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Mariners, Maps, and Metaphors: Lucas Waghenaer and the Poetics of Navigation

Tamsin Badcoe

Early modern books about navigation are often difficult to navigate. As the paratexts of the English edition of Lucas Waghenaer's *The Mariners Mirrour* (1588) suggest, a reader is likely to be confounded by the troubling experiential gap that exists between a printed account and an encounter with the sea itself. In *The Mariners Mirrour*, both Waghenaer and Anthony Ashley, the English translator, use prefaces and dedicatory letters to conceptually prepare and orientate their audience. They posit the need for an active reader who is self-consciously engaged in the process of making knowledge and who is receptive to the figurative way that space is represented in their work. In addition, a poem attributed to Janus Dousa (Johann van der Does), printed alongside the prose prefaces of *The Mariners Mirrour*, places figurative expression at the heart of knowledge making practices, illuminating the ways in which early modern arts of navigation often relied on the interaction of *techne* and *poiesis*.

A reader of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* will be familiar with the figure of the shipman described in the poem's general prologue. A professional traveller, more at home at sea than on the pilgrim's path between Southwark and Canterbury, he brings with him a sense of place that extends far beyond the immediate location of the poem. Described as originally "wonyng[e] fer by weste," his occidental place of habitation briefly invites the reader to contemplate the peripheries of the island on which the poem is set, and what might lie beyond it. There is something unsettling about his presence on dry land, which carries with it the suggestion of piracy and the death that comes by drowning; as the narrator hints, those who lose a fight against him are sent home "by water [. . .]"

to every lond” (*The Canterbury Tales* 401). As a final resting place, the sea holds a network of spaces in suspension, in which every road leads home. As Charles A. Owen comments, there is an “epic quality” to Chaucer’s portrait, which is not “so much critical of the Shipman as imitative of his world” (71). An image thus emerges of a man of no “nyce conscience” who has lived a life exposed to the elements, ungoverned by the petty transactions of merchants. In the words of Dan Brayton, author of *Shakespeare’s Ocean*, the shipman’s life appears to be governed by “contingency, risk, and the knowledge shared by an international cabal of mariners bound by their intellectual mastery of the forces that made ships sink or swim” (90). However, the image is more suggestive of isolation than of collaboration; the shipman is characterised as a solitary individual whose remarkable personal skill is his only redeeming feature. As the narrator explains:

But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
 His stremes, and his daungers him bisides,
 His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage.
 Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
 Hardy he was an wys to undertake;
 With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
 He knew alle the havenes, as they were,
 Fro Gootland to the cape of Fynystere,
 And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne. (401-409)

The shipman’s knowledge is repeatedly categorised by his possession of it, as if it is a selfish kind of knowing born of rare personal experience and labour. The poet writes only of “*his* craft [. . .], *his* tydes,” and of course, “*his* daungers,” as if these are things that are not to be shared. The detail of the shipman’s world may be narrated without irony, but the emphatic quality of the way in which it is possessed makes it sound like private property.

In recent years, literary navigations of the waters of the deep have become an increasingly freighted area of interest for critics of medieval and early modern literature. In particular, there has been a movement in scholarship to think about the poetics of the sea, and the way that figurative language both shapes, and is shaped by, contact with salt water. As Steve Mentz observes in *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean*: “when the ocean appears, even in metaphor, it wrenches us out of our land-based perspectives” (3). For readers in the sixteenth century in particular, these “land-based perspectives” were countered by multiple innovations, in both imaginative literature, and in practical treatments of subjects such as pilotage, chart making and ocean-going travel (see Waters).

For literary and cultural critics such as Mentz and Brayton, the plays of William Shakespeare have become one particularly rich place to investigate how sixteenth-century writing negotiates the conceptual and imaginative pursuits of an increasingly maritime culture. Of great allure, for example, is Shakespeare's fascination with the murky depths of the sea floor, a place where no human gaze can penetrate, and where acts of "fathoming" and "sounding" engage not only with the technical language of seafaring but also with the conceptual limits of human knowledge and understanding (Mentz 1-18 and Brayton 68).

During the late sixteenth century, advocates of the advancement of navigational science described their subject as the object of study most "necessary for al men" (Cunningham P2v). In order to explore the processes which gave rise to the particular kind of literary and imaginative engagement described above, this essay considers the way in which aids for navigation and pilotage, focusing on the English edition of Lucas Waghenauer's *The Mariners Mirrour*, are already shaped by a figurative way of thinking. As Rayna Kalas has observed, for example, early modern authors were highly sensitive to "the material craft of figurative language," and often recognised "poesy [. . .] as *techne* rather than aesthetics, and figurative language as framed or tempered matter, rather than verbalized concepts" (Kalas xi, 21). As we shall see, books about navigation, due to their innovative content, constantly meditate on the difficulties of communication and representation. These texts ask their readers to imagine that which cannot be seen, or grasped, in simultaneity, and to conceive of processes which, to ensure the survival of their users, have to remain fluid. In several cases, poetry is directly deployed as a teaching aid, where the reader is required to consider how language can shape their experience of the material world, and how it can catch "in concrete terms the feel of the sailor's struggle with the elements" (Owen 70). Acts of making, or *poiesis*, communicate to the reader the need to negotiate perceptual processes and the problems of contingency, fathoming the act of translation that must occur when theory is applied to the problems of lived experience. Along with poetry, figurative prose works to frame and fashion textual spaces which give shape both to the sea and to the conceptual processes needed to navigate it.

The sea is a difficult kind of space to place within a reader's grasp and perhaps because of this, texts about navigational theory often have strange geographies. They take the reader into spheres of knowledge made by men whose homelands have untried coasts and whose native skies are populated with unfamiliar constellations. Their translators and editors are conscious that they need to orientate their readers so that their ways of looking though subsequent pages are alert to mobility; not all can be mastered from the comfort of the study. For navigational

theoreticians such as William Barlowe, for example, a clergyman with a passion for mathematics and seafaring instruments, even the most elegant abstractions tended to retain the memory of their material and experiential origin. In his preface to *The Navigators Supply*, for instance, Barlowe confesses that he “abhorred the sea,” due to the “antipathie” of his “body against [. . .] so barbarous an Element,” but that, once freed from the bodily discomfort of actual seafaring, or “the outward toile of the hand,” he remained tied to the intellectual pursuit of the navigational arts (A4v). Reflecting on the possible applications for mathematics on board a ship, he explains that it is “in the minde onely” that “pure and true Arte, refined from the drosse of sensible or experimentall knowledge, is to be found” (A4v). The language he uses to figure this desirable process suggests how sensible, tactile experience of the drossy, extraneous, content of the material world, can be “refined” or tempered by the promise of containment within new mathematical forms, a skill that suggests the practical rather than the aesthetic qualities of “arte.” By balancing deliberate intimations of his own physical discomfort and frailty with the active promotion of his “heartie affection” for navigational studies, Barlowe constructs an authoritative space “beyond the bounds” of his profession as a preacher (A4v, B1v). As a result, the memory of the “drosse” involved in a sea voyage is allowed to exceed its limits and to remain as a shaping influence, even within the work of a self-professed landlubber. As Barlowe seems to suggest, the full weight of the terraqueous world cannot completely be contained by abstraction and is thus left exposed like jetsam, something to be ignored at one’s peril; his withdrawal from the water is ultimately a sign of respect. After all, the audience he imagines is not comprised of other scholars in their studies but men who after “dangerous and dolefull experience,” have been betrayed by the “treacherie” or variation of the sailing compass, and who still “forsake the maine land, betaking themselves to the wide Ocean Sea” (A2v).

As Barlowe’s concerns demonstrate, the author of a navigational text was required to respond to the challenge of negotiating the relationship between theory and experience. For many authors, this negotiation takes place in the preface and other paratexts, wherein an author could lay out the terms on which his book should be read. As Helen Smith and Louise Wilson explain in their introduction to *Renaissance Paratexts*, the paratextual elements present in printed texts “shape our approach to the books we are reading. They also work upon our imagination” and provide “a way of approaching the world which is structured by the physical forms in which it is described” (7). Building on the work of Gérard Genette, who defined the paratext as “a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy” (2),

their collaboration explores the multiplicity of ways in which early modern authors and printers reached out to their reading public through the manipulation of printed structures and forms.

Translators such as Robert Norman, for example, used paratextual poetry to work through the nature of a seaman's labour, catching in words the necessary interactions of skill, experience, character, and technical craft. In the poem which accompanies his translation of Cornelis Antoniszoon's *The Safeguard of Sailors* (B3v-B4r), Norman praises the seaman's endurance and, echoing Chaucer's portrait of the shipman, articulates an isolated sea-bound subject:

Whoso on surging seas, his season will consume,
 And meanes thereof to make, his onlie trade to live,
 That man must surelie knowe, the shifting sunne and moone,
 For trying of his tides, how they doo take and give. (1-4)

As a poet, however, Norman's skills are noticeably meagre and the vocabulary of early modern navigation feels uncontained by his chosen stanzaic form. For example, the names of measuring instruments are forced into unremitting alexandrines, an effect best demonstrated by the sixth and seventh stanzas, which describe the seaman's methods of fixing his location following a tempest:

Thus when he all the night, with wearie toile hath tride,
 And sees the swelling seas, hath set him from his waie:
 Then when a little slatch of caulme he hath espied,
 With ioiful hart to take the height he doth assaie.

His Astrolabie then he seeketh for the sonne,
 Or Crossestaffe for the starre, called the Ballastell:
 And thus with helpe of them, and declination,
 How land doth beare of him, he knows within a while. (21-28)

Despite the slightly forced rhythm, these stanzas offer a rich image of reorientation in the midst of the "swelling seas." Weak half-rhymes and impossibly stretched words aside, the poem successfully conveys an impression of ceaseless forward movement.

In the final stanza, Norman moves the focus away from the mariners of his own age in order to indulge in a brief moment of praise for the pioneers of navigational theory, recalling those of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who "scarce knew the winds" and rode "in arrogance on waves unknown" (l.134, 136). There is perhaps also a moment of modest self-

congratulation, for Norman himself joins the ranks of innovators and instructors, by association:

If pilots painefull toile, be lifted then aloft,
 For using of his arte according to his kind:
 What fame is due to them, that first this arte out sought,
 And first instructions gaue, to them that were but blind. (33-36)

Norman suggests that to travel without art is to travel blind. To be able to visualise the interactions between the sea, the ship, the winds, and the contours of the coast, is to have mastery over them. In the letter to his patron Charles Howard, Norman suggests that his readers will encounter such marvellous matters in his book “as it were in a mirror.” Here, the reader will discover “matter rather miraculous to wonder at, than to be thought compassable within the reach of humane braine, or liable to the capacitie of a fraile seelie worldling” (B3v-B4r). As Mentz notes, “Norman applauds not so much God’s mysteries as the emerging sciences of hydrography and navigation, which makes the sea legible” (4), thus begging the question as to what making the sea legible might actually involve. In imitation of the mariner’s use of the magnetic compass to measure their position relative to the magnetic meridian, or a pair of geometric compasses to measure distance, Norman borrows the language of capacity and orientation to push at the limits of what his audience might find “compassable.” The author’s figurative allusions to the mirror and the compass, both objects whose use augments human perception, demonstrate the powerful cognitive links made by the early modern imagination between “technology and representation” (Brayton 81). Rayna Kalas, for example, has argued that the “figures of framing” and “images of glass” that are so prevalent in Renaissance poetic imagery indicate how *poiesis* itself could be viewed as “a material practice and a technical craft” (ix).

In order to pursue further this question of the role of figurative language in the art of navigation, the rest of this essay focuses on some of the paratexts from the English translation of Lucas Janszoon Waghenauer’s *The Mariners Mirrour*. Waghenauer’s book was originally printed in Leiden in 1584 by Christophe Plantin as the *Spieghel der Zeevaerdt* and the English edition appeared in 1588, an important year in English maritime history because of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It is generally regarded as the first work of its kind owing to the way in which it presents both sailing directions and lavish coastal charts, which had previously existed as separate hydrographic practices. The title of the work immediately places the text in a tradition of exemplary writing, in which metaphorical reliance on a mirror image or perspective glass is used to

fashion a “compressed but comprehensive presentation of a larger reality” (Grabes 43). Indeed, the way in which the English, or “Englished” paratexts create a dialogue involving the translator, author, and imagined reader, suggests that the work constantly and consciously stimulates the reader to consider the ways in which Waghenauer’s work is framed. Dedicatory epistles and letters to readers are accompanied, for example, by a Latin panegyric attributed to the Dutch humanist Janus Dousa (Johan van der Does), which incorporates a variety of classical references to the sea. When read together, the paratexts reflect on the kind of unique cognitive practices required for the transmission and exchange of navigational theory and information. As a group, they provide a range of social contexts for the exchange of ideas in a dialogue that is performed across literal, generic, and linguistic borders.

From the very first page of the work, problems concerning language and representation are brought to the foreground. In the dedicatory letter addressed to Sir Christopher Hatton which introduces the English edition of the work, Anthony Ashley, the English translator, apologises for his “slack performance” and “speedie translation,” confessing that he “no sooner vnder-took this woork then mistook it, not considering what perfect knowledge, proper termes and peculier phrases are necessarie and inseperable incident to the true interpretation of any Mechanicall science, much more to this notable art of Hidrographie” (¶1r).¹ Drawing attention to the specialist vocabulary associated with seafaring, he recalls his need to collaborate with other translators in order to fill in his own linguistic blanks; after all, “perfect knowledge” of the sea comes with its own language. Indeed, the problems of translation are familiar from earlier pilot books. At the beginning of his translation of Pierre Garcie’s *The Rutter of the Sea*, for example, Robert Copland addresses something that appears to be an enduring problem:

Me thought veray diffycyle to me, not knowynge the termes of mariners, and names of the coostes and hauens, for I came neuer on the see, nor by no coste therof. But folowyng my cople by the aduyse, and ouersyght of certayne connyng men of that scyence whiche bolded, and informed me in many doubttes, I did vntertake in doing my diligence: as a blind horse in a myl turnyng the querne ygnorauntly, saue by conductynge of the mylner that setteth hym on worke. (A3v)

A translator who describes himself as a blind workhorse might not fill the reader with confidence, but it is perhaps the translator’s back-to-basics approach that facilitates the reader’s engagement. As both Cop-

¹ The signature mark of the first gathering of *The Mariners Mirroure* is a ¶, or pilcrow.

land's and Ashley's apologies suggest, in books such as these, verbal craft often goes hand in hand with technical craft, and language itself is thought of as an instrument, along with the compass and the sea card.

Although less worried about his written expression, the Dutch author of *The Mariners Mirrour* still has to deal with problems of legibility. Waghenaer, whose original prefaces appear in translation in the English edition, repeatedly asks the reader to question the nature of the representations his atlas contains, demanding that his reader holds in constant suspension a mental translation that can constantly move between the literal and figurative. In an attempt to get his readers to question what they do when they look at a sea map, he points out something fairly obvious, though perhaps easily forgotten: "Freendly Reader," he writes, "for as much as all skilfull and experienced in the art of Nauigation, do well know, that certain of the sandy coastes and shoares [. . .] are moueable, and haue not alwaies their being in one self place, as in these Tables or Chartes" (¶2r). His charts are simultaneously faithfully set down and fundamentally untruthful, a distinction that the author makes not on the basis of the legitimacy of his measurements and observations but on the basis of the technology he is using to share this information with his readers. Noting how several landmasses are known to shift under the eye of different pilots due to their surrounding currents and sandy shores, he draws attention to the spatial impossibilities and cognitive breaches that occur when the pages of a book are required to compass the seas of Europe and beyond:

First; that by these examples, thou mightest vnderstand, that vpon the like causes, the like chaunges may happen: next that the vnskillfull and especially the enuious backbiter and carper, may haue no matter to cauill, nor occasion to carp, seeing that things to come, and vncertaine, can by no meanes possible, bee perfectly described. (¶2r)

With no hope of attaining the impossible ideal of "perfect description," Waghenaer defends himself against the "backbiter and carper," whose destructive words are capable of unravelling his delicate process. As Ulrich Kinzel observes, it for reasons such as these that "navigation cannot be regarded as an *episteme*, knowledge aiming at unchangeable objects of the representational mode of being," and "rather has to be seen as *techne*, knowledge that relates to changing objects or the operative mode of formation" (30). To make the ocean legible, one must first address the problem that "writing the ocean can only claim a virtual reality" (Kinzel 29). This is, of course, a feature of imitative writing more generally; sea water only makes the issue more immediately apparent

because of what Mentz calls “the basic challenge the ocean always poses: to know an ungraspable thing” (ix).

As Bernhard Klein has recently observed in an article exploring the shared spatialities of early modern navigational literature and the sixteenth-century Portuguese epic *The Lusians*, the “large map representing the sea” described in Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem *The Hunting of the Snark* is perhaps “the only true sea chart ever printed” (239). Famously, as Klein recounts, Carroll’s fictional sea captain provides his crew with “a perfect and absolute blank” (239). Although Waghenaer does not resort to such extremes himself, his translator Anthony Ashley actually draws attention to the way that the newly engraved charts in the English edition of *The Mariners Mirrour* have had the sea “purposfully left in blanc” so that each individual owner of the book can “correct the same with his owne hand, as it shall best like himselfe” (¶1r). As an impromptu theorist of maritime cartography, Ashley’s work demonstrates something that Elizabeth Spiller has revealed to be an intrinsic feature of early modern knowledge making practices, which emphasise the role and agency of the reader, and where “knowledge cannot be simply given to readers” but is instead “produced by them” (Spiller 3). The provisional aspects of Waghenaer’s charts are rewritten as strengths and actively invite the reader to participate in the exploration of the territories they represent. These charts invite collaboration and exchange, even if the users never meet in person.

Furthermore, in a short section of *The Mariners Mirrour* printed under the heading “Of the Use and Practise of this Booke,” the reader is once again asked to collaborate in the author’s endeavour to grasp the ungraspable:

And let it not seeme straunge to any if peradventure some of the sea coastes, havens, countries, etc., appeare not so fully and plainely, and shewe themselves as indeed they are, and as they are pourtraied in our severall Chartes [. . .]: perhaps many errors wilbe found in this booke, which a painfull and diligent Pilot will easely amend, seing as it is farre easier to correct that which is already invented, then to frame a new. (A1r)

Here, the author reflects on the value of his endeavour, concluding not only with the admission of error but with the sense that it is only through further trial that his atlas of the sea can be augmented and amended. His refusal to commit to the creation of a treatise in which the coasts of Europe “shewe themselves as indeed they are” demonstrates an acute awareness of how his charts function in a performative mode (see Andrews 18). He offers a “frame,” rather than unmediated content, and as Brayton notes, there is something inherently performa-

tive even about the composition of the work's lavish title page, which "suggests the metaphor of the sea as a stage, with mariners as actors in a *naumachia*, or nautical drama, and a group of cartographers assembled around a blank globe as playwrights of a sort" (2). The part of the image to which Brayton refers could be a blank globe but it is more likely to be a mirror, where the speculative elision between global map and perspective glass echoes the introductory and highly figurative prose of Mercator's *Historia Mundi*, which theorises its own cartographical project in very similar terms:

It presenteth to our Sight the whole Globe of the Earth as it were in a Mirrour or Looking glasse and doth show the beautie and ornaments of the whole Fabricke of the world, and containeth all things within her ample and spacious bosom, and like the vaste Sea, it does not only open and lay forth the hidden and remote Islands, but also all other Countries. (A3v)

Seductively, the task of Mercator's "looking glasse" is to act strangely like "the vaste Sea," imagined perhaps at the turning of the tide. Its action is to expose, or to "open and lay forth." Yet, this is an inverted, flattened, world; the trope of the mutable mirror, as both surface and frame, is itself notorious for its protean ability to distort, refract, and transform. The mirror reflects back an image, "only so long as mirror and original are juxtaposed" (Graves 113). To look at the title page of Waghenaer's sea atlas is to face ambiguity; the mirror is an object in which the mariner sees himself, or at least the ideal qualities that he is supposed to possess, and a frame through which the reader is supposed to behold the mutable coasts of Europe, and a sea made as transparent to the viewer as tempered glass.

As Jeffrey N. Peters has remarked, "maps succeed not only because they are science, but also because they are metaphors" (35), which begs the question what a map might be a metaphor for. Waghenaer's charts speak of motion, discovery, and measurement, and as the prefaces indicate, a reader must be aware of how their rhetoric and figuration operates. The work of *The Mariners Mirrour* itself thus takes on a kind of epic quality that finds full expression in the Latin panegyric attributed to Dousa, which appears in the English edition with a facing page translation. The Dutch edition contains substantially more poetry, including a poem by the Leiden author Jan van Hout, but this does not appear in Ashley's translation (see Koeman 43-47) and the single poem which is present bears only a passing resemblance to the earlier panegyrics on which it was modelled. It therefore offers yet another reframing of Waghenaer's endeavour, casting the author's travails both alongside and in opposition to the epic voyage of the Argonauts. The poet makes it

clear that *The Mariners Mirrour* is a work proudly produced in Northern Europe, distinct from the efforts of the Spanish and Portuguese:

[. . .] Ile none of your *Argos* adventurs
 Western discoverers: tis enough for mee t'have a corner
 In this swift caravel to behold these Tables in order:
 And learne how *Northern Nereus* hath spread many braunches.
 (lines 34-37)

In addition to the worldliness of its northern orientation, which proposes in its final line to direct the reader to places where “no star, nor lead, hath led any Spaignard” (41), the poem also conveys an idealised sense of Waghenaer’s project. The poem speaks of surfaces, where the reader will behold the ocean regions as if in a glass, and also of depths. The penetrating alien presence of the author’s gaze has astonished the sea-calves and other, more mythical, creatures of the deep. The knowledge offered by the work provides entrance to “the secreat closet of Seagoddeses” (22) and access to “th’hidden secreats of th’old *Lady Tethis*” (30). Its praise of the author is great indeed:

Now Mariners henceforth at Sea may ye live very carelesse,
 For that a saulfe journey cleered from dangerous extreames,
 Is for ye prepared. For now may ye into good harbour
 Hale, even at pleasure. Now doth the forme o the mayn-deepe,
 And all shoalds proffer themselves to be cleerly beholden.
 All this prayse is dew to thy will, to thy paines, to thy charges,
 Ingenious *Wagener*, which hast so worthily guyled,
 That Wagon on Mayn-sea which winds cause flie to the compasse:
 As if upon thy both hands and knees with curious insight
 Strongly thy selfe hadst crept and search out th’*Ocean* althrough.
 Moreover unlesse that peradventure a Searcher of East-seas,
 Or Northern passage, should want any thing that he searcheth:
 Thou shewest each Region farr of, what sort it ariseth.
 Nor *Venus* in Mirrour could view her selfe any cleerer,
 Then *Tethys* in this Glasse may well discern her apeeraunce.
 (6-20)

Produced in the wake of experiments at sea, the poem is characterised by a vocabulary of elevations, breadths, and depths or soundings, of impossible and fantastic spatial and conceptual mastery. The “mayn-deepe” is given “forme,” fashioned into something transparent in which its riches can be “cleerly beholden.” The translator of the poem even allows himself to indulge in making a pun on Waghenaer’s name, where the imagined ship guided by the author is refashioned as a “Wagon,”

implicitly finding sea roads to traverse. Even Venus, who is often depicted as rising fully formed from the sea, and with a mirror in her hand, is outdone by the author's performance.

If, as Mentz has implied, there is a difference between sea-based, and land-based ways of knowing, the poem conflates the two, imagining a solid bottom to the ocean's murky depths which can support the crawling, yet undaunted body of the author. Waghenaer, breathing miraculously among the fishes, suffers only the discomfort caused by his labours, not the inhuman transgression of elements. His imagined body is contorted in order to make maximum contact with the sea floor; fathoming his subject, his hands and knees are loaded with the same intent as the expected lead and line. What is usually only perceived using instrumental means is here passed through Waghenaer's imaginary fingers, his "curious insight" allowing him both visual and tactile experience of an untouchable space. The sea made by the poem is both the sea of empirical encounter and that of myth and cultural fantasy. To borrow again from Gérard Genette, this poem-as-paratext acts as a very particular kind of threshold, "an airlock that helps the reader pass without too much respiratory difficulty from one world to the other" (408). In *The Mariners Mirrour*, the poem functions as a conceptual airlock in a very immediate sense, establishing a sea road between the study of a humanist scholar and a newly fathomable ocean; simultaneous land-based and sea-based perspectives are thus made possible. The sea of the poem is not a bottomless depth but a place of transparent exchange that appears illuminated from within. It is perhaps no coincidence that Waghenaer's instructions concerning how to copy a sea chart in the section entitled "How to Draw and Use a True and Perfect Sea Carde" specify the use of a "table of glass," lit from behind in order to render the inscribed surfaces translucent (A4r).

However, to return to dry land, what the poem imagines is, of course, an impossible ideal. The impossible image of Waghenaer crawling along the sea floor actually dangerously obscures the single most vital piece of information both he and Ashley otherwise seek to emphasise. No mariner can ever "live very carelesse" as long as the sea and coast behave in the changeable way that is natural to them. The poem may encourage the reader to dream, to fantasise about the possession of an oceanic epistemology, and to share in the ambition of Waghenaer's project, but it will not help them survive at sea. It offers a different mode of knowing and understanding, in opposition to the rhetoric of the cautious prose prefaces which situate navigation as a field of knowledge that fully belongs to the *technai*, the knowledge arts categorised by "their ability to manipulate the world, exercising some control over forces that otherwise might lead to our ruin" (Stern 50). What the poem

provides instead is an interrogation of the process of making knowledge, and the formation of a deliberate course of action which allows the author and translator to construct and privilege an active reader, who must “exerciseth, searcheth out and observeth” for himself (Waghenaer A2r). The many perspectival frames produced by *The Mariners Mirrour* sound the limits of the printed book as a piece of navigational technology and produce the reader as the site where knowledge is finally made. The matter found at the bottom of the ocean, both metaphorically and substantially, is perhaps that which makes the mirror for the mariner; but the subject is as difficult to bind as Proteus himself.²

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