A number of books have appeared in the last two decades that have reversed the route of discovery by sending Native Americans across the Atlantic to encounter Europeans.[1] On Savage Shores claims its place on that shelf by focusing its attention on the Iberian peninsula in the sixteenth century. Reconstructing an “Indigenous diaspora” caused by voluntary and involuntary transatlantic voyages, Caroline Dodds Pennock divides her subjects into several categories, including slaves, go-betweens and diplomats, performers, and family members (p. 91). The result is a narrative familiar to anyone conversant in the historiography of the Columbian Exchange but one that also offers a more comprehensive picture of Native Americans in early modern Europe.

The vast majority of Native peoples who crossed the Atlantic in the wake of Columbus did so unwillingly as victims of kidnapping and enslavement. Citing other historians who have done the number crunching, Pennock estimates that the eastbound slave trade brought “tens of thousands” of Indians to Europe, and that Columbus himself was responsible for three to six thousand of these unfortunate souls (p. 46). These statistics are a sobering reminder of the ubiquity of Indian enslavement in the Atlantic world. Even after the Spanish crown declared Indians vassals deserving protection from such a fate, the trade continued because of loopholes that legalized the enslavement of cannibals, war captives, and people rescued from worse fates, such as human sacrifice. Practically all of these unwilling discoverers of Europe remain anonymous to us, although Pennock manages to recover the stories of a few from freedom suits brought in Spanish courts, cases that in themselves testified to the acculturation of these exiles to Iberian society.

Fewer in number but easier to identify in archival materials were those Natives who traveled to Europe as interpreters and diplomats. In a chapter on go-betweens, Pennock retells well-known stories about Diego Colón, Pocahontas, and Manteo and Wanchese, but she also uses these examples to illuminate some important differences between the Spanish and English when it came to...
recruiting such individuals. The Spanish practiced a form of “evangelical mediation,” sponsoring the education of go-betweens in monasteries and other religious institutions, while the English relied more on the entrepreneurial initiative of adventurers like Sir Walter Raleigh (p. 82). The upshot was that Native go-betweens remained transient figures in Elizabethan England, while religious and kinship ties integrated such people much more deeply into Spanish society.

In a similar vein, the Spanish were more generous than other European powers when hosting Native Americans who arrived as diplomats. This openhandedness stemmed in part from the Native visitors’ ability to project nobility and wealth by arriving with large retinues and exotic accoutrements. It also owed something to the practice among the conquistadors of taking wives from leading Native families and thus producing offspring who could claim elite status on both sides of the Atlantic. Such was the case with Francisca Pizarro Yupanqui, a daughter of Francisco Pizarro who left Peru and built her own palace in Spain. In contrast, the English practice of such marital diplomacy started and ended with the union of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. The visits made by Native diplomats from Mexico and Peru to petition Spanish monarchs for redress, exemptions, or privileges under royal authority call to mind similar embassies by Cherokees and Mohegans to eighteenth-century London. However, in Spain’s case, the Native diplomats were received more often as distant cousins than supplicant strangers, no doubt because many of them had mestizo backgrounds.

Kinship figures prominently in Pennock’s analysis. In addition to Native-Spanish lineages such as the one started by Francisco Pizarro, she also traces ones that connected France and Portugal to Brazil. We know of these unions because children produced by them sometimes traveled to Europe to seek employment, secure inheritances, or gain recognition of their legitimacy. Pennock observes that such transatlantic familial ties were “something particularly typical of the Spanish empire in this period,” although the distinction between Catholic and Protestant states seems relevant here as well (p. 131). Simply put, the Catholic Church’s emphasis on converting and catechizing Natives, along with its customs surrounding godparenthood, allowed wider avenues of assimilation for Indians into European society.

Pennock’s discussion of Native commodities and exhibitions in Europe is less successful than her exploration of transatlantic familial and diplomatic connections. A chapter on the impact of American crops such as potatoes, cacao, and maize on European diets takes a detour from human travelers to summarize the historiography of the Columbian Exchange. Another chapter, on Native Americans brought to Europe willingly and unwillingly as human curiosities, covers the sixteenth century but also takes the book’s widest chronological tangent when it discusses nineteenth-century Wild West shows.

On Savage Shores is pitched toward an audience of general readers, and as such delivers an engaging narrative that promises to broaden popular perceptions about the European-Indian encounter, particularly as it concerned the Spanish conquest. By moving her focus out of the Caribbean, Mexico, and Peru, Pennock reorients the reader’s perspective away from the gory tales of the Black Legend and toward a more subtle intertwining of European and Native lives after 1492. Specialists in early American history will find much here that is familiar, but will benefit from the focus on Spain and to a lesser extent Portugal and France, which offers opportunity for comparison to the more widely studied English experience with Native travelers.

Note
[1]. See Alden T. Vaughan, Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jace Weaver, The Red Atlantic: American Indi-

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