

Peter C. Mancall. *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America*.

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Just as the early modern endeavor of cosmography cannot be contained within one modern discipline, the life of one of its most eminent practitioners, Richard Hakluyt, cannot be restrained to the genres of biography or intellectual history. Peter Mancall's study of Hakluyt, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America*, transcends and assimilates biography, bibliography, cultural and social history, and literary analysis in order to recreate the comprehensive exterior and interior worlds of Britain's pioneering travel writer.

Despite the long-acknowledged impact of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* on the genesis of the British Empire and the ongoing activities of his namesake society, Hakluyt is an elusive historical subject, with few personal sources beyond his publications with which to recreate his life. His texts and reputation linger on, but Mancall begins his study with the assertion that "Hakluyt has vanished" (7). To resurrect his subject, Mancall is forced to rely on both textual and contextual evidence rather than documentary sources, and consequently *Hakluyt's Promise* exposes its readers not only to Hakluyt's texts but also to nearly every detail of Elizabethan life and culture that might have touched or influenced him: the landscape of London, the disease environment of Oxford, the development of

English cartography and ethnography, and, above all, the cultures of print and information in late Renaissance Europe.

A cleric by vocation and a relentless collector, compiler, author, and publisher of travel literature by avocation, Hakluyt's "twin goals of exploration and evangelization" (71) merged to create an intensifying "obsession" for the English colonization of America in the middle years of Elizabeth's reign. Closely following Hakluyt's own words, and echoing the most recent analysis of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* by Richard Helgerson — *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (1992) — Mancall focuses primarily on his subject's secular motivations rather than his religious rationale. Hakluyt's patriotic desires "to advance the honour of our Countrey" (93) and "deprive the Sp[anish] king of the trespasse of the west" (81) emerge as paramount, but additional economic and demographic motivations are given near-equal weight, along with the intensifying preoccupation with the quest for the Northwest Passage.

For each of Hakluyt's major works, *Divers Voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the Ilands adjacent* (1582), the unpublished "Discourse on Western Planting" — which Mancall identifies as the first "comprehensive rationale for westward expansion" (155) — and the two editions of the *Principall Navigations Voiages and Discoveries of the English nation* (1589 and 1598–1600), Mancall presents the comprehensive cultural milieu, incorporating texts, events, and people, that influenced his compilation and creative process. A picture — and world — of voracious reading, networking, and consideration emerges, as Hakluyt collected, copied, and classified geographical information for his books and his country.

Ultimately Hakluyt's life, and Mancall's book, takes us to the Jamestown Colony in 1607, through Hakluyt's works, colonial advocacy, and personal connection to the Virginia Company. Though his name appears on the 1606 royal patent, Hakluyt chose not to venture to the New World and his attention turned increasingly toward the East after the apparent failure of the colony. This reorientation is accommodated easily by Mancall, who presents Hakluyt as not only a man of the Atlantic world, but of the entire world, even though he never traveled farther than Paris. In the present postcolonial world, Mancall seeks more than the mere restoration of Hakluyt, but to reinterpret him "not only as a planner of expansion but also as a participant in a pan-European discussion about the nature of the world beyond Europe's borders" (309). This is an ambitious goal, but Mancall's focus on both the context and the connections of Hakluyt's life enables him to achieve it. *Hakluyt's Promise* is essential reading for students and scholars of the early expansion of Europe and the formation of the Atlantic world; those with interests in early modern cultural history, print culture, and Elizabethan intellectual life will also find it to be an instructive and innovative volume, both in terms of its content and methodology.

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