

Lestringant's extensive scholarly work in this field. However, the superstructure of the book, as laid out in the introduction, makes rather different and distinctly problematical claims. To begin with, Lestringant will have no truck with what he calls the "crazed revisionism" of those who "deny cultural anthropophagy" (p. 6). No substantial arguments are offered in favor of this rejection, although what the author calls a "sufficient answer" is supposedly provided by a quotation from de Pauw to the effect that human beings have amply shown themselves capable of all conceivable forms of vileness. "The Cannibals," we are assured, "did really exist, and have never ceased to speak to us"; the retrieval of their voices is "the aim of the present book" (pp. 6–7).

This is difficult to fathom. "Le Cannibale," a figure sometimes obscured by the translation into the plural "cannibals," but captured by the upper-case *C* in the quotation above, is a stereotype that, as Lestringant ceaselessly shows, owes its metamorphosis to European religious, political, and philosophical developments. There were, and are, Native American groups supposedly referenced by this stereotype, whose voices do need hearing. But they are not heard here, and it is difficult to understand how the author could have imagined them to be.

Ironically, when it comes to historically authenticated cases of cannibalism, as *Cannibals* makes clear, it is Europeans who are eating Europeans: from the family who ate their child during the final weeks of the siege of Sancerre in 1573, an event that traumatized Léry, to the survival cannibalism on the raft of the *Medusa*, memorably sketched by Théodore Géricault and turned into a novel by Jules Verne who, predictably, gives the appetite for human flesh to the crew rather than to the officers and passengers. Equally predictably, it was in fact the officers and passengers who ate the crew.

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Columbus Then and Now: A Life Reexamined. By MILES H. DAVIDSON. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Photograph. Illustration. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxx, 609 pp. Cloth, \$39.95.

Few historical figures have gathered as many myths about their person as Columbus. Now that the tide of books produced during the 1992 Quincentenary has washed to shore, Miles Davidson provides a useful service by summarizing and critiquing research on this individual. The goal is less to produce a new narrative than to clear away barnacles. Each chapter follows a uniform pattern by exposing the documentary evidence (primarily the narratives of Andrés Bernáldez, Hernando Colón, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdez, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, and the newly recovered letters of the *Libro copiador*) to an intense scrutiny normally decently buried in footnotes. Davidson relies upon his own translations, since virtually every version in print, no matter how recent or scholarly, is held faulty. The author then compares his findings to those of selected American writers (it is not immediately clear why Europeans are neglected). Historians with the most references to be found in the index, in

descending order, are Samuel Eliot Morison, Carla Rahn Phillips and William D. Phillips Jr., John Noble Wilford, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, and Kirkpatrick Sale, all of whose accounts the author found wanting.

This encyclopedic tome is well worth consulting to review arguments concerning virtually any point of interest about the Navigator. The end of each chapter provides brief and useful evaluations of the topics covered. A summary of Davidson's evaluation of the first voyage provides an example of his approach. Columbus was a self-educated artisan from a cultural backwater. Since he had never piloted a ship, his role in promoting his enterprise was that of speculator and, later, a kind of CEO. As for the issue of the mysterious navigator who allegedly showed Columbus his route, the author surprisingly believes that "there are neither atmospheric nor geographical reasons to doubt that the voyage of the unknown pilot could have taken place" (p. 106). On the other hand, there is no decisive proof that Columbus ever expected to make it to Asia, given that he brought neither the supplies nor the specialists expected for a first contact. Instead, he set out to find islands 'toward India,' which he did. Nor is there evidence for the near mutiny beloved by storytellers. The first landing more likely occurred on 11 October than on the celebrated date, although it will never be possible to figure out on which island Columbus landed, despite the obsessive attention to minutia displayed by antiquarians and weekend sailors. And the Santa María was deliberately scuttled to provide building material for a fort to commence Columbus's colonizing plans, and its crew left behind to hold the land.

By way of warning for those academics whose feelings are easily bruised, be cautioned that Davidson thoroughly dislikes and mistrusts professional historians who bravely construct a narrative line when evidence is contradictory, or who fill in local color that is lacking in the documents. One chapter heading bears Carl Sandburg's quote, of which the author heartily approves: "The best witness is a written paper." Thus regarding Columbus's reception by Fernando and Isabel in Barcelona in 1493, Davidson dismisses Morison's colorful narrative about Columbus being received with state honors in the Alcazar as "poppycock" (p. 288), and as to Wilford's assertion that on this occasion the king wore a garnet crown and the queen a white veil, Davidson comments: "What a touching and imaginative picture!" (p. 289). There are any number of times throughout the book when the author himself refuses to fashion a narrative path because he has been unable to locate a document that would provide a sure course and direction.

Finally, it is curious that the frontispiece of the book is a portrait that the Metropolitan Museum of Art long ago decided did not represent Columbus; a better choice might have been Tobias Stimmer's engraving of the lost 1550 "Jovius Portrait."

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