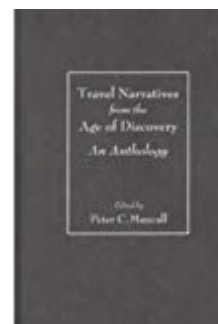




Peter C. Mancall, ed. *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. xv + 413 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-515596-9; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-515597-6.



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Published on H-Travel (February, 2007)

Teaching Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Travel Literature

When European merchants, mariners, and missionaries returned from their first forays into the New World(s), they found a readership eager for their observations of strange lands and peoples. Many of these travelers' tales were collected and reprinted by anthologists and encyclopedists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and later by societies dedicated to preserving national maritime heritages. It is primarily the accounts found in these publications that have shaped the historical narrative of the encounter of Europeans with the rest of the world—a narrative based predominantly on printed, English-language works, organized chronologically around the fulcrum of 1492.

Since the 1980s, scholars of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century travel literature have significantly revised this narrative by applying new techniques and methodologies borrowed from the fields of history, anthropology, and literary criticism. As part of this new approach, scholars have learned that “we can be certain only that European representations of the New World tell us something about the European practice of representation.” Scholars have likewise learned to apply different methods of tex-

tual analysis to wring new insights from stale sources, and used techniques of ethnohistory to enhance their understanding of the other side of the encounter.[1]

The introduction to *Travel Narratives from the age of Discovery* distills this enormous body of recent work in order to explain the historical circumstances that promoted a particular, eurocentric narrative of encounter. Then, through the comparison and juxtaposition of a refreshingly wide range of primary sources, the volume demonstrates how new approaches to texts can yield a more nuanced and multilateral view of early modern contact. In my opinion, this anthology is unsurpassed as an undergraduate textbook or introduction to the subject of discovery and/or early modern travel writing.

The thirty-seven extracts in *Travel Narratives* include familiar figures like Cartier, Columbus, and the so-called Leo Africanus, as well as lesser-known voices, such as that of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, an impoverished Incan nobleman who addressed his chronicle to Phillip III, and Ma Huan, who traveled to Mecca with the Ming armada of Cheng Ho in the 1430s. The primary sources are organized into four continental regions of Africa,

Asia, America, and Europe. Each primary source is contextualized with a critical introduction highlighting the specific themes and contexts of that selection.

There are many ways to organize such an anthology. The combination of synthetic introductions paired with stand-alone primary sources is effective. This is especially the case in the “Europe” section (broadly defined to include lands bordering the Mediterranean), which highlights the differences and similarities in the opinions of writers from different backgrounds, as well as the relative strangeness of lands and peoples closer to home.

One of Mancall’s intentions is to inscribe the non-European experience onto a discussion dominated by European sources, thereby rectifying an omission (he rightly points out) made by “even the most recent comprehensive view of travel writing” (p.10).[2] In doing so, Mancall taps into two current historiographical preoccupations: the chronological and geographical de-centering of Europe, and a renewed interest in the experiences of non-Europeans in the age of European expansion.[3]

But the inclusion of non-European sources—six are reproduced here, two of which are first translations—is only one way to resurrect voices from the other side of the encounter. Mancall suggests that we can also “listen to the echoes of their [non-European] stories in the tales that their visitors told” (p.48). To this end, the volume is furnished with a fifty-five page introduction and “A Note on Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading” section which guide the reader quickly but insightfully through the approaches and methodologies that have informed recent scholarship of early modern travel literature.

For example, European travel writing, and publishing in particular, is presented as only one mode of communication within a larger tradition of manuscript, oral/aural, graphical, and other artistic representations. Mancall mentions that Samuel Purchas included significant portions of the *Codex Mendoza*, an indigenous pictorial chronicle of Mayan history, in his monumental *Purchase His Pilgrimes* (1625). To similar effect, *Travel Narratives* presents twenty-one plates from, among other things, Linschoten’s *Itinerario* (London, 1598) and Theodore de Bry’s *Americae Tertia Pars* (Frankfurt, 1592) in order to explain the use of image as text, and the literal wonderland conjured by travel writing in the imaginations of the European readership. Mancall also spends considerable time showing how “every author constructed his or her narrative according to certain cultural, economic, and ideological constraints” (p. 10). By outlining the political, intellectual, economic, cultural, technological, and

biological aspects of European expansion, Mancall contextualizes the sources and brings out the striking variety in the intent, style, and content of the period’s travel literature.

I cannot find many faults with this book. One laments the dearth of non-European voices, but this is a circumstance of history, not Mancall’s editing. The selections that are included are fascinating and functional within the book’s framework. It is true that almost all of these texts can be found in other anthologies or, if it was originally printed in English, on the internet.[4] However, the selections presented here generally do not overlap with excerpts in other recent anthologies. For example, the excerpt of the early-seventeenth-century traveler Fynes Moryson, is different from the selection in another recent anthology of English travel literature and furthermore functions to illustrate a point about kinds of exposition.[5]

Those versed in the literature of discovery will perhaps find new insights in the primary sources. However, this volume is primarily aimed at the student. In *Travel Narratives* Peter Mancall has succeeded in assembling a global documentary presentation of travelers in the early modern period, packaged in the most recent scholarly thinking on the subject, and presented in a format ideal for teaching.

Notes

[1]. Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 7. On the innovations mentioned, see also Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). *Travel Narratives* contains a good overview of this literature.

[2]. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[3]. See for example: T.F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Nabil Matar, ed. *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Christian Feest, ed., *Indians & Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays* (Aachen: Alano Verlag, 1989); Stuart B.

Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[4]. See *Early English Books Online*: [http://](http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home)

eebo.chadwyck.com/home.

[5]. See, for example, Andrew Hadfield, ed., *Amazons, Savages & Machiavels: Travel & Colonial Writing in English, 1550-1630, An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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Citation: Sebastian Barreveld. Review of Mancall, Peter C., ed., *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*. H-Travel, H-Net Reviews. February, 2007.

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