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Ana Crespo-Solana *

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Ships Arriving at Ports and Tales of Shipwrecks: Heterotopia and Seafaring, 16th to 18th Centuries

Crespo-Solana Ana

Instituto de Historia, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (IH-CSIC), ana.crespo@cchs.csic.es

Abstract

The objective of this article is to provide a critical analysis of maritime heterotopia as a category for reinterpreting ships, shipwrecks and maritime landscapes between the 16th and 18th centuries. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining history, underwater archaeology, heritage theory and literary analysis, it explores the ways in which maritime spaces, especially ships and shipwrecks, functioned as 'other spaces' – following Foucault's concept of heterotopia – in the articulation of imperial projects, power relations, experiences of transit and narratives of memory. A particular focus has been placed on the examination of shipwreck accounts, which are regarded as microhistories of human behaviour in contexts of crisis. These accounts have been shown to offer insights into alternative social structures, dynamics of authority, and manifestations of violence or solidarity. A review of the legal framework and practices related to shipwrecks in the Spanish Carrera de Indias is also undertaken, with particular emphasis on their impact on maritime legislation and international law. The article proposes a reading of maritime heritage as a symbolic and political device in constant dispute, where material remains and associated narratives shape collective memories, geopolitical tensions and new forms of cultural appropriation. Shipwrecks thus become sites of rupture and origin, charged with utopian, dystopian and heterotopic potential.

Keywords: early maritime history; maritime archaeology; utopian studies; ocean studies; global history

1. Introduction

In recent years, maritime studies have undergone a remarkable epistemological shift that has shifted the focus from grand narratives of exploration and imperial expansion to a denser, more critical and multifocal history of ocean spaces. This new paradigm, influenced by global history, microhistory, underwater archaeology and environmental humanities, has generated growing attention to ships as social spaces, shipwrecks as transformative events, and the sea as an active agent in historical processes. Authors such as Karen Wigen (Seascapes, 2007), Lincoln Paine (The Sea and Civilisation, 2013) and Marcus Rediker (Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, 1987) have contributed decisively to this approach, which understands the sea as a cultural, symbolic and legal space in continuous interaction with human societies.

This paper deep into this interdisciplinary framework and proposes a reinterpretation of the phenomenon of shipwrecks and ships as heterotopias, that is, as ambiguous and disruptive spaces, following the concept developed by Michel Foucault. Contrary to the traditional view of shipwrecks as mere accidents or tragedies, this article explores their potential as generators of otherness, memory and even utopia. The article critically reviews the state of the art, where divergent approaches persist: while underwater archaeology has focused on the material and technical recovery of shipwrecks (Castro & Medina, 2019), traditional maritime history has prioritised routes and institutional structures (Parry, 1963). In contrast, this study integrates both approaches and expands them through tools such as network analysis, the history of emotions, the epistemology of risk and the theory of maritime cultural landscape. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate that shipwreck

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narratives and the normative practices associated with them not only reveal human behaviour in extreme contexts, but also allow us to reinterpret the ship as a space of conflict, resistance and symbolic creation. Through historical sources, legal documents and archaeological case studies, it is argued that maritime heterotopia offers a powerful lens for understanding the tensions between imperial control, individual agency and cultural transformation. Among the main conclusions is that shipwrecks, far from representing an end, constitute a turning point where new identities, liminal communities and narratives emerge that challenge the established order. This perspective also allows us to rethink maritime heritage not only as a material vestige, but as a symbolic, political and ethical construction in the present.

2. Heterotopia and Maritime Landscape

José de Veitia Linaje dedicates a chapter in his book *Norte de la Contratación de las Indias occidentales*, originally published in 1672, to "De los navíos arribados, derrotados o perdidos en la navegación de la Carrera de las Indias" (On ships that arrived, were defeated or lost in the navigation of the Indies), in which he describes some of the main problems affecting navigation on the ocean routes of the Spanish maritime system in the early modern times[i]. Like other legislators of his time, Veitia Linaje analysed the many possible consequences that these *defeats* and other disastrous actions at sea could have for the legal system of the Spanish empire. The extensive body of legislation that maintained this maritime and mercantile system, which for 280 years linked Spain and America, as well as other maritime trading areas in the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the African coast, the Pacific Ocean and Asia, has hardly been seen as a metaphor for utopia in maritime history. The utopian perspective encompasses a variety of ideas and approaches, as the seas have been spaces of exploration, trade and conflict, as well as of imagination and the projection of ideals, sometimes reflected in the extensive regulatory material on the construction of the political, military and commercial empire. The utopian basis present in many projects related to the *Novus Mundis* is currently being revisited, such as the work of Bartolomé de las Casas, the enactment of the so called *Leyes Nuevas*, the Franciscan missions, movements for the abolition of slavery and many others, which ultimately led to significant transformations[ii].

Utopia at sea is reflected in a history of the creation of spaces, emerging human behaviours and the circulation of ideas that affected the dynamics of navigation and the creation of a new society, but also of an interactive micro-society on board ships. However, utopia or its variants, dystopias and heterotopias, are also generated during maritime disasters or arrivals on land, in all their varieties, in human reactions to disaster, power and authority, which ultimately influence our understanding of the otherness resulting from maritime travel and its consequences. Literary examples that combine these manifestations can be found in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, written around 1610, in Robert Louis Stevenson (*Treasure Island,* 1883), or even in Jules Verne, in his *20,000 Miles Under the Sea* (ca. 1869), in which mythical islands, libertarian communities at sea, non-existent or imaginary treasures, or even colonialism as an imperial utopia are recalled.

In the case of the Spanish *Carrera de las Indias*, despite numerous studies on its historical and geographical basis, there are still enigmas surrounding the causes and circumstances of the events that produced space and behaviour from a microhistorical perspective. The *Carrera de las Indias* is described as a complex system of interactions in which the borders of empires and nations are highly porous[iii]. Understanding connectivity beyond the system created by the empire as an entelechy whose existence reaches its own end is impossible without analysing microhistories in which narratives overlap. Several questions need to be addressed in order to study this narrative of utopian or non-utopian construction, considering the maritime societies built and narrated from the ocean and ocean routes. Firstly, this microhistory of the Spanish *Carrera de las Indias* has as its central key the ships, vessels that are also microcosms, micro-societies in motion, heterotopic spaces, rather than utopian ones per se. Secondly, the protagonists of this microhistory are social agents, but also the historical-geographical nodes that participate in and feed off these multiple narratives: the port cities, the coasts, the beaches where the vessels anchored and moored. In short, it was about the emergence of socio-cultural behaviours and ethnic interaction in a vast and ambiguous maritime, coastal and

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intertidal space on the borders of empires, which has left an important tangible and intangible heritage.

In order to establish a theoretical and methodological perspective on this maritime microhistory within the theory of empires, it is essential to understand what the Carrera de Indias really was between the founding of the *Casa de Contratación* (Board of Trade) in Seville in 1503 and its abolition after various vicissitudes that led to its relocation to Cádiz between 1717 and 1790, when this institution disappeared forever. The Spanish navigation and trade system constituted a dynamic spatial model that evolved towards self-sustaining localisation structures and consolidated a network of knowledge of navigation, trade, cartography and information transfer, especially on shipbuilding techniques, as well as financial instruments and mechanisms for social cooperation[iv]. This process manifested itself in the development of so-called self-organised networks, which included agents of various types and scales, such as merchants, clergy, officials from metropolitan and colonial institutions, and other diverse social actors. Self-organised networks are described in historical studies as complex systems that, based on simple rules of local interaction between nodes, generate stable or adaptive global structures. Networks are based on principles such as redundancy and multiplicity of links, adaptability to environmental change, the emergence of temporary leadership or key nodes, and the absence of centralised planning, but with an emerging functional coherence. These characteristics are particularly relevant to maritime trade networks, where agents must make decentralised but coordinated decisions[v]. This is a theoretical model that is providing new perspectives thanks to the application of social network analysis (SNA) and the identification of key aspects for understanding the functioning of human groups operating through maritime routes, such as node identification, density, centrality, or intermediation[vi]. The self-organised network approach provides a powerful lens for analysing modern trade beyond rigid structures, showing how actors created dynamic systems of coordination, innovation and resilience. It allows historians to link economic, social and cultural history around the relational logic of exchange. The concept of self-organised networks has become particularly useful for understanding the internal dynamics of mercantile networks in the Modern Age, characterised by their flexibility, adaptability, and resilience in the face of unstable environments or changing regulations. and it is an approach that allows human networks to be studied not as fixed hierarchical structures, but as dynamic systems that evolve from local interactions between agents (merchants, trading houses, consulates, brokers, intermediaries), generating global patterns of cooperation and competition.

In this context, navigation emerges in a colonial and imperialist maritime context replete with what we might call heterotopic microhistories. It is true that microhistory is capable of revealing hidden aspects of history, although it always tries to avoid excessive generalisation based on specific cases, so as a historiographical method it can serve to identify particularly repetitive aspects[vii]. The theoretical model, according to the studies of Gruzinsky, Ginzburg and Levy, is applied to human relations in complex colonial settings, prioritising a small-scale approach in order to reveal aspects that are ignored or minimised by macroscopic approaches. This also allows for the microhistorical study of utopia/heterotopia in maritime environments, specifically in the emergence of behaviours during shipwrecks themselves, or in the reactions of different groups of individuals in coastal maritime societies to the impact that the consequences and debris of a shipwreck can have on their environmental and sociocultural surroundings. This microhistorical analysis emphasises the study of human behaviour in the face of dramatic experiences, such as shipwrecks, making it possible to study the reactions of marginal or ordinary actors, rescuing their voices and perspectives[viii]. This approach has an important precedent in studies of historical shipwrecks, such as the work of Pérez-Mallaína[ix]. It is precisely the narrative of the shipwreck that reflects the interaction between the local and the global, because although it focuses on a specific event, it refers to a repetitive and not isolated phenomenon, also derived from broader structures and processes, such as those experienced in the context of the *Carrera de Indias*, and which points to the emergence of universal behaviour as a reaction to historical events. Applying the concept of heterotopia to case studies in ocean navigation, from a Foucauldian perspective[x], defines maritime spaces as places of otherness, regulation and control within a colonial system that required spatial networks and ocean routes for its survival. In the Spanish case, the key to this control lay in the galleons and fleets of the *Carrera de Indias*, authentic

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floating spaces with their own normative, hierarchical and symbolic system, but which also integrated routes, ports and different maritime landscapes. This perspective must be taken into account in a new oceanic history in which the sea is not a marginal space. A fairly extensive and rich literature raises interesting theoretical and methodological questions for its study, despite the relatively recent oceanic turn in historical studies and the fact that, in a way, it still constitutes a blue hole in historiography[xi].

But the study of the ocean has produced disparate approaches and perspectives. Even today, historians tend to view the ocean as a highway for intercontinental exchange, emphasising transoceanic interactions and the mestizo and creole cultures that have resulted from them. Social scientists approach the sea as a theatre of conflict, whether for commercial privileges or rights to resources. Archaeologists and humanists have probed the elusive contours of the ocean in maps and metaphors, prioritising the study of the materiality and archaeological remains of historical events. Karen Wigen, in her introduction to *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, emphasises the analysis of historical experience in maritime regions around the world, addressing issues such as trade, migration, creole cultures and piracy, and establishes a theoretical and methodological framework that prioritises the study of maritime spaces in global history and proposes new regional and global geographies that complement traditional terrestrial perspectives. In addition, it emphasises the need to consider the relationships between land and sea in order to understand the historical development of the world [xii]. This model of analysis is undoubtedly complementary to classic works that justified maritime expansion, albeit from a Eurocentric perspective, such as John H. Parry's *The Discovery of the Sea.* This classic, like so many others, focuses on the transformation of the perception of the world, the motivations for maritime exploration, the development of naval technology, the economic and social impact of the opening of trade routes, new geographical knowledge, and the beginning of colonialism and its cultural and social consequences for peoples [xiii].

The ocean and the seas are cultural spaces that evoke this heterotopia of historical transition. This idea underlies Mack's work, *The Sea, a Cultural History*, although the author does not use the concept of heterotopia in his analysis. Mack explores the human relationship with the sea through various perspectives, including literature and art. Despite this, he is a reference point when considering the sea and ships as examples of heterotopias, an idea that coincides with Foucault's, spaces that exist within society but are different or "other" and which do appear in P. Johnson's studies [xiv]. Human behaviour at sea, from a utopian perspective, integrates analysis of working conditions, forms of social organisation and conflicts on board merchant ships and warships, as described in Marcus's work Rediker's *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* [xv]. This approach combines social history, maritime history and a Marxist perspective, paying particular attention to the agency of sailors as workers and political subjects. An important aspect of this study is the utopian dimension of seafaring life, since despite exploitation (in the English case, sailors were often victims of *impressment*, or forced recruitment, which turned their situation into a form of disguised slavery), ships offered a space where workers from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds experienced alternative forms of community, redistribution and cooperation. Certain practices, commonly universal, such as the equitable distribution of booty on pirate ships, the democratic election of captains, or the rejection of terrestrial authority, have been considered as seeds of egalitarian societies. In this sense, life at sea combined a scenario of oppression with the creation of plebeian utopias [xvi].

Heterotopia relates the maritime landscape, in all its theoretical meanings, to space. This affects the concept of landscape, which is strongly linked to the idea of heritage. In his work *Landscape and Memory* (1995), Simon Schama explores how the relationship between nature and culture is deeply shaped by collective memory, mythology and history. For Schama, landscapes are not simply natural or physical settings, but cultural constructions laden with meaning, linked to national, religious and personal identities. The idea of landscape is not a purely physical or aesthetic space, but a cultural product that reflects beliefs, aspirations and memories [xvii]. It is a reinterpretation of human experiences, memory and tradition passed down through generations. There is a cultural memory of the sea, which is why it is sometimes difficult to separate the cultural from the natural in

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maritime and underwater archaeology. Schama does not expressly refer to the sea, as opposed to the forest, as a cultural landscape, but he does point to the sea as a space of meaning, as a symbolic frontier, a boundary between order and chaos, between the known and the unknown; a landscape of mystery, of the sublime or feared (sea monsters, initiatory voyages, the flood), and of course, as a visual and artistic reference, art as part of the construction of a collective memory of the landscape. The ocean is a liquid and liminal space [xviii].

In general, the concept of landscape has various manifestations, from the urban and rural to the idea of the maritime landscape, depending on the spatial qualification. A distinction must be made between the maritime landscape and the maritime cultural landscape, the difference between which is based on human intervention and the value associated with the environment from a heritage and cultural point of view. While the maritime landscape may or may not be natural, depending on the anthropic impact it has received, the maritime cultural landscape always includes elements that are the product of human intervention and has cultural and historical significance [xix]. In reality, when we refer to the maritime cultural landscape, we are referring to submerged archaeological sites, or combinations of terrestrial and submerged sites that reflect the relationship between humans and water. These landscapes can vary in size from a single beach to an entire coastline and may include areas of now flooded terrestrial sites as well as now dried-up underwater sites. What unites all these sites is the premise that every aspect of the landscape (cultural, political, environmental, technological and physical) is interrelated and cannot be understood without reference to the others. It is also a microhistory in which individual spaces and/or sites reflect a broader landscape and provide a framework for integrating such diverse themes as trade, resource extraction, housing, industrial production and war into a holistic study of the past [xx]. As Castro and Medina point out, the narrative power of shipwrecks and the social value of archaeology go hand in hand in raising public awareness of heritage protection and reflection on historical memory, including in the heterotopia of the sea [xxi].

It is important to highlight the model of studying the sea as a dynamic agent of change. In maritime history, the concept of the sea as an agent determines the economic, cultural, and political development of maritime societies. Lincoln Paine, in his book *The Sea and Civilisation*, explores how shipwrecks altered global routes, networks, and logistical structures [xxii]. In her approach, Gelina Harlaftis, although applied to navigation in the ancient world, emphasises that the sea is not only a means of transport, but also an economic space that facilitates trade, migration and cultural exchange [xxiii]. Ports, shipping routes and merchant fleets become agents of change that can transform entire economies and societies. Various aspects would be included in this model of analysis: economic transformations; mobility and migration; technological innovations; maritime identity and culture; and politics and geopolitics. These meanings must be integrated with the idea of maritime cultural landscape, which links the study of texts and narratives with the analysis of materiality, objects and artefacts, now recovered by underwater archaeology. The idea of maritime heritage is a multidisciplinary field that connects materialities (ships, ports, shipwrecks) with symbolic constructions and far-reaching historical processes. Thus, the conceptualisation of the sea as a heterotopia, that other space, charged with ambiguity and potential for disruption, is fundamental when interpreting the maritime experience as an exceptional environment, a frontier or a transit zone, where both utopian projects (ideal colonies, floating cities, dreams of freedom) and practices of control, violence or segregation are articulated[xxiv]. This leads to new interpretations of the role of the sea in economic transformations, from mercantile capitalism and Atlantic networks to today's extractive and logistical economies, which involve tensions between sustainability and exploitation. Maritime heritage thus becomes a critical tool for analysing how the logics of accumulation and dispossession materialise in coastal spaces and heritage objects [xxv]. Mobility and migration also fit into this perspective: the sea is both a route of promise and a space of shipwreck, which places maritime heritage at the heart of narratives of memory, displacement and diaspora. Contemporary studies explore how these maritime memories are inscribed in discourses of identity, resistance or mourning [xxvi].

Technological innovations, from sailing to the digitisation of archives and virtual reconstructions of shipwrecks, are also opening up new forms of access, but are also generating new tensions between conservation and the conversion of the maritime past into spectacle. Heritage

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management is thus challenged by these developments, which affect both knowledge and governance of underwater cultural heritage. In terms of maritime identity and culture, there has been a shift towards approaches that, in some way, suppress the essence of the maritime, exploring how imaginaries, representations and senses of belonging are constructed in relation to the sea. Here, the notion of utopia once again operates as a lens for reading colonial, modernist or tourist projects, in tension with local memories, resistances and multiple identities. Finally, maritime heritage has become politicised in the context of geopolitical disputes over sovereignty, territoriality and jurisdiction. In this context, the heritage status of the sea can be understood as a way of exercising power, claiming rights or constructing historical legitimacy over disputed spaces.

However, the concept of maritime landscape is broad, as it integrates geographical areas with maritime routes themselves and their connection nodes, which include coastlines of various types, but also islands and archipelagos as connecting nodes, port and maritime cities, and their different areas with their heterogeneous material cultural characteristics. Within this meaning are the so-called *seascapes*, defined as: geographical space influenced by the sea and maritime activities, which is also reflected in cartography and art. In turn, it is a concept that could have different typologies depending on the areas used by ships to anchor and moor, such as stone beaches, very typical in the Mediterranean, sandy areas, coasts, ports, or special docks built for the wintering of war and merchant fleets. In general, ports are related to this idea of the maritime landscape and, in part, to a coastal landscape dominated by infrastructure designed to support maritime transport networks. Sometimes, some of the buildings in these ports mean that the area adjacent to the port locations is sparsely populated, although attached to the port area is the maritime city with a clear commercial and financial significance [xxvii]. The term *'underwater seascape'* is a parallel *to 'seascape'* or *'seabed landscape'*, in both cases associated with cultural and natural heritage, submerged areas that are also a landscape, in the sense that they are spaces appreciated by society and in which cultural heritage is integrated with natural heritage. Indeed, the idea that the concept of landscape is conceived as an area resulting from the interaction between natural and human factors, can be applied to the underwater world [xxviii]. It is important to bear this concept in mind as it is related to the process of formation of an underwater site after a shipwreck, and also to the creation of a museum heterotopia that manifests itself long after the historical event.

3. Legislation and Microhistory of Shipwrecks

Early Modern maritime legislation recalls historical events reflected in the maritime landscape in interdisciplinary interaction with historical maritime and underwater archaeology. Much of this legislation is specifically aimed at verifying, controlling or regulating human experiences in marginal or problematic contexts as a result of unforeseen situations, which is why a microhistorical approach helps to better understand social reality in maritime contexts. The phenomenon of shipwrecks was not only a common maritime occurrence, but also a legal and political problem of the first order. In practice, legislation on shipwrecks ranged from the logic of local appropriation (by coastal communities or individuals) to the growing intervention of states in a context of imperial expansion, administrative centralisation and the construction of national marinas. Shipwrecks were considered legal events, given their implications for the ownership of cargo and hulls, as well as being historical events with an obvious capacity to alter routes, provoke litigation or reorganise trade networks. The relationship between the legal, economic and historical dimensions of shipwrecks in the Modern Age, particularly focusing on the legal treatment of cargo, the hull and its impact on trade routes and networks, has been the subject of various interpretations. Shipwrecks were considered events with legal implications that affected disputes over private property and the changing legal frameworks for the rescue of goods, in some cases even with implications to the present day, as we saw in the case of the trial over the goods seized from the frigate Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes (1786)[xxix]. Maritime disasters have been dealt with diplomatically, which has influenced the shaping of international maritime law. A pamphlet circulated after the disaster of the frigate Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, attacked by The pamphlet synthesises the common aspects of such situations, including the moral appeal against the enemy's ruthless acts, the interrogation of the political ethics and legitimacy of the English actions, and the seizure of allied ships and their cargo without a prior

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declaration of war. The text is characterised by a strong emotional impact, aiming to evoke feelings of justice and compassion in the audience in response to the depicted events of a shipwreck caused by human cruelty.a British squadron in 1804 off Cape Santa María, reveals a diplomatic and propagandistic context [xxx]. In various historical cases of salvage, the notion of *res nullius* (nobody's property) has been applied to the appropriation of shipwreck remains and identified with the idea of piracy, a pejorative meaning that still exists today [xxxi] In the case of the *Carrera de Indias*, there were important situations in which shipwrecks affected commercial disputes and were tried in specialised courts, especially in the ports of Cadiz and Seville [xxxii].

The relationship between legislation and shipwrecks is reflected in the microhistory related to cases of ships arriving at ports, their vicissitudes before, during and after navigation, and the events that cause disasters at sea and the sinking of vessels. From a regulatory point of view, in the case of Spain, there is a consolidated legal tradition based on Roman law and the *Partidas* of Alfonso X. However, the king's right to intervene in shipwrecked property (right of shipwreck) was also recognised, although , this coexisted with local customary practices (rights of the shore or right of discovery) [xxxiii]. Spanish legislation adopted the Justinian and Roman codes until practically the end of the Middle Ages, but medieval maritime jurisdictions substantially changed many of the issues related to shipwrecks and their consequences. Texts such as the *Roles of Oleron* and the *Libros del Consulado del Mar* (*Book of the Consulate of the Sea)* emerged, in which the idea appeared that it was not possible, under any circumstances, to appropriate the products derived from a shipwreck[xxxiv]. For the modern age, we have works such as the aforementioned by José de Veitia Linaje, as well as various Ordinances and Corpora that compile laws produced between 1492 and 1628, collected during the reign of Philip IV. For example, the so-called *Sumario* is an important precedent for the legislative compilations subsequently made by Juan de Solórzano y Pereyra and the *Recopilación de las leyes de Indias,* bringing together most of the sources related to shipwrecks and other accidents at sea [xxxv].

The maritime discourse contained in this complex and extensive corpus is very broad, but we can basically identify two fundamental aspects related to the fate of ships. Veitia Linaje includes this in his work, always citing his legislative sources and insisting, first and foremost, on how to insure against the risks of shipwrecks and losses. These laws appear in the work of Rodrigo de Aguilar, especially those related to the defeat of ships in the Carrera de Indias at their final destination, their arrival in port, the port where they were actually supposed to arrive, legally [xxxvi]. In this corpus, the concepts of defeated and lost are also joined by the idea of arrival. According to Sebastián de Covarrubias, arrival means "to reach the shore, and consequently the port" [xxxvii]. In other words, it implies that a ship was rescued and reached port. Veitia not only adopts Covarrubias' definition, but also incorporates it to explain the legal implications of arrival in the context of trade and navigation between Spain and the Indies [xxxviii]. Sometimes arrivals do not take place at the port where they should have gone, but at any other port where they were forced to land due to circumstances. He distinguished between forced arrival and malicious arrival, the meanings of which we can intuit. In fact, Veitia claimed that one of the greatest damages suffered by trade with the Indies had been caused by malicious arrivals. In this context, historical documentation provides information on countless cases in which the cunning of ship captains and masters can be seen.

Various royal decrees organised and punished, where appropriate, the appropriate courses and routes for ships. This largely explains the crown's obsession with legislating the impossible: establishing the maritime routes that should or should not be taken in the fleets' courses. The royal documents on routes are sometimes difficult to link to this maritime legislation. A royal decree of 17 January 1591 stipulated in 33 ordinances how the dispatch of fleets should be organised, punishing malicious arrivals. In the composition of the fleets, each ship had to sail to the ports where it was registered, and loose ships were prohibited unless they had an express licence, with offenders, masters and pilots being punished with deprivation of office and 10 years in the galleys[xxxix]. In the event that a ship isolated from the fleet was "*derrotado*" (not overcome, defeated, but changed of routes), but had to change course and make a forced and unavoidable arrival, the judges of the port where it arrived had to guarantee its redirection without allowing any other cargo on board. They also had to arrange for the necessary repairs so that the ship could sail again. The port judges had to

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guarantee everything necessary to ensure that the law was complied with. Sometimes this was not easy, as reflected in specific cases where this interaction between heterotopia and the creation of spatial otherness occurred. A supposedly anonymous *report* describes the difficulties of following the rules imposed by the Spanish crown regarding routes, leading to experimental courses that posed a challenge due to the loss of central authority, with important decisions being made by captains or local officials [xl].

However, there were exceptions to this rule on maritime routes, which were conveniently exploited. It has been demonstrated that ships could be subject to a state of 'derailment' as a consequence of two distinct factors: firstly, adverse meteorological conditions and secondly, the psychological effect of fear of piracy [xli]. A decree issued in Lisbon in May 1582 affecting ships on route to Brazil, Cape Verde or returning from Angola and Guinea stipulated that if they were forced to land at any port in the Indies, they should be offered a warm welcome [xlii]. The royal officials of the ports were to provide them with assistance and aid so that they could continue their journey, without unloading or selling their cargo in the port of forced arrival. This ordinance of 1591 also required royal port officials to send an annual report to the Council of the Indies on the ships that had arrived, the circumstances of their forced arrival and, where applicable, to specify what "had been misappropriated", i.e. whether goods had been unloaded for sale or distribution without permission in a port other than the official port of destination [xliii]. Another Royal Decree issued in Madrid on 8 April 1614 prohibited ships from the Windward Islands, particularly those from Santo Domingo and Santa Marta, from arriving in Cartagena, and if any did arrive, they were to be considered lost "with all the goods they carried" [xliv]. These and many other changing regulations on routes and courses influenced not only the logistics of colonial trade but also the occurrence of accidents, arrivals and shipwrecks, especially the restrictions imposed on ships with permission to control intra-Caribbean trade [xlv]. The crime of selling or buying goods from ships that had arrived or been wrecked was punished in the same way as appropriating goods from a shipwreck. Sellers and buyers, whether merchants or clergy, could be severely punished with the same penalties. These ordinances had particularities and s for the cases of the Canary Islands, the Algarve, and southern Portugal, in which case ships could not unload without first arriving in Seville. Veitia Linaje discusses the arrivals of armadas, fleets, and galleons or ships [xlvi]. He describes cases of ships that strayed from the armadas, generally due to storms and in some cases due to battles at sea. Veitia Linaje cites the case of the fleet of galleons in 1638 that arrived sailing from Cartagena to Havana "having fought twice with the Dutch" [xlvii]. A Royal Decree dated 18 January 1661, endorsed by Juan de Subiza to Juan Ramírez de Guevara y Arellano, Marquis of Miranda, member of the Supreme Council of the Indies, sought to obtain information on all arrivals at any port in the Indies, this being a competence of the court of the *Casa de la Contratación*. Another decree was issued in Madrid on 10 December 1664 to Juan de Solar, but only for arrivals at the port of Buenos Aires [xlviii].

The second issue addressed in these laws refers to accidents at sea, especially shipwrecks as historical events, but which impose a series of legislative issues on shipping routes. The exact moment of the shipwreck, immediately after the disaster, creates a dystopia, a breakdown of the utopia of navigation. The behaviour of the agents involved in this historical moment somehow breaks the established order of the laws and regulations governing the navigation system. In practice, when shipwrecks hit the coast, local authorities and merchants promoted the recovery of cargo, which led to frequent conflicts between neighbours, royal officials and merchants over the appropriation of the wreckage. The *Consulado de cargadores a Indias* (Consulate of Shippers to the Indies) had jurisdiction over disputes between merchants arising from shipwrecks since 1557. This jurisdiction was extended to cover cases of loss of cargo due to shipwreck, disputes over general and particular damage, and claims between shippers and captains. It is interesting to note how the consulate court dealt with these cases, especially the legal proceedings concerning the loss and salvage of vessels and the loss of ships [xlix]. One of the oldest documents related to shipwrecks in the Consulate court is the file on the loss of General Luis Alfonso Flores' fleet from New Spain, which was lost in Cadiz between 1587 and 1596. This was a significant episode, as the accident occurred within the bay of Cadiz due to a combination of bad weather conditions, overloading of the ships and logistical deficiencies [l]. This accident must be understood in the context of a critical situation with several cases of fleets damaged,

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sunk or lost in the Bay of Cádiz due to storms, the poor condition of the ships, many of which were overloaded or poorly caulked, logistical confusion in dispatches, aggravated by the presence of troops and resources assigned to Philip II's campaigns in England and Flanders, and even the English attacks of 1587 and 1596. In America, the Council of the Indies regulated the salvage of treasures, notably in the case of sunken galleons. The Indian legal framework on shipwrecks, treasures and their salvage, including the powers of the Council of the Indies, royal decrees and recovery practices, with numerous examples of sunken galleons and the intervention of the Crown, has been extensively analysed in the work of María del Carmen Alonso García [li].

The *Nueva Recopilación de las Leyes de Castilla* (New Compilation of the Laws of Castile*)* the main source of Castilian law between 1567 and 1805, states: "That ships that are wrecked at sea shall be kept for their owners, and likewise the goods that are thrown into the sea to lighten the ship"; and establishes, among other things, that: "the ship and all the things found therein shall be given to those to whom they belonged before the ship was wrecked or endangered; and no one shall dare to take anything from them without the permission of their owners..." [lii]. Those who acted otherwise, according to the aforementioned law, would be punished for theft, and this also applied in cases where some goods were thrown from the ship in order to lighten it. This technique was often used in cases of danger of sinking. Once again, in the *Novísima Recopilación,* a collection of laws compiled during the reign of Charles IV, we find almost the same terms transcribed under the heading "order to be observed in cases of shipwreck" [liii]. These laws set out rules on how the authorities and individuals should act when a shipwreck is found, including the rescue of people and property; the custody and distribution of the cargo; the responsibility of judges and local officials; protection against looting; and the rights of the owner of the ship or the goods. This body of law consolidates previous scattered rules of Castilian law and responds to the Bourbon interest in regulating maritime trade, in a context in which shipwrecks were frequent and had significant legal, economic and social consequences.

In general terms, historical salvage operations of shipwrecks following the event were directed by the Council of the Indies and local authorities of the Board of Trade. Salvage operations were based, first and foremost, on the issuance of royal decrees that permitted and regulated the salvage of sunken goods. These royal decrees stipulated the distribution of the booty between the Royal Treasury and those who carried out the salvage, with proportions ranging from 50 to 80% for the Crown, depending on the value of the cargo. The salvage was organised with divers and rudimentary diving bells, employing experienced divers and fishermen. They were often lowered with ropes or inverted bells to try to retrieve silver, ingots or chests. The lawsuits often took a long time and many of these rescues led to prolonged litigation, especially when there were doubts about the ownership of the cargo or when the ship-owners claimed payment for damages and compensation [liv]. Part of the follow-up was carried out through the accounting books of the Board of Trade, where lost and recovered cargoes were recorded. These documents are now essential for the archaeological and historical study of shipwrecks. For the 18th century, we have documentation from the *Escribanía de Marina* (Marine notary) de Cádiz, although there is fragmented information in various historical archives. It is important to supplement this with documents from archives outside Spain, as it is not always easy to reconstruct the narrative of a shipwreck, although there are cases of complete files in the General Archive of the Indies and the General Archive of Simancas [lv]. Some of the most important primary sources on the salvage of historical wrecks illustrate how these activities were carried out, such as the so-called "Manuscrito de Ledesma" (Ledesma Manuscript), or *Pesca de perlas y busca de galeones (Pearl Fishing and the* Search for Galleons*)*, written by Pedro de Ledesma, an exceptional document on underwater search practices in the 17th century [lvi].

Legislation, but also customs and practices, not always legal, in the event of a shipwreck near the coast or in accessible maritime areas, can be analysed in a comparative context with other maritime nations of the time. In England, legislation on shipwrecks developed around *common law*, royal prerogatives and the jurisdiction of the Admiralty. The *Wreck and Salvage Law* conferred rights over property on the English crown if the owner could not be identified. In practice, a system of salvage rights was established, which encouraged rescue without promoting looting. The High Court of Admiralty mediated numerous property disputes, and commercial companies (such as the East

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India Company) developed specific protocols for cargo lost at sea[lvii]. In France, the monarchy promoted more centralised legislation with the *Ordonnance de la Marine* of 1681, under the direction of Colbert. This law unified and modernised French maritime law, including shipwrecks. These regulations established the king's right to goods shipwrecked on the kingdom's coasts; notification to the authorities was required, looting was prohibited under severe penalties, and a portion of the goods was recognised as belonging to the rescuer, in proportion to the rescue. In practice, these regulations increased state control over the coastline, and registers and notarial protocols on shipwrecks were extended [lviii]. The Netherlands developed a complex system of maritime jurisdictions and customary practices, with a decentralised approach. Dutch maritime law was set out in texts such as the *Ordinance of Amsterdam* (1570) and the *Ordinance on Wrecks of Zeeland,* which in practice gave local authorities a strong involvement in the management of shipwrecks. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) specifically regulated the treatment of shipwrecks on its routes, prioritising the institutionalised recovery of goods and applying the principle of restitution to the owner if identifiable [lix]. In general, the evolution of in y law on shipwrecks reflects the progressive nationalisation of the sea, favouring a pragmatic jurisdiction that reconciled law with trade. However, local practices persisted in all four cases, creating tensions between written law and customs. Shipwrecks served as an occasion for debates on sovereignty, property and maritime justice, which were essential in the formation of modern maritime law.

4. Maritime Routes and Connections

Societies that depend on the sea develop unique identities and cultures influenced by their constant interaction with the ocean, but they have also imposed certain types of thalassocracy. Following Horden and Purcell's theory, the relationship between these societies and the ocean could be analysed from a decentralised perspective of maritime powers, going beyond the idea of a single thalassocracy and understanding a mosaic of micro-regions interconnected by the sea [lx]. The sea is undoubtedly an agent of economic transformation, as it facilitates the creation of international trade networks, the accumulation of capital and economic specialisation, as well as the movement of goods, people and knowledge. It has had a revolutionary influence on naval technology and nautical science, particularly promoting transfer between regions, in turn becoming a powerful catalyst for transformation in maritime economies. Control of maritime routes and strategic ports has also had political and military implications, shaping the power and influence of different social actors throughout history.

In the heterotopia represented by the historic wooden ship of modern times, the influence of environmental conditions was fundamental. Basically, the maritime route is a consequence of the physical environment, especially the conditions of navigation, winds, waves and currents. In fact, the dependence between ports and regions is shaped by environmental factors as much as by human intentions themselves [lxi]. The analysis of heterotopia in the microsociety of a ship can be viewed from multiple perspectives: at sea, analysing the very nature of the sea with its currents, wind and waves; above the sea, focusing on ships and their movements; around the sea, assessing the dispersion of material evidence linked by water; and because of the sea, analysing the economic and political implications. Considering these four perspectives of analysis, we first consider the sea, nature or geography as a sensory experience. The material force of the maritime environment shapes life on board. This view highlights the perceptual and symbolic dimension of the ocean as a hostile or sublime environment, which conditions social practices, emotions and temporal organisation on the ship. Thus, the sea is a fluid, chaotic, socially constructed space [lxii]. Helmreich offers an anthropological reading of the sea as a sensory, cognitive and symbolically complex environment [lxiii]. And Peters discusses how the sea, as a physical and cultural environment, reorganises forms of perception and mediation [lxiv]. Navigation differs between seas and oceans. Seas have historically been more prone to short journeys or coastal shipping. Ocean navigation has required a greater capacity to cope with nature, which has been reflected in technological pressure and the increase in the transfer of knowledge and ideologies, both in shipbuilding and in astronomical knowledge, ocean currents and storm variability, frequency, intensity and spatial distribution. Historical documents can provide important information on the state of the sea, raising the possibility of comparing and

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analysing these data and real parameters of the state of the sea with historical information from documentary sources. A particular example was the route describing the passage through the Bahamas Channel, which the Spanish fleet of the Indies began to use systematically from the second half of the 16th century, driven by strategic and economic reasons such as shortening the return journey to Spain, avoiding routes exposed to pirates, and taking advantage of favourable currents. Juan Escalante de Mendoza included the route in his work *Itinerario de navegación de los mares y tierras occidentales* (1575), although its design was attributed to the *Piloto Mayor* (senior pilot) Diego García de Palacio [lxv]. Despite its usefulness in taking advantage of the sea current, a precursor to formal knowledge of the Gulf Stream, the recommendation to avoid the shoals and reefs surrounding the islands of the channel, which required precise knowledge of soundings, courses and the risk if the exact position of the keys was not known, the flow of storms and hurricanes in this area endangered the fleets of New Spain and Tierra Firme on their return to Spain on more than one occasion. Around 1590, another important document appeared describing the routes of the fleets of the Indies from the Canary Islands to the Gulf of Mexico and back, drawn up by the Portuguese cosmographer Mateo Jorge[lxvi].

The environmental conditions of navigation can be analysed in documents known as maritime charts and log books (called *Derroteros*), drawn up by pilots, cosmographers and navigators. These documents combine empirical observations with geographical knowledge and provide data on prevailing winds, ocean currents, tides, sea conditions, coastal hazards and regional climatology. Since the 16th century, in the context of Iberian expansion, systematic deep-sea navigation was consolidated thanks to the work of institutions such as the *Casa de la Contratación* in Seville. Works such as Alonso de Chaves' *Espejo de navegantes (Mirror of Navigators)* and the charts attributed to Andrés García de Céspedes show an early interest in describing the seasonal patterns of trade winds, the variability of tropical storms and the areas of equatorial calms (doldrums) [lxvii]. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the production of charts intensified and diversified, adapting to new commercial and naval routes. Notable works include those by French, English and Dutch pilots, such as Samuel Thornton and William Hack, who documented the accumulated experience of trading companies and navies. These texts show advances in the representation of currents such as the *Gulf Stream* and identify dangerous areas such as sandbanks, reefs and areas with persistent fog, as well as advice on how to avoid them. Recent studies have highlighted the value of these documents for understanding not only nautical knowledge but also environmental perceptions and technical adaptation mechanisms in the face of extreme phenomena (storms, hurricanes, monsoons). Furthermore, some current approaches consider them part of an epistemology of risk and maritime exploration [lxviii].

The geographical location and landscape of port enclaves show common characteristics and some differences. Regions, port cities and ports were, in contrast to the moving space represented by ships, fixed spaces, but to a certain extent heterochronic. In the port city, shipbuilding enclaves such as shipyards, arsenals, timber storage areas and other supplies were important. Clandestine ports acted as alternative spaces that escaped the official control of the Carrera de Indias, with cases such as the illicit trade networks in the Caribbean, with enclaves such as Tortuga Island and Port Royal. Islands of passage and stopover, anchorage areas, intertidal zones or ports such as Havana, Santo Domingo and San Juan de Puerto Rico also functioned as port heterotopias, points of control and reorganisation of trade. They became spaces for quarantine, provisioning and redistribution of goods. The anchorages where ships moored and the coastal and intertidal areas useful for careening and rebuilding vessels were also heterotopic zones. For example, like other cities in the Spanish Atlantic port system, Cadiz and Veracruz were suitable for commercial ports, even taking into account the difficulties of developing a large commercial enterprise in these marginal areas of the Empire. These difficulties included restricted access to fresh water, food and other essential resources. It is therefore fair to say that the demand for exotic and colonial products would have been one of the main factors in their growth and popularity. Later on, they were also the subject of a policy of military defence, the creation of institutions and logistics in the supply of resources. All this was crowned by actions on the part of the dominant merchant groups to favour these maritime areas fiscally and economically [lxix].

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On the sea, the ship emerges as a floating world and a political space. It is a closed social microcosm, where hierarchical relationships, labour tensions, forced coexistence and constant mobility generate unique social conditions. This perspective has been central to studies of maritime history, anthropology of the sea and cultural studies, such as in Rediker's work, which analyses a microhistory of class conflict and social experimentation, where forms of resistance emerge, but also the resilience of self-organised networks [lxx]. It is perhaps this aspect that is closest to Foucault's fundamental heterotopia of the ship as a floating place outside the order, connecting all places and at the same time outside everything, which is also analysed in Will Hasty's work on pirates and literature [lxxi].

The microhistory of the ship has been analysed in parallel with the commercial nature of the activities it relates to. Here we can see the proliferation of an image that is widespread in naval iconography and representative of power since the Renaissance, which we see in historical maps and charts and in historical cartography [lxxii]. Routes and the maritime landscape as a concept establish the idea of nodes, related to the connections between ports and port cities. These are ships on maps, and sometimes not in ports, but anchored in specific areas of the sea where there were anchorages, not always in ports but in areas that today can be identified as archaeological sites. Thus, around the sea, material evidence, information about the human networks that played a leading role in historical events and archaeological remains can be found today. From this material and archaeological perspective, we study how the remains of shipwrecks, scattered cargoes or submerged port structures trace networks of connections and discontinuities. This approach allows us to extend the notion of heterotopia to objects and their redistribution in aquatic space, without neglecting an approach that values marginal and liminal spaces, such as shipwrecks, in relation to memory and power [lxxiii]. The material remains on the seabed also reflect the cultural and economic practices of ships; in fact, sunken ships are encapsulated social spaces whose dispersion offers clues about their heterotopia [lxxiv]. It is important to reclaim a biography of objects, to study cargo as material culture with routes, social contexts and symbolic meanings, beyond the economic value of the artefacts themselves. Cargoes should be analysed to question their origin, trajectory, intended use and the meaning of a cargo whose cycle was abruptly interrupted by shipwreck. Furthermore, the study of metals found at a site, such as the Belinho shipwreck (Esposende, Portugal, ca. 16th century), due to their stylistic coherence and provenance, can offer clues about 16th-century European trade routes and the material and symbolic exchange involved in maritime traffic between regions. A ship's cargo is thus a cultural, symbolic and social entity [lxxv].

From the perspective of the sea, the ship is considered an extension of systems of power, trade and circulation. The spatial oceanic network of mercantile systems was matched by the complex geopolitical form of the trans-maritime empire. The oceanic vision is not easy to resolve, especially when analysing how it was possible to sustain a political and military empire with the few and poor resources, most of them totally scattered, that were available at the time. The sea forces the reorganisation of political and economic structures, which translates into new forms of sovereignty, jurisdiction and conflict, including fundamental issues of maritime law and regulation [lxxvi]. On board the ship, workflows, resistance, migration and exploitation intersect, generating new political realities. Ultimately, modernity is articulated from the sea, as the ship is a liminal space between work, desire and global circulation [lxxvii].

5. Shipwreck Stories and the Ship as Utopian Heritage

Shipwrecks are not only tragic episodes in maritime history; they are also symbolic landmarks that allow us to reinterpret ships as utopian heritage. At the intersection of history, archaeology and literature, shipwreck stories act as narrative devices that transform sunken vessels into spaces of memory, otherness and ideal projection. The shipwrecked vessel ceases to be merely a technical artefact and becomes a cultural symbol with multiple layers of meaning: material ruin, time capsule, stage for human dramas and suspended utopias. This utopian dimension is particularly evident in the heterotopias defined by Michel Foucault as 'other spaces', real spaces that function as symbolic and material counterpoints to the social order [lxxviii]. The ship, as an enclosed, floating and mobile space, is already a heterotopia in itself. But it is the shipwreck that interrupts its functional teleology

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and places it in a new temporality, a "heterochrony", where time is fragmented, stopped or mythically projected into the future. A particular vessel, or the entire fleet, each with its own logistical characteristics and specific structure, were mainly transit zones where cultures, goods and ideas intersected. They were microcosms with specific rituals and codes. It can also be said that the fleets, composed of multiple types of vessels, acted as heterochronies, since time was regimented differently from time on land and there were rituals of passage and ceremonies that marked the entry into a different space. It is an idea that the other space gives rise to another time, as Foucault would point out, in an analogous way between the two concepts (heterotopia and heterochrony), which has been present since the 16th century and has evolved since then. It is space and time in a metaphorical sense in the evolution of social and cultural behaviours, in this case relating to maritime heritage [lxxix].

As Rediker suggests, these exceptional spaces allow us to imagine alternatives to the colonial and mercantile order, in the form of egalitarian microcosms, hybrid communities or narratives of resistance [lxxx]. The shipwreck story, whether literary, historical or archaeological, embodies this conversion, from transit to destiny, from voyage to accident, from order to chaos. *The Trágico-Marítima of* Bernardo Gomes de Brito (1735–1736) or the chronicles of survivors such as Pedro Serrano, whose earliest reference appears in the *Comentarios* of Garcilaso de la Vega (1609), form a narrative corpus in which the sea appears as a space of trial, purgatory or redemption. These stories not only inspire myths, as in the case of Stevenson and the desert island, but also reveal an oceanic imaginary where shipwreck operates as rupture and genesis, as tragedy and the origin of a new community or identity [lxxxi]. Sometimes, this new society derived from the survivors of a shipwreck in an inhospitable environment leads to violence and terror, as happened after the shipwreck of the Batavia (1629) off the coast of Western Australia on the Houtman Abrolhos reefs. Without resources, during the absence of Commander Francisco Pelsaert, who left in search of help, Petty Officer Jeronimus Cornelisz took control, ushering in a reign of terror, ordering the systematic murder of more than 100 men, women and children, with the aim of reducing the number of mouths to feed and establishing a new colony under his leadership. The violence was physical, sexual and psychological, including torture, summary executions and the enslavement of women. This is an extreme case of the breakdown of social order in contexts of isolation and crisis, illustrating how catastrophe can give rise to a microcosm of authoritarian power, structural violence and the struggle for survival [lxxxii].

The historical account relates history, archaeology and literature. Historically, it is the shipwreck, and archaeologically, it is the wreck. Between the initial event and the final consequence, there is a process of formation of *ocean literacy* and a site. In general, studies on shipwrecks have been viewed from different perspectives: shipwreck literature, description of the historical event; reconstruction from a social anthropology of shipwrecks in light of preserved documentation; and underwater, maritime and intertidal history and archaeology, which study shipwrecks as generators of archaeological sites and heritage. In the case of Spain, shipwreck studies show a certain degree of homogeneity despite the difficulty of connecting historical narrative and archaeological study, given the relatively few wrecks studied from a scientific archaeological perspective. The 16th century is an exceptional century, with cases such as the San Juan (1565), a Basque whaling ship sunk in Canada, which is a world reference in 16th-century underwater archaeology [lxxxiii]. It is a paradox that, although not many underwater archaeology campaigns have been carried out on 17th-century Spanish shipwrecks, it is precisely this century that will see the most accidents at sea and inhumane fortunes on the Atlantic routes. According to Ricardo Borrero, the archaeological heritage of this century has been largely devastated by systematic looting. Borrero estimated that, of 55 shipwrecks worldwide, located and identified as Iberian, 37 have been plundered [lxxxiv]. The 18th century offers other scientifically studied historical and archaeological examples, such as the sites of El Triunfante [lxxxv]. The study of these cases has revealed important parts of the structures of the wrecks, the wood used in their construction, and some exceptional objects, with finds preserved in museums and complete publications in progress.

Cinema and literature have recreated shipwrecks as catastrophic events, but also as the product of a romantic and melancholic underwater landscape. Historical evidence can provide another perspective. This can be seen in the case of the New Spain fleet of Admiral and General Manuel de

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Velasco y Tejada, which sank during a battle in 1702 in the Strait of Rande, in the San Simón inlet (Vigo estuary, Galicia). The galleon carrying the treasure from trade with America, the Santo Cristo de Maracaibo, sank near the Cíes Islands, giving rise to a controversial legend that attracted a treasure hunting company. According to historical documents part of the treasure transported on board the fleet was taken to Seville and Madrid, and that the silver cargo was even more plundered by members of the Seville Consulate than by the Anglo-Dutch squadron, according to an investigation carried out by Minister Bernardo Tinajero around 1707. According to this information, the consuls committed certain excesses in contravention of the royal orders, for which they were charged with a series of offences for "having kept money from the 140,440 pesos that remained of the 606,000 that came in the fleet of Manuel de Velasco that sank in the Vigo estuary, and for not having done with the merchandise on board what the king had ordered, given that the enemy navy was nearby" (sic) [lxxxvi]. According to Dutch documents, a large part of the silver returns from the fleet's cargo belonged to foreign merchants from Cadiz, especially Dutch merchants [lxxxvii]. This is a sad case of how, unfortunately, the legend created around the shipwreck can sometimes overcome historical and archaeological rigour.

The maritime accident was the result of various factors. A quantitative analysis of shipwrecks makes it possible to estimate the approximate percentage of causes. If we analyse the data collected from the cartographic visualisers (web mapping) and historical-archaeological GIS available, it is possible to determine that most of the shipwrecks related to Spanish-American Atlantic trade in the 16th to 18th centuries occurred in a specific geo-climatic context [lxxxviii]. Along with climatic factors, the geographical characteristics of the navigation areas and, on occasions, a certain lack of knowledge of the seabed conditions, are two aspects that were often intrinsically related. Other factors may refer to what we might call social issues, such as the handling of the ships themselves and the skill or lack of skill of the pilot. The knowledge that pilots and sailors had of the geography and climatology at any given time in history was perhaps the most decisive factor in any accident or event at sea that led to a shipwreck. In the latter case, the accident could also have occurred due to the use of very large ships that were steered, by mistake or miscalculation, into reefs and shallow waters or areas of recent sedimentation that produced the fearsome mobile sand bars such as those that existed in the Guadalquivir River between Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Seville.

Large ships could run aground and become stranded on land, at the entrance to estuaries or in unknown waters. This was very common, of course, in the early centuries of ocean navigation and during the period when Europeans were discovering unknown lands. Escalante recommended ships of no more than 100 tonnes, a negligible tonnage compared to the large galleons that were built from the second half of the 16th century onwards. It should be noted that coastal areas in historical times were not really equipped for the docking of large ships. It was easier to arrive at estuaries and rivers where, on occasions, ships were towed from the shore by animal or human traction. Large ships, such as galleons, used to anchor away from the coast and beaches, depending on the circumstances, due to their large size, which could cause them to run aground. A support vessel was used when loading and unloading goods or when the crew needed to approach the beach. Accidents due to inexperience or poor logistics in manoeuvring the ship near the coast and dykes were very common. For example, when arriving and unloading the ship, it was common to load it with ballast so that the waterline would be lower and thus prevent the ship from turning on its axis and capsizing due to its own weight. Contrary to what has sometimes been thought, episodes of war at sea and naval battles were not the main cause of shipwrecks. However, there are some important cases in which an encounter between enemy navies has led to the sinking of important ships and, sometimes, even the entire fleet. Sometimes, shipwrecks resulting from battles did not occur during the battle itself, but during storms that, almost like divine punishment, raged before or after the combat. Finally, it is possible to identify changes in the patterns of shipwrecks and their circumstances between the 16th and 18th centuries, analysing them from various perspectives, such as shipping routes, technological advances, climatic conditions, armed conflicts and improvements in cartography and shipbuilding. The 16th century, a century of exploration and discovery, meant that shipwrecks were closely linked to ignorance of sea routes. There was a predominance of shipwrecks due to navigational errors, storms and reefs in unexplored areas or the use of vessels such as caravels and galleons, which had structural limitations

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in open seas. The 17th century, a century of trade consolidation and naval warfare, saw increased maritime traffic due to transatlantic trade and the fleets of the Indies. The increase in shipwrecks was due to attacks by privateers and pirates, especially in the Caribbean. However, advances in cartography reduced some accidents caused by navigational errors. The 18th century was a century of technological improvements and increased oceanic expansion due to the development of more resistant ships, such as ships of the line, and the use of better navigational instruments (such as the marine chronometer in the second half of the century). The persistence of shipwrecks on key trade routes and in logistical areas was sometimes due to armed conflicts [lxxxix].

The existing literature on shipwrecks and their consequences is very extensive, in apparent contradiction to the relatively few scientific works with results from maritime and underwater archaeological interventions. The existing scientific works on shipwrecks are rich in data and nuances that transport the reader to a historical narrative present in the collective imagination of maritime societies throughout the centuries, also highlighting the common characteristics of these historical events. Shipwrecks as historical events represent a break with the normativity of maritime travel, theoretically controlled and legislated by the crown, and the creation of a new heterotopic space, especially on isolated coasts, desert islands or in indigenous territories. From a heterotopic perspective, shipwrecks in the Spanish India trade generated spaces of otherness and crisis. The case of the shipwreck of the San José galleon (1708) and the discovery of its cargoes turned this site into an archaeological heterotopia. After its sinking, the San José ceased to be a space of transit and became an underwater heterotopia, a lost treasure with a certain mythical aura. Today, this archaeological site is at the centre of a dispute, where political, historical and economic discourses on colonial memory clash [xc]. The shipwreck of the Juliana (1588), a galleon of the Spanish Armada that sank in hostile territory for the Spanish Empire, led to the execution of the survivors, although some were assimilated into local communities. In a way, it is a heterotopia of otherness, of the others on the coast of Ireland where the shipwrecked remains arrived. The shipwrecked were foreigners without shelter, but at the same time, some survivors integrated into Irish society, creating a hybrid cultural space that challenged colonial logic. This disaster has been the subject of a study with a human perspective from the suffering and forgotten memory by Pedro Luis Chinchilla [xci]

Following Pérez-Mallaína's studies, several important aspects can be identified for study in shipwreck accounts and historical documentation related to survivor reports [xcii]. These reports describe micro-histories focused on the observation and analysis of human behaviour in the face of catastrophe, from a historiographical, literary, anthropological and archaeological perspective. They are narrative testimonies of extreme experiences, useful for exploring human behaviour in the face of adversity. These documents, ranging from official letters to chronicles, personal diaries and memoirs, reveal survival strategies, forms of leadership, social cohesion or disintegration, violence and solidarity, and the construction of meaning in the context of disaster [xciii]. Shipwrecks are also social events that lead to legal proceedings in which the roles of captains, the obedience or disobedience of the crew, struggles over cargo or access to lifeboats, and decisions made during the disaster redefine authority in ways that would not happen on land [xciv]. On a literary and narrative level, stories such as those of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca have been explored, whose account entitled *Naugrafios* (Shipwrecks 1542) describes a shipwreck followed by an experience of transformation and survival. Studies such as those by Rolena Adorno and Ilan Stavans have analysed these narratives from postcolonial and self-construction perspectives, highlighting the way in which the subject (re)configures itself on the brink of shipwreck and in subsequent interaction with strange or indigenous environments [xcv]. The *Naufragios* are an allegory of survival; they are not adventure stories but descriptions and narratives of migration, settlement, survival and, of course, colonisation and the discovery of new lands, "very difficult to believe" (sic) whose purpose is to inform the king: "through many and very strange lands, I wandered lost and naked, both in terms of the location of the lands and regions, with the distances that separate them, and in terms of the sustenance and animals that are raised there, and the diverse customs of the many and very barbaric nations with whom I conversed and lived, as well as the other particularities that I was able to observe and learn about." [xcvi]. Recently, studies on the memory of the shipwreck have highlighted its potential as a traumatic account, susceptible to being reworked by survivors to justify their actions, legitimise their

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authority or reinterpret their destiny. In this sense, the account of the shipwreck not only documents what happened, but also helps to make sense of the catastrophe, integrating it into narratives of providence, divine punishment or redemption.

6. Conclusions

The heterotopia of the ship has been interpreted from multiple perspectives, ranging from the sensory experience of the maritime environment to its role in global economic and political networks. This plurality of approaches reinforces the idea of the ship not only as a physical space, but also as an epistemological device that allows us to explore tensions between order and chaos, discipline and freedom, centre and periphery. Current studies tend to combine material, symbolic and legal analyses, proposing integrated models that link the sea to the social construction of space. Shipwrecks, in this sense, are utopian ruins. Not as remnants of a closed past, but as remains activated by narratives that endow them with symbolic agency. Underwater archaeology has contributed to this reading by considering submerged landscapes not only as sites, but as stages of memory and conflict, where scientific practices, political disputes and fantasies of lost treasures converge [xcvii]. Cases such as the San José (1708), which became a symbol of colonial memory and the subject of international litigation, or the Nuestra Señora de Atocha (1622), whose prolonged search fuelled a utopia of hidden wealth for centuries, illustrate this symbolic potential. From underwater archaeology, studies of shipwrecks such as La Belle (1686) or the Vasa (1628) allow us to infer behaviour from the distribution of objects, human remains and evacuation trajectories. These findings have been interpreted to reconstruct scenes of abandonment, rescue attempts, or even rituals in the face of death. Archaeology therefore allows us to confirm or refine what written sources tell us. Authors such as Greg Dening have approached shipwrecks as moments of cultural crisis, where the usual rules are suspended and individuals must reinterpret their role, their faith, or their place in the world. Shipwrecks function as a laboratory for observing human behaviour in extreme conditions and, in turn, as a metaphor for social or symbolic collapse[xcviii]. The shipwrecked vessel is also a symbol of the impossible: what was destined to unite, trade or conquer is left isolated, broken and fragmented. The island, the reef, the seabed is then transformed into inverted utopian spaces, places of waiting, testing or rebirth. In the cases of the Santa María de la Consolación (1681) and the Juliana (1588), the survivors forge new relationships in foreign territories, creating spaces of cultural hybridity or resistance to imperial logic. Thus, shipwrecks reveal the fragility of the colonial project and, at the same time, open up the possibility of thinking about other forms of life and memory.

The idea of utopian heritage therefore implies a double gaze: towards the past as an archive of truncated possibilities, and towards the present as an opportunity to reinterpret those remains from an ethic of care, historical justice and cultural imagination. In this framework, tools such as network analysis, historical GIS and predictive models allow us not only to locate shipwrecks, but also to understand the routes, practices and vulnerabilities that made them possible [xcix]. But it is the historical, testimonial or fictional account that makes them meaningful, by inscribing them in a collective narrative that connects catastrophe with hope, and ruin with the desire for a world.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

AGS: Archivo General de Simancas, Valladolid, Spain.
AGI: Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Spain
BNE: Biblioteca Nacional de España
AMN: Archivo del Museo Naval
Mss.: Manuscrito
NA: Nationaal Archief, Then Hague, The Netherlands
L.H: Levantse Handel Archief

MDPI	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute
DOAJ	Directory of open access journals

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