

Early Modern Travel Writing (2): English Travel Writing

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‘A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine’, begins one of the most ambitious poems of sixteenth-century England, Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590).¹ Within the European literary canon, epics like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Argonautica* had all begun, in some way, with the promise of a journey. No stranger to that classical heritage, which a humanist education inculcated in all its students, Spenser brought travel back home: his knight, familiar enough to English readers with their still insatiable appetite for medieval romances and their characteristic quests, sets forth in a Faerie land that is not-quite-England. Spenser was not the only one. The revised and much-augmented second version of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* in 1593 memorably begins with two shepherds being interrupted in their pastoral laments by a ‘thing’ that floats closer and closer to the shore, till it turns out to be the shipwrecked, but still living, body of one of the two protagonists.² It is a moment that merges two worlds: the seclusion of the European pastoral tradition and the sprawling geopolitical world of Greek romances like Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*, shaped by the crosscurrents of ancient global traffic. By the end of the century, on the English popular stage, a play that we now think of as representative of a certain nascent early modern sensibility would turn to its denouement with the arrival of a travel letter:

HORATIO: What are they that would speak with me?

SERVANT: Seafaring men, sir. They say they have letters for you.³

¹ Edmund Spenser, *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, and others, 2nd edn (London: Pearson, 2007), I.I.I, p. 31.

² Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 64.

³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Neil Taylor and Ann Thompson (London: Arden, 2006), 4.6.1–2.

From the chivalric heroes of Spenser and Sidney, to the account of his fortunes in the hands of pirates which Shakespeare's Hamlet describes in his letter to Horatio, such examples are testament to the ways in which travel infused both the culture and the imagination of England in the great age of voyages and discoveries. England was not unusual in this. We know that across Europe as a whole, the advent of print, in particular, coincided with the rise in trade, travel, and geographical discoveries.⁴ It produced a surge in texts that recorded, remembered, and anthologised travel experience, and such texts often circulated as extensively as the travellers themselves, weaving travel experience into the very fabric of society.

Like readers elsewhere in Europe, English readers had access to a huge range of travel-related texts. These ranged from advice literature and cartographic collections, to hefty compilations of information that catered to real and armchair travellers alike.⁵ The latter ranged from standard classical exemplars such as Ptolemy's *Geography* and Pliny's *Natural History*, to encyclopedic accounts like the *Fardle of Facions* (1555), translated from Johann Boemus's *Omnium gentium mores* (1520). Sebastian Münster's *Universal Cosmography* was another often critiqued yet unavoidable presence, published in German in 1544 and Latin in 1550, and followed by multiple translations and adaptations, including English versions in 1561 and 1572. Later, there would be Giovanni Battista Ramusio's immense three-volume collection of travel accounts, *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (1550–9), and Theodor de Bry's magnificently illustrated series of publications, *Les grands voyages*, or 'The Discovery of America' (1590–1620) and the *Petits voyages*, or the 'India Orientalis' series (1598–1634). Both the reach of the texts and the range of translations is testament to the prominence of travel, opening up both Britain and Europe to larger global crosscurrents, which challenged many of the epistemological certainties of the period.⁶ The great homegrown compendia of Tudor and Stuart England in many ways emerged as responses to the continental exemplars. Richard Eden's *Decades of the New World* (1555), assembling translations from Münster to Ramusio, Peter Martyr, Gonzalo Fernández de

⁴ For more on the relationship between print and the development of travel writing, see Chapter 4 above.

⁵ See Edward Godfrey Cox, *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel*, 3 vols. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1935–49); and John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965).

⁶ Those global crosscurrents of travel and their impact have been explored variously as 'connected histories' and as part of a 'global renaissance'. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford University Press, 2004); and Jyotsna Singh (ed.), *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), among others.

Oviedo, and Antonio Pigafetta, was significantly expanded by Richard Willes in his *A History of Travayle in the West and East Indies* (1577). It provided a model for both emulation and challenge to Richard Hakluyt, whose own monumental *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, first printed in 1589 and turned into a three-folio-volume behemoth in 1598–1600, focused pointedly on English travels and voices, albeit with scattered exceptions, as a way of inspiring English travel and trade to catch up with continental endeavours.⁷ That, in turn, would be further expanded by Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625).

These compendia preserve a range of voices that covers the entire typology of figures involved in the production of early modern English travel writing that William Sherman has suggested, from editors to pilgrims, errant knights, merchants, explorers, colonisers, captives and castaways, ambassadors, pirates, and scientists.⁸ As collective, material interventions, their importance is undeniable in establishing a certain English reputation and approach to travel and travel writing, framed by an emergent national, Protestant identity, and expressed through an emphasis on eye-witnessing and plain speaking.⁹ Much of it was driven by a collective English drive for trade and nascent imperial and colonial ambitions, with the first major English trading companies being chartered within a space of fifty years, from the early Muscovy (1555), Cathay (1576), Eastland or North Sea (1579), Turkey (1581), Venice (1583) and Levant (1592) companies, to the significantly more long-term influence of the East India Company (1600) and the Virginia Company (1606). However, attending to them barely scratches the surface of the impact of travel writing on English cultural life and the imagination in this period. This essay will offer a glimpse into the variety or *copia* which drove the production, and often determined the structure, of that larger body of English travel texts. It will also explore the multiple ways in which travel

⁷ See Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (eds.), *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

⁸ William H. Sherman, 'Stirrings and Searchings (1500–1750)', in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 21–30.

⁹ See Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 149–92; Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Mary Fuller, *Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narrative in the Age of European Exploration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Nandini Das, 'Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing', in Andrew Hadfield (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500–1640* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 292–309.

writing drew on and interpolated itself into different genres and literary forms.

It was inevitable that romance would be one of those forms. As Spenser's opening of *The Faerie Queene* exemplified, the hugely popular genre of chivalric romance had always offered a central role to the quest. It is therefore not surprising to see glimpses of that emerge in the large volume of travel accounts produced by English travellers who found themselves in continental Europe and further abroad in the period. One representative sixteenth-century figure in this context is the writer, translator, playwright, and occasional anti-Catholic intelligencer, Anthony Munday. In 1578, twenty-five-year-old Munday, apprenticed to the printer John Allde, broke his indentures and set off to travel in continental Europe. His intention, as he would later claim in the preface to the account of that journey, *The English Romayne Life* (1582), was 'to see straunge Countreies, as also affection to learne the languages', but the actual publication of his travel account was driven also by the need to establish himself as a credible witness for the Crown at the trial of Edmund Campion and other Jesuit missionaries charged with treason.¹⁰ Accused of lying about the sojourn at the English College in Rome that had brought him in contact with some of the accused, Munday printed his account to satisfy those 'doubtful whether I have been there or no' (sig. Br^r), while also catering to the curiosity of his Protestant English readers about the Catholic cities of Europe.

Throughout Munday's account of his journey to Rome, tropes of travel experience and established narrative models inflect each other constantly. As Melanie Ord has pointed out, the experience of being robbed of all belongings by a group of disbanded soldiers at the very beginning of his continental journey on the road between Boulogne and Amiens enables Munday to represent himself and his travelling companion as prodigal youths, lamenting the loss of their 'former quiet being in England, carefully tended by our parents and lovingly esteemed among our friends, all which we undutifully regarding, rewarded us with the rod of our own negligence' (sig. Br^v).¹¹ His subsequent infiltration of the Catholic English College in Rome, and return home, armed with acquired knowledge to be employed in the service of his Protestant queen and country, fits that familiar trajectory of prodigality

¹⁰ Anthony Munday, *The English Romayne Lyfe* (London, 1582), sig. Br^r.

¹¹ Melanie Ord, 'Representing Rome and the Self in Anthony Munday's *The English Roman Life*', in Mike Pincombe (ed.), *Travels and Translations in the Sixteenth Century: Selected Papers from the Second International Conference of the Tudor Symposium* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 45–64 (at p. 49).

perfectly. When he recounts the story of the nights he spends in a haunted room at the English College, it is partly to demonstrate the inefficacy of Catholic superstition, since throwing ‘holy water about’, as suggested by the priests, ‘did as much good, as the thing is good of it selfe’ (sig. I4^r), but it is also an inset story of strange visitation and night trial whose basic premise would be familiar to any consumer of fabliaux and romances. The close resonances between Munday’s travel account and those narrative models become even clearer when we juxtapose *English Romayne Life* with the romance *Zelauto, the Fountaine of Fame*, which Munday produced in 1580, immediately after his return to England. The adventures of Zelauto, son and heir of the Duke of Venice, open up a romance hall of mirrors to Munday’s own experiences in Rome.¹²

Elsewhere, Munday’s account in the *English Romayne Life* absorbs other models. The list of the relics in the Seven Churches of Rome, for instance, is offered as an illustration of the ‘subtiltie of Anti-Christ’ (sig. E3^v). However, ‘le sette chiese di Roma’, a pilgrimage route popularised by Filippo Neri, was the subject of numerous guidebooks, images, and maps since the Jubilee of 1575, when over 400,000 pilgrims had visited Rome to gain papal indulgence from Pope Gregory XIII. Munday’s account of that route – Protestant protestations aside – is an accurate enough description to satisfy any curious traveller or reader. It would also be familiar enough from texts such as the great antiquarian Onofrio Panvinio’s *De praecipuis urbis Romae sanctoribusque basilicis*, published c.1570, which ran through at least fourteen editions over ten years, and as Eamon Duffy has pointed out, ‘provided both a stimulus and a quarry for the flood of publications on Christian Rome related to or flowing from the Jubilee of 1575’.¹³ On the other hand, the account of the death of fellow Englishman Richard Atkins, burnt at the stake for desecrating the sacrament at St Peter’s Church, which Munday offers at the end, is deeply and deliberately reminiscent of Protestant martyrdom accounts, with which his readers would have been equally familiar.

The fine line that Munday toes between fascination with and criticism of Catholic practices demonstrates a basic anxiety about travel, and about travel to Catholic Europe in particular, that emerges in many other English texts of the sixteenth century. When Roger Ascham evoked the old Italian proverb, ‘*Inglese Italianato e un diavolo incarnato*’ (an Englishman Italianate is a devil

¹² Nandini Das, *Renaissance Romance: The Transformation of English Prose Fiction* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 97–8.

¹³ Eamon Duffy, *Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants, and the Conversion of England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 183.

incarnate) to characterise the Italianate English traveller in his *Scholemaster* (1570), he was using a turn of phrase that had come into circulation in the fourteenth century to describe the English mercenaries or condottieri like the infamous Sir John Hawkwood (c.1323–94) who offered their services for sale across the continent.¹⁴ But for English humanists and educators such as Ascham, the lure of Catholic Europe was far more widespread and insidious, attracting impressionable English youth to ‘Circe’s court’ (p. 226) and metamorphosing them into seditious beasts. Munday himself, as well as later travellers such as Fynes Moryson, would comment repeatedly and defensively about the need for pragmatic compromise and often inevitable necessity of conforming, at least outwardly, to Catholic practices. However, what is perhaps most telling is that the threat which Ascham identifies particularly characteristic of such travellers is variety: *copia* and invention that overflow boundaries and defy control. Ascham’s Italianate travellers are malcontents corrupted by Catholic influence, which spreads throughout England like a virulent infection in the guise of the new Italianate fiction that they introduce into the country as the fruit of their travels. It contains ‘such subtle, cunningg, new, and diuerse shiftes, to cary yong willes to vanitie . . . as the simple head of an English man is not hable to inuent’, Ascham would claim. ‘Suffer these bookes to be read, and they shall soone displace all bookes of godly learnyng’ (p. 231). In the ambivalent *copia* of *The English Romayne Life*, in Munday’s own later career as the foremost English translator of the French and Iberian chivalric romance cycles of *Amadis de Gaule* and *Palmerin of England*, or in the wicked, irreverent wit of later prose narratives like Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) that both emulates and ridicules travel narratives and chivalric romance at once, there is perhaps some corroboration of Ascham’s accusation.

The longevity of the literary turn through which Munday transformed his journey into romance in the Elizabethan period would continue to inflect texts such as Captain John Smith’s later Jacobean account of his travels in the *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), which provides a thrilling list of near escapes, complete with a litany of exotic women, from the ‘beauteous Lady Tragabigzanda’ in Turkey, to the ‘blessed Pokahontas, the great Kings daughter of Virginia’ in the New World.¹⁵ Tireless producers of popular

¹⁴ *The English Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. W. A. Wright (Cambridge University Press, 1904), p. 229; Sara Warneke, *Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), p. 107.

¹⁵ John Smith, *The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles . . .* (London, 1624), sig. [ii]^v.

fiction, on the other hand, would use their credentials as travellers to lend an added gloss to their narratives in a burgeoning market of print: Thomas Lodge famously admitted to writing his *Rosalynde* (1590) 'to beguile the time with labour' during a sea voyage to the Azores and the Canary Islands.¹⁶ Travel, and fiction that travelled and was inspired by travel, would soon come to transform the English literary landscape and shape travel writing itself.¹⁷

These last few examples, however, are also indicative of the wider domain of travel beyond the known European territories that were being traversed by the English increasingly as we move into the seventeenth century. Sometime in 1614–15, a strange meeting took place 'betwixt [I]Spahan and Lahore, just about the Frontiers of Persia and India'.¹⁸ Part of the caravan heading towards Isfahan were the English adventurer and diplomat Sir Robert Shirley [Sherley] and his Circassian wife Teresia – on their way back from King James I's court in England to that of the Shah of Persia. On the other side was the idiosyncratic traveller Thomas Coryate, heading from Isfahan towards the Mughal court in India and undertaking most of that onerous journey on foot. Coryate's two books describing his exploits, walking almost 2,000 miles across Europe and covering forty-five cities, had earned him a degree of notoriety already: *Coryats Crudities* (1611) and *Coryats Crambe* (1611) were accompanied by playful mock-panegyrics by well-known figures, from poets such as John Donne and Ben Jonson, to courtiers and diplomats such as Sir Henry Goodyer and Sir Thomas Roe. At their meeting, Coryate was delighted to note that Sherley had both books in his luggage, 'neatly kept'.¹⁹ The journey to India, which ended with his death in Surat from dysentery in December 1617, would lead to two further books, *Thomas Coriate traoueller for the English wits* (1616) and the posthumously published *Mr Thomas Coriat to his friends in England* (1618). Even the records of the incomplete journey bear testimony to what Coryate himself described as his 'insatiable greedinesse of seeing strange countries: which exercise is indeede the very Queene of all the pleasures in the world'.²⁰

¹⁶ Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde. Euphuus golden legacie found after his death in his cell at Silixedra* . . . (London, 1590), sig. A2^v.

¹⁷ For examples of the traffic between fiction and travel in this period, see the essays in 'Travel and Prose Fiction in Early Modern England', Special Issue of *Yearbook of English Studies*, ed. Nandini Das, 41/1 (2011). For more on the relationship between fiction and travel in later periods, see Chapter 30 below.

¹⁸ *Thomas Coriate traoueller for the English wits* . . . (London, 1616), p. 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Coryate's texts, and particularly those last two 'Mughal' accounts, offer a very different glimpse into early modern English travel writing, not only in ranging far beyond the known Christian world, but also through the multiplicity of impetus and variety of forms that they adopted. Coryate's choice of culinary titles such as *Crudities* and *Crambe*, his admission of 'greediness' and description of travel as the 'Queene of all the pleasures', are telling: this is travel as entertainment, both for the traveller and the readers at home. This is not to say that Coryate's texts are devoid of the practical details that contemporaneous advice literature asked travellers to note.²¹ He dutifully notes, for instance, the days it takes him to move between cities in his route across the Middle East, the size of the 'goodly city of [L]ahore in India, one of the largest Cities of the whole universe' (p. 13). But by addressing the cosy group of the 'sireniacal gentlemen, that meet the first Fridaie of every Moneth, at the signe of the Mere-Maide in Bread streete' (p. 37) in *Thomas Coriate traoueller for the English wits*, Coryate also very clearly shows travel as a communal activity. The traveller's interactions with communities abroad are recorded, and perhaps undertaken, at least partially with an eye on their potential pleasurable consumption by a community of readers awaiting his accounts at home. The resulting texts are indeed 'greedily' polyphonic in form and language. There are couplets and verses thrown in here and there; a letter written by Coryate to his mother shares space with the speech he made in 'the Persian tongue' to the Mughal emperor, printed in idiosyncratic phonetically transcribed Persian and English translation; and woodcuts – Coryate perched on an elephant, Coryate astride a camel – adorn the title-pages. That sense of travel writing as an integral part of a community is further emphasised when Coryate's adventures are seen refracted through multiple records by others; inevitable in an age when both traffic and frequency of travel grew exponentially, and travellers proliferated even in what might have seemed like remote and exotic destinations. Coryate's arrival in India in 1615 coincided with the embassy of the first English ambassador to the Mughal court, Sir Thomas Roe. In the more serious official journals and accounts by Roe and his chaplain Edward Terry, therefore, we get sudden fleeting glimpses of Coryate, making orations, and getting into spats in the local language with local figures, ranging from the mullah calling for prayers, to the washerwoman employed by Roe's retinue.²²

²¹ For more on travel advice literature, see Chapter 25 below.

²² Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615–1619*, ed. Sir William Forster, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1899), vol. i, pp. 103–4; Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655), pp. 70–1, 270–1.

Coryate was one of a group of early seventeenth-century writers who used their wide-ranging journeys around Europe and the 'Old World' of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, to produce equally wide-ranging accounts. They used the routes, connections, and knowledge opened up in those far-flung regions by England's burgeoning trade connections (of the kind preserved in the larger compendia by Hakluyt and others), but their own journeys were driven not so much by the usual purposes of trade, diplomacy, or political imperatives, but primarily by a desire to satisfy individual curiosity, and to share that travel experience with reading communities back home. As a result, while often equally invested in ideologically inflected accounts of cross-cultural encounters, they provide an interesting counterpoint to the more official travel accounts produced as part of navigational, mercantile, or diplomatic activity. Among Coryate's contemporaries, such figures include the Scottish traveller William Lithgow, whose nineteen years of travel informed *A most delectable, and true discourse, of an admired and painefull peregrination from Scotland, to the most famous kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affricke* (1614), revised and updated in 1616, 1623, 1632 (as *The Totall Discourse*), and 1640. George Sandys, who travelled across France and Italy, before embarking on an epic journey to Turkey, Egypt, and Palestine, utilised his humanist training to compile a rich chorographic description of the places he visited in his *Relation of a Journey Begun An. Dom. 1610* (1615), full of classical learning constantly juxtaposed with present experience.²³ And from 1617, Fynes Moryson began to publish his massive multi-volume *Itinerary . . . Containing His Ten Years Travel Through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland*.²⁴

One element that Coryate's Persian speech to the Mughal emperor highlights is the extent to which travel beyond the known boundaries of Europe, and to the 'Old World' in particular, engaged with a shared cultural memory developed back home. Classical Greek and Latin inevitably formed a part of it, as did the Bible, but contemporaneous literature and culture played an equally integral part. Alongside romance and prose fiction, popular drama was a noticeable component in this interchange. When Coryate informs

²³ See Jonathan Haynes, *The Humanist as Traveller: George Sandys' "Relation of a Journey Begun An. Dom. 1610"* (London: Associated University Presses, 1986).

²⁴ *An itinerary written by Fynes Moryson Gent. . . .*, 3 vols. (London, 1617). The majority of an unpublished fourth volume was transcribed by Charles Hughes and published under the title *Shakespeare's Europe: Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary. Being a survey of the condition of Europe at the end of the 16th century* (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1903).

Jahangir of his ambition to visit Samarkand for the sole purpose of seeing the sepulchre of Tamburlaine, who is 'perhaps . . . not altogether so famous in his own Country of Tartaria, as in England', the memory of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* lurks behind his admitted fascination with Jahangir's Timurid ancestor.²⁵ Lithgow offers a description of the hospitality offered to him in Tunis by Yusuf Rais, an Englishman 'turned Turk', living under the protection of the pasha. Behind his detailed and somewhat bemused description of his host's passion for artificially incubating chicken eggs in North African-style clay ovens on an industrial scale, there is an implicit acknowledgement of Rais's real identity.²⁶ His readers would have appreciated the incongruity: this short, balding, mild-mannered poultry enthusiast, after all, had been the most notorious English pirate of the age, John Ward, whose life had been dramatised only three years previously by Richard Daborne in his play, *The Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612).²⁷

It is undeniable that Europe, and Italian cities in particular, offered the most common alternative sites of dramatic action on the English stage, standing in as convenient mirrors for England and home as often as they offered an exotic antithesis to English values. But the representation of the East carried a different imaginative weight altogether, partly because dramatic representation was likely to be the only encounter that most people would have with the legendary splendours of the East, and partly because the actual geographical domains in question were known to be spaces where travel could and did transform people more visibly, consistently – and dramatically – than elsewhere. Both were factors in ensuring that, on the one hand, popular plays such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, or Robert Greene's *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks* (1594) and Daborne's *The Christian Turn'd Turk*, as the examples of Coryate and Lithgow above demonstrate, tended to remain in travellers' memories as they undertook their own journeys. On the other, contemporary travel accounts found themselves being refracted on the English stage fairly quickly.

²⁵ *Mr Thomas Coriat to his friends in England* (London, 1618), sig. [B4]^r.

²⁶ Lithgow, *Total discourse, of the rare adventures . . .* (London, 1632), pp. 358, 380.

²⁷ The interest in Ward is exemplified by the report of an anonymous English sailor in 1608, preserved in the Venetian archives, which includes a description of 'Capt. Ward (concerning whom there is so much talk)' being 'about 55 years of age . . . very short, with little hair . . . most courageous and prodigal, a great sleeper, a fool and an idiot out of his trade.' Horatio F. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, vol. XI: 1607–1610 (London: Mackie, 1904), p. 140.

The 'Turk' plays, of which *The Christian Turn'd Turk* with its dramatic retelling of Ward's apostasy was a notable example, alongside Philip Massinger's *Renegado* (1624), tapped into the profusion of piracy, captivity, and conversion narratives in this period.²⁸ Daborne based his play on the information he gleaned from two pamphlets printed in 1609, Andrew Barker's *True and Certain Report of the Beginning, Proceedings, Overthrows, and now present Estate of Captain Ward and Dansiker*, and the anonymous *News from Sea, of Two Notorious Pirates, Ward . . . and Dansiker*. Other travellers, like Sir Robert Sherley, whom Coryate met at the frontiers between Persia and India, also found themselves represented on stage in their lifetime. John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins quickly produced their play *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607) about the three Sherley brothers, Anthony, Thomas, and Robert, roughly at the same time as the publication of a pamphlet of their exploits called *The Three English Brothers*, written by Anthony Nixon.²⁹ Nixon's text drew heavily on three earlier travel accounts about the Sherleys, the anonymous *A True Report of Sir Anthony Sherley's Journey* (1600); William Parry's *A New and Large Discourse of the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley, Knight* (1601); and George Manwaring's *A True Discourse of Sir Anthony Sherley's Travel into Persia* (1601). All of those, in turn, are likely to have driven the production of other subsequent accounts, including Anthony Sherley's own *Relations of his Travels into Persia* (1613), Thomas Sherley's *Discours of the Turks* (1617), and Thomas Middleton's *Sir Robert Sherley* (1609).

In *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607), there is a further encounter – this time between Robert's older brother Anthony and another English traveller – which leads us to a third and final group of early modern English travellers and travel writing. These were figures whose wanderings were contained within substantially more familiar territories, but that began increasingly to constitute a significant subgroup of early modern English travel writing from the 1590s, into the seventeenth century and beyond. The scene in question is based in Venice, but hungry for gossip from home:

²⁸ See, among others, Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel Vitkus (ed.), *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579–1624* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

²⁹ See Anthony Parr (ed.), *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 7–8.

SERVANT. Sir, here's an Englishman desires access to you.

SIR ANTHONY. An Englishman? What's his name?

SERVANT. He calls himself Kemp.

SIR ANTHONY. Kemp! Bid him come in.

Exit Servant. Enter Will Kemp and a Boy.

Welcome, honest Will. And how doth all thy fellows in England?³⁰

The visiting 'Englishman', like Sherley himself, is a historical figure. A comedian, jigmaker, and one of the initial five shareholders of the Lord Chamberlain's Men along with Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, Will Kempe may have played roles such as Falstaff, and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.³¹ He was well travelled: we know, for instance, that at the start of his career in 1585–6, he performed in the Netherlands and Denmark. By the time of his meeting with Sherley in 1601, Kempe had already left Shakespeare and his fellow actors of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and struck out on his own as an independent entertainer, with a special line in travel as performance. His presence in Europe was a sequel to a previous feat, when in February 1599 he had undertaken a public wager to morris dance from London to Norwich, a distance of over a hundred miles, recorded in *Kemp's Nine-Days' Wonder* (1600).

Kempe's texts offer us rare glimpses of local life and practices. The 'multitudes of Londoners' who accompany him for the first part of his morris-dancing exploit to Mile End, come either 'for love they beare toward' him, or 'to keepe a custome which many holde, that Mile-end is no walke without a recreation at Stratford Bow with Creame and Cakes'.³² From Chelmsford to Braintree, the road is 'full of deep holes', where 'two pretty plaine youthes' who had been accompanying Kemp for a bit got stuck in the mud, and Kemp 'could not chuse but lough to see howe lilke two frogges they laboured' (sig. B3^r). On entry into Norwich, where he is welcomed with an acrostic poem, he steps on the skirts of a 'homely maide, that belike, was but newly crept into the fashion of long wa[i]sted peticotes tyde with points', and 'off fell her peticoate from her wa[is]te', to the delight of the 'unruly boies' (sig. Dr^r).

There is a question whether contemporaries would have acknowledged this as writing about travel. As Andrew McRae has pointed out, "domestic

³⁰ Ibid., p. 104. The play shifts the action to Venice from Rome, where the two actually met, according to contemporary accounts.

³¹ See David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³² William Kempe, *Kemps nine daies wonder Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich* (London, 1600), sig. A3^v.

travel” is an anachronism, since in the early modern period to “travel” typically meant to leave the nation’s shores’.³³ Some scholars and antiquaries travelled the length and breadth of Britain and produced detailed textual accounts. They include figures such as John Leland, who produced detailed chorographical itineraries from his journeys around Britain in c.1538–43, William Camden, whose *Britannia* (first published in Latin in 1586, and in English in 1610) used Leland’s manuscript notes as a crucial source, and John Stow, who undertook a more geographically focused chorographical challenge in his *Survey of London* (1598; 2nd edn 1603). However, recording the experience of travel was merely a by-product of the chorographer’s more fundamental aim of producing a text that could offer at once a spatial counterpart to history, and a textual counterpart to cartography. Beyond their endeavours, for the majority of ordinary people in a society undergoing unprecedented changes on multiple levels, unregulated spatial mobility within the country was a source of worry and attempted control, rather than of celebration. Yet at the same time, it is clear that certain modes of domestic movement, which acted both as agents and evidence of wide-ranging sociocultural shifts, were emerging.

If Kempe is an early exemplar of that development, a key figure after him is John Taylor, Thames waterman and pamphleteer, who produced around 200 pamphlets between 1612 and 1653.³⁴ Both Kempe and Taylor undertook exploits that were part of a much wider practice of travel wagers in the period. These had their roots partly in the ways of providing financial cover for the hazards of Christian pilgrimage in earlier periods, and partly in Tudor courtly gambling culture. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, the practice had become much more widespread. Individual exploits would be proposed and sponsored by supporters, formally witnessed and verified along the way by an overseer, with the publication of the story of the wager becoming ‘an intrinsic part of the wager process’.³⁵ Taylor’s most famous stunt is also his most idiosyncratic: a voyage in 1619 that he undertook in a brown paper boat with stockfish oars, and held up by inflatable bladders which he claimed had been blown up by a whore, a usurer, a cutpurse, and drunken bagpiper, their collective breath deemed an appropriate safety

³³ Andrew McRae, *Literature and Domestic Travel in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 14.

³⁴ Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet, 1578–1653* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 66.

³⁵ Anthony Parr, *Renaissance Mad Voyages: Experiments in Early Modern English Travel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 46.

measure since proverbial wisdom asserted that a rogue born to hang would never drown.³⁶ But his very first organised stunt in 1618 is a more representative example, securing 1,650 sponsors for the journey and its promised textual report, published soon after as the *Pennyles Pilgrimage; or, the Moneylesse Perambulation of John Taylor, alias the Kings Magesties Water-Poet; How He TRAVAILED on Foot from London to Edenborough in Scotland, Not Carrying any Money To or Fro, Neither Begging, Borrowing, or Asking Meate, Drinke, or Lodging* (1618). Promising a ‘tale’ of ‘strange (yet English) fashions’ in rhyming iambic pentameter couplets, the *Pennyles Pilgrimage* is an account of both travel and sociability, or lack thereof.³⁷ Taylor and his couplets move from inn to inn, and alehouse to alehouse. At the Queen’s Arms in Stony Stratford, a group of friends arrange free food, drink, and lodging. At Daventry, however, gathered countryfolk gaze upon him ‘As if some Monster sent from the Mogull / Some Elephant from Affricke, I had beene’ and ‘drank of my Beere, that to me was given, / But gave me not a drop, to make all even’ (sig. B2^v). Manchester compensates with its exemplary hospitality, with the hostess at the Eagle and the Childe taking such care of him that ‘In troath shee prov’d a mother unto me’ (sig. C2^r).

In his very final travel account, written just weeks before his death in 1653, Taylor would reflect explicitly the difference between undertakings such as these and the more usual travel accounts of foreign destinations:

Some cross the sea to see strange lands unknown
And heer, like strangers, do not know their own . . .
Many of foreign travels boast and vaunt,
When they, of England, are most ignorant.³⁸

Perhaps understandably, albeit incongruously, then, the royal progress and chorography were the unlikely but close relatives of such domestic travel: Taylor’s *Pennyles Pilgrimage*, for instance, evidently intended to imitate both King James’s 1617 progress and, more immediately, the wager trip of the poet Ben Jonson, who had set off for his own well-publicised walking tour to Scotland barely a week before Taylor.³⁹ The style of the resulting texts is consequently and self-consciously different from the ‘plain style’ often

³⁶ John Taylor, *The Praise of Hemp-seed with The Voyage of Mr Roger Bird and the Writer hereof in a Boat of browne-Paper, from London to Quinborough in Kent* (London, 1620), sig. F1^r.

³⁷ John Taylor, *The pennyles pilgrimage . . .* (London, 1618), sig. A4^r.

³⁸ John Taylor, *The certain travailes of an uncertain journey* (London, 1654), sig. B1^r.

³⁹ See Ian Donaldson, *Jonson’s Walk to Scotland* (Edinburgh: Quadriga, 1992); and James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders (eds.), *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

adopted in the standard travel accounts one finds in the collections of Hakluyt or Purchas, where a trustworthy transmission of travel information is of paramount importance, conscripted for a cause that is always greater than the individual enterprise, be it proto-imperial national ambition, or mercantile profit. The Victorian historian James A. Froude's famous description of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* as 'the prose epic of the modern English Nation' has become a much-repeated commonplace for scholars interested in early modern English travel and travel writing.⁴⁰ However, if the *Principal Navigations* is representative of a certain English approach to travel writing, then it is telling that the literary forms most often associated with popular writers like Kempe and Taylor are poetic. Both of them move in and out of poetry, from commendatory verses to couplets and jigs. Their writing combines rhetorical extravagance and colloquial vigour in deeply characteristic, identifiable ways, creating voices that present travel and authorship as inseparable activities, both conceived in terms of labour, and more specifically, as labour 'worthy of financial reward'.⁴¹ Taylor, in particular, styling himself as the 'water-poet', gestures towards the tradition of the journey poem, which gathers particular momentum in the seventeenth century.⁴²

When Ben Jonson published his *Collected Works* in folio form in 1616 – itself a significant moment in marking the status of imaginative writing – his collection of his epigrams concluded with a poem (Epigram 133) whose obsession with filth and excrement has earned it the doubtful fame of being one of 'the most deliberately and insistenty disgusting poems in the language'.⁴³ 'On the Famous Voyage' is reminiscent of Rabelais's riotously sharp humour in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532–52), and looks forward to Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century transformation of travel fiction in *Gulliver's Travels* and elsewhere. It recounts a journey from Bridewell to Holborn supposedly undertaken by two part-drunk city men, Shelton and Heyden, along Fleet Ditch through which much of London's sewage flowed. Jonson presents the undertaking clearly both as a counter to contemporaneous celebrations of English maritime achievements, and as a wager mocking the tradition of Kempe and his contemporaries. In his hands, this quotidian journey turns into a nightmarish mock-heroic description of the

⁴⁰ J. A. Froude, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1868), p. 361. Originally published in *The Westminster Review*, n.s., 2 (July 1852), 32–67.

⁴¹ McRae, *Literature and Domestic Travel*, p. 164.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 185–92.

⁴³ Richard Helgerson, 'Ben Jonson', in Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry: Donne to Marvell* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 148–70 (at p. 152).

urban space as a grotesque female body – flatulent, diseased, incontinent, and sexually voracious – London replacing the Virgilian journey into hell. ‘I sing the brave adventure of two wights, / And pity ’tis, I cannot call them knights’, Jonson begins his account of the voyage.⁴⁴ His scatological excesses may seem a far cry from the romance of travel with which we began, but that very distance serves to exemplify the immense variety of the travel writing produced in this period, even as it demonstrates the inevitable entanglement of imagination and a shared cultural memory. From the nascent formulations of empire and nation, to the interrogation of the familiar as much as of the strange and the exotic, from factual reporting to flights of imagination in fiction, on stage, and in poetry, early modern travel writing left its mark on English literature and culture in ways that would be revisited in subsequent periods.

⁴⁴ Ben Jonson, ‘On the Famous Voyage’, in *The Works of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1616), pp. 813–18.