

On August 29, 1583, the Hungarian scholar and Neo-Latin poet Stephen Parmenius was lost, along with approximately one hundred others, when the *Delight*, one of the ships on Sir Humphrey Gilbert's expedition to North America, went aground and broke up in the pounding waves off Sable Island, east of Nova Scotia. Parmenius left behind a small corpus of writings – two Latin poems and one letter in Latin – all of which are important documents for the age of the European exploration of North America.

Although we know very little about Parmenius, it seems that he had left Budapest in 1579, in his early twenties, to continue his education in the western European universities of the Protestant Christian world. By the autumn of 1581, he was connected with Christ Church College, Oxford (a university that attracted many foreign scholars like himself) and had as his roommate, the geographer Richard Hakluyt. Parmenius' intended to return to Hungary to serve his beleaguered native land, but after being introduced by Hakluyt to Gilbert, he became enthusiastic about Gilbert's American venture and wrote *De navigazione* to honor him as one of England's great explorers. In 1583, Parmenius revised *De navigazione* and decided to accompany Gilbert as poetic chronicler for the first English expedition of territorial annexation in the New World. On the return trip, Gilbert insisted on a course toward Sable Island where the *Delight* foundered. Eleven days after the *Delight* went down, Gilbert's own ship, the *Squirrel*, was swamped in heavy seas and sank, along with all its crew and Gilbert himself.

*De navigazione* survives today in two copies and in Hakluyt's 1600 reprinting of its 1583 revision. The poem is the work of an accomplished and imaginative Latinist, skilled at dactylic hexameter verse and especially well read in Vergil and Horace. It is particularly significant because it contains an extended personification of America (lines 242-423, about 40% of the poem) that differs from the popular contemporary personification of America as displayed, for example, in Jan van der Straet's "America," which is dated to the late 1570's and preserved as one of the engravings of Theodor Galle's *Nova Reperta*, ca. 1600. Parmenius' personification of America, which has not been discussed in previous scholarly literature, will be the focus of this paper. The paper will contrast the iconography of van der Straet's graphic personification of America with Parmenius' literary personification and analyze the novelty and importance of the literary personification in terms of the author's facility with Latin hexameter composition and the depth of his classical knowledge, his Protestant fervor, his flattery of both English patron and host country, and his ability to create a figure that, ultimately, has startling personal relevance to Queen Elizabeth herself.