

*Picturing Experience in the Early Printed Book: Breydenbach's Peregrinatio from Venice to Jerusalem.* Elizabeth Ross.

University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014. xv + 236 pp. \$79.95.

---

In our age of digital apps such as Google Earth, one can virtually travel to almost any location, shifting effortlessly from satellite expansiveness to street-view intimacy. While such an experience seems entirely new, its origins can be traced to an ambitious project of the first century of European printmaking: Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in*

*Terram Sanctam*. Published in Mainz in 1486, the book appeared in Latin, German, and Dutch editions and was especially appreciated for its innovative woodcuts by Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht. These include two multisheet foldouts: one depicting Venice, the pilgrimage's departure point, and the other a map of the Holy Land with a view of Jerusalem. In this beautifully produced, well-written, and clearly argued study of the *Peregrinatio*, Elizabeth Ross moves beyond the typical questions of authorship, whether textual or visual, in order to explore the book as a product of collaborative editorial and pictorial collation and translation. As she demonstrates, the result is a carefully crafted "multimedia bricolage" (18), one that convinces its audience of its authenticity by asserting firsthand experience.

After introducing the *Peregrinatio*'s authorial team in chapter 1, Ross sets the stage for their innovative approach. Chapter 2 explores resistance to the relatively new medium of the printed book, especially in Mainz where Archbishop Henneberg was troubled by new translations of sacred texts produced without ecclesiastical oversight. His 1485 edict required that books be approved by a committee of university professors. The *Peregrinatio* was perfectly attuned to these concerns, opening with a dedication to Henneberg and a critique of the many poorly written "new books" (25) and the notion that everyone could be an author. As a cleric, Breydenbach had the necessary credentials, but he also offered something new. Although he relies heavily on the writings of others, he edits and confirms his sources through his role as eyewitness. This same process is exemplified by the work of Reuwich. As the book's visual author, he stresses the act of seeing as the ultimate form of knowing.

Chapter 3 focuses on Breydenbach's goal that the *Peregrinatio* be more than a pilgrimage guide, but also a goad to militarization and Crusade. In this regard, the printed text and images are linked to the sale of printed indulgences as a fundraising tool. Interestingly, the book's "catalog of the peoples of the Holy Land" (68) details a range of heresies to be combated, from Islam and Judaism to various Eastern Christianities. Ross's study culminates with two chapters devoted to a subtle parsing of the *Peregrinatio*'s most spectacular visual component: a foldout panorama of Jerusalem nestled in a map of the Holy Land. It is here that Reuwich's job as visual compiler and editor is most obvious, as he draws on earlier regional maps, medieval *mappae mundi*, Ptolemaic grids of latitude and longitude, and portolan charts of coastlines. Beyond descriptive details of geography, the map is dotted with place-names and captions. Near Mount Sinai, inscriptions describe the movement not only of Christian pilgrims, but also Islamic and Jewish ones, by literally tracing their respective paths with lines of text snaking toward the promised land or toward Mecca. Arcing into an uncertain distance, the path of the haj concretizes its status as a kind of antipilgrimage.

This opposition of Christian and Muslim perspectives also informs Reuwich's depiction of Jerusalem. The artist uses the vantage point of the Mount of Olives, a view specifically promoted by Franciscan guides, as Ross points out, in order "to recoup a Christian experience of sacred sites that were otherwise shaped by Islamic structures, controlled by Muslims, and barred to Christians" (143). Thus the image reveals

a consciousness of Islamic control and a desire to combat it. This is most explicit in the prominent Dome of the Rock. Although Breydenbach and Reuwich were undoubtedly aware of this structure's Islamic identity, it is marked "Templum Solomonis," an act of purposeful mislabeling that allows a "Christian reoccupation of the [temple] mount" (181). The vista's orchestration ultimately circumvents the inaccessibility of so many sacred sites by permitting one sweeping view of all of them. Thus pilgrims could still reap the benefit of promised indulgences by visually traveling to each location. As Ross argues, the "idea of an indulgenced view provides a missing link between the practices of real and spiritual pilgrimage" (162). In the latter, images become surrogates for actual experiences and allow many of the same rewards. In this way, the *Peregrinatio* was more than travel literature or Crusade propaganda, but a devotional aide that essentially made the real journey to Jerusalem unnecessary.

DAVID S. AREFORD, *University of Massachusetts Boston*