
Peter C. Mancall, ed. *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 413p.

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The selection of texts in Peter Mancall's *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology* provides a comprehensive overview of the vast amount of travel literature that was circulated and published from the mid-fifteenth century through the early seventeenth century. Mancall's *Travel Narratives* invites readers to experience travel narratives as cultural artifacts that preserve detailed knowledge of the past mediated through each author's individual cultural biases, larger national agendas, and the conventions of travel writing as a genre.

In the introduction to *Travel Narratives*, Mancall clearly explains how to read these complexities in travel writing: "Yet for all the problems modern readers have navigating these travel accounts, the texts that survive should not be dismissed as revealing more about the observer than the observed...the ablest of these writers provided posterity with accounts that have proven to be fundamental for scholars trying to understand what particular societies were like" (13). *Travel Narratives* spans accounts of Africa, Asia, America, and Europe to challenge narrow assumptions that travel writing is limited to the early modern colonial enterprises of nations like Spain, Portugal, and England. While the majority of the narratives that Mancall includes in his *Travel Narratives* were written by Europeans, some accounts such as those by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala escaped "catastrophe" to provide the reader of *Travel Narratives* with a multinational view of the early modern world.

Because Mancall's *Travel Narratives* is divided by geographic region (Africa, Asia, America, and Europe) its breadth provides a portrait of trade, culture, geography, infrastructures, rituals, and religious practices not available in anthologies of travel narratives that concentrate on specific regions in depth. *Travel Narratives* opens with narratives of Africa as various as the conditions of their speakers. For example the narrative of the Portuguese prisoner Andrew Battel details cannibalism, infanticide, and giant monsters in comparison to Leo Africanus' Vatican-sponsored ethnography that details the life span of Northern Africans and the dehumanization of slavery. Mancall provides the same range of accounts in the section on Asia through selections by such authors as Zahiruddin Muhammed Babur and Duarte de Sante. Because of the larger, global context, the Western accounts of discovery such as those by Christopher Columbus or Sir Walter Raleigh in the section on America can be better understood from an enriched perspective. When the text concludes with narratives of Europe, Mancall shows how the same cultural gaze travelers used to make sense

of places, such as Goa, are also used to make sense of Queen Elizabeth's court and the theater district in London.

In *Travel Narratives* Mancall chose excerpts from various texts that focus on daily practice, not just audience arresting accounts of cannibalism and monsters. For example, when looking at the market district in Goa, Jan Huygen van Linschoten shows how labor is geographically delineated: "There is also a street full of gold and Silver Smiths that are Heathens, which make all kind of works, also diverse other handicrafts men, as Coppersmiths, Carpenters, and such like occupations, which are all heathens, and everyone a street by themselves" (192). *Travel Narratives* then invites a comparison between Linschoten's descriptions of Goa's clearly demarcated markets with Hernan Cortes' remarkably similar description of the markets in Tenochtitlan: "Each kind of merchandise is sold in its own street without any mixture whatever, they are very particular in this" (227). Because of such interesting similarities in seemingly unrelated accounts, *Travel Narratives* should be read in its entirety.

The regional layout of the text offers a great range of travel texts for both specialists and students new to the discourse of travel writing. In the introduction to each two- to twenty-page entry, Mancall provides a textual history when necessary. The comprehensive discussion of the history of circulation and printing of travel narratives in Mancall's introduction reinforces the short explanations that precede each entry. Mancall follows up his general introduction with notes on sources and suggestions for further reading where he offers this word of caution: "this note will provide an overview of the existing scholarship, but there is material beyond what is mentioned here" (49).

Throughout the text Mancall includes a number of illustrations created from the accounts of travelers, such as De Bry's "Burning of the Brahmin Widow" based on Linschoten's narrative, and "Flying Fish in the Atlantic" based on de Lery's Atlantic crossing. Mancall also includes the engraving originally published in a 1599 edition of *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Emphyre of Guiana*, which depicts the race of people whom Raleigh described as having faces in their chests alongside a very realistic armadillo. This famous engraving is indicative of Mancall's larger project in his *Travel Narratives*: to show the fabulous side-by-side with practical, reliable knowledge of the early modern world.

Travel Narratives will encourage readers of all levels to discern what details in the narratives are the products of ideological assumptions and what details can be taken as fact. Because of its breadth, Mancall's *Travel Narratives* would work well as a key text in an introductory undergraduate class on travel writing, an undergraduate early modern literature survey, or an undergraduate early modern studies class. This text is also a great reference volume for scholars with more specialized interests in

early modern studies or travel writing. While other reviews have faulted Mancall for not providing enough directive advice in the introduction to each selection, he may be holding back more complex theoretical framework in order to appeal to a general readership. ✱