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Romance, Cosmography and the Trading Companies

Albions England and The Preachers Travels

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Abstract

The article examines the circulation of cosmographical knowledge as a result of some of the less prominent, lower-class trading company travellers, often through romance or romance tropes. It focalizes some romance strategies, values and intermediaries – notably Sir John Mandeville, and the figures of the travelling hero – used to convey cosmographical knowledge in narrative form. William Warner's *Albions England* (notably the 1596 edition) and John Cartwright's *The Preachers Travels* (1611) are the main textual focus, each comprising a different kind of approach to cosmography and travel writing, and each, importantly, boasting a connection – personal or professional – to the trading companies. In the case of Cartwright, the article argues that his is a 'romancified' travel text, and the first English first-person account to attend to Shah 'Abbas' major building projects at Isfahan; in the case of Warner, it shows how Mandevillean figures are engaged to support the project of heroizing English trading company travellers and mariners.

Keywords: *Cosmography, Persia, Romance, Trading Companies, Travel Writing*

1. *Introduction*

When the English translation of Sebastian Münster's hugely popular *Cosmographia* (1544) was published in 1561, it was partial, focussing only on Scandinavia, probably (it has been suggested) because of King Erik XIV of Sweden's recent courtship of Queen Elizabeth I.¹ Its translator, George North, dedicated the work not to Elizabeth (to whom his relation Thomas North would later dedicate his Plutarch translation), nor to a wealthy

¹ Richard Eden had also translated sections from Münster in *A Treatise of the Newe India* (1553). I owe great thanks to the editors of this issue, and to the two anonymous readers who made especially useful and informed suggestions for revisions.

would-be patron or intellectual mentor, but to the ‘English gallant’ (Johnson 1612, C5r), Thomas Stukely. Not yet as notorious as he would soon become, Stukely nonetheless already represented a type of English mobility – adventuring travel, but also mobility of identity – that was fast becoming a domestic staple in various genres of romance. Socially, he occupied a middle ground, neither knight nor citizen nor rogue; instead, travel and the gains of travel were his defining attributes. As North writes of Stukely’s social and physical mobility, ‘Besydes these your liberalities [of friendship], your own trauel in foreyne & straunge nacions wyth the perfect vnderstandyng, & almost natural speakyng of theyr languages: importeth you to be as trym a Courtier, as you are knowen to be a worthy Soldiour’ (Münster 1561, Aiiiv). At this point, we should remember, Stukely’s soldiering had caused him to fight on several opposing sides (the English, French and the Spanish), as well as being involved in piracy of French ships, but he found himself briefly back in favour in London at the time of the North/Münster publication, where (as a ‘trym ... Courtier’) he had recently been appointed to help with the imminent visit of the Irish ‘rebel’ chieftain, Shane O’Neill, to an anxious court in late 1561.² Stukeley had also, it seems, been planning a colonising trip to Florida for some years, and given the friendship with North, the ‘trauel in foreyne & straunge nacions’ probably included this ambition too. He was, in other words, an ideal exemplification of that slippery figure, the travelling hero.

To English an extract from this early and important work of cosmography with the help of Stukely as dedicatee was to acknowledge the strong link between early modern cosmography and romance. It also acknowledges the growing popular interest in cosmography, and the appeal of (mostly romance) narrative modes to engage with it. And it reveals one way in which that link operated in narrative practice: focalised through the actions of a travelling hero. In this translation, in fact, North makes short work of the geographical and ethnographic descriptions – ‘the situacion of their Countries, the maners of theyr people’ (Aiiiv) – to speak ‘amply’ instead of the political history behind the rise of Erik XIV to the Swedish throne. The deliberate centring of a hero in North’s translation makes narrative what had been cosmographical description. The same technique would later be used by some of those describing their travels east and west, borrowing romance tropes and centring themselves as a travelling hero, with the added benefit of mediating the novelty of their experiences to domestic readers. But inherited models of chivalric romance, while still current, were not the only model.

Early modern romance, Ladan Niayesh writes, is situated ‘Halfway between the nostalgia of medieval chivalry and the enterprising spirit of early modern exploration, piracy and commerce as preludes to a future empire’ (2018, 1).³ Despite the wider decline in the medievalized forms of romance with its aristocratic or royal heroes, early modern romance diversified, and, in many of its late-sixteenth/early seventeenth century incarnations, it proved particularly hospitable to new kinds of local, lower-class heroes, drawn from the world of early modern exploration, piracy and commerce rather than medieval chivalry. It is the cosmographical information disseminated and sometimes elicited by these travelling heroes – in romance but also in travel writing – that this essay seeks to foreground. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the infamous figure of Sir John Mandeville plays a significant role, a protean yet transitional version of the travelling hero as it evolved across multiple genres.

² Stukely had fought at the siege of Boulogne (1544), but had also served the king of France in battle and embassy, and fought for the Duke of Savoy (serving Philip of Spain) at Saint-Quentin (1557). A Catholic, Stukely’s allegiances were always unclear, and he spent time at the court of the Hapsburg emperor Charles V in Brussels as well as Hapsburg Saint Omer. See North (2018). On Shane O’Neill’s visit to the English court, see Ciarán Brady 2015.

³ ‘it is both very old-fashioned and innovatively modern’, Niayesh concludes (2018, 1).

It is a large field, though, and in this article I attend to a neglected group: those who travelled as mariners on the ships of the joint-stock trading companies, and whose contributions to English cosmographical as well as literary culture have not yet been fully accounted for. The writings of those directly attached to the companies are important both because of their authors but also their audience, the social and knowledge networks in which they circulated. Romance served ‘servants and citizens’ (*ibid.*) as well as élites, and it was, therefore, a genre receptive to cosmographical knowledge generated or disseminated by servants and citizens of the joint-stock trading companies. This may well have been particularly true of stage romance, given the many vectors linking the London theatres and companies (especially Bankside) with the merchant communities.⁴ But prose and verse romance, and the many romance-flavoured varieties and diversifications of popular prose and translations across the turn of the century are also worth attending to.

The remainder of this essay focuses on two representative examples showing where we might look to identify further such materials: in personal or professional ties, in romance or in romance-flavoured travel writing. The cosmographical quasi-romance writings of William Warner (1558/9-1609), whose father was one of the sailors on the first English ships sent to investigate a north-east passage (and which prompted the establishment of the Muscovy Company) is my first example; the travel writings of John Cartwright (fl. 1600-1611), sometime chaplain on East India Company voyages is my second; each may have had an influence on some of the new genres of travel play such as *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) and citizen romance such as Thomas Heywood’s *Four Prentises of London* (1615) in early seventeenth-century London. But I begin with an overview of the conceptual links between romance, travel and cosmography in the period.

2. *Romance, Travel and Cosmography*

Early modern cosmography owed much to classical and medieval sources, whether maps or travel narrative, Ptolemy or Mandeville, entwined with the new technologies and conceptual structures of geography, cartography and navigation. But it was also newly indebted to, and enriched by ‘the painefull Seaman’ of more recent global travels, mercantile and otherwise. ‘for by his exceeding great hazzards the forme of the earth, the quantities of Countries, the diuersitie of nations, and the natures of Zones, Climats, countries and people, are apparantly made known vnto vs’, as the navigator, John Davis of Sandridge, wrote (1595, ¶3r). But the forms in which that data travelled are varied: from the great collections of Venetian travel accounts compiled by Giovanni Battista Ramusio (*Delle Navigationi et viaggi*, 1550-1559) and emulated by Richard Hakluyt (*Principall Navigations*) in 1589 and 1598-1600 to instructional manuals such as Davis’; from merchants’ letters and maps to individual printed accounts of journeys or places, whether original or translated; from the pages and margins of the new atlases to the pages and plots of romance which had often been drawn from, and set in, distant parts of the world.⁵

That romance played a part in the experience, narration and circulation of early modern travels is by now well established. Barbara Fuchs (2001) has shown the influence of the romance

⁴ An important recent project on the ‘King’s Women, 1594-1642’ (studying the lives and socio-familial networks of the women associated with Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men), and their links to colonial settlement, has been revealing the depth and tightly wound intricacy of those connections.

⁵ ‘It is in the nature of romance to be made of foreign influences and to be woven out of different kinds of discourses coming from outside a single national culture’, Goran Stanivukovic writes (2017, 4).

imagination in the acts and writings of the Spanish in South America. Cyrus Mulready (2013) extends the argument to the early modern stage, arguing that stage romance was a key instrument of the success of early English colonialism and trading voyages, and helped define the English geographical imagination (Relihan 2004; Das 2011; Stanivukovic 2016). Writing of perhaps the best-known (epic) romance of the period, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1596), Tamsin Badcoe (2019) demonstrates the cosmographical knowledge-making that happens in and through some of its most conspicuously romance-like aspects.⁶ Niayesh (2011) has shown the significance of the genre, modes and values of romance to English conceptualizations and representations of the world of the East. (Famously, a copy of Mandeville's *Travels*, already known as more romance than factual travel account, accompanied Martin Frobisher on his 1576 voyage in search of the Northwest passage, *ibid.*).

One alignment of travel, cosmographical knowledge and romance familiar from the genre's roots in crusading and trans-national travel is found in the figure of the gentleman traveller and his writings. This took real as well as figurative forms: for example, Thomas Lodge, who travelled with Thomas Cavendish on the latter's last voyage (1592-1593), wrote a romance (*A Margarite of America*, 1596) while seaboard that drew heavily on his experiences – a markedly dark and violent narrative, as Daniel Vitkus (2011) notes. Sir Kenelm Digby, too, is notorious for having had numerous escapades on the Mediterranean, and subsequently writing a romance about them (Moshenska 2016). Other gentleman travellers (such as Anthony Knyvett) wrote journals or accounts of their travels, though they were not always printed.⁷ Key to these, albeit in different ways, was the heroic romance styling of privateering by the likes of Sir Francis Drake and Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex; certainly in the late years of Elizabeth's reign, their celebrated efforts in raiding and piracy demonstrates the uses of romance models to the nobility. And yet, just as technological advancement diminished the significance of the knight on horseback in the period, the commercial and corporate imperatives of the joint-stock companies also diminished the significance and perhaps prestige of the heroic, aristocratic voyager.

Less often celebrated, but a group who also had a significant role in the making and dissemination of cosmographical knowledge on these voyages, were those who worked the ships on which these gentlemen conducted their exploits. Those who worked on joint-stock company ships – captains, factors, pilots, chaplains, and the general company of mariners – occupied an unstable position, not just in relation to the risks they took, but also in relation to their perceived value by their employers, as Richmond Barbour has pointed out of the East India Company. 'Above all, shareholder profits derived from the return of sufficient cargos, not particular ships or personnel. Their collective buoyancy thus insulated the investors from the total risks suffered by their employees' (2021, 361). The high loss of life in these voyages, and the need to use non-English labour alongside the English seamen created its own kind of risk to capital investment, Barbour points out, as well as a certain suspicion of those who worked the voyages. It resulted in the starker division of seamen from investors, and increased regulation of the commercial opportunities of these voyages such that trading rights and profit accrued only to the Company, commercializing labour both at home and abroad. More significantly, he argues, it 'generated vocabularies of race and station which, being yoked to praxis, inflected

⁶ She relates Merlin's magical globe, for example, to 'the figurative language used by cosmographical texts to sound the range of their ambitions and aims', as a kind of multi-modal 'cosmographical glass' (Badcoe 2019, 145).

⁷ For biographies of Knyvett (including his ethnographic writings on the coastal Tupi-speaking peoples of Brazil, and a considered range of other English travellers), see Das 2022. For a fascinating study of the writing habits on East India Company ships, see Barbour's introduction to *The Third Voyage Journals* (2009).

the emergence of global capitalism' (361). The tensions on board between gentleman sailors and the seamen, and the ethos of privateering that remained strong in the early years of the seventeenth century, was another familiar formation that probably exacerbated these divisions and the entrenchment of class- and race-based prejudice.⁸

And yet, the companies remained heavily reliant on the verbal and written reports of its agents and seamen – indeed required them, in many cases, as the archives show. Moreover, a small number of those who travelled on the company voyages wrote or published their own private accounts, sharing cosmographic data (whether first-hand or drawn from other authors) in narrative or instructive mode. In this category, for example, we find William Baffin, a pilot and talented draughtsman, who spent years on voyages in the north Atlantic, and later drew the first map of India for Sir Thomas Roe (1619); he lost his life during the East India Company attack on Portuguese Hormuz, in the Persian Gulf in 1622. Following his own involvement in voyages to the north Atlantic with Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Thomas Cavendish, the highly experienced sailor and navigator John Davis of Sandridge published a treatise on navigation, *The Seamans Secrets* (1595); he would die ten years later on Sir Edward Michelborne's East India Company voyage (1604-1606). Another John Davis (of Limehouse, who had sailed with his namesake on the first 1601-1603 East India Company voyage under Sir James Lancaster, and who took over as pilot after Davis' death on that voyage) produced a manuscript rutter (mariner's handbook) on sailing to the East Indies (BL Sloane 3959), which Samuel Purchas published in the important 1625 edition of his *Pilgrimes*.

Merchants such as John Frampton also contributed to English geographical and navigational expertise by translating works from other languages; Frampton's translations include botanical and medical treatises from the Spanish 'new world', as well as the *Geography* of Martín Fernández de Enciso (1578) and Pedro de Medina's *The Art of Navigation* (1581). While many of these texts were instructional, they occasionally made use of romance tropes: the romance quester, for example, moving through marvellous, improbable worlds of prodigy; or thick structures of difficulty and impossibility/impassability. And they certainly helped strengthen the newer, more civic modes of romance, in which heroes were recognisable, lower-class types voyaging from known places, rather than footloose aristocrats in pastoral or chivalric worlds. By the end of the sixteenth century, the knights errant of chivalric romance had become readable in mercantile terms, and merchants and agents readable in chivalric romance terms, whether on stage or in verse, or prose romance. The best example of the former must be Thomas Heywood's stage romance, *Four Prentises of London*, first performed in about 1592, but published in 1615; Warner's account of the Muscovy Company agents in 1596, of which more later, best illustrates the latter. Michael Murrin even argues for the relevance of 'the company model' to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, contending that 'the romance of *The Faerie Queene* is a corporate genre, a response to risk, a genre that makes its heroes exemplary also because the example lies at the heart of the early modern corporation' (2014, 196). We witness this kind of imbrication of trade and romance in William Warner's *Albions England* (1586-1612), allied with descriptive travel.

3. 'Fayr Commerce' and Mandevillean Description

It can be difficult to trace the knowledge transfer achieved by those seamen who returned safely to London, many of whom were less likely to have literacy skills. But one striking potential case

⁸ See Jowitt 2017 on these tensions, particularly in relation to the Cavendish voyage.

is that of William Warner, whose father accompanied Richard Chancellor on the first (1553) voyage in search of a north-east passage, which would lead to the establishment of the Muscovy Company and trade with Persia. Not a mariner himself but an author and attorney at the court of common pleas, Warner finds a place for his father, and the merchant adventurers after him who made it to the White Sea, to Moscow, and eventually to Persia, in the astonishing, ever-expanding text that is *Albions England* (1586-1612). Hardly read today, Warner's bizarre – but also highly enjoyable – jumble of texts is an invaluable record of changing literary tastes in prose and poetry across the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a period more usually examined for its dramatic output. First published in 1586 as a 'Historicall map' of Britain, this edition contained four Books of chronology material, beginning with Noah, alongside an epitome of the *Aeneid*. Each subsequent edition added new chronological material (another two Books in 1589, two more in 1592, ultimately comprising thirteen, in the final, posthumous edition) – as well as more of the 'historicall intermixtures, inuention and varieties' advertised in the opening page of the first edition. The 1596 edition (my focus here) is particularly interesting for its move into describing the reign of Elizabeth, and contemporary materials, and for its responsiveness to the first edition of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the second edition of which was published the same year as well as Books IV-VI.

The romance styling of *Albions England* disguises its own cosmographic innovation, not least in the trans-national terms in which it conceives of the nation described in its title. It would go through five editions during Warner's lifetime, and multiple transformations of genre and interest: from chronicle history to chorography, to romance, to heroic verse. Its epic interests were clear from the inclusion of a short prose epitome of Virgil's *Aeneid* in all editions, and William Scott grants it the title of epic in the strikingly varied list of English heroic writings he provides in his poetic treatise, *The Model of Poesy* (1599). Warner achieved some attention from contemporaries, it seems, and is commended in several literary anthologies or commentaries of the late 1590s, including Robert Allott's *Englands Parnassus* (1600) and Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (1598), which went so far as to deem Warner 'our English Homer' (1598, 281v).⁹ But those epic ambitions were always shaped by or in romance terms, and expressed in fragmented, episodic, interlaced forms more evocative of romance. The combination of romance 'gests' with heroic 'actes' of Englishmen comes through nicely in the work's epic opening:

I tell of things done long agoe, of many things in few:
And chiefly of this Clime of ours, the Accidents pursue.
Thou high Director of the same, assist mine artlesse pen,
To write the gests of *Brutons* stout, and actes of English men (Warner 1569, B1r)

To this established set of terms, a vocabulary of 'mart' (which neatly captures, or even conflates, both the commercial and martial), commerce and even 'fayr commerce' will come to connect and characterize the overlaying of cosmography, romance and English travel that we find in the new Books (9-12) of the crucial 1596 edition.

From the beginning, *Albions England* embraced hybridity and multiplicity, offering as its title notes its 'historicall map' and chronicle history together with 'historicall intermixtures, inuention, and varietie'.¹⁰ My focus here is on the Books added in the 1596 edition and in

⁹ Warner's entry by Craik (2004) offers a thorough list of these. Little has been written on Warner's work.

¹⁰ The full title of the first edition (1586) is: *Albions England. Or historicall map of the same island: prosecuted from the liues, actes, and labors of Saturne, Iupiter, Hercules, and Aeneas: originalles of the Brutons, and English-men,*

subsequent editions in which Warner fully embraces this ‘varietie’, building on the occasional interpolated beast fable or classical parable of earlier Books to include ephemera (e.g., a ‘Chat passed betwixt two old Widowes, concerning new Fangles now vsed by women’), or indictments of Catholicism, or European political affairs such as the wars in the Low Countries, or the Spanish Inquisition (all of which appear in Book 9). Certainly, Warner treads more dangerous ground here in recording the reign of Elizabeth contemporaneously. Giving rein to the romance proclivities of his text is one reasonable response to that challenge; romance by its nature lends itself to experiment, to hybridity, but is also useful in being conspicuously fictive. Significantly, Warner’s depiction of the reign of Elizabeth also comes with a clear expansion of the cosmographical situation of ‘England’. If the ‘historicall map’ of the subtitle of the 1658 edition signalled the geographical or chorographical ambitions of the text, while connecting it with a newly fashionable kind of chronicle history in verse (as exemplified by Samuel Daniel’s *Civil Wars*, 1595), from 1596 Warner situates England within ever-widening geographic and geopolitical frames. Thus, articulating the experiences of his father on the earliest trading company voyage, one that ultimately brought about the first direct English trade with Persia, is fully of a piece with Warner’s developing ambitions for his ‘historicall map’ of England. And if, ultimately, the account of the Muscovy travellers offers little *new* by way of geographical description, Warner’s innovative interweaving of their travels with a playful Mandevillean romance plot attests to the newly popular intermixed forms in which geographical information could be – was being – disseminated, including by those with direct or indirect connections or experience of the trading company voyages.

The Chancellor voyage comprised three ships, but only one returned safely, the *Edward Bonaventure*. It had a crew of approximately 35 men (and may have included French, Scottish and other non-English crew), and had reached the White Sea, and from there, Moscow, where Chancellor was received at the court of Tsar Ivan IV. Though it was not their object, it quickly became clear that they had identified a viable trading route not just with Moscow but also (subsequently) with Persia, thanks to the Tsar’s recent works on the Volga river; the Muscovy Company was formed and a second voyage, under Chancellor, would retrace their route in 1555. The *Edward Bonaventure* returned to London, however, in the summer of 1554.¹¹ Warner introduces the English travellers and their ‘Fresh matter of Discoueries’ (T3v) in Book 11, especially the northern voyages, with and the southern voyages described (in much less detail) in Book 12. These Books first appeared in the 1596 edition together with a new Book 9, which replaced the short panegyric to Elizabeth that concluded the 1592 edition to deal primarily with Elizabeth’s enemies, looking to European politics and their intersection with English politics (war in the Low Countries, ‘sturres in Ireland’, the Spanish Armada, etc.), all of which introduce the English travel materials. ‘Fresh discoveries’ were, of course, partly necessitated by this increasingly hostile context and England’s increasing peripherality to European geopolitics.

Warner used two important intertexts for his account of the English travellers: firstly, his source-text, the first edition of Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations* (1589). He seems to have had a copy of the first edition of Hakluyt by his side, from which he borrowed and

and occasion of the Brutons their first aryuall in Albion. Continuing the same historie vnto the tribute to the Romaines, entrie of the Saxones, inuasion by the Danes, and conquest by the Normaines. With historicall intermixtures, inuention, and varietie: profitably, briefly, and pleasantly, performed in verse and prose by William Warner’.

¹¹ Although not before an unfortunate incident in which it was attacked and robbed by a convoy of Dutch fishing vessels not far off Scarborough; recent research on Dutch court records has produced important new information about the crew and what it carried (see Sicking and van Rhee 2019).

condensed ‘extensively’, as R.R. Cawley (1922) has demonstrated. This is no secret: Warner proudly acknowledges Hakluyt several times, in Books 11 and 12: for example, his demurrall that ‘of [further] Discouerers we purpose not to dwell. / Els would we here reuiue, but that through Hakluyts Pen they liue’ (V1v), and on another occasion he refers his reader onward to Hakluyt for fuller details.¹² Warner also loosely adheres to the order of material in Hakluyt, though with frequent leaps to other accounts dealing with the same places or events, as Cawley shows. But although Warner twice mentions his father, Cawley’s analysis leaves little room for speculating as to his personal contribution, apart from occasional details of local conditions or climate (ice and cold, changing light conditions) which Warner may well have deduced from the accounts in Hakluyt anyway. In considering the reach, impact and influence of Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations* in England, therefore, we should also seek to include analysis of the reach, impact and influence of texts such as Warner’s.

His second intertext is more striking, not as a source, but for how it is used as an imaginative prompt – as frame and interlaced narrative to the account of the English travellers. Not only that, but the choice of text also enables an extended shared joke with the reader, building trust and community using romance methods at precisely the point at which Warner provides his Hakluytian narratives of heroic English travellers. That text is the enduringly popular medieval travel text, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, from which Warner adapted and embellished a conspicuously fictional chivalric romance narrative: a comic subplot of a peripatetic quasi-chivalric romance and, tellingly, ‘fayr Com[m]erce’ between Sir John Mandeville and one Eleanor, ‘cousin’ of King Edward III (1596, [S6]v). In this narrative, Eleanor falls in love with a ‘green knight’ (Mandeville in disguise), who wins all before him at a joust. Troubled by the distance between their relative social status, Mandeville in his melancholy does not disclose this disguise but takes himself off travelling, like a catalogue of crusading heroes that ‘through the triple Orbs did Armes and Trauels vnder-goe’ ([S8]v). But the interventions of his friend Stafford, and Stafford’s beloved Dorcas, mean that Eleanor is eventually apprised of the green knight’s identity, and the three of them take ‘To ship-boord’, this time to Rome, where Mandeville had informed his friend he would be, after his travels further east ([V6]r).

The plot now digresses from its chivalric set-up to a more popular register, with Dorcas advising Eleanor against virginity, and reminding her that to ‘Increase and Multiply’ is God’s imperative ([V5]v). Again, Warner makes Eleanor’s travel to ‘old Rome’ ([V7]v) serve his turn, with the narrator praising ‘one in loue, not moop’t at home, but mapping Lands’ ([V6]r). But before Rome, he presents a long-delayed summary of the ancient Britons, Elizabeth’s royal forebears, and the quarrel with ‘new Rome’ ([V7]v) – an oddity reconciled when, soon after, Warner offers a similar genealogy of how Rome ‘did rule, was rul’d, and ruin’d at the last’ ([V8]r). Further disguises, a long-deferred recognition scene and the eventual reunion of the lovers are conducted in romance terms, but along the way, the narrative again indulges some of the accretive, eclectic aspects of Book 9, whereby Warner includes a potted history of Rome, critiques of Italian courtesy and even a saucy tale of a ‘Faire young wife of Lyncolne-Shire’ (X2r) and the competition between a ‘Northern-man’ and ‘Southern-man’ (X3r) for her. When eventually Mandeville and Eleanor meet again and marry that night in Rome, together with his friends Stafford and Dorcas, Warner abruptly ends with a disavowal: ‘Nor creeded be this Loue-Tale of this Ladie and this Knight’ ([X6]r).

¹² Elsewhere he refers his interested reader onward, so they may ‘at large in Hakluyt reade’ ([V5]r).

It is worth citing a long passage from the opening of Book 11, to give a sense of the enmeshing of narratives with familiar romance and even epic tropes, alongside Mandeville:

From then, when first my Father, eare my birth, was one of those,
 Did, through the Seas of ysie Rocks, the *Muscovites* disclose,
 We shal our *English Voyages*, the cheefe at least, digest,
 Of which in this her Highnes Raigne haue been perform'd the best,
 And here a while let *Mandeuil* and his Beloued rest.
 To name the diuers Peoples that in *Europe* be, weare much,
 Not but remotest Regions, of our Natiues seene, we touch.
 But, Moderns, Yee (of whom are some haue circum-sail'd the Earth)
 Here pardon vs your Sailes, and giue your proper Praises bearth.
 Infuse yee Penn-life too into ore-taken Fames by death. (T1r)

The apostrophe of 'Moderns', and the declared expectations that some of the English circumnavigators themselves may read this (and Warner must mean the sailors, as well as their famous captains and pilots), invite a sense of great scale as well as complicity, even as they situate the accounts within Warner's own personal sphere. In these Books, *Albions England* positions the sailors of those voyages, who undertook such perils, as part of the intended readership of his work, authenticators of its geographical knowledge, perhaps, but also fellow-mediators of difference (especially foreign difference) in entertaining domestic terms.

In this, we should note that some early modern authors anticipated an overlap of readership for romance and narratives of recent global travel, usually by sea, or at least a concatenation of interests across the two. Thomas Lodge, for instance, closes his euphuistic romance *Rosalynde* (1590) with a signed personal appeal to his readers to draw lessons of filial obedience and fraternal amity from it. But, he continues, 'If you grace me with that fauor, you incorage me to be more froward, and as soon as I haue ouerlookt my labors, expect *The Sailers Kalender*' (now lost, if it ever appeared) ([P4]v). Similarly, Spenser's proem to Book II of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) invited readers to credit his Faerieland on the basis that recent travels they have read of mean that they now know of Peru, or the Amazon 'now found trew' (Proemio, 2), places not known even to the ancients. The pleasures of armchair travel, as Andrew Hadfield (2009) has noted, accounted for a reliable portion of the readership of travel texts, and reading the imaginary travels of romance heroes in the context of the reality of new global travels must have added a frisson. 'The old romance geographies of Fairyland, Arcadia, Cathay, Babylon, and the matters of Rome, France, and Britain were supplemented – and redefined – by the new global geography', as Vitkus writes (2011, 100). On the other hand the new global geography made ample use of romance narratives and tropes to describe both old and new worlds.

Freewheeling as it is, the Mandevillean romance also has direct connections to Hakluyt, Warner's main source for this section. Although already regarded with some scepticism, Mandeville's *Travels* had been included in the first edition of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, but would be dropped from the second edition (1598-1600).¹³ The dedication to Edward III that appeared in one cluster of the Mandeville manuscripts – and was included in the 1589

¹³ As Marianne O'Doherty (2019) and Maria Shmygol (2020) have both argued, however, the inclusion of the untranslated Latin so-called 'Vulgate' text of Mandeville in Hakluyt's first edition marks a significant shift away from the heavily-illustrated English editions (such as the 1582 edition issued by Thomas East) long circulating. Hakluyt's choice of the Latin text, O'Doherty argues, seems partly motivated by its 'highly unusual, seemingly prescient cosmographical framework ... and its presentation of a critical, skeptical narrator' (2019, 320).

Hakluyt – presumably inspired Warner’s romance plot of Eleanor and Mandeville – even as Warner playfully engages prevailing scepticism about Mandeville already:

Who reads Sir Iohn de Mandeuil his Trauels, and his Sights
 That wonders not? and wonder may, if all be true he wrights,
 Yeat rather it beleeeue (for most, now, modernly approu’d),
 Than this our Storie, whence suppose he was to Trauell mou’d. (1596, [S7]r)¹⁴

That sly playfulness extends to the interplay between the Mandevillian subplot and Warner’s heroic narrative of English travel. For example just as Eleanor discovers (too late!) Mandeville’s love for her, as relayed by his letter from Cyprus, Warner interrupts to introduce a catalogue of ‘Fresh discoveries’ of the English travellers. And what ‘She said, ... else-where shall ensew’ – a classic narratological technique of romance entrelacement (T3v).¹⁵ In this way, their toils and sufferings through ice and storms stand in for and emblemize her love-trials, the curious speculation she has that Mandeville might seek her to become ‘a trans-Marine’ (T5v). Elsewhere, Warner follows a long critique of the papacy and the Italian city-states with a return to ‘our English Trinitie of Louers’ (X2r). Another site visited by the English travellers elicits the narratorial aside, ‘Here Mandeuile, perhaps, had bin’ (T7v).

But the relationship between the Mandevillean romance and the travellers’ narratives goes beyond felicities of tone or style, and serves to ‘romancify’ their tales alongside it. Closely identified with Warner himself (as we saw), the narrator of these Books, we find, is not the apparently distanced, objective narrator more typical of epic, but rather the complicit, involved, playful narrator of romance. And this narrator is unafraid to indulge the speculative romance-like pleasures of reading travel narratives in his account of the Muscovy Company agents, just as much as in the travails of Eleanor and Mandeville: ‘Suppose our *Jenkinson* before King *Obdolowcans* Throne’, he proposes to the reader, before offering a lush and richly furnished description of ‘Pearles and pretious Stones’, ‘silke and gold imbroyderie’ on his tents, ‘Carpets rich’ and a water fountain. ‘Scarce *Cleopatras Anthony* was feasted with more cheere’ (T7r), he winks. Other reassuring domesticating touches prevail: he emphasises Mandeville’s repudiation of temptation by exotic offers, including the daughter of a Muslim prince of Egypt, in favour of his ‘home-bred Loue’ (T8r). There is a compelling fluency and colour to Warner’s writing, when now he describes the Rome visited by Eleanor, Stafford and Dorcas: ‘Such wonders, couch’t in Ruins, as vnseene might seeme vntrew’ (V8r). On the other hand, Warner also uses his personal connection to highlight the very real perils of these voyages – his father lost his life on a Company ship with Towerson in 1577 – by comparing them to the trials of classical heroes: ‘In trewer Perils, and more braue Achieuements, than the Tailles / Of *Iason* and *Vlysses*, of their fabled Sea-toyld Sailes’ (T1r-T1v).

In sonnet 15 of his *Amoretti* sonnet sequence (1595), Edmund Spenser had also sought to bridge the gap between trade, travel and desire in terms that Warner may well echo in his praise of English merchant-heroes:

¹⁴ On the dedication to King Edward, see Ormrod 2012.

¹⁵ Warner’s habit of leaving one character at rest, as if to bestow additional rest by way of this narrative diversion, when moving back to his other narrative is another classic romance strategy. For example, Jenkinson is left to ‘rest at his Iornies end’ with ‘Obdolowcans Sonne’ while Warner returns to Mandeville and Eleanor (T7v).

Ye tradefull Merchants that with weary toyle,
 Do seeke most pretious things to make your gain:
 And both the Indias of their treasures spoile,
 What needeth you to seeke so farre in vaine? (1999, sonnet 15, ll. 1-4)¹⁶

Spenser, of course, goes on to praise his beloved in a conventional blazon of precious jewels (ruby lips, pearly teeth, golden hair, etc), chiding the ‘painfull seamen’ (as Davis put it) for their ‘weary toyle’ and encouraging his readers to look closer to home, to his beloved, for such treasures instead. But in carefully condensing and reporting the details Hakluyt provided of the English trading company travels, and interlacing them with his playful Mandevillean romance, Warner offers a different kind of reading experience altogether, not conventionalized but innovative, not chiding but inclusive – and one that genuinely disseminates geographical information to a wider audience than those who could afford or would consider seeking out Hakluyt’s folio(s). Romance fiction proves a much more enabling vehicle than a sonnet, of course: as Vitkus contends, ‘By representing the pleasures, profits, and perils of cross-cultural exchange within the erotic, promiscuous matrix of romance fiction . . . English romance tales offered new ways to understand English culture’s entanglement with a global system, and new ways to register the changes and challenges that resulted from that expansion and engagement’ (2011, 100). As it develops and transforms across its many editions, but perhaps most signally in the 1596 edition, Warner’s *Albions England* makes brilliant use of romance in its hybrid intermixture of forms to reach new audiences for the details of this entanglement and the expanded global imaginary it involved.

4. *A Preacher’s Travels*

Where Warner’s connection to the merchant adventuring company’s travels was familial, John Cartwright’s was professional. But first it was speculative – and successfully so. Although we know very little of Cartwright’s background beyond what his published writing tells us, we do know that in 1602, he was employed as chaplain to travel with the East India Company voyage, led by George Waymouth, to the north Atlantic, in search of a northwest passage to China. The voyage suffered an early setback when some of the sailors mutinied and sought to return home. Cartwright was accused of having fomented the mutiny, and was certainly involved in the examination; even after the situation was quelled, the allegation followed Cartwright to the extent that when, almost ten years later, he published an account of his travels in Asia, he prefaced it with further denials of the charge (‘yet God is my wnesse that my Conscience is cleare, either from wronging the Companie that then was; or any wayes from hindring the full proceeding of that Voyage’, 1611, [A3]v). We have no evidence that he was employed by the company after the Waymouth voyage, however. Cartwright was himself (presumably) invested in the success of the voyage, having been contracted to be paid significantly more of a monthly wage in the event of the success of the ‘discovery’¹⁷ (the voyage was victualled for sixteen months and tasked with being away for at least a year, but returned, unsuccessful, after less than four months).

¹⁶ I have argued elsewhere that Warner’s 1596 edition engages directly with the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, the second edition of which was also published in 1596 (see Grogan 2022).

¹⁷ Cartwright was to be paid 3 pounds a month if the voyage was successful, but only 30 shillings a month if not, according to the company records for 24 April 1602 (see ‘East Indies: April 1602’, in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, East Indies, China and Japan, Volume 2*, 1513-1616, ed. by W.N. Sainsbury, London, 1864, 132-133, *British History Online*).

Cartwright may well have gotten the post as a result of those previous travels to Aleppo, and then overland to Persia, a year or two previously. It is unlikely that he was employed by the East India Company when he undertook his Asian travels, an account of which is found in his book, *The Preachers Travels* (1611). But the overlap with Company interests, and the framing of this account – albeit retrospectively – to commercial interests is strikingly combined with its geographical and political data, as I will argue. Even its title reflects Cartwright's interests in presenting himself not so much as a man of God as a man of the Company, a 'preacher', the commonly used word for 'chaplain' in company correspondence.¹⁸ His narrative begins not with the journey from London but with an account of arriving safely at Aleppo, 'being some sixe miles before our approach to the Citty, encountred by many of our English Merchants, to giue us the welcome on the Turkish shore' (B2v).¹⁹ Cartwright also recounts a warm welcome by the consul Richard Colthurst, with whom he stays for two months (a typical housing solution for a Company chaplain).²⁰

Cartwright may have travelled from London in the company of John Mildenhall (his travel companion for a good part of this trip), and if he did, he left London on the *Hector* in February 1599; as Cartwright opens his narrative at Iskanderun rather than Constantinople (where the *Hector* was bound), he may simply have met Mildenhall at Aleppo, sometime between May and July 1600.²¹ From Aleppo, they travelled overland by caravan to some of the key political, historic and trading cities of Persia – Qazvin, Qom, Shamakhi, Kashan among them, aiming for Lahore. They parted ways at Kashan, with Cartwright travelling to the new Safavid capital, Isfahan and returning thence to Aleppo, and eventually London. Mildenhall, by contrast, continued on to India, where he visited the court of Akbar at Agra, eventually securing some trading privileges for the English, even before the East India Company procured such a thing.²² But it would be Cartwright, and not Mildenhall, who would next be employed by the company: for the 1602 Waymouth voyage.

Although written afterwards, Cartwright's account of his eastern travels is clearly framed at least partly with English trading company interests in mind – but also, it seems, with sharing vital new information about the geography and politics of the Middle East with English readers. Following a dedicatory epistle and an epistle to the readers, a third preface provides his motivations in publishing his 'iournall' so as to provide 'a full description of these parts, as they are at this day' (B1v) as well as comfort to his readers in learning about Persia (and, notably, about Persian opposition to the Turks, 'stirred vp thereunto by two of our Country-men, Sir Anthonie Sherley, and Master Robert Sherley his brother', A2v).²³ Although he boasts of his eye-witness testimony,

¹⁸ MacLean (2004) cites a letter to Cecil in which Biddulph signs himself 'preacher of the gospell', for example, but it was used more widely.

¹⁹ Purchas omits this opening section in his edited version of Cartwright's text.

²⁰ William Biddulph, however, was serving as chaplain for the Levant Company at that time, and probably sharing quarters with Colthurst too.

²¹ On Mildenhall, see Foster 1933, 173-182.

²² In fact, Mildenhall spent almost ten years in Persia and India, and learned Persian, though was unsuccessful in his attempts to find formal employment with the East India Company upon his return in 1608 or 1609. He had previous connections to the prominent merchant Richard Staper (one of the founders of the Turkey – later Levant – Company as well as the East India Company), and Staper would now employ Mildenhall in a private trading voyage east instead. Mildenhall had a son and daughter in Persia, with an Indian wife, and when he died in 1614, he was the first Englishman to be buried in the Christian graveyard in Agra.

²³ The Sherleys have attracted much attention, most recently by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2011, 103-142), and Kaya Şahin and Julia Schleck (2016).

Cartwright also uses prior textual sources, silently or otherwise, as part of a text that is geographically detailed, politically informed, and carefully mediated for domestic readership – even as it borrows elements of style and characterization from romance. For our purposes, Cartwright's description of Isfahan, the first English account to record and appreciate the significant architectural, cultural and political redevelopment of Shah 'Abbas' new capital, warrants particular attention.²⁴

Intersecting, aligning and sometimes misaligning with the company and its interests, the career as well as travels of figures like Cartwright and Mildenhall can provide useful perspectives on the expansion of the realm of knowledge as experienced and disseminated by those in the employ of the joint-stock trading companies – or, just as significantly, on the margins of them. While we depend on what survives in the archives, of course, the issue of class has obscured how and what we see of the travels of early modern English men and women. Why, for example, have the Sherley brothers (minor gentry) attracted so much scholarly and popular attention for taking themselves off to the court of Shah 'Abbas' ostensibly representing English commercial and political interests, when very similar actions by Mildenhall at the court of the Moghul emperor Akbar just a year or two later have not? The experiences of the ordinary mariners, many of whom came from east London, and were actively distrusted by the merchants and Company investors (as Barbour has argued), are not only a relatively untapped source, but also an undermined one, thanks to the forms and values of the documents in which they appear. The Company merchants 'generated vocabularies of race and station' in their dealings with their labour force on ship and abroad, both domestic and foreign, but some of their voices may still be recovered, as Barbour has shown (2021, 361). A chaplain's role on board ship occupies a different kind of authority and socio-economic profile, usually on the side of the master or captain, and the merchants and investors. In the case of Cartwright, the role of chaplain to the Company was one with which he strongly identified – and which also gave him a financial stake in the success of the discovery voyage, in the case of the 1602 voyage. And yet, the attempted mutiny on that voyage, and his association with it, must hint at a certain sense of fellowship with the mariners rather than the captain class, even if he was to disavow that later on.

Cartwright's 'iournall' joins an understudied sub-field of chaplains' accounts of their postings and travels with the joint-stock trading companies. The best-known is that of William Biddulph, Levant company chaplain in Aleppo (and whom Cartwright probably met while staying with Colthurst), who published a semi-fictionalised account of his travels in 1609.²⁵ Simon Mills has recently made a persuasive case for an alignment of learning and commerce facilitated by chaplains in the Turkey Company, principally in relation to antiquarian, orientalist and theological learning and the acquisition of books and manuscripts by Company chaplains – a 'commerce of knowledge' closely interwoven with commercial trading routes and trading company infrastructures (Mills 2020). But little has been written on the cosmographical writings of the various Company chaplains, whether established in their post or (like Cartwright in 1602) those sent on 'discovery' voyages.²⁶ Before the formalizing of the role and its conditions in 1624

²⁴ Shah 'Abbas' moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, and began a major programme of cultural, architectural and physical redevelopment of the city from about 1598. On the dating of these works, and the earliest references to the Shah's plan, see Melville 2016.

²⁵ On Biddulph and his fictionalizing strategies, see MacLean 2004, 51-65. Other examples of chaplains' travel narratives include those of Edward Terry (1655) and, later still, William Hallifax (1691). Biddulph was also responding to another recent popular travel text from the east by an English merchant, Henry Timberlake (1603), who styled himself an 'English pilgrim'.

²⁶ See Mills 2020, 15-70, for a history of chaplains in the Turkey company. Company records for chaplains appointed to the Turkey Company do not survive before 1611, but conditions were formalized in 1624, allocating

by the Levant Company, Mills points out, records of the identity, conditions and activities of earlier chaplains is sparse; the case of Cartwright, however, shows the benefits of casting a wider net, to include those on unsuccessful voyages or who undertook speculative travel with a view to the future commercial benefit of the trading companies. While Biddulph confected a series of distancing devices allowing him to fictionalize the record of his travels (which may have been influenced by the hostilities between himself and a later consul, Thomas Glover [1606-1611]), Cartwright embraces the authority of the role of 'preacher' or Company chaplain. His is less a 'commerce of knowledge' than a knowledge of commerce overlaid onto the geographical and ethnographic descriptions of his journey; a compelling combination of opportunity as well as eye-witness testimony.

Although describing a voyage a decade previously, Cartwright frames his account within the geopolitics of Britain, Europe and the East. The nature, origins and current state of the political and religious hostilities between Persians and Turks occupy a prominent place in his narrative, although most of that information was already known, and was part of the reason for the demise of the Muscovy company trade-route to Persia and the concomitant rise of the Turkey (later Levant) Company trade in the 1580s. The inclusion of a long section of comments on Anthony and Robert Sherley has tended to distract scholars from the much more substantial engagement with the geography and ethnography in the text. But Cartwright commits to describing 'seueral Nations, Situations, Cities, Riuers, Mountaines, and Prouinces, which I haue scene and passed by' (1611, B2r), particularly where those geographies are partly known from classical or biblical history, and even more so, where they proffer potential commercial opportunities to the English trading companies.

Besides his own observations, Cartwright refers to the maps of Ptolemy and, more recently, of Abraham Ortelius (at one point chastising Ortelius for disregarding the commercial and cultural prominence of Kashan) as well as the geopolitical history of Giovanni Tomaso Minadoi, *Historia della Guerra fra Turchi, et Persiani* (1587), from which he borrows extensively in the second part of his narrative, that describing the potential for Christians to capitalize on the historic enmity between Ottomans and Persians.²⁷ The text is rich in details of the contemporary experiences of the traveller, whether the benefits of camels over mules in certain landscapes (D2r), or the challenges of navigation, as he and Mildenhall travel with a large caravan with camels and mules. He provides domesticating detail for English readers (the Euphrates is 'as broad as the *Thames* at *Lambith* ... almost as fast as the Riuer of Trent' – the latter a nice touch, recalling the Trent's own tendency to flood and the significance of its 'rising and falling' [C2v]). He shows an interest in the etymology of place-names, one that encompasses and goes beyond provision of ancient and contemporary names, as other travellers of the period offer. He lists an array of informants: Jews, Turks and Armenians among them. Like the Muscovy Company merchants who travelled some of this country before him, he frequently observes signs of ruin and damage from the wars with the Ottomans, as well as local customs 'worthy obseruation' (D1v) (the torture and execution of a petty criminal in one village, the uses of tar-oil in another) or pleasingly risky events and locations for the armchair traveller (e.g. the dramatic source of the Tigris, which with 'the steepnesse of the same, together with the hideous noise,

chaplains (after a formal interview and sermon in London), a 3-5-year term, lodgings and board in the consul's house, an annual salary and allowance towards books, and a charge to 'preach the word of god & administer the sacrament to the English Nation according to the cannons & constitutions of the Church of England' (19).

²⁷ Minadoi's text was translated into English by Abraham Hartwell, secretary to Archbishop Whitgift, and published as *The History of the Warres betweene the Turkes and the Persians* (1595).

and whistling murmuring, we found not so great contentment aboue [it], as we did beneath', D2v). The itinerary-shaped narrative is divided into clearly titled sections describing places, peoples or cities, and sometimes biblical or historical sites (e.g., 'The description of Armenia', 'The description of the Curdes a most theu-ish people', 'The description of Van'). But the marginal notes also provide clear directions for commercially-minded readers: 'A trade might be planted by the Muscouian merchants', 'The commodities to be carried from England into Persia', 'The colours of cloath to be sent into Persia' ([H4]r).²⁸

In the case of Kashan, 'a principall Citie in *Parthia*, very famous and rich howsoever *Ortelius*, and others make no mention of it' (I1v), Cartwright's description is little short of romance-like, so lush and excessive is his praise – especially in commercial terms – for the city: intensely hot though the climate is, 'it wanteth neither fountaines, springs, nor gardens, but aboundeth with all necessaries whatsoever: consisting altogether in merchandize, and the best trade of all the land is there, being greatly frequented with all sorts of merchants, especially out of India' (I2r). The giant black scorpions that menace the city only add to its qualities of romance excess, of what Murrin calls 'the marvelous real' (2014, 9), a mode generated from precisely these Eastern settings, and here heavily inflected by fantasies of commercial profit (also Murrin 2014, 9-26).

Cartwright's description of the Shah's garden at Isfahan a few pages later ('a thousand fountaines, and a thousand brookes' [I3]r) also engages in this mode of the 'marvelous real'. Significantly, it is the first English text to describe in any detail the developing new administrative capital city, Isfahan, with its wealth of art, architecture and design, including the Bagh-i Naqsh-e Jahan gardens and palaces, Chahar Bagh gardens and avenue, the new commercial district and covered bazaar, and eventually, the Allahverdi Khan bridge and a series of significant water engineering projects.²⁹ A major programme of rebuilding and redevelopment had begun just a few years before Cartwright and the Sherleys were there, but unlike the Sherleys, Cartwright shows a strong interest in the city and an appreciation of the significance of this redevelopment, and its implications. Thus, Cartwright highlights the – in Europe unusual – public access to the royal gardens and site of royal exercises at Isfahan: 'neither is this garden so straitly lookt vnto, but that both the kings souldiers and Citizens, may and doe at their pleasures oftentimes on horse backe repaire thither to recreate themselues in the shadowes and walkes of those greenes' (I3r). (For comparison, the key dialogue with the Shah described in Anthony Sherley's own *Relation of his Travels*, 1613, takes place in 'a garden' in Isfahan, but gives little detail of the development of Shah 'Abbas' new capital city, let alone the remarkable gardens and maydan; Sherley also notes in passing that the Shah's entry to Isfahan is simply 'of the same fashion' to that he encountered in Kashan).³⁰

In offering his readers a description of a garden fit for romance, with its thousand fountains and brooks and 'thousand sundry kinds of grafts, trees, and sweete smelling plants, among which the Lilly, the Hyacinth, the Gillyflower, the Rose, the Violet, the flower-gentle, and a thousand other odoriferous flowers', Cartwright provides a hospitable resting place for his readers as much as himself, while evoking the astonishing ambition and achievement of Shah 'Abbas' architectural redevelopment of Isfahan, and its exemplification of his sovereignty. Cartwright shows himself

²⁸ He concludes this section by noting 'I am perswaded that any honest factor residing in Casbin [Qasvin] may vent a thousand cloaths yearly, wherof the Venetians haue good experience' ([H4]r).

²⁹ On the dating and contemporary Iranian chronicles describing the development of Isfahan and the timeline and key moments of Shah 'Abbas' shift of capital city from Qazvin to Isfahan, see Emami 2016 and Melville 2016. It is likely that Cartwright is describing Chahar Bagh in this passage.

³⁰ It was 'of the same fashion that it was at *Cassan*; differing onely in this, that for some two English miles, the waies were couered all with Veluet, Sattin, and cloth of Gold, where his horse should passe' (Sherley 1613, [L4]v).

alert to the excellence of the artistry involved, noting that the parterring and architectural details of the palaces within the gardens ‘easier stay, then satisfie the eyes of the wondring beholder’ (L3r). Isfahan was, indeed, conceived as an artistic and visual marvel, an expression of royal magnificence as well as (paradoxically) humility, and the redevelopment centred both on the commercial centre with the building of a new covered bazaar, for example and the Chahar Bagh gardens that ran through its centre; in subsequent years, a viewing-tower would be erected at Takht i Sulayman, an elevated site on Mount Soffeh, to offer a prospect on the city itself as a wonder, to residents and visitors alike. ‘Romancified’ though it is, Cartwright’s description pays attention to the urban experience of citizens’ lives, and captures something of the scale and ambition of the Shah’s works, and its potential to give expression to his rule – even if he later repeats a series of worn tropes about Persian iniquity, largely drawn from Minadoi and others.

The middle section of Cartwright’s account switches genre, and moves into an approving account of the arrival of the Sherley brothers to the court of Shah ‘Abbas’ in 1599, and what ensued of their ostensible project to win him to the Christian cause, including a heavily derivative (of Minadoi) account of the source and history of hostilities, confessional and otherwise, between the Ottomans and Persians. It is for this section that Cartwright’s work has received most scholarly attention, at the expense of his geographical and commercially framed descriptions of Ottoman and Persian lands, and indeed his return to this mode in describing his return journey. Cartwright praises both Sherleys, and provides dubious biographical details about Teresia Sherley, whom he describes as a Circassian woman from the Shah’s seraglio – but interestingly, he rejects as ‘more fitte for a Stage, for the common people to wonder at’ (K3v) the plotline of their Christian child, with the Shah standing as godfather, found in the 1607 London play *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, which dramatized the adventures of the Sherley brothers as stage romance.

Although Cartwright implicitly aligns his own account with ‘any mans priuate studies’ ([K4]r), in opposition to this ‘common’ (K3v) audience of the London stage, it is clear from the prominence of his digression on the Sherleys that the success of that play and the wider interest in the Sherleys to which it and a series of contemporary pamphlets and narratives testify had some part in motivating the writing and publication of Cartwright’s *Preachers Travels*.³¹ (Not that Cartwright is entirely convinced by them – he describes Anthony as ‘a man very wise and valiant, if hee had not beene too prodigall’ (L3r) and distances his report of Anthony’s embassy and leaves it ‘to the world to iudge of’ (K3v)). But it also prompts him to lament at some length the success of the Islamic Ottoman empire, and to note the suffering of Christians in the Mediterranean which ‘we (thanks be giuen vnto God) in these Northerne parts of the world may behold with safety, but not without pitie’ (L1r). Cartwright’s narrative is marked by these regular remembrances of the relationship between the reader and the wider world he narrates, a feature of cosmographic knowledge-making as well as community formation.³² The text closes with an appeal to his fellow-countrymen, those who ‘either shall hereafter serue in the warres of *Hongary* against the Turk, or trade in those places’, to reject Islam, ‘as the only way that treads to death and destruction’ (P1r).

The return journey is less engaged, and readers are left to wonder why he did not continue to Lahore with Mildenhall as originally planned and advertised. Cartwright’s account of the lands he traversed on his return from Isfahan is heavily indebted to textual sources, several of which he explicitly recommends. He indulges the armchair traveller once again by revisiting the old chestnut of the dating of biblical history, as well as providing descriptions and commentary on the

³¹ See the new biography of Teresia Sampsonia Sherley by Stevenson in Das 2022, 177-184.

³² His epistle to Sir Thomas Hvnt is signed from Southwark, by the river but also the playhouses, of course.

site of Eden, and the ruination of Babylon. He does, once again, digress to strongly recommend Batan, on the Persian gulf: a 'verie profitable trade for the East Indian companie', a site for 'a speedie vent for our broade cloath, Carsies, Tinne and Lead' (M3v), and even, he suggests, a potential reconfiguration of the Persian silk trade with Europe, particularly Portugal. In this, Cartwright shows a strong insight into the specific challenges to the company of establishing the kind of English trade with Persia that his text has been so consistently recommending and seeking to advance: Portuguese domination of European and even Persian interests in the Persian Gulf, a situation that the East India Company would, many years later, eventually confront directly in agreeing to join Shah 'Abbas' in an attack displacing the Portuguese from Hormuz.³³

As Badcoe writes of Spenser's romance, 'various forms of travel invite the contemplation of different kinds of epistemological horizon, from the historical and the spiritual, to those of conquest, both erotic and territorial' (2019, 4). Cartwright does not write a romance, but his *Preachers Travels* invites the contemplation of different kinds of knowledge of and engagement, primarily by Londoners, with the Ottoman and Persian empires. If the geographical and ethnographic details he disseminates are unstable, even contradictory, his own questing in the realm of the 'marvelous real' using an aspirational commercial frame generates a sense of individual mobility and possibility within these familiar worlds of biblical and classical history. But they are imbued with a sense of urgency within the competitive forms of the global market, no less so its epistemological horizons. Addressing ordinary citizens as well as prospective investors and educated armchair travellers, Cartwright's narrative of cities, markets and trading ports, spliced with appealing accounts of semi-familiar sites of classical and biblical history, draws on romance strategies and styling to convey new data about Persia and to help mediate the distance between it and the lives of his readers. And in his appreciation and dissemination of the sophisticated, progressive ambition of Shah 'Abbas' at Isfahan, Cartwright shows how radical these new geographies, these new epistemological horizons, can be back home.

5. Conclusion

The two case studies I have presented here share and bring together an interest in new forms and details of geographical, political, cultural and ethnographic knowledge gleaned from English travels abroad, with the linguistic and conceptual vocabularies of romance, and, perhaps more significantly, the epistemological affordances of the genre. They are distinctive in promoting or foregrounding the significant commercial interests of their subject of travel, travellers and travelling heroes. And they attest to less often examined networks and genres of cosmographical knowledge circulating in the period. Although Cartwright and Warner have quite different life-experiences, and different literary ambitions, their close proximity to the joint-stock trading companies is, for each of them, a significant factor in their writing. It is not quite the same as recovering the voices of the seamen who sailed the ships, very many of whom died in the course of their work and who did not have the university education and writing opportunities enjoyed by Cartwright and Warner. But it is, I hope, a prompt to look more closely at the new kinds of knowledge generated and disseminated by and for those who worked for the trading companies in this 'marvelous' and violent era.

³³ On the events at Hormuz in 1622 and what led to them, see Good 2022, 10-16. See also a forthcoming issue of *Renaissance Studies* on the subject, co-edited by Edmund Herzig and Ladan Niayesh.

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