

1. In *Marvelous Possessions*, Greenblatt examines the European discourse of wonder as it operates in early modern travelogues and descriptions of the New World. He claims that wonder is the primary emotional response to radical difference, preceding reason. Further, he claims that wonder is used as a device to alternately renounce or legitimate possession of new territories. While he does trace the genealogy of wonder as a discourse (Aristotle, Milton, Descartes), he never provides convincing evidence as to how wonder became a tool for legitimating possession (he weakly argues that Columbus used wonder to aestheticize the appropriation of new territory). I do not think that wonder and appropriation are unrelated—I have noticed that both appear in early modern scientific discourse (specifically, documents about microscopy and curiosity cabinets). However, Greenblatt's argument is weakened by his failure to provide a convincing connection between the two.
2. Also, how did the discourse of wonder operate at the same time outside of accounts of the New World? At the same time that voyages of discovery were taking place, many other forms of discovery were taking place in Europe—of exotic objects and microscopic life forms, and society was undergoing a major transformation out of which arose both capitalism and Protestantism. How does the discourse of wonder operate in each of these fields, and to what ends?
3. Greenblatt points out an interesting aspect of the chronicles of discoveries of the New World—many authors suppress their own perspective and their own previous knowledge of texts on the New World and write their accounts using the knowledge and expertise of the natives. For example, Montaigne writes 'Of Cannibals' as the testimony of his servant. This discursive device, writes Greenblatt, was intended to represent "the naked truth of the New World, the same truth that we would find if we could strip away the interpretive and rhetorical accretions from the discourse of the elite" (148). This discourse sets up the native as the reliable witness, reliable primarily because of his ingenious naiveté—the native is not civilized enough to know how to lie. This device is the opposite of the literary devices used by natural scientists less than a century later to establish the trustworthiness of scientific witnessing. Shapin and Schaffer argue that the reliability of scientific experimentation could only be firmly established by a quorum of socially recognized and respected (male) modest witnesses who could testify and verify experimental evidence. And yet in the accounts of the New World, veracity is established by the native, who is considered trustworthy because of his lack of socialization. Maybe the accounts of the New World and natural science experiments are too different to compare their literary technologies to one another, but I find it interesting that 'scientific' truth is being established by a "natural state of humanity" in one case and by social prestige in the other.
4. Greenblatt's historiographic project is to interpret primary resources in order to explore the open-endedness of historical moments. This project seems both anti-teleological and forgiving—appreciating the social and subjective context in which decisions were made frees contemporary readers from judging historical

actors' actions after the fact. But Greenblatt certainly judges the European explorers in retrospect and writes a decidedly unforgiving history of European conquest. This is not to say that I am siding with Columbus, Cortes, and their ilk—the European conquest of the New World was nothing short of genocide. But this is easy to say in the twenty-first century, and was certainly not so clear to those embedded in the social context of the time. We all already know that the explorers were bad, bad men—why can't Greenblatt tell a much more interesting and nuanced story of European exploration and conquest by focusing on the discourse of wonder to examine how European explorers related to their new and 'marvelous' discoveries?