Any good reading? The changing reception of early-modern travel writing

By Matthew Day

In 1624, Richard Eburne, the Church of England vicar of Hengstridge in Somerset, and author of a number of religious tracts, published a pamphlet about English attempts at colonisation in Newfoundland. His book, *A Plaine Pathway to Plantations*, was written 'For the perswading and stirring up of the people […] to affect and effect these Attempts [*sc*. at colonisation]' and was cast as a dialogue between Enrubie, a merchant, and Respire, a farmer (Eburne 1624: title-page) [1]. The work opens with a debate about the merits of reading tracts recording English colonial endeavour. Respire, the doubtful farmer, marvels that Enrubie should find any 'good or pleasure […] in such idle Bookes,' describing them as 'fables, not worth the looking on' (Eburne 1624: C1v.). He doubts Enrubie can 'find any good in reading such books'. In reply, Enrubie delineates the 'delight that comes by the noveltie of the contents' and claims such writing offers a chance to see 'those goodly Countreys' with 'the eyes of the minde'. The information gleaned enables him to 'stop the mouthes, and confute the malice' of those who speak badly about plantations and makes him 'better prepared to informe' those who oppose plantations of the benefits of colonisation. Respire is easily persuaded and becomes a willing co-loquitor with Enrubie where he learns not only about the advantages of colonial activity, as advocated by the merchant, but also about how contemporary practices in colonisation could be improved.

Eburne's text brings to the fore a question that troubled the educated classes of early-modern England. The literature that we now categorise as travel writing, grew enormously in the early-modern period and was extremely diverse in nature though attitudes towards both travel and its literature were varied (Sherman 2002). Some educationalists thought them beneficial, while others regarded travel as expensive, indulgent and morally corrupting (Carey 2009: 180). Humanists sought to organise the writing up of voyages in a methodologically consistent way (Stagl 1990) [2] but for some people, travellers and their narratives remained of dubious merit with accusations of mendacity and exaggeration not uncommon (Adams 1962; Carey 2016). Dramatists such as Ben Jonson and Richard Brome satirised the impact of reading such texts, suggesting they brought no benefit and turned a man's wits (Jowitt 2012). In early-modern England the value of reading narratives of travel was contentious.

Although we know how some dramatists who wanted to satirise the reception of voyage literature chose to present it, we actually know very little about what other readers made of the new wave of literature. Here, I want to examine the reception of early-modern travel literature, over the *longue durée*, through the prism of readers' responses to a seminal early collection. Richard Hakluyt's *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of*

the English Nation was first published in 1589, and reissued in three volumes from 1598-1600 as *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Although it was not the first collection of writing about English travel it marked a turning point in the publication of documents and narratives relating to the topic because it was, at that point, the most comprehensive collection available. Hakluyt's first edition covered a 1500-year period and comprised more than 800 pages in folio; the second edition extended to three bulky volumes, also in folio. Part of the reason for the increased size was Hakluyt's willingness to include descriptions of places the English had not visited and accounts of voyages by other nationals. He gave a variety of reasons for doing so including: the provision of the best available information about parts of the world the English had not visited (Hakluyt 1598–1600: III A2v–A3r); inspiring (and goading) the English for not having achieved more (Hakluyt 1598–1600: II *2v); providing them with models of colonisation from which they could learn (Hakluyt 1598–1600: II *3r); and contextualising English achievements by emphasising their difficulty in comparison with those undertaken by other nations (Hakluyt 1598–1600: 1 *4r). Notwithstanding this diversity, the historian Froude described the work as 'the prose epic of the modern English nation' (Froude 1867: 296) while in the mid-twentieth century the historian G. M. Trevelyan claimed that 'the most influential writer in the age of Shakespeare, if it were not Foxe the Martyrologist, was Hakluyt, author of *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation*' (Trevelyan 1967: 207). More recently, Anna Suranyi concurred noting that Hakluyt was a 'very influential writer whose works were widely read,' by readers who 'likely shared many of his convictions' (Suranyi 2014: 169) but elsewhere she notes that 'information about who actually read these books is tantalizingly scarce' (Suranyi 2008: 32). Similarly, Anthony Payne whose census of copies is an essential scholarly resource (Payne, no date) notes that 'readership and influence' remain 'difficult to establish, although […] contemporary ownership is well documented' (Payne 2008: 43) [3]. Although there has been some work on the reception of the collection (Crone and Skelton 1946; Quinn 1974; Day 2012; Jowitt 2012), Payne correctly observes 'we still have much to learn about [the works'] contemporary readership and reception' (Payne 1997: 15).

Approaches to reception history vary enormously but I follow Robert Darnton who advocated combining 'textual analysis with empirical research' (1990: 181) and Heidi Hackel in seeking to establish 'both the strategies recommended to readers and the practices in which they then engaged' (2005: 8). To do so, I draw on print culture over the c.425 years since publication of Hakluyt's collection, manuscripts and the inspection of more than 150 copies in the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States of America. Looking at three different strands of proposed interpretation – the advancement of practical activities, antiquarianism, and the celebration of English naval achievement – I bring forward evidence to show the reception history of each, over a long period. Doing so demonstrates a number of things. Firstly, the problem of over-emphasising particular aspects of a highly complex and diversified text; secondly that reception history complicates such interpretations sometimes cutting across interpretative approaches and thirdly that some kinds of reception continued into the twentieth century while others waned. I suggest, too, that there are differences between a work's reception as a physical book that requires positioning in a specific location,

and its interpretation as a series of texts, that allows for complexity, ambiguity and diversity. Finally, through detailed analysis of individual cases, I hope to show ways in which readers' diverse engagements with the texts reflect Hans Jauss's observation that a literary work does not offer 'the same face to each reader in each period' (Jauss 1970: 10). What is new is to see how this plays out in relation to a sixteenth-century collection of travel writing.

Theorists of reception history have tended to focus on whole books such as novels (Iser 1974) or concentrated on the community of readers (Fish 1980) and the nature of interpretation. Likewise, those literary critics and cultural historians who have, often brilliantly, shown the ways in which particular, seminal texts (Burke 1995; Gingerich 2010) or fascinating individual case studies (Ginzburg 1980) have nuanced our understanding of reception in practice, have tended not to consider works which contain multiple texts. In the case of Hakluyt's collection of voyages this is significant because critics have sometimes prioritised one aspect of it over others. What reception studies show is that responses were much more multifaceted. The evidence relating to the three main strands of reception discussed here also demonstrates a long history of selective reading. When we think of the way Hakluyt's book was received, we will find that, it frequently constitutes a history of the reception of a particular text or selections of text within the collection rather than of the book as a whole.

Commentators' willingness to categorise the two editions of Hakluyt's work in particular ways serves, ironically, to reiterate the rich diversity of the books when those interpretations are considered collectively. Anthony Payne (1999: 20) suggests that the 1598-1600 edition 'may best be seen in the context of the antiquarian and collecting movement of the circle of William Camden, as an episode in intellectual as much as colonial history'. E. G. R. Taylor (1934) and Lesley Cormack (1997: 129–62) see geography as the main genre of *The Principal Navigations,* while T. J. Cribb argues that 'Hakluyt's whole purpose is […] to promote replication of his narratives in real life' because they contain 'the technical information and instructions enabling that to be done' (1999: 102). James P. Helfers has highlighted the 'patriotic and pragmatic' (1997: 172) motivations mentioned in the collection and Richard Helgerson (1992: 151–91) drew attention to the work's interest in trade and commercial interests. The two editions of *The Principal(l) Navigations* (4) do all the things outlined by these commentators and these readings offer valuable insights. Yet, as Hakluyt's own prefatory materials make clear, the collections were intended to serve multiple purposes. Indeed, the works appear to be self-consciously ambiguous about their genre. Hakluyt himself referred to the work both as his 'English Voyages' (1598–1600: III A2r) and as a 'historie' (Hakluyt 1598–1600: II *2r). He was clear it was not a 'Cosmographie' (1589: *3v) but nevertheless emphasised its organisation by 'Geographie and Chronologie' (1598–1600: I *4r). He drew attention to the antiquity of some of its texts yet also noted there were many mentions of 'beastes, birds, fishes, serpents, plants, fruits, hearbes, rootes, apparel, armour, boates, and such other rare and strange curiosities, which wise men take great pleasure to reade of' (1589: *4v). The work claimed to celebrate English achievement, putting up for praise those who had undertaken the voyages, and to inspire others to undertake similar journeys, yet, in the second edition, in particular, it also included the narratives of voyages undertaken by those of other countries. Documents and narratives were provided both as

evidence of past events and as models for future practice. In short, the books aimed to have wide appeal.

Before examining the textual reception of the collections in detail, it is worth pausing to consider the implications of dealing with the book as a physical object. As Henry Petroski (1999) has shown, libraries create order and categories. The practical need of placing a physical object in a specific location can shed some light on how those who made that decision perceived it. As we might expect for a book containing multiple different types of text, owners and readers responded in a variety of different ways. Sir Walter Raleigh, who knew Hakluyt well, wrote his own *History of the World* and was interested in colonisation, categorised his copy as a history (Oakeshott 1968: 289). At Winchester College in the 1620s the work was shelved with geographical material [5]. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the genre of 'travel collection' burgeoned, so owners shelved their copies in this category, frequently adding to the spines or front fore-edge words such as 'Hakluyts voyages' [6] or 'The English voyages' [7]. Rather idiosyncratically, the Shakespearean scholar, Edward Capell lumped *The Principal Navigations* with a number of other contemporary works into the category of 'Shakespeariana', reflecting his own bardolatry [8]. The inclusion in Hakluyt's collection of significant amounts of material about the colonisation of America led to a focus on that aspect of the work. John Reinhold Forster thought Hakluyt published 'primarily with a view to excite his countrymen to prosecute new discoveries in America and to promote the trade to that quarter of the globe' (1786: 189–90). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, collectors in the United States concurred placing the text in libraries of 'Americana' (Penrose 1949: 12; Philadelphia Free Library). These decisions prioritised one aspect of the collection and implicitly ignored the nearly two-thirds of it dedicated to other geographical regions**.** The need to shelve the book, rather than read the text, led often to a single categorisation, which was at odds with the complexity that the text itself contained and actual readers found within it.

The complexity of *The Principal(l) Navigations* means that there is no room here to cover every angle of the reception of Hakluyt's work. To begin, I wish to consider interpretations which might come under Cribb's notion of 'practicality' but I am not simplistically linking reading to action, a connection which seems extremely hard to prove given the multiplicity of motives that precede action. Rather, I investigate those readers who were involved in the planning of voyages or colonisation, and as preparation for it, undertook research to understand better how to go about it. Not surprisingly, it was standard practice in the early-modern period for those investing in or embarking on long-distance voyages of exploration or trade, as well as those involved in colonisation, to lay their hands on all the published material they could about the regions they were proposing to visit. Joyce Lorimer has demonstrated how Sir Robert Cecil's assessment of the likelihood of a successful colonial venture drew on his knowledge and understanding of travel writing of the region in question (2012: 105). John Brereton's *A Briefe and True Relation of the Discoverie of the North Part of Virginia* advised potential investors in colonisation to read relevant parts of Hakluyt's work (1602: F4r). Captain Thomas James noted that in preparation for his voyage to the North-West Passage that he gathered 'a Chest full of the best and choicest Mathematicall bookes, that could be got for money in England: as likewise Master Hackluite, and Master

Purchas: and other books of Journals and Histories (1633: Q1v). What is noticeable is the diversity of material James implied he read. In the mid eighteenth century, Alexander Dalrymple, the Hydrographer of the Admiralty, was still turning to travel accounts from the early seventeenth century to help him draw up the maps and accompanying *Memoirs* that he published about places that had been little visited (Dalrymple 1787: D1r). Such documents had the very real intention of being valuable to voyagers and continued the tradition of the early period.

Indeed, perhaps surprisingly given the increase in knowledge and understanding of the world gained by the British over the two centuries after the publication of Hakluyt's collections, the work remained a relevant publication for two of Britain's most ardent imperialists at the turn of the nineteenth century. Sir Joseph Banks, bibliophile and botanist, turned to his impressive array of travel narratives in 1813 when advocating that the British Government annex Iceland (Agnarsdóttir 2016: 526). It was one of many sources that informed his understanding of the region. Similarly, Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty from 1804–45 whose imperialism was inspired by Elizabethan precursors deployed older voyage narratives to inform himself about the arctic. His *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions* (1818) sought to promote and celebrate exploration in the region and recorded the search for a North-East and North-West Passage. It was written because the previous year, as Barrow subsequently explained, there had been significant ice-melt in the arctic bringing icebergs much further south into the Atlantic than was common. This led to the belief that there could be a North-West Passage (1846: 13–20). Barrow's 1818 work draws on *The Principal Navigations* (1818: 49–115) citing the narratives of Martin Frobisher and John Davis but also refers to two sixteenth-century tracts on the North-West Passage. He noted that 'Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Mr. Richard Willes composed very learned and ingenious discourses on the subject' and asserted that Gilbert's work, in particular, 'contains much curious argument in favour of such a passage' (1818: 78). As late as the nineteenth century, for geographical regions that were still unfamiliar, early-modern travel writing remained a possible source of valuable information.

Nor was it just for planning purposes that owners turned to Hakluyt's collection. For some, the usefulness of the book only became apparent once they had embarked on their enterprise. The well-known anecdote recorded in *Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas His Pilgrimes* about the use of *The Principal Navigations* suggests that it could have an immediate and very practical impact (Payne 1997: 21). When the third East India Company voyage was stuck in the doldrums at the equator and desperately short of water, they turned to Hakluyt's book. Although Purchas does not precisely explain how this helped, it seems probable that by reading narratives in the collection they identified a place they could reach to obtain fresh water. Doing so enabled the success of the voyage. Somewhat later, and in a different part of the world, Captain John Narborough and his companion Captain John Wood both used *The Principal Navigations* to provide practical information for navigation while at sea. In their 1669–71 voyage to the Straits of Magellan, they turned to narratives and documents relevant to the region to help them navigate the little-known area (Campbell, Bradley and Lorimer 2018: 62, 202). Colonists too sought *The Principal Navigations* once they were 'in the field'. The early settler, Emmanuel Altham, having arrived at Plymouth

Plantation, wrote to his brother-in-law in 1623 asking him to buy 'the books of English voyages' since it would 'do [him] great good' (James 1997: 33). Precisely what Altham meant by 'great good' and whether this was for pleasure, practicality or both remains unclear, but it is noteworthy that he sought them once he had arrived in New England.

We can gain some insight into how those seeking insights for practical planning purposes may have obtained it from travel narratives by looking at Hakluyt's own practice. Shaped by humanist practices of common-placing and the extraction of choice sections of text, it seems Hakluyt did not require carefully prepared lists to identify useful information nor that he was distracted by the emotional appeal of a narrative. On publishing the account of Drake's voyage, Hakluyt puffed it, twice describing it as 'famous' (Hakluyt 1598–1600: III, 3P3v). Yet, when it came to giving business advice to a trading company, Drake's heroism and achievement were ignored and replaced by a relentless search for information extracted from this and other narratives. In response to a question about the location of goods to be traded, Hakluyt observed 'There groweth […] longe peper in the Isle of Baratene, as appeareth by the testimony of Sir Francis Drake, in the 3rd volume of my English Voiages pag.741' (Taylor 1935: II 477). He listed too evidence from a number of other sources including narratives of Dutch voyages and tracts that he had in Italian (Taylor 1935: II 481). Hakluyt thus extracted practical information from a narrative, which he himself had positioned as bringing esteem and credit.

Similar complexity is evident if we turn to the concept of Hakluyt's text as being predominantly antiquarian. In suggesting that Hakluyt's worked belonged to this field, Anthony Payne rightly drew attention to its early records of English travel and the strong personal links between Hakluyt and other antiquarians such as William Camden (Payne 1999: 20). There is certainly evidence that some readers were interested in the older material contained in Hakluyt's work. A Bodleian Library copy has marks in the margin at a section of text that talks about 'peaceable King Edgar' (Hakluyt 1598–1600: Bodleian Library I A5r) [9] and underlines the word 'peaceable'. The copy at Emmanuel College, has an early-modern annotation by the same extract and repeats the substance of the text, noting '100,000 min in K. Edgar's fleet' by a section that reads 'an hundred thousand men at the least' (Hakluyt 1598–1600: Emmanuel College I A5r) [10]. Sometimes this interest seems to have been local and particular, in a way that Roey Sweet describes as being associated with antiquarianism (Sweet 2008). One of the copies held at Trinity College, Dublin, places neat, dotted, marginal markings against a number of sections pertaining to the medieval history of the kings of the Isle of Man and their interaction with the Irish. This hints at a geographically specific connection between the reader and the copy of the text (Hakluyt 1598–1600: Trinity College Dublin I A6r-v) [11]. Nor was it just ancient history on which annotators commented. An anonymous hand has added a note in a copy at New College, Oxford [12] about the ship the Merchant Royall recorded in Philip Jones's account of a 1585/86 voyage to Constantinople. Jones noted that the ship was 'a very brave and goodly shippe, and of great report' (Hakluyt 1589: T6r) but the early modern commentator has added 'this ship was after by a cruell tempest cast awaie in ye Gulfe of Venice being richlie fraughted & bound for England' (Hakluyt 1589: New College T6r).

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that interest in the antiquarian material or readings that searched for 'subject matter [which] is recondite, of little interest to anyone except the specialist', (Sweet 2008) was undertaken by gentleman who were 'slightly ridiculous, pedantic and myopic' (Sweet 2001: 182). By contrast, there is plenty of evidence of politically motivated deployment of antiquarian material. In the late seventeenth century, John Selden used antiquarian material of dubious veracity to support imperialist claims to navigational rights (Sobecki 2011: 26–7). The same principles that Selden invoked in relation to the sea were also applied to territory. From the earliest period, European countries in their arguments with each other about possession of overseas territories drew on such texts to support their claims (Seed 1995). Sir Ferdinando Gorges, a colonial adventurer, provides a convenient early example. His *America Painted to the Life* had a complicated publishing history being first released in print in 1658 by his grandson of the same name. It had been written much earlier with a view to defending the territorial claims of the English in North America against those 'made thereunto by the Embassador of France, […], in the year 1624' (1658: [A1]r). Gorges explained that Hakluyt's work had an essential role in supporting that claim by showing that 'Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and Sir Richard Grenvile, and many others, Noble spirits of our Nation attempted to settle a Plantation in the parts of America, in the Reigne of Queen Elizabeth'. Despite their 'variable successes' he claimed that the narratives were evidence of 'Primor seisin and royal possession taken thereof, as of right belonging to the Crown of England' (Gorges 1659: [H4]r-v). In short, Gorges interpreted the activity undertaken by the early adventurers as evidence to support colonial claims and knew that he could find the narratives in Hakluyt's collection.

Gorges's practice of drawing on old documents to make territorial claims continued throughout the early-modern period. Jeremy Black (2001) has shown the importance of extensive libraries to eighteenth-century diplomacy in order to support such assertions and it is no surprise that the British Government owned a copy of each edition of *The Principal(l) Navigations* (Payne no date) nor that it regularly turned to early-modern collections to justify claims (Day 2013). Indeed, such texts played a part in international boundary disputes through the nineteenth century and can still do so today. Following a survey undertaken by Sir Robert Schomburgk in 1835–9 the British Government sought, in 1841, to open negotiations with the Venezuelan Government about the borders of British Guiana. The dispute lasted throughout the nineteenth century with both governments preparing cases for arbitration and tracing their arguments back to early documentary sources (British Government 1898: 28–32). Despite the judgement that was handed down in 1899, the case remains unresolved (International Court of Justice, 2022). Nor is the inclusion of such documents in cases like the British Guiana – Venezuela boundary dispute exceptional. As John McHugo, writing for the International Boundaries Research Unit commented in 1998, original documentation such as almanacs, pilots, maps and trading company archival material remains fundamental to the cases governments make for territorial claims (1998: 10–22). Just such material is evident in travel collections such as *The Principal(l) Navigations*. The importance of such documents has waned over time with the increasing significance of international treaties, but it remains the case that where treaties are not in force, governments seek to establish their claims to territory. To do so, they may well have recourse to travel

literature from the early-modern period when many assertions of discovery and settlement by Europeans were first made.

Such uses, though still current, are now relatively few and usually part of a larger body of evidence. Overall, the narrative about the reception of Hakluyt's two editions of travel narratives and documents for practical purposes is one in which such use has generally, though not, entirely waned. By contrast, one area that continued into the twentieth century is their reception for leisure purposes. Here, I want to trace just one aspect of that development by focussing on the claims for the heroic nature of those who undertook the voyages. This theme has recurred ever since *The Principall Navigations* was first published.

Both editions of *The Principal(l) Navigations* brought together accounts of a wide number of English navigators, with a view to praising their achievement. Individuals were lauded for their success and, if unsuccessful, usually for their industry. A key purpose was to bring together the various evidence to create a sense of critical mass. The first edition was intended to overcome 'the obloquie of our nation' (Hakluyt 1589: *2v); the second edition was published 'for the benefit and honour' of the country (Hakluyt 1598–1600: I *4r). Both, in effect, attempted to 'preserve certaine memorable exploits of late yeeres by our English nation atchieved' (Hakluyt 1598–1600: I *4r). What gave the collections a distinctive edge, compared with the separately published, individual accounts was that they were brought together in one publication to create a pantheon of achievement and Hakluyt's contemporaries quickly endorsed the theme. As early as 1593, Gabriel Harvey, was directing his readers to the reports 'of the worthy Western discoveries, by […] Sir Humfry Gilbert: […] of the brave West-Indian voyage by […] Sir Frauncis Drake: […] of the horrible Septentrionall discoveryes […] of Sir Martin Frobisher: […] of the politique discovery of Virginia, by the Colony of Sir Walter Raleigh' which, along with 'sundry other famous discoveryes, & adventures' could all be found in Hakluyt's collection (Harvey 1593: G1v-G2r). Another early commentator and 'singular good friend' of Hakluyt's was William Bedwell (Ortelius 1606: 'Parergon' 6r), the Hebrew scholar and probable translator of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. His translation closely followed the original Latin of the 1603 edition but also incorporated some new material (van den Broecke 2008: 204). Amongst those additions were references to Hakluyt and *The Principal Navigations* in which Bedwell repeatedly praised the work. When Ortelius explained how the voyages of Columbus and the Portuguese had extended knowledge of the western, southern and eastern parts of the world, Bedwell added a comment that the north had 'been first found out by the English merchants and navigatours' (Ortelius 1606: 'Parergon' 6r). He referred readers to 'that worthy worke of the *English Navigations*' and, after a personal commendation of Hakluyt, noted that 'by him *England* still shall live, and the name of brave Englishmen shall never die.' He reiterated the claim later in 'Parergon' on an unnumbered sheet inserted after the map entitled 'The Peregrination of Ulysses'. There he observed Hakluyt had 'set out the English voyages, to the immortall praise and commendation of this our Nation, and those brave Captaines and Seamen which have undertaken and performed the same. (Ortelius 1606: 'Parergon' 34[b]v). Bedwell's additions turned Ortelius's atlas into a location for praise of English navigational achievement. Although Bedwell and Harvey took different approaches to their allusions to Hakluyt's work with Bedwell grouping together the 'brave Englishmen'

and Harvey itemising some of the voyagers, both authors emphasised the narrative content of Hakluyt's collection and framed the works in terms of their celebrations of English navigational achievement paying less attention to the other materials within the collection.

Similar selectivity recurred throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Excerpts and passages from *The Principal(l) Navigations* were republished and reprinted, sometimes adapted, in a range of texts. Crone and Skelton's survey provides the most detailed insight into the way subsequent travel collections responded to Hakluyt's collections (Crone and Skelton 1946: 91, 96, 104–5, 135–6) but other genres, such as naval biographies also drew on them. John Campbell's much reprinted *Lives of the Admirals and other Eminent British Seaman* (1742–4) frequently cited Hakluyt's work and other early-modern travel collections, while the anonymous *The Naval Chronicle: or Voyages, Travels, Expeditions, Remarkable Exploits and Atchievements of the Most Celebrated English Navigators, Travellers and Sea Commanders from the Earliest Accounts to the End of the Year 1759* (1760) retold many narratives to be found in Hakluyt's collection before adding new ones that post-dated it. *The Naval Chronicle* drew attention to the 'unparalleled Hardships, and Sufferings [the voyagers] underwent' and celebrated their 'Bravery and Love of Liberty' (Anonymous 1760: title-page). It was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, that we find a resurgence of interest in *The Principal(l) Navigations*. This involved both the reproduction of the original text and a renewed interest in the publication of selections from it, but this time for a wider market. Each of these constituted a reception of the original works repackaging them to provide a particular focus, emphasis or interpretation.

As Crone and Skelton (1946: 133) note the first republication of the full text of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* did not occur until 1809-12 when it was reproduced in a limited-edition, five-volume collection under the title *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Hakluyt 1809–12). Limited to 325 copies, it was aimed at the upper end of the market and it was not until the latter end of the century and the first part of the twentieth, that cheaper editions became available. The first of the extensive reproductions of the text was published by E. & G. Goldsmid (1885–90). The 'Editor's Preface' claimed that this sixteen-volume, 'handy edition' (Hakluyt 1885–90: I v) would address the problem of scarcity and cost. It reproduced the 1598–1600 edition but rearranged the order of the texts so that voyages that related to 'the same parts of the globe' were grouped together (Hakluyt 1885–90: I viii) and thereby broke the organisation that Hakluyt had attempted to achieve. A more faithful reproduction, which preserved the order of the original was the 1903–5 edition published by MacLehose and Sons (Hakluyt 1903–5). Bound in hardback and produced in 1000 copies, of which one hundred were on 'hand-made paper', it was pitched at the higher end of the market. While it remains the edition of choice for scholars its popularity is hard to judge. Indeed, it is this edition of which Mary Fuller observed that 'in the last decades of the twentieth century, library copies […] could be found with pages of particular accounts uncut', (Fuller 2012: 233) a phenomenon also experienced by this author in the twenty-first century.

Much more successful, but to date largely neglected by scholars, seems to have been the edition which directly derived from MacLehose's edition. It had an introduction by John Masefield and was first published in 1907 in eight small volumes but was a significantly

curtailed edition. Released under the Everyman series by Dent and Sons it was sufficiently popular to justify reprints of certain volumes in 1910 and 1913 before a full reprint in 1926, and a further reprint in 1927-8 which had two additional volumes dedicated to foreign voyagers. The initial 1907 edition, however, was a notably more English affair than Hakluyt's original 1598–1600 edition. Masefield explained that 'all those voyages and Treatises which are not English' were excluded and the edition thereby omitted much of the material Hakluyt himself had added into the second edition (Hakluyt 1907: I xxv). Masefield introduced the work as 'a great and noble poem, which commends the sailors of our nation […] "for their high courage and singular activity"' (Hakluyt 1907: I xiv). Readers coming to Hakluyt's work for the first time through the first Everyman edition or its reprints up until 1926 would have received a very different impression of the work than if they had encountered the original. Although the twentieth-century edition shared Hakluyt's wish to promote and celebrate English achievement it had lost, until the 1927–8 reprint, the concern to provide information about areas visited by travellers from other nations. It consequently had a much greater focus on English naval activity. That period, however, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth was one which also saw a significant increase in the publication of texts taken from *The Principal(l) Navigations* edited for a popular market.

One of the earliest of these selections was E. J. Payne's *Voyages of the Elizabethan Seamen to America: Thirteen Original Narratives from the Collection of Hakluyt* (1880). They were organised chronologically and included the three voyages of John Hawkins to Africa, (beginning in 1562), Martin Frobisher's three voyages to the north-west 1576–8, Francis Drake's circumnavigation of 1577, and Thomas Cavendish's first and last voyages 1586 and 1591 before concluding with Walter Raleigh's voyage to Guiana 1595. Ironically, though, despite containing the narratives of some of the most famous English explorers, this collection did not extol English achievements. Rather, its focus was on America and, the introduction claimed the narratives charted the transition of 'an America enslaved, medieval, Spanish and Catholic, – to the new America, an America free, modern English and Protestant' (Payne 1880: viii). Further editions followed before the work was edited by C. Raymond Beazley and re-contextualised in 1907. With the title amended to drop the reference to America and with the omission of the narratives of Cavendish's last voyage and the accompanying letter, along with Raleigh's Discovery of Guiana, the work was published as *The Voyages of the Elizabethan Seamen: Select Narratives from 'The Principal Navigations' of Hakluyt.* Beazley offered a new interpretation of what the narratives demonstrated. Rather than being an introduction to American history, the selection from Hakluyt's text was now linked to English navigational achievement and imperialism. The Preface claimed that it was possible to find 'no better and more representative picture' of 'English expansion in the great days of Elizabeth' (Payne 1907: iii) and that this was one of the few periods of 'national progress'. Understanding this period of history, Beazley claimed, was essential because it was from this that 'England achieves her position in the modern World' (Payne 1907: iii). Making only small changes in contents to Payne's *Voyages of the Elizabethan Seamen to America*, Beazley was able to offer a very different interpretation of the texts explicitly tracing the roots of the British Empire back to Hakluyt's collection. Both Payne and Beazley continued, in their own way, the tradition of focusing on a selection of

particular voyages that went right back to Gabriel Harvey, but each offered a different interpretation. What they had in common was their selectivity, prioritising particular narratives and ignoring the documents that formed an important part of the original publication, along with the narratives of less eminent voyagers and the narratives of journeys undertaken by other nations. Each wanted to trace their nation's routes back to the activities of a number of individuals and make inferences and judgements about the modern nation.

A different approach to selections of narratives from *The Principal(l) Navigations* was to be found in the Cassell's National Library series. This weekly publication that began in 1886, sold at 3d in paperback or 6d in hardback and was extremely popular (Altick 1958: 10). It was edited by Professor Henry Morley and drew selections from a wide range of classic literature. Robert Fraser has argued that in establishing the library, Cassell was developing 'an imperial national tradition' for those who 'wished to better themselves' and that it contributed to the 'cult of the hero' (Fraser 2011: 129). Three of its weekly selections drew from Hakluyt, but these heroes were not men of outright success and their heroism was more implicit than explicit. Each selection coalesced broadly around geographical locations though each was very different in its contents. The first, volume 23 – *Voyagers' Tales from the Collection of R. H.* – focussed on narratives and diplomatic letters relating to voyages to Turkey, the Mediterranean and Africa. It included accounts of both successful and unsuccessful voyages including texts such as that of 'The Worthy Enterprise of John Fox, An Englishman, in delivering 266 Christians out of the captivity of the Turks' (Morley 1886a: 9–27) and 'The unfortunate voyage made with the *Jesus*, the *Minion*, and four other ships to the parts of Guinea and the West Indies, in the years 1567 and 1568' (Morley 1886a: 102–18). There was little by way of introduction and the texts were left to stand for themselves. The same could also be said of volume 35, *Voyages in Search of the North-West Passage from the Collection of Richard Hakluyt*. The North-West Passage was a very topical issue throughout the nineteenth century, and the volume opened with Sir Humphrey Gilbert's tract arguing for the existence of a passage before proceeding to give the accounts of Martin Frobisher's three voyages, and those of John Davis in search of it. By way of introduction, Morley reproduced a volume of *Household Words* (12 April 1851) in which he had written about his own journey north. He thereby linked the old narratives from Hakluyt with the accounts of more recent attempts to find the passage. *Voyages in Search of the North-West Passage* became an opportunity to reflect on earlier nineteenth-century voyages such as those by William Parry and John Franklin and to recount the hardships of journeys from the sixteenth century onwards. Volume 177, *The Discovery of Muscovy from the Collection of Richard Hakluyt* (1889), focused on Richard Chanceler's 1553 journey to Muscovy and the return home in 1567 of Osep Napea, the Muscovite Ambassador, in company with four English merchant ships. This volume also included supporting documents such as the Muscovy Company's instructions to pursers, but the introduction only spoke briefly of the early history of Anglo-Russian relations before giving a brief history of Russia up to the time of Ivan IV 'the Terrible'. There was no sense of English heroism explicitly set out. Fraser makes a good case that, through Cassell's National Library, Morley, as well as facilitating wide access for the educated to a range of classic texts, was also shaping a sense of national identity but it was not Morley's way to be didactic about his purpose nor to articulate the

nature of the heroism his selections implied. This was far from celebratory and, as Fraser suggests, was intended to be accessible to a wide social class.

Cassell's National Library was targeted at adults but the start of the twentieth century also saw a number of publications aimed at children, and these were much more explicit about the conclusions they wished their readers to draw. In 1908, Edwin M. Bacon released *English Voyages of Adventure and Discovery retold from Hakluyt* which was republished in 1909 as *The Boy's Hakluyt: English Voyages of Adventure and Discovery retold from Hakluyt*. The book targeted American children and aimed to 'draw the youth of to-day to a source of American history of first importance' (Bacon 1908: v) but there was very little of the original text. Rather Bacon summarised and retold the narratives to make them more accessible producing what he claimed was a 'coherent story' which showed the 'daring, pluck, courage, genuine heroism and splendid nerve displayed by the English captains' (Bacon 1908: v) Also appearing in 1909 was the Revd A. E. Hall's *Selections from Hakluyt's 'Principal Navigations'*. Part of A. C. L. Guthkelch's English Texts for Secondary Schools series, its contents were more varied than Bacon's publication but like Masefield's selection it drew on the MacLehose edition. It opened with Edward I's Voyage to the Holy Land in 1270, progressed to Anthony Jenkinson's voyage to Russia in 1557 and then included some well-known favourites such as the narrative of John Fox's escape, and that of John Davis's first voyage to the north (1585). However, it concluded with three texts which focussed less on discovery and more on naval military history. Francis Drake's attack on Cadiz (1587) was followed by the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) before the collection concluded with the account of Richard Grenville's destruction in the 'Last Fight of the Revenge'. Notwithstanding the military nature of some of the contents, the introduction claimed that the narratives were 'of the utmost value, considered as a history of the beginnings of discovery and colonisation' (Hall 1909: x). How widespread the text was in schools remains unclear, but the desire to position the selected texts as exemplifying the foundations of British imperialism is evident.

Finally, I wish to conclude with two selections both of which were targeted at children and both of which rewrote and modernised the narratives. Frank Elias's *First Voyages of Glorious Memory: Passages from the 'Principal Navigations' of Richard Hakluyt. Selected for Young People* (1911) decreed 'Hakluyt is a book of fights and discoveries' but alleged that the collection only dealt with the latter. It claimed the selected texts exemplify 'the courage of endurance' which it termed the 'finest of all kinds' (Elias 1911: vii). 'Filled with this' we are told 'these old seamen faced starvation, frost-bite, storm and shoals and diseases of the ghastliest kind, and came at last to their great discoveries' (Elias 1911: vii). The edition aimed to inculcate a vision of heroic endurance as precursor to memorable action. A. D. Greenwood's *Voyages and Discoveries Retold from Hakluyt* (1917) took a slightly different approach. Published in the middle of the First World War, the Preface invited readers to make a direct comparison between the times of Hakluyt's original publication and contemporary events. Asserting that the 'great Adventurers of the days of Queen Elizabeth were no pirates' it claimed, in an unmissable parallel, that 'their heroic deeds were undertaken as part of their task of defending the freedom of the country against an overwhelming military power on the Continent' (Greenwood 1917: Preface). Greenwood

located her reading of Hakluyt's text within the context of events on the Continent and hinted at a note of self-sacrifice. Both Elias and Greenwood prioritised the narratives from Hakluyt's original collections and sought to guide their readers to particular interpretations of their selection of texts. Both sought to promote a sense of courage - and by implication heroism - but did so from different perspectives: the former emphasised endurance, the latter defence of one's country against overwhelming odds. Taken together all of these texts aimed at children, derived from *The Principal(l) Navigations* can be seen as promoting a particular set of values as interpreted by the editors of the collections who each reshaped Hakluyt's work to re-present it through their own particular lens.

I hope to have shown through this analysis of some elements of the reception of Hakluyt's landmark collection of early-modern travel writing some of the diversity, complexity and longevity of readers' receptions of them. Much has had to be omitted but I hope I have done enough to suggest that the books served many purposes. Early readers did use the collection for planning their own voyages and it formed part of a suite of information that merchants, explorers, colonists and the backers of such voyages might consult when planning voyages. Such usage had a limited life span as knowledge of the world increased but for less well-known regions it seems to have persisted into the nineteenth century. As a record of the past, the collection afforded interest to individuals with specific knowledge or sense of location as well as providing information to governments seeking to justify territorial claims. Intriguingly, the practice of using travel narratives from the early-modern period to supply evidence for such boundary disputes continues to this day in certain rare circumstances. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the collection experienced something of a revival with new editions and excerpts both extensive and short being published. Many prioritised narratives containing examples of bravery and struggle with an emphasis on repeating and retelling narratives from Hakluyt's collections and continuing a thread of reader response that was evident among Hakluyt's contemporaries. Often these versions promoted a sense of the heroic, but this too was nuanced. A much wider population, including children, was now able to access excerpts of *The Principal(l) Navigations* but each selection repackaged the work in its own particular way. Taken together, this wide range of uses suggests a complexity of reception, which resists simple categorisation, and which needs to be nuanced as times changed. While much still remains to be investigated, I hope to have done enough to suggest that over many centuries, readers from different walks of life, in many different ways and for multiple purposes would have agreed with Enrubie that the Hakluyt's collections provided much 'good reading'.

Endnotes

1. Throughout the text I have modernised spelling of u/v and i/j.
2. For a database of these texts, see *Art of Travel 1500-1850*, a database of European travel advice literature, available at: https://artoftravel.nuigalway.ie <accessed 18 April 2022>.

3. The ownership is well documented thanks to the work done by Anthony Payne in the census of copies which underpins this study. I wish to record my thanks to Anthony Payne for his support.
4. I use the term *The Principal(l) Navigations* as shorthand to refer to both editions at once.
5. I am grateful to Richard Foster, Librarian at Winchester College, for this information by email 29 July 2018.
6. The copy at Dulwich College of Hakluyt 1598–1600 is marked 'Hakluyts Voyages' on the spine.
7. The copy at Alderman Library, Charlottesville of Hakluyt 1598–1600 is marked 'The English voyages' on the front fore-edge.
8. The copy at Trinity College, Cambridge of Hakluyt 1598–1600 is marked 'Capel's Shakesperiana' on the binding.
9. The copy at Bodleian Library, Oxford of Hakluyt 1598–1600, shelf-mark H.8.15 (1, 2) Art.
10. The copy at Emmanuel College, Cambridge of Hakluyt 1598–1600, shelf-mark MSS 3.2.21, 22
11. The copy at Trinity College, Dublin of Hakluyt 1598–1600, shelf-mark M b.28–30.
12. The copy at New College, Oxford of Hakluyt 1589.

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