

GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEW FORUM

REFLECTIONS ON CHARLES C. MANN'S 1491*

Editors' note: Every now and then—perhaps not as often as we would wish—a new book sparks an extraordinary variety of reactions and stimulating discussions among geographers, and a single review simply cannot do justice to the volume. Such is the case with Charles Mann's 1491. Our solution is to present a "Geographical Review Forum," comprising an introduction that sets the stage, eight critiques, and Mann's response to them. May the forum inspire more thought, more talk, more research and writing, and more revelations!



A YEAR BY MANY OTHER NAMES

W. George Lovell

Queen's University, Canada

Our world has been turned on its head, and cannot be fixed.

—Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, 1612–1615

The year 1492 was good for some, bad for others. How do we come to terms with all that a year portends?

Fourteen calendar rounds have come and gone since the Columbus Quincenary, an event that witnessed an adipose body of literature wash ashore on the beach of human endeavor. True enough, a high tide did leave behind a handful of titles still worth combing through, titles deservedly kept in print, ones that always yield a return: Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* (1985–1988), for instance, or Ronald Wright's *Stolen Continents* (2003). Much of the work generated to mark that fateful and fatal landfall has been swept back out to sea, seldom consulted (for very good reasons) in the bibliographical doldrums. Numerous contributions have sunk, Titanic-like, to the bottom, extravagant ventures now glimpsed only rarely by an inquisitive few curious to peek at the relics of Davy Jones's Used Book and DVD Locker—the likes of Kirkpatrick Sale's *The Conquest of Paradise* (1990) or Ridley Scott's flopbuster film by the same telling name.

Like Columbus's offspring, Fernando, I am the son of a merchant seaman, so allow me to toil a bit more with maritime metaphors. Navigating a tricky passage is best achieved with a savvy captain at the helm, one assisted in his task by experienced and able seamen. Our discipline, the Latin Americanist realm of it in particu-

* 1491: NEW REVELATIONS OF THE AMERICAS BEFORE COLUMBUS, by Charles C. Mann. xii and 465 pp.; maps, ills., bibliog., index; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. \$30.00 (cloth), ISBN 140004006X; \$14.95 (paper), ISBN 1400032059.