CONCLUSION

One could argue that Tommaso Campanella was right on both accounts, in 1600, when he claimed that more history had been made in the previous century than in the preceding four thousand years, and that more books had been made than in the preceding five thousand years.¹ The printing industry had reached maturity, after all, at the same time that the discovery of the New World and the European return to Asia were just two of many significant events of the era. Both elements can be considered stimuli for collections of voyages published between 1500 and 1700. The printed testimonies of the European encounter with overseas societies and their commercial success in the bookstores of the Old World enabled compilers to combine the two developments Campanella described into one genre. Whereas the sixteenth-century editors of collections had been educated men trying to make sense of a rapidly expanding world, their seventeenth-century successors were mostly publishers and booksellers, whose objective it was to present the growing number of armchair travellers with a comprehensive impression of European experiences in America, Africa, and Asia.

The De Brys, at the turn of the century, were the first publishers to co-ordinate such a vast enterprise, breaking with the humanist traditions of editorship which up to then had characterised the genre. In line with Campanella’s statement—which emphasised the primacy of the printing revolution—the publication and the sale of books were their main objectives. Given their widespread appeal, the reports of Europe’s maritime expansion formed the ideal set of historical events for a collection which became the nucleus of a successful publishing firm. In order to sell their showpiece to readers across Europe, the De Brys adjusted the representations of the overseas world as presented in the original accounts. Their editorial strategy, a clear testimony to the business acumen ascribed to them by friends, was aimed at making the volumes acceptable for all potential customers. Because of religious struggles, and the resulting segregation of society along confessional lines, this would require careful planning.

¹ Cf. supra, Ch. 1, p. 30.
The collection's linguistic division allowed for textual differentiations invisible to the reader of a particular edition, but unmistakable when both versions are being compared. This study has demonstrated that some of the differences between the German and Latin narratives were significant in both their scope and their representational implications. Some accounts included in one translation were even omitted altogether in the corresponding version. The De Brys, moreover, left out parts of the accounts they considered offensive, and once even went so far as to reduce a traveller's introduction to a fraction of its original size to avoid expected controversy and the threat of censorship. Hence the Latin volumes, intended to reach both religiously moderate members of the Republic of Letters and readers in territories loyal to Rome, blunted the edges of accounts written by polemical Protestant authors. The German translations, while less categorical in their omissions and modifications, were also neutralised in order not to provoke controversy.

Scholars of the De Bry collection have tended to look at its Protestant character, describing it as a contribution of bitter Protestant refugees to the polemised realm of printed matter in the period around 1600. Richard Hakluyt's involvement in the collection's conception and the incorporation of the testimonies from Girolamo Benzoni, Jean de Léry, and René de Laudonnière in the early *America*-volumes have fuelled this impression. John White's watercolours in particular, used for the opening volume, have been routinely interpreted as depictions disclosing a Protestant agenda. To a certain extent, this is understandable. The De Brys were indeed Calvinists, and in selecting and editing travel accounts they may have been subliminally influenced by religious concerns. But this was not the point of the collection, and not the representational objective of the collection as is often argued. Looking at the early *America*-volumes, the question regarding the extent to which these volumes may be representative of the collection as a whole, or even for that series alone, has seldom been addressed. The omissions of entire prefaces and narratives mentioned above indicate different patterns of modification, and therefore demand a different approach to the collection's contents and the underlying editorial strategy.

The consensus behind the thesis that the De Brys intended to sing the praise of Protestant success overseas stems in part from the assumption that Theodore was forced to escape persecution in his hometown Liège. Some publications still consider the goldsmith a victim of the Duke of Alva’s oppression of the Reformed in the Netherlands, yet his actual migration to Strasbourg before 1560 was conditioned by