

RACHEL WINCHCOMBE. *Encountering Early America*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021. Pp. 256. \$120.00 (cloth).  
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Building on the work of scholars like Karen Kupperman in *The Jamestown Project* (2008), a volume that marked the quadricentenary of the first permanent English colony in the Americas at Jamestown, in *Encountering Early America*, Rachel Wincombe examines the foundations of early English colonialism in the Americas from 1492 to the founding of the Virginia Company in 1606. Wincombe argues that the sixteenth century witnessed the first sustained, if at times fitful, English efforts to understand, define, and commercialize the Indigenous lands and peoples of the Americas (2–3). Throughout, Wincombe situates the actions of English voyagers, merchants, and colonists within both a wider European colonizing context and within the context of rising poverty, religious reformation, and unstable foreign relations in England. To support her account, Wincombe examines printed primary sources, primarily English travel literature, promotional tracts, and translations of other European texts, such as Richard Eden's 1555 version of Peter Martyr's *De Orbe Novo Decades* and Thomas Hackett's 1568 translation of André Thevet's *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique*. On the whole, Wincombe succeeds in her goal of providing a culturally focused contribution to the history of Anglo-Indigenous encounters, recharacterizing sixteenth-century English ventures to the Americas as foundational, rather than simply precursory, to the development of empire in the Atlantic world (19, 208).

Wincombe has organized *Encountering Early America* into four thematic chapters. In chapter 1, she situates discourses of alterity within Renaissance ethnography and humoral theory by highlighting the influence of classical and biblical texts on promotional tracts. Aside from a few isolated examples of cannibals and Amazons in works by George Peckham and Walter Raleigh, the figure of the “wild man” dominated English ethnographic accounts in this period because it created a variety of positive and negative caricatures of Indigenous people that demonstrated a lack of colonial control (45–46, 51). In chapter 2, Wincombe shows that, over the course of the century, religious and commercial motivations became closely intertwined as the English came to believe that pious intentions would providentially result in material gain for their colonists. With the rise of anti-Spanish sentiment and the failed colonial ventures of the 1570s and early 1580s, Richard Hakluyt and George Best reevaluated English settlement schemes to combat disillusionment, and stressed the importance of evangelization as a means to promote colonial ventures (76, 93). In chapter 3, Wincombe looks at representations of Indigenous appearance, especially in the engravings of 1590 by Theodore de Bry, which hinted at the potential for Indigenous peoples to provide new markets for English cloth manufacturers. Efforts to clothe Indigenous people, particularly the Inuit and Algonquians, were intended to alleviate their perceived nakedness, which the English considered a symptom of poverty and incivility (124, 132). In chapter 4, Wincombe examines the impacts of ideas about the body, food, and the physical environment on expansion, charting a shift from a discourse of scarcity in mid-century to one of abundance and (often misplaced) optimism by the early seventeenth century (191). By way of conclusion, Wincombe emphasizes the adaptive approach to colonization that characterized the early Jamestown settlers. This approach, though due for its own refinements in the seventeenth century, was indebted to a previous century of lessons learned (202–3).

*Encountering Early America* is well researched, written, and produced, and will be appealing to both a specialist audience and a broader readership. The complex entanglements of sixteenth-century geographic, historical, ethnographic, and environmental discourses all appear and reappear throughout. Consequently, the book will be of interest not only to historians of empire and encounter but also to historians of science, environment, religion, and demography. Indeed, Wincombe's analysis and discussion of these entanglements are some of the

strongest parts of the book, especially in the section about diets and bodies, which reveals connections between the English aversion toward settling in the frigid Arctic, their distaste for Inuit foods, and their anxieties about maintaining health and temperance in unfamiliar places (175). These connections expose geohumoral, environmental, and political anxieties that shaped English aspirations for empire, forcing them to turn south to more temperate climates. Additionally, Winchcombe is very effective at incorporating other European influences on English representations of Indigenous people, emphasizing how English authors, like Eden in his translation of Martyr's *Decades*, were often reliant on Spanish, Portuguese, and French imagery (116). This reliance reinforces the argument that cultural encounters occurred within a broader European context, rather than isolated national ones.

Occasionally, some of the implications of the analysis could be more explicit. For instance, to what extent did the presumed incivility and alterity of Indigenous peoples govern the extent of their inclusion or exclusion from the English imperial system? As anti-Spanish sentiment increased in the late sixteenth century, did the English outlook on Indigenous territorial possession change, thus altering the legal status of Indigenous people? Greater engagement with the historiography of law in the early English empire may have helped to further contextualize the implications of their changing ideological positions. Nonetheless, Winchcombe lucidly demonstrates that sixteenth-century English colonial ventures laid the groundwork for seventeenth-century colonial projects through their efforts to understand, define, and commercialize the Americas. Winchcombe has succeeded in helping free sixteenth-century colonization and empire-building efforts from their old status as false starts, and she has instead found in them important foundations.

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ANN E. ZIMO, TIFFANY D. VANN SPRECHER, KATHRYN REYERSON, and DEBRA BLUMENTHAL, eds.  
*Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*. Studies in Medieval History and Culture.  
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As Ann Zimo, Tiffany Sprecher, Kathryn Reyerson, and Debra Blumenthal note in their introduction to *Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*, margins and marginality are well-established research topics in medieval studies at least since the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, too often, certain spaces and different groups of people are quickly understood as marginal, based rather on stereotypes and assumptions than on well-grounded research results. The thirteen contributions to this volume explore a variety of forms of marginality and marginalization under the headings “Race,” “Geography,” “Gender,” “Law,” and “Body.” One particular strength of this volume is that not a single contribution treats its topic in a one-dimensional way. Although none of the contributors deliberately uses the term *intersectional*, almost all scrutinize different sets and intersections of categories of difference, which renders the division of the contributions into five parts under these headings rather negligible. Lori De Lucia takes a closer look at the late medieval slave trade route between Borno (in today's Nigeria) and Palermo (Sicily), and examines “the trans-Mediterranean construction of the archetype of an inherently enslavable black African” (11). She emphasizes the role and importance of mainly Muslim West African actors in the trans-regional slave trade, whose ideas and images of *pagan* and *black* and therefore enslavable Africans were gratefully adopted by European slave traders.