In this volume, N. I. Nevskaya has assembled a collection of Russian translations of primary sources concerning the history of eighteenth-century astronomy in St. Petersburg, thus providing in one volume a highly valuable reference for Russian readers in this important area of their national history—one that is often, for linguistic reasons, inaccessible to most of them. As a rule, until well into the nineteenth century very little of Russian astronomical work was published in the Russian language. Most of the sources here—one archival, some archival and previously published, some facsimiles, and some reprints from obscure or rare publications—were published in French and a smattering in Latin, although hard-to-obtain reproductions of Russian newspaper accounts of disputes at the Academy of Sciences are also represented. While of limited utility to Western readers who can negotiate some of the documents in the original languages, Nevskaya’s volume is indispensable to Russian scholars for its concentration of important material and references, and very useful to Western historians of Russian science for Nevskaya’s detailed and well-informed footnote apparatus, along with the introductory essays to each section, which illuminate many nuances of the original documents. While her interpretation of the general history of the foundation of the Academy remains rather orthodox and at times dated, and her engagement with recent Western historiography of Russian science is practically nonexistent, the closer Nevskaya hews to her specific area of Russian astronomy, the more innovative and valuable are her comments.

The volume concerns “astronomy” in a quite general sense. While obviously central topics such as the founding of the Petersburg astronomical observatory, celestial mechanics, and positional astronomy are represented in detail, the greatest amount of attention is devoted to geography. The central practical task accomplished by the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences (founded in 1724) in the eighteenth century, in fact, was its contribution to a detailed atlas of the Russian Empire. This work was begun by J. N. Delisle (see below) on 30 December 1726, immediately upon his arrival in Petersburg. His early corrections of maps led to the production by oberprocurator of the senate I. K. Kirilov of a valuable atlas in 1734, which was then modified and expanded over the century. To accomplish this work, precise latitude determination was required, and the astronomical expertise ensconced at the academy was essential to this monumental effort. The longest single document in Nevskaya’s volume, and also among the most interesting, are the minutes of the geographic department of the academy from 1735 to 1738, occupying more than a hundred pages of text (not including commentary) and providing a fascinating glimpse at the internal workings of the academy. Interesting as well—if somewhat anachronistically named—is the section on “astrophysics,” which discusses Russian contributions to the determination of the existence of an atmosphere on Venus in 1761 and 1769. Clearly a seminal contribution to eighteenth-century knowledge of the heavens (and well annotated in Nevskaya’s rendering), this work was not understood as astrophysics proper—the analysis of the chemical and physical properties of heavenly bodies—until the nineteenth century.

Nevskaya displays some original—and welcome—interpretation as well in her choice of a central hero of her collection. Instead of the almost universal veneration of M. V. Lomonosov as the only natural philosopher of interest in the eighteenth century (barring the always problematic case of Leonhard Euler), Nevskaya rightly places Joseph Nicolas Delisle (1688–1768), the head of the astronomical observatory in St. Petersburg, as the pivotal figure in organizing and conducting most of the valuable researches detailed in this volume. In resurrecting Delisle, and in her careful editing and translating of these documents, Nevskaya has made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the history of Russian astronomy in the Enlightenment.

MICHAEL D. GORDIN

Felipe Pereda; Fernando Marías (Editors). El Atlas del Rey Planeta: La ‘Descripción de España y de las costas y puertos de sus reinos’ de Pedro Texeira (1634). 398 pp., illus., index. Hondarribia, Spain: Editorial Nerea, 2002. €100 (cloth).

Pedro Texeira’s Descripción de España y de las costas y puertos de sus reinos, appears in print here for the very first time, having been discovered only recently in the collection of the National Library of Vienna. Its publication represents a highly significant milestone in the history of Spanish cartography during the early modern period.

That history has long been understood in negative terms. The seventeenth century witnessed the acceleration of a trend that had begun during the latter half of the sixteenth century, that is, the
transfer of leadership in the technologies of cartography from the Iberian Peninsula to northern Europe. During the 1600s, the production of maps in Spain seems to have declined dramatically, leaving us with few examples of what constituted the state of cartography during the reign of the minor Hapsburgs. This paucity of documentation has lead various scholars to characterize the history of cartography in seventeenth-century Spain as yet another manifestation of the country’s “decadence” during this period. The production of maps, we are led to believe, withered along with the political and military fortunes of the Spanish monarchy, eventually becoming as underdeveloped and derivative—relative to the accomplishments of other European countries—as other aspects of Spanish culture.

Texeira’s atlas, as only one document in what remains a poorly documented scientific world, does not allow us to overturn this model altogether. Nevertheless, the atlas can help us begin to reassess it. For the first time, we have at our disposal a major cartographic project commissioned by a seventeenth-century Spanish king, Philip IV, that is reminiscent in its ambitions and in the quality of its execution of the projects sponsored by his grandfather, Philip II, one of the sixteenth century’s most important patrons of mapping in the service of the state. No longer need we speak exclusively in the negative terms of “decadence” because we now have this atlas upon which to base some positive assertions about how the Spanish monarchy under the minor Hapsburgs went about the business of mapping its domains, about what sort of cartographic products it most valued, and about what capacities it had to execute cartographic projects.

These and other issues are explored in the five interpretative essays that precede the text of the atlas itself, and in the “key to the atlas” that follows it. Their authors—Felipe Pereda, Fernando Marias, Richard L. Kagan, Agustín Hernando, and Daniel Marias—include some of the leading figures in the history of Spanish cartography. The essays provide the sort of discussion we would expect from introductory material of this kind, including what we know of its author and of its genesis and purpose. They also provide a very useful review of the contents of the atlas. Some, however, go beyond what we might expect to become significant contributions to the history of Spanish cartography. This is true in particular of Richard L. Kagan’s essay, which places Texeira’s atlas in the broader context of early modern Spanish mapping, and Fernando Marias’s contribution, which discusses it in the light of Spanish and European urban cartography. There are some regrettable redundancies, and the issue of cartographic decadence is never tackled directly. Nonetheless, all of the essays will be of interest to students of early modern Spanish cartography. The atlas itself is certain to become part of the bibliography indispensable to the field.

**Ricardo Padrón**

**Juan Pimentel.** Testigos del mundo: Ciencia, literatura y viajes en la ilustración. 342 pp., illus., index. Madrid: Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, SA, 2003. €22 (paper).

Travel accounts were something of a rage in the eighteenth century. The public could not get enough of them, so hacks churned them out. Printers made fortunes by producing new, inexpensive, pocket editions. John Hawkesworth reportedly received £6,000 for his account of British expeditions to the South Seas, including Captain Cook’s, although the controversy triggered by its release was to cause his death. Novelists such as Daniel Defoe and Jacques-Henri