

Michiel van Groesen. *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)*. Leiden & Boston: BRILL, 2008. xiii + 564 pp. 86 b&w illustrations. \$129.00. Review by JAKUB BASISTA, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKÓW.

As we teach, research, and write about the early modern period, we encounter over and over again two milestones that marked the changing position of Europeans in the world, if not in the universe: I have in mind explorations and colonization opened with the Portuguese capture of Ceuta and the discovery of print by Gutenberg. New, strange, unknown, often fantastic and sometimes terrifying worlds opened to the sailors and soon after to all people of Europe. News of them were transmitted to various distant and obscure places in Europe and at times distributed in print, often being reprinted over and over again, having numerous translations and foreign publications. Europe joined the outside world, while Europeans were slowly learning about the distant places. Of course, information was available to a few who could afford buying prints and to the selected few who could write, yet nothing influenced human imagination more powerfully than images. While the first travel accounts carried either no pictures or barely a few of bad quality, the advent of the printing press led to a new genre that brought magnificent illustrations of the wonders, curiosities and terrifying scenes from abroad to travel writing. Not only did they enrich one's imagination, but they became accessible to the illiterate members of various societies as well. In his recently published work, Michiel van Groesen presents the phenomenon of imaginative story telling about the overseas world(s) with the use of prints produced by the famous Dutch family De Bry.

Most historians teaching early modern world history are familiar with the De Bry collection, but its origins as well as its detailed history and contents remain sketchy at best. This volume opens a discussion of the image of the world at the eve of the Age of Exploration as well as the printed travel literature from those days. In particular, van Groesen recalls the works of Ramusio and especially of Hakluyt who stimulated Theodore De Bry to prepare and publish his collection (112). He was also the one who supplied the Dutch artist with drawings and water colors of the American continent by John White. In

effect a series of volumes, beautifully illustrated and described by the most known travel authors of the time, was produced that still sparkle like diamonds amidst the many volumes of the time.

In chapters 2-4, van Groesen describes the career of the De Bry family and their business, as well as their meandering from the trade of gold smithery to publishing, before he turns to his chief concern—his discussion of the presentation of the outside world in De Bry's prints. Van Groesen devotes the next four chapters (about 130 pages) to a discussion of the contents of these prints and the way in which the unknown world was brought closer to European readership. The author first addresses the problem of how plants and animals were presented. He reports that knowledge of the fauna and flora outside of Europe was rather poor and not very precise. Although he offers some specifics, I must confess I was expecting much more here—in particular a deeper analysis of how plants in a world becoming increasingly more accessible were reported by contemporary travelers as opposed to how plants were understood and categorized by the scientific community in the universities of those days. The chapter devoted to the presentation of native peoples as shown in the collection improved my humor, as we find discussion of how the nobles were presented, how their images were viewed against the present Europeans, and finally how body language and rites of passage were presented by the De Brys. What is interesting is the fact that, in some cases, the pictures are far more detailed than the descriptions of the travelers. For example, we find evidence in various scenes of cannibalism, which suggests a deep-seated fear among Europeans of the "other." No less important is the question of religion or lack thereof, namely paganism, which the collection introduced widely to the European readers and which is discussed here in a separate chapter.

Having presented the main themes of the picture collection, the author returns to the analysis of the collection as a phenomenon functioning in seventeenth-century Europe. On the one hand, he discusses the differences between the various language versions, carefully changed not only in order not to limit the readership, but also not to insult it religiously. The importance of these endeavors is unquestionable, yet quite hard to grasp and expose.

What was the role of the collection in the contemporary society? What were its setbacks and positive impact? Has the collection added to the development of specifically qualified readers? Michiel van Groesen does not omit these problems and presenting his findings makes a clear suggestion about his opinion on the impact of this collection.

The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages is fascinating for a reader interested in the early modern prints or in the representations of the outside world based on the writings of contemporary writers. What I found especially inspiring were the fragments that point to the development and change in the public opinion of those times—discovery and colonization led to an expansion of the European consciousness about these unknown, new found lands. If one is looking for a detailed explanation and interpretation of De Bry's presentation of the overseas world, one may be somewhat frustrated by the scarcity of such an approach. But on the other hand, Michiel van Groesen's comparative analysis and interpretation of the images of travel writing has given us a lot of material for further study.

Jen E. Boyle. *Anamorphosis in Early Modern Literature: Mediation and Affect*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010. ix + 165 pp. + 18 illus. \$99.95. Review by LARA DODDS, MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY.

Anamorphosis is a trick of perspective that allows two images to be inscribed within a single viewing area. Stand here and observe two Renaissance gentlemen at the height of their influence; move slightly and the skull appears, shadowing the worldly concerns of the painting with an imminent and inevitable mortality. Since the publication of Greenblatt's analysis of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, anamorphosis has served as a convenient trope for representing the instabilities of early modern subjectivity. Jen Boyle's *Anamorphosis in Early Modern Literature* returns to this well-traveled ground with a study of anamorphosis as a cultural practice that anticipates the critical problems posed by new media. Boyle is particularly interested in the way that anamorphosis, like more contemporary forms