

The others are: "The Place of the Seventeenth-Century Revolution in English History;" "Political Discourse in Early Seventeenth-Century England;" "Archbishop Laud's Place in English History;" "The World Revolution;" "Gerrard Winstanley and Freedom;" "Seventeenth-Century English Radicals and Ireland;" "Abolishing the Ranters;" "Literature and the English Revolution;" "The Restoration and Literature;" and "History and the Present."

The essay that best illustrates the enduring themes in Hill's research, as well as his strengths and weaknesses, is "Abolishing the Ranters." In many ways, what Hill seeks to do in this essay is, against today's revisionists, to defend the thesis that the English Revolution was a decisive moment in both English and world history, and that the Ranters—a loosely jointed radical movement of the 1640s that sought to overturn all of conventional political, social, and economic thinking—were representative of how revolutionary the revolution was, 1640-1660. Moreover, their ultimate failure, like that of the Levellers and Diggers, is seen as emblematic of England's failure to turn boldly toward a new, better future. How cogently one can argue that thesis when one's only sources are printed tracts is the question.

What Hill has always assumed is that, historically, politics and ideas are grounded in social and economic dynamics. While his earlier work was set within a rather crude Marxist framework (the English seventeenth century as that period in which lord-serf was replaced by capitalist-proletariat), his later work is much more sophisticated. More than that, his sources today are no longer exclusively state papers and parliamentary debates. However, what Hill has never paid much attention to is the question of gender or women's history in general. Nor has he ever been able to set aside his preconception of what should have happened in seventeenth-century England—a turning.

Still, Hill's work is of enormous importance in the historiography of early modern England. This collection of essays reminds us of how fine an historian he really is.

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Jeffrey Burton Russell. *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians*. New York: Praeger, 1991. Pp. xiv, 117. Cloth, \$12.95.

Not wholly unlike previous anniversaries of the European discovery of the Americas, the Columbian Quincentenary, now thankfully behind us, brought with it a cacophony of scholarly reinterpretations, intellectual, cultural, and social controversies, and myriad varieties of kitsch on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. Once the flotsam and jetsam generated by this celebration is brushed aside, what remains is a serious body of largely historical writing and therewith a restimulated popular interest in world history. The brief volume entitled *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* by Jeffrey Burton Russell, a professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is an example of this scholarship that also explores the broader global context.

In this essay, Professor Russell, the author of numerous works on medieval, intellectual, and world history and its teaching, seeks out the origins of the popular misperception that most of Columbus's European contemporaries believed the world to be flat. Russell emphasizes that it is of particular importance that the actual source of this historical myth be recognized because of its continuing appearance in many modern textbooks and historical studies, including Daniel J. Boorstin's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Discoverers* (1983). The genesis and perpetuation of this view, which is not true, but widely believed, also touches upon questions about the nature of historical knowledge, truth, and honesty.

After stating the problem, Russell provides a good survey of the geographical worldview of the Middle Ages and what Columbus and his contemporaries really believed. It is pointed out correctly that the true shape of the world as well as its size were relatively well established by the third century B.C. by Hellenistic scientists and certainly known to the learned of the Middle Ages. For several reasons of error, Columbus's measurement of the earth's circumference was actually less accurate than that of many of his contemporaries. In the context of this discussion, Russell underscores that intellectually and otherwise the Middle Ages certainly were not "Dark" and that there is a blurring between the medieval and the modern in history.

Where then did the misperception originate? Russell answers this question with the opening line of Chapter Three: "Nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers flattened the medieval globe." He traces the error back to the 1820s and especially the very popular writings of Renaissance-influenced authors like Washington Irving and Antoine-Jean Letronne. He goes on to state that its acceptance "snowballed" with the Darwinian reaction of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And the methodologies and integrity of the fabricators and perpetrators of the historical myth are of necessity brought under close scrutiny.

While the flat-earth error is no longer as widely perceived by the public as Russell would have us believe, he has nevertheless written a scholarly, yet very readable investigation into its background, origins, and consequences. This book also is well-documented and contains a good bibliography and numerous helpful illustrations. It can be of interest to scholars and other serious readers as well as to students in the classroom dealing with problems of medieval-modern intellectual history, the history of European discovery, and historiography.

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Randall M. Miller, ed. *Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family*. 1978. Reprint. Athens: University of Georgia Press, Brown Thrasher Books, 1990. Pp. 297. Paper, \$15.95.

Two main teaching tools reach out from *Dear Master*. One is technical, the other substantive. The technical tool forms a prod, urging students to use standard English. Several unvarnished copies of the actual slave and ex-slave handwriting accompany the printed renditions. The grammar appears with all of the original folksiness, in stark contrast to what is today acceptable even in non-standard-English environments.

The other prod is patriotic. *Dear Master* demonstrates that United States slaves did not automatically choose freedom in Africa over slavery in the United States. No fear of reenslavement in the United States was expressed in letters from either Africa or Alabama. Once they returned to Africa, ex-slaves were both called and regarded as white by the natives. There was a major difference, however, in that repatriated Africans were unalterably opposed to the slave trade.

The American Africans, on both sides of the Atlantic, were demonstrably Christian. For example, the *Dear Master* letters express considerable anguish over proper marriage relationships within a Christian context. Moral restraints could be and were cultivated.

Dear Master implicitly sets forth the notion that white men did have to deal with sexual restraints against abusing black women. The value of passive resistance, which is carefully drawn out, tempered indiscriminate punishment. For the system of slavery to work, both masters and slaves had to work together. The letters and the commentaries document the cooperative relationship.