Italian missionaries, merchants, chroniclers, biographers, poets, visionaries, storytellers and letter-writers described and often distorted faraway places for Western European audiences. Odoric of Pordenone and Marco Polo introduced their readers to East Asia; Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Dante told travel stories set in Italy, the Near East, and the afterlife; and Margherita Datini and Christine de Pizan proved that women were as adept as their male counterparts at devising worlds. ITAL 401 (cross-listed with MED 304), is an interdisciplinary course that explores these authors in relation to medieval trade, diplomacy, gender roles, religion, ethnography, and warfare.