

Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metclaf, eds. *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-Between in the Atlantic World*.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. xv + 192 pp. \$25. ISBN: 978-1-4214-0346-5.

Duffy and Metcalf offer a very readable analysis of the sensational and bestselling travel narrative of Hans Staden of Hesse, a sixteenth-century German gunner who traveled between Europe and South America with the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the French and was held captive for ten months by the Tupinambá of Brazil, who were supposed to be cannibals. The authors invite readers to travel with Staden as “our go-between” (10) to the sixteenth-century Atlantic world, which in Duffy and Metcalf’s treatment is defined by its material cultures and the exchange of labor, spices, dyes, captives, and slaves. Staden, they argue, was a “physical go-between” (9) in that he travelled across the Atlantic connecting disparate places; a “transactional go-between” (9), who used strategic lies to play one culture against the other in order to survive; and, as the author of his own illustrated travel narrative, a “representational go-between” (10), who helped define the Tupinambá as cruel and bloodthirsty cannibals.

Duffy and Metcalf are at their best when they are reconstructing the material world of Staden’s European historical contexts. They trace his journey from Hessian towns, to the bustling slave city of Lisbon, and by sea into the “larger network of trade and communication” (13) that connected the Atlantic world, in lively

descriptions of life on the ship, South American port calls, travel disasters, and piracy. They then trace his return to his native Hesse after five years of travel and months of captivity to find it transformed by Protestantism. In that context, they recount the process by which Staden's story was vetted, edited, and illustrated for publication as a narrative of Protestant redemption, using his book as a go-between to the printmaking culture of sixteenth-century Germany. These chapters combine impressive original research with a command of secondary literature that makes this an excellent text for undergraduate students in Atlantic world history courses. Indeed Duffy and Metcalf have dedicated the book to their students.

In reaching out to that undergraduate audience, the authors often ask and answer questions about Staden's motivations and emotions as he adventured in the Atlantic world, attempting to cross the barriers not only of time and culture, but of Staden's "dissimulation," or strategic lies used by subordinates to flatter, manipulate, and even conceal true religious identity against the threat of persecution (57). Duffy and Metcalf are correct when they identify Staden as a fascinating character who inspires a full range of responses in his modern readers, from admiration at his cunning to condemnation for the real effects of his representation of the Tupinambá, which "served to label, caricature, inspire fear and loathing, and justify war and colonization" (142). Here the authors acknowledge the work of other scholars fascinated by Staden's subterfuge, as well as the heated debates over the veracity of his portrayal of the Tupi as cannibals. Thus the book also provides an accessible introduction to the many scholars who have contributed to this debate over cultural cannibalism, and could serve as an excellent teaching tool on a historiographic controversy.

Unfortunately, the chapter on the Tupinambá culture is the weakest in the text and simply recounts Staden's story of his captivity. Though they refer to the "cannibalism ritual" as "an honorable ceremony with deep spiritual meaning" for the Tupi people, Duffy and Metcalf also knowingly make the politicized decision to reiterate and thus reinforce the colonialist knowledge that the Tupinambá were indeed cannibals. Here they have missed an opportunity to elaborate on the role of the transactional go-between in the early modern Atlantic world by fully exploring the multiple possibilities for surviving through strategic lies and misunderstandings. This also might have allowed them to strengthen the connection between Staden's history and the violent identity politics of the Reformation era, to look more compellingly for his religious motivations, and even to contextualize his stories of cannibalism and captivity within the rich new historiography on early modern identity and the humoral body. All the same, through a richly illustrated, well-told account, Duffy and Metcalf have succeeded in capturing the essence of a compelling character: Hans Staden, an ordinary man with an extraordinary story of the sixteenth-century Atlantic world.

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