

direct-action style, visiting banned countries without a passport. In the 1950s, he reported that some Black prisoners of war in North Korea, far from being “brainwashed,” recognized truth in the prison camp denunciations of the United States as a white racist power. Worthy had been a World War II conscientious objector and was led into radical politics by the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation. He welcomed a worldwide insurrection of colonized peoples, but also wrote frankly that the PRC’s simple equation of the Chinese revolution with the Black freedom struggle in the United States was misleading and fashioned with the PRC’s own geopolitical interests in mind.

Frazier’s interest lies mainly in analyzing the use of media—newspapers, propaganda posters, performance, and the like—that created the “imaginary” of African-American/Maoist solidarity from the 1950s to the 1970s. With the widening of the Sino-Soviet split and the inception of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Black sojourners in China, particularly the refugees from Jim Crow terror Robert F. and Mabel Williams and the leftwing educator Vicki Garvin, issued broadsides and high school study plans brimming with Mao-glorifying enthusiasm. Both the Williamses and Garvin returned to the United States by the early 1970s and subsequently issued statements recognizing the destructive purges that constituted the Cultural Revolution. Frazier’s focus on media rhetoric and iconography steers him away from inquiring into their private thoughts in the later years of their PRC exile. But he does survey the transformations of policy through the 1970s that led the PRC to team up with the United States and apartheid South Africa against the anticolonial movements backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba, which shattered the allure of China’s anti-imperialist, anti-racist militancy.

Frazier’s narrative of solidarity and disenchantment leaves a profoundly mixed impression: it is still possible to understand the structure of feeling that led Black radicals to see a beacon in Beijing and to embrace the pretensions of Mao’s followers to a different kind of communism that resisted the consolidation of bureaucratic party power. Yet it is also bracing, even depressing, to read through the dispatches of undoubting sojourners celebrating a tyranny, faux-Marxist as it was, that masqueraded before the global left as a new-world order of people’s power.

———Howard Brick, University of Michigan

Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe’s Early Modern World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

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Readable and engaging, *Inventing Exoticism* explores the emergence of a distinctive form of world description during the second half of the seventeenth century and its ideological consequences. Benjamin Schmidt’s focus is on

large, costly, illustrated descriptions of the Americas, Africa, and Asia produced in the Netherlands. The author makes a compelling case that these books had a wide impact throughout Europe and situates them at the center of changing conceptions of global order. He provocatively redefines the exotic within its Dutch context by analyzing it beyond the realm of colonial power dynamics without obfuscating those dynamics.

Chapter 1, “Printing the World,” provides a close-grained look at Dutch book printing through the lens of Amsterdam publisher Jacob van Meurs. Schmidt explores the production of illustrated travel narratives and compendia and elucidates a system within which authors, engravers, and commentators were subsumed under the authoritative “brand” of van Meurs geography. These books emerge not principally as texts but as syntheses of maps, travelogues, and descriptions that leant themselves as much to viewing, handling, and perusing as to reading, and they were instrumental in initiating the mode of assemblage we regard as exoticism.

Chapter 2, “Seeing the World,” turns to the visual qualities of these books, staking a claim for Dutch geography as a prodigiously image-rich means of organizing the world. Central is the notion of *autopsia*—terrestrial rather than corporeal—and Schmidt draws productively on recent important literature on natural history. Most distinctively, he charts a trajectory spanning the decades between 1650 and 1700 to shed light on “the paradox of pictures.” This paradox is the apparently contradictory necessity for images which vouched for the truth in the eyes of stay-at-home travelers yet attracted criticism as superfluous distractions from objective description.

A diverse selection of the printed images that comprised these geographies takes center stage in Chapter 3, “Exotic Bodies.” Frontispieces, map borders, and cartouches representing African, Asian, and American bodies are examined as components of the production of knowledge and fantasy. Through attention to extravagantly violent and sexualized imagery, Schmidt presents a compelling, if familiar, case for these printed bodies as sites for the exercise of power and as repositories for appetites that could be safely displaced from the European center.

Chapter 4, “Exotic Pleasures” inventories the appearance of marketable goods within such illustrations and traces the prevalent slippage between places and things for the European reader and viewer. Schmidt argues that the vagueness of exotic motifs—the possibility, for example, of the dislocation of American feather-work to representations of Africa or Asia—served as a necessary condition for their ubiquity within the decorative arts. The book concludes with an epilogue that examines the eighteenth-century bifurcation of rhetorically systematic geographies that avoided copious illustration from the assemblages of exotic delight that continued to proliferate within a decorative register.

*Inventing Exoticism* is a compelling study that will be regarded as required reading for scholars of the printed book industry, the representation of non-European bodies, and the intersections of commerce, travel, and image-making.

———Sean Roberts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar