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Rita Banerjee. *India in Early Modern English Travel Writings: Protestantism, Enlightenment, and Toleration*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions. Leiden: Brill, 2021. $167.00 (cloth).
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In *India in Early Modern English Travel Writings: Protestantism, Enlightenment, and Toleration*, Rita Banerjee examines English representations of India as they evolved and responded to the broader intellectual, epistemological, and methodological developments of the seventeenth century. Her analysis centers on the manuscript of the journal of diplomat Thomas Roe (in India from 1615 to 1619), the collated but unpublished diaries of East India Company factor Peter Mundy (1627 to 1632), along with the printed accounts of clerics Edward Terry (1616 to 1619) and John Ovington (1689 to 1693), and that of physician John Fryer (1672 to 1677). Banerjee compares these with the writings of several mainland European authors, chief among whom are the French doctor François Bernier (1658 to 1668) and the gem merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (in India at various points between the late 1630s and 1668).

After a superficial discussion of medieval and Renaissance approaches to travel writing, and a chapter examining the social and intellectual background of the authors and what she asserts to be their literary agenda, Banerjee begins her analysis proper with an examination of early representations of the Mughal emperor and his court in the writings of the earlier English travelers. Her chief interest, though, lies in the second half of the seventeenth century. This period, she argues, sees a marked shift in the form and content of travel writing characterized by a new interest in the examining the manners and customs of Indians, which she takes to be a function of the "new trends in thinking introduced by the Enlightenment" and the resultant "shift towards ethnography and empiricism" (21). The remaining chapters focus on the effect of this ethnographic turn, examining, first, representations of Indian religion, and then the act of sati (self-immolation of a widow on her husbands' funeral pyre), and the harem. She rounds out the book with a discussion of how these authors wrote about the political history of the Mughals under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Portions of two of these chapters have been previously published elsewhere.

As Banerjee argues, travel writing is an engaged activity. These writers' experiences were informed by the intellectual guidebook of assumptions, prejudices, and objectives they brought with them as they left Europe, and their resultant accounts are mediated by these concerns and those of their intended readership. Through this process, travel writing serves both to fashion the other and the self (2).

While Banerjee asserts that her approach is "largely historicist" (22), there is little subtlety in the historical analysis proffered here. Part of the problem is that Banerjee draws far too bright a line between the pre- and post-Enlightenment writers she focuses on and their ways of thinking about and representing India and its inhabitants. But the concern with describing foreign manners and customs she takes as diagnostic of the ethnographic turn in travel writing is classical and was a style for organizing spatial data adopted by many Renaissance geographers. Indeed, the idea of organizing travel data according to particular ontological categories is central to the *ars apodemica*, a style of advice literature notable from the 1560s, which detailed the nature and types of things that the would-be traveler should observe and report.

More surprisingly, Banerjee devotes no attention to the processes by which these particular texts were composed. Despite the heated and complicated debates through the seventeenth century about both the reliability of historically contingent observations of particulars and the extent to which they could be used as the basis for general assertions about the nature of things, she takes the shift to empiricism and the privileging of induction as uncomplicated. But travel observations and the process by which they were translated into text was far from a straightforward process. All the travelers whose works are discussed here would have reworked

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the notes they made about what they saw into the form in which they are now known. Some did so a long time after their return. Terry, for instance, did not publish his account until some thirty years after his return home, and then in response to particular concerns. But this means that such works cannot be taken as neutral, quasi-scientific accounts. Reworked by their authors, these texts have been through a process of interpolation whereby chronologically ordered, contingent facts have been extracted from context, and rearranged in such a way as to invest them with meaning as evidence of something. This process of generalizing from individual observations to create a useful representation of some aspect of reality is not just a scientific one: it is rhetorical too. But Banerjee expresses no interest in the role of rhetoric in the fashioning of these texts either in terms of their representation of Indian manners and customs or more generally in terms of the rhetoric of early scientific production, the subject of much recent scholarship.

Instead, Banerjee makes much of what she calls "disavowals" and "transferences" (for instance, 67). These are comparisons she finds between the society of the observed and that of the observer that the latter seems deliberately to have ignored. For instance, Roe makes no comparison between what he took to be the corruption of Jahangir's court and that of James I in England, which she takes as an attempt "to construct a civilized England" in juxtaposition to the oriental "other" (54–55). But Roe was an ambassador writing a journal chronicling, for the directors of the East India Company, his efforts to secure a trading agreement with the Great Mughal—it would have been surprising, then, if he *had* chosen to offer such a digression. Similarly, she makes much of the fact that none of these writers parallels the act of sati to "the practices of heretic-burning and witch-burning, widespread in seventeenth-century Europe" (195). But this might have more to do with the facts that the last burning for heresy in England occurred in 1612 and that English witches were never burned (they were hanged).

Finally, *India in Early Modern English Travel Writings* could have benefited from a much more thorough editorial process. The material on the French travelers is extensive but is not directly connected to English developments. While Banerjee intends it to serve as contrast, she presents it without any assessment of the different intellectual context—in terms of both religion and epistemology—from which it emerged.

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Over the last two decades, historians have devoted much energy to refining and diversifying our understanding of the Enlightenment, most recently with regard to the contributions and perspectives of craftspeople. *Crafting Enlightenment: Artisanal Histories and Transnational Networks* builds upon this trend with a group of case studies that span four continents and push the concept of the long eighteenth century to its limits. To justify this scale of analysis, the editors, Lauren R. Cannady and Jennifer Ferng, make two main arguments: first, that the Enlightenment was "not an exclusively European phenomenon" but rather "symptomatic and evidence of a rapidly accelerating world of mobile people, things, and ideas circulating across sovereign borders that were perpetually being reconnected" (13); and second, that

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