



Books of the brave

Irving Albert Leonard

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Since its original publication in 1949, Irving A. Leonard's pioneering *Books of the Brave* has endured as the classic account of the introduction of literary culture to Spain's New World. Leonard's study documents the works of fiction that accompanied and followed the conquistadores to the Americas and goes on to argue that popular texts influenced these men and shaped the way they thought and wrote about their New World experiences.

For the first time in English, this edition combines Leonard's text with a selection of the documents that were his most valuable sources—nine lists of books destined for the Indies. Containing a wealth of information that is sure to spark future study, these lists provide the documentary evidence for what is perhaps Leonard's greatest contribution: his demonstration that royal and inquisitorial prohibitions failed to control the circulation of books and ideas in colonial Spanish America.

Rolena Adorno's introduction signals the lasting value of *Books of the Brave* and brings the reader up to date on developments in cultural-historical studies that have shed light on the role of books in Spanish American colonial culture. Adorno situates Leonard's work at the threshold between older, triumphalist views of Spanish conquest history and more recent perspectives engendered by studies of native American peoples.

With its rich descriptions of the book trade in both Spain and America, *Books of the Brave* has much to offer historians as well as literary critics. Indeed, it is a highly readable and engaging book for anyone interested in the cultural life of the New World.

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