Paradoxographical Descriptions of Caribbean Animals in Fray Ramón Pané's *Relación acerca de las antiguëdades de los Indios* [1]

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Abstract: This essay investigates Fray Ramón Pané's text from 1500 CE, *Relación acerca de las antiguëdades de los Indios*, within the literary context of the paradoxography. It examines cultural frameworks and general literary knowledge that would have been understood by Pané within the structures of Spanish and Hieronymite societies. This essay compares the framework and content of Pané's work with the known paradoxographies of Aelian and Aristotle, focusing on the emphasis placed by Pané on transformation via linguistic translation/interpretation and mythological animal representation. Through my analysis of the original text, I outline Pané's transliteration of Taino mythology and culture, emphasizing the significance of this New World text itself within the paradoxographical genre, a genre that had generally been in disuse long before Europeans arrived in the Caribbean. While I base my analysis in the study of genre, my general focus is the inclusion and importance of transformation and animal lore within Taino culture, and their transliteration into a little-used European genre by a little-known Spanish friar.

Keywords: Ramón Pané, Taino, paradoxography, mythology, hieronymite, colonial, animal, folklore

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Based on the way he described the fauna of Hispaniola, it can be argued that Ramón Pané's *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians* (original title: *Relación acerca de las antiguëdades de los indios*;1500 CE) contains elements of the paradoxography, or the "wonder-catalogues" of the ancient and medieval worlds. Transcribed from indigenous reports by the missionary and Hieronymite Fray Ramón Pané in the last decade of the 15th century, the text is a short collection of myths and curiosities of the Taino people of north-central Hispaniola. In the context of this essay, the most significant elements of the *Account* are those of the animals described by Pané

as they reflect elements of the paradoxographical tradition continued from Antiquity. While Pané presented a collection of natural and supernatural mythology, medicine, and religion from the Taino culture of Hispaniola, he superimposed upon these elements the concise descriptions of animals and chapter segmentation found in Western paradoxographies. Included in this is Pané's lack of descriptive curiosity or inquiry into Taino animal folklore. While Pané's background as a Hieronymite would have supplied him with an ample religious education, his contribution and awareness of the paradoxographical genre is curious, as the Hieronymites were known for preferring religious to secular texts and authors ("La Orden de los Jerónimos"). His animal descriptions appear influenced by these paradoxographies, and he continued this Western wonder-catalogue tradition in the Caribbean via his representations of both the existing fauna of Santo Domingo and the marvelous realm of the supernatural. By linking the animal descriptions in the *Account* to the paradoxographical tradition, we can see that Pané had some awareness of Classical and medieval secular knowledge. Relatedly, because of the dual nature of the text itself, as both a form of paradoxography and a testament to Taino culture, it was left largely unread and forgotten until the end of the 19th century. At that time, the text was rediscovered, translated, and annotated by several notable scholars, including Antonio Bachillar y Morales, Tomás Minuesa, and José Juan Arrom. In this essay, I connect the paradoxography to Pané's animal descriptions/inclusion from Taino culture and demonstrate how this affected both the marginalization and rediscovery of this prime description of indigenous culture.

In order to understand Pané's paradoxical inclusions, it is useful to analyze the important role of education within the Hieronymite order and how that influence affected Pané's inclusion of paradoxographical elements. The text itself has been recently classified as a work of anthropology and ethnography, but I argue, based on my analysis of his education and the animal descriptions inherited by Pané through medieval literature, that the allomorphic[2] zoological representations found in the *Account* can also be linked closely to paradoxography. Frustration for ecclesiastics and adventurers alike was not a new phenomenon in the late medieval period. Continued study and learning, however, as a Hieronymite, would have been expected of Pané, despite any setbacks. As a member of the Order of St. Jerome during the 15th century CE, he received some formal education (Tormo y Monzó 41). The most talented young Hieronymites were sent to school to study, supported by their monastery, and each was tasked with learning a profession that could better the Order (28-29). These became the *friars*, and everyone else, those who received a minimal religious education in order to read, write, and copy religious texts in Latin, formed the *chorus* of the Order (40). Pané must have been one of the educated members of the Order, as he introduced himself as "Friar Ramón" in his *Account*. He received an education in philosophy (the Classical writers) and theology (the Bible and religious writers, such as St. Augustine), based on the principles of Scholasticism.[3] Pané did not receive a university degree as this was not permitted for Hieronymites until after 1610 CE (41-42). That he left Spain and traveled to the New World in service of Columbus indicates that he had received an upper-level education. After a century in the New World, the Hieronymites began to lose their powerful role as teachers of Christian doctrine

in the Caribbean, and in 1610 the Order shifted its focus away from evangelism and public life, embracing both monastic seclusion and the doctrine of quiet contemplation with a focus on natural theology (Tormo y Monzó 41).

Pane's work has long been referred to as an *account* due to the use of the word *relación* in the title. However, it is much more than that. Roberto González Echevarría defined the noun as a "report, deposition, or even a confession,…" which is true in that Pané compiled the text at the behest of Christopher Columbus. However, Pané's text is not a confession; it contains very little information about indigenous daily activities and focuses more on the culture's mythology (Pane 56). Although the text itself is very short, there is a great amount of detail relayed in both his transcription and the narrated portions. He did not report much of his own action among the Tainos beyond the evangelical, and neither did he report the actions of other Europeans on Hispaniola.

The *Account* was written in three distinct sections, including descriptions of indigenous mythology, of indigenous religious practices, and inclusions of Pané's efforts (both successes and failures) to evangelize the Tainos. Pané wrote simply and was very direct, transcribing information the Tainos told him, and including some of his own commentaries and opinions. What is left of the original text is short, less than 30 printed pages, and, while each chapter is brief, the information that Pané relayed is significant in that it tells the story of the Taino people from both their own perspective and from Pané's experience with them. It is not only a transcription of Taino mythology, and a brief account of Taino daily life, but a narrative written from Pané's perspective as well.

In recent history, the text has been labeled both a work of anthropology and ethnology by leading scholars. Edward Gaylord Bourne, a 19th-century historian, recognized the *Account* as the first treatise written in the New World, although it was never a treatise in itself (311). González Echevarría determined that Pané's text was an ancestor of later texts of anthropology in the Americas, and further argued that anthropology first developed in the early years of the colonial period when Pané was living on Hispaniola (144). Arrom highlighted the cultural and religious meaning behind many of the elements of Pané's text in his work, *Fray Ramón Pané, Discoverer of the American People*, asserting that the *Account* is "la primera indagación etnográfica en el Nuevo Mundo" ("the first ethnological investigation of the New World"; my trans.; 353).

Other authors have argued that Pané's overall goal was evangelical and, therefore, not anthropological or ethnographical. He wanted to change the culture from within by converting indigenous people to Christianity. According to Meghan McInnis-Domínguez, Pané's writing is paradoxical because of this evangelical intent in the New World, "Lo paradójico del proyecto de Pané es que pretende dar voz exclusiva a los Tainos, pero a través de un formato textual español que, por su naturaleza, excluye tal posibilidad" ("The paradoxical [aspect] of Pané's project is that he claimed to give voice exclusively to the Taínos, but through a textual Spanish format which, by nature, excludes that possibility"; my trans.). McInnis-Domínguez supplemented this idea: "Pané no busca un diálogo etnográfico con los Tainos. El autor es incapaz de transcribir, sin agregar su propia perspectiva porque ello implicaría un menoscabo a su autoridad como redactor del texto

y como representante de los colonizadores españoles en el Nuevo Mundo" ("Pané does not look for an ethnographic dialogue with the Taínos. The author is incapable of transcribing, without adding his own perspective because that would imply a loss of his authority as editor of the text and as [the] representative of the Spanish colonizers in the New World"; my trans.). Constance Janiga-Perkins argued that Pané's *Account* is not the original text at all, and that the subsequent translators have re-interpreted Pané's interpretation of what he was told and what he transcribed. The resulting text is an "autoethnography," that reflects the understanding of the translator(s) and the reader(s) more than the original writer (8). As an "autoethnography," the *Account* depends upon the reader's interpretation and correlation of signals and signs (Eco 48). If the original writer and the subsequent translators did not have all the grammatical and linguistic pieces of the Taino or Castilian languages, there are an infinite number of misinterpretations that could occur with each subsequent reader and translator. Included is the understanding that Pané's work itself is superficial; what was once a richly developed oral tradition of indigenous cosmology, mythology, and culture was transcribed by a person who had no true knowledge of the culture. His cultural perspective is skewed as he is not an indigenous person and could have fully learned all of the complex cultural signals and signs that come with spoken and body language in his short time on the island. Also, he is there with a purpose: his goal is to evangelize the indigenous people while learning their customs and writing down their folklore. Pané acknowledges that he does not understand everything the indigenous people tell him, and he only writes down that which he was able to "figure out" (11).[4] Pané himself did not even seem to even seem to know what kind of text he should have been writing or what it would be when he finished it, and he labeled the text by various names, calling it a *relación*, a *libro*, and an *obra* (11; 25; 30).[5] Pané openly acknowledged that he did not know much about the information he was trying to transmit: "Esto es lo que yo he podido entender y saber acerca de las costumbres y los ritos de los indios de la Española, por la diligencia que puse.…" ("This is what I have been able to understand and know about the customs and rites of the Indians of Hispaniola, por all the diligent [work] I have done.…"; my trans.; 29). What is clear, however, is that anthropology as a science was not in existence at the time of Pané's transcription, and it was impossible for Pané, an educated Christian missionary, to fully leave behind the prejudices of his cultural relativism in order to accept and appreciate the Taino oral and social traditions.[6] His text was not only a transcription of the behaviors and mythology of a people, much of which was based on careful observation, but it was also a medieval wonder-catalogue of the Other in which he posed no questions, demonstrated little-to-no curiosity, and recorded bizarre[7] anecdotes and beliefs in concise chapters. All of these same elements were literary tools used extensively by authors of paradoxographies.

I do not argue that Pané was attempting to write a paradoxography. Instead, I analyze the elements associated with the paradoxographical genre found in his text. There are several identifiable traits of the paradoxography within Pané's report: concise chapter segmentation, decontextualization, a reliance on voices of authority, no indication of causation for actions or beliefs, and consistent references to the bizarre or marvelous. In the *Account*, each chapter is

short and concise, with no causation or reasoning given for the actions and beliefs. Pané relies on indigenous voices of authority in order to substantiate the information he relays, information that is then laid out in bizarre anecdotes that Pané neither questions nor fully contextualizes within Taino mythology.

Pané wrote only the one text, with hardly enough information to label it a *book* in the same sense of length or content by which Aelian and Aristotle created books. However, his text does have a structure similar to the paradoxographies in that it is divided into three clear parts, which are broken down into mythology, religious practices, and his attempts at evangelization. Each of the twenty-six chapters is uniquely titled, like the chapters of paradoxographies, to give a clear indication of what information is detailed in each short chapter. For example, his first chapter is entitled "De dónde proceden los indios y de qué manera" ("Where the Indians Come from and in What Way"; my trans.; 11). Pané's individual chapters are clustered into three sections delineated into segments based on their theme and content. Stephanie Merrim describes this text as a *mestizo*, or *culturally blended*, text, beginning with a Taino logic and ending with a Spanish one (97). In this sense, I believe that all paradoxographies are blended in their own individual fashion, as the early paradoxographers were never true members of the cultures or lands being described, and later paradoxographers merely transcribed other voices of authority. While physically present on the island, Pané never fully integrated with the Tainos. He only seemed to care for those Tainos who adapted to his religion, such as Juan Mateo, and his chapters reflect his frustration with his linguistic and religious situation (Pané 29).

Pané openly acknowledges the group indigenous sources he relies upon, never naming any one individual but using all their voices as agents of authority. He varies his writing and uses different expressions in his transcriptions when detailing what these voices say, such as "Dicen que," "como los indios," and also "según contaban los viejos" ("They say," "as the Indians," "according to the elders"; my trans.; 13; 13; 14). In Chapter 6, he writes, "todo lo que escribo es según me lo contaron, y por tanto, yo lo refiero como lo supe de los indios" ("everything that I write is according to what they told me; therefore I recount it as I learned it"; my trans.; 13-14). Working with a language that had no written sources was frustrating for Pané. He writes in Chapter 5, "Como los indios no tienen escritura ni letras, no pueden dar buena información de lo que saben acerca de sus antepasados, y por esto no concuerdan en lo que dicen, y menos se puede escribir ordenadamente lo que refieren" ("As the Indians have not writings or literature, they cannot give good information about what they know of their ancestors, and because of this they cannot agree on what they say, and even less is one able to write down in an orderly fashion that which they recount"; my trans.; 12). Neither does he seem to want to entirely believe these indigenous voices of authority, and his text is slightly tainted by his incredulity. An example of this comes from Chapter 22 when Pané transcribes the tale of a house spirit who did not want to stay in the house, and who disappeared entirely after the Christians arrived (23-24). At the end of this description, when the house spirit had scuttled off into a laguna, Pané, both summarizes his feelings and releases himself of the responsibility of normalizing the bizarre tale, "Como lo

compré así lo vendo" ("As I bought it, I sell it"; my trans.; 24). I understand this to mean, "Do not shoot the messenger." Pané's own opinion is seldom heard throughout the text, and he maintains a distant narrative voice. When he does express his personal feelings about what he is transcribing or what he has experienced, it is always with a sense of disbelief: "se engañan algunas veces" and "a éstos creen en tales fábulas con mayor certidumbre" ("they trick [others] sometimes" and "they believe in such fables with sheer certainty"; my trans.; 17).

Pané, like the Classical paradoxographers, becomes a voice of authority within his text. Initially, Classical paradoxographers were compilers and not active researchers, and generally relied on texts and oral traditions as a point of reference (Romm 86). Pané had no written Taino texts to work with, and his reliance upon the indigenous story-telling process limited how much information was relayed and confirmed at any given time. Commanded by Columbus to live among the people, learn their language, and write down everything he was able to learn about them, Pané becomes an external voice of authority about them. However, he is not entirely confident in his skills as a voice of authority, writing, "poco vale lo que llevo escrito" ("what I write is of little value"; my trans.; 16). He goes so far as to state to his readers that, like the indigenous storytellers, he is not a quality voice of authority. He conveys what he can, but knows his *Account* is lacking in information and clarity, and he attempts to defend his feelings of inadequacy: "Como yo escribí de presura, y no tenía papel bastante, no podré poner en un lugar lo que por error llevé a otro; pero con todo ello no me he equivocado, porque ellos lo creen todo como lo llevo escrito" ("As I wrote hastily, and I did not have sufficient paper, I could not put what I had written in the wrong order in the correct place; but in all of this I am not mistaken, as they believe everything as I have written in"; my trans.; 14).

Pané provides linguistic information to clarify his text by translating Taino vocabulary for his European audience. For example, when he describes the woodpecker, he first cites it is indigenous name and then rephrases it for his European audience, "Buscaron un pájaro que se llama inriri, y antiguamente inrire cahubabayael que agujerea los árboles, y en nuestro idioma se llama pico" ("They look for a bird which is called *inriri*, and in the past was called *inriri cahubabayael*, which makes holes in trees, and in our language we call *beak*"; my trans.; 14). Later, when transcribing a story about Caracaracol,[8] Pané provides a direct translation, "[…] dijeron: 'Ahiacabo Guarocoel, que quiere decir: conozcamos a nuestro abuelo'" ("[…] they said: 'Ahiacabo Guarocoel, which means we know that this is our grandfather'"; my trans.; 16). He sometimes informs his audience about what objects are used for, such as, "Cuando van a visitar a algún enfermo, antes que salgan de su casa toman hollín de los pucheros o carbón molido, y con él se ponen negra toda la cara, para hacer creer al enfermo lo que quieran acerca de su dolencia" ("When they went to visit some sick person, they took soot from a [cooking] pot, or ground charcoal, and used it to blacken their faces, in order to make the sick person believe what they [the medicine men] wanted them to believe about their illness"; my trans.; 18). This act of translating was not uncommon in other texts that developed out of the paradoxographical tradition. In the description of Marco Polo's travels, there are often translations provided that give deeper understanding about the people or places

being described. One simple example comes from the section titled *Here Is Told of the Province of Acbaluc Manji*. Benedetto, paraphrasing Marco Polo, writes, "The capital is called Acbaluc Manji, words signifying 'the White City on the frontier of Manji'" (176).

By translating, Pané relays information that only he can provide at that moment, which falls in line with his concern for cataloging information as properly as he can. This concern for cataloging supersedes any need to ponder over or question the information that he transcribes. For example, Chapter 1, Pané gives the origin of the Taino people of Hispaniola and he transcribes their relationship with the sun:

> Cuando vivían en aquella gruta, ponían guardia de noche, y se encomendaba este cuidado a uno que se llamaba Mácocael, el cual, porque un día tardó en volver a la puerta, dicen que lo arrebató el Sol. Viendo, pues, que el Sol se había llevado a éste por su mala guardia, le cerraron la puerta y fue transformado en piedra cerca de la entrada. Dicen también que otros, habiendo ido a pescar, fueron cogidos por el Sol, y se convirtieron en árboles.…[9] (11)

Pané gives no reason for why the Sun snatches or transforms people, leaving us to wonder how the Tainos culturally understood the place of the Sun within their society. Was it a force of good or one of evil? Was it life-giving or death-bringing? Pané gives us no causation to the sun's actions, leaving scholars to wonder about the reasons for the importance of this myth.

Pané rarely gives explanations as to why the Tainos behave as they do or believe what they did. Pané transcribes particular social and religious behaviors of the Tainos and comments on them from his outside perspective, but he does not question why these behaviors occur. Neither did other paradoxographers question why certain beliefs were held or actions done by the groups they described. An example of this comes from Aelian, who describes humankind's interaction with some fish:

> If a man with the juice of silphium on his hands seizes the Torpedo, he avoids the pain which it inflicts. And should you attempt to draw the Great Weever from the sea with your right hand, it will not come but will fight vigorously. But if you haul it up with your left hand, it yields and is captured. (329-331)

Aelian neither questions why *silphium* is used rather than another pain-reliever, nor does he explain why the Weever needs to be caught with the left hand. He relays information and leaves the reader to determine the reasons why.

Pané presents the bizarre and marvelous in a manner similar to paradoxographical texts, which were notable for their strange (i.e. foreign) content and anecdotes. As Scott Johnson writes, "Early paradoxographies appear to be mainly pseudo-scientific works, collections of stories about bizarre plants, geographical formations, and the like. Gradually the content became more fluid including social customs and sexual oddities" (401). Strabo (1st century BC) noticed that the

distance of a geographical location from the reader contributed to the wonder and "bizarreness" of a paradoxography, as information about plants, animals, and people from non-Western European regions was scarce during his time period, and seemingly fantastic (Romm 99). For example, Aelian describes the "Ants of India" which "guard the gold will not cross the river Campylinus" (163). He also describes the hedgehog as "prudent and experienced in providing for its own wants […] it rolls among fig-crates (they say), and such dried figs as are pierced […] it quietly removes […]" (167). To the modern scholar, these may seem like odd and/or unbelievable behaviors to ascribe to animals, but for a medieval reader, these words, written in texts by the Ancients, were accepted as truth (Zumthor and Peebles).

The factor that keeps these marvelous details both realistic and believable is the manner in which they are conveyed. The facts, such as they are, are presented in short, simply phrased paragraphs. Pané also achieves this same brevity and clarity when describing the bizarre nature of things in Hispaniola. An example can be found in Chapter 19, "Cómo hacen y guarden los cemíes de madera o de piedra" ("How to Make and Care for the House Gods Made from Wood or Stone"; my trans.):

> Los de madera se hace de la siguiente manera: Cuando alguno va de camino y le parece ver algún árbol que se mueve hasta la raíz, aquel hombre se detiene asustado y le pregunta quién es. El árbol responde: "Trae aquí un behique; él te dirá quién soy." Aquel hombre, llegado al médico, le dice lo que ha visto. El hechicero o brujo va luego a ver el árbol de que el otro le habló … y le dice: "Dime quién eres, qué haces aquí, qué quieres de mí y por qué me has hecho llamar.…" Entonces aquel árbol o cemí, hecho ídolo o diablo, le responde diciendo la forma en que quiere que lo haga. El brujo lo corta y lo hace del modo que se le ha ordenando.…[10] (21-22)

Pané presents the marvelous in a clear way that is both understandable and almost believable. He cannot help decorating his commentary about witchcraft with his cultural bias, however, calling the shaman *médico*, then *hechicero*, and *brujo* (*doctor, wizard, warlock*; my trans.). His audience understood the religious implications of his vocabulary, particularly when he calls the religious idol *diablo* (*devil*; my trans.). However, the marvelous details of the chapter are outlined matter-of-factly and concisely, much like the clear references in Aelian's paradoxography.

While these five general literary aspects loosely link Pane's text to paradoxography, it is his animal representations that best demonstrate the concept of the *marvelous* that is so commonly found (and expected) in paradoxographies. What makes these representations important when faced with all of the animal representations written by Europeans in the New World is that Pané does not try to find a space for them within his Euro-centric perspective. He relays the fantastic animal-based information as it was told to him, and does not alter it with Christian references, nor does he use it to represent the commodification of the New World. Instead, Pané's zoological representations reflect the literary commitment made by paradoxographers to relay

pure information, as it was given to them by voices of authority, to a wider audience with as little personal interference or cultural contamination as possible. In turn, Pané marks the text with the conventions of the paradoxographical methodology.

Pané's transcriptions of animals in his paradoxography are all centered around the marvelous theme of transformation. These transformations come in various forms, and link life and death to magic. Like other paradoxographers, Pané depicts the foreign animal world through both its natural and supernatural elements. Transformation was a common theme in paradoxographies. An example is the case of Pontus honey, which was believed to make sane men crazy and to cure epileptics (Aristotle 245). A further example comes from Aelian, who describes cranes which, after reaching old age, go to the islands of Ocean (the Atlantic) and take on the shape of humans as a reward for being faithful children to their parents (185).

Pané's references to birds show them to be agents of transformative magic. In the first reference, found in Chapter 2, Pané describes the initial separation of men and women on the island, beginning with an incident that occurred between two Taino male mythological figures:

> Sucedió que uno, que se llamaba Guahayona, dijo a otro, de nombre Yahubaba, que fuese a coger una hierba llamada digo, con la que se limpian el cuerpo cuando van a bañarse. Este fue delante de ellos, más lo arrebató el Sol en el camino y se convirtió en pájaro que canta por la mañana, como el ruiseñor, y se llama Yahubabayel. Guahayona, viendo que éste no volvía cuando lo envió a coger el digo, resolvió salir de la gruta Cacibajagua.[11] (12)

Pané describes the Sun snatching up Yahubaba and changing him into a bird. It is this transformative magic which also transformed the lives of the Taino people of Hispaniola forever, after Guahayona made the decision to leave the region based on Yahubaba's disappearance. Interestingly, Guahayona never questioned what happened to Yahubaba, and instead he left the region without searching for the disappeared group member.

In the second bird reference, found in Chapter 8, a woodpecker becomes an important transformative agent in the cosmology of the Tainos after the local women left the island with Guahayona and abandoned their children. In the preceding chapter, Pané explains that the men on Hispaniola were filled with desire for women, and they went out after it rained in the hopes of tracking down females. Instead, the men watched some creatures fall from the trees that were "ni hombres ni mujeres, pues no tenían sexo de varón ni de hembra" ("neither men, nor women, and therefore had no male or female sex [organs]"; my trans.; 14). After a successful attempt to catch these sexless creatures, the men deliberated on how to make them into women and finally hit upon an idea:

> Buscaron un pájaro que se llama inriri, y antiguamente inrire cahubabayael que agujera los árboles, y en nuestro idioma se llama pico. Juntamente tomaron aquellas personas sin sexo de varón ni de hembra, les ataron los pies y las manos, cogieron el ave y se la ataron al

> cuerpo; el pico, creyendo que aquellas era maderos, comenzó la obra que acostumbra, picando y agujereando en el lugar donde ordinariamente suele estar la naturaleza de las mujeres. De este modo dicen los indios que tuvieron mujeres.…[12] (14)

The woodpecker transformed these sexless beings into women by pecking a hole at the apex of their thighs and giving the indigenous population new females. There are four points here that relate these two passages to paradoxographies. The first is that both texts are concise, clear, and without unnecessary details. Every word seems to have been chosen to explain the story without making it too detailed or unclear. Secondly, the element of magic gives the text a sense of the mysterious, essential to the wonder-catalogues. Third, the first passage gives no causation. The actions proceed without any explanation as to why the events are unfolding; Pané does not explain why the Sun took Yahubaba, nor why he was transformed into a songbird, and neither does Pané explain why Guahayona did not look for Yahubaba. Finally, in the second passage, Pané substantiates the text with two voices of authority. He writes, "De este modo dicen los indios […]" ("In this way, the Indians say […]"; my trans.) to give credence to the story, and Pané interjects his own voice of authority by translating the bird's name into *our* language (Castilian), "en nuestro idioma se llama pico" ("in our language, it is called *beak*"; my trans.;14).

Similar to these marvels described by Pané is an interesting marvel described by Aristotle in his paradoxography, *On Marvellous Things Heard*.[13] The paradoxographical elements of the anecdote are similar to those of Pané's:

> 79. They say that in the island of Diomedeia in the Adriatic there is a remarkable and hallowed shrine of Diomedes, and that birds of vast size sit around this shrine in a circle, having large hard beaks. They say moreover that if ever Greeks disembark on the spot they keep quiet, but if any of the barbarians that live round about land there, they rise and wheeling round attack their heads, and wounding them with their bills kill them. The legend is that these birds are descended from the companions of Diomedes, who were wrecked near the island, when Diomedes was treacherously murdered by Aeneas, the king of those parts at the time. (267-269)

The text is clear and concisely written, and Aristotle gives a voice of authority through "they say" and "the legend." We see not only the transformation from man to bird through the descendants of the wrecked mariners, but there is also no causation given for the transformation. Finally, there is a mysterious air about the tale due to a lack of information that might incline a reader to want to know more information about the story of Diomedes.

Transformation is not only limited to birds in Pané's paradoxography. Water is an important element of transformation, as well, and both snails and fish are represented as objects of transformation within the water. Pané transcribes an incident in which Guahayona tricked Anacacuya, a *cacique* (chief) into looking into the water from the edge of a canoe. Guahoyana

drowned him and stole all the women from Anacacuya's tribe:

> También se fue un cuñado de Guahayona, llamado Anacacuya, que entró en el mar con él, y dijo Guahayona a su cuñado, estando en la canoa "mira qué hermoso cobo hay en el agua" el cobo es el caracol del mar. Cuando Anacacuya miraba el agua para el cobo, su cuñado Guahayona lo cogió por los pies y tirólo al mar; luego tomó todas las mujeres….[14] (13)

Guahayona used the image of a sea snail that may or may not have actually been present in the sea in that moment in order to distract his brother-in-law and steal all the women. While the snail itself is neither existing nor inexistent, Guahayona uses it as a form of trickery, marking it as an involuntary agent of change. Again, Pané turns himself into a voice of authority by explaining what a *cobo* is.

This is not the only reference made by Pané about snails, however, and these are imbedded references based on Pané's transliteration of the Taino language. Later, in chapters 9 and 10, he writes about the creation of the sea and a man named Caracaracol. He defines the word *Caracaracol* as "sarnoso," which can be understood as either someone who is scabby or someone who is immoral. However, Caracaracol did not behave immorally, nor was there any other reference in the text to him having any skin irregularities, so the transliteration of the name is even more curious when, in Castilian, it translates directly to "snail face." Is this a transliteration of the sound of the name on the part of Pané? Or is it also Pané's word-for-word translation of a name that also had a secondary meaning? I take the leap that Pané uses two identifiable Castilian words when transcribing the name in order to give further information about the personage being signified. This was not a new literary device in Pané's time; in his medieval text *El libro de buen amor* (*The Book of Good Love* [completed in 1343 CE]), Juan Ruiz used the same kind of aptronym when he writes about the overly friendly nun, Trotaconventos, whose name literally means "convent-trotter" and who runs from convent to monastery acting as a go-between to help others in their sexual pursuits (183).

According to Pané's transcription, Caracaracol was partially responsible for the creation of the ocean, by way of the story of Yayael. Pané describes an incident in which Yaya, a farmer or a landowner of some sort, killed his son Yayael, and saved his bones in a pumpkin that he had hung up. One day, Yaya's wife turned the pumpkin over and the bones transformed into fish. Yaya's wife, Caracaracol, and his three unnamed brothers then ate these fish. After finishing their meal, the feasters wanted to hang the pumpkin back where it belonged before Yaya came home from tending his lands and discovered what they had done. The brothers hung it up poorly and it fell, breaking into pieces from which so much water and fish poured out that it created the sea (Pané 15). Interestingly, if compared to the reference of the sea snail in Chapter 5, Caracaracol (Snail Face) helped to create the sea in which Anacacuya was killed while looking into it to see a sea snail (12-13). The transformative story marks water, and with it the snail and fish that inhabit that realm, as part of the Taino cycle of life and death.

I feel that it is worth mentioning the transformative nature of water for the creatures existing in it, as described in Pané's transcription, which is very intriguing because of Catholic associations with water. Not only is water used in the baptismal rite, but it is also considered cleansing, as in the case of the Great Flood, and the fish within it are a symbol of Jesus Christ. As a metaphor of both life and death, this Taino myth corresponds to metaphors found in the Catholic faith.[15]

Other aquatic creatures are also agents of transformation in Pané's text. In Chapter 9, as I previously recounted, the human bones were changed into living fish, a marvelous life-out-of-death story. In Chapter 10, the bones continued to generate in the pumpkin and then pour from it to become part of the living aquatic system (15). The turtle, another aquatic creature, accorded a special place in the Taino cosmology, was created from the flesh of a human. Caracaracol received a blow on his back when he entered his grandfather's house to ask for come casaba bread. His grandfather threw a container that held a psychedelic drug called *cohoba* at Caracaracol's back (16). Afterwards, his back swelled and his three brothers could only relieve the swelling by cutting the lump with a stone ax. Out of the incision came a female turtle, and the men built a house for her to live in (16). The turtle is a creature whose life begins on land and ends in the sea, much like the life of Anacacuya. Pané transcribes not only elements of Taino mythology, but also a cultural tendency to see life form out of death. This is not unlike the description of the fly found in Aelian who, upon drowning, can be brought back to life if sprinkled with ashes and left in the sun (129). The magical element in Aelian's paradoxography is a combination of the sun and the ashes, working in tandem to bring life from death.

Another interesting use of animal words comes from Pané's transliteration of the name of a cave from which the Sun and Moon emerged, called *Iguanaboina*. The first part of the word, *iguana*, can be understood as the four-legged amphibian found in the Caribbean and the Americas. A *boina* is a dark-colored serpent found in the Caribbean. The *Iguanaboina* itself is represented in Taino pictographs as a humanized serpent or lizard ("Taino Cave Paintings"). Pané does not say much about this composite creature, other than, "Dicen también que el Sol y la Luna salieron de una gruta, que está en el país de un cacique llamado Mautia-TeNuel, a cuya gruta, que llaman Iguanaboina, la veneran mucho, y la tienen toda pintada a su modo…." ("They also say that the Sun and the Moon left a cave, one that is in the country of a chieftain named Mautia-TeNuel. His [the chieftain's] cave, called *Iguanaboina*, was venerated very much, and they [the indigenous] painted it in their way…."; my trans.; 16). The cave, then, is named for this composite creature, and it is also the origin of the Sun and the Moon. As an interesting contrast, both iguanas and snakes are cold-blooded creatures which lay eggs, but the Sun and the Moon were "birthed" from the *Iguanaboina* in the same way that mammals birth their offspring, through the feminine *gruta* (*grotto*; my trans.). All of the mythological supernatural elements in this transcription of some of the Taino origin story (*Iguanaboina*, Sun, and Moon) have been personified through the "birth" of the Sun and Moon into the world. Pané may not have known or understood the metaphorical aspects of the mythology that he was transcribing, but as part of the whole, the idea of the life-giving sun and moon being born from a place named for a composite creature adds to the

perspective that this text is, indeed, a wonder-catalogue.

Animal bones and flesh are also depicted by Pané as being used as part of shaman ceremonies.[16] Pané describes the use of bones and flesh as tricks to deceive those indigenous individuals who were ill into believing that they had been cured:

> Cuando van a visitar a algún enfermo … toman algunos huesecillos y un poco de carne, y envolviendo todo aquello en algo para que no se caiga, se lo meten en la boca … y sorbe [aspira] al enfermo por el cuello, el estómago, la espalda, las mejillas, el pecho, el vientre o por otras partes del cuerpo. Hecho esto, comienza a toser, y a poner mala cara, como si hubiese comido alguna cosa amarga, escupe en la mano y saca lo que ya hemos referido que se puso en la boca en su casa o por el camino, sea piedra, o hueso, o carne, como ya es dicho. Si es una cosa de comer dice al enfermo: "Has de saber que tú has comido una cosa que te ha producido el mal que padeces; mira cómo te lo he sacado del cuerpo, donde tu cemí te lo había puesto porque no le hiciste oración.…"[17] (19)

While transformative in the sense that the animal bones and flesh were changed into an element of healing, they were also portrayed by the *behiques* as part of the illness of the invalid. Removing the animal parts, even if it were part of a ruse pulled off by the shaman, was an attempt to at least alleviate the psychological stress associated with whatever ailment the patient had to deal with. In other wonder-catalogues there are instances of biological altruism that are similar to the anecdote about the shaman and his patient. As the shaman needed the patient and vice versa, so the crocodile needs the plover. According to Aelian, the crocodile swims with his mouth open to catch prey, but often ends up with his mouth filled with leeches instead. Rather than suffer the pain of them, the crocodile comes out of the water and opens his jaw. The plover flies into his mouth and eats the leeches, thus alleviating the pain for the crocodile and filling the plover's belly. The relationship is so important that the crocodile never eats the birds who clean him, not unlike the *behique's* relationship with his client, which was so important that he tried to alleviate his patient's stress (167-169). The animal bones and flesh became an intermediary that both the shaman and the patient could blame for the illness.

An anecdote about snakes and shamans was also included in Pané's New World wonder-catalogue. Pané transcribes an episode in which a shaman had lost a patient and the family of the dead sought revenge. The family beat the shaman with sticks, and "le rompieron las piernas, los brazos y la cabeza, de modo que lo muelen.…" ("they broke his legs, arms, and head, in such a way that they pulverized him.…"; my trans.; 21). They left him for dead but, miraculously, "A la noche dicen que van muchas sierpes de diversas clases, blancas, Negras, verdes y de otros muchos colores, las cuales lamen la cara y todo el cuerpo del médico.…" ("At night, they say that many snakes of different types, white, black, green, and many other colors, came and licked the face and all of the body of the shaman.…"; my trans.; 21). A few days later, the shaman was cured and was walking around again (21). The creatures transformed him from injured and dying into a living

and viable human being.

The wonder-catalogues also detail the mysterious power of snakes. Aelian describes them in detail:

> 24. The poison of serpents is a thing to be dreaded, but that of the Asp is far worse. Nor are remedies and antidotes easy to discover, however ingenious one may be at beguiling and dispelling acute pains. Yet after all there is in man also a certain mysterious poison, and this is how it has been discovered. If you capture a Viper and grasp its neck very firmly and with a strong hand, and then open its mouth and spit into it, the spittle slides down into its belly and has so disastrous an effect upon it as to cause the Viper to rot away. From this you see how foul can be the bite of one man to another and as dangerous as the bite of any beast. (123-125)

Equally as marvelous as the anecdote of the snakes and the shaman is that of the children being zoomorphized into creatures akin to croaking frogs. In Chapter 4, Pané discusses what happened to the children after their mothers were led away by Guahayona. The children demanded milk, but their fathers could not feed them. "Llorando así y pidiendo la teta, y diciendo 'toa, toa' … fueron transformados en animalillos, a modo de ranas, que se llaman tona, por la petición que hacían de la teta.…" ("Crying in this manner and asking for the breast, and saying 'toa, toa' … they were transformed into little animals, such as frogs, which they called Tona*, because of their asking for the breast.…"; my trans.; 12).[18] By transforming them into crying amphibians, Pané's transcription removes the humanity from the indigenous children. Whether this was intentional on the part of Pané or on the part of the indigenous storyteller(s) is uncertain. However, what we have is a demonstration of dehumanization and zoomorphism of the children. In wonder-catalogues, there are often references to anthropomorphism,[19] or to non-human animals who work in the service of humans. For example, Aelian writes about the frogs of Seriphus:

> … you will never hear the Frogs croaking at all. If however you transport them elsewhere, they emit a piercing and most harsh sound. On mount Pierus in Thessaly there is a lake; it is not perennial but is created in winter by the water which flows together into it. Now if one throws Frogs into it they become silent, though vocal elsewhere. Touching the Seriphian Frogs the people of Seriphus boast that Perseus arrived from his contest with the Gorgon after covering an immense distance, and being naturally fatigued rested by the lake side and lay down wishing to sleep. The Frogs however worried the hero with their croaking and interrupted his slumbers. But Perseus prayed to his father to silence the Frogs. His father gave ear and to gratify his son condemned the Frogs there to everlasting silence.… (197-199)

In Pané's reference, the children are dehumanized but given a voice at the loss of their mothers. In Aelian's text, the frogs lose their voice in their own land, only regaining it through forced migration. In both texts, there is a sense of wonder and a sense of loss through

transformation.

A final point to make in relation to animals and transformation in Pané's *Account* is that of the *cemí* (house spirit) Opiyelguobiran. This house spirit was described as quadrupedal, like a dog, and it would flee at night and hide in the woods, only to be found the next morning (Pané 23). After the arrival of the Christians to Hispaniola, "dicen que éste huyó y se fue a una laguna; que lo siguieron por sus huellas, pero no lo vieron más, ni saben nada de él…." ("they say that this [house god] fled and went off to a lagoon; they followed his tracks, but they never saw him again and know nothing more of him…."; my trans.; 23-24). While Pané transcribes this creature as being like a dog, and it is unknown if this description is an assumption based on how the house god is described to him, or if the islanders themselves state that it looked like a dog. Interestingly, the moment the Europeans arrived, the *cemí* disappeared and was never seen again. The creature was transformed into nothingness upon the arrival of Christianity, as if Pané is trying to tell the reader one of two things: first, that he is not fooled by any trickery and that the islanders cannot prove their gods were able to talk and eat (which Pané expresses some doubt over in Chapter 15), so they must be forcibly disappeared, or that the power of Christianity's arrival squashes the belief in this house god. Either way, Pané uses the Taino's own beliefs against them (18).

The most interesting aspect of these animal transcriptions, beyond the mystery or the brevity of each transcription, is that Pané never openly questions them and he does not question the established Taino belief system. He compiles and transcribes, and provides references and definitions where needed, but he never attempts to explain why these events unfold nor does he question the myths that he is told. He makes no attempt to transcribe morals or messages; he simply writes what he is dictated by the Tainos, as he had been commanded by Columbus. As I indicated previously, this form of transcription is a very common attribute of paradoxographers.

Pané's *Account* shows not only his presence within the text through descriptions of his personal and religious frustrations, but also through the structure and manner of his descriptions, which are his attempt at creating an informative and historical text. Understanding Pané's animal references as part of the paradoxographical tradition is important in that it not only gives scholars another perspective and mode of analysis of a well-known New World text, but it also demonstrates that Classical and Medieval animal descriptive literature still had a place in early modern European society. While I do not believe that he intended to write a paradoxography, but that, in following the orders of his Admiral, he employed the writing style and rhetoric that was familiar to him from his education. While his text was mostly overlooked by scholars until the 19th century, and the original was lost to time, what remains of the text through translation is nothing short of a New World paradoxography. While he did not manage to evangelize the Taino groups of Hispaniola, Pané accomplished a marvelous feat for his time: he transformed the oral traditions of those peoples into part of the European literary tradition. His own form of magic was that he broke through the wall of communication and transcribed a rich mythology for future generations to study.

Notes

1. *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians* (All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated). This essay is based on Chapter 2 of my dissertation, *Encounters with Animals in the New World*, available via TRACE through the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
2. *Allomorphism* is defined by Garrard as the representation of animals as different from human beings. There are no negative connotations associated with this (208).
3. Pané would have read Aristotle, and likely read Aelian's *On the Characteristics of Animals*, as well as the works of other natural historians. His religious background with the Hieronymites affected his perception of the Tainos to some degree, which he communicated through his general distaste of the people and disbelief of their religion, all based on his strong cultural bias. The text that Pané left to posterity is one of some erudition, composed of transcription, narration, religious insight, language explanations, and attempts at translation.
4. Specifically, he writes, "escribo lo que he podido averiguar y saber.…" ("I write that which I was able to figure out and know…").
5. "a relation," "a book," and "a work"; my trans.
6. This is not to imply that all modern anthropologists are able to fully leave behind their own cultural relativism, only to demonstrate that in Pané's time, that would have been unheard of.
7. "Bizarre" in the medieval sense of "the marvelous."
8. *Caracaracol* is a significant Taino figure and is the only named son of the Mother Earth figure.
9. "When they lived in these caves, they kept watch at night, and one [person] named Mácocael was tasked with this job, who, because one day he was late returning to the door, was carried off by the Sun. Seeing, then, that the Sun had carried him off for being such a bad guard, they shut the door on him and he was transformed into stone by the entrance. They say also that others, having gone fishing, were taken by the Sun and were transformed into trees…" (my trans.).
10. "Those of wood were made in the following manner: when someone goes for a walk and it seems that he sees a tree move at the roots, that man will stop short, be startled, and ask who is there. The tree responds, 'Bring hither a shaman and he will tell you who I am.' That man, arriving at [the home of] the shaman, tells him what he has seen. The wizard or witch will go later to see the tree of which was spoken…and he will ask it, 'Tell me who you are, what you are doing here, what do you want of me, and why have you asked for me.' Then that tree, or house god made idol or devil, responds to him, indicating the shape that he wants to be made into. The warlock cuts it [the tree] down and makes it in the way which he had been ordered…" (my trans.).
11. "It happened that one [man], who they called Guahayona, said to another [man] Yahubaba, that he should go and collect an herb called *digo*, with which one cleaned the body while bathing. This one [Yahubaba] went ahead of everyone else, and the Sun snatched him up along the way and turned him into a bird that sang in the mornings, like the mockingbird, and it is called Yahubabayel. Guahayona, seeing that this [man] did not return from being sent to pick the *digo*, resolved to leave the Cacibajagua cave" (my trans.).
12. "They look for a bird which is called *inriri*, and in the past was called *inriri cahubabayael*, which makes holes in trees, and in our language, we call *beak*. Together they took these sexless people, tied their feet and their hands, then took the bird and tied it to their [the captive sexless people] bodies. The *beak*, believing that those [people] were made of wood began the task to which it was accustomed, making holes in the place where

ordinarily lies the nature [sex organs] of women. In this way, the Indians say they got their women…." (my trans.)

13. This text is found in a compilation of Aristotle's shorter works, *Minor Works*.

14. "Also, there was a brother-in-law of Guahayona, named Anacacuya, who went into the sea with him [Guahayona]. Guahayona told his brother-in-law, while in the canoe, 'Look what a beautiful *cobo* there is in the water' [the *cobo* is a snail of the sea]. When Anacacuya looked into the water for the sea snail, his brother-in-law Guahayona grabbed him by the feet and threw him into the sea; later he took all of the women…" (my trans.).

15. Within the European cultural framework, the idea of water as transformative was not uncommon. One example comes from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the story of the nymph Cyane, who, at seeing Proserpina raped and carried off by Pluto, cries so much that she dissolves within a pool of tears (111-113).

16. Pané associates the *behiques,* the equivalent of a shaman in Taíno culture, with trickery and treachery, and uses his experiences with the *behiques* to discredit them to his Christian readers. He mostly refers to them as *médicos* (*doctors*) (17-18).

17. "When they [the shamans] go to visit a sick person … they take some small bones and a little meat, and wrap it all in something that keeps it from falling, and then they put in in his mouth [to hide it from sight] … they sniff the sick person's neck, stomach, back, cheeks, chest, and belly, or other parts of the body. That done, [he] begins to cough and pull sour faces, as if he had eaten something bitter. He spits in his hand and takes out that which we have already referenced that he put in his mouth while at his home or while on the road [to the house of the ill person]. It could be a stone, or a bone, or meat, as I already said. If it is a foodstuff, he says to the sick person, 'You must know that you ate something that has produced this evil that you are enduring; look how I have taken it out of the body, where your *cemí* [house god] had placed it when you did not make prayers [to him]…'" (my trans.).

18. Bourne determined that "tona" is likely a word meaning "breast," and perhaps "toa" is the way that little children pronounce the same word.

19. Animals becoming humans.

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