

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

Raymond J. Howgego, *Encyclopedia of Exploration: Invented and Apocryphal Narratives of Travel* (Hordern House Rare Books, 2013)

In 1503, the Frenchman Binot Paulmier de Gonneville set sail in search of a route to the East Indies. Lost in a great storm off Cape Verde, he reached an unknown land which he called Indies Meridionale. After a six-month stay in this idyllic tropical paradise, Gonneville returned to France together with the chief's son Essomericq who married Gonneville's daughter Suzanne. Many years later, in 1663, their great-grandson published his ancestor's memoirs. Subsequent research has suggested that Gonneville's mysterious destination was in the region of Ilha de Sao Francisco on the coast of Brazil. But it was not for this discovery, documented in the first volume of Raymond Howgego's *Encyclopedia of Exploration*, that Gonneville's voyage became famous, rather it was for the place he *imagined* he had discovered.

At the time, Gonneville located his destination some six hundred miles to the east, rather than the west of the Cape of Good Hope, and part of the legendary southern continent, Terra Australis. When the influential Charles de Brosses compiled his own history of exploration in 1756, he included Gonneville's voyage as the first for the Pacific region, preempting Magellan by 15 years. De Brosses' compendium of voyages inspired generations of French navigators and their patrons. Kerguelen, Bougainville and Surville all drew impetus for their own voyages from the illusory, rather than real, destination of Gonneville's voyage. So too did generations of English explorers, such as James Cook, who relied heavily on the translated version of the de Brosses text.

Howgego's fifth volume in the *Encyclopedia of Exploration* acknowledges the role such imagined voyages and destinations play in exploration history. By dedicating an entire volume to *Invented and Apocryphal Narratives of Travel*, Howgego recognises the ways in which imagination and exploration inspire and fuel each other. Imaginary voyages are not just flights of fancy, or self-serving delusions, they inspire exploration of the unknown, fill the gaps in our knowledge and tell stories we'd like to be true even though they aren't.

Another of Howgego's genuine voyages also illustrates the intertwined relationship between the illusory and the authentic. Inspired by the legend of Gonneville, Yves-Joseph de Kerguelen de Trémarec, set off in search of Terra Australis in 1771. On discovering some tiny windswept islands in the Southern Ocean (now known as Kerguelen Islands), Kerguelen promptly sailed back to France, abandoning his consort ship, and reporting his discovery as a new southern France with an ideal climate for grain, crops and timber. The second ship, under the command of Saint Allouran continued the mission, sailing to the east until striking Shark Bay in Western Australia and claiming the region for France. Meanwhile in France, Kerguelen's claims were greeted with a mix of enthusiasm and scepticism. Kerguelen was ordered back to the Southern Ocean to confirm his alleged discovery, and to find his missing ship, a voyage which ended with his officers' disputing the idyllic descriptions of this 'Southern France' and Kerguelen being court martialled and imprisoned. Such close interconnections between fantasy and reality must have made Howgego's task of compiling the first four volumes in this series difficult indeed, and no doubt prompted the creation of this fifth volume devoted to those voyages and accounts which could not be accommodated within the commodious pages of the earlier volumes.

Book reviews: *Encyclopedia of Exploration: Invented and Apocryphal Narratives of Travel* by Raymond J. Howgego. Danielle Clode.

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Howgego's fifth volume includes 'invented, imaginary, apocryphal and plagiarized' narratives through history, but the line between the real and the entirely fictitious is thin indeed. The real life inspirations for the novels of Daniel Defoe, Jules Verne and Jonathon Swift are well known, although Howgego, interestingly, often focuses on the less well-known fictional voyages of these authors. From Jules Verne's library, for example, Howgego draws only *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, *Journey to the Moon* and *The Sphinx of the Ice* for closer scrutiny, but rather surprisingly not the better known *Around the World in 80 days*, or *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*. Including even a subset of Verne's expansive *Voyages Extraordinaire* series is a work in and of itself and illustrates the difficulty Howgego must have faced in narrowing the scope of this vast undertaking without compromising breadth. The resulting combination of the obvious and the obscure, the famed and the forgotten, is one of the great delights of Howgego's book. Everywhere we read new fascinating details, even for people and voyages whom we might think were all too well-known. I knew, for example, that Laperouse, whose expedition famously vanished after visiting the nascent British colony at Botany Bay, sparked not only a plethora of real voyages and explorations in search of his fate, but also a fictional accounts about his unknown fate. Until reading Howgego's account, however, I did not realise just how many of these fictional stories were written. Nor did I realise that one of them appears to have been written by Watkin Tench, better known for his actual accounts of Sydney's early settlement than his fictional work. Similarly, the influence of Bougainville's voyage to Tahiti on imaginative renditions of the noble savage and idyllic nature of primitive life is a well-studied in the scholarly literature, but Howgego's text provides in fascinating detail the precise journey Bougainville's narrative has taken through various fictional, satirical and sometimes apparently factual accounts, such as Diderot's *Supplement au voyage de Bougainville*.

Navigating the journeys of these narrative influences within an alphabetical structure remains, perhaps, the only downside of this impressive body of work. Despite extensive cross-referencing, indices of books, imaginary places and names (in addition to the primary organising principle by 'explorer'/author), uncovering the various threads remains a somewhat fortuitous and serendipitous process. The starting point is not always easy to find. The only solution to this problem is, of course, to dive in at an arbitrary point and see where the journey takes you, an activity which I have no doubt many of the readers of this book will greatly enjoy.

Danielle Clode