

Abstract

This article compares trends in the reception of the fourteenth-century travel narrative (*Relatio*) of the Franciscan Friar Odorico da Pordenone in Italy and England before the end of the fifteenth century. Principally using physical evidence for the intended audience and actual reception of the *Relatio*'s surviving manuscript witnesses, this article draws a sharp distinction between a text circulating in Italy predominantly among lay, middle class, vernacular-literate readers and one attentively read in England by Latinate, religious and scholarly audiences.

Keywords: Odorico da Pordenone, travel writing, Medieval Latin literature, reception studies, Franciscan literature, Italian literature in England

The *Viaggio in Inghilterra* of a *Viaggio in Oriente*: Odorico da Pordenone's *Itinerarium* from Italy to England

I. Introduction

Odorico da Pordenone was a Franciscan Friar who, in the wake of the thirteenth-century expansion of the Mongolian empire, travelled to the court of the Great Khan at Khanbalik (modern Beijing).¹ He appears to have spent around eleven years (c.1318-29) travelling and evangelising in India and China, before returning to Italy.² According to a subscript at the foot of the earliest dated redaction of his travel narrative, now known as his *Itinerarium* or *Relatio*, he dictated an account of his journey to an amanuensis, a fellow-Franciscan, Guglielmo da Solagna at Padua in 1330.³ A subscript added to some manuscripts records his death at the Franciscan convent in Udine in 1331.⁴ Shortly after his death, district officials began to gather records of miracles worked at his tomb in Udine. A redaction of the *Relatio*, together with a biography and collected miracles were gathered together into a body of

¹ In all likelihood the Yüan emperor Yesün-Temür (1323-1328), though Odorico does not specify. On the Yüan dynasty after Khubilai, see Hsiao Ch'i-Ch'ing, 'Mid-Yüan politics' in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 490-586.

² Odorico da Pordenone, *Libro delle nuove e strane e meravigliose cose*, ed. by A. Andreose (Padova: Centru studi antoniani, 2000), p. 34 and n. 78.

³ On Guglielmo da Solagna's redaction, see Paolo Chiesa, 'Per un riordino della tradizione manoscritta della *Relatio* di Odorico', *Filologia Mediolatina*, 6-7 (1999-2000), 311-50 (pp. 314-15; 324). There is little consensus in the manuscripts as to the work's title, but it is referred to as the *Relatio* or *Itinerarium* in scholarship. I refer to it as *Relatio* throughout.

⁴ Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', 316.

evidence to support the case for the Friar's canonisation, an event that never, in fact, took place.⁵

The *Relatio* is a record of one Christian missionary's impressions of encounter with the Middle East, Western and Southern India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China and even Tibet. This relatively short account makes no claim to comprehensiveness, but focuses on the 'many great and marvellous things' of which the traveller has heard and seen.⁶ Information about sites associated with the Old and New Testaments and Christian saints jostles with descriptions of exotic animals and plants. Interest in different regions' produce and mercantile activities is balanced by an ethnographic curiosity about religious and social practices. Descriptions of the wealth and power of rulers, including the Mongol Great Khan and his court, sit alongside stories of dog-headed men, cannibals, and pigmies. Of central importance to the narrative, moreover, is a long, hagiographical account of events surrounding the martyrdom of four Franciscan missionaries at Tana (near Bombay) in 1321. Odorico narrates the story of their capture and execution at the hands of the local *melic*, local representative of the Delhi sultanate, the miracles that impeded their execution, and the miraculous preservation of their bodies from corruption after death, before claiming to have collected their bones and removed them to a Franciscan convent at Zaiton (Chü'an-Chou) in Southern China.⁷ The incorporation of this narrative into the seemingly inappropriate context of a set of travellers' reminiscences is evidence both of the *Relatio*'s close connection with and promotion of the Franciscan order's wider evangelical projects,⁸ and of the multi-generic and multi-purpose nature of the text as a whole. This text, 'di carattere polisemico', mixes — with no apparent sense of

⁵ Odorico's beatification eventually took place in 1755. The most complete account of Odorico's career and of the moves towards his canonization is in the editor's introduction to *Odorico da Pordenone: Vita e miracula*, ed. by Andrea Tilatti (Padova: Centro studi antoniani, 2004), pp. 9-76.

⁶ Odorico da Pordenone, *Relatio*, ed. by Athanasius van den Wyngaert, *Sinica franciscana: Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, 6 vols (Quaracci: Ad claras aquas, 1929-61), I, 413-95 (p. 413).

⁷ On the Delhi sultanate in this region in the period (under Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq Shā between 1320-24) see Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 195-97 and 204.

⁸ On the episode's importance in the construction of the traveller's persona see Andreose, "Ego frater Odoricus de Foro Julii de Ordine fratrum Minorum": Forme dell'autodiegesi nell'*Itinerarium* di Odorico da Pordenone', *Quaderni di storia religiosa*, 13 (2006) (= *Religioni per via*) pp. 217-35 (p. 227). For an overview of Franciscan missionary activities in Asia in the fourteenth century see Jean Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient au moyen âge (XIII-XV siècles)*, Collection de l'École française de Rome, 33 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977).

incongruity — the hagiographic with the secular, and the monstrous *mirabilia orientis* of tradition with the social, cultural and political *mirabilia* of eyewitness report.⁹

Though Odorico's *Relatio* received relatively little attention from specialists either in Medieval Latin or in Italian until recent years,¹⁰ his work was widely-diffused in the Middle Ages.¹¹ His account survives, like the *Milione* of Marco Polo that preceded it by thirty years, in multiple Latin redactions and European vernacular translations, including Italian, French, and German.¹² Scholars who have embarked upon work preparatory to a critical edition of the text have remarked upon its 'active' manuscript tradition, a tradition 'caratterizzata com'è da una forte tendenza all'innovazione, sia sul piano linguistico [...], sia sul piano del contenuto'.¹³ With reference to its Italian *volgare* versions, Alvise Andreose has suggested reasons for this textual instability:

Di norma, le modifiche che traduttori, compilatori o semplici copisti apportano al testo rispondono all'esigenza di adattarlo alle attese e ai gusti del destinatario. Così è avvenuto anche per la *Relatio*, che in relazione al contesto storico, sociale, culturale in cui si è diffusa, è stata letta di volta

⁹ Andreose, 'Tra ricezione e riscrittura: la fortuna romanza della *Relatio* di Odorico da Pordenone', in *Medioevo romanzo e orientale: Il viaggio nelle letterature romanze e orientali*, VII Convegno della Società Italiana di Filologia Romanza, Catania-Ragusa 24-27 settembre 2003, ed. by Giovanna Carbonaro and others ([n.p.], Rubbettino, 2006), pp. 5-21, p. 6. On the *mirabilia orientis* tradition, see Rudolph Wittkower, 'Marvels of the East', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 159-97.

¹⁰ The first modern edition of the work, by Henry Yule, in *Cathay and the Way Thither* (1866) was superseded in 1929 Athanasius van den Wyngaert's edition (already cited). Though flawed, this will be cited as my base text throughout in default of a better option. Since 1982, when the Amministrazione provinciale di Pordenone held a conference entitled 'Odorico da Pordenone e la Cina', interest in Odorico has grown steadily, resulting in critical editions of different vernacular versions of the text, and, in 2004, in an edition of the Beatus' *Vita et miracula* (ed. Tilatti). See in particular Folker E. Reichert, *Begegnungen mit China: Die Entdeckung ostasiens im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1992); *Odorico da Pordenone e la Cina*, Atti del convegno storico internazionale, Pordenone 28-29 maggio 1982, ed. by Giorgio Melis (Pordenone: Amministrazione Provinciale di Pordenone, 1983); Francesca Romana Camarota, 'Dalla "relatio" di Odorico da Pordenone al *De rebus incognitis*', *Rassegna della letteratura Italiana*, ser. 8, 95 (1991), 31-39; multiple studies by Andreose (cited throughout). Recent editions include the *Libro delle nuove*, ed. by Andreose; *Memoriale Toscano*, ed. by Lucio Monaco (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1990); *Les Merveilles de la terre d'Outremer: Traduction du XIVE siècle du récit de voyage d'Odoric de Pordenone*, ed. by D. A. Trotter (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990).

¹¹ No exhaustive handlist of manuscripts of the *Relatio* has as yet been published. A collation of information available from the following studies of specific textual traditions and from a survey of manuscript catalogues suggests 117 manuscripts whose location is currently known, of which 10 post-date the fifteenth century: Giulio Cesare Testa, 'Bozza per un censimento dei manoscritti Odoricioni', in *Odorico da Pordenone e la Cina*, pp. 117-50; Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', Lucio Monaco, 'I volgarizzamenti italiani della Relazione di Odorico da Pordenone', *Studi Mediolatini e Volgari*, 26 (1978-79), 179-220; Andreose, "'Lo libro dele nove e stranie meravioxe cose": Ricerche si volgarizzamenti italiani dell'*Itinerarium* del beato Odorico da Pordenone', *Il Santo*, 39 (1998), 31-67.

¹² Versions in French, German and Italian are listed by Testa, 'Bozza'.

¹³ Chiesa, 315.

in volta secondo una diversa chiave interpretativa: ora come una manuale di mercatura, ora come una semplice compilazione di *mirabilia* esotici.¹⁴

The textual history is, Andreose suggests, one of continual *rifunzionalizzazione*, adaptation and transformation to the wants and needs of a specific and changing audience.¹⁵ This article will follow one strand in the process of transformation and adaptation of Odorico's text, a process that shows the medieval travel narrative to be a widely-read, heavily-used, multi-functional and above all dynamic form.

In the following section, I will, using published accounts of the manuscripts supplemented by personal examination of a sample of these (see Appendices I and II for details) outline broad trends in the reception of the work in Italy over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁶ Against this background, I will then move on to an examination of the English manuscripts of the *Relatio* (Table 3, Appendix), examining in detail how English copyists and readers transformed this text once again, adapting it to meet their own, very different, needs. Using physical evidence for the intended audience and actual reception of the surviving witnesses of the text (ownership evidence, codicological context, script and decoration, mise-en-page and marginalia), and focusing on detailed case-studies of selected English manuscripts, I draw a sharp distinction between Italian and English trends in the reception of Odorico's work.

II. A viaggio in Italia

As I have noted above, the testimony of Odorico's amanuensis Guglielmo da Solagna places the initial redaction of the Odorico's *Relatio* firmly in an early-fourteenth-century Franciscan context. Indeed, work on the Latin manuscripts has clarified that a project to promote the canonisation of its author-protagonist played a role in the text's early diffusion.¹⁷ In a possibly Udinese manuscript of the fourteenth century, the *Relatio* is copied with a collection of Odorico's miracles, collected at the instigation

¹⁴ Andreose, 'Tra ricezione', p. 7.

¹⁵ Andreose, 'Tra ricezione', p. 6.

¹⁶ For Latin manuscripts, see in particular Chiesa, 'Per un riordino' and 'Una forma redazionale sconosciuta della *Relatio* latina di Odorico da Pordenone, *Itineraria*, 2 (2003), 137-63. The four surviving medieval manuscripts of the translation known as the 'Memoriale Toscano', along with accounts of MSS now lost are described Lucio Monaco, 'I volgarizzamenti', 200-09. Brief descriptions of the 14 MSS of other *volgare* versions are given in Andreose, "'Lo libro dele nove e strane meravioxe cose'". For a detailed discussion of the *fortuna* of the work in *volgare*, focussing in particular on differences between the surviving versions, see Andreose, 'Tra ricezione'.

¹⁷ Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', 315.

of Pagano delle Torre, Patriarch of Aquileia¹⁸ In a second early version, the notary Guecello explains that he has compiled his text at the request of the *gastaldo* of Udine (the Patriarch's representative) and given a copy to the Friars Minor.¹⁹ Finally, in a third redaction dated to 1340, the Bohemian Franciscan Henry of Glaz testifies that he transcribed a copy of the *Relatio* at the Papal Court in Avignon, where he had met certain of Odorico's confrères, who were clearly promoting the cause of the friar's canonization.²⁰

Irrespective of the manifest efforts by local magnates and officials and members of the Franciscan order to promote Odorico's life and works and to seek his canonisation, Odorico's *Relatio* appears, on the basis of the number and variety of surviving manuscripts, to have experienced a mixed *fortuna* in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Before the end of the fifteenth century, the text circulated in Italy both in Latin and vernacular versions.²¹ A survey of surviving manuscripts (Appendix I) shows roughly equal (and low) numbers of Latin and vernacular manuscripts survive from the middle and end of the fourteenth century. Moving from the fourteenth into the fifteenth century, however, the number of surviving vernacular copies rises sharply, while the number of Latin manuscripts does not. Ownership information concerning these manuscripts is also suggestive. Very few surviving manuscripts can be firmly linked to religious centres in Italy, and inventory evidence has thus far placed only two further copies in Franciscan or Dominican libraries in Northern Italy by the middle of the fourteenth-century.²²

¹⁸ Assisi, Biblioteca Comunale MS 343 is thought to have belonged to the Franciscan convent at Udine: Testa, 'Bozza', p. 121; Tilatti, p. 98.

¹⁹ The *recensio* Guecelli, printed by Richard Hakluyt in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. by Richard Hakluyt, 3 vols (London: Bishop, Newberie and Barker, 1599-1600), 2, 39-53; Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', 348.

²⁰ Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', 347.

²¹ At least three Latin recensions and six Italian translations: Chiesa, 'Per un riordino'; Andreose, 'Tra ricezione', pp. 6-13.

²² Four manuscripts are linked directly or indirectly to religious orders: Assisi 343 discussed above; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170 is from the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella in Florence; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. lat. 4048 almost certainly belonged to a female religious order: Andreose, *Libro delle Nuove*, p.72. Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale VE III, MS VIII.D.68 has been identified as of Franciscan origin: Cesare Cenci, *Manoscritti francescani della Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli*, 2 vols (Firenze: Grottaferrata, 1971), II, 836-37. Additionally, the exegetical and sermon content of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. f. lat. 2584 as well as its good quality gothic script and two-column layout identifies it as belonging to a religious order with a preaching focus. Copies now unidentified once existed in the Dominican convent of S. Nicolò in Treviso after 1347, and one at the Franciscan Convent in Gubbio in 1360: Testa, 'Bozza', pp. 138-39.

Even allowing for distortion arising from potentially uneven survival rates, it is reasonable to suggest that this text's popularity was more limited in the fourteenth century but that its readership was wider in the fifteenth. Moreover, beginning around the middle of the fourteenth century, translations of the text proliferate in northern and central Italy.²³ Around 1400, a vernacular version termed the *Memoriale Toscano* also began to circulate. Given that its hagiographic material is abridged and its ethnographic and exotic *novitadi* are enriched, the *Memoriale* appears to be a reworking of the text updated with a lay reading public in view.²⁴

From basic codicological data (Appendix II) it is possible to reach an impression of the status of the text's versions and the social level of its Italian readers. The large majority of manuscripts are executed on paper, in Italy a more economical and less durable support than parchment,²⁵ and in cursives rather than in formal bookhands (and, in fact, examination of the manuscripts shows that hands are often irregular).²⁶ The decoration in the manuscripts is predominantly of low or medium-quality (for example, with undecorated *litterae nobiliores* in the same ink as the text, or utilising only one additional colour). Only three manuscripts are, to my knowledge, endowed with either figurative illustration or illumination.²⁷ When the *Relatio*, whether in its Latin or vernacular versions, is copied or bound at an early stage with other works, it tends to appear most frequently in varied, principally vernacular, miscellanies or in collections with other material relating to pilgrimage or travel. The contents of these miscellanies and collections are too varied to permit generalisation, but may include prayers, *rime*, medical recipes, accounts of pilgrimages, and

²³ Andreose, *Libro*, pp. 49, 95-97 and 'Tra ricezione', pp. 6-13.

²⁴ Monaco lists the redactor's additions in his introduction. They tend noticeably towards the marvellous, exotic, and ethnographic: *Memoriale*, ed. Monaco, pp. 75-79.

²⁵ Those employing animal skin are BNC Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170, Assisi 343, Paris, BN, lat. 2584, and Casanatense 276. Only Paris, BN, lat. 2584 is of fine quality.

²⁶ Manuscripts in formal bookhands are BNC, Conv, Soppr. C.7.1170, Assisi 343, Paris, BN lat. 2584, Casanatense 276; BNC Magl. VII.1334; Mantua 488 ('uncontrolled gothic' according to Consuelo Wager Dutschke, 'Francesco Pipino and the Manuscripts of Marco Polo's Travels', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 351-57). Other manuscripts are principally executed in cursives, though information was not available for Marciana, 4326 or Naples, BN, VE III, VIII.D.68.

²⁷ The texts in BAV Urb. lat. 1013; Lucca 1296; BAV, Barb. lat. 4048 feature illumination or figurative illustration. Medium-quality decoration (e.g., 2-coloured and decorated initials, manuscripts with filigree decoration etc) appears in the copies in BNC, Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170 (but note that the opening folio of the Marco Polo text in the same manuscript is finely illuminated); BN lat. 2584; BNC Panc. 92; BAV Vat. lat. 5256.a. Details of decoration could not be ascertained for Marciana, 5726, Marciana, 12496 or Naples, BN, VE III, VIII.D.68.

historical or family notes.²⁸ Indeed, discussing Riccardiana 683, Lucio Monaco highlights the characteristic owner-copied *zibaldone* impression given by the manuscript.²⁹ The manuscript evidence, coupled with the textual evidence of secularisation in the *Memoriale Toscano*, suggests not a prestigious or revered text, but nevertheless a text of increasing popularity amongst vernacular-literate, administrative or mercantile laypeople, some of whom may well be copying the text for themselves. Indeed Lucio Monaco has suggested that nine out of the eighteen manuscripts of the *Relatio in volgare* should be attributed to a Tuscan ‘pubblico di cultura mercantesca’.³⁰

Additional physical data taken from a sample of Italian manuscripts suggests how they may have been approached by this readership. Five of fourteen feature marginalia in the hands of scribes and two by readers.³¹ Of these, only two manuscripts, both Latin (Paris, BN, lat. 2584, an institutional manuscript, and BAV, Vat. lat. 5256 (b)), contain written notes in significant number, as opposed to graphic symbols such as manacula, crosses or lines, with the occasional verbal note. The manuscripts examined suggest that scribes and readers of Odorico in Italy, whether of Latin or *Volgare* copies, were not, on the whole, in the scholarly habit of marking up their texts with marginal finding directions, gloss, or commentary. Indeed, even in the relatively high-quality volume from the library of the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella (Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170), the corrector who marks up the text does so only with occasional manacula and two doodled faces, of no clear relevance to the text they accompany.

Giulio Cesare Testa has suggested that Odorico’s *Relatio* and other travel narratives of its kind were considered by their contemporaries to be of ‘statuto incerto

²⁸ For example, the fifteenth-century MS Correr, Cicogna 2113 initially contained notes in Latin on Venice, a Chronicle of Venice, and a list of Venetian families and names and a *Relatio in volgare*, but was added to over the following century in at least two further hands: Monaco, ‘I volgarizzamenti’, 196-97.

²⁹ Monaco, *Memoriale Toscano*, p. 68. On the phenomenon of owner-copyists and informal, lending-based book production in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy see Armando Petrucci, ‘Reading and Writing *volgare* in Medieval Italy’, in *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, ed. trans. by Charles Radding (New Haven: Yale [1995]), pp. 169-235 (pp. 183-89; 198-200).

³⁰ *Memoriale*, p. 68. On the suggested ‘ambienti laici, notarili o mercantile’ of MSS of the *Libro*, see Andreose, ‘Tra ricezione’, p. 8.

³¹ Latin manuscripts Paris, BN, lat. 2584, BNC, II.VI.277, BAV, Vat. lat. 5256 (b), and *volgare* BAV, Barb. lat. 4048 and BNC, Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170 feature scribal, rubricators’, or correctors’ marginalia. Urb. lat. 1013 and Angelica, 2212 feature readers’ annotations.

e privo, in certo senso, di autorità'.³² The evidence outlined above for the production, readership, and use of Odorico's *Relatio*, when considered with textual evidence for its treatment by copyists, suggests that Testa's summary is a pithy and accurate statement of the case in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy. Just as translators and copyists took a relaxed attitude to the text's integrity as they approached it, adding to and abbreviating their exemplars at will, so text producers chose not to lavish funds or time on the physical text, copying it in lower-status scripts, on paper, and with little decoration. The time-consuming process of adding a marginal apparatus of reading directions or glosses, a convention deriving ultimately from scribal or scholarly practice, was also generally avoided.

III. *A viaggio in Inghilterra*

Within twenty years of its composition, Latin texts of Odorico's *Relatio* reached England.³³ A key point of distinction between the reception of Odorico's narrative in England and that in Italy stands out immediately from a review of its English manuscripts. Although one French vernacular manuscript and one fragment of the *Relatio* are currently housed in the British Library, no manuscript of the *Relatio* in English or French, the country's two literary vernaculars in the period, appears to have been produced anywhere in the British Isles.³⁴ This is, in fact, the first indication of a remarkable change in the *fortuna* of Odorico's *Relatio* when it reaches England.

³² Testa, '“Questo mio librecto...”', in *Odorichus de rebus incognitis, Odorico da Pordenone nella prima edizione a stampa del 1513*, ed. by Lucio Monaco and Giulio Cesare Testa (Pordenone: Camera di Commercio, 1986), pp. 9-32 (pp. 28-29).

³³ Cambridge, CCC MS 407, and British Library, Royal 14.C.XIII both bear the ownership inscription of Simon Bozoun, prior of Norwich Cathedral Priory, who finished his term as Prior in 1353: N. R. Ker, 'Medieval Manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory', in Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. by Andrew G. Watson (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 243-72 (p. 260).

³⁴ BL, Royal 19.D.I, a Parisian manuscript that contains a French translation of the *Relatio* by Jean de Vignay, must have been in England before the first decade of the fifteenth century: Consuelo Wager Dutschke, 'The Truth in the Book: The Marco Polo Texts in Royal 19.D.I and Bodley 264', *Scriptorium*, 52 (1998), 278-300 (pp. 296-97). A version of another French translation by the Benedictine Jean le Long must have been available in England before 1356, when one was used to produce the pseudonymous pastiche travel narrative *Mandeville's Travels*: Michael Bennett, 'Mandeville's Travels and the Anglo-French Moment', *Medium Aevum*, 75 (2006), 273-92. The fragment in London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho D.II is of this version but dates to the fifteenth century. *Mandeville's Travels* (composed in Anglo-Norman French) borrowed extensively from Odorico's *Relatio* and circulated in Middle English and French vernacular versions. For a discussion of the reception of this immensely popular text, see Rosemary Tzanaki, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences: A Study on the Reception of the Book of Sir John Mandeville (1371-1550)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

Not surprisingly for a Latin text circulating in mid-fourteenth-century England, the majority of known or likely owners of the *Relatio*'s English manuscripts are religious institutions including Benedictine and Mendicant houses. Norwich Cathedral Priory was furnished with two copies (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 407 and London, British Library, Royal MS 14.C.13), both of which are well-produced manuscripts that contain a variety of travel and geographical texts marked up with a distinctive programme of marginal paratext in red (see fig. 1). Also well-produced is the copy of the text in the Courtenay compendium, probably from Breamore Abbey, a good-size manuscript of mixed historical and topographical matter (191 x 272 mm, 219 fols) written in two columns in a neat Anglicana with wide margins and furnished with rubrication, scribal *notabilia* and more detailed readers' notes.³⁵ Three manuscripts can be associated with the scholarly environments of Oxford and Cambridge: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 275 (fig. 2), Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby 11 and Digby 166 (fig. 3), all of which are discussed in more detail below. Two of these manuscripts (Digby 11 and Digby 166) present significantly lower production values than most other English manuscripts of the work, being written without ornament or even rubrication in highly abbreviated and basic varieties of Anglicana.

The physical texts of the *Relatio* circulating in England share a number of characteristics in common. Copied on parchment (though generally not of fine quality), the majority are executed in varieties of the then dominant mid-range bookhand in England termed by Parkes Anglicana, and, with a couple of notable exceptions, in its less formal varieties.³⁶ None are copied in the textura that was by the mid-fourteenth century employed largely for religious texts or exceptionally prestigious volumes. The majority of surviving manuscripts are simply rather than ostentatiously decorated, and were copied or bound at an early stage in collections

³⁵ This manuscript, formerly on deposit at Devon Record Office, Exeter, was sold by its last owner, the Earl of Devon, in December 2008 and details of future location and availability to scholars are not known at the time of writing. A description is available at www.sothebys.com, Sale L08241, December 3rd 2008, Lot 31.

³⁶ Paper was still a relatively expensive import in England until well into the fifteenth century, when its cost began to diminish and usage levels increase: see R. J. Lyall, 'Materials : the paper revolution', in *Book production and publishing in Britain, 1375-1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 11-29. Three English manuscripts (CCC 275, Royal 14.C.XIII, and Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 84 are copied on vellum or very well-prepared parchment). Royal 14.C.XIII and Hunter 84 are also copied in more calligraphic varieties of Anglicana than the remainder of manuscripts. On the hierarchy of varieties of this script see M.B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250-1500*, rev. edn (London: Scholar Press, 1979), pp. xiii-xxv.

that focus, at least in part, on questions of travel, mission, pilgrimage, or geographical description. Moreover, the English manuscript tradition of this text is distinguished by a marked tendency towards annotation, either by scribes (in 6 of 10 cases) adding finding notes or reading direction, or by the addition of readers' comments.³⁷ Through evidence of ownership and from the physical texts themselves it is possible, then, to build up a partial picture of the *Relatio*'s English readership. The text is known in Benedictine and ecclesiastical libraries and in secular, Franciscan and Benedictine colleges of the two universities. It does not normally appear in particularly prestigious or high-value volumes, but is often supplied with the apparatus of learning: a programme of marginalia to aid and direct reading.

What follows is a study of four manuscripts supplied with just such apparatus by scribes, correctors, rubricators or readers, all active agents in the production process of the collaborative work that is the medieval book. Marginalia such as *notabilia* (simple 'nota' marks), *manicula* (pointing hands), other graphic signs and written notes were added to medieval manuscripts for a diverse range of reasons. Keyword finding notes help readers locate particular passages, glosses explain unfamiliar vocabulary, and written notes direct attention or interpretation or supplement the text's information. Three of the manuscripts discussed below (Digby 11, Digby 166, and CCC 275) can be linked with greater or lesser degrees of certainty to university environments, and have been supplied with a paratext in the hand of a scribe or corrector. The fourth (Arundel 13) is of unknown provenance, and is supplied with a programme of marginalia in the hand of a later reader. Taken together with ownership evidence and manuscript context, these paratexts, whether scribal or readerly, show how the *Relatio* underwent at least one further striking *rifunzionalizzazione* for a particular English reading public, and shed light on the reading conventions and interpretive strategies brought to bear on the text by its English readers.

III.i Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 11

The fourteenth-century text of the *Relatio* in Digby 11, a small manuscript (145 x 95mm) in what has been called a 'distinctive scholar's hand' is thought to have

³⁷ Manuscript genetics may play a part in this pattern, given that 6 of the 10 relevant manuscripts belong to the same textual group (the *recensio Guecelli*; see Chiesa, 'Per un riordino', pp. 330-32). However Cambridge, CCC 275, and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 162/83 are *recensiones breviores* that feature similar characteristics.

belonged to the Franciscans of Oxford, making it the only manuscript of the *Relatio* in England that we can consider likely to have been read by members of Friar Odorico's own order.³⁸ In this manuscript, the *Relatio* has been copied along with a *Summa de natura rerum*, a Latin translation of the Greek Lexicon, *Suidas* (the *Suda*) attributed to Robert Grosseteste, the *Vita Tartarorum* of the Franciscan missionary Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, and descriptions of Rome and other Italian cities.³⁹ The *Summa de natura rerum* and *Suda* are scholarly reference works. Grosseteste's *Suda* in particular is evidence of an interest in Byzantine and Greek language and culture unusual in fourteenth-century England.⁴⁰

The programme of marginal paratext added to this manuscript by, to judge from the hand, the volume's scribe, suggests the reading practices and interpretive conventions that this particular scholarly, Franciscan community of readers brought to bear on this text. The annotator writes finding notes against place names (*passim*), points of interest in Christian geography (the location of Noah's Ark and the land of Job, fol.44v; the kingdom in which St. Thomas of India is buried, fol. 49r; Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka, fol. 51v), exotica (how pepper is grown, fol. 48r; trees that produce flour, fol. 50v), wonders ('mirabilia' include the stone that protects from wounding by iron at fol. 50v and fish that throw themselves on dry land in Indochina at fol. 51r), and ethnographic detail (various idolatrous practices at fol. 49r; the absence of private property and marriage and the presence of cannibalism in Sumatra at fol. 50r).⁴¹ A particular focus of interest for this annotating scribe appears to be Odorico's account of the martyrdom of his four fellow-missionaries in India. Each torment that the Friars undergo at the hands of the local *melic* (ruler) and each of their pre- and post- mortem miracles is carefully marked up as 'tormentum' or 'miraculum' (fols 45r-48r). In addition, the scribe carefully picks out and highlights any passing references to

³⁸ The manuscript is composite, and I deal here only with the section that contains Odorico's *Relatio* (Part I), as the date of assembly of the manuscript as a whole cannot be verified. W. D. Macray, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues*, IX, *Digby Manuscripts*, A reproduction of the 1883 catalogue with notes by R. W. Hunt and A. G. Watson (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1999), pt. 2, p. 10.

³⁹ *Digby Manuscripts*, pt 1, 8; pt 2, 10.

⁴⁰ A. C. Dionisotti, 'Robert Grosseteste and the Greek Encyclopaedists', in *Rencontres de Cultures dans la philosophie médiévale: Traduction et traducteurs de l'antiquité tardive au XIVe siècle*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse and Marta Fattori (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1990), pp. 337-53.

⁴¹ In a longer, as yet unpublished, investigation I have demonstrated that these are features that tend to attract the attention of the *Relatio*'s annotators more generally: O'Doherty, 'Eyewitness Accounts of 'the Indies' in the Later Medieval West: Reading, Reception, and Re-use (c. 1300-1500)', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2006, pp. 97-111, pp. 163-70. In my transcriptions of annotations I have silently expanded contractions and suspensions throughout.

Franciscan *loca* (fols 48v and 52r). Readers of Digby 11 would find themselves directed to approach the *Relatio* literally, to treat it as a repository of information on Christian topography and on the *mirabilia orientis*. The text's Franciscan readers are, moreover, encouraged to approach the text as proof both of the extent of Franciscan missionary activity in the East, and of divine support for this activity, demonstrated through God's miracles.

III.ii Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 166

Digby 166 (fig. 3) is another simply-written and undecorated manuscript, probably of the late fourteenth century.⁴² The manuscript's contents, according to A. G. Rigg, 'suggest a university provenance', and A. I. Doyle has suggested that this manuscript may have belonged to the Benedictines of Gloucester Hall, a small college that housed only a few Scholar-monks at a time in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries.⁴³ The genesis of this composite miscellany volume, which now contains over 70 items, has been succinctly summarised by Rigg:

[A] fourteenth-century bookseller offered for sale five booklets: mathematical commentaries [including a commentary on Sacrobosco's *De Sphaera* and works on geometry] (part I), Peter Dacia on the *Algorismus* (Part II), Sacrobosco *De Sphaera* (Part III, quire iii only), the *Travels* of Odoric of Pordenone (part IV, incomplete), and a collection of satirical poems (Part VI). To these he added a collection of prose satire (Part V) in a scrappy booklet of two bifolia and an extra leaf [...].⁴⁴

Rigg goes on to note that the volume was supplemented in the fifteenth century, when Odorico's *Relatio* was completed. It seems likely that the book remained in academic circles; in the fifteenth century the schoolroom geography the *Imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis was among items added to it.⁴⁵

Several features of the fourteenth-century nucleus of this manuscript demand notice. The *Sphaera* and commentaries are school textbooks, with Sacrobosco's text

⁴² It is possible that there is a close connection between Digby 11 and Digby 166. These manuscripts witness the same recension of the *Relatio* (*Guecelli*) and feature a small number of identical or closely similar marginal notes. A full collation of all surviving manuscripts of this version will be necessary to fully establish any connection, however. In the meantime, given that only a small proportion of the marginalia are identical, I have treated the manuscripts and their paratexts separately.

⁴³ A.G. Rigg, 'Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies (III)', *Medieval Studies*, 41 (1979), 468-505 (pp. 469, 474 n).

⁴⁴ Rigg, 471.

⁴⁵ Rigg, 472-73.

being required reading on the Bachelor of Arts curriculum. These textbooks sit, however, with a collection of Latin poetry and prose, including satirical and antifeminist material, of the kind appealing to an educated and (in view of the antimatrimonial material) clerical readership. That the book was assembled from separately-priced quires bought from a bookseller indicates that the *Relatio* was selected to sit with this material. Whatever the reason for its inclusion, its interest was clearly maintained into the fifteenth-century, when an owner took the trouble to locate another exemplar and to complete the incomplete text.

Like Digby 11, the manuscript was furnished, during its production process, with a programme of scribal marginalia to guide and direct its readers. Paratext directs attention to noteworthy details. Sites of Christian interest are picked out (the tomb of St Anastasius, fol. 36r), along with idolatrous religious practices (an idol that demands human sacrifice, fol. 39r), riches and jewels (the great ruby of the king of Nicobar fol. 40v), and shocking or taboo customs (anthropophagy, fol. 40v). As in Digby 11, the hagiographical account of the death and miracles of the four Franciscan martyrs at Tana is meticulously marked up to be read as a hagiography, with each torment and miracle individuated, and post-mortem miracles clearly signalled (fols 36v-39r). Digby 166's paratext echoes, too, Digby 11's interest in the locations of Franciscan mission stations (fol. 38v, fol. 41r). However, the paratext has certain peculiarities of its own. The annotator occasionally uses indexing symbols alongside his annotations; versions of the Greek characters alpha and phi appear alongside annotations on fols 37r and 40r, for example. Alongside Odorico's reference to St Thomas (who, according to legend, died whilst evangelizing India) he writes 'here lies the body of St Thomas the Apostle, that is, in the Kingdom of Mobar'.⁴⁶ In fact, this annotator notes the location of any given custom, people or feature with meticulous regularity. The careful linking of phenomenon to toponym adds verisimilitude even to the alien; this is no vague, unlocalised catalogue of *notabilia* and *mirabilia*. *Mirabilia* are, nonetheless, a feature of Odorico's *Relatio* that the Digby 166 scribe takes particular care to point out. He uses the term 'mirabile' six times in his marginal commentary: to refer to strange diseases (fol. 36v), idolatrous practices (fol. 39r), natural phenomena (spawning fish, fol. 39v), and even features of

⁴⁶ 'Hic iacet corpus S. Thome apostoli scilicet in regno Mobar', fol. 39r.

daily life, such as the practice of fishing using cormorants in southern China (fol. 41v).

Given the evident religious interests of this particular annotator, it is perhaps surprising to find no marginal notes that direct interpretation by condemning or warning against non-Christian customs or practices. Indeed, even cannibalism, nudity and the keeping of property and wives in common (customs attributed to Indonesia) are noted without adverse commentary (fols 40v, 39v). On the other hand, the annotator comments in approbatory vocabulary on the ‘generosity of the king’ of Sri Lanka, who freely allows his people to seek for jewels in the island’s great lake (fol. 40v) and that in the unnamed principal city of Tibet no man dares spill blood (fol. 44r). The paratext directs readers to read the *Relatio* for *mirabilia*, geographical information, and proof of God’s work through the Franciscans. However, the text’s utility goes beyond this. The wider world can, it is implied, offer lessons in good governance and behaviour.

III.iii London, British Library, MS Arundel 13

Unlike the two manuscripts discussed so far, the provenance of the fourteenth-century English manuscript Arundel 13 (fig. 4) has not been established or suggested. The manuscript, which now contains only Marco Polo’s *Book* and the *Relatio*, was once part of a larger volume, as its early foliation shows. Its wide margins have been furnished with an extensive programme of annotation in a fifteenth-century hand. Arundel 13 is the only manuscript under discussion here to have been annotated by a later reader, rather than scribe, rubricator or corrector.⁴⁷ However, this annotator’s practice shows how unwise it can be to attempt to draw too strong a distinction between the roles of scribe, corrector and reader. Scribes read and readers write; Arundel 13’s annotating reader takes on the task of correcting the original scribe’s Latin and, as the discussion below shows, many of the annotations that he adds to the manuscript are not different in nature to the paratexts discussed above that I have termed ‘scribal’.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See fols 34r and 44v. In fact, the Marco Polo text in the same volume features annotation in two distinct hands. The earlier of these does feature in the *Relatio*.

⁴⁸ Bella Millett argues that the terminology that insists upon distinguishing between author, scribe, and readers and users of manuscripts is inherently problematic and presents a concise survey of recent discussions of this problem in her textual introduction to *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition from Corpus Christi College ms 402*, 2 vols, Early English Texts Society, O.S., 325-26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005-08), I, pp. xlviii–li.

Arundel 13's programme of paratext shows its author's deep, sophisticated and multi-faceted engagement with Odorico's text. His notes are often prescriptive, directing readers to treat a given text section in a particular way. Certain features that the annotator remarks upon are conventional points of interest in manuscripts of the *Relatio*. He notes exotic plants and produce (trees on the island of Panten (unidentified island, probably in Indonesia), that produce wine, flour, and poison (fol. 44r); jewels and wealth (the splendid palace of Java, fol. 43v; the giant ruby of the king of Necuveran (Nicobar), fol. 44v). His annotations also frame the narrative of the four Franciscans martyred at Tana, where it methodically notes three post-mortem miracles achieved through their bones (fol. 42r).

There are two peculiarities, however, of this annotator's practice. Firstly, he is a meticulous and consistent cross-referencer. On at least five occasions he notes alongside a particular custom, feature, exotic or marvellous detail that Marco Polo's text agrees, followed in each instance by a book and chapter number to the Marco Polo text in the same volume (e.g., fol. 44r, three times on fol. 44v, fol. 45r). Cross-referencing of this type works to the benefit of both texts; Odorico's observation is shored up by the agreement of Marco Polo, and vice versa. Indeed, in this manuscript, the text's truthfulness and credibility on a literal level are rendered beyond doubt by an abundance of such corroborative evidence. However, the process of cross-referencing as practiced by this annotator conceals difference as much as drawing out similarities between the two travellers' accounts of the East. Alongside Odorico's report that, in the island of Panten, stones exist that can protect the bearer from harm by weapons of iron the annotator writes 'concordat Marcus ii. 3' (fol. 44r). It is true that Marco's book mentions such a stone (Book 2, Chap. 3, fol. 29r in the same manuscript), but its use is attributed a very different island: Çipangu (Japan).⁴⁹

Whilst this annotator's marginalia clearly demonstrates an assumption that Odorico's text should be read as literally true, it demonstrates equally clearly that the value of this narrative stretches beyond the literal. Ethnographic observations on the customs and religious practices of pagan peoples abound in the text. These lead the annotator to point on several occasions to moral inferences to be drawn from it. In his account of the kingdom of Mobar (Ma'bar, the Coromandel coast), Odorico describes

⁴⁹ Cross-references on widows who burn with their dead husbands in Campa (Indochina) and the splendid necklace and ruby of the king of Necuveran (Nicobar) function in the same way, concealing the fact that Marco's *Book* attributes these features to different locations: fol. 44v.

the practice of pilgrimage to a great temple and its magnificent idol. The pilgrims volunarily put themselves through great pain on their journey: some travel bound; some with their arms tied to a board attached to their necks; some with a blade fixed in their arms; some prostrate themselves at every fourth step. Odorico then describes an annual procession that takes place, in which the idol is transported out of the temple in a chariot with great ceremony. Worshippers, he says, throw themselves beneath the chariot's wheels, saying that they wish to die for their God.⁵⁰ The annotator's paratexts to this section show a mixed, even disturbed, response to Odorico's report. The direction to 'note how they make a pilgrimage to this idol and what pain they undergo in pilgrimage' suppresses negative language and judgements, allowing the possibility that Indian pilgrims may be a source of moral example for lax Christians unwilling to go through half so much for their own, true God.⁵¹ And yet the annotator's mildly approving tone changes sharply as the narrative continues. Of those who go so far as to die for their idol, he writes 'note how the foolish people throw themselves under the cart in which this idol is carried and thus die lacking in grace'.⁵² Within the space of a single folio, the annotator has drawn from the practices narrated in the text an *exemplum in bono* and an *exemplum in malo* respectively.

Finally, in addition to reading the text as literally true and morally useful, the annotator also at one point finds the text susceptible to allegorical interpretation. One of the most memorable and mysterious parts of Odorico's narrative occurs towards the very end of the text, in a valley through which runs a 'river of delights' evoking, perhaps consciously, the four rivers of paradise.⁵³ The valley is filled with music, but its floor is strewn with corpses. A great and terrible head is carved into the rock, and the Friar can only overcome his fear of this by repeating the biblical phrase *verbum caro factum* (John 1: 14). At the very end of his journey through the valley the Friar climbs a hill of sand, where he sees silver pieces piled high, 'like the scales of fish'. Briefly tempted, but in the end throwing these to the ground, Odorico leaves the

⁵⁰ *Relatio*, ed. Wyngaert, XI, 442-44.

⁵¹ 'Nota quomodo peregrinantur ad istud ydolum et quam penam sustinent in peregrinatione': fol. 43r. The potential of accounts of pagan piety to act as an effective admonition to lax Christians is highlighted by Marco Polo's Dominican translator, Francesco Pipino da Bologna, in his prologue to Marco's *Book*. See *Marka Pavlova z Benátek Milion*, ed. by J. V. Prásek (Prague: České akademie Císare Frantiska, 1902), pp. 1-2.

⁵² 'Nota quomodo stultus populus ponit se sub curru in quo ducitur istud ydolum et sic fatue gratis moritur': fol. 43r.

⁵³ '[...] unam vallem que est posita supra flumen deliciarum': *Relatio*, ed. Wyngaert, 491.

valley unscathed, and, in the eyes of his Saracen travelling companions, a holy man.⁵⁴ This passage in fact divides modern commentators on the *Relatio*; some read it literally, attempting to locate the valley and explaining Odorico's experience as psychological, whilst others consider it purely symbolic.⁵⁵ The annotator of Arundel 13 is in no doubt. Glossing its spiritual interpretation (fig. 4), he writes that 'this valley signifies worldly prosperity and all manner of other fleshly delights'.⁵⁶ Then, in a note that redirects readers' attention to the text's literal sense and potential utility, he adds 'the word is made flesh – note that this is effective if devotedly spoken by a person of faith'.⁵⁷ The marginalia of Arundel 13, then, engage in a complex and multi-layered reading process, interpreting the text in different ways simultaneously. The reading practices in evidence here, which include heavy annotation and cross-referencing, are academic, and the processes of interpretation applied and invited are clearly shaped by the conventions of late-medieval scriptural interpretation, in which moral and allegorical readings of the text may co-exist alongside the necessary literal sense.⁵⁸

III.iv Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 275

Thomas Markaunt, a fellow of Corpus Christi College left his early-fifteenth-century copy of the *Relatio*, bound with a number of other items including a Latin *Mandeville's Travels*, a *Letter of Prester John*, and a *De Saracenis*) to his college in 1439.⁵⁹ CCC 275 is one manuscript that is known to have been well-read, and by scholarly readers; Markaunt's books were available to college members, and CCC 275 was on loan for 60 of the 77 years between 1440 and 1516.⁶⁰ The many readers

⁵⁴ '[...] argentum ego reperi in maxima quantitate, ibi quasi squame piscium congregatum': *Relatio*, ed. Wyngaert, 492.

⁵⁵ Andreose summarises the positions: *Libro delle nuove*, p. 240, n. 1.

⁵⁶ 'Iste vallis signat prosperitatem mundialem et aliam delectacionem corporalem quacumque': fol. 50v.

⁵⁷ 'Verbum caro factum est nota quam valet si devote a fideli dicatur': fol. 50v.

⁵⁸ On the adaptation of techniques of reading and literary analysis applied to the Bible to secular literature, see Minnis and Scott, 'General Introduction', Chapter 8 'Updated Approaches to the Classics' and 9 'The Transformation of Critical Tradition' in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-1375: The Commentary Tradition*, rev. ed. by A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 1-11; pp. 314-438.

⁵⁹ The volume is composite. I focus on the section containing the *Relatio*. See M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), II, 35-38.

⁶⁰ C. R. Cheney, 'A Register of MSS Borrowed from a College Library, 1440-1517: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 232', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 9 (1986-90), 103-29 (p. 116).

who borrowed it do not appear, however, to have made many marks of their own in the volume, which is extensively annotated in the hand of its corrector.⁶¹ Annotations to the copy of the *Relatio* in the volume are few (other texts, in particular the *Mandeville*, are more extensively annotated), but their form is noteworthy. Rather than simply using a caret or nota mark and writing his addition, correction or annotation in the margin, the annotator employs a system of symbols. Figure 2 shows this system in operation. A small key-like symbol placed alongside the text refers the reader to its equivalent at the foot of the leaf. The particular footnote shown, in fact, indicates the annotator's very academic approach to his task. It is positioned alongside the *Relatio*'s hagiographic account of the martyrdom of the four Franciscans at Tana. Alerted to the presence of four Christian preachers in Tana, the 'Cadi' (*qadi*, or judge) persuades the *melic* (representative of the Sultan of Delhi) to have them killed. To kill a blaspheming Christian is to gain, he claims, as much merit as to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, 'that is, to the place where Mohammed rests'.⁶² The footnote, keyed to 'Mecha' in the text, refers the reader to a specific folio and column in the *Book of John Mandeville* in the same volume where further, equally erroneous, information on the subject of the Prophet's resting place is to be found. The note is evidence of a mode of reading that is academic not only in form (the use of a system of symbols and notes), but also in substance.⁶³ It appears pedantic, guaranteeing the verisimilitude of a point of tangential relevance to the text's main narrative thrust, the martyrdom of the friars and their pre- and post- mortem miracles. A cross-reference of this kind acts, nonetheless, as a double buttress, confirming by repetition the veracity of both text and referent. The academic apparatus in CCC 275 confers legitimacy on the volume's collection of texts about the non-Christian world, whilst the process of cross-referencing binds them together into a mutually-reinforcing collection whose factual content can be (and has been) verified through comparison.

⁶¹ Very occasional notes are made in other hands elsewhere in the manuscript (e.g., in a heavily flourished hand on fol. 197v, a leaf of the history of the three kings), but not in the *Relatio*.

⁶² '[...] tu unum scire debes, quod Macometus precepit in Alcoram, id est in lege sua, quod si aliquis unum interfecerit christianum qui diceret malum de Macometo et de lege nostra, tantum meritum ipse haberet ac si iret ad Mecam, id est ad locum ubi manet Macometus": *Relatio*, ed. Wyngaert, 431. That the Prophet's tomb was located in Mecca was a not uncommon medieval misconception.

⁶³ There is some visual similarity between the noting symbols in CCC 275 and the indexing symbols developed and employed by the scholar and Bishop of Lincoln Robert Grosseteste. However, the symbols in CCC 275 do not appear to be employed in a thematically consistent way. On Grosseteste's symbols see M. B. Parkes, 'Books and Aids to Scholarship of the Oxford Friars', in *Manuscripts at Oxford: An Exhibition in Memory of Richard William Hunt (1908-1979)* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1980), pp. 57-60.

Conclusion

In his *De insulis et earum proprietatibus*, begun in the 1380s, the Florentine poet and emulator of Giovanni Boccaccio, Domenico Silvestri, makes one of a very small number of overt admissions by fourteenth and fifteenth-century Italian scholars to knowledge of Odorico da Pordenone's *Relatio*. Silvestri explains in the prologue to his reference work on the islands of the world that Odorico attributes 24,000 islands to the furthest East. However, he decides against relying on Odorico's authority for information about these:

I would have included some of these islands here, except that to mingle the fables (*fabulas*) of modern authors (*novorum*), who have not altogether been tested in our times, in with the histories of ancient authorities (*veterum auctorum*) would do nothing other than diminish with untruths belief in truth, no matter how truthful may be those things that Odoricus writes.⁶⁴

Silvestri's comment gives weight to Testa's suggestion that Odorico's text, generically of 'statuto incerto' was, in Medieval Italy, 'privo, in certo senso, di autorità'. Silvestri vacillates over Odorico's text; it may or may not be truthful, but the mere fact that it has been not been altogether tested or approved as have the ancients is enough to confer on it the status of untruth (*mendacium*). This is not to say that the *Relatio* did not enjoy a certain popularity; it did, but a popularity generally limited to a vernacular literate, lay, mercantile and administrative readership. Popularity is, moreover, not the same as authority, as the multiple unsignalled changes to the text's vernacular versions traced by Andreose and the physical features of the manuscripts in which it appears suggest.

The English manuscripts of the *Relatio* point, on the other hand, to a markedly different audience and approach. There is certainly little evidence that the producers and readers of its English manuscripts considered the text's status or authority

⁶⁴ 'Quarum [insularum] aliquas posuisssem nisi quod inter veterum auctorum historias et fabulas miscere novorum, nec multum nostris temporibus probatorum, nil aliud esset quam mendaciis veritati fidem minuere et quamquam vera essent que Odorigus scribit': Domenico Silvestri, *De insulis et earum proprietatibus*, ed. by C. Pecoaro, *Atti dell' Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Palermo*, 4th series, 14 (1953-54), 1-319 (p. 30).

uncertain. In England, the text appears in manuscripts whose context, mise-en-page and paratexts fit them for studious reading by religious and scholars. In fact, the selection of manuscripts examined in detail in this article demonstrate the activities of what could be considered, in Roger Chartier's terminology, a 'community of readers', readers whose culture, education, and affiliations lead them to share certain assumptions and conventions concerning 'legitimate uses of the book, ways to read, and [...] instruments and methods of interpretation'.⁶⁵ In the case of the *Relatio*, these conventions include study, meditation, interpretation, and annotation. The text is marked up to be interpreted first and foremost as a factual narrative, and readers appear to have been as conscientious in their approach to its sacred hagiography as to its profane travellers' tales. The apparatus of scholarship is drawn upon to bolster the narrative's claim to truth by noting detail that adds verisimilitude and by cross-referencing to sources beyond the text. Yet the same apparatus also, perhaps, legitimises the reading activity by making this text — the work of an untested modern — meaningful, functional and relevant to a scholarly audience.

That the English readers of Odorico's *Relatio* tend to belong a particular scholarly and religious interpretive community does not, of course, mean that they all interpreted the *Relatio* in precisely the same way. Indeed, the paratexts and annotations that survive represent desired and projected readings: what certain readers thought they should think, not what they thought. And yet even these desired and projected readings differ. The paratext of Digby 11 sets the text out pragmatically as a mine of information. At the hands of the annotator of Arundel 13, on the other hand, the text becomes not just practically and academically useful, but also a stimulus to meditation. Readers are invited to draw moral guidance from the text and, in one instance, to read an episode allegorically, applying conventions of reading and modes of interpretation deriving from Biblical interpretive traditions.

A study of Odorico da Pordenone's *Itinerarium* from Northern Italy to England provides a stimulus to revised thinking on several fronts. On the one hand, it adds nuance to our understanding of the reception of medieval travel narratives, cautioning against generalisation and urging us to individuate carefully the strands of a text's reception through different reading communities. On the other, it illustrates

⁶⁵ Roger Chartier, 'Communities of Readers', in *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the 14th and 18th Centuries*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 1-23 (p. 4).

some of the ways in which religious and scholarly readers in late-medieval England made use of such relatively unusual texts. Through the adaptation of methods of reading and interpretive techniques deriving from religious study and scholarship, the *fabulae* of an unapproved *modernus* of uncertain authority could become both useful and instructive.

Marianne O'Doherty
University of Southampton

Appendix I: List of Manuscripts

The following three tables list all the manuscripts of Odorico da Pordenone's *Relatio* of Italian and English origin considered in the research project that led to this article and cited in the text. They include manuscripts dated to the turn of the fifteenth century, but exclude those produced (probably or certainly) after 1500, as well as those exemplars (one English and one Italian) too fragmentary to allow reliable data to be drawn.

TABLE 1.1a. Manuscripts copied in Italy and written in Latin

<i>Date</i>	<i>Manuscripts in Latin</i>	<i>Viewed in person</i>
1330-1440	Assisi, Biblioteca Comunale, 343 BNP, lat. 2584	✓
14c <i>ex</i> - 15c <i>in</i>	Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, 276 BMV, 4326 (lat. XIV.43)	
1400-1500	BNCF, Magliabechiano VII. 1334 BNN, VIII.D.68 BAV, Vat. lat. 5256 (b) Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, Coll. Cicogna, n. 2408	✓ ✓
15c <i>ex</i> - 16c <i>in</i>	BNCF, II.IV.277 Udine, Archivio Capitolare, F. Bini., Misc. 22.3	✓

TABLE 1.1b. Manuscripts copied in Italy and written in the vernacular

<i>Date</i>	<i>Manuscripts in Italian</i>	<i>Viewed in person</i>
1330-1400	BNCF, II.II.15 BNCF, Conv. Soppr. C.7.1170 BAV, Urb. lat. 1013 BMV, 5726 (It. VI.102)	✓ ✓ ✓
1400-1500	BNCF, Panciatichiano 92 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 683 Lucca, Biblioteca Governativa, 1296 Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale, 488 Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, 2212 Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, 1548 BAV, Vat. lat. 5256 (a) BAV, Barb. lat. 4047 BAV, Barb. lat. 4048 Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, Coll. Cicogna, It. 2113 BMV 12496 (It. VI.585)	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

TABLE 1.2. Manuscripts copied in England

<i>Date</i>	<i>Manuscripts in Latin</i>	<i>Viewed in person</i>
1330-	Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, 162/83	✓
1400	CCC, 407	✓
	Courtenay Compendium (formerly Exeter, Devon Record Office, Courtenay Papers 150 8M Devon Add - SS 11/1)	✓
	BL, Royal 14.C.XIII	✓
	BL, Arundel 13	✓
	BOD, Digby 11	✓
	BOD, Digby 166	✓
1400-	CCC, 275	✓
1500	Glasgow, University Library, Hunter 84	✓
	BL, Harley 562	✓

Appendix II: Codicological Data

TABLE 2.1. Summary of codicological data from twenty-six manuscripts of the *Relatio* copied in Italy and ten copied in England

		<i>Number of MSS (copied in Italy)</i>	<i>Number of MSS (copied in England)</i>
Support	Paper	22	
	Parchment	4	10
Script	Formal bookhands (gothic & humanistic)	6	
	Cursives showing humanistic influence	2	
	Other cursives (including <i>cancellaresca</i> and <i>mercantesca</i>)	16	
	Anglicana (bastard or <i>formata</i>)		3
	Anglicana (basic or medium-quality)		7
Decoration	Illumination and/or figurative illustration	3	2
Companion pieces	Travel or geographical description	10	9
	Miscellanies	8	3

TABLE 2.2. Annotation patterns in a sample of fourteen manuscripts copied in Italy and all known manuscripts copied in England

<i>Type of annotation</i>	<i>MSS copied in Italy (Latin)</i>	<i>MSS copied in Italy (‘volgare’)</i>	<i>MSS copied in England (Latin)</i>
Scribal, rubricator’s, or corrector’s marginalia	3	2	6
Readers’ marginalia	0	2	4
No marginalia	2	6	2

TABLE 2.3. Medieval ownership of ten manuscripts of the *Relatio* copied in England

<i>Type of owner</i>	<i>Number of MSS</i>
Monastic (Benedictine)	3
Preachers (mendicants)	1
Ecclesiastical	1
University	2

