



# Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria?: Torrid Diseases in a Temperate World

*Robert S. Desowitz*

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## **Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria?: Torrid Diseases in a Temperate World** Robert S. Desowitz

An instructive, often humorous, chronicle of how the worms and germs of the tropical world have made and are making their way north. We live in a fool's paradise, comforted, despite all evidence to the contrary, that we are insulated from the scourging microbial and parasitic diseases of the tropics. Yet past and present history reveals that many of the "classic" tropical diseases are, in reality, temperate too yellow fever in Philadelphia, the Ebola virus in Maryland and Virginia, and the Mexican pig tapeworm in Brooklyn. Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria? traces the origin of these extraordinary, but by no means isolated, cases. Did the crew of the Santa Maria bring syphilis (Pinta) back from the New World? Did Charles Darwin suffer a protracted illness and eventually die from the bite of an assassin bug while traveling through Argentina? Writing with enthusiasm and from wide medical experience, Dr. Robert Desowitz is a veritable Sherlock Holmes of parasites and pathogens. Spanning a human history of over 50,000 years, Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria? also looks ahead to the constant dangers of microbial diseases of unprecedented savagery "Doomsday bugs" creeping into the industrialized world.

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