. A comprehensive map of the Verrazzano voyages can be found in Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, p. 7, the only book thoroughly to describe and discuss them.

9 The location of "Refuge" has been somewhat taken for granted. Recently, however, it has been argued that "verification of this and other evidence documenting sixteenth-century contacts in the area requires further research": Robert S. Grumet, *Historic Contact: Indian People and Colonists in Today's Northeastern United States in the Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Norman, Okla., and London 1995), p. 129; see also the map at p. 131.

10 Detailed accounts of Verrazzano's 1524 voyage can be found in Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Montréal, 1963-83), I, pp. 33-63; Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 71-90; Carl Ortwin Sauer, *Sixteenth-Century North America: The Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 52-61; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America* (New York, 1971-74), I, pp. 277-325; D.B. Quinn et al., eds., *New American World*, pp. 280-90; Harry Culverwell Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian* (London, 1979), pp. 192-8; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, pp. 11-49; Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast during the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge and London, 1990), pp. 105-14; Litalien, *Explorateurs*, pp. 53-8. The latest and most thorough general assessment of

ocean must have been either Pamlico Sound or Albemarle Sound, and the place of his sighting was probably somewhere along the Outer Banks around Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.¹¹ Verrazzano was the first to report that the American continent was unexpectedly enormous, larger than Europe, Africa or Asia. This was an unwelcome discovery which in fact dispelled any hope of an easy way to the Indies.¹² Furthermore, Verrazzano's description of the natural and human resources of the new

Verrazzano's voyage, from an ethnohistorical viewpoint, is Richard D'Abate, "On the Meaning of a Name: 'Norumbega' and the Representation of North America", in Emerson W. Baker, Edwin A. Churchill, D'Abate, Kristine L. Jones, Victor A. Konrad and Harald E.L. Prins, eds., *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega* (Lincoln, Neb., and London, 1994), pp. 61-88. The best modern maps of the voyage are in B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, p. 108; Trudel, *Histoire*, I, p. 44; D.B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York, 1977), map no. 157; Lucchetta, "Alla scoperta dell'America del Nord", p. 42; D'Abate, "On the Meaning of a Name", p. 64. Citations are from the Verrazzano's report as translated in Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 137, 140, 142.

- 11 On the Verrazzanian Sea (the false Pacific Ocean), see John Bakeless, *America As Seen by its First Explorers: The Eyes of Discovery* ([1950] New York, 1989), p. 202; B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, pp. 122-5; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*, p. 19; Cumming, "The Colonial Charting of the Massachusetts Coast", *Colonial Society of Massachusetts Publication*, 70 (1980), pp. 66-118; James L. Axtell, "The Exploration of Norumbega: Native Perspectives", in Baker et al., *American Beginnings*, pp. 156-7; Cartier, *Relations*, ed. by Marcel Bideaux (Montréal, 1986), p. 268; Louis De Vorse, Jr., "The New Land: The Discovery and Exploration of Eastern North America", in Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves, eds., *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent* (Savage, Md., 1987), p. 42; Lucchetta, "Alla scoperta", p. 51; Maria Teresa Di Palma, "Rotte e profili del Nuovo Mondo", in *Storie di viaggiatori italiani*, p. 78; P.E. Hoffman, *New Andalusia*, pp. 105, 113-14, 239, 312; Charlotte M. Gradie, "The Powhatans in the Context of the Spanish Empire", in Helen C. Rountree, ed., *Powhatan Foreign Relations 1500-1722* (Charlottesville and London, 1993), pp. 156-7; John L. Allen, "The Indrawing Sea: Imagination and Experience in the Search for the Northwest Passage, 1497-1632", in Baker et al., eds., *American Beginnings*, pp. 7-35. For a long time, this false sea would appear in European maps, starting with the 1527 world chart of Genoese cartographer Vesconte de Maggiolo and the 1529 world chart of Giovanni's brother, Girolamo, an expert cartographer who might have been on board the *Dauphine* in 1524, but most probably was not. The Maggiolo map is well reproduced in B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, p. 106; Trudel, *Histoire*, I, p. 52; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*, pp. 20-1. On Girolamo da Verrazzano's cartography see D.B. Quinn, "The Early Cartography of Maine in the Setting of Early European Exploration of New England and the Maritimes", in Baker et al., eds., *American Beginnings*, pp. 41-3. His map is well reproduced in Trudel, *Histoire*, I, p. 53; Firpo, ed., *Colombo Vespucci Verrazzano*, between pp. 160-1; Derek Howse and Michael Sanderson, *The Sea Chart: A Historical Survey based on the Collections in the National Maritime Museum* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 25; Roman H. Rainero, ed., *Manoscritti cartografici e strumenti scientifici nella Biblioteca Vaticana Secc. XIV-XVII. Mostra organizzata in occasione della IX Conferenza internazionale di storia della cartografia* (Giugno-Dicembre 1981) (Vatican City, 1981), p. 30.
- 12 On America as a stumbling block, see Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 142-3; also D.B. Quinn, "New Geographical Horizons: Literature" [first published in 1976], in D.B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London and Ronceverte, WV, 1990), p. 72; Cartier, *Relations*, pp. 11, 15; P.E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia*, p. 112; Eviatar Zerubavel, *Terra Cognita: The Mental Discovery of America* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), p. 48; D'Abate, "Introduction", in Baker et al., *American Beginnings*, p. 3; Allen, "Indrawing Sea", in *ibid.*, pp. 17-9. After Verrazzano, a good portion of this northern stumbling block was, for a long time, known as "Norumbega". It appeared with that or similar names on the contemporary cartography. Especially on cartography, see the contributions in *American Beginnings* by D.B. Quinn, "Early Cartography of Maine", pp. 37-59, D'Abate, "On the Meaning of a Name", pp. 61-88, J.B. Harley, "New England Cartography and the Native Americans", pp. 287-314.

land showed very little that could be of immediate interest to his financial sponsors in Lyon and Rouen or to the king of France. Sparse references to “various types of bird” or to “an enormous number of wild animals” certainly were of no significance to his backers; nor were vague reference to minerals or metals in mountains observed from the sea likely to whet the appetite of anybody comparing them to the riches of Spanish America or, even more likely, to the real Indies in the East.¹³

In contrast to the opinion of his contemporaries, most scholars have considered Verrazzano's 1524 voyage “a tremendous accomplishment”. American anthropologist Bernard G. Hoffman provided the following summary of the navigator's achievements: “He was the first to explore the gap between the Spanish ventures to the south and the English enterprises to the north; he was the first to establish the continental nature of [the Americas]; and he was the first commander to bring back anything resembling a detailed account of the natives of North America”.¹⁴ The overall judgement on Verrazzano's exploits and personality has always been highly positive. A man of letters and an educated and sophisticated writer, he has been defined as a man and an explorer of the Renaissance, systematically searching for knowledge, able to distinguish hypothesis from fact and to admit there were many things he did not know.¹⁵ Moreover, Quinn defined as exceptional his “intelligent and humane approach to the Amerindian population” and his ability to appreciate “the natural features of the American landscape”.¹⁶ This overall praise of Verrazzano's exploits is confirmed in the two major monographs which contain all one could possibly want to know about the navigator. One is the the magnum opus of a former Director of the John Carter Brown Library, Lawrence C. Wroth, pronounced “definitive” by Quinn, “[u]nless new evidence appears”.¹⁷ The other is the work of Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, judged to offer a useful explanation of the French and Florentine background that made the four transatlantic voyages of the Verrazzano brothers possible.¹⁸

This enthusiastic appraisal of Verrazzano as a good navigator and a honest reporter, however, is based on internal evidence only — that is on what Verrazzano himself wrote of his own accomplishments. He described his voyage, in uncharted waters, as smooth and quick, and he reported no human losses, a rather uncommon occurrence. The view that Verrazzano was a good navigator originates in the short treatise which concluded his report and on counterfactual evidence, that is, the

13 References to animals are in Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 135-36, 139, to minerals, pp. 140-41.

14 B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, p. 112.

15 B.G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, p. 107; D.B. Quinn, “Exploration and the Expansion of Europe” [first published in 1965], in D.B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies*, p. 3; D.B. Quinn, “New Geographical Horizons”, p. 72; D.B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, p. 155; Geoffrey Vaughan Scammell, *The World Encompassed: The First European Maritime Empires c.800-1650* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), p. 454; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, p. 7; Pierre Pluchon, *Le premier empire colonial: Des origines à la Restauration* (Paris, 1991), p. 44; Trudel, “Emergence of Empires. France”, in Jacob Ernest Cooke, et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of the North American Colonies* (New York, 1993), I, p. 78.

16 D.B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, p. 155.

17 Wroth, *Voyages*; D.B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, p. 154.

18 Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, who define Wroth's book as “un travail d'une très grande érudition” (p. 216).

historians' failure to detect lies in his account. As for Verrazzano's honesty as a reporter, this is inferred from his own vow to state explicitly the precise limits of his new knowledge. In fact, not only did Verrazzano openly contradict Aristotle's long held theories on the globe's geography, "proven false by experience",¹⁹ but he also liked to add to his descriptions of the aboriginal peoples qualifying sentences that convey an overall impression of truthfulness and objectivity. He stated, for example: "We could not learn the details of the life and customs of these people, because of the short time we spent on land, due to the fact that there were few men, and the ship was anchored on the high seas". Such comments as "He saw nothing else", referring to one of his sailors who had gone ashore at Annunciation, and the concluding remark that "the lack of a [common] language" had made it impossible to ascertain the religion and the system of governance of the aboriginal peoples he had met,²⁰ serve to confirm the long-held view that Verrazzano was an honest and objective reporter.

To be sure, some scholars — mainly literary critics, philosophers and semioticians — would argue that the notion of "honesty" in a colonial reporter such as Verrazzano is of little significance. According to them, one must be wary of the accounts of the early Europeans because what they saw and reported was not "the real thing", but a projection of their own imagination which had been shaped by tradition, experience and expectation. British historian John H. Elliott has expressed this concern in the clearest form: "Even where Europeans . . . had the desire to look, and the eyes to see, there is no guarantee that the image which presented itself to them — whether of peoples or of places — necessarily accorded with the reality". To illustrate his case, Elliott quotes the Verrazzano report: "Verraz[z]ano brilliantly describes the Rhode Island Indians [the Narraganset, possibly the Pokakonnet too], with their dark hair, their bronzed colouring, their black and lively eyes. But were their faces really 'as gentle and noble as those of classical sculptures', or was it the reaction of a man with a Florentine humanist upbringing, who had already created for himself a mental image of the New World inspired by the Golden Age of antiquity?"²¹ Elliott could have used other favorite Verrazzano quotations to prove his case.²² Witness the case of the Cape

19 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 142.

20 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 134, 136, 141. That the Cape Fear natives were the Cusabo is stated by Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, p. 155.

21 John Huxtable Elliott, *The Old World and the New 1492-1650* ([1970] Cambridge, 1980), p. 21. Elliott's quotation is also used by Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York and Oxford, 1992), p. 21. Elliott's rendering of Verrazzano's sentence is rather free. Whereas his quotation reads "as gentle and noble as those of classical sculptures", Wroth's transcription has "sweet and gentle, very like the manner of the ancient" (Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 138). The original Italian is even vaguer: "L'aria dolcie et suave imitando molto l'antico" (*ibid.*, p. 127). Elliott has substantially confirmed the main concepts of his 1970 book in Elliott, "Final Reflections. The Old World and the New Revisited", in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill and London, 1995), pp. 391-408. The Kupperman 1995 collection and Fredi Chiappelli, ed., *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old* (Berkeley, 1976) are the most important collective efforts that have followed in the footprints of Elliott's *New World*.

22 Siding with Elliott's point of view, are Wilcomb E. Washburn, "The Clash of Morality in the American Forest", in Chiappelli, ed., *First Images*, I, pp. 335-50; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, 1978), p. xvi; Charles H. Long's introduction to Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man* ([1959] Middletown, Conn., 1988), p. vii. Of special significance, on

Fear natives, described as “dark in color, not unlike the Ethiopians” and “agile and swift runners” like “the Orientals, particularly those from the farthest Sinarian [i.e., Chinese] regions”. Or Verrazzano’s remark that the Narraganset “when sowing . . . observe the influence of the moon, the rising of the Pleiades, and many other customs derived from the ancients”. Or his description of a terrified Nanticoke in prayer: “worshipping like a monk, pointing his finger to the sky, and indicating the sea and the ship, he appeared to bless us”.²³ Elliott’s rather pessimistic view of descriptive sources, however, could be counterbalanced by the following statement of another 16th-century travel specialist, British literary critic Philip Edwards. He admits that “[i]t is difficult, perhaps impossible, to make a clear distinction between writings in which people describe events they participated in, or report, and imaginative writings, or fiction”. Still, he concludes, although “[h]istorical truth may be unknowable, . . . there is such a thing as falsehood”.²⁴ According to Edwards, then, historians who still try to use traditional sources such as travel accounts to establish the hard facts of reality — people and places, as Elliott puts it — can still go about their business, although they must take a lot of care.

In spite of Elliott’s warnings, the evidence contained in Verrazzano’s report is used by scholars of 16th-century North America as a matter of course. Through it historians describe the natives’ manner of clothing and hairdressing, the use of fire to build canoes and clear the land, and their circular multi-family houses.²⁵ Some of the evidence could be of special significance. For example, American historian Neal Salisbury is able to use Verrazzano’s observation that the houses of Narragansett Bay lodged as many as 25 to 30 people to conclude that each family consisted of an average of 7.5 members and that the total population of the region between present-day Saco, Maine, and New Haven, Connecticut, amounted to roughly 135,000 people.²⁶ Furthermore, according to American historical geographer Carl O. Sauer,

account of its ethnohistorical context, see D’Abate, “On the Meaning of a Name”. See also the oft-cited pioneering essays by Gilbert Chinard, *L’Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1913); Geoffroy Atkinson, *The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature before 1700* (New York, 1920); and Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* ([1951] Bloomington, Ind., 1961).

23 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 134, 137, 139. See also Bakeless, *America*, p. 200; Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century* (Toronto and New York, 1976), p. 23; Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazano*, p. 16.

24 Philip Edwards, *Last Voyages: Cavendish, Hudson, Raleigh. The Original Narratives* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 8-9. For the various levels of closeness to reality, see D.B. Quinn, “Exploration and Expansion”, p. 3. Quinn maintains that “it is often the simple seaman or soldier . . . who can bring the new scene and the newly envisaged cultural landscape most sharply and objectively to light”. These points are also made by American literary critic, William Brandon, *New Worlds for Old: Reports from the New World and their Effect on the Development of Social Thought in Europe, 1500-1800* (Athens, Ohio, and London, 1986), p. 151.

25 Verrazzano certainly influenced scholars of 16th-century North America. However, given the fact that his report was published only in the 20th century, it is unlikely that he influenced subsequent negative descriptions of the Mi’kmaq, as maintained by Dutch-American anthropologist Harald E.L. Prins, *The Mi’kmaq: Resistance, Accommodation, and Cultural Survival* (Fort Worth, 1996), p. 13.

26 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 139; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York and Oxford, 1982), p. 26.

Verrazzano had “an eye for the pattern of vegetation”²⁷ in spite of his poor identification of species and was able to communicate to the modern historian “the true nature of the geography of aboriginal North America”. This was not an almost impenetrable primeval forest, but a “landscape mosaic comprised of a biophysical environment greatly altered” by the aboriginal peoples.²⁸ In many areas, especially from Portland all the way down to New York City, the environment had been patterned into parklike stretches of cleared land and was managed through the regular use of fires. At Narragansett Bay these “champaigns”, prairies or savannas (as they are variously called) were deemed to be so large that, Verrazzano observed, they could well accommodate “a large army”. Although Verrazzano exaggerated their dimensions, he observed these stretches of cleared land in both New England and in North Carolina. To be sure, forests still constituted the dominant feature of much of the North American seaboard. As Verrazzano noted, north of Portland the forest became less open and its composition changed, the coniferous species becoming its usual feature.²⁹ As remarked by American historian William Cronon, Verrazzano “quite reasonably attributed the absence of agriculture in the north to a soil which would produce neither fruit nor grain ‘on account of its sterility’”.³⁰

Verrazzano’s vignettes have also been used as evidence to illustrate, in their simplicity, the routine of the earliest encounters between Europeans and aboriginal peoples. On one occasion, at Annunciation, needing water, Verrazzano sent a boat towards the beach, where some natives, probably of the Croatoan nation, were “making various friendly signs”. As “enormous waves” made it impossible for the boat to put ashore, a young sailor was instructed to get as close to the beach as possible, to throw to the awaiting Croatoan some presents, and to swim back to the ship. On his way back, he was “tossed about by the waves . . . and carried up onto the beach half dead”. The Croatoan “immediately ran up”, “carried him some distance away”, took off his shoes, stockings and shirt, and “made a huge fire next to him”. The destitute sailor and his companions looking from the boat were certain that the Croatoan “wanted to roast him for food”, and were amazed when they realized that they only wanted to warm him up and help him regain his strength.³¹ On another

27 C.O. Sauer, *Sixteenth-Century North America*, p. 57.

28 De Vorse, “New Land”, p. 27.

29 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 139. See also Bakeless, *America*, pp. 200, 202-8; Elliott, *Old World*, p. 19; C.O. Sauer, *Sixteenth-Century North America*, p. 58; Jonathan D. Sauer, “Changing Perception and Exploitation of New World Plants in Europe, 1492-1800”, in Chiappelli, ed., *First Images*, II, pp. 814, 827; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* ([1983] New York, 1989), pp. 25-6, 38-9, 49, 174 n. 13; De Vorse, “New Land”, pp. 26, 29.

30 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 140; Cronon, *Changes*, p. 38. Explorers were mostly unable to appreciate and communicate the biophysical features of the new environment they saw. According to Cronon, for “the entirety of the sixteenth century . . . the only New England known to Europe was near salt water” (Cronon, *Changes*, p. 19; see also Elliott, *Old World*, p. 19).

31 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 135. This episode is also narrated in Morison, *European Discovery*, I, pp. 290-2; Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton, 1984), p. 161; Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800* ([1986] Stanford 1989), p. 28; Lynn Glaser, *America on Paper: The First Hundred Years* (Philadelphia, 1989), p. 146; Axtell, “Imagining the Other: First Encounters in North America” [first published in 1992], in Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, p. 52. American historical geographer C.O. Sauer, *Sixteenth-Century North America*, p. 58, maintains that this was the first Algonquian nation met by the Frenchmen, but does not mention the Croatoan.

occasion, at the Delmarva Peninsula, a party of 20 Frenchmen went about two leagues inland "to find that the people had fled in terror into the forests". They only found a very old woman and an 18- to 20-year-old young woman "who had hidden in the grass in fear". They had six children with them, five girls and an eight-year-old boy, who clung to the older woman's neck. The rest of the story is told by Verrazzano as a matter-of-fact occurrence: "We took the boy from the old woman to carry back to France, and we wanted to take the young woman, who was very beautiful and tall", yet she managed to raise such a fuss that "we decided to leave her behind, and took only the boy". As is well known from other accounts, the kidnapping of natives, and especially of children who might later be used as interpreters, was a common occurrence of all exploration voyages.³² Finally, in what he called Arcadia (still in the Delmarva Peninsula), a party of some 20 Frenchmen who were ashore met with a native, probably a Nanticoke, who was rather curious, but also suspicious and "ready to fight". To impress the newcomers the Nanticoke showed them "a burning stick, as if to offer us fire". The Frenchmen responded by making "fire with powder and flint" and "fired a shot." According to Verrazzano, the Nanticoke "trembled all over with fear" and "remained as thunderstruck".³³

The narrative contained in the Cellere Codex is vague at best, and it often presents inaccuracies with which historians and historical geographers have been struggling for the past century or more. Our certainties are in fact few and far between. We know that Verrazzano navigated along the North American coast from present-day North Carolina to Nova Scotia. We also know that Verrazzano's "little mountain by the sea" is Navesink Highlands, in New Jersey, because it is the only hill on the coast between Florida and New York, and that the "two small but prominent hills" with a "very wide river" in between must be Staten Island to the west and Brooklyn to the east in New York State, with The Narrows in between leading to the Hudson River. The "excellent harbor" is close to Newport, somewhere along Narragansett Bay.³⁴

Everything else is more uncertain.³⁵ For example, historians and other scholars

32 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 136. This episode is also narrated in Bakeless, *America*, pp. 206-7; Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, p. 13; Dickason, *Myth of the Savage*, p. 210; Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal, 1985), p. 125; Cartier, *Relations*, p. 339 n. 290; Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York and Oxford, 1988), p. 150. One should add that, in the same fashion, European children and convicts were voluntarily abandoned on the coasts of South America in the hope that they might be adopted by the aboriginal peoples and later used as interpreters: Dickason, *Myth of the Savage*, p. 190.

33 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 137. The episode is also narrated in Firpo, ed., *Colombo Vespucci Verrazzano*, p. 136; Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York and Oxford, 1985), p. 11; Axtell, "Through Another Glass Darkly: Early Indian Views of Europeans" [first published in 1974], in Axtell, *After Columbus*, p. 134; Axtell, "Imagining the Other", p. 55.

34 Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 137.

35 This note does not address the whole question of Verrazzano's early years, let alone that of the preparation and the organization of his 1524 voyage, both of which are still shrouded in mystery, in spite of the evidence regarding Francis I's own involvement discovered by Thrower, and of Mollat du Jourdin and Habert's best efforts. For example, the opening sentence of Verrazzano's report mentions a "storm . . . encountered in the northern regions". Was it Norway, Scotland, or the voyage in which a number of ships were lost and the *Dauphine* was left alone in his North American expedition? Is a further reference to the "northern countries" related to any of Verrazzano's own experience in the north? Prior to her departure, the same *Dauphine* was "equipped for war": was it privateering or

have addressed such major problems as, how Verrazzano could mistake Pamlico Sound for the northwest passage, or miss Chesapeake Bay or the Bay of Fundy altogether. And how could he accomplish his mission by navigating at such a long distance from the coast? They have also been faced by the realization that most places Verrazzano mentions, including dates of arrival and departure, are not accurate and make any uncontested identification impossible.³⁶ What was the location of his first sighting of land? Close to Cape Fear is our best guess, probably at Myrtle Grove, but some maintain it was at Cape Canaveral, Florida. As for the date, it was sometime between 1 and 7 March — yet we are guessing on the basis of average crossing times. In a marginal note, Verrazzano explains that he first went towards Florida, but then turned north “so as not to meet with the Spaniards”. What did he know of their presence in the area, and exactly how far south did he go? We do not know the location of Annunciation, although it most probably is somewhere around Cape Hatteras. As for the possible arrival date, it varies between 25 March and 4 April. Verrazzano had in mind something like the Virginia of the English when he called the land he had discovered around Annunciation “‘Francesca[.]’ after our Francis”. Yet we are uncertain whether the intended person is the King of France or his son. After Annunciation, the *Dauphine* “reached another land which seemed much more beautiful and full of great forests”. This is somewhere along the Delmarva Peninsula, whose coast Verrazzano baptized Arcadia “on account of the beauty of the trees”. Most historians believe this is either in Worcester County on the eastern shore of Maryland or in the neighbouring Accomac County of Virginia. How can we possibly know? Another distinguished scholar is certain that Arcadia is Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.³⁷ Verrazzano’s “Lanzone” promontory is either Cape Henlopen in Delaware or Cape May in New Jersey. The “Bonivetto” promontory is either Cape May or Atlantic City, New Jersey. The “largest river” baptized “Vandoma”, is most probably the Delaware, but the hypothesis that it is the Hudson River has also been put forward. The triangular-shaped island is likely Block Island, but a similar description could apply to the larger Martha’s Vineyard. The northern country in which the forests became “very dense” was Maine, probably the coastline from present-day Portland to the New Brunswick border — but this does not correspond to Verrazzano’s latitude figures. The three major islands discovered in Maine have variously been identified as, south to north, Monhegan, Matinicus, Metinic, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven, Swans Island and Mount Desert. We know that Verrazzano steered for home at “the land

military protection? Why did the *Normande*, the second ship meant for North America, not follow the *Dauphine*? Furthermore, we still have to find a clear explanation for the massive presence and involvement of people from the Italian peninsula (Genoese, Tuscans, Lombards, Venetians — not Italians) in the discovery voyages. We do have a sense of the conspicuous role the Italians played in a complex financial system that Italian historian Airal di has termed “the international republic of money”. Yet, as Quinn points out, “we still find some difficulty in accounting for the precise range and extent” of their influence (see Airal di, “Gigli di Francia”, in Barbieri and Airal di, *Dal Verrazzano al Cartier*, p. 62; and Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, p. 50).

36 D.B. Quinn, “Early Cartography of Maine”: “there was bound to be much misunderstanding of detail and of scale”, (p. 40), and “The names that Verrazzano gave to inlets northeast from Cape Cod have caused much speculation. In most cases they cannot be identified”, (p. 42).

37 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 134, 136-7. The Kitty Hawk hypothesis is from Morison, *European Discovery*, I, p. 295.

which the Britons [i.e., Bretons] once found", also described as "the land which the Lusitanians found long ago". Whether this was Cap-Sable or Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, or Cape Fogo or Funk Island in Newfoundland, or somewhere else altogether, remains to be ascertained. Finally, we do not know the exact date of Verrazzano's return to Dieppe.³⁸

Verrazzano's inaccuracies regarding people are similar in scope.³⁹ He reportedly went ashore at least ten times,⁴⁰ and on most occasions he made contact with the natives. In fact, he spent very little time with them. At Annunciation information on the Croatoan was gathered mostly through a young sailor who "learned the following about these people: they are dark in color . . . their skin is very glossy, they are of medium height, their faces are more clear-cut, their body and other limbs much more delicate and much less powerful, but they are more quick-witted". (The comparison was with the Cape Fear natives).⁴¹ At the Delmarva Peninsula they remained for three days "anchored off the coast", but took the time to explore the area for "about two leagues inland". Verrazzano was apparently able to make friendly contact only with what he considered a very old woman. He did not get close to any dwelling, "as they were in the interior of the country", yet he surmised that these were "built of wood and grasses", although many natives slept in the open. In some way, however, he was able to describe their manner of dressing and the fact that their subsistence was based on pulses, vines, hunting and fishing. At Narragansett Bay Verrazzano's men spent the longest time on land, 15 days, and were well received by two kings, a queen and the Narraganset people in general, with whom they "made great friends". Their physical appearance, clothing and ornaments were abundantly recorded. This time the Frenchmen went "five to six leagues into the interior" and managed to see and describe their dwellings. One wonders, however, how in only 15 days Verrazzano was able to reckon that they "live[d] a long time", "rarely fell sick", and "their end comes with old age". We may concede that the crew might have chanced upon the funeral of an old man whose relatives performed the "the Sicilian lament", a long-

38 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 137, 140-1, 143. The various hypotheses described in this and the previous paragraph are well summarized in both Wroth, *Voyages*, and Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*.

39 Verrazzano's people are the North American Natives. His report lacks any reference to his 50-man crew, only mentioned once as a "crowd of sailors" (Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 139).

40 C.O. Sauer and American historian Douglas E. Leach state that, according to his own report, Verrazzano went ashore six times: C.O.Sauer, *Sixteenth-Century North America*, p. 58; Douglas E. Leach, "Colonial Indian Wars", in Washburn, ed., *History of Indian-White Relations* (Washington, D.C., 1988), p. 128). Ten times seems a better calculation. One at Cape Fear on the way back from Florida (Wroth, *Voyages*, p. 134). A second time still in the Cape Fear region, but somewhat farther north ("Not far from these people, we found others on the shore" [p. 134]). A third time at Annunciation, around Cape Hatteras (pp. 135-6), and a fourth "after fifty leagues", somewhere along the Delmarva Peninsula (pp. 136-7). The fifth landing was along the coast called Arcadia, where the episode of the terrified Nanticoke took place (p.137). New York was the sixth landing, albeit a rather short one (p. 137), and Narragansett Bay the seventh (pp. 138-40). In Maine they made "several visits to their houses", which makes it an eighth landing (p. 140), and subsequently they traded from a distance, but then "penetrated . . . inland", then the ninth landing (pp. 140-1). Finally, they put ashore a tenth time, in Nova Scotia or Newfoundland, this time with no recorded contact with the natives, before leaving the continent (pp. 141, 143).

lasting mixture, one gathers, of wailing and singing.⁴²

In the past two decades scholars have switched from a rather static approach to native cultures to a more dynamic examination of their change over time. Ethnohistorians have shown how to combine archaeological evidence with traditional written documents. Some have applied their new methods to Verrazzano's report and have assessed the evidence contained in the Cellere Codex.⁴³ There again, however, the lack of other written evidence has encouraged some to use Verrazzano's report as supportive evidence in at least two issues of no minor significance. The first issue is the allegedly growing hostility between Europeans and aboriginal peoples. Generally speaking, Verrazzano's report describes encounters with natives who seem to become less friendly the farther north he went. He does not report any problem at the first three landings (at Cape Fear and Annunciation), but at the fourth one, the place of the kidnapping in the Delmarva Peninsula, "the people had fled in terror into the forests". At New York the local natives, possibly the Mohegans, seemed friendly again, but the Frenchmen could not really verify their attitude because they left in haste due to an impending gale. At Narragansett Bay, according to Verrazzano, the Narragansett were rather "joyful" to meet the Frenchmen, yet they were careful not to let their women "come on board ship", and a "queen and her maidens" were sent "to wait on a small island about a quarter of a league from us". Along the Maine coast the relations between the Penobscot, a nation of the Abenaki confederation, and the Frenchmen were undoubtedly hostile. Although "several visits to their houses" are reported, these took place "[a]gainst their wishes" by armed parties. Trade was performed at a distance, the Penobscot on the top of some rocks offering their wares (probably furs) on a rope, and receiving in the same fashion what they wanted in exchange from the Frenchmen, who were in a boat. The Abenaki were defined as "brute creature[s]" "full of crudity and vices", "barbarous", devoid of "courtesy", showing "no sign of cultivation".⁴⁴

41 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 135-6.

42 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 136-41. There is constant and explicit reference to making signs and gestures as the only means of communicating. For a commentary on Verrazzano's "catalogue" of savage features ("We think they have neither religion nor law . . . with the same fervor and enthusiasm that we had" (p. 141), a commonplace literary topos rather than the product of his original observations and by far the less interesting part of his report, see Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 42; and Pluchon, *Premier empire colonial*, p. 42. The latter, unfortunately, takes it quite seriously. For a very recent overview of the southerly Indians sighted by Verrazzano, see Rountree and Thomas E. Davidson, *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland* (Charlottesville and London, 1997). The authors do not make much of Verrazzano's journal (see pp. 47-8).

43 See for example Axtell's quick comment on Verrazzano's "bust": *After Columbus*, p. 53; and D'Abate, "On the Meaning of a Name".

44 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 134-141, citations at pp. 135, 138-40. See also Bakeless, *America*, pp. 204-5, 207 (who maintains that the sailors' admiration for the Narragansett women was "platonical"); Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, p. 12; Cronon, *Changes*, p. 83; Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euramerican Relations* (Berkeley, 1984), p. 16; Axtell, *After Columbus*, pp. 154, 156; P.E. Hoffman, *New Andalusia*, pp. 109, 111; Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, pp. 84, 86; Axtell, "Exploration of Norumbega", pp. 156-57; Grumet, *Historic Contact*, pp. 71-3, 129-31, 176-77 (with maps of archaeological sites where Native-European contact is documented). On the controversy over the meaning of "Abenaki", see the short caveat in Baker et al., *American Beginnings*, p. 316 n. 10.

The second issue in which the Verrazzano report has been used as supportive evidence within the dynamics of contact is the natives' alleged inability to resist the lure of European manufactures. Near Annunciation the Frenchmen threw to the Croatoan eagerly awaiting on the beach "some trinkets, such as little bells, mirrors, and other trifles". At Narragansett Bay again "a few little bells and mirrors and many trinkets" were thrown at the Narraganset, who already displayed "various trinkets hanging from their ears" or "around the neck", and prized "sheets of worked copper", "little bells, [and] blue crystals". These same Narraganset Natives had no use for silk, gold, steel, iron and mirrors. As for firearms, Verrazzano was astonished to report that they did not "admire" their power, but only "examined the workmanship". In Maine, the Penobscot knew exactly what they wanted: nothing but "knives, hooks for fishing, and sharp metal", although they used "beads of copper in their ears". There again, Verrazzano's report seems to suggest a progressive change from the naïve and easy-going Cape Fear natives, who prized decorative "trinkets", to the matter-of-fact Penobscot, who wanted utilitarian implements. Some historians have used this change, again from south to north, to show the passage from a native set of values, primarily non-utilitarian and status-oriented, to a new world dominated by European values, utilitarian and market-oriented.⁴⁵

In both cases discussed so far, the main inference is that the southerly natives had not had any previous contact with the Europeans and were candidly joyful at meeting them. The northerly natives, on the contrary, had experienced contact, probably with fishermen, and the latter had spoiled this naïve atmosphere by committing certain crimes, one would suspect mainly by taking advantage of their women. These actions had rendered the natives suspicious, if not overtly hostile. According to Swiss historian Urs Bitterli, who suggests a general framework for cultural encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans in the early modern age, Verrazzano's experience "follows a pattern which occurs repeatedly in . . . other parts of the world" in which "peaceful behavior on both sides" was the rule, until it was replaced by misunderstandings and eventual collision.⁴⁶

Verrazzano is not responsible for the two theories briefly summarized above, namely, the growing hostility between Europeans and aboriginal peoples and the natives' inability to resist the lure of European manufactures. Although this is not the place to discuss either theory, a few remarks could be useful to dispel the notion that individual documents, such as the Verrazzano report, can be used at face value as all-purpose evidence. As regards the growing hostility between Europeans and aboriginal peoples, had Verrazzano or somebody else gone farther north, one might surmise that relations with the natives would have been even worse.⁴⁷ Not so. Ten years later, in 1534, the Mi'kmaq and the St. Lawrence Iroquoians of Chaleur Bay showed no

45 Wroth, *Voyages*, pp. 135, 138, 140-1. Mollat du Jourdin and Habert, *Verrazzano*, p. 30 n. 39; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, p. 52; Dickason, *Myth of the Savage*, p. 163; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, pp. 128-29; Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, p. 85.

46 Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict*, p. 21.

47 See, for example, Morrison, *Embattled Northeast*, pp. 15-16; Dickason, *Myth of the Savage*, p. 163; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, pp. 128, 138; Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict*, pp. 29-30; De Vorsey, "New Land", p. 29.

hostility and insisted on trading with Cartier. Eighty years later the French found the same natives, who by then should have been violently hostile to the Europeans, quite friendly all along the New England shore, the Maritimes and the St. Lawrence River.⁴⁸ Evidently, the local natives simply reacted in different ways according to their own experiences, and some had found a way to accommodate the Europeans into their universe. Furthermore, the fact that the various groups showed different material needs and wishes is a far cry from assuming that those who had had more contact with the Europeans had already been hooked into an unavoidable dependence on the Old World's manufactures. For the aboriginal peoples, to learn how to use European fabrics and metals was often a long process, and there usually was a long interval in which European goods were prized as objects of decoration and status, not for their utilitarian quality. At any rate, as Salisbury well explains, even when these objects became "technological improvements ... easily adapted to the existing culture", "no wholesale transformation [of the local culture] was entailed in their occasional acceptance and use".⁴⁹ If the Verrazzano case proves anything, it is that, at least initially, there was no pattern at all. Each nation, or group, acted in their own way according to their own tradition, experience and expectation — just like Elliott's Europeans.⁵⁰

In sum, while we should be aware of Elliott's caveat with regard to the reliability of descriptive sources, when assessing Verrazzano's report we should still look, in the most traditional manner of historical criticism, for evidence of truthfulness and falsehood. This is what Edwards implicitly recommends and, for example, Quinn has practised throughout his long career. Most importantly, however, we must not rely too heavily on the Cellere Codex merely because it still is the only written document we have on certain North American regions during the early 16th century. Rather than await the unlikely discovery of another written source, the full value of Verrazzano's report is more likely to be established by assessing it against evidence of a different kind, as ethnohistorians have been doing consistently in the past two decades.

48 Bakeless, *America*, p. 213; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, p. 54; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, p. 130; Cartier, *Relations*, pp. 110, 115.

49 Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, pp. 53-4 (who maintains that Cartier's experience was "more typical", at least in that area. See also Cronon, *Changes*, p. 93. Axtell stresses the technological superiority of the Europeans: Axtell, *Invasion Within*, p. 11; Axtell, "Through Another Glass", p. 134; Axtell, "Imagining the Other", p. 55. On this debate, see Laurier Turgeon, Denys Delâge and Réal Ouellet, eds., *Transferts culturels et métissages: Amérique/Europe XVIe-XXe siècle* (Sainte-Foy, 1996), especially pp. 11-32, 141-277; also Dean L. Anderson, "The Flow of European Trade Goods into the Western Great Lakes Region 1715-1760", in Jennifer S.H. Brown, et al., eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference. Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing and Mackinac Island, 1994), pp. 93-115, for the persistence of this pattern well into the 18th century.

50 Elliott, *New World*, p. 20. Cronon, *Changes*, p. 83 emphasizes the same point: "[T]he various Indian peoples of New England undoubtedly started interacting with European visitors neither at the same time nor in the same way".