



The Book of Marvels and Travels (Oxford World's Classics)

By John Mandeville, Anthony Bale

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In his *Book of Marvels and Travels*, Sir John Mandeville describes a journey from Europe to Jerusalem and on into Asia, and the many wonderful and monstrous peoples and practices in the East. Written in the fourteenth century, the *Book* is a captivating blend of fact and fantasy, an extraordinary travel narrative that offers some revealing and unexpected attitudes towards other races and religions. It was immensely popular, and numbered among its readers Chaucer, Columbus, and Thomas More. Here Mandeville tells us about the Sultan in Cairo, the Great Khan in China, and the mythical Christian prince Prester John. There are giants and pygmies, cannibals and Amazons, headless humans and people with a single foot so huge it can shield them from the sun. Forceful and opinionated, the narrator is by turns learned, playful, and moralizing, with an endless curiosity about different cultures.

Anthony Bale provides a lively new translation along with an introduction that considers questions of authorship and origins, the early travel narrative, Crusading and religious difference, fantasy and the European Age of Discovery, and Mandeville's pervasive popularity and influence. The book includes helpful notes on historical context that provide insights into medieval culture and attitudes. There are also three maps, an index of places and a general index, and a note on medieval measurements.

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Editorial Review

Review

Bale shows a lightness of touch in translation, which remains close to the syntax of the Middle English while avoiding archaism. Bale's introduction offers a pithy and elegant overview of current scholarship on the nature of the text. --Kim M. Phillips, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*

About the Author

Anthony Bale is Professor of Medieval Studies, Birkbeck College, London. He has published widely on various medieval topics, including Anglo-Jewish history, the poetry of Chaucer and Lydgate, the cult of St Edmund and fifteenth-century literature. His most recent book is *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages*.

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