

Travel Writing: A Historical Survey

2. Early modern I: Looking East.

Creating monsters and marvels: the reader's response to the new.

- Medieval parameters of probability
- Age which accepted supernatural as much as natural causation
- Miracles and monsters etc...
- Belief in the 'auctores'
- Distrust of individual's empirical observations
- Sin of 'curiositas'
- Circular process of knowledge formation but are most of us any wiser/cleverer?
- 1492: Columbus 'discovers' America
- Launching a wave of European voyages of discovery

This period is called the age of discovery!

- Which in turn launch a wave of accounts of 'voyages and travels'
- Changes to attitudes to established intellectual authorities, the auctores
- New emphasis on empirical data, accuired through the senses
- 16th and 17th century 'battle of the Ancients and Moderns'
- In travel writing, new emphasis on the eye witness 'relation' or 'report'
- New emphasis on disciplined techniques of observation and note-taking

Early modern travel writing: the British context

- Looking west: Rich lands people only with 'savages'. Rivalry with Catholic Spain.
- Looking East: More complex tapestry of cultures, races and nations. Culture of greater antiquity/power/sophistication than Britain.
- A pre-imperial era – imperial rhetoric just beginning...
- A small island off the NW coast of Europe
- Distant from the great sits of classical culture.
- Experienced the 'Renaissance' belatedly
- Christian, and specifically, Protestant – at odds with Catholic southern Europe

Venice:

- An independent city-state (Italy not unified until 1870)
- Major power in the med from the 13th to 16th century – publicity purposes, made a war ship in a day
- For Coryat Venice = 'the fairest lady, yea 'the richest paragon and queene of christendome'
- Italy as site of high culture and sophistication