JSP/REL 439; meets with JSP/REL 676
Travel, Translation, and Pilgrimage

Prof. Ken Frieden

From the Crusades to contemporary tourism, travel has been a prominent motif in religious literature and in popular culture. We will look at accounts of both secular travel and pilgrimage narratives, primarily by Jewish travelers. Most claim authenticity, although the line between fact and fiction is not always easy to determine. In any case, travel narratives have played a central role in literary and religious history. The pilgrim often sees the world in relationship to Scripture.

As many of the narratives we will read were not written in English, for much of the semester we will work with translations. Consequently, the course will also refer to pertinent issues in translation studies. There is a natural connection between exploration and translation, because as George Steiner wrote, “The translator invades, extracts, and brings home.”

Required Textbooks


[Used copies of most of these books are available on Amazon.com and bn.com]

Other readings are available as scanned PDFs on Blackboard. Print them out and bring them to class for discussion! It would also be possible to order print-on-demand copies of some texts.
Schedule

Part One: Pre-Modern Travel Narratives & Pilgrimages

WEEK 1  Introduction: Travel and Translation
Travel in the Hebrew Bible
The Book of Jonah and Psalm 107.
Any translation is acceptable; in class, we will refer to the
Jewish Publication Society Tanakh.

WEEK 2  Medieval Travel in the Shadow of Scripture
Eldad the Danite (ca. 880), in Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages, pp. 5-15.
Benjamin of Tudela (1165-73), in Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages, pp. 38-63.
[If time permits, look at the complete text of The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela,
trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (1907); PDF available on Blackboard.]
Petachia of Ratisbon (1170-87), in Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages, pp. 64-91.
Jacob ha-Cohen, in Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages, pp. 92-99.
Isaac Chelo in Jerusalem, in Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages, pp. 130-134.

WEEK 3  Renaissance Travel: Intertextual, Rationalistic, Naturalistic?
Meshullam ben R. Menahem of Volterra (1481), in Jewish Travellers
in the Middle Ages, pp. 156-207.
“The Letters of Obadiah Jaré da Bertinoro” (1487-90), in Jewish Travellers
in the Middle Ages, pp. 209-250.
George Steiner, “The Hermeneutic Motion” [from After Babel, 1975], in Venuti’s
Translation Studies Reader (textbook), pp. 193-198. [Also on Blackboard]

Part Two: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Travels

WEEK 4  Willem Bontekoe, Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage, 1618-25,
[Pages 1-70 available on Blackboard, Adobe pages 1-34]
Susan Bernofsky, in Venuti’s Translation Studies Reader, pp. 43-63.
First 3-page paper is due


WEEK 7  George Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean, and the Shipwreck of the Antelope, East-India Packet, There*. Dublin: White, 1788. [Esp. pages 10-97; PDF on Blackboard, Adobe 49-139]

**Second 3-page paper is due**

**Part Three: Fantasy Travels, Allegories, & Pilgrimages**


WEEK 9  Nahman of Bratslav and Nathan Sternharz [1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, trans. Arnold J. Band (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Esp. tales 1, 6, 9, 10, 12.


Third 3-page paper is due

Part Four: Travels from Eastern Europe


WEEK 14  Travel narratives selected by students.

WEEK 15  Travel narratives selected by students.
Conclusions and Review
Final paper is due

First 3 Papers should be 3-page (double-spaced) close analyses, focusing on literary aspects such as narrative techniques or figurative language, in conjunction with ideological issues.
E-mail your papers—the night before class, if possible—to Ken Frieden, kfrieden@syr.edu, and bring hard copy to class for discussion. The final paper should be about 6-8 pages long (undergraduates) or about 10-15 pages (graduate students).

Requirements: Three 3-page papers (30% of grade); careful preparation of readings, regular attendance, and class participation (30% of grade); final paper (40% of grade).