REMAPPING TRAVEL NARRATIVES, 1000–1700

TO THE EAST AND BACK AGAIN

Edited by

MONTSERRAT PIERA

REMAPPING TRAVEL NARRATIVES (1000–1700)

Connected Histories in the Early Modern World

Connected Histories in the Early Modern World contributes to our growing under-standing of the connectedness of the world during a period in history when an unprec-edented number of people—Africans, Asians, Americans, and Europeans—made transoceanic or other long-distance journeys. Inspired by Sanjay Subrahmanyam's innovative approach to early modern historical scholarship, it explores topics that highlight the cultural impact of the movement of people, animals, and objects at a global scale. The series editors welcome proposals for monographs and collections of essays in English from literary critics, art historians, and cultural historians that address the changes and cross-fertilizations of cultural practices of specific societies. General topics may concern, among other possibilities: cultural confluences, objects in motion, appropriations of material cultures, cross-cultural exoticization, transcul-tural identities, religious practices, translations and mistranslations, cultural impacts of trade, discourses of dislocation, globalism in literary/visual arts, and cultural histo-ries of lesser studied regions (such as the Philippines, Macau, African societies).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION: TRAVEL AS *EPISTEME*—AN INTRODUCTORY JOURNEY

MONTSERRAT PIERA

Those who go out in search of knowledge
will be in the path of God until they return[1]

PERCEPTIVE READERS WILL no doubt observe that I am, of course, unasham-edly borrowing this volume's title from J. R. R.Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (1937). Bilbo Baggins's quest, as described in Tolkien's book and, within the metafictive diegesis, in the character's own memoirs of that same title, exhibit all the paradigmatic ingredients found in travellers' temperaments: an inquiring and curious mind, a love for adventure, courage and resourcefulness as well as distrust and fear of the unknown. Thus, Bilbo Baggins will endure, in equal measure, all the delights and discomforts that have besought fictional as well as historical travellers through the ages. At the onset of our own exploration into the mysteries of travel narratives it is fitting that we whimsically evoke Bilbo and the emphasis that his title (*There and Back Again*) places not only on the effects of travel itself but on the transformative impressions of the act of travelling on someone's life after his or her return to their point of origin as well as the importance of recording these worthy experiences. The hobbit-turned-writer expressive title equally underscores, as will become palpable in the ensuing studies, not only the reciprocal nature of any contact between the traveller and the peoples he/she encounters but also the inescapable acquisition of knowledge which follows any such interaction.

Scholars of medieval and early modern culture and history are keenly aware of the fact that travel narratives, travelogues and maps provide us with a privileged *locus* of investigation of issues of multiculturalism, nationalism and geopolitics. In spite of the fact that these travel narratives[2] enact intriguing cultural exchanges and transfers of knowledge among disparate ethnic, political and religious groups, they have often been

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[1] These words were uttered by the Prophet Muhammad, according to a *hadith* related by al-Tirmidhi (d. 892).

[2] I conceptualize the term "travel narratives" not restrictively but very widely. Thus, it encompasses not only traditional written texts but also a wide array of cultural artifacts: maps, Portolan charts, merchants' journals, ships' logs, and also decorative objects, relics, and visual artifacts which depict either instances of travel or objects of exchange and trade that have been transferred through travel. Thus, the travel narratives we scrutinize serve to illustrate that travel created an oppor-tunity for what in modern usage we would term "multicultural" interaction and exchange which circumvented rigid "national" boundaries and categories.

excluded from the historical or literary canon for their purported lack of objectivity and verisimilitude and the simplicity of their discourse.[3] Meanwhile, the emergence of a new field of Travel Writing studies[4] in the last decades has not only begun to transform our estimation of such narratives and artifacts but has also revealed that travelling and the development of scientific advances aimed at enhancing such travel had a crucial impact on the onset of early modernity.

Missing from this latest repositioning in current scholarship is a conscientious assessment of the role of Islamic and other Eastern cultures in these developments and the pivotal role that a common maritime and mercantile *ethos* had in the forging of interactions between several supposedly inimical traditions. This project seeks to reassess this role. We aim at interrogating how various Islamic and Eastern cultural threads were weaved, through travel and trading networks, into Western European/Christian visual culture and discourse and, ultimately, into the artistic explosion which has been labelled the "Renaissance."[5]

While several laudable projects have begun to turn the scholarly tide by offering a much more nuanced understanding of Asia or the "Orient" 's influence on Europe and the

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3 Thus, travel accounts have often been neglected if deemed unauthentic but, for our purposes, the most relevant aspect of a travel narrative is not the empiric authenticity of the travel but that the narrative presents itself as a travel account. Moreover, our investigation encompasses not only accounts of actual travel but of imaginary and fictional journeys as well as the travel of ideas.

4 Kim Phillips is careful not to call "Travel Writing studies" a "discipline" yet and suggests that we first attempt to define the subject of such discipline (www.medievaltravel.amdigital.co.uk/essays/philips). Other scholars have also addressed the issue of considering whether or not "travel writing" is a genre: Paul Zumthor, "The Medieval Travel Narrative," *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 809–24; Tim Youngs in *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) and *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Joan-Pau-Rubiés, "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," *Journeys* 1 (2000): 5–35; Jan Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology," in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004); and Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Extremely useful and informative is Jean Richard, *Les récits de voyages et de pélerinages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981).

5 We are, of course, mindful of the fact that, in the case of the European sources studied here, these "eastern threads" are weaved into Europe through European eyes. Thus, while the premise of cultural and artistic exchanges between East and West can be widely recognized, in scrutinizing European texts we still need to remember that the appropriation by Western travellers and artists of Islamic and eastern motifs does not imply or indicate an active agency on the part of Islamic and eastern writers, artists and subjects. Furthermore, a variety of "encounter studies" have proven what Giancarlo Casale aptly summarizes here: "Europe's interaction with the outside world was, from the European perspective, conditioned by the preexisting intellectual traditions of the medieval and Renaissance West" (*The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10), which made European sources quite unreliable in assessing Eastern cultures.

Renaissance movement,[6] such as Nabil Matar's *In the Lands of the Christians* and *Europe Through Arab Eyes*; Gerald McLean's edited collection *Re-Orienting the Renaissance*; and Jerry Brotton's *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* as well his and Lisa Jardine's *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West*, just to name a few, the same cannot always be said about the medieval era and much remains to be explored in terms of the links between East and West during the purported "Middle Ages," despite the welcome appearance in 2013 of Kim M. Phillips's *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510*[7] as well as Shirin A. Khanmohamadi's *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages* and Martin Jacobs's *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World*, both of which were published in 2014. Our project, thus, seeks to bridge the frequently artificial and capricious disjunction that continues to be perceived between the so-called "Middle Ages" and "the Renaissance."[8] Furthermore, since we are reading non-European sources as well as European ones and the articles in our volume describe non-European geographies and cultures, we have opted to try to eschew the very European-minded temporal framework which creates the division between Middle Ages and Renaissance; we will apply instead a chronological characterization that can equally encompass all cultures discussed therein. Consequently, we will study travel narratives composed between 1000 and 1700.

In all chronological periods travel, military conquest and trade through the Mediterranean placed Western European citizens and merchants in contact with Islamic and Eastern technology and culture. Documents and maps which describe such contacts consistently illustrate the converging and pragmatic dynamics of cultural acceptance in the neutral *milieu* of the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, a careful and comparative study of these contacts will make it possible to postulate that the spread of the so-called "Renaissance" values and beliefs might have followed a trajectory the reverse of what is generally assumed, that is, it is conceivable that salient aspects of Renaissance culture travelled from the periphery to the centre, from the fringes of Islamic and eastern

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6 Naturally we are obliged to mention a much earlier and ambitious multi-volume project begun in 1965 but which still remains the most relevant and exhaustive source on the topic of Asia and its influence on European thought and culture: *Asia in the Making of Europe* by historian Donald Lach.

7 In her monograph Kim A. Phillips revisits both Said's ideas about Orientalism and the assumptions of post-colonialism adopting instead what she terms a "pre-colonial" methodological stance. Phillips finds that medieval travellers were very heterogeneous in their responses to encounters with Eastern cultures and she also postulates that, most of the time, these travellers did not exhibit any of the colonial and imperialistic traits that have often been adscribed to them by post-colonial scholars.

8 I cannot engage here in a thorough discussion of the pitfalls of such periodization and on the various stages of such crucial and contested debate. I refer the reader, among many others to which I cannot do justice here, to the valuable contributions of Jacques LeGoff's last book, translated in 2015 as *Must We Divide History Into Periods?* (New York: Columbia University Press) and to Jennifer Summit and David Wallace's introduction to their edited collection of articles in the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007), 447–51, entitled "Rethinking Periodization."

cultures to the midst of hegemonically Christian polities. To put it another way, the Christian polities of the West were not, in fact, the centre of the world, as we still imagine nowadays, but the periphery.[9]

This volume is thus devoted to medieval and early modern travel narratives and travelogues in order to critically engage some of the misconceptions about the onset of modernity and about Islamic and Eastern cultures which still pervade current academic as well as popular discourse. The aim of this collection of essays is to probe into this hitherto neglected subject of the representations of cultural exchange in travel literature and to bring to the fore the relevance of the cultural and commercial imprint of the East in any account of the development of the West.

To be sure, classical and medieval geography did not use the terms "East" and "West" and, in fact, it did not even divide the known world into an Asian Orient and a European Occident but acknowledged instead the existence of three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa.[10] As Plinius had stated: "Terrarum orbis universus in tres dividitur partes" and this idea will prevail thanks to St. Augustine, Paulus Orosius and St. Isidore of Seville.[11] Medieval European terminology about the Orient was highly imprecise, as were geographical demarcations. Generally, Asia was divided into two parts: Asia Major and Minor. Mandeville mentions Asia Minor, Asia Major and Deep Asia. The latter, where Catay would be located, was the most oriental of them.[12]

Thus, since the terms "East/Orient" and "West/Occident" are not only theoretically contested but also difficult to define given their fluidity and imprecision from classical antiquity to the modern period, it will become indispensable in our study to use more

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9 The myth of Eurocentrism which postulates that the West has been historically hegemonic is still very prevalent, despite its supposed lack of currency in academic discourse. According to Eurocentric views, Europe is the only active shaper of world history. Europe is active, the rest of the world passive. Europe is the center, the rest of the world is its periphery. While most scholars realize that Eurocentrism is an ideology that distorts the truth by viewing history from a European perspective and emphasizes the superiority of Western culture, perhaps the most troubling aspect of it is its epistemological implications, the fact that Eurocentrism is so entrenched in scholarship that it creates a paradigm for interpreting the facts, a set of assumptions of how the world should work and thus we judge any other areas of the world as being determined by the same set of assumptions. See Robert Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the 15th to the 21st century* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) for a more globally minded master narrative which can contribute to dispelling the myth of Eurocentrism.

10 Suzanne Conklin Akbari postulates, in fact, that the dichotomy of Orient and Occident might have come about after a late medieval move from maps with a traditional eastern orientation to maps with a northern orientation (*Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 20–23).

11 St. Isidore affirms in his *Etimologiae* (XIV, II, 1): "Divisus est autem trifarie: e quibus una pars Asia, altera Europa, tertia Africa nuncupatur" (It is divided in three parts, one part being called Asia, the second Europe, and the third Africa).

12 Aníbal A. Biglieri, *Las ideas geográficas y la imagen del mundo en la literatura española medieval* (Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2012), 251–52.

explicit geographical terms.[13] Thus, in the broadest sense, "East" will be defined within our collection as the Islamic lands in North Africa (or Maghreb), central European polities in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Asia. "West," on the other hand, encompasses all the Christian lands west of Hungary. The essays included therein investigate travel accounts written by authors from both geographical areas, "East" and "West" (as opposed to solely European or Western authors, as has generally been the norm), and who have, thus, traversed both geographical and cultural *loci* in both directions.

Our inquiry will be informed by recent scholarship on cultural and economic history, visual arts, and ethnology, which seek to reassess and critique some post-colonial approaches indebted to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The volume includes studies by scholars from various disciplines: English Literature, History, Architecture, Ottoman Studies, Iberian Studies, Persian Studies, Jewish Studies and Islamic Religion. The following contributions examine the cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural scholarship on the transfer (or, literally, the *translatio*)[14] through travel of cultural and religious values and artistic and scientific practices from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries. Thus, while the *topos* of *translatio studii*, clearly formulated in several medieval works (for example in Chrétien de Troyes *Cligès* as well as in Juan Ruiz's "Dispute between the Greeks and the Romans" in his *Libro de buen amor*), is most frequently predicated on the idea of a transfer of knowledge from Greece westward, in this volume, instead, we posit that there was indeed a *translatio* from further East moving westward.

Naturally, espousing this transference requires not only a philosophical repositioning but also a geographical and physical one, which can be easily attained just by carefully contemplating ancient and medieval maps, such as the Hereford Mappa Mundi or the so-called Catalan Atlas, which placed Jerusalem and central Asia as the epicentre of the known world while the western lands were illustrated on the fringes of such world.[15]

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13 I want to also be very cognizant of the fact that many of the labels or terms that are often applied both when one conceptualizes "Europe" or "Asia" or when we refer to the "East" or to "Eastern cultures" can lead to misinterpretation or can denote "Orientalizing" stances. I will not go into a detailed discussion of this contested and hotly debated topic in here but the various articles will at various junctures engage in a discussion of such debates. As a general rule, however, we will try to avoid using labels such as "Orient" uncritically.

14 The *topoi* of *translatio studii* or transfer of knowledge as well as the concomitant *translatio imperii* or transfer of power, which propounded an unbroken continuity between the Roman Empire and medieval cultural paradigms and polities, thus guaranteeing the legitimacy of sovereignty, were often articulated in medieval texts.

15 Several scholars have discussed the relevance of map projections in understanding historical processes and the importance of reassessing how cartography has been utilized as a site to promote political ends and to enact propagandistic narratives. For excellent studies about the development of cartography historically and its functions and interpretations see Jerry Brotton's *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), his more recent (albeit for a more popular public) *A History of the World in 12 Maps* (New York: Viking, 2013), and his article "A 'Devious Course': Projecting Toleration on Mercator's 'Map of the World', 1569," *The Cartographic Journal* 49 (2012): 101–6; John P. Snyder's *Flattening the Earth: Two Thousand*

While many scholars in several disciplines have actively engaged in a revisionist account of the conventional narrative about the rise and supremacy of the West and the foundational attributes of Graeco-Roman civilization, perhaps one of the most widely known among lay audiences is anthropologist Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (1982). Wolf, and by now many others, have not only made considerable inroads in our appreciation of the ways in which societies that had been disregarded in hegemonic European historical narratives were and are profoundly implicated in global historical systems and changes, but have also contributed to enhancing our understanding of the centrality of the Eastern lands and cultures on global affairs in the past as well as the present.

After all, as the historian Peter Frankopan has recently put it in reference to the centre of Asia, "it was in this bridge between east and west that great metropolises were established nearly 5000 years ago, when the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in the Indus Valley were wonders of the ancient world [...] where the world's great religions burst into life,"[16] where cities exhibited grandiose buildings as well as sophisticated sewage systems unseen in Europe and where, according to a Chinese geographer, markets bought and sold an enormous range of products, brought from all the corners of the world.[17] It was, in sum, a land "where empires were made."[18]

The German geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen had already described and aptly named this extensive network of routes which served to connect distant peoples and places: the Silk Roads, or *Seidenstraßen*.[19] The peoples who circulated along these roads traded and exchanged not only goods but also ideas, customs and beliefs. They learned from each other thus contributing to further expansions in the sciences, philosophy, language and religion.

Thus, the world of antiquity was more complex and interconnected than conventionally thought. In spite of seemingly unsurmountable obstacles there existed a vibrant and efficient network of transference and exchange crisscrossing the landscape through the Silk Roads. The Greeks and Romans were expanding east but the Chinese were also expanding west.

Years of Map Projection (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Frank Lestringant's *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Denis Cosgrove's *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and Alison Sandman's contributions, particularly "Mirroring the World: Sea Charts, Navigation, and Territorial Claims in Sixteenth-Century Spain," in *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2002), 83–108.

16 Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015; repr., New York: Knopf, 2016), xv.

17 *Records of the Grand Historian by Sima Qian, Han Dynasty*, trans. B. Watson, vol. 2. (rev. ed. New York: Colombia University Press, 1971), 234–35.

18 Frankopan, *Silk Roads*, 3.

19 Ferdinand von Richthofen, "Über die zentralasiatischen Seidenstrassen bis zum 2. Jahrhundert. N. Chr.," *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 4 (1877): 96–122. According to some scholars, however, von Richthofen's initial formulation of the term he coined does not always coincide with subsequent interpretations offered by later historians and geographers.

Therefore, traders' and travellers' horizons broadened significantly many centuries before the Age of Discovery. The geographer Strabo, for example, affirms that within a few years of Rome's occupation of Egypt, 120 merchant ships were sailing for India each year from the Red Sea.[20] Commercial exchange in Indian ports, nonetheless, was not restricted to merchandise that originated in the subcontinent. A large variety of goods from distant locations such as Vietnam and Java were brought to the Mediterranean via India and Persia:

> Ports on both the western and eastern coasts of India served as emporia for goods brought from all over eastern and south-eastern Asia ready to be shipped west. Then there were the goods and produce of the Red Sea, a vibrant commercial zone in its own right as well as linking the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean and beyond.[21]

Simultaneously, the Chinese were heading west and establishing regular and intensive trading with Persia, sending as many as ten trading missions a year, often with the purpose of selling their famed silk and acquiring goods as variegated as pearls from the Red Sea, cucumbers, apricots, myrrh from Yemen and even peaches from Samarkand.[22] Chinese silk, in turn, made its way to Rome, where it not only became one of the most expensive and sought-after commodities but also contributed to a revolution in cultural mores and, if we are to believe some moralists like Seneca,[23] to a cataclysmic undermining of traditional Roman rules of decency.

Two intertwined impulses are, hence, at the root of every instance of travel: curiosity and necessity. All throughout history these two impulses have informed the experiences of every traveller: the pilgrim, the conqueror, the adventurer, the merchant, the missionary, the explorer and the diplomat. In whichever guise we find them, travellers set out on a journey to learn new things and acquire knowledge about themselves or their surroundings or with the purpose of acquiring the goods and supplies needed for their subsistence. The act of travelling is always, consequently, an epistemological enterprise.

Travel becomes, thus, *episteme* not in Foucauldian terms but in a purely Platonic sense, that is, "knowledge," in contrast to the concept of *doxa*, which signifies common belief or opinion.[24] The *motif* of travel was omnipresent in the medieval and early

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20 Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. and trans. H. Jones, vol. 1. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 454.

21 Frankopan, *Silk Roads*, 17–18.

22 B. Laufer, *Sino-Iranica: Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1919); Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1.

23 Seneca, *Moral Essays*, ed. and trans. J. Basore, vol. 3. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 478.

24 In *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), Michel Foucault used the term *épistème* to refer to the historical *a priori* that grounds knowledge and its discourses and thus represents the condition of their possibility within a particular epoch. According to Foucault several *epistemes* may co-exist and interact at the same time.

modern imaginary.[25] It was not always regarded as an exciting experience as the etymo-logical meaning of the English word for travel, *travail* (effort), attests. It always included, nevertheless, an epistemological dimension. To travel was to acquire knowledge and to know oneself, to grow. Although all monotheistic religions agreed on the importance of pilgrimage and travel as a symbol of religious experience (*hegira*, *peregrinatio*) this is particularly true in the Islamic tradition where travel, as attested by the hadith quoted at the beginning of this introduction, is conceived as a praiseworthy enterprise whose goal is the search for knowledge:

> Travel in all its myriad forms—pilgrimage, trade, scholarship, adventure-expanded the mental and physical limits of the Muslim world [...] Travel as a meritorious activity is endowed with an ancient pedigree in the Muslim tradi-tion. A rich vocabulary of words related in one way or another to travel is found in the Qur'an.[26]

And many Qur'anic verses encouraged Muslims to "travel on the earth and see" (3:137; 6:11; 12:109; 16:36; 29:20; 30:9; 30:42).[27]

This quest for knowledge, nevertheless, is equally present in all traditions, from bib-lical times to classical antiquity to medieval and early modern Christianity. From the wandering Moses to Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey* the *topos* of the traveller has been fun-damental and very prolific in the Graeco-Roman tradition. As Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés observe in their introduction to *Voyages and Visions: Toward a Cultural History of Travel*, the paradigm of the Christian pilgrim of the Middle Ages is derived "from ancient myths such as Apollonius [of Tyre], who travelled himself into sainthood, or the allegor-ical Odysseus, whose journey became a metaphor for the spiritual progress of his readers' lives."[28] From these beginnings there evolved two patterns of travel as pilgrimage in the Christian tradition: visiting the Holy Land and the veneration of sacred relics. These two patterns will even merge in the case of some individual travellers, such as the remark-able Egeria, who left us an early and informative travelogue of her explorations. During her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the fourth century CE (381–384), she eagerly vis-ited all those places mentioned in the Bible as well as several *martyria* which contained sacred relics.[29] And these two types of religious quests will in time coalesce fictionally in

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25 One of the most famous medieval travel narratives was the *Book of John of Mandeville,* a highly popular book which, although fictional, was believed to be an actual eyewitness account. This work encompasses the most salient characteristics of the quintessential medieval travel narrative: long and arduous voyages, assortments of marvels and fantastical tales, exotic creatures and monsters and ethnographic observations about distant lands and peoples.

26 Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 51 and 53.

27 Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 2006), 35.

28 Jas Elsner and Joan Pau Rubiés, *Voyages and Visions: Toward a Cultural History of Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 15.

29 Egeria, who was most probably a nun from Spain or France, visited the Holy Land only a few years after the death of Constantine and, thus, her work is one of the earliest extant descriptions of

the adventures of errant knights in search of the Holy Grail in the popular romances of the Arthurian tradition and historically, in the crusades.

Due to the crusades, Oleb Grabar asserts, "there occurred, in particular in the twelfth century, an extraordinary increase in the number of 'points of access', that is, of places where contacts [between East and West] could and were made, as well as in the variety of these contacts."[30] While this is true, crusaders were nevertheless remarkably bereft of ethnographic curiosity for the people they met along their travels. This lack of interest of the crusaders, despite this opening of "points of contact," illustrates well the "non-fraternization attitude" of the crusader towards the surrounding culture and the clearly colonizing stance of the crusades, discussed by Joshua Prawer in "The Roots of Medieval Colonialism."[31] Oleg Grabar also pointedly remarks that two centuries of contact did not really produce any deep cultural and artistic impacts between the East and the West.[32]

With the sole exception of the Jewish Benjamin of Tudela's *Sefer ha-Masa'ot* (*The Book of Travels*) in the twelfth century, we do not find many documents that describe ethnographic observations about Muslims and other Eastern peoples until the thirteenth century.[33] One example would be the detailed ethnographic narrative of the missionary trip to Mongolia by the Franciscan friars John of Plan Carpini (1245–1247)[34] and William of Rubruck (1252–1255): "In effect the late Middle Ages are characterized by the growth of ethnography within the related genres of geographical literature, ambassadorial reports, mission and even pilgrimage itself."[35] The travel narratives written or dictated by Carpini, William of Rubruck, Marco Polo and the fictional John of Mandeville have in common an attention to practical knowledge and empirical observation, in particular of human subjects. Elsner and Rubiés see this shift as "the ultimate relocation of the paradigm of travel from the ideal of pilgrimage to those of empirical curiosity and practical science" which results from "the transformation of the traditional ideologies of pilgrimage, crusade and chivalry under the impact of new religious, political and social concerns."[36]

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the area. Her portrayal of the sacred places in the Holy Land and the life of the ascetic desert hermits make of her travel account one of the most informative sources of early Christian ritual and worship (*Egeria's Travels*, ed. John Wilkinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999)).

30 Oleb Grabar "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications 1986), 441–554 and 442.

31 Joshua Prawer, "The Roots of Colonialism," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades,* ed. Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 23–38.

32 Grabar, "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange," 444.

33 See Kaplan's (Chapter 9) and Piera's (Chapter 3) contributions in this volume for more information about Benjamin of Tudela and his travel narrative, the *Sefer ha-Masa'ot* (*The Book of Travels*).

34 Adriano Duque's chapter (Chapter 8) in this volume is devoted to this expedition.

35 Elsner and Rubiés, *Voyages*, 31.

36 Elsner and Rubiés, *Voyages*, 31.

It can be posited, however, that the tradition of written traveller's accounts was always shaped by empirical curiosity and pragmatic needs, even more than by religious fervour. It began with seafarers' logs and these logs were probably the origin of the *periplous*,[37] an ancient genre of texts describing coastlines, such as the Carthaginian Hanno's account of his travels along the African coast (early fifth century BCE) and Pytheas and Massalia's *Peri tou Okeanou* (*On the Ocean*) around 320 BCE.[38] And not only the Greeks but all previous and subsequent traditions and cultures produced these types of documents.

Although maritime travel was precarious it was still the fastest and most convenient means of transportation and centuries of seafarers' experience was poured out on to ceaselessly evolving captains' logs, navigational and Portolan charts, atlases and *mappa mundi* which outlined the major sailing routes and the coastal landmarks.[39] The Mediterranean sea was crowded with Arab and Jewish traders as well as Byzantine and Western merchants, predominantly from Italian and Catalan cities but also from Hanseatic cities and the British Isles, to such an extent that a common language of the sea developed:

> The little ships of small traders with local knowledge could follow a myriad of less frequented ways so that, in effect, the whole coastline of the Mediterranean was alive with maritime traffic linking peoples and places together [...] Few embarked on a sea voyage without a degree of apprehension. It did mean entering a world with its own technical language, its own laws and customs. It was, however, also a way to new experiences and possible riches.[40]

The prospect of riches and profit was thus one of the driving forces of travellers, but profit was always intertwined with beauty and the desire for the exotic. Medieval and early modern society, not unlike our own, was attracted to beautiful, luxurious and rare objects and artifacts.

Paul Freedman has brilliantly depicted and analyzed the medieval fascination with spices in *Out of the East: Spices in the Medieval Imagination*. And Anne Goldgar demonstrates on her study on the cultivation of the tulip in Holland in the sixteenth century that "rarity, beauty and profit thus go together; what is rare is beautiful, and what is

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37 A Greek word still used in some modern languages, for example Spanish ("periplo"), to indicate a long journey.

38 Maria Pretzler, *Pausanias: Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 20.

39 Medieval maps are truly not maps as we conceive them in modern times. Medieval *mappa mundi* were more accurately "diagrams" of the world. As P. D. A. Harvey states, medieval maps "are best understood as an open framework where all kinds of information might be placed in the relevant spatial position, not unlike a chronicle or narrative in which information would be arranged chronologically" (*Medieval Maps* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 19). These earlier maps included and conveyed not only geographical information but also zoological, anthropological, moral, theological and historical information (19).

40 Susan Rose, *The Medieval Sea* (London: Continuum, 2007), 11–12.

beautiful is profitable."[41] Tulips, as spices, were brought from the East and were considered very exotic: "The special excitement generated by tulips stemmed first from their foreign nature […] But tulips were particularly valued because of their unpredictable and exciting capacities for variation."[42] Their arrival in Europe in the sixteenth century is attributed to the imperial envoy Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, although it is also possible that they were introduced into European markets through trade between Turkey and Italy, France and the Low Countries.[43]

This fascination with exotic objects such as the tulip can be equally applied to many other material luxury goods that Western merchants found in Eastern markets and brought back to Europe. A variety of Islamic material goods (ceramics, glassware, silks, rugs, metalwork) became markers of luxury, social status as well as artisanal skill in Western society. Evidence of the deep influence of Islamic trade and exchange of luxury goods is furnished in Western Renaissance paintings of the period. As Western artisans and artists sought to emulate their counterparts in Persia, Arabia and Syria, they used travel as a means to reach and learn from technical masters in the Islamic world,[44] thereby developing their craftmanship as well as a new understanding or, at times, a misunderstanding of Islamic culture.

The field of Renaissance Studies has been a pioneer in the development of theories of consumption[45] which shift the emphasis from the provenance and actual value of an object of exchange to its perceived significance to consumers, as Patricia Fortini Brown claims: "The exotic and the unfamiliar count for as much as the cost"[46] and objects that came from the Orient or "looked" oriental were eagerly sought after or emulated. At the same time, however, the Ottomans were also looking to the West for artistic inspiration and exotic objects. Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton are illustrative examples of the type of Renaissance scholarship that seeks to illuminate the "pragmatic engagement between

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41 Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Anne Goldgar, "Nature as Art: The Case of the Tulip" in *Merchants & Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen (London: Routledge, 2002), 324–46 and 338. Goldgar quotes a 1618 commentator on Dodonaeus's *Cruydt-Boeck* as saying about tulips: "In this country men […] will pay the most, not for the most beautiful [tulip] or the finest, but for the rarest to be found" (337).

42 Goldgar, "Nature as Art: The Case of the Tulip," 326.

43 Goldgar, "Nature as Art: The Case of the Tulip," 326.

44 Perhaps one of the most often cited examples of this type of travel, to perfect an artist's craftmanship, is the case of the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini, who travelled to Istanbul to learn from Ottoman artists.

45 Approaches that support a consumption model of analysis can be found in Daniel Miller's introduction (1–50) to his book *Materiality: Politics, History, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). These approaches are based on Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's understanding of "consumption as a form of cultural production" (*The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: Basic Books, 1979)).

46 Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 84.

East and West in which each fully acknowledged the participation of the other and nego-tiated workable relationships"[47] by analyzing sixteenth century art-based transactions and luxury objects of exchange within their appropriate historical context.[48]

Their findings have served not only to undermine "the Burckhardtian (and with it the new historicist) view of emerging Western European selfhood in the Renaissance"[49] but also to counteract Edward Said's "version of Western Europe's construction of the Orient as an alien, displaced other, positioned in opposition to a confident, imperialist Eurocentrism."[50] These exchanges, stimulated more by curiosity than necessity, brought about a reciprocal transfer of cultural values and artistic and scientific practices. As Gaston Bachelard argued, "the conquest of the superfluous is more spiritually exciting than the conquest of what is necessary. Man is a creature of desire, not a being motivated by necessity."[51]

These voyages of commercial exchange had been extremely important all throughout the medieval period for the development of cartography and to acquire a better knowl-edge about geography and the world in general. Thus, the considerable advances in map-making in the fifteenth century which would eventually bring about the Portuguese and Castilian travels to the New World were indebted not to the work of theoretical geographers but to the empirical knowledge gained by actual and constant maritime expeditions. One of the first maps to incorporate the evidence garnered by travel expe-rience was Abraham Cresques's Catalan Atlas[52] compiled between 1375 and 1377 and presented in 1381 as a gift to the king of France by the king of Aragon, Joan I. As a matter of fact, the Majorcan Jewish school of cartography represented by Cresques was the first to innovatively integrate inland features in Portolan charts.[53] It is certainly not a coincidence that such school should be located on the island of Majorca, only recently reconquered by the Christian army of the Aragonese king, Jaume I, in 1229. It was precisely because of the Muslim past of Majorca that the island had become not

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47 Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 61.

48 Particularly enlightening in this regard are their analysis of the significance of Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes at the Medici Chapel of the Magi in Florence, Carpaccio's depiction of the St. George cycle in the Scuola Dalmata in Venice, Holbein's painting "The Ambassadors," and the portrait medals executed by Constanzo de Ferrara and Antonio Pisanello.

49 Naturally their approach also disavows Stephen Greenblatt's notions of a characteristically unique "Renaissance self-fashioning," which has also been problematized in the field of Medieval Studies; see, for instance, the collection of articles in *Self-Fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Laura Delbrugge (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

50 Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*, 61.

51 Quoted in Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*, 6.

52 Harvey, *Medieval Maps*, 60.

53 See Pinhas Yoeli, "Abraham and Yehuda Cresques and the Catalan Atlas," *Cartographic Journal* 7 (1970): 17–27, for detailed information about the Catalan Atlas and the Cresques family and workshop. Upon receiving the map, the king of Aragon was so enthusiastic that he named Abraham Cresques "magister mappamundorum et bruxolarum" (master maker of world maps and compasses).

only a relatively tolerant and thriving multicultural society but also "a world center of commerce" in the fourteenth century:

> In its ports and harbours anchored hundreds of ships and within the walls of the city of Majorca, later named Palma, lived thirty thousand sailors. It was also a center of learning and culture. Astronomy, astrology, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, jurisprudence and the natural sciences in general were highly developed.[54]

It is believed that the Cresques family arrived in Majorca after 1229 from the north of Africa. Emigration of Jews from North Africa to Majorca was robust and they maintained very strong family ties with North Africa: "These connections contributed no doubt to the relatively-detailed geographical information which the Jewish Cartographers of Majorca had of North Africa."[55]

By way of the north of Africa another traveller who was to have an immense influence on the cultural imprint of the West came to the lands of the Iberian Peninsula from Damascus. As Maria Rosa Menocal more poetically relates it:

> Once upon a time in the mid eighth-century, an intrepid young man called Abd al-Rahman abandoned his home in Damascus, the Near Eastern heartland of Islam, and set out across the North African desert in search of a place of refuge. Damascus had become a slaughterhouse for his family, the ruling Umayyads, who had first led the Muslims out of the desert of Arabia into the high cultures of the Fertile Crescent. With the exception of Abd al-Rahman, the Umayyads were eradicated by the rival Abbasids, who seized control of the great empire called the "House of Islam."[56]

This young survivor fled westward to the lands of his Berber mother (in today's Morocco). Once he arrived in the north of Africa he found most of his Berber kinsmen had themselves emigrated to the Iberian Peninsula: "Abd al-Rahman followed their trail and crossed the narrow strait at the western edge of the world. In Iberia, a place they were calling al-Andalus in Arabic, the language of the new Muslim colonizers, he found a thriving and expansive Islamic settlement."[57]

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54 Yoeli, "Abraham and Yehuda Cresques," 25.

55 Yoeli, "Abraham and Yehuda Cresques," 26. In addition to their contacts with North African Muslims, there is also evidence that Jewish merchants travelled and traded with Muslims as far as Timbuktu.

56 María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 3. It should be noted however, that Menocal's and other scholars highly favorable view of "convivencia" in the Iberian Peninsula during that period has ben subsequently nuanced and critiqued. I do not have space here to address that still ongoing debate but suffices to say that what is undoubtable is that there was constant interaction between Muslims, Jews and Christians. What remains controversial is to determine how convivial that interaction truly was in any given historical juncture.

57 Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 3.

Within two centuries the city where he now arrived, Cordoba, would be called "the ornament of the world," one of his descendants would become the caliph and for seven hundred years there would be a Muslim presence in Europe and al-Andalus's cultural achievements would reverberate all over Christian Europe for centuries to come.[58] Abd al-Rahman's *rihla* transformed him as much as every traveller transforms the worlds with which he or she comes in contact. Every travel brings us closer to *episteme*.

The ensuing articles seek to illuminate the different manifestations of epistemological discovery rendered through travel and its inherent contradictions. The collection is divided thematically in three parts. The first will be devoted to the examination of a variety of travel narratives (penned by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian travellers) which creatively and critically destabilize the boundaries of the *rihla* tradition. The second part considers how Eastern cultures and, in particular, eastern *loci* (Egypt, Persia, and Istanbul), were conceptualized, comprehended, and, especially, imagined (in both an intellectual and a visual sense) by Christian travellers and writers from 1000 to 1700. The third and last part analyzes the relevance of material and intellectual exchange and reciprocal circulation within the dynamics of commercial and political interaction between the East and the West.

The first three essays in this collection focus on the Islamic *rihla* tradition from three different perspectives and three different geographic areas. Rebecca Gould introduces in "From Pious Journeys to the Critique of Sovereignty: Khaqani Shirvani's Persianate Poetics of Pilgrimage," one of the most important and least-studied Persian travel narratives, *Khaqani Shirwani's Tuhfat al-Iraqayn (Gift from the Two Iraqs)*, composed in the middle of the twelfth century while Janet Sorrentino describes pre-modern Muslim ritual by scrutinizing the travel accounts of two Muslim authors, Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta. Montserrat Piera compares and contrasts three travel narratives, spanning from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, which were composed by Iberian subjects (Benjamin of Tudela, Pero Tafur and Leo Africanus/al-Wazzan) from each of the three monotheistic traditions.

Rebecca Gould begins her essay by contextualizing Khaqani's text within a larger discussion of the travel narrative genre and the culture of pilgrimage in medieval Persian (and more broadly Islamic) literary culture, and examines the links between these texts and an emerging discourse of autobiographical reflection on the poetic self. Gould explores Khaqani's memorable renderings of his journeys through Baghdad and other cities of Iraq on his way to Mecca, focusing in particular on the rich metaphors through which the itinerant traveller genders the landscape through which he passes, and on the political implications of his poetic critiques of the sultan from whose grasp he escaped when he departed Azerbaijan. Gould's analysis ultimately demonstrates that the Persianate literature of travel substantially deviates from its Arabic counterpart by exerting a narrative shift from piety to political insubordination.

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58 As Alexander E. Elison reminds us in *Looking Back at al-Andalus* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) one can argue that al-Andalus is a construct created to satisfy contemporary needs for a nostalgic past: "Whether it is viewed as a lost paradise of cultural splendor, a symbol of displacement and exile, a site of religious tolerance, or a past to be embraced and learned from, al-Andalus has proven to be a highly evocative site of nostalgic expression" (2).

In "Observing Ziyara in Two Medieval Muslim Travel Accounts," Janet Sorrentino discusses Muslim travel literature of the medieval and early modern period but focuses not only on their observations about scientific and artistic exchange, but particularly on the ways these travellers articulated their observations about worship and ritual. Sorrentino's essay examines the writings of two such travel writers: Ibn Jubayr (sixth/twelfth centuries) and Ibn Battuta (eighth/fourteenth centuries),[59] who carefully surveyed religious observances performed wherever they travelled and who did not distinguish or disparage sectarian identity in what they observed. Their observations and attitudes, derived in general from direct experience, open a window to the broader Islamicate religious culture of the post-classical period.

The third chapter in the first part of the collection delves into Iberian travellers' experiences of Eastern cultures. For medieval subjects the act of travelling was a very unpredictable and dangerous endeavour which could render the traveller vulnerable to violence, abuse, warfare and misfortune, among other perils. Montserrat Piera's article explores both the actual (or physical) and figurative vulnerabilities expressed and enacted by three early modern Iberian travellers: one Jewish (Benjamin of Tudela, twelfth century, d. 1173), one Christian (Pero Tafur, 1410–1484), and one Muslim (al-Hassan al-Wazzan, known as Leo Africanus, 1486/88–1554?) who engaged in long voyages throughout Europe, Asia and the Maghreb and wrote in detail about their experiences. In these three writers, vulnerability is inextricably connected not only to their travels but also to their geographical origins and their particular historical circumstances.

Our exploration of how the East was imagined by early modern travellers and readers in Part II begins with the article " 'Tierras de Egipto': Imagined Journeys to the East in the Early Vernacular Literature of Medieval Iberia." In it Matthew V. Desing tells us about the Apollonius of Tyre legend, a tale of nautical adventures set in the eastern Mediterranean and one of the most popular narratives in Europe from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. The mid-thirteenth-century Spanish version, the *Libro de Apolonio*, provides a fascinating locus for the study of portrayals of travel in the Near East, and particularly in Egypt, not only because of the content of the narrative itself but because of its manuscript context as well. Within the narrative, the author constructs Egypt as an imaginary landscape for the protagonist's purifying pilgrimage. Egypt is, thus, not a specific place in this text, but rather a general locale for the purification of sins. Approximately a century after the *Libro de Apolonio*'s composition, the text was copied and included in the manuscript Escorial III-K-4 and Desing argues that this new context casts the function of Egypt in a different light. Egypt strikingly appears in all three poems of the manuscript: the *Libro de Apolonio*, the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, and the *Adoración de los Reyes*. When placed into this expanded context, the *Libro de Apolonio*'s Egypt ceases to be an abstract place, and becomes fixed through its connections to a geographical web of places familiarly imagined, not only because of the audience's experience with biblical and hagiographical narratives that deal with such locales, but also because of the expanding gaze of the Christian Iberian kingdoms beyond the peninsula during the century between the poem's original composition and its inclusion in the manuscript.

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59 Where dual dates are given in this volume, the first relates to the Muslim calendar, and the second to the Christian calendar.

In the next contribution, "The Petrification of Rostam: Thomas Herbert's re-vision of Persia in *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile*," Nedda Mehdizadeh follows the English East India Company's 1626 expedition to Persia through Thomas Herbert's popular travelogue, *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile.* Like many travellers to Persia, Herbert finds himself at the crossroads of two very different chronological periods: the memory of Persia's ancient past under the Achaemenids, which he had learned about through translation of texts like Herodotus's *Histories* or Xenophon's *Cyropedia*, and the present moment of growth and prosperity of the Safavid Empire he witnesses during the expedition. Despite the expedition's goal to improve mercantile and diplomatic relations between England and Persia, Herbert finds himself travelling between these two different times, transposing the past onto the present. Indeed, he continues this process well into the future as he revisits Persia with each subsequent revision of his travel narrative—four in total. Each subsequent edition expands dramatically with inclusions of classical stories, biblical narratives, and faded memories. Despite the fact that each section of his travelogue experiences massive changes, his account of the empire's capital, Isfahan, experiences only modest changes. A vibrant metropolis, Isfahan invites travellers from all over to do trade; rather than offering discussions of the comings and goings of the city, Herbert gives details about the architecture as well as a short discussion of the death of Iran's most prominent literary figure, Rostam from Abolqasem Ferdowsi's medieval epic poem, *Shahnameh.* "The Petrification of Rostam" begins by questioning Herbert's intention for including a re-narration of the hero's death. Why does Herbert include this story at all? Why does he omit the well-known details of Rostam's life? And how does this discussion reveal Herbert's own desires about his re-vision of Persia?

Elio Brancaforte delves, in his article entitled "Between Word and Image: Representations of Shi'ite Rituals in Safavid Iran from Early Modern European Travel Accounts," into the way early modern European travellers to the Ottoman and Safavid Empires reimagine the East. This contribution considers examples, both visual and textual, from early modern European travellers and chroniclers—such as Thévenot, Pietro Della Valle, Adam Olearius, and John Ogilby—and their attempts to explain the Sunni–Shi'ite confessional divide for Catholic and Protestant readers in Europe, readers who were all too familiar with the troubles associated with divergent religious beliefs and their impact on the secular world.

In "Visions and Transitions of a Pilgrimage of Curiosity: Pietro Della Valle's Travel to Istanbul," Sezim Sezer Darnault and Aygül Ağır describe Pietro Della Valle's encounter with the Ottoman Empire's capital. Sezer Darnault and Agir's study focuses on Pietro Della Valle's perception and interpretation of Constantinople's visual culture within the frame of European–Ottoman encounters. The Roman aristocrat spent one year in Constantinople between 1614 and 1615 during his voyage to the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and India. Published in the 1650s, Della Valle's detailed letters illustrating his travels were widely disseminated throughout Europe. Unlike his predecessors, he was neither a missionary nor a tradesman; as has been noted, "Della Valle styled himself as the 'pilgrim' and his pilgrimage was, "decidedly a pilgrimage of curiosity". His observations as a self-fashioned nobleman reflect a search for identity and self-fulfillment. His narratives of Turkey reveal the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan

Ahmed I (1603–1617), a period, as Sezer Darnault and Ağır argue, when the Ottoman Empire and Europe were redefining their relationships.

With Adriano Duque's contribution, "Gift-giving in the Carpini Expedition to Mongolia (1246–1248 CE)," we begin the third thematic section in the collection (Exchanging Objects, Ideas and Texts) and we travel farther east in our exploration, to the lands of the Mongols. In 1246, Pope Innocent II sent out an expedition to Mongolia, with the two-fold objective of converting the Mongols and gathering information about their warfare and social organization. Composed of three Franciscan friars, the expedition managed to reach the central camp of the Mongols, where they witnessed the coronation of the great khan. In their travels, the Franciscan friars had to cross numerous territories and follow a series of ritual salutations involving the exchange of letters and presents.

During the European Middle Ages, gift exchanges nourished an immense variety of public and personal experiences. They played a vital economic role in ensuring not only the good relations between peoples but also their social and political recognition. Drawing on previous scholarship on gift-giving by Marcel Mauss, Jacques Derrida, and John Milbank, Adriano Duque's essay addresses questions such as what constitutes a gift and what sorts of objects and texts circulated in late medieval gift exchanges. More importantly, the essay examines the kind of social, political, and/or cultural inferences that the exchanges and the objects themselves acquired during this expedition. Duque concludes that gift-giving in the Carpini expedition provides important insights into the development of Christian–Mongol relations in the mid-thirteenth century and a useful tool to channel social and diplomatic relations.

Gregory Kaplan illustrates not commercial or diplomatic exchanges but intellectual interactions. In his article "The East–West Trajectory of Sephardic Sectarianism: From Ibn Daud to Spinoza" Kaplan discusses how Muslim hegemony in Al-Andalus during the medieval period had exposed Jewish thought to Middle Eastern schools of thought that eventually encouraged Jewish defiance of traditional rabbinical authority. This cross-cultural contact created a lasting effect on the movement called Karaism, which travelled and expanded, by means of the Sephardic diaspora expelled from Spain after 1492, to seventeenth-century Amsterdam and to the writings of Baruch Spinoza. Kaplan studies the evolution of Karaism, which had spread to Iberia from the Middle East and had already been observed by the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela in his *Sefer ha-Masa'ot* (*Book of Travels*), which documents his journey through the Middle East between 1169 and 1171.

The next article does not deal with the travel and exchange of ideas but rather with the travel of material objects. On this occasion, the object, a saint's arm, acquires sacred connotations. In "Piety and Piracy: Repatriating the Arm of St. Francis Xavier" Pilar Ryan studies the circumstances surrounding the voyage of the fleet that was returning St. Francis Xavier's arm to Europe from the Far East via Goa, India. An epigram in a 1695 book describes the threats that pirates posed to the expedition. Through this epigram, we catch a glimpse of the functional agreements and practices between military men, merchants, and missionaries during the age of exploration. Ryan examines how sacred objects were protected from pirates in the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the role the ship's chaplain played in this specific defensive mission, and

how the rhetoric about the threat of pirates paralleled the rhetoric about the danger of Protestants.

The last two contributions in Part III centre on the theme of early modern English interpretations of the Eastern subject and of their interactions with Western subjects. Ambereen Dadabhoy examines the topic of Muslim conversion and the problematization of the notion of "turning Turk" through the modalities of gender and race in "The Other Woman: The Geography of Exclusion in *The Kight of Malta*." Dadabhoy seeks to find out how the "turned Turk" became such a popular figure on the early modern English stage and a key player in the imaginative geography of the English in their constructions of the "Islamic world." According to Dadabhoy *The Knight of Malta* imbricates, through the use of the generic architecture of romance, categories of difference, such as gender, race, and religion, in its construction of nation and community. She argues that the play offers an innovative lens through which questions of encounter and traffic with Muslim regimes can be framed and answered. By tracing the circulation of women in the play, Dadabhoy reveals the affective and symbolic roles they occupy in addition to the suspicion they engender and claims that the dramatization of the national and imperial triumph of Malta (and Christendom) over the Ottoman Empire (and Islam) is achieved through the simultaneous absorption and exclusion of radical difference. Exploring the intertextual links between *The Knight of Malta* and other late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Mediterranean plays topically engaged with Moors and Turks (such as Robert Daborne's 1609 *A Christian Turned Turk* and Philip Massinger's 1624 *The Renegado*) highlights the interest of English dramatists in that locale and the audience's cultural fascination with multiple forms of difference.

The danger of the Barbary Corsairs, the North African pirates operating out of the Ottoman regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Salee was twofold: in their piratical operations they captured hundreds of English and European men, women, and children, selling them in the slave markets of Algiers and Constantinople; and more terrifyingly, many were English and European by birth but had vouchsafed God, king, and country and now swore allegiance to a foreign emperor and a heretical religion. As Dadabhoy demonstrates, travel accounts and captivity narratives, which enjoyed wide circulation in the period, undergirded the epistemological construction of Anglo-Ottoman encounter. Such narratives provided the raw material for the plots of these plays, but they also contributed the symbolic and affective registers of meaning and difference these representations exposed and emphasized. The author argues that even as these texts demonize the geographies and peoples of Islam, there remains a strain of ambivalence that destabilizes such totalizing constructions and forces us to reconsider moments of encounter through new theoretical frameworks that move away from conflict and toward transaction and contingency.

Although significant knowledge of the Islamic world came to Christendom through the transmission and translation of written works, the eyewitnesses' accounts of European travellers and seemingly uninteresting documents such as merchants' logs served as another major source of information about contemporary Muslim societies. Julia Schleck analyzes this topic in the next contribution, "Experiential Knowledge and the Limits of Merchant Credit," but she cautions us that the transmission and reception

of such knowledge was notoriously problematic because travellers were routinely accused of being exaggerators or "travel liars." Schleck declares that some experiential knowledge was valued while some was derided, depending largely on the source of the account and his or her standing in the home community.

This article explores the credence given to one of the most organized and experienced set of travellers from early modern England to the Ottoman, Persian, and Mughal Empires: the English merchants of the nascent Levant and East India Companies. Despite the growing wealth and influence of these merchants in English society, their status as commoners and their devotion to business served to diminish the epistemological value of their knowledge claims. These same traits thus ironically served to enhance their knowledge base, and degrade its reception as truth in England. By focusing on an offer made to King James in 1622 for a direct trade in silks with Shah Abbas I of Persia, Julia Schleck's article will evince the paradoxical role that the experiential knowledge of merchants played in the development of English familiarity with Islamic lands and peoples.

While each essay in our volume focuses on different travel narratives and travel and commercial experiences one can still infer, despite the disparity of disciplines, methodologies and critical approaches utilized by the authors, that there are many points of convergence and shared conclusions among the different essays. A comparative study of the many manifestations of cultural exchanges between West and East will yield intriguing discernments about cross-cultural interaction. Such investigation, however, brings very forcefully to the forefront as well the inherent hindrances that imperil the process of exchange itself, which is never neutral and is always replete with cultural significance and the possibility for misinterpretation. As post-colonial studies as well as some critiques to their formulations have shown us, and the discussions in the following articles will illustrate, contacts and interactions between cultures are never entirely harmonious but decidedly contested instead. This is even more markedly the case in interactions between medieval and early modern Christians and other religious or ethnic groups: Muslims, Jews, Mongols, Persians, Ottoman Turks.[60] Postulating that these groups engaged in constant hostility or warfare, however, is equally inaccurate.

The medieval historian Brian Catlos suggests an alternative to such dichotomy while discussing the construct of medieval Iberian so-called "convivencia" and offers a paradigm of interaction that is more realistic. According to him, disparate communities operated under a "hierarchy of social formality."[61] Thus, some activities (trade, agriculture)

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60 European travellers and merchants who first came in contact with Eastern populations exhibited much more markedly than native groups every cultural "symptom of colonialism," as Robert Bartlett puts it: they were generally members of "immigrant elites with close ties to the metropolis" and a contemptuous disregard of native customs and controlled or interacted with large disaffected populations with a different language and religion (*The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 185).

61 Brian Catlos, *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 397. See also David Nirenberg's

were invested with little religious or ideological importance, so interchange occurred easily in these areas; in other more formal situations (marriages, religious debates) the groups would endeavour vigorously to protect their social boundaries.

The instances of exchanges depicted in this volume elucidate and demonstrate the validity of this theoretical model. Our project has sought to illuminate the processes by which missionaries, ambassadors, merchants and explorers established fruitful and pragmatic ties with their neighbours and hosts for the purpose of religious fulfillment and commercial and political expansion. Ultimately, however, our vision will always be slightly distorted and unsettling because the subjects studied by our travel narratives' narrators are always concealed behind a mask of "sly civility" in Homi Bhabha's words,[62] but also because our travelling narrators' gazes are always informed by their own belief systems.

Consequently, our impression of our topic of study will be indeed very similar to that experienced by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen when reading that most celebrated of travel narratives, the *Book of John Mandeville:*

> Unflaggingly congenial yet quietly treacherous, the *Book of John Mandeville* masks its recalcitrance beneath what postcolonial theory calls a "sly civility". Bearing a reassuring resemblance to traditional accounts of pilgrimage and travel, as well as to classical ethnography, the text seems companionable enough. Its easygoing narrative of foreign marvels and distant travels lure readers into enthusiastic encounter [...] but then leaves them to wonder if the motion-filled and unsettled world it brings into being won't erode the stability of their own. The *Book of John Mandeville* is, in a word, unsettling.[63]

Travel and the epistemological and ethnographic learning of other cultures which travelling provides always erodes the stability and the identity of the traveller and encounters among peoples from different cultures are always both congenial and treacherous. Unsettling yes, but wondrous and worthwhile nonetheless as attested both by all the travel writers studied in this collection and by the scholars who study them. The thirteen scholars here included are daringly debunking several old paradigms in their novel interpretations of historical documents, travelogues, material objects, visual artifacts, and literary texts. It is fitting, thus, to end this introduction by summarizing the elements which we believe make this a distinctive volume.

First, this collection is truly comparative, in that it draws on not only a variety of Islamic and Jewish writings, but also Spanish, Italian, and English works. This

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"Religious & Sexual Boundaries in the Medieval Crown of Aragon", in *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Interaction and Cultural Change*, ed. Mark Meyerson and E. English (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 1999), 141–60, and his book *Communities of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

62 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 93.

63 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Pilgrimages, Travel Writing and the Medieval Exotic," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 611–28 and 611–12.

differentiates our enterprise from previous, more rigidly focused and nationalistically organized collections, which by nature of their rigidity were unable to engage in fruitful comparisons across national traditions and histories and, therefore, neglected to assess contested collectivities like "West" or "Europe" (or "Christendom"). Similarly, our collection features essays that go well beyond the conventional focus on the Ottomans, including a number of essays examining travel narratives to geographical areas not so frequently studied, such as Safavid Persia or Mongolia. Such geographical breadth is, perhaps, only comparable to Nabil Matar's collection featuring essays analyzing travel accounts of Jerusalem by travellers throughout Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Near East.[64]

Furthermore, this collection is also singular in that it encompasses wide fields of inquiry, ranging from examinations of Muslim travel writings to Sephardic Jewish philosophy. This remains quite unusual in the literature on travel writing (particularly the examination of the *rihla* genre) which, despite repeated calls for work from non-European authors, remains, for the most part, resolutely Eurocentric. It is our hope that the inclusion in our collection of several essays devoted to non-European travel topics will bolster and validate work done recently by scholars such as Nabil Matar, Giancarlo Casale,[65] and others which aims to refute long-standing misconceptions in our field, namely, that the "Age of Discovery" was marked by an upsurge in European travel alone, and that Muslims rarely "travelled."

Lastly, the collection indisputably concentrates on travel narratives.[66] While there have been a high number of publications in the last decade[67]—particularly collections, but also monographs—on East–West exchange and/or European depictions of the "East" (usually defined as the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, with occasional attention to the Safavid Empire), the fact remains that, with some notable exceptions, the majority of them focus on European literary representations, with reference to

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64 Nabil Matar is, perhaps, the scholar who has most contributed to expanding our knowledge of the Arab perception of "Western cultures" in the early modern period, thanks to his frequent editions of travel accounts written by Arabic travellers: *In the Lands of the Christians* (New York: Routlege, 2003); *Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Muhammad ibn ʿUthmān al-Miknāsī, 1779–1788* (New York: Routledge, 2015), among other worthwhile publications. Matar's work has also served to counteract the prevailing Eurocentric emphasis in Travel Writing studies.

65 Giancarlo Casale, for example, rightly decries in his book *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* that no serious attempts have been made by scholars "to portray Ottoman achievements as part of the larger story of physical expansion abroad and intellectual ferment at home that characterized Western European history during precisely the same period" (4) and concludes that the so-called "Age of Exploration" cannot truly be called solely "European."

66 That is the case of most of the articles, with only one exception, Chapter 11, which deals more specifically with a literary representation of travel. Even in this case, however, the emphasis is still on travel and on issues of encounter and traffic in the Mediterranean Sea.

67 See pp. 2 and 3 of this introduction and corresponding footnotes for copious bibliographical references to many of these publications.

other European prose documents, including travel narratives, only to help forward more detailed analyses of literature (romances and dramatic works in particular). This is especially the case within English Studies, where the interest in Anglo-Islamic exchange has been particularly keen. The focus of our collection, on the contrary, is on travel narratives and their genuine enactment of intriguing cultural exchanges and transfers of knowledge among disparate ethnic, political, and religious groups.

The ensuing articles analyzing such travel narratives and their authors' collective perceptions have fashioned a unique navigational charting of what we envision will be a remapping of our assumptions about the emergence of modernity and subjectivity, about the transference of knowledge and the establishment of bonds between peoples of disparate origins through global travel and about the interaction between Eastern and Western cultural modes in the period before the onset of the so-called "Renaissance" and "the Age of Discovery" as well as during that era and beyond.