

Giles Fletcher, the elder (1546-1611)  
and the writing of Russia

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## Abstract

In the historiography of early modern exploration, travel and trade, the English 'discovery' of Russia has been sidelined by western European experiences of the Americas, despite its important role in English adventuring activities. This thesis contributes to redressing this imbalance by exploring Elizabethan perceptions of Russia, through an in-depth analysis of the work of Giles Fletcher, the elder (1546-1611). Fletcher was sent as Elizabeth's ambassador to Russia in 1588. On his return, he wrote and later published *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591). This was a controversial text on its first publication and had a fascinating afterlife over the next three hundred years.

Through a discussion of the initial 'discovery' of Russia and establishment of the Muscovy Company from 1553-1590, this thesis examines the context in which Fletcher's work was inspired. It goes on to explore the creation, reception and revision of *The Russe Commonwealth*, a text which initially served as counsel for the Queen and became counsel for commonwealth on publication, as well as providing important trade and travel information for a public audience. Fletcher's theorizing text on Russian tyrannical government held resonance for the political context of the English commonwealth in the 1590s and an examination of these resonances suggests reasons for its censorship. This discussion also highlights the importance of the role of the humanist poet to counsel and guide a ruler and commonwealth, in Fletcher's case, through a 'feigned' picture of Russia.

The thesis explores how Russia was good to think with for a humanist poet and diplomat of the late Elizabethan period and how an analysis of Russian tyrannical government held resonance for the political context of England in the 1590s. It further analyses how such a view of Russia was re-appropriated in very different contexts for diverse political ends.



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## Abbreviations

BL MS	Manuscripts in the British Library, London
NA	The National Archives, Kew
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i> , ed. Robert Lemon <i>et al.</i> (London, 1856-1998)
CSPF	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, Elizabeth I</i> , ed. Sophie Lomas Crawford <i>et al.</i> (London, 1861-1950)

**Introduction – ‘The Country is too colde, the people beastly bee’:  
England encounters Russia in the sixteenth century**

William Warner’s *Albion’s England*, originally published in 1586 with a second edition in 1597, recorded a summary of the activities of the newly established Muscovy Company as a celebration of the achievements of Elizabeth’s reign,

through the Seas of ysie Rocks, the Muscouites disclose  
We shal our English Voyages, the cheefe at least, digest  
Of which in this her Highnes Raigne haue been perform’d the best  
[....]  
Yeat him to say for most the Meane, it weare not vs to shame  
Of *English* new Discoueries, that yeeld vs Wealth and Fame.<sup>1</sup>

Russia held a prominent place in Elizabethan travel information, compilations and cosmographies, as a celebration of English adventuring spirit.<sup>2</sup> Depictions of Russia also turned up in Elizabethan theatre, poetry, works on husbandry, encyclopaedias, religious texts and political theory. In Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) it is ‘cold Muscouie’ that provides the metaphor for the captivating, imprisoning and tyrannous love that Stella ignites in Astrophil, ‘Now euen that foot-steppe of lost libertie / Is gone, and now like slaue borne Muscouite:

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<sup>1</sup> William Warner, Albions England a continued historie of the same kingdome, from the originals of the first inhabitants thereof; and most the chiefe alterations and accidents there hapning: vnto, and in, the happie raigne of our now most gracious soueraigne Queene Elizabeth. VVith varietie of inuentiue and historicall intermixtures (1597), The Eleventh Book, Chapter LXII.

<sup>2</sup> See Richard Eden, The Decades of the Newe Worlde or west India (London, 1555) and Richard Hakluyt, The principall nauigations, voiages and discoueries of tbe English nation made by sea or ouer land, to the most remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth at any time within in the compasse of these 1500. yeeres, (London, 1589).



/ I call it praise to suffer tyrannie'.<sup>3</sup> The representation of Russia as heretical, tyrannous or with potential to be converted appeared in treatises on religion, John Bale's *A pageant of popes* (1574), Thomas Bilson's *The true difference betweene Christian subiection and unchristian rebellion* (1585) and Richard Bancroft's *A suruay of pretended holy discipline* (1593), to name but a few. Russian imagery was to be found on the stage in Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost* (first performed 1594-95, first printed 1598), *Measure for Measure* (first performed 1604, first printed 1623), *Macbeth* (first performed 1606, first printed 1623) and *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1610, first printed 1623).<sup>4</sup> John Marston included a reference to Russia in his play *What you will* (1607). Other literary figures presenting images of Russia in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were Raleigh, Heywood and Nashe.<sup>5</sup> In his *Have with you to Saffron Walden* (1596), Thomas Nashe went so far as to create a pun on his name using the Russian phrase 'pomuloi nashe', meaning 'Have mercy upon us'.<sup>6</sup>

Glimpses of Russia could similarly be seen in individual lives. In Hammer's excellent analysis of the political career of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, he notes two instances in which Russia comes up as anecdotally significant in Essex's life. The first was a ballad published in 1584, relating the events of an archery contest at York, in which the Earl of Essex and George Clifford, the Earl of Cumberland backed rival contestants. This archery contest was also attended by

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<sup>3</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *His Astrophel and Stella* (London, 1591), pp. 13 and 1.

<sup>4</sup> Francesca Wilson, *Muscovy; Russia Through Foreign Eyes, 1553-1900* (London, 1970), pp. 60-61, Daryl W. Palmer, *Writing Russia in the age of Shakespeare* (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2004), pp. 71, 156, 180-182. For a discussion of the representation of Muscovites in *Love's Labour's Lost*, see Fred Sorenson, 'The Masque of the Muscovites in *Love's Labour's Lost*', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 50 (1935), pp. 499-501.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd E. Berry, *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder* (Madison, 1964), p. 151.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, *Muscovy*, pp. 60-61.

three ambassadors from Russia.<sup>7</sup> The ballad describes, among other things, how the Russian ambassadors marvelled at the archery contest, the efficacy of the English bow and the proficiency of the English archers, one of the Russian ambassadors even attempted the bow himself,

And one desired to drawe a Bowe

The force and strength thereof to knowe

[....]

And they might well consider than

An English shaft will kill a man.<sup>8</sup>

Russia came into Essex's picture again in 1587 at the return of Sir Jerome Horsey from the far distant and frozen land of Muscovy. On this occasion, Essex, the aspiring statesman and favourite of Elizabeth, pronounced to the Queen and Court that he would learn the Russian language, 'the famoust and most copius language in the world'.<sup>9</sup>

In the era of western European discovery exemplified by the voyages of Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Amerigo Vespucci and Ferdinand Magellan, England was the infamous western European laggard, sluggish in comparison to her continental counterparts. With the exception of John Cabot's North Atlantic voyages, England's forays into the exploration of unknown lands only really began in the 1550s with voyages to West Africa and Muscovy. And it

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<sup>7</sup> Paul E. J. Hammer, The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: the political career of Robert Devereux, 1585-1597 (Cambridge, 1999), p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> William Elderton, A New Yorkshyre Song, intituled: Yorke, Yorke, for my monie of all the cities I euer see, for mery pastime and companie, except the Cittie of London (London, 1584).

<sup>9</sup> Hammer asserts that the Queen was in fact teasing Essex about his desire to learn Russian, although Horsey's account does not necessarily suggest that Essex was being teased, rather that Essex expressed a very clear, if somewhat overly enthusiastic, desire to impress the Queen with his learning. See Hammer, Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics, p. 56 and BL Harleian MS 1813, fol. 46v, printed in Russia at the close of the sixteenth century, ed. E. A. Bond, Hakluyt Society, 1<sup>st</sup> Series, XX (London, 1856) p. 233.

was not until the 1580s that England's overseas adventures were actually being recorded and published with any consistency or success.<sup>10</sup>

The historiography of this era of discovery has tended to focus predominantly on the New World experience of first encounters and to some extent rightly so, as the New World was indeed a novel discovery for western Europeans in the most profound sense. However, in terms of England's experience of exploration and encounter with previously unknown lands, the historiographical focus has perhaps been skewed too much towards America. Elena Shvarts, in her illuminating study of English representations of Russia from the early modern period onwards, draws attention to what Daniel Vitkus has called 'a "new globalism" in early modern studies' describing 'the obsession with New World colonial histories that has gripped early modernists, especially since the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus'.<sup>11</sup> Examples of such are Karen Ordahl Kupperman's *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, Anthony Pagden's, *European Encounters with the New World*, Seed's *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* and Mary Fuller's *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624*.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, the English 'discovery' of Muscovy in 1553 presents a particularly intriguing case-study for the examination of English encounters with

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<sup>10</sup> The exceptions were Richard Eden's *A treatyse of the Newe India* in 1553 and his *Decades of the Newe Worlde* in 1555. However, these were translations of foreign voyages with information on English exploration attempts appended or mentioned in the prefaces. Richard Eden, *A treatyse of the Newe India* (London, 1553) and *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or west India* (London, 1555).

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Vitkus, 'Toward a New Globalism in Early Modern Studies', *JEMCS*, 2.1 (2002), p. v, quoted in Elena Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe: the matter of Muscovy in Early Modern English Travel Writing and Literature', unpublished PhD thesis (Stanford, May 2004), p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> K. O. Kupperman, ed. *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill and London, 1995), Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters With the New World* (New Haven and London, 1993), Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge, 1996) and Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English travel to America, 1576-1624* (Cambridge, 1995).



and writing about unfamiliar and new lands of the expanding early modern world. The 'discovery' of Muscovy opened up a significant area in which England could define itself and compete for a new European civil identity, an identity that was increasingly characterized by marvellous and lucrative discoveries, complex trading networks and overseas dominion and colonisation. For England, in the 1550s at least, Muscovy and the North Eastern passage to Cathay presented just as important an arena for English exploration and encounter with unfamiliar lands, as did the New World for other western European powers. Indeed, in 1579-1580 Richard Hakluyt wrote a pamphlet advocating a three-pronged plan to counter Spanish colonial ascendancy, which involved taking control of the Strait of Magellan and a Brazilian island, alongside promoting and funding English attempts to find a North eastern passage.<sup>13</sup> Russia also held a prominent place in Hakluyt's seminal sixteenth century work on travel information, *The Principal Navigations*, taking up at least a third of the contents of this voluminous tome.<sup>14</sup>

Since Muscovy was only 'discovered' by the English in 1553, it could be categorised as a New World subject; it was unfamiliar and strange and on the periphery in terms of Old World boundaries. However, Muscovy was also a 'Christian' land and could hardly be categorised in the same way as the newly discovered and savage America because it engendered one of the most fundamental markers of civility, the Christian faith. How, then, was Muscovy, as a Christian, yet unfamiliar subject, to be thought about, experienced and written?

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<sup>13</sup> Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's obsession for an English America* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 80-81.

<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Nauigations*. Hakluyt published a second edition in 1598 entitled *The principall nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation made by sea or ouer-land, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600. yeres* (London, 1598-1600).

In order to consider these questions, this thesis explores the work of Giles Fletcher, the elder, ambassador of Elizabeth I to Russian Emperor, Feodor I in 1588-9 and examines the production, reception and legacy of a text which started life as a late sixteenth-century work of counsel for Queen Elizabeth I and ended up contributing to anti-Soviet, pro-American 'doctrinal warfare' during the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> The thesis traces the work's evolution from its first inception in the form of the notes of an Elizabethan ambassador to Russia in 1588 to its publication as a work of travel information, reference, political science and counsel for commonwealth in 1591. The suppression of this text on its first publication spoke of a similar fate to come but also illuminates the controversial content of this work which made it so attractive for re-appropriation in very different contexts. The work itself, an ambassador's account of Russia, would be appropriated for differing purposes in such times of crisis as the English civil wars and Protectorate, the pan-European social unrest and revolutions of 1848, the Russian revolution of 1905 and as part of the cultural cold war propaganda machine. The production, reception and afterlife of this particularly controversial text provides the framework for a discussion of the late sixteenth-century use of Russia to theorize on tyrannous, and by comparison, ideal godly government.

When considered in the context of increasing knowledge of and interest in unfamiliar and new lands, and Elizabethans' active discovery of them, it becomes less surprising that Russia would be chosen as a site for a critical work on the meaning, practice and extent of power in civil government and how to govern a land and people appropriately, in a godly fashion. Thinking with Russia became relevant in a context where Protestant England's status as an adventuring

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of American Cold War 'doctrinal warfare', see Kenneth Osgood, Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad (Lawrence, Kansas, 2006), especially pp. 288-298.

commonwealth, competing with the likes of Catholic Spain and Portugal, was proved by their (only) consistent adventuring achievement in the unfamiliar land of Russia.

Western European literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proliferates with travel accounts, captivity narratives, mercantile advice, travel advice, diplomatic reports and maps of unfamiliar and new lands. Such rich sources of information on how early modern people conceptualised and experienced the expansive changes in their worldviews has resulted in an abundant and extensive historiography of exploration, trade, discovery, cultural relations, first encounters and the articulation of difference. The historiography of both western European and non-western European travel accounts has been hugely influenced by Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism*, in which he argued that the West had created an imaginary 'Orient' which supported the hegemony of imperialism, neglecting to represent the oriental lands from the point of view of its inhabitants and actually constructing the 'Orient' as a representation of an imagined geographical place, which could be defined and controlled by the west.<sup>16</sup>

Said's monolithic trajectory conjures up a picture of the West as having created the 'Orient' as 'a distorting mirror within which Europe defined, justified and celebrated itself'. The novelty of Said's approach was that in describing how the West had essentialized an image of the East, the 'other', in order to define its own identity, Said employed the Foucauldian framework of discourse, enveloping Orientalism within and as a product of the relations of knowledge and power. For Said, Orientalism was not simply an academic discipline, it was a cultural

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1978), pp. 3, 57, 63.

discourse of power and knowledge which legitimised and brought about the imperial hegemony of the West over the East. It was a self-sustaining myth, which pitted the imaginary Orient against the equally imaginary Occident, the 'self' versus the 'other'.<sup>17</sup> Said's thesis criticised Orientalism as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.' His argument was that Europe 'articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative not of a puppet-master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries'.<sup>18</sup> Not only does the European create the 'Orient', the very act of studying the Orient in fact closes its boundaries, essentializing the East as an unchanging and ultimately knowable (and governable) entity. In Said's words the unfamiliar becomes 'a closed field, a theatrical stage, affixed to Europe'.<sup>19</sup>

The most often articulated criticism of *Orientalism* has been that in presenting Orientalism as the discourse of a European culture that began with Herodotus and spanned the ages until now, a discourse which essentialized the East as an imaginative, enduring representation, Said, in fact, essentialized Europe in the same way that he accused Orientalists of essentialising the 'Orient'. This criticism can be followed through into Colonial discourse theory because, as David Washbrook argues, it has served to affirm Said's assumptions concerning Orientalism as an enduring, undifferentiated, unchallenged discourse and has by that count ignored the differences in European perceptions of the 'Orient other', which more recent research has increasingly brought to light.<sup>20</sup> Colonial discourse

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<sup>17</sup> A. L. Macfie, *Orientalism* (London, 2002), p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 3, 57.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> D. A. Washbrook, 'Orientals and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol.5, Historiography*, ed. R. W. Winks (Oxford, 1999), pp. 596-611



theory has effectively silenced the internal 'other' version of accounts which have perhaps not supported the polemic of Said's critique, to the extent that even western voices which were favourable to the non-European and hostile to colonialism have been ignored. This criticism is heartily supported by A. L. Macfie in his incisive historiographical review of Orientalism. Macfie goes so far as to contest that without Said's essentialization of Europe 'he would be unable to sustain the essential distinction between Occident and Orient, West and East, and 'self' and 'other', on which he builds his thesis. Nor would he be able to sustain his indictment of European Orientalism, defined by him as a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident.'<sup>21</sup>

In attempting to present the case for a Western stereotypical invention of the 'orient', Said had in fact presented a stereotypical picture of the West as unchanging and inflexible in its attitude to the East. As Washbrook argues, Colonial discourse theory, in emphasising the monolithic discourse of Said, has fallen in to the trap of denying the complexity of Orientalist culture and western writing on the unfamiliar 'other', epitomised by the 'Orient', and perhaps unwittingly has only served to uphold the patriarchal undertones of the Orientalist discourse that Said alludes to. Additionally, as Washbrook asserts, 'rather than escaping Europe, colonial discourse theory merely cites one of its own philosophical traditions against another', and this other has had success because it fits comfortably with the 'political categories of "multiculturalism" inside present-day Western societies themselves'.<sup>22</sup> Washbrook's critique was published in 1999 and as more recent history and events have revealed, multiculturalism as a

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<sup>21</sup> Macfie, *Orientalism*, p.101.

<sup>22</sup> Washbrook, 'Orientals and Occidents', pp. 605, 608-609.

practical political policy has broken down, leaving politicians and policy makers floundering for a solution to the problems of social cohesion in the diverse populations of present-day Western societies.

Both the argument of *Orientalism* and its subsequent critique, although focused primarily in scholarly writings on the colonial period, has also had an impact on the discussion of fifteenth and sixteenth century experience and appropriation of unfamiliar lands and new worlds.<sup>23</sup> Problematically, much of this historiography has often heralded the combined response of western European accounts of the unfamiliar 'other' at the expense of the individual response to these unfamiliar lands. Scholars have often presented only one way of writing an unfamiliar land, emphasising the 'orientalizing discourse' of western accounts, as opposed to seeing the multiple ways in which unfamiliar lands were represented and employed for differing purposes. The theory of an orientalizing discourse used by western Europeans to appropriate and cope with unfamiliarity has been particularly applied to the New World of the Americas by early modern scholars, whereas little attention has been paid to the unfamiliar land of Russia, a land that was 'discovered' by those intrepid sixteenth century explorers of England in an attempt to reach the orient.

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<sup>23</sup> A substantial amount of the work conducted on the area of Orientalism has focused on relations from the late eighteenth and nineteenth century onwards, due of course to the great expansion of the British empire during this period and Said's own focus on critiquing the western European academic discipline of Orientalism. For examples of the influence of Said in histories of nineteenth and twentieth century topics see R.S. Kranidis, The Victorian Spinster and Colonial Emigration: Contested Subjects (New York, 1999), P. Krebs, Gender, Race and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War (Cambridge, 1999), J. Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power (Leicester, 2000), and C. McEwan, Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa (Aldershot, 2000). However, more recently, the influence of Said's thesis can be seen in many, if not all, scholarly works attempting to discuss earlier cultural confrontation, from the Renaissance onwards, for example Urs Bitterli, Cultures in Conflict: Encounters between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800, trans. R. Robertson (London, 1989), F. Lestringant, Mapping the Renaissance World: the geographical imagination in the Age of Discovery, trans. D. Fausett (Cambridge, 1994) and Stephen Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions: the wonder of the New World (Oxford, 1991).

The historiography, particularly of fifteenth and sixteenth century exploration, adventure and trade, seems to have side-lined the less familiar, but still equally important, sites of Northern 'discovery', revealing perhaps an anachronistic fascination with the new world of America, dictated by the present global context.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the recent interest in the history of early modern travel and exploration has expressed itself in the form of anthologies of travel accounts, such as Kenneth Parker's *Early Modern Tales of Orient: a critical anthology*, Andrew Hadfield's *Amazons, Savages and Machiavels: Travel and Colonial writing in English 1550-1630; an anthology* and Peter Mancall's *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: an anthology*.

The fascination in the last few decades with examining cross-cultural relations has resulted in anthologies that lump together very diverse experiences of travel, exploration and cultural encounter, at the expense of discussing the resonances and meaning of individual experiences of unfamiliar lands and the production of texts in response to such experiences.<sup>25</sup> The beneficial effect of having these anthologies available is the increased awareness of the importance of

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<sup>24</sup> For examples, see J. H. Elliot, *The Old World and the New, 1491-1650* (London, 1970), Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America, 2 vols.* (1971-1974), David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: from the Bristol voyages of the fifteenth century to the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth* (London, 1974), Fredi Chiapelli, Michael J. B. Allen and Robert Benson, *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, 2 vols.* (Berkeley, 1976), K. O. Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (New Jersey, 1980), James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the ethnohistory of Colonial America* (New York and Oxford, 1981), Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1984), Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, ed., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, 1987), Rachel Doggett, ed., *New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas, 1491-1700* (Washington D.C., 1992), Stephen Greenblatt, *New World Encounters* (1993), John Logan Allen, ed., *North American Exploration, 3 vols.* (Lincoln, N.E. and London, 1997), Thomas Scanlan, *Colonial Writing and the New World, 1583-1671* (Cambridge, 1999), Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell, *American Encounters: natives and newcomers from European contact to Indian removal--1500-1850* (New York and London, 2000), Jonathan Locke Hart, *Representing the New World: the English and French uses of the example of Spain* (New York, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Parker, ed., *Early Modern Tales of Orient: a critical anthology* (London, 1999), Andrew Hadfield, ed., *Amazons, Savages and Machiavels: Travel and Colonial writing in English 1550-1630; an anthology* (Oxford, 2001), Peter C. Mancall, ed., *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: an anthology* (New York, Oxford, 2006).



travel narrative and information during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the domestic audience. Such anthologies have also displayed, although only to a certain and edited extent, various types of representation and techniques that were employed by writers to understand and translate to the domestic audience the unfamiliar land and 'other' in their midst. Unfortunately, the experience of the individual writer has at times been marginalised or taken out of the equation altogether as anthologies and histories have focused rather on the presentation of many texts, and sometimes only excerpts of these texts, prioritising travel narrative over the multi-layered concerns of the writers themselves.<sup>26</sup> At its extreme, this has served only to de-contextualise and devalue the individual process of experiencing and writing about something unfamiliar.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of the more specific historiography of early English encounters with Russia, T. S. Willan's mid-twentieth century account of the beginning of trading relations with Russia provides an accessible and comprehensive, if a little traditional, history of early Anglo-Russian encounters.<sup>28</sup> In his analysis of the early English encounters with Muscovy, Willan draws extensively on the work of nineteenth century historians, such as Hamel, Bond, Tolstoy, Morgan and Coote and from the early twentieth century, Inna Lubimenko.<sup>29</sup> An earlier work, and the

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<sup>26</sup> See Hadfield, Amazons, Savages and Machiavels and Parker, Early Modern Tales of Orient.

<sup>27</sup> See Melanie Perreault's analysis of English encounters with Russia, West Africa and America in which the combination and comparison of English experiences of all three lands takes away from the important nuances found in individual texts and the specific geographical and temporal contexts of voyages to different locations. Perreault comes dangerously close to comparing English responses to Russia with what she sees as parallel English responses to the indigenous peoples of America, who they had yet to meet properly in the 1550s. This raises the problem of drawing a conclusion about the way that the English perceived and then represented the Russians (very critically) in the light of what is already known about later writings and representations of the Americas and Africa. Melanie Perreault, Early English Encounters in Russia, West Africa, and the Americas, 1530-1614 (New York, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> T. S. Willan, The Early History of the Russia Company, 1553-1603 (Manchester, 1956).

<sup>29</sup> J. Hamel, England and Russia (London, 1854), E. A. Bond, ed. Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century, Hakluyt Society, XX (London, 1856), G. Tolstoy, The first forty years of intercourse between England and Russia, 1553-1593 (St Petersburg, 1875), E. D. Morgan and C. H. Coote, eds., Early Voyages and travels to Russia and Persia, Hakluyt Society, LXXIII (London,



only one specifically focused on the Elizabethan ambassador Giles Fletcher, the elder's account of Russia, is Seredonin's *Sochinenie Dzhil'sa Fletchera*. This thesis analyses the use of Fletcher's account of Russia as a source for early modern Russian history. Seredonin was intent on correcting the 'errors' in Fletcher's account and casts doubt on his depiction of Russia as a reliable source for the history of Russia at this time.<sup>30</sup>

Subsequent and wide-ranging work has been done on early Anglo-Russian relations by Samuel H. Baron, examining such areas as the context of early modern Russian trading relations, Russian embassies to England and Russian historians' views on Russia and the West.<sup>31</sup> Anthony Cross has also produced an annotated anthology of early modern English perceptions of Russia.<sup>32</sup> There seems to have been a noticeable interest among American scholars in Anglo-Russian relations particularly during the 1960s, perhaps as a result of Cold War

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1886) and I. Lubimenko, Les relations commerciales et politiques de l'Angleterre avec la Russie avant Pierre le Grand (Paris, 1933). For early twentieth century work on the subject, see Armand J. Gerson, Earnest V. Vaughan and Neva Ruth Deardorff, Studies in the History of English Commerce in the Tudor period: I The Organization of the Muscovy Company by Armand J. Gerson (New York, 1912), M. Wretts-Smith, 'The English in Russia during the second half of the Sixteenth Century', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4<sup>th</sup> Series, vol. III (London, 1920), pp. 72-102, Sergei Yakobson, 'Early Anglo-Russian Relations (1553-1613)', Slavonic Review, vol. XIII (1934-35), pp. 597-610, Karl H. Ruffman, Das Russlandbild im England Shakespeares (Göttingen, 1952) and M. S. Anderson, Britain's Discovery of Russia, 1553-1815 (New York, 1958). For a more general work on early modern European perceptions of Russia, see Vasilli Kliuchevskii, Skazaniia Inostrantsev o Moskovskom Gosudarstve (Foreign Accounts of the Muscovite State) (Petrograd, 1918). Various Russian documents relating to early Anglo-Russian affairs from the Russian archives, particularly the Foreign Office (Posol'skii Prikaz) can be found printed in Sbornik Imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva, vol. 38 (St. Petersburg, 1883).

<sup>30</sup> S. M. Seredonin, Sochinenie Dzhil'sa Fletchera "Of the Russe Commonwealth" kak istoricheskii istochnik (The treatise of Giles Fletcher's "Of the Russe Commonwealth" as a historical source) (St. Petersburg, 1891).

<sup>31</sup> S. H. Baron, 'Osep Nepea and the Opening of Anglo-Russian Commercial Relations', Oxford Slavonic Papers, new series, XI (Oxford, 1978), pp. 42-63, 'Ivan the Terrible, Giles Fletcher, and the Muscovite Merchantry: a reconsideration', The Slavonic and East European Review, vol. 56 (London, 1978), pp. 563-585, 'The Muscovy Company, the Muscovite Merchants and the Problem of Reciprocity in Russian Foreign Trade', Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte, vol. 27 (Berlin, 1979), pp. 133-155, 'Plekhanov's Russia: the impact of the West upon an 'Oriental' society', Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. XIX (New York, 1958), pp. 338-404.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Cross, ed., Russia under Western Eyes, 1517-1825 (London, 1971). This a comprehensive and broad-ranging compilation of western European accounts of Russia. Its weakness lies in the fact that the accounts included are excerpts, rather than the full texts and only a selective view of western European perceptions of Russia.

fears and fascination over Russia, especially during the critical period of the Cuban missile crisis in the early 1960s.<sup>33</sup> The intervening period has not seen much work on early Anglo-Russian relations, except that of Maria Unkovskaya and Maija Jansson and Nikolai Rogozhin.<sup>34</sup> The aim of Unkovskaya's thesis is to redress the imbalance in a British-orientated historiography of early Anglo-Russian relations that has focused predominantly on trade relations rather than taking due account of the complex diplomatic and political issues at stake in early English encounters with Russia.<sup>35</sup> Unkovskaya deftly explains Anglo-Russian relations through the structure of diplomacy, using Russian sources that many British scholars had not previously used and thus addressing a substantial gap in the literature. Works such as Willan's, argues Unkovskaya, often regurgitate the nineteenth century conclusions of Hamel, Tolstoy and Bond, which although plausible, are somewhat dated.<sup>36</sup> Jansson and Rogozhin have also taken up Unkovskaya's call to temper the trade-heavy British historiography on the subject and outline the wider international political issues surrounding the Russian

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<sup>33</sup> John Q. Cook, 'The Image of Russia in Western European Thought in the Seventeenth Century', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Minnesota, 1959), Ian Grey, 'Ivan the Terrible and Elizabeth of England', *History Today*, vol. 12 (1962), pp. 648-651, Lloyd E. Berry, *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder* (Madison, 1964), Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, ed. Richard Pipes and John V.A. Fine Jr. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), Giles Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth*, ed. Albert J. Schmidt (New York, 1966), Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, ed., *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1968), B. M. Haney, 'Western Reflections of Russia, 1517-1812', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Washington, 1971) and C. Halperin, 'Sixteenth-century Foreign Travel Accounts of Muscovy', *Sixteenth-century Journal*, vol. 6 (1975), pp. 89-111.

<sup>34</sup> Maria V. Unkovskaya, *Anglo-Russian diplomatic Relations*, unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford, May 1992) and Maija Jansson and Nikolai Rogozhin, eds., *England and the North: the Russian Embassy of 1613-1614*, trans. Paul Bushkovitch (Philadelphia, 1994). The other exception is Baron, see Samuel H. Baron, 'Muscovy and the English Quest for a Northeastern Passage to Cathay (1553-1584)', *Acta Slavica Japonica*, vol. III (Japan, 1985), pp. 1-17, Samuel H. Baron, 'Thrust and Parry: Anglo-Russian Relations in the Muscovite North', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, new series, vol. XXI (1988), pp. 19-40 and Samuel H. Baron, 'Fletcher's mission to Moscow and the Anthony Marsh Affair', *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 46 (1991), pp. 107-130.

<sup>35</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. ii, iii, 5.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. iii.

embassy to England in 1613.<sup>37</sup> These works have addressed significant gaps, but have, in their attempts to raise the profile of diplomacy and politics in the early Anglo-Russian relationship, inevitably tended towards underplaying the importance of the mercantile aspect and the intricate, indissoluble, yet fluid interconnections between the Muscovy Company, the Crown and the Elizabethan polity. They have also imposed their own restrictions on what constituted 'political' and 'diplomatic' for both the Elizabethans and the Rurikid Russians.

John Archer claims to take a balanced position between the trade-heavy British historiography and the political, diplomatic leanings of the recent American and Russian historiography.<sup>38</sup> However, rather than discussing the diplomatic and mercantile nuances in early Anglo-Russian relations, Archer's thesis is very much based on a literary critical approach to the subject and is grounded on a mis-placed model of Russian identity as descendant from Herodotus' depiction of the savage 'Scythians'; an argument, which will be critiqued in more depth in my discussion of the Russo-Tartar relationship in Chapter Three.<sup>39</sup> Rather than separating trade from politics and diplomacy, or favouring one over the other, I attempt where necessary, and as the sources have led me, to analyse early Anglo-Russian relations and encounters as political, commercial, cultural and social, and as existing within a discourse of 'discovery' and the early modern fascination with new worlds.

Significantly, within the last decade there have been several different analyses of sixteenth century western European encounters with and writing about

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<sup>37</sup> Jansson and Rogozhin, *England and the North*, p. vi.

<sup>38</sup> John Michael Archer, *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India and Russia in Early Modern English Writing* (Stanford, California, 2001), p. 207, n. 27.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 101-138.



Russia.<sup>40</sup> Marshall Poe has done extensive and illuminating work on western European perceptions of Russia. The strength of his work is its broad scope, identifying and collating the different accounts of all western European observers throughout the early modern period. The weakness of his approach is his tendency at times to homogenize such western European accounts as all working within a similar renaissance frame of reference based on an Aristotelian definition of despotism. Poe's work is useful for its breadth, but unhelpful in disengaging with the individual views of western European commentators and their unique contexts and experiences.

In choosing to focus specifically on Elizabethan perceptions of Russia, Daryl Palmer avoids the problems of Poe's work, but his analysis of individual characters and their representations of Russia is at times quite insular. The context he provides often tends to be more cultural and literary, than political, exposing his disciplinary leanings, and much space is given over to discussion of Shakespeare's use of the image of Russia on the Elizabethan stage. Shvarts' thesis, on the other hand, covers a substantial period of time in her analysis of English perceptions of Russia and within this, some commentators get rather a short shrift, although her discussions of the work of the Fletchers and Milton are thorough, if brief. She approaches the subject, again, from a literary perspective, but consistently seeks to get to grips with the historical context. Although Palmer and Shvarts cover much of the same ground, Palmer, in limiting his time frame to the Elizabethan period, is able to give more contextual analysis to his discussion of individuals and their work.

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<sup>40</sup> Marshall T. Poe, "A People born to Slavery": Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748 (Ithaca and London, 2000), Palmer, Writing Russia (2004), Shvarts, 'Putting Russia on the Globe' (2004), Perreault, Early English Encounters in Russia (2004), for historiographical discussion of Perreault's thesis, see p. 13 above, and Kit Mayers, North-East Passage to Muscovy: Stephen Borough and the first Tudor Explorations (Stroud, 2005).

One thing, among others, that is missing from the historiography surrounding early Anglo-Russian encounters is an in-depth exegesis of the work of Giles Fletcher, the elder. His account of Russia remains the most comprehensive early modern western European account of the “barbaric” land on Christendom’s borders. Editors and commentators on his work, such as Bond, Berry, Pipes and Schmidt, have produced good introductions to the man and the text, but since Seredonin’s nineteenth century essay on Fletcher’s treatise, which focused predominantly on whether it was a viable source for the history of Muscovy, no scholar has attempted to put Fletcher and his work thoroughly under the microscope and place him within the context of late Elizabethan politics, both domestic and foreign.<sup>41</sup> This thesis aims to address the lacunae, by analysing Fletcher’s work within the context of late Elizabethan humanist discourse and the domestic politics of the 1590s. In this analysis of early English representations of Russia, I also aim to problematise what has come to be a rather essentialised historiography of western-Europeans appropriating and imagining the unfamiliar ‘other’, particularly the New World other, through the ‘self’.

All of these recent works, my own included, reveal an increasing awareness in the historiography of early modern travel information that Russia has

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<sup>41</sup> Bond, ed., Russia at the close of the Sixteenth Century, pp. i-cxxxiv, Berry, ed., English Works, pp. 3-49, 134-167, Pipes, ed., Of the Russe Commonwealth, pp. 1-68, Schmidt, ed., Of the Rus Commonwealth, pp. i-xliv, Crummey and Berry, eds., Rude and Barbarous Kingdom, pp. 85-246. Both Schmidt and Pipes talk of ‘factual reliability’ in their introductions to Fletcher’s text, trying to analyse the text as a historical source for the realities of Muscovy in the sixteenth century and the Anglo-Russian relationship. Berry, on the other hand, discusses in great detail textual authority and the influence of Fletcher’s text on other literary texts of the time, revealing his primarily bibliographic concerns. All fail to adequately dissect Fletcher’s text in detail and pick up on his resonances with the contemporary Elizabethan political and religious context. Seredonin’s work also had a politically-charged agenda, in wanting to refute Fletcher’s analysis of Russia as a true reflection of the land in the late sixteenth century. Those who have recently taken a more analytical slant on Fletcher’s work, namely Archer, Shvarts and Palmer, have approached his writings from a noticeably literary perspective and in the context of other *literary* works, see Archer, ‘Slave-born Muscovites; Sidney, Shakespeare, Fletcher and the Geography of Servitude’ in Old Worlds, pp. 101-138; Sharvts, ‘Putting Russia on the Globe’, pp. 93-103, Palmer, ‘Writing Ardor: The Submissions of Giles Fletcher’ in Writing Russia, pp. 129-154.

been sidelined in this discussion, despite its important role in English adventuring activities, and the need to redress this imbalance. This renewed interest in western encounters with the unfamiliar North East also points to continuing anxiety and curiosity within current worldviews over where to place Russia culturally, geographically and politically and is perhaps indicative of a tendency to avoid defining Russia as anything specific, neither Asia nor Europe, something 'different', something 'other'. This thesis aims to contribute to redressing the imbalance of the current historiography on sixteenth century travel, exploration and trade which has been too often weighted towards western-European experiences and representations of the Americas.

The discussion begins with a brief examination of the Muscovy Company and their 'discovery' of Russia, exploring the culture and languages used by English merchants and ambassadors who encountered this unfamiliar land. The 'Muscovy Company literature', the subject of Chapter One, includes diplomatic and royal correspondence, as well as the day-to-day mercantile affairs that the Company were involved in, their petitions and complaints, their relations with the Russian Emperor and his officials and disputes within and without the Muscovy Company, in and outside of Russia.

Chapter Two relates Giles Fletcher's experience and response to Russia in his embassy of 1588-89, discussing the influence of Fletcher's primary role as a poet and his humanist education, as revealed in his reactions to this unfamiliar land. Fletcher's involvement in Muscovy Company affairs and the Anglo-Russian relationship during his embassy reveals, above all, his humanist tendencies to act and to counsel. His diplomatic writings present a particularly distinct view of the Muscovy Company situation and the Anglo-Russian relationship. This is followed

by an analysis of the manuscript versions of Fletcher's text, tracing the evolution of his work from a diplomatic report, in the vein of the Venetian *relazioni*, and work of counsel for the private audience of the Queen (and court) to a work of counsel for a public audience, as well as a work of reference, promotion and political science. The discussion of Fletcher's more formalised, written response to Russia is accessed from this starting point and context of Anglo-Russian mercantile and diplomatic affairs. The final section in Chapter Two examines briefly how Fletcher's work interacts with Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, the most exhaustive English travel compilation of the early modern period.

The content of Fletcher's book-length treatise on Russia, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, is discussed primarily in Chapter Three in the context of the themes that emerge from the examination of the Muscovy Company literature and the development of Fletcher's response to Russia. This in-depth analysis of Fletcher's account of Russia reveals it as more of a theorizing of tyrannical government than a travel narrative of a new world subject; the template of Russia as a tool to think with, as much as a description of an unfamiliar land.

In this respect, Fletcher's image of Russia bears similarities with contemporary discussions and realities of English government and society in the early 1590s, and this is the subject of Chapter Four. This chapter draws attention to the potential resonances that Fletcher's text could hold for an English reader and points to English circumstances that could have influenced the production and reception of Fletcher's text in its printed 1591 form. This chapter also begins to uncover the multiple languages and readings of Fletcher that can be found in his text and raises the issue of the fluid, multi-generic nature of his work; that it is not



simply, and not even, 'travel literature' or narrative, nor is it simply counsel for a queen, a mirror for magistrates.

Chapter Five discusses the immediate and controversial reception of Fletcher's text. It explores the motives of counsel and critique behind Fletcher's work by examining Fletcher's return to his role as a humanist poet and the parallel themes in his poetry that bear upon the major theme of counsel in his account of Russia: how to identify a tyrant and how to guard against tyranny. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Fletcher's later career and how his writing of Russia may have influenced his reputation.

Chapter Six follows the legacy and afterlife of Fletcher's text. The main focus of this chapter is to examine the first re-print of Fletcher's text in the tumultuous context of 1643, amidst the political and social trauma of civil war. It discusses what conditions may have led to the re-printing of Fletcher's text and how his work on Russian tyranny may have been seen as relevant to the context of 1643. This discussion is followed by a brief exploration of the 1657 edition of Fletcher's text and an epilogue tracing how the text was re-appropriated and re-deployed in very different circumstances, spaces and places, politically and historically.

The virtue of examining the production, reception and afterlife of such a text is the potential it has for revealing how texts and information have been re-appropriated and drawing attention to the active role of the reader in the reception of a text both despite and because of the intentions of the author. Taking such a long, and broad view of a text and its author, however, means that particular detail in some areas is neglected at the expense of the broader brushstrokes that I am attempting to portray. For instance, this thesis sets up the context of Muscovy



Company literature as a framework in which to discuss the works of Fletcher, as opposed to covering in depth and in detail every inch of ground relating to Muscovy Company and Anglo-Russian affairs. Similarly, my thesis does not provide much in the way of an examination of the role of gender in government, or in fact the role of gender, and indeed women, in Elizabethan diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia. Of course, in the reign of Elizabeth, the issue of her gender, as a ruler, was of great importance, but it takes a back seat in this discussion, due to issues of space and the nature of the project as a whole. Fletcher does not explicitly discuss gender in government, but this may, of course, have been because the gender of the Queen was inherent to any discussion of Elizabethan government and politics.

Similarly, the purpose of Chapter Four is to illuminate the political context in which Fletcher was writing and engaging with, thus my discussions of the themes of counsel, virtuous nobility, parliament, fiscal affairs, colonisation in Ireland and the New World and governing a commonwealth are naturally limited. Each theme in itself has a large historiography and these themes are themselves the subject of entire books. My discussions of these themes and the historiographies surrounding them are, therefore, not exhaustive; rather they are pointers along the way, seeking resonances, not answers. This is particularly the case in the discussion of civil war politics in Chapter Five, but again this is rather a virtue of the thesis than a vice, for civil war historiography has often attempted a detailed pigeon-holing of events, individuals and works into the unhelpfully definitive categorisations of parliamentarian or royalist. My discussion of the re-appropriation of Fletcher's text for the civil war context is distinctly *not* an

attempt to pigeon-hole either Fletcher's politics or those of the printer who reproduced his work.

Just as the arguments of Fletcher's text are multifaceted, so are the arguments of this thesis. To summarise, this thesis seeks to redress, in some part, the imbalance in the historiography of the 'discovery era' that has so often looked to the West, at the expense of the Northeast. It also aims to add to the critique of Said's monolithic and essentialized theory of 'Orientalism'. Moreover, it looks to counter the limited and persistently invariable historiography of mercantile and diplomatic Anglo-Russian relations, by discussing English encounters with Russia and the Muscovy Company literature through linguistic and cultural discursive examination, as opposed to through a solely mercantile or diplomatic lens. And finally, it attempts to further open up the discussion of genre in the context of early modern travel narrative, which has often not done justice to the multi-generic nature of texts such as Fletcher's, nor to the richly textured content of works which incorporate travel information, reference, promotional and trade advice, political science and counsel for commonwealth.

## **Chapter 1 - An Adventuring Commonwealth: English Diplomatic and Mercantile Encounters with Russia, 1553-1603**

Wee shall keepe our owne coastes and Countrey, hee shall seeke strange and unknowen kingdoms. He shall commit his safetie to barbarous and cruell people, and shall hazard his life amongst the monstrous and terrible beastes of the Sea.

Clement Adams, 'The newe Navigation and discoverie of the kingdome of Moscovia, by the Northeast, in the yeere 1553'.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines the English 'discovery' of Russia, the subsequent establishment of the Muscovy Company and early Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations. An examination of the extant Muscovy Company literature reveals the important discussion of civility (represented by order, honour and obedience) and barbarity (represented by disorder, dishonour and disobedience) inherent in English first encounter narratives with the unfamiliar land of Russia. Rather than presenting a chronological account of the Muscovy Company establishment up until the embassy of Giles Fletcher, the elder in 1588-9, this chapter seeks to illuminate Muscovy Company culture, the language used in their correspondence and the issues that were of greatest importance in their mercantile affairs and

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation comes from a speech ostensibly by Henry Sidney, according to Clement Adams in his account of Richard Chancellor's pioneering voyage to find a North Eastern passage to Cathay. Adams recorded that Richard Chancellor had been brought up in the Sidney household, perhaps by Sir William Sidney, rather than Sir Henry Sidney, who would have only been aged 24 in 1553, see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Sidney, Sir Henry (1529-1586)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25520> (accessed 22 April 2008). Sidney expressed in his speech both his high estimation of Chancellor as well as the difficulties he would face in his adventure. He preceded the comment noted above with his concerns for his friend: 'we shall here live and rest at home quietly with our friends, and acquaintance: but hee in the meane time labouring to keepe the ignorant unrulye Mariners in good order and obedience, with howe many cares shall hee trouble and vexe himself, with howe many troubles shall he breake himselfe, and howe many disquietings shall hee bee forced to sustaine'. See Clement Adams, 'The newe Navigation and discoverie of the kingdome of Moscovia, by the Northeast, in the yeere 1553' in Richard Hakluyt, The principall navigations, voiages and discoveries of the English nation made by sea or over land, to the most remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth at any time within in the compasse of these 1500. yeeres (London, 1589), p. 281.

Anglo-Russian relations.<sup>2</sup> This discussion, thus, provides the context for a consideration of the writings of Giles Fletcher – diplomatic, literary and poetic – which are examined in later chapters.

### i) The English ‘Discovery’ of Muscovy

In 1557, the Italian collector and editor M. John Baptista Ramusio included in his *Delle navigationi et viaggi* a tract, later translated and included in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations* (1589),<sup>3</sup> on the great importance of the discovery of the Northern passages to East Asia, ‘Which navigation to Cathay, although it be not as yet throughly knowen, yet if with often frequenting the same, and by long use and knowledge of those seas it bee continued, it is like to make a wonderfull change and revolution in the state of this our part of the world.’<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the significance of this potentially ‘wonderfull change and revolution in the state of this our part of the world’ that would occur, if a North-

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<sup>2</sup> Lucy Munro, ‘Fletcher, Giles, the elder (*bap.* 1546, *d.* 1611)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9726> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Hakluyt (1552?-1616) was a prolific collector and editor of travel writing, discovery narratives and diplomatic and mercantile information in the late sixteenth century. He is described by Anthony Payne as ‘an editor, translator, and encourager of geographical literature’ and aimed to celebrate and publicise England’s ‘discoveries’, see Anthony Payne, ‘Hakluyt, Richard (1552?-1616)’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11892>, (accessed 22 April 2008). His most celebrated work is The principall nauigations, voiages and discoveries of the English nation made by sea or ouer land, to the most remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth at any time within the compasse of these 1500. Yeeres (London, 1589). With the success of the first edition of the *Principal Navigations* in 1589, Hakluyt proceeded to publish a further and much expanded edition, Richard Hakluyt, The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation made by sea or over-land, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600. yeres (London, 1598-1600). I have used both of these editions in my thesis and will reference them respectively as Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589) and Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1598-1600).

<sup>4</sup> M. John Baptista Ramusio, ‘Navigations and Voyages’ (1557), in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 500.



eastern passage to Cathay were to be discovered has often been overlooked in the historiography of renaissance exploration, trade and colonisation.<sup>5</sup>

The venture to discover a North Eastern passage to China had initially been suggested by Robert Thorne, the younger in 1527 and later on by his business partner, Roger Barlow, in 1540.<sup>6</sup> This North Eastern passage was seen by Barlow, Thorne, and later on by Richard Hakluyt, as a gateway to new and rich lands and also as a new discovery in its own right. Indeed, a brief look at the contents page of the most popular contemporary English travel compilation, Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* of 1598-1600, shows the first section of the book exclusively dedicated to the discovery and history of relations with the North East. In the preface to this work, Hakluyt styled the unknown land of Muscovy as a place where England could prove itself as equal in endeavour to the Spanish, Italians and Portuguese. Hakluyt writes 'wil it not in all posteritie be as great a renowme unto our English nation, to have bene the first discoverers of a sea beyond the North cape (never certainly knowen before) and of a convenient passage into the huge empire of Russia....as for the Portugales to have found a sea beyond the Cape of Buona Esperanza.....or for the Italians and Spaniards to have discovered unknowen landes so many hundred leagues Westward and Southwestward?'<sup>7</sup>

Thorne and Barlow, Bristol merchants living in Spain, were among the few individuals who attempted to raise England's awareness of her potential adventuring possibilities. In 1527, Thorne wrote two letters, one to Henry VIII

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<sup>5</sup> An exception is H. Wallis, 'England's search for the Northern passages in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries', *Arctic*, vol. 37, no. 4 (1984), pp. 453-472.

<sup>6</sup> A brief biography of Robert Thorne, the younger (1492-1532) can be found in R. C. D. Baldwin, 'Thorne, Robert, the elder (c.1460-1519)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27347> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1598-1600), Preface to the Reader.

and one to Dr. Lee, the English ambassador to Spain, publicising his ideas about the possibility of England discovering a Northern passage to Cathay.<sup>8</sup> These two letters were later printed in Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the ilands adjacent unto the same* (1582) and in *The Principall Navigations* (1589 and 1598-1600), under the titles 'A persuasion of Robert Thorne' and 'The Book of Robert Thorne'.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of Thorne's first letter was to encourage an English discovery of a North *Western* passage to the East Indies. Thorne advocated England's duty and opportunity to compete with the impressive and lucrative discoveries of Spain and Portugal. The North was presented as an undiscovered area, lying in such close proximity to the English as to demand its discovery by them. It was also their best opportunity to make substantial progress in a sphere, where until now the English had been fairly apathetic.

The North was relatively free from previous claims of possession, 'For out of Spaine they have discovered all the indies and Seas Occidentall, and out of Portingall all the Indies and Seas Orientall....So that now rest to be discovered the sayd North parts, the which it seemeth to mee, is onely your charge and duety'.<sup>10</sup> In 1540-41, Henry was again encouraged to consider further discovery of the North. This time a North *Eastern* passage to Cathay was suggested. This was a

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<sup>8</sup> Heather Dalton suggests that Henry did not receive Thorne's 1527 letter, advocating exploration of the North, and that it was only with Barlow's letter in 1640, that Henry was informed of their ambitions and hopes to explore northern waters. She also suggests that Thorne's role in encouraging Henry to pursue exploration of a northern passage has been over-emphasised by Hakluyt, at the expense of Barlow's key role in putting together the plans for finding a northern trading route to Cathay, see Heather Dalton, 'Roger Barlow: Tudor Trade and the AtlanticWorld', unpublished Ph.D thesis (University of Melbourne, February 2008), Chapter 6.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the ilands adjacent unto the same* (London, 1582), sigs. B<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>4</sub>, Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 250-258 and Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1598-1600), pp. 212-221.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Thorne 'A declaration of the Indies' in Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages*, sig. B<sub>2</sub>. This can also be found, under the title 'A persuasion of Robert Thorne', in Hakluyt *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 250 and Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1598-1600), p. 213.

joint effort from Thorne and Barlow, although presented to Henry VIII by Barlow, as Thorne had died in 1532.<sup>11</sup>

Fifty years after Thorne's and later Barlow's petitions to Henry VIII, Hakluyt explained one of his primary motives for publishing the travel narratives of England, that 'I both heard in speech, and read in books other nations miraculously extolled for their discoveries and notable enterprises by sea, but the English of all others for their sluggish security, and continuall neglect of the like attempts especially in so long and happy a time of peace, either ignominiously reported, or exceedingly condemned'.<sup>12</sup> Hakluyt's purpose was to explain how in Henry's reign, England had been encouraged by the few writers, such as Barlow and Thorne, to take up her duty to discover the North, yet 'as the purpose of David the king to builde a house and temple to God was accepted, although Salomon performed it: so I make no question, but that the zeale in this matter of the aforesaid most renowned prince may seeme no lesse worthy (in his kinde) of acceptation, although reserved for the person of our Salomon her gracious Majesty'.<sup>13</sup> According to Hakluyt, by the 1580s the time had truly come to celebrate England's adventuring spirit and wonderful discoveries, especially in the North.

As well as prestige and renown in the eyes of other Christian princes, the discovery of a Northern passage would provide England with much needed commercial markets. In the 1550s England's economic situation was bleak. Due to widespread inflation in Europe and debasement of their own English currency during the 1540s in order to pay state expenses, followed by attempts to repair the

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<sup>11</sup> John Parker, Books to Build an Empire: a bibliographical history of English Overseas Interests to 1620 (Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 25, 29, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), Epistle Dedicatorie, pp. 2r-v.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 3.



damage of the debasement by revaluing the English currency in 1551, English prices fluctuated drastically particularly between 1549 and 1551 and England's currency value rose and fell dramatically in comparison with the continent.<sup>14</sup> In order to combat this pressure and stabilise England's economic position, it was necessary to increase exports. However, this was an area in which England was simultaneously floundering. The cloth trade was England's biggest industry. Cloth exports had risen steadily through the first half of the sixteenth century and the means of cloth and wool production had expanded with demand and high prices, but the boom peaked in 1549-50 and declined considerably from that point. The slump in the early 1550s indicated a fall in the demand for cloth at home and abroad, which resulted in employers reducing their cloth production.<sup>15</sup>

The combination of the rapid rise in food prices and the contraction of the cloth trade had a detrimental effect on all echelons of society, but particularly on the commons who suffered more unemployment and less income at a time of rising prices.<sup>16</sup> Causes for the slump in the cloth industry have been attributed to a glut in the cloth market at Antwerp, which was compounded, in England's situation, by the debasement and subsequent revaluation of their coinage in the

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<sup>14</sup> Challis argues that the first experiments in debasement of the Tudor coinage were seen in Ireland in 1536. With the initial success of this debasement and the profit it brought to Henry VIII, the debasement project was contemplated and continued in the English context, being prepared in the early 1640s and in 1644, it was officially put into practice. Despite initial success in increasing Royal funds to pay for war in Scotland and France, the longer-term consequences were that England's debased coinage was increasingly rejected at home and abroad and the fraud of the Crown illuminated. Further debasement followed in order to both try to raise more revenue for the Crown and address the rejection of English coinage, but this left England's economy in an even more precarious position. It was under Edward VI, and the Earl of Warwick, that the coinage was reformed during 1550-1552, the official policy of reforming the coinage was made public in 1551, see C. E. Challis, The Tudor Coinage (Manchester, 1978), pp. 81-112. See also C. G. A. Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700, vol. II: Industry, trade and government (Cambridge, 1984), p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> Harry S. Cobb, 'Cloth exports from London and Southampton in the later 15th and early 16th centuries: a revision', Economic History Review, Vol. 31 (1978), pp. 601-9. See also Henryk Zins, England and the Baltic in the Elizabethan Era, trans. H. C. Stevens (Manchester, 1972), pp. 160-191.

<sup>16</sup> A G. R. Smith, The Emergence of a Nation State; the commonwealth of Enland, 1529-1660, second edition (Harlow, 1997), p. 52.



1550s.<sup>17</sup> During the mid-1540s England was also at war with both Scotland and France.<sup>18</sup> These conflicts cost huge amounts of money, thus contributing to inflation and the social and economic distress of England. The bad harvests of 1549, 1550 and 1551 also contributed to the bleak situation of England's economy in the 1550s and further bad harvests in 1555 and 1556 caused grain prices to increase rapidly to over double their normal rate, worsening the situation of the Commonwealth.<sup>19</sup>

The crisis in England's cloth exports in the early 1550s demonstrated England's dangerous dependence on only a single trading market. This, combined with the decline of the Antwerp market, highlighted England's desperate need to find new markets for her cloth and wool industries to combat inflation and mercantile decrease.<sup>20</sup> In the 1560s a religio-political element was added to the economic crisis. In 1563-4 and in 1569-73, the breakdown of relations between England and the Netherlands and England and Spain, respectively, led to further disruption of English trade to Antwerp. In the mid-1580s the situation was worsened by revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule and the consequent takeover of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma.<sup>21</sup> Antwerp, once the flourishing hub of European trading networks, suffered amidst political and religious strife under Spanish rule, causing English merchants to flee from the Low Countries, and in turn crippling the continental wool trade on which England had so long

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<sup>17</sup> Brian Dietz, 'Antwerp and London: the Structure and Balance of Trade in the 1560s' in Wealth and Power in Tudor England: Essays presented to S. T. Bindoff, eds. E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht and J. J. Scarisbrick (London, 1978), pp. 186-187. See also Smith, Emergence of a Nation State, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> Simon Adams, 'Britain, Europe and the world' in The Sixteenth Century, 1485-1603, ed. Patrick Collinson (Oxford and New York, 2002), pp. 191-199, esp. pp. 191 and 194-5.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, Emergence of a Nation State, pp. 52-53.

<sup>20</sup> Clay, Economic Expansion, p. 115. For a succinct discussion of the rise and fall of Antwerp as a mercantile and financial centre for European and colonial trade, see Peter Spufford, From Antwerp to London: the decline of financial centres in Europe, The Ortelius Lecture, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (Wassenaar, 2005), pp. 12-20.

<sup>21</sup> See G. D. Ramsay, The Queen's merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands: the end of the Antwerp Mart (Manchester, 1986). See also Zins, England and the Baltic, p. 170.

depended.<sup>22</sup> England's economy, so reliant on the export of cloth, was also confounded by their dependence on Hanse middlemen in the Baltic, mediating England's access to much needed naval and food supplies, as well as an export market for English cloth.<sup>23</sup> It was this severe situation and the knowledge that other continental powers were looking beyond traditional frontiers that encouraged English merchants, entrepreneurs, investors and mercantile advisors to also dismiss the conventional limits of the Tudor worldview and to consider the prospect of distant and unknown markets.<sup>24</sup>

In response to the dire situation of the English economy and markets, a voyage to explore a potential North Eastern passage was proposed. According to Hakluyt's sources, in 1553 an estimated group of two hundred and forty people, made up of merchants, high officers of state, investors and other interested parties, gathered in London to discuss and launch a highly dangerous and costly exploratory voyage to find a North Eastern passage to Cathay.<sup>25</sup> The group that met together in 1553 was not yet a company, just a gathering of promoters and interested parties, which later became known as the Muscovy Company. This gathering financed the first official English voyage of discovery, hoping to find a quick and efficient route to the East. Instead of Cathay, however, the only successful vessel venturing into the North East 'discovered' Muscovy. From this point on ambassadors, merchants, craftsmen, physicians, even a midwife, voyaged to Muscovy and encountered, worked and lived with Muscovites. Clement Adams' narrative of the first successful voyage to Muscovy explained the

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<sup>22</sup> Parker, Books to Build and Empire, p. 102.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Bannister and Geoffrey Duckett, two English merchants of the Muscovy Company, even referred to England's dependence on Baltic -imported goods, through Hanseatic middlemen as 'the bondage of....the town of Dantsick', see Zins, England and the Baltic, pp. 8-34, quoted at p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> E. H. Ash, ' "A note and a caveat for the Merchant": Mercantile advisors in Elizabethan England', Sixteenth Century Journal, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002), pp. 1-31.

<sup>25</sup> Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 280.

reasoning for the expedition as a search for new markets for English cloth, although no doubt there was also the expectation of gold, spices and goods previously unknown.<sup>26</sup>

The pioneering voyage of exploration set out in late May 1553 with Sir Hugh Willoughby (d. 1554?) as Captain General and Richard Chancellor (d. 1556), his pilot general.<sup>27</sup> Willoughby was a sea captain and had served in the Scottish campaign in 1544, as well as commanding Lowther Castle from 1545-1550 and campaigning in the border counties and eastern marches in 1551.<sup>28</sup> Chancellor had trained as an apprentice pilot under Roger Bodenham in 1550, in a voyage to the Levant that was intended by Sebastian Cabot to train up English pilots who severely lagged behind their continental counterparts.<sup>29</sup> During the expedition Chancellor's vessel, the *Edward Bonaventure*, lost contact with the other ships, the *Bona Speranza* and the *Bona Confidentia*.<sup>30</sup> These two vessels continued their journey east and halted in the mouth of the river Arzina, in Lapland. Due to lack of sufficient knowledge of exploration and navigation, the two ships wintered there and all were frozen to death - a failure on the part of mercantile advisors to provide adequate advice on how to cope in the extreme conditions of the far north.<sup>31</sup> Chancellor's ship was more successful. It managed to anchor at the mouth of the river Dvina in the White Sea. On arrival there and after initial and rudimentary communications, through sign language, with the

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<sup>26</sup> Adams, 'The newe Navigation' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> 'The voyage of Sir Hugh Willoughbie knight wherein he vnfortunately perished at Arzina reca in Lapland' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, p. 267.

<sup>28</sup> James McDermott, 'Willoughby, Sir Hugh (d. 1554?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29599> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>29</sup> James McDermott, 'Chancellor, Richard (d. 1556)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5099> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>30</sup> 'The voyage of Sir Hugh Willoughbie', p. 269.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 270.



natives, the Russians understood that Chancellor wished to see the Emperor. A message was sent down to Moscow and eventually Chancellor was invited by the Emperor to travel down to Moscow to present his letters from Edward VI.<sup>32</sup> As a result of Chancellor's skilful and astute representation of King Edward VI and of the intentions of those who had funded the exploration, Chancellor obtained favourable trading privileges, resulting in an English monopoly over the Russian trade, in varying degrees, for the next fifty years.<sup>33</sup>

The tragic fate of the *Bona Speranza* and the *Bona Confidentia*, followed by Chancellor's opportunistic commercial activities in Russia, altered the original vision of the group that had met and financed the voyage in 1553. England was, at the time, dependent on the importation of Baltic-controlled goods such as masts and pitch. Direct access to the Russian market, which would supply them with such necessities, would cut out the Hanseatic middleman.<sup>34</sup> On 'discovering' a potential new market for English goods in Russia, and to import much-needed navy supplies, the promoters who had gathered in 1553 realised the necessity for a more secure organisation if this new market was to be exploited. They applied for corporation status, which was granted on 26 February 1555, to one hundred and ninety nine men and two women.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 'The voyage of Richard Chanceler Pilot Maior the first discoverer by sea of the kingdome of Moscouia' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 283-284 and 'The letters of King Edward the sixt written at that time to all the Kings, Princes and other Potentates of the Northeast' in Hakluyt (1589), pp. 263-265. See also Inna Lubimenko, 'The Correspondence of Queen Elizabeth with the Russian Czars', *American Historical Review*, vol. 19, no. 3 (April 1914), pp. 525-542, especially p. 525 and A. E. Pennington, 'A Sixteenth-Century English Slavist', *Modern Language Review*, vol. 62, no. 4 (October 1967), pp. 680-686, especially p. 680.

<sup>33</sup> Willan, *Early History*, p. 5. See also T. S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555* (Manchester, 1953), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Zins, *England and the Baltic*, pp. 1-3, 5, 11-12. See also G. D. Ramsay, 'The Settlement of the Merchants Adventurers at Stade, 1587-1611' in *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe: Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott (Basingstoke and London, 1987), pp. 452-472, esp. pp. 459-60.

<sup>35</sup> There is a list of these members of the incorporated Muscovy Company preserved in the National Archives, Kew and printed in full in *CSPD, Addenda, Mary, 1553-1556*, vol. VII, no. 39. This list is also printed in Arman J. Gerson, 'The Organization and Early History of the Muscovy



The goods that England so desperately needed to find a market for were predominantly dressed cloths, kerseys and wool. The trade to Russia would not only provide a vent for such goods but would help solve unemployment and vagrancy: 'This trade will maynetene thirtie or fortie greate shippes...vent the most parte of our coullarid clothes, & in shorte tyme if neade require all the karsayes maid within the realme, whereby her maiesties subiectes may be sette a wourke'.<sup>36</sup> 'Lead ready wrought to lay on their howses. Tynne ready wrought into vessell and Copper, and Iren' were also 'acceptable commodityes to Russia and Muskovia'.<sup>37</sup> In return, Russia supplied them with 'pitch, Terr, ship mastes, and Tymber, hemp, Cables and Ropes for ships' as well as 'salt, Trane Oyle, Buff hides, Cow hides, Tallow, fures of all kindes'.<sup>38</sup> The newly incorporated company that would carry on this trade became known as the Muscovy Company, although its official title retained the original motives to find a Northern passage to the luxuries of Cathay, 'the Company of marchants adventurers of England, for the discovery of lands, territories, iles, dominions, and seignories unknowen, and not before that late adventure or enterprise by sea or navigation, commonly frequented'.<sup>39</sup>

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Company' in Studies in the History of English Commerce in the Tudor Period, eds. Armand J. Gerson, Earnest V. Vaughan and Neva Ruth Deardorff (New York, 1912), pp. 116-120. The list is organised hierarchically beginning with members of the nobility, followed by knights who are also Aldermen, followed by members who are only Aldermen, followed by Esquiers and then Gentlemen. The status of the rest of the list is not identified, implying they had no official title or means of status identification. One of the women, Mrs Margaret Kyrtom, is found under the subsection of Aldermen. There is also one 'Katherin' with no legible surname and no status and one 'Stephaine Abowroughe' who could be either male or female.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Bannister & Geoffrey Duckett to Sir William Cecil, 12 August, 1568, S. P. For. Eliz, no. 2415, as quoted in E. D. Morgan and C. H. Coote, Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia by Antony Jenkinson and other Englishmen, The Hakluyt Society (London, 1886), p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> BL MS Harleian 541, f. 165

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Willan, Early History, p. 7. Many of those who were involved in both the financing and the practical workings of the Muscovy Company, were also involved in promoting and financing the continued efforts to find a North Western passage to Cathay. For an example of such shared investment in the discovery and outworking of both North Eastern and North Western trading ventures see Michael Lok's account of Frobisher's attempts to find a North Western passage. This

This desire for discovering unknown lands and continuing the search for the elusive North Eastern passage was consistently renewed in the following years. Stephen Borough (1525-1584), an experienced sailor and naval administrator, embarked in the *Serchthrift* in 1556 to continue exploring the coast to the North East, Vaigatz, Nova Zembla and the land of the Samoedes, and later to find and retrieve the frozen ships the *Bona Esperanza* and the *Bona confidentia*, which had been under Willoughby's care.<sup>40</sup> Borough was successful in finding the frozen ships, but less so in making much progress along the unknown northern coastline of Russia.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Randolph, one of the first career-oriented ambassadors of the day and sent by Elizabeth to Russia in 1568,<sup>42</sup> wrote a commission for James Bassendine, James Woodcocke and Richard Browne to discover lands to the North East from St Nicholas on 1 August 1568, but there remains no evidence that the voyage actually took place.<sup>43</sup> In 1580 Arthur Pet and

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account provides a list of those investing in Frobisher's voyages and many of the same names can be found throughout the Muscovy Company literature, for instance John Dee, Anthony Jenkinson, Francis Walsingham, Christopher Hoddesdon, William Burrowe [Borough] and William Bonde, see 'The account gyven by Michael Lok of the third voiage of Martin Furbusher for the discouerye of Cathai &ct. by the Northwest partes', Huntington Library (San Marino, L.A.), HM715.

<sup>40</sup> R. C. D. Baldwin, 'Borough, Stephen (1525-1584)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2914> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>41</sup> 'The voyage of Steuen Burrough towarde the riuier Ob intending the discouerie of the northeast passage' and 'The voyage of the foresaid Steuen Burrough from Colmogro in Russia to Warehouse in serch of certaine English ships not hard of the yeere before' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 311-321 and 327-331. See also Kit Mayers, *North-east Passage to Muscovy: Stephen Borough and the first Tudor Explorations* (Stroud, 2005), pp. 77-89.

<sup>42</sup> Gary Bell discusses the revolution in ambassadorial practice during Elizabeth's reign, in which ambassadors were beginning to be apprenticed and groomed for service as a lifelong ambassador, taking on the role as a profession rather than as merely a stepping-stone to higher preferment and political advancement, see Gary M. Bell, 'Elizabethan Diplomacy: The subtle revolution' in *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern England; Essays in Honor of De Lamar Jensen*, eds. Malcolm R. Thorp and Arthur J. Slavin (Missouri, 1994), pp. 267-288. See also Julian Lock, 'Randolph, Thomas (1525/6-1590)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23122> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>43</sup> 'A commission graunted by M. Randolfe for a discouerie to the Northeast by Sea' and 'Instructions giuen to the discouerers in that action' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 406-407. See also Willan, *Early History*, p. 100, n. 4.



Charles Jackman, Company servants, were specifically sent by the Company in a further attempt to discover the way to Cathay.<sup>44</sup>

There was also a continued attempt to send merchants-cum-ambassadors into Persia, most famously Anthony Jenkinson, who was appointed Captain-general to the convoy of Muscovy Company ships carrying the Russian ambassador Osip Nepea back home in 1557.<sup>45</sup> Jenkinson was an experienced traveller and merchant. He had been travelling in the Mediterranean basin since 1546 and in 1553 had gained a special license to trade with the Turks from Suleiman the Magnificent at Aleppo.<sup>46</sup> The Persian ventures were undertaken in order to find further markets for English goods and to compete with the Venetian monopoly over Turkish trade.<sup>47</sup> Muscovy Company employees Geoffrey Ducket and Thomas Bannister were sent into Persia in the summer of 1569, along with Lionel Plumtree, and twelve other Englishmen in the *Thomas Bonaventure* to further explore the trading opportunities there. They returned from their trading expedition in 1573.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> BL MS Cotton Otho E VIII, ff. 67-77. See also Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 466-482 and 'Instructions for the North-East Passage by Richard Hakluyt, lawyer, 1580', in E. G. R. Taylor, ed., *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, The Hakluyt Society, Second Series, no. LXXVI (London, 1935), vol.1, pp. 147-158.

<sup>45</sup> John H. Appleby, 'Jenkinson, Anthony (1529-1610/11)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14736> (accessed 26 May 2008).

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson from the cite of Mosco in Russia to Boghar in Bactria, An. 1558', 'The voyage of Anthonie Jenkinson through Russia, and ouer the Caspian Sea into Persia, An. 1561', 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia the third time, An. 1566' and 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia the fourth time, An. 1571' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 347-374, 397 and 426-437. These accounts of Jenkinson's voyages are interspersed with diplomatic correspondence between the Queen, the Muscovy Company and the Russia Emperor, see especially pp. 359-364. See also John H. Appleby, 'Jenkinson, Anthony (1529-1610/11)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14736> (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Ducket's account can be found in BL MS Additional 48151, ff. 169-74, also part printed in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 419-425.

## ii. ) The Establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations, 1555-1603

When the Company was officially formed in 1555, Sebastian Cabot assumed the role of Governor.<sup>49</sup> The Company was established on the basis of a joint-stock organization. Instead of trading as individuals with their own capital, all merchants traded as a body, with corporately owned goods.<sup>50</sup> They were forbidden to get involved in private trade,

That all adventures, losses, & charges: that all commodities, advauntages, & gaines, even from the beginninge of this trafficke, shold be common to all. That this Societie shold exercise, not euerie man his owne, but alltogether the hole and common trafficke. That nothing shold be referred to the priuate gaine of any, but the hole all together, to the common proffit of all, and to the publicke Dignitie of the hole Societie.<sup>51</sup>

The ideology and language of common charge and common wealth was extremely important to the establishment and ordering of the Muscovy Company and the prescriptions as to how they would do their business, revealing the nature of the company as a microcosm of Elizabeth's commonwealth. Eric Ash suggests the joint-stock structure of the company was a result of Cabot's influence, translating his knowledge of current Italian joint-stock methods to the English situation, and of course his extensive inside information on successful Spanish practices and organization.<sup>52</sup> According to Queen Elizabeth's account of the establishment of

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<sup>49</sup> Willan, *Muscovy Merchants*, pp. 9, 84 and Gerson, 'Organisation and early history', pp. 116-20.

<sup>50</sup> This was one of the first English Joint Stock Companies, see C. E. Walker, 'The History of the Joint Stock Company', *The Accounting Review*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June 1931), pp. 97-105, especially p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Queen Elizabeth to Ivan IV, Emperor of Russia, 16 September, 1568, BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>52</sup> Ash, 'Mercantile Advisors', p. 9. Cf. Walker, 'History of the Joint Stock Company', pp. 97-105. See also William Robert Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, 3 vols. (1912, reprinted Gloucester, Mass., 1968), vol. 2, p. 36 and



this trade, a joint-stock organisation was opted for because 'in the beginning of this matter, thei perceyvinge this trade to be, so perilous in thadventure, so chargeable for thexpenses, & every way of soch a weight and moment, that it was to heuy for a fewe to beare, & to greate for private men to sustayne'.<sup>53</sup> Servants and Factors of the Company were in effect trading on its behalf, as its employees, as members of this microcosmic reflection of Elizabeth's Commonwealth. This meant that individuals were not allowed to engage in private trade or in any way undermine the common wealth of the company and yet they were given very little in the way of incentive to respect these rules.

Although many of the Muscovy Company records on Anglo-Russian relations in this period, housed in the Company's buildings, were destroyed in the fire of London, 1666, a significant amount of material has survived.<sup>54</sup> The majority of the material consulted for this chapter comes from the collections found in the British Library and the National Archives. These archives include a considerable amount of correspondence between Elizabeth and various Russian emperors and court officials. The archives also hold a wide range of correspondence between governors, factors, ambassadors, merchants and interested parties involved in the Muscovy Company, displaying the extent to which mercantile affairs influenced and were influenced by many sections of society and revealing the multiple literary schema at work in the representation of Russia during this period. The Muscovy Company documents that provide the

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Alison Sandman and Eric H. Ash, 'Trading Expertise; Sebastian Cabot between Spain and England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 813-846.

<sup>53</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Baron has produced a very helpful, but not exhaustive list, see Samuel H. Baron, 'A guide to published and unpublished documents on Anglo-Russian relations in the sixteenth century in the British archives', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 11 (1977), p. 355-387, also printed in Samuel H. Baron, *Muscovite Russia; collected essays* (London, 1980), chapter XI. For a more wide-ranging guide, see Janet M. Hartley, *Guide to Documents and Manuscripts in the United Kingdom Relating to Russia and the Soviet Union* (London and New York, 1987).

most pertinent material in this discussion are the royal correspondence, instructions to ambassadors from Elizabeth and governors of the company, and documents that arise in response to concerns of private trade and the conduct of English merchants and ambassadors abroad.<sup>55</sup>

In 1555, Chancellor was sent out to Russia again, along with the Muscovy Company agents George Killingworth and Richard Gray, who were to present Philip and Mary's letters to the Emperor, Ivan IV.<sup>56</sup> Although merchants and servants of the company were sent over regularly from 1555 onwards, the more formal and specifically diplomatic (as opposed to simply mercantile) contacts with Russia continued with Anthony Jenkinson's mission of 1557, returning the Russian ambassador, Osip Nepea, back to his homeland and exploring trading possibilities in Persia.<sup>57</sup> Jenkinson was sent out to Russia again in 1561 to continue his trading ventures into Persia, via Moscow.<sup>58</sup> On his return to Moscow from Persia in 1563, Jenkinson secured more trading privileges for the Muscovy Company and returned to England in 1564. Jenkinson was sent back out to Russia for a third mission in May 1566, to protest against trading privileges that had been granted to an Italian merchant, Raphael Barbarini, who had conned Elizabeth into supporting his safe passage into Russia allegedly to pursue his debtors. A further purpose of the mission was to request the Company's complete monopoly over

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<sup>55</sup> These documents can be found, in the majority, in the British Library Cotton, Lansdowne, Harleian and Egerton manuscripts, as well as the Royal Manuscripts and in the State Papers Foreign, Russia in the National Archives, Kew, see SP 91/1 in particular. The National Archives at Kew hold photographic copies of English documents held in ЦГАДА, the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts, Moscow. I have also consulted the Ashmolean and Tanner Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Oxford and manuscripts in the Huntington Library, San Marino, L. A.

<sup>56</sup> Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 299-301.

<sup>57</sup> 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia, wherein Osep Napea first Ambassador from the Emperor of Moscouia to Q. Marie was transported into his cuntry. Ann. 1557' and 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson from the citie of Mosco in Russia to Boghar in Bactria, An. 1558' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 333-343 and 347-359.

<sup>58</sup> 'The voyage of Anthonie Jenkinson through Russia, and ouer the Caspian Sea into Persia, An. 1561' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 365-374. For Jenkinson's commission and the royal correspondence he carried to both the Russian Emperor and the Sophy of Persia, as well as instructions from the Muscovy Company, see Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 359-364.



trade to St Nicholas.<sup>59</sup> Jenkinson returned in the winter of 1566-7, but was then sent back out to Russia in May 1567 on behalf of the Muscovy Company, who wanted clear confirmation of their privileges over Russian trade, in the light of English interloping at the port of Narva.<sup>60</sup>

Randolph was the next ambassador to be sent to Russia immediately after Jenkinson's return in June 1568, and returning himself in August 1569.<sup>61</sup> Randolph was followed by Jenkinson again in 1571-2,<sup>62</sup> along with his Secretary Daniel Sylvester, who returned to Russia as an ambassador in his own right in 1575.<sup>63</sup> Sylvester, having returned with the Russian Emperor's letters for Elizabeth, was then sent back to Russia in 1576 with the Queen's response. However, before he could reach Moscow, he was killed by a bolt of lightning, according to Jerome Horsey's account, and the ambassadorial mission came to an end.<sup>64</sup>

Sylvester had, apparently, been given instructions, written and verbal, to continue negotiations regarding a royal marriage and political alliance between Russia and England, but his papers were destroyed with him.<sup>65</sup> In response, Ivan IV sent his ambassador Fedor Andreevich Pissemskiy to England to continue these negotiations. Elizabeth avoided being pinned down to any kind of alliance with Russia at every turn, and thus Pissemskiy left England empty-handed, but

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<sup>59</sup> 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia the third time, An. 1566' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 397-399. See also BL MS Royal 13 B I, f. 160v.

<sup>60</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 189v-190. See also Willan, Early History, pp. 88-89.

<sup>61</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249 and Lansdowne 11, nos. 16, 35, 36 and 37.

<sup>62</sup> 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia the fourth time, An. 1571' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), 426-437. See also BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 7-8, BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249, BL MS Lansdowne 11, nos. 16, 35, and 36.

<sup>63</sup> BL MS Harleian 36, ff. 194r-196v and BL MS Egerton 2790, ff. 178-180. See also BL MS Harleian 36, ff. 197r-198r.

<sup>64</sup> Jerome Horsey, 'The Travels of Sir Jerome Horsey' printed for the first time in Edward A. Bond, ed., Russia at the close of the Sixteenth Century (London, 1856), p. 184.

<sup>65</sup> Maria V. Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford, May 1992), p. 76.

insisted on a representative of the Queen to accompany him back to Russia to continue and conclude an alliance between the two lands.<sup>66</sup> Sir Jerome Bowes was chosen for this difficult task.<sup>67</sup>

Bowes had had previous diplomatic experience in the French court, assisting in the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and François Valois, duke of Alençon, and had been a member of Sir Philip Sidney's ambassadorial retinue to Rudolf II in 1577.<sup>68</sup> Bowes' infamous diplomatic mission was disastrous for the Company and for Anglo-Russian relations, both in the short-term and long-term.<sup>69</sup> This was perhaps due to his irascibility and his quarrelsome ambassadorial manner, but also due to the difficult position Elizabeth had placed Bowes in, exhorting him to persuade the Russian Emperor out of both a political alliance and the proposed marriage negotiations to Lady Mary Hastings, without giving him any power to bargain with.<sup>70</sup> His argumentative responses to the Russian Emperor were notorious in late seventeenth century accounts of Russia, in which Bowes was represented as a valiant and faithful subject of the Queen in standing up to the tyrannical Ivan the Terrible.<sup>71</sup> Bowes was dismissed from Ivan's presence a month before the Emperor died, having failed to conclude any concrete negotiations, and was subsequently held under house arrest for two

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<sup>66</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. 67-84.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth's instructions to Jerome Bowes can be found in BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff.32-34. A copy of her letter presenting Bowes to Ivan IV as her ambassador can be found in the National Archives, Kew, PRO 22/60/5. For 'Bowes report on his embassy' see NA SP 91/1, ff. 24r-25v.

<sup>68</sup> M. Unkovskaya, 'Bowes, Sir Jerome (d. 1616)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3051> (accessed 26 May 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. 89-103.

<sup>70</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 43. See also Willan, *Early History*, pp. 163-165.

<sup>71</sup> The legendary Bowes appears in John Milton, *A brief history of Moscovia and of other less-known countries lying eastward of Russia as far as Cathay; gather'd from the writings of several eye-witnesses* (London, 1682), pp. 90-97. He also appears in Samuel Pepys' diary, according to M. Unkovskaya, 'Bowes, Sir Jerome (d. 1616)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn. 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3051> (accessed 8 May, 2007). On references to Bowes in Pepys see also Robert Croskey, 'A further note on Sir Jerome Bowes', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, vol. 10 (1977), pp. 39-45.



months after the Emperor's death while the preparations for the funeral of the dead Emperor and the accession of the new Emperor, Feodor I, took place.<sup>72</sup>

After Bowes' disastrous attempt to negotiate on behalf of the Queen in increasingly strained Anglo-Russian relations, the situation appeared to be reconciled by an Englishman resident in Russia, one of the Company's employees, Jerome Horsey. Horsey had been an apprentice clerk in Russia since 1572 and had made friends in high places, being sent by Ivan on a secret mission to buy arms in England in 1580. He later came to be favoured by the new Emperor Feodor, who sent him as messenger to the Queen to resolve the problems in their diplomatic and commercial relationship in 1585.<sup>73</sup> Having impressed Elizabeth with his prestige as a messenger of the Russian Emperor, Jerome Horsey was recognised as a special ambassador of the Queen's and sent into Russia with answers for Feodor in 1586-7. However, due to various misunderstandings and suspect activities on the part of Horsey, more of which will be discussed later, he was recalled to England, though fled back to Russia in late 1587.<sup>74</sup> Horsey was followed by the embassy of Giles Fletcher in 1588-89, an embassy that was intended to confront the disorder and decline in the Muscovy Company and renew

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<sup>72</sup> 'A discourse of the Ambassage of Sir Ierom Bowes' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 499. See also Unkovskaya, 'Bowes, Sir Jerome (d. 1616)', *ODNB* (accessed 8 May, 2007) and Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. 100-108. For further discussion of Bowes' account of his embassy and its reception, see Robert M. Croskey, 'Hakluyt's accounts of Sir Jerome Bowes's embassy to Ivan IV', *Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, vol. 61, no. 4 (1983), pp. 546-564.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Hellie, 'Horsey, Sir Jerome (d. 1626)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13813> (accessed 26 May 2008).

<sup>74</sup> For details on Horsey's employment as ambassador to Russia see BL MS Lansdowne 112, nos. 40, 42 and 136 and BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 363-366. Unkovskaya argues that Horsey was the first English spy in Russia and that he was sent into Russia in late 1587 by Walsingham. Walsingham, however, attempted to recall him, on hearing of Horsey's bad reputation in the Russian court, but to no avail. Horsey managed to outwit Walsingham's agents who were attempting to track him down and bring him back to England, and continued on to Moscow in 1588. Horsey's presence in Moscow was seen by the Company as unhelpful and rebellious, see Unkovskaya 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. 134-135.

an amicable relationship with the Russian Emperor, as will be discussed in Chapter Two.

### iii.) Negotiating Commonwealth and Civility in Muscovy

#### a.) The Order of Civility

The Anglo-Russian encounter called into question Elizabethan standards of civility, the appropriate form of governing a commonwealth and individual English identity itself. Within the context of broader Elizabethan worldviews, opened up due to the necessity of new markets and increasing awareness of lagging behind continental developments, it is not surprising that the governors of the Muscovy Company, interested investors and the Queen herself were primarily concerned with the identity and civility of their own people abroad, as opposed to identifying and writing about the 'difference' of the unfamiliar Russian. Indeed, according to Anna Bryson, the idea of 'civility' 'was increasingly deployed as the discovery of non-European societies stimulated Europeans to define a collective superiority in their culture over others and to establish a historical perspective in which alien societies could be viewed as more or less developed according to a Western European standard'.<sup>75</sup>

An examination of the material relating to Muscovy Company activity points to the importance of order, honour and obedience in the maintaining of an English brand of civility when encountering the unfamiliar subject. Bryson defines civility as 'a living language of social action which linked an idealized vision of the social order with the changing pressures and conditions of social

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<sup>75</sup> Anna Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1998), p. 51. For an example of contemporary discussion of the concept of civility, see Cyvile and Uncyvile Life (London, 1579), reprinted as The English Courtier and the Cuntrey-gentlemen (London, 1586). See also a contemporary translation of Aristotle, John Dickenson, tr., Aristotle's Politiques or Discourse of Government (London, 1598), esp. sigs. B<sub>2</sub>v-B<sub>3</sub>r.



life'.<sup>76</sup> Within the Elizabethan commonwealth itself, the theme of order was of utmost importance, particularly in humanist thinking and the very structuring of Elizabethan society, 'Necessary it is that good order be first set in families....and good members of a family are like to make good members of Church and common-wealth'.<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth had evoked such a theme of order to the Emperor Ivan in her correspondence of September 1568, describing the establishment of the Muscovy Company on the basis of good order, conforming to the laws of her commonwealth, and the consequences when such order was rejected, 'by præscription of good Lawes, the life of man, the order of all thinges is conserued.....where lawe is contemned, and order broken, miserie of man, confusion of thinges, and vtter destruction of bothe, doth consequentlie folowe'.<sup>78</sup>

Order was an essential discourse in early modern English thought. The concept of order as expressed in the microcosm of the family and translated onto the macrocosm of the state was inspired by the fifth commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you'.<sup>79</sup> The catechism, the repetition of which was a weekly requirement for the youth of every parish, epitomised the individual's duty to keep order within him or herself, within the family and the society at large, 'to

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<sup>76</sup> Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p. 261. For more discussion of the concept of civility, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA, 1994), pp. 42-48 and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Presentment of civility: English reading of American self-presentation in the early years of colonization', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 54 (1997), pp. 193-228.

<sup>77</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), quoted in Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 87. See Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society; gender and class in early modern England* (Oxford, 1988), especially Chapter 2, pp. 34-66 and Anthony Fletcher, 'Introduction' in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 31-39.

<sup>78</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>79</sup> Exodus, chapter 20 verse 12, *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, found on *Bible Gateway*, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus20:&version=31>; (accessed 2 June 2008).

submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters'.<sup>80</sup>

The discourse of patriarchal and familial control structures was integral to early modern political thought and practice, 'a familie is the right gouernment of many subiects or persons vnder the obedience of one and the same head of the family...the true seminarie and beginning of euey Commonweale, as also a principall member thereof'.<sup>81</sup> Fathers, or heads of families, were 'all those to whom any authority is given, as magistrates, ministers of the church, school masters; finally, all they that have any ornament, wither reverent age, or of wit, wisdom, or learning, worship, or wealthy state, or otherwise be our superiors, are contained *under the name of fathers*; because the authority both of them and *fathers* came out of one fountain'.<sup>82</sup> Without the social structure of familial and political patriarchy, a commonwealth was doomed to fail. Muscovy Company employees residing in Russia did not have access to any of these established control structures of Elizabethan society. The family, in particular, was a social, civil structure that they severely lacked. Perhaps, then, disorder and rebellion within the Muscovy Company employees living in Russia was inevitable, for according to Jean Bodin, 'no Colledge, nor bodie politique can long stand without a familie, but must of it selfe perish and come to nought'.<sup>83</sup>

Elizabeth's 1568 letter to Ivan explained the principal tenets in the establishment, organisation and good working of the Muscovy Company, under the authority of the Queen.

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, p. 36. See also p. 35-36 for discussion of the catechism.

<sup>81</sup> Jean Bodin, *The six bookes of a commonweale* (London, 1606), p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander Nowell, *A Catechism Written in Latin* (1563), trans. Thomas Norton (1570), ed. G.E. Corrie (Cambridge, 1853), pp. 130-1, quoted in Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchy in Political Thought* (Oxford, 1975), p. 46, emphasis added by Schochet.

<sup>83</sup> Bodin, *Six bookes*, p. 9.



To this hie Courte of Parlement, the matter of trafficking into Moscouia, was referred. Where, it was ordered, that a solemne Societie of this trade sholde be constituted, not of Merchant men onelie, but of all soch Englishe men also, no man excluded, that vnder certain Conditiones and by an orderlie waye, indifferentlie præscribed, wold labor to be admitted into this feloship.<sup>84</sup>

The language used epitomises Elizabethan political and social culture, revolving around the good ordering of the commonwealth and the importance of upholding the natural order by working within the bounds of laws and designated identities.

The theme of order was displayed as a concern in the literature surrounding the English discovery and establishment of trading relations with Muscovy in the sixteenth century. Order had been required in the establishing of trading relations, for the Company was set up 'by the Authoritie of our high Courte of Parlament, & under the Conditions of thies good orders first instituted' so 'that this Societie shold be, not onelie surelie established, but also worshipfullie ordered, in all respectes and degrees.'<sup>85</sup> Even down to the passage to Russia and the behaviour of the crew on board pioneering ships, order was prescribed, 'the above named foure shippes shall in good order and conduct saile, passe, and trauaile together in one flote, ginge, and conserue of societie, to be kept indissolubly to be seuered, but united within continuall sight'. Order was maintained by patriarchal authority 'the saide Captaine shall haue the principal rule and gouernment of the aprentices: And that not onely they, but also all other the sailers, shallbe attendant and obedient to him, as of dutie and reason

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<sup>84</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

appertaineth'.<sup>86</sup> It was also a requirement for the sustaining of honourable and successful commercial relations with Russia.

Unlike attempts to colonise Ireland, and later North America, which implied the establishment of the colonizing country in the microcosm - a translation of everything necessary for English habitation and survival in a new and potentially fertile land - the trading communities associated with places like Russia were not permanent.<sup>87</sup> They were mobile and transitory, on an individual level, although the Company retained a long term presence in Russia. They were also not a true reflection of English social life, with no familial structures and no women and children. If the family was the microcosm of order and civility, and obedience was inherent in the familial order, then in such situations as trading communities, living and working in an unknown land such as Russia, order was bound to disintegrate. Rebellion could be explained by lack of familiar and familial social structures. In this context, then, it was even more important to provide the isolated Englishmen with father-figures, who would point the

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<sup>86</sup> 'Instructions giuen to the Masters and Mariners to be "observed in and about this Fleete, passing this yeere 1557, towards the Bay" of St Nicolas in Russia, for this present Raze to be made, and return of the same by Gods grace to the port of London, the place of their right discharge, as in the Articles ensuing is deduced', taken from Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, (London, 1589), pp. 332-3. Also printed in Morgan and Coote, *Early Voyages*, vol. I, pp. 7-10.

<sup>87</sup> In his 'Epistle dedicatorie' to Philip Sidney, prefacing the *Divers Voyages*, Hakluyt noted the manner of the successful Portuguese colonisation in Brazil 'where they have nine baronies or Lordships, & thirtie engennies or suger milles, two or three hundred slaues belonging to eche mill, with a Iudge, and other officers, & a Church : so that euey mill is as it were a little commonwealth', Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages*, sig. 1v. On the colonisation of Ireland see A.F. O'Brien, 'Ireland: conquest, settlement and colonisation' in Ó Ceallaigh, Daltún (ed.), *New perspectives on Ireland : colonialism and identity : selected papers from the Desmond Greaves summer school and related essays* (Dublin, 1998), 9-51, Nicholas P. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), Andrew Hadfield, 'English colonialism and national identity in early modern Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1993), pp. 69-86 and D. Shuger, 'Irishmen, Aristocrats and other white barbarians: a cultural analysis of English colonialism as considered in the "Irish Tracts" of Edmund Spenser and John Davies', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 2 (1997), pp. 494-525. On the colonisation of the New World see David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2002), Nicholas P. Canny, 'England's new world and the old, 1480s-1630s' in *The Oxford history of the British empire. Vol. 1 : The origins of empire : British overseas enterprise to the close of the 17th century*, ed. Nicholas P. Canny (Oxford, 1998), pp. 148-69 and Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge, 1996).



merchants and servants of the Company to the authority of their Father in heaven and thus maintain a good order and obedience in those dislocated from their Protestant Commonwealth, thus safeguarding English Christian civility abroad.

In the retaining of Englishness abroad the philosophy of order was crucial, not just economically and financially, but also socially and spiritually. This is expressed in the instructions given to ambassadors and agents to pass on to the Company's servants, encouraging them to practice English forms of religion, rather than imbibing the religious practices of the Russians. In his instructions from the Queen, the ambassador Daniel Sylvester was informed that the subjects trading in Russia were 'chargded to have vsed some light and contemptuous behaviour to the defacinge of suche dewe service and relligion as our good brother and his whole contrie usethe'. Consequently, Sylvester was directed to 'let the Govero[u]r and whole companie of our Subiects there have knowledge co[m]mandement given them in o[ur] name by yo[u] to them they may not only give offence to the naturall people of that contrie, but most of all to God in conforminge themselves contrarie to their knowledge and consciences to the relligion of that people'.<sup>88</sup>

Religious non-conformity undoubtedly ranked as a serious disorder, negating English civility and undermining the patriarchal culture of a fledgling Protestant Commonwealth. More fundamentally, it was an insult to God, and could result in punishment. Interestingly, it was the English merchants' 'mocking' of the Russians by taking on their religion that was condemned by Elizabeth. This response would suggest a sense of insecurity relating to the Russian native, implying an attitude of superiority, and interpreting English servants' assimilation

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<sup>88</sup> Instructions given to Daniel Sylvester, ambassador from Queen Elizabeth to the Emperor of Russia, May 1575, BL MS Egerton 2790, ff. 178-180.

of Russian culture as mocking, rather than an attempt to integrate and become familiar with Russian society, for they were accused of conforming 'more to serve the tyme and place then for any trew devotion they can have thereunto'.<sup>89</sup>

### b.) The Honour of Civility

Order went hand-in-hand with honour as a demonstration of English identity and civility and this dual language was integral to English encounters with the unfamiliar Russian subject. Honour was displayed in the ordered, civic-minded and virtuous man and an ordered man expressed an honourable image of English manhood, civility and commonwealth.<sup>90</sup> However, it was far more difficult to retain such honourable civility in a foreign land without the conventional structures of order which permeated Elizabethan society at every level. Jerome Horsey was one such example of honourable civility abroad gone wrong.

One of the most disreputable and interesting characters in the history of the early adventures of the Muscovy Company, Jerome Horsey's ambiguous and fluid identity was at times heralded as honourable, and at others condemned as the essence of barbarity. He was consistently represented to the Queen by the Muscovy Company as 'a daungerous instrument and a mover of trouble and variaunce and soe wastfull and prodigall that their trade cannot beare the charge of such an one to have to doe for them'.<sup>91</sup> The Company provided sundry examples of 'his unfaithfull fraudulent and deceiptefull dealinge' and yet he was employed by the Queen as her ambassador in 1585-6, and again in 1589-90, even after his

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<sup>89</sup> BL MS Egerton 2790, ff. 178-180.

<sup>90</sup> 'A man's honour, in this period, was the essence of his reputation in the eyes of his social equals; it gave him his sense of worth and his claim to pride in his own community', Anthony Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding in Elizabethan and Stuart England' in Fletcher and Stevenson, *Order and Disorder*, p. 93.

<sup>91</sup> 'A discourse on the troubles caused by Jerome Horsey', 1588-90[?], BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.



several misdemeanours had come to light.<sup>92</sup> To the Company he represented the epitome of dishonour and disorder within Anglo-Russian trade relations, as Robert Peacock, chief Agent of the Muscovy Company in Russia, explained in a letter to Walsingham in 1587, 'To tell of his disorderly behaviour here [Moscow] would be to enter a sea that hath no bottom'.<sup>93</sup> Indeed to examine all his suspect activities over the course of almost twenty years spent living in Muscovy is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Although Horsey had been resident in Russia and employed by the Company for several years, he only came to the attention of the Queen in the 1580s. In the papers relating to the activities of Horsey, the chronology and events appear somewhat confused. What can be ascertained is that the Company accused him of having brought about the imprisonment of one Thomas Wynnington 'because this Wymmington had discovered to the Companie the abuse of ther servauntes in Russia'.<sup>94</sup> He was also accused of orchestrating the imprisonment of three more Muscovy Company employees, Richard Silke, his wife and family, 'one Finche, an Englisheman',<sup>95</sup> and John Chapel, with the result 'that he is feared by all o[ur] nation ther for a common Accuser and noe man will live w[i]th him'.<sup>96</sup>

The Company's representation of Horsey's career is punctuated by a belief that Horsey constantly and dishonourably acted above his degree and calling. The Company complained that at one stage Horsey 'by pretence of further

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<sup>92</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40, see also 'A discourse of the second and third Imployments of Sir Ierom Horseye Esquire nowe Knight sent from his Ma[ies]tie to the Emperor of Rushea in An[n]o .1585. and .1589', BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 363r-374v. See also Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations', pp. 131-140.

<sup>93</sup> NA, SP 91/1, f. 53. See also Bond, *Russia*, pp. lxxxix-xci and CSPF (1586-88), pp. 221-22.

<sup>94</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>95</sup> 'Articles exhibited by the Companie of Merchauntes tradinge to Russia Against Hierom Horssey', BL MS Lansdowne 62, no. 22. Also printed in Bond, *Russia*, Appendix III, p. 330.

<sup>96</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

authoritie geaven him by her gracious l[ett]res Pattentes toke upon him to have desposed the Agent, Robert peacocke.....[and] tooke upon him the name of President'. In this usurped position as President of the Company, he began to improve the Company's buildings, borrowed large sums of money from the Russian Emperour's treasury in the name of the Company and claimed an extra allowance from the Company for his charges. He was accused of falsifying inventories and inventing 'mens names to be debtors for great sommes of money for commodities soude them' who were 'but ymaged men'.<sup>97</sup> Some of his deceptions regarding his falsified accounts and defrauding of the Company he readily confessed to and paid for, 'his beinge discovered and the goodes wantinge he was content to be charged.....[and] toke upon him the debte'.<sup>98</sup>

Yet one affair that points most clearly to his ambiguous reputation, lying somewhere between honour and dishonour, civility and barbarity, concerned the Russian Empress, the Queen and a midwife. This affair, which still remains shrouded in uncertainty, involved a question of honour, and more specifically the importance of upholding female honour as a marker of civility in a patriarchal society.<sup>99</sup> In August 1585 Horsey, being found in great favour in the Russian court was chosen to carry over to England, letters from the new Emperor Feodor to Elizabeth. He was armed with Feodor's 'most lovinge and kinde l[ett]res gratuities and tokens of remembraunce' expressing 'soe honorable and brotherlie a zeale in his highnes towardes her Ma[iest]ie and for her people', that the Queen 'did by the reason of soe acceptable thinges brought by the said Hierom Horssey

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<sup>97</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 62, no.22. Also printed in Bond, Russia, Appendix III, p. 329.

<sup>98</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Willan's discussion of Horsey, Willan, Early History, pp. 169-170, 199 and that of Bond in his introduction, Bond, Russia, pp.xliii-cxix, esp. pp. lxxv-lxxviii. See also Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, eds., Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the accounts of sixteenth-century English voyages (Madison, 1968), pp. 249-261.



make the more estimac[i]on and accompt of him and appointed that he should be used above his degree and callinge'.<sup>100</sup>

These letters also contained Feodor's complaints against the behaviour of Sir Jerome Bowes, the most recent English ambassador in Russia, complaints against the behaviour of Robert Peacock and John Chapel, employees of the Company, and complaints against Elizabeth's treatment of the most recent Russian messenger into England, Reynold Beckman. Feodor required that Horsey should be sent back to him with answers from Elizabeth.<sup>101</sup> Horsey, appearing to the Queen in an elevated position, as Feodor's ambassador, was granted more honour and recognition than previously his position in the order of the commonwealth had required. As a result, Horsey was then returned to Feodor, being recognised as the Queen's ambassador, rather than just a messenger or merchant.

In later correspondence with the Emperor's chief adviser, Boris Fedorowich, the Company asserted that Horsey 'at that time beinge not Content to keape himselfe w[i]thin the limites of a messenger or bearer of the said Emperors l[ett]res presumed to tell the Queene that order was given him from the Emperesse to move her Ma[iest]ie for the sendinge over of a midwief into Russia'.<sup>102</sup> Consequently a midwife was found and sent over to Russia with Horsey and a commendation to the Empress from Elizabeth. On the midwife's arrival in Russia, she was kept, at Horsey's command, in Volodga, four hundred miles from Moscow, for the space of a whole year and was never allowed to see the

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<sup>100</sup> 'Matters to be conteyned in her Ma[iest]es L[ett]res to be wrytten to the Empero[r] of Russia in the behaulfe of the Companie of Merchautes tradinge those partes', BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 33.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 53, no. 19.



Empress.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, the Empress and her brother, Lord Boris Fedorowich, claimed ignorance of the midwife's arrival and residence in Russia. When Boris was later told of the presumption of Horsey, he made strong complaint to Elizabeth claiming that the Empress, his sister, had been 'greatlye dishonored by suche a surmyse Especially in respecte of the unfittnes of the messenger to be used in suche a request' and suggested that Horsey's head should be cut off.<sup>104</sup>

Horsey was detained in England in late 1587 to answer the Company's charges of fraud against him and various other complaints made by the Company and the Russian Emperor about his behaviour.<sup>105</sup> However, it was only when a complaint was made against Horsey by the midwife he had taken over to Russia in questionable circumstances, that Horsey fled the English authorities. The Company concluded that on the complaint being made by the midwife, 'he feeleth himselfe touched w[i]th the guiltines of his Conscience & fearinge the daunger that would there upon followe is fled awaie from his native Countrie and as we thinke hath taken his iorney towards Russia'.<sup>106</sup> The Company's role in ascertaining the guilt and heinous nature of Horsey's crime was evident in the prejudiced rhetoric of their reports, 'What he ment by that practise and what warraunte he had to move the Queene for a midwief it is to be coniectured by his soddaune departure uppon the mydwiefes complaints to the Queene'.<sup>107</sup> Although

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<sup>103</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 53, no. 19. See also BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40 and Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.

<sup>104</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40. For other accounts of Horsey's misbehaviour and the matter of the midwife see BL MS Lansdowne 53, no. 19 and Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.

<sup>105</sup> See the letters addressed to Lord Boris Fedorowich and Andreas Shalkan, explaining how Horsey had been charged by the Muscovy Company for various misdemeanours on his return to England in the autumn of 1587, found in BL MS Lansdowne 53, no. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Letter to Lord Boris Fedorowich, BL MS Lansdowne 53, no. 19.

<sup>107</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40. Bond suggests in his account of the affair that Horsey had misunderstood the commission of procuring a midwife for the Russian Empress, and that in his misinterpretation, he had thus misled the Queen. He argued this on the evidence of Fletcher's defence of Horsey, see Bond, *Russia*, pp. lxxv-lxxviii, pp. 373-375. However, the language used by the Muscovy Company to describe Horsey's behaviour in this affair suggests that they thought

Horsey had appeared willing to confess and face charges for fraud, private trade and other misbehaviour, the accounts suggest the Company wished to present the crime against the honour of a midwife, the honour of the Empress and the honour of the Queen, in deceiving them all, as holding weightier consequences. These consequences Horsey could not pay off with money or talk away with civil words and honorable self-representation.

It is perhaps surprising that in 1590 Horsey was again taken into confidence and commissioned by the Queen to take letters back to Feodor.<sup>108</sup> This was due to the positive testimony of Giles Fletcher, but perhaps also due to Horsey's ability to ingratiate himself and represent his dishonorable activities in a more attractive light.<sup>109</sup> It also points to the fluid nature of self-representation and how civility and honour were perceived by differing audiences. Part of Giles Fletcher's mission to Russia was to accompany Jerome Horsey back to England to face his charges.<sup>110</sup> Concerning the affairs of Horsey, Fletcher 'by commission thoroughly examined and inquired after [them], and all proved to bee most false.'<sup>111</sup> In particular, the affair of the midwife Fletcher 'found to bee mistaken

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otherwise. Rather than having misunderstood the directions of Boris Fedorowich, Horsey was accused of being intentionally deceptive in his actions of requesting and bringing over to Russia a midwife for the Russian Empress. For instance: '[Horsey] moved the Queene as hauing a Commission from the Emperesse for an Englishe mydwief to be sent into Russia Whereuppon a mydwief was sent but she beinge come ouer the said Horssey practised to keape her from the knowledge of the Emperesse and hauinge deteyned her at Vologdo farre from the Musko by the space of a yere she is nowe returned and the Emperesse neuer knewe of her', BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>108</sup> See Bond, *Russia*, pp. xciii-cx. See also Feodor's letter to Elizabeth I which, among other things, complained of the appointment of Horsey, yet again, as an ambassador to Russia, NA SP 91/1, ff. 82r-87v and Feodor's letter, on similar topics, to Lord Burghley, NA SP 91/1, ff. 88r-90v. The controversy over Horsey's second employment as ambassador to Russia can also be seen in the Muscovy Company's petition to Lord Burghley, requesting he write favourably to the Russian Emperor Feodor to reassure him in the light of his dislike of the choice of Horsey as an ambassador, see NA SP 91/1, ff. 91r-92v.

<sup>109</sup> See NA, SP 91/1, ff. 74r-75v. Also printed in Bond, *Russia*, pp. 373-375.

<sup>110</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 498. See also NA SP 91/1, ff. 74r-75v and printed in Bond, *Russia*, pp. 373-375.

<sup>111</sup> 'Jerom Horseie answear to the generall complaints in the Emperouer his letters', printed in Bond, *Russia*, Appendix V, p. 371.



by Mr. Horsey, who had received his charge, not from the Emprise, but from his brother, Borris Fedorowich Godonoe, to procure owt of England, not a midwife, but soom Doctoritza that had skill in woomens matters', although the Emperor and Lord Boris Fedorowich denied any knowledge of it.<sup>112</sup>

Whether Horsey had indeed been mistaken or whether he had other intentions involving the midwife and his suspect activities, the representation of his worst crime being against the honour of reputable and powerful women reflects the early modern concern to uphold the natural order of social standards and the civil behaviour and honour of the individual, particularly the female individual, within the ordered society. Also significant is the reality that Horsey was subsequently taken back into confidence by the Queen, or her Privy Council at least, as an official ambassador in 1590-91, suggesting a certain degree of flexibility in judgements on testimony, self-representation and the fluctuating value of womens' honour. This instance points to a more sensitized reaction to dishonourable behaviour abroad, in a situation where it was easier to break the honour codes and disobey the laws of Elizabethan society.

#### **iv) Negotiating Civility and Barbarity: Representing the Queen at the Muscovite Court**

Although the Russians were consistently represented as barbaric and culturally backward,<sup>113</sup> the English did not always hold the monopoly over

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<sup>112</sup> NA SP 91/1, ff. 74v-75r. Also printed as 'Matters objected against Mr. Horsey by the Emperours Counsel of Rusland [Answered by Dr. Giles Fletcher]' in Bond, Russia, Appendix V, p. 374.

<sup>113</sup> See Richard Chancellor's account of Russia in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 280-292, as well as Jerome Bowes, 'The discourse of the Ambassage of Sir Ierom Bowes to the forsayd Emperour' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 491-500. For the underdevelopment of Russian society, displayed in their architecture, predominantly made of wood, see Anthony Jenkinson, 'The voyage of Anthony Ienkinson into Russia, wherin Osep Napea first Ambassador from the Emperor of Moscouia to Q. Marie was transported into his countrie' in Hakluyt,



civility, or acceptable self-presentation. The English ambassadorial writings on Russia reveal a preoccupation on both English and Russian sides with the correct addressing of titles to one another, expressed in royal correspondence between England and Russia, as well as in the expectations and realities of the treatment of ambassadors as representatives of the monarch, and their behaviour towards foreign potentates.

On the Russian side perhaps more than the English, the royal correspondence displays an almost obsessive attitude to the correct reception and recitation of titles of ambassadors and the ruler they were representing. The Russian Emperor's full title, which he required to be used in all correspondence and more importantly when being addressed by ambassadors and messengers, ran to over eight lines of writing,

great L[ord] and upholder Emperour and great duke Iohn  
Vasseliw[i]ch of all russia of all volodem[er] muscovia  
Nouogordia Emperour of Cazane Emperour of Astracane Lord of  
Plasko great duke of Smolenskye of Twere of Vgoria of Permia of  
Vatskye of Bolgoria and others Lord and great duke of Nouogrod  
the Lowar of Cherimise of Razane of Polotskye of Rostowe of  
yereslavia belozer vdorskye obodskye Condingeske of all Seberia  
and other the north p[ar]ties Commaunder Lord and inheritor of  
Lefeland and of manie other Countries east west and northe to ...  
our heires and successors.<sup>114</sup>

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Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 335 and 337 and Thomas Randolph, 'Thomas Randolfe Esquire from the Queenes Maiestie to the Emperour of Russia' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 400.

<sup>114</sup> 'Instructions to the Ambassadour of Russia to the Q[ueen]s Ma[ies]tie in manner of a letter', 20 June 1570, BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 7-8. For other good examples of the use of the Russian

This was in comparison to the English title 'Our sister Elizabeth buy the grace of god Queene of England, Fraunce and Ireland defendor of the Christian faith and other Countries'.<sup>115</sup>

In later years of correspondence between the Queen and the Russian Emperor, Elizabeth began to abridge the cumbersome title, to the great consternation of Feodor. In reply to Feodor's complaint, that the Queen had 'not observed that due order or respect that which appertained to your princely Majesty', Elizabeth protested that 'nothing is farther from us then to abridge so great and mighty a prince of the honour due unto him (whom we holde for his greatnesse to deserve more honour than we are able to give him)'.<sup>116</sup> She even went on to explain how, without diminishing any of her power and honour, she abridged her 'own stile, which is thus contracted, *videlecet*, "Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queene of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.," which kingdoms and dominions of ours are expressed by these general words, *videlicet*, England, France, Ireland; in every which there are severall principalities, dukedomes and earledomes, provinces and countreyes; which being severally expressed would enlarge much our stile, and make it of great length'.<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth was at pains to point out that 'we think it no dishonour to us compendiously to abridge the same in all our writings'.<sup>118</sup>

At his first audience with the Emperor, having been forced to wait weeks and having been received in a way unfitting for the Queen's ambassador, Giles

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Emperor's extensive title, see NA PRO 22/60/1, PRO 22/60/11 and PRO 22/60/17, in which the Emperor's title stretches (unusually) to eleven lines.

<sup>115</sup> BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 7-8.

<sup>116</sup> 'The Queenes Majesties letter to Feodor Ivanovich, Emperour of Russia' in Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600), pp. 499-501. Also printed in Bond, *Russia*, Appendix V, pp. 376, 378.

<sup>117</sup> 'Queenes Majesties letter' in Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600), p. 500. Bond, *Russia*, Appendix V, p. 378.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p. 500, and in Bond, *Russia*, p. 378.

Fletcher deliberately abridged the Emperor's title in his address, out of honour to his own Queen. He explained 'When I had audience of the Emperour, in the verie entrance of my speech, I was cavilled withall by the Chauncellor, bycawse I saied not forth the Emperours whole stile, which of purpose I forbare to doe, bycawse I would not make his stile of two ellnes, and your Highnes stile of a span long'.<sup>119</sup> It was of utmost importance to the English ambassadors to uphold the honour, as reflecting the political, cultural and economic superiority and civility of the Queen, as a representative of her princely majesty. Indeed Sir Jerome Bowes had, according to a third-person report on his embassy found in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, set the standard for upholding the honour due the Queen, he 'being very unwilling (how dangerous soever it might proove to his own person) to give way to the Emperour, to derogate ought from the honour and greatnesse of her Majesty....tolde him that the Queene his Mistresse was as great a prince as any was in Christendome, equall to him that thought himselfe the greatest'.<sup>120</sup>

Unlike Bowes, who was apparently admired for his chivalry and loyalty to his Queen both by the Russian Emperor and later in England, Fletcher, in his endeavour to uphold and assert the equal if not superior status of the Queen, suffered in his reception from the Russian Court and the treatment he received throughout his time in Russia. This was according to the individual reports written by both Bowes and Fletcher (and no doubt with different motives) after the event. The author of Bowes' account described how his gallantry and his pride in standing up to the Emperor's insults to the Queen had impressed the erratic Ivan IV, whereas Fletcher claimed that he was ill received, that the stubbornness of his

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<sup>119</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>120</sup> 'A briefe discourse of the voyage of Sir Jerome Bowes knight, her Majesties ambassadour to Ivan Vasilivich the Emperour of Muscovia, in the yeere 1583', in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 493.



audience, especially the chancellor, meant that he had to give way and that he was treated badly because he had stood up against dishonour to her Majesty in the court of Feodor.<sup>121</sup> Fletcher did, however, manage to obtain a confirmation of previous privileges granted to the company with some additions, whereas Bowes left Russia empty handed, having been detained by the new Emperor and afterwards refusing to accept the Emperor's parting gifts.<sup>122</sup>

In 1590, Elizabeth herself complained to the Emperor Feodor about his treatment of her ambassador, Giles Fletcher,

The sodene alteracone of your brotherly love professed towardes us, in usynge our late ambassade, Gylles Flechere, so basely as the lyke hath not byne sewed [shewed?] or used to any of ours by the greateste prince of Europe.....dothe geve us juste cause to suspecte that your highnes nether was nor is so well affected towardes us as wee deserved and appertaynethe to our place and qualletye.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> For Jerome Bowes relation of his reception at the Russian Court, see 'A briefe discourse of the voyage of Sir Jerome Bowes', Hakluyt, Principall Navigations, p. 493. For Fletcher's reception, see BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>122</sup> See 'The late ambassage of Master Giles Fletcher, Doctor of the *Ciuill Law*, sent from her Maiestie to the Emperour of Russia, Anno 1588' in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations, p. 503 or 498 and 'A briefe discourse of the voyage of Sir Jerome Bowes', Hakluyt, Principall Navigations, p. 496.

<sup>123</sup> 'A lettere sente from the Queenes moste excelente Ma[ies]tie to the Emperore of Rushea, by Jerrom Horsey, Esquier, hir Ma[ies]ties agente, 1589', BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, ff. 367r-v. This is also printed in Bond, Russia, p. 297-299. The letter detailed the break-down in the Anglo-Russian relationship of amity, as perceived by the English government, at least, and complained bitterly of the treatment of England's ambassadors and merchants in Russia, especially Giles Fletcher, since the death of the previous Emperor, Ivan IV. In July 1591, the new Emperor Feodor replied to this letter of complaint in a similar fashion, protesting at the tone of the Queen's letter, her complaints about the present state of their relationship and the fact that she had used the disgraced Horsey as her agent for carrying such letters. Not only was Horsey in a precarious and discredited position with the Russian government, but he was also only a 'mere' agent, not an ambassador. To add insult to injury, in Elizabeth's letters, sent by this agent who 'deserved death....the Emperours stile is abridged in his ma[ies]ties l[ett]res and signed w[i]th the signett w[hi]ch Horsey said was the seale of hir ma[ies]ties treasury: whereas all other princes in their l[ett]res to the Emperour give hym all his titles of honor and signe them w[i]th their great seale as he doth likewise in all his l[ett]res to her ma[ies]tie and other great prynces'. This letter of reply can be found in the National Archives, SP 91/1, ff. 82r-84v, followed by a condensed summary of the letter, SP 91/1, ff. 86r-

There were several points of complaint relating to the Emperor's reception of Fletcher. The Queen's representative had been entertained in such a way 'not agreeable to our princely quality, and not such as we shew unto your ambassadors and messengers of what quality soever they be of', a pointed insult expressing Elizabeth's views about the inferiority of Russian ambassadors.<sup>124</sup> Feodor's reception of Fletcher, and indeed any of the ambassadors, was perceived as a direct indication of the Emperor's attitude towards the Queen herself. The recognition of honour was not only central to the outworking of relations between monarchs in terms of titles and style, but for Elizabeth at least, her representation was key in upholding her honour and superior, civil position. An ambassador received honourably as a direct representative of the Queen expressed the natural order of civil Christian, European culture. Rightly bestowed honour and respect was crucial to the right ordering of Elizabethan civil society. Thus the Queen's representative was due all honour, was responsible for making sure that the Queen was honoured in her absence, and should have behaved honourably, in a way that expressed the power, glory and status of the monarch.

During his reign, Ivan proposed an Anglo-Russian royal marriage, alongside an offensive and defensive alliance and a request for refuge in England if it was necessary.<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth managed to dissuade Ivan from an Anglo-Russian

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87v. Significantly, Feodor also accused the Queen of knowing nothing of this letter of complaint sent by the messenger Horsey, that her 'Ma[ies]ties L[ett]res were written by some of hir secretaries, w[i]thout hir priuitye' and that 'hir ma[ies]tie would enquire w[hi]ch of her secretaries wrote the l[ett]res sent by Horsey, wherein his title was abridged, and to blame hym for it; and to give order that hereafter he may have his full title', see SP 91/1, ff. 86r-v.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in Willan, *Early History*, p. 218.

<sup>125</sup> Lady Mary Hastings, cousin to the Queen, was eventually suggested as a prospective bride for Ivan, despite attempts to side-line his requests for a royal marriage. However, Sir Jerome Bowes was instructed by Elizabeth that one of his ambassadorial duties was to dissuade Ivan from the proposal on the basis of Lady Mary Hastings' supposed ill-health and disposition: 'use all the best persuasions you can to dissuade him from that purpose, laying before him the weaknes of the Lady, when she is in best state of health and difficulties, that are otherwise like to be stood vpon by the Lady, and her friends, who can hardly be induced to be so farr separate the one from the



marriage alliance, avoiding an unequal match with a barbaric prince, as well as circumventing the issue of an offensive alliance that might have put England's trading privileges at risk and placed England in a compromising diplomatic position.<sup>126</sup> Just as she instructed her ambassadors to deter Ivan from ideas of a

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other', BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 32-34. See also Willan, *Early History*, pp. 161-163. The issues of an offensive and defensive alliance and the request for refuge in England are also covered in Elizabeth's instructions to Jerome Bowes, BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 32-34. The offensive and defensive alliance was first proposed by Ivan IV in 1567, via Anthony Jenkinson. Rogozhin and Jansson convincingly refute previous historians' views, Willan's in particular, that Elizabeth was always opposed to such a treaty and that she never even contemplated, let alone responded to, the proposal. From Rogozhin and Jansson's reading of the evidence, it seems more likely that Elizabeth was prepared to consider such an alliance with Ivan IV at this stage, yet she did not respond to the proposal in an appropriate fashion. Elizabeth preferred simply to have the league established on the word of the two monarchs, rather than as an official or formal agreement, hedging her bets, as it were, if she needed a get-out clause. Her defence to the Emperor, after his anger at her reluctance to sign a formal treaty, was that such a formal treaty would have negated the secret nature of this treaty, whereas if the league was established by trusting in her word, the secrecy of the league could be maintained. For further discussion of this, see Maija Jansson and Nikolai Rogozhin, *England and the North: The Russian Embassy of 1613-1614* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 12-17. Not having a formal signed treaty with Russia allowed Elizabeth to renege on the agreement, as she attempted to do in the embassy of Jerome Bowes, 1583-84.

<sup>126</sup> There is a series of extant documents that relate the drafting of a league of amity between the Russian Emperor and Elizabeth, see NA, SP 103/ 61, ff. 1r-10v. These documents reveal the negotiation of which articles would be included in the league of amity. The league requested by the Russian Emperor asked for a defensive and offensive alliance, financial and political aid in time of need, as well as the support of money and arms when under attack from an enemy. It also proposed that artificers and craftsmen from both countries have safe passage, safe residence and freedom in each others' dominions; that only those merchants licensed to trade by the respective potentates be allowed to trade in the other's land; measures to prohibit private trade and a final article requesting the continuation of embassies to cement the league of amity. An examination of SP 103/ 61, ff. 5-10v reveals that a document of agreement to the Emperor's proposed league was in the process of being drawn up. In the various stages of this revised document, Elizabeth 'agreed' to all of the Emperor's articles, but qualified those relating to trade and the treatment of merchants. She also requested that this league of amity would in no way negate or discount the previous privileges received by the Muscovy Company, and demanded that it made them inviolable. These documents frequently discuss Elizabeth's agreement to these articles as 'on the Queen's behalf' or 'on her Ma[ies]ties part' as opposed to directly stating that she herself had agreed to these articles and stipulated the changes made in the English response to the Russian Emperor's demands for the league of amity. The language and tone of the documents suggest that the Queen had not had direct involvement in the construction of this answer to the proposed league; rather it appears that the documents were framed, revised and rewritten 'on her behalf' as opposed to with direct consultation and agreement of the Queen. The documents detailing Elizabeth's response to the Russian Emperor's requests reveal the primary concerns of her government over the Russian Emperor's. The corrections and additions to the articles agreed on suggest that this may have been an attempt to appease the Emperor with Elizabeth's agreement to a defensive and offensive alliance in order to protect the commercial interests of the Muscovy Company. However, it is clear from her instructions to Bowes that Elizabeth was not happy with the idea of an offensive alliance with Russia in 1583, see BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 32-34. Could this be, then, an example of the model of monarchical republic at work? See Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' in *Elizabethan essays* (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. 31-57. Huttenbach has established that the succession of documents regarding the articles of a league between Elizabeth and Ivan, were produced between 1575 and 1577. He also suggests that although in 1569, Randolph was instructed by Elizabeth to side-step



royal marriage, Elizabeth encouraged her ambassadors to side-step Ivan's demand for an offensive and defensive alliance. She instructed Jerome Bowes to

declare vnto him, that we could not assent thereu[n]to, thinking it requisite both in Christianity and by the law of Nations, and common reason not to professe enimity or enter into effects of hostility against any prince or potentat, without warning first given to the party so procuring enimity to desiste from his wrong doing or cause giving of hostility which kind of capitulating is usuall between us, and all other princes, be they neuer so remote from vs, as some of our confederates are in a manner as farr distant as he and his kingdome are.<sup>127</sup>

The Queen's words suggested a clear distinction between civil, Christian conduct and identity and the barbarity and lack of Christian virtue displayed by the Russian Emperor in suggesting an offensive alliance. The practice of civil, Christian states was not to initiate hostility without warning. Russia did not appear to fit into this mould, seeming to lack an awareness of 'the law of nations' and bearing more similarity to the infidel Turk than civil Christendom.

In this comment, Elizabeth appeared to have won the upper hand in their linguistic and diplomatic wrangles over civil status and cultural development. During her reign, she consistently managed to evade Ivan's requests for a marriage alliance, as well as his requests for political alliance. She was able to

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requests for an alliance, just as Bowes was in 1584, during the interim period, Ivan threatened to revoke the trading privileges the Muscovy Company had enjoyed, if Elizabeth did not agree to a formal league of amity between them. This prompted Elizabeth to consider such a formalised league, hence the revisions in the proposed articles during the years 1575-77. For further discussion of these documents, see Henry Huttenbach, 'New Archival Material on the Anglo-Russian Treaty of Queen Elizabeth and Tsar Ivan IV', Slavonic and East European Review, vol. 49 (October, 1971), pp. 535-549.

<sup>127</sup> BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 32-34.

distance herself enough not to engage too extensively in a diplomatic relationship that would have called into question English cultural superiority over Russia. Elizabeth also emphasised the remoteness of the Russian land, implying the unfamiliarity of Russia, but perhaps also implying indirectly a more acute barbarity on Russia's part as other lands similarly distant and on the periphery of the known Elizabethan worldview still abided by the 'law of Nations'.

The need to keep oneself and one's employers and other subjects of the English Commonwealth civil in a sometimes barren and often barbaric land remained an issue of great anxiety in the Muscovy Company context. Robert Peacock declared with pride and resolve that 'Russia shall not corrupt me, nether one waye not other; it hath not increased me in welthe, it shall not decrease me in my good name'.<sup>128</sup> Others were not as consistent in their Christian civility and their Commonwealth principles during their dealings with and experience of Russia.

#### **v.) Merchants Behaving Badly: disorder, dishonour and the barbarity of the civil English in Muscovy**

The issue of private trade was a distinct area of very apparent disorder and disobedience in English encounters with Russia, pointing to the potential risk of Muscovy merchants going native (and barbaric) in a foreign land. It also reflected the ongoing concern to uphold English civility in its commonwealth subjects abroad. These concerns appear again and again in the extant ambassadorial and mercantile writings of the Muscovy Company. The quantity of diplomatic and commercial correspondence relating to private trade is testimony to the reality of

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<sup>128</sup> NA SP 91/1, f. 53. See also Bond, *Russia*, pp. lxxxix-xci and CSPF (1586-88), pp. 221-22.

its widespread occurrence. Such trade, contravening the Company's rules, raised two significant issues in the maintenance of law and order of English subjects abroad as representatives of Englishness in another land. Firstly the Company and its employees were closely linked with the Crown and to a certain extent they were representatives of the Queen. Therefore law, order and civil behaviour were absolutely essential in the Company, for both the preservation of English civility abroad and the representation of English (royal) identity to the unfamiliar Russian subject.

Secondly, the issue of order and obedience, and lack of it in Muscovy Company employees, could potentially raise doubts as to the efficacy and ability of the Queen's rule being maintained in the society of her subjects abroad, especially those who were so closely connected to the Queen's interests. Just as in the contemporary Elizabethan socio-political discourse, men without masters or familial structures were a cause for concern, so men abroad without any familial structures were at risk of becoming rebels.<sup>129</sup> The language of order and honour and an acknowledgement of the English monarch's authority had to be integral to the lived and written experience of merchants, artisans and ambassadors, in order to avoid rebellious subjects and traitors abroad. As an expression of her authority and asserting English order, Elizabeth wrote to the Emperor concerning private traders, 'they knowe most certainlie, that this they do, against the præscription of oure Lawes, against the Dignitie of there Contrie, against the will of there Prince. For the Lawes, do expreslie forbid it: There Contrie thinketh it an vnworthie

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<sup>129</sup> A. L. Beier, Masterless Men: The vagrancy problem in England 1560-1640 (London and New York, 1985), Introduction and Chapter 1, esp. pp. xix, 9-10, 12-13.



attempte, that soch vnworthie Persones, shold deale, w[i]th a most worthie Prince, eyther in conferringe of counsell, or exercisinge of trafficke.’<sup>130</sup>

In both 1568 and 1584, the Company’s papers relate the decision to send over a party of factors and diplomats to sort out the misdemeanours of its employees.<sup>131</sup> The mid-to-late 1560s and the 1580s seem to be specific periods when privateering, disorder and misbehaviour, as well as decline of the trade, within the Company were rife, or at least of great concern to Company members and privateers alike.<sup>132</sup> Geoffrey Ducket and Thomas Bannister, assistants to the ambassador Thomas Randolph, were sent in 1568 to deal with the disobedient servants of the Company and other interlopers.<sup>133</sup> They petitioned the Emperor, ‘accordynge to the Queanes heighnes Com[m]ysson, gyven untoo them, that they maye bye thy maiesties Authorite com[m]and home all suche ynglishe men, as lye heare in trade of merchandize, in contempt of the Queanes Ma[ies]tie, and her lawes & agaynste the Orders of the Cumpanye’.<sup>134</sup>

Ducket and Bannister made it explicit in their address to Ivan that any private trade undertaken by English subjects was illegal and was actively subverting the Elizabethan brand of civility. Those involved in such trade – the perpetrators identified by Ducket and Bannister were Ralph Rutter, Thomas Glover, Christopher Bennet and John Chapel - were ‘all Rebels and traytours too owre Soverayne, Ladye, the Queenes heighnes’.<sup>135</sup> Disobedience at this level and in these particular circumstances was close to rebellion against the Elizabethan

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<sup>130</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>131</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249, Cotton Nero B xi, ff.359b-361b, Lansdowne 42, no. 23 and Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>132</sup> Unkovskaya’s work on Anglo-Russian relations during the mid-1580s corroborates this suggestion, see Unkovskaya, ‘Anglo-Russian’, pp. 84-130.

<sup>133</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249. See also BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 226v-228.

<sup>134</sup> Petition of Geoffrey Ducket and Thomas Bannister, representatives of the Muscovy Company, to the Russian Emperor Ivan IV, BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 41.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*

commonwealth. And the consequences were harsh, in word, if not in deed, 'we saye plainlie, if any Subiecte of oures, eyther secretlie at home, or boldlie abrode, attempte to ouerthrowe this order for this Societie, so præscribed by oure Lawes, so confirmed by our R[o]yall assent, whither he liue on land or Sea, in what corner of ther worlde soeuer he hide him, he shall never escape iust punishement, for soch a contempte of vs & oure Lawes'.<sup>136</sup> In a letter to the Emperor detailing the history of the Muscovy Company, Elizabeth denounced such interlopers, warning him against subjects 'who, beinge, vnfathfull to there owne Masters, vnnaturall to there owne Contrie, disobedient to vs there Soueraigne, what fañ/th they will kepe in strange contries, or what dewtifull seruice they will do in the ende, to any other Prince, your Ma[ies]tie by your greate wisdom can well iudge.'<sup>137</sup>

Whether Ivan took this advice to heart is unclear. In 1569 an English interloper was bold enough and 'unnatural' enough to petition the Russian Emperor against the rule and protection of his own sovereign. He and his illegal company appealed to the 'most mightie emperor and greate duke Iohn Vassillewitche ov[er] all rusland extend unto us all englishe marchantes thie maiesties greate m[er]cie'.<sup>138</sup> The petition of Christopher Bennet against the Queen, directed to the Russian Emperor, detailed the situation from the point of view of the interlopers and their trade. Bennett represented the concerns of those 'interlopers' to the Emperor, and their potential fate at the hands of a cruel

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<sup>136</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Christopher Bennet, 'Bennet agaynste the Q[ueen] Ma[ies]tie geve[n] in a supplication to the Emp[eror] of Russia', n.d., BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 37. Baron suggests the date for this document is 1569, see Baron, 'Guide to Documents on Anglo-Russian relations', p. 381. Although Bennett is mentioned several times by Willan, no mention is made of this particular document, even though correspondence between the Queen, the Company and the Russian Emperor in 1569 and 1570 referred to Bennett as an interloper and traitor to England.



Muscovy Company and a Queen who had been persuaded by the company to establish 'a lawe throughout all england that uppon paine of death that no englishe marchant or other subiectes for any kynde of bessines should not come with shippinge....but onlie the said S[ir] W[illia]m garret and his company'.<sup>139</sup>

Perhaps the best indication of the disorder and 'unnaturalness' of Bennett and his company is seen in his style of address to the Emperor, mimicking the Russian custom berated by various travel accounts, 'all we englishe m[ar]chantes wold come and knoke o[ur] heads unto thie Maiestie wepinge and crying owt uppon S[ir] Will[ia]m garrett for the great injure and wronge that he and his company hath done unto us'.<sup>140</sup> The imperial ambassador Herberstein, and the English ambassadors Jenkinson and Fletcher, in their written accounts of Russia, all made derogatory comments on the Russians' manner of addressing and prostrating themselves before their social superiors.<sup>141</sup> Fletcher reported 'he must turne himselfe about, as not daring to looke him on the face, and fall down with knocking of his head to the very ground, as he doth vnto his Idoll'.<sup>142</sup> George Turberville recounted in his poems on Russia how 'the stranger bending to the god, the ground with browe must beat'.<sup>143</sup>

Bennett's justification for petitioning the Emperor was 'that we dare not goo to our quenes maiestie nor to S[ir] Will[ia]m garrett nor his co[m]pany we

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<sup>139</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 37.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Herberstein noted the manner in which Russians petitioned their Emperor: 'if he desires to offer his thanks to the grand-duke for any great favour, or to beg anything of him, he then bows himself so low as to touch the ground with his forehead', in Notes Upon Russia: being a translation of the Earliest Account of that Country, entitled *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii*, by the Baron Sigismund Von Herberstein, trans. and ed. R.H. Major, 2 vols. (New York, n.d.), p. 124. See also Anthony Jenkinson's 'The maners, vsages and ceremonies of the Russes' in Hakluyt Principall Navigations (1589), p. 344.

<sup>142</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Common Wealth, p. 224.

<sup>143</sup> George Turberville, Tragicall Tales translated by Turberville in time of his troubles out of sundrie Italians, with the argument and Ienvoye to eche tale (London, 1587), p. 189.



feare pounisheme[nt] of death'.<sup>144</sup> Effectively Bennett was requesting protection from the Russian Emperor against the Queen and the Muscovy Company. This was close to treason.<sup>145</sup> Clause 1 of the 1563 Treason Act *An Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's Subjects in their due Obedience* stated, among other things, that 'all persons whatsoever' who did 'promise any Obedience to any pretended Authority of the See of *Rome*, or to any other Prince, State or Potentate....or shall do any overt Act to that Intent or Purpose....every of them shall be to all Intents adjudged to be Traytors, and being thereof lawfully convicted shall have Judgement, suffer and forfeit, as in Case of High Treason'.<sup>146</sup> In linguistically prostrating themselves before the Russian Emperor and petitioning for his protection against their anointed monarch, Bennett and his companions had expressed obeisance, if not obedience to another Prince. Much of the historiography surrounding perceptions of treason in Elizabethan England focuses, understandably, around the threat of Catholicism and popery taking hold once more in the Protestant commonwealth, the personal safety of the Queen and the tricky issue of succession.<sup>147</sup> Yet Bennett's case reveals that there were other, further-flung arenas in which Elizabethan subjects could act treasonously.

A note at the end of the petition highlights the effects that the cruelty of the Muscovy Company demands were having on the families and livelihood of these interlopers who were not part of the civil order of Elizabeth's England, implying the tyrannical barbarity of the Queen and Muscovy Company, as

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<sup>144</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 37.

<sup>145</sup> D. Alan Orr, *Treason and the State: Law, Politics and Ideology in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 21-25.

<sup>146</sup> 23 Elizabeth I, c.1, quoted in Orr, *Treason and the State*, p. 24. See also Frederic A. Youngs, Jr., 'Definitions of Treason in an Elizabethan Proclamation', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4 (December 1971), pp. 675-691.

<sup>147</sup> Peter Lake and Michael Questier 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in Early Modern England: the Edmund Campion Affair in Context', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72, no. 3 (September 2000), pp. 587-627 and Leslie Ward, 'The treason act of 1563: a study of the enforcement of anti-Catholic legislation', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 8 (1989), pp. 289-308.

opposed to the mercy of the Russian Emperor. Bennett and his companions were petitioning for the right to trade freely at Russian ports and representing the Queen and Company as tyrannical and monopolising powers, putting these individuals' lives, and the lives of their families at risk, by not allowing them to continue trading at the Narve and prohibiting them on pain of death. The familiar and accepted representation of the Muscovite monarch as barbaric, treacherous and cruel and the English monarch as civil, Christian and orderly was turned on its head by Bennett's own head-knocking supplication to the Emperor as opposed to using his natural means of petitioning through his own country's legal procedures. This inversion of the civil Elizabethan monarch with the barbaric Russian Emperor was indirectly presented in Fletcher's more literary treatise on Russia, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Elizabeth explained to Ivan that the Muscovy Company had been established by 'the Common Counsell, & publike iudgement of the hole Parliament of the Realme'. Thus 'no Subiecte of oures can iustelie complain or trewlie reporte that he is excluded from this Societie, but eyther, he is oute of it, by his owne negligence, or unworthie of it, by his owne falte'.<sup>148</sup> Those unworthy or negligent, and by implication dishonourable, had missed their opportunity and were not allowed to be involved in the new trade with Russia. It was only the civil and ordered 'commonwealth' subject who had the privilege and opportunity to be involved in the Company's adventure.

The case between the Muscovy Company and three private traders, William Bond, George Bond and John Foxall, in 1564 demonstrates, however, the extent to which the issues of the justice (or tyranny) of monopoly and interloping

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<sup>148</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff.241-249.



were contested. The Bonds' and Foxall's response to charges against them for interloping was based on the argument that the Narva was not included in original privileges granted to the Company in 1553, as at that time it had not been part of Russia and thus not part of the area that the Company had monopoly over. This presented a similar situation to that of Bennett and his fellow petitioners to the Emperor Ivan. The Company argued in defence of their accusations that it had a monopoly over English trade with Russia. The port at Narva was now Russian and therefore any trade there should be conducted by the Muscovy Company, not interlopers and not members of the Company engaging in private trade.<sup>149</sup>

The concern for order within the Company, as part of a functioning commonwealth, became all the more pressing when not only interlopers, but servants and factors of the Muscovy Company itself were engaged in illegal private trade. Particularly in the 1580s, complaints of privateering and concerns over the decay of the trade in Russia were much more prevalent. It was feared by the Company that the 'lewde dealinge' of Anthony Marsh, Peter Garrard, Jerome Horsey, Richard Relph and others 'by privat traffique (w[hi]ch is utterly forbidden) as oth[e]rweis by supplanting the saide Pecock & Chappell his assistant, is so great and perilous, as yt will shortly overthrowe the trade and corporation'.<sup>150</sup> In reaction to this threat, in 1584 the Company sent into Russia a number of agents 'to spy oute all o[ur] doings', namely Robert Peacock, John Chapel, Christopher Holmes, John Merick, Anthony Marsh, John Horneby and 'Wimington who is sent over as a promoter by the company to spy oute all o[ur]

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<sup>149</sup> The debate was recorded in several petitions and responses from the Company. These can be found in BL MS Cotton Nero B viii, ff. 10v-19. For further discussion of the Narva trade route to Muscovy, see Zins, England and the Baltic, pp. 35-53.

<sup>150</sup> Notes prefacing the letter from Richard Relph on Rose Island to his companions in Casan, warning them of the company's actions, 12 August, 1584, BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 395b. Another copy of the notes and letter, which includes two extra paragraphs in the 'notes' can be found in BL MS Lansdowne 42, no. 23.



doings; wherefore nowe you may trust none of the companies servants, for they are all sworn to discloze whatsoever'.<sup>151</sup> Richard Relph, a guilty target wrote to his partners in illegal trade, warning of the arrival of this group at St Nicholas, 'The newe agent & assistant loketh more like promoters then merchants; & spie so here at the shippes, that there dareth nether purser nor maryner trade, no not for so much as a cap cloth, the Masters are bound in two hundreth pounds to the contrarie'.<sup>152</sup>

Private trade was a disruption to the natural order and demonstrated the presumption of an individual to step outside his role in the structured society. To step outside this prescribed role in society was to rebel, to be disordered, to be identified only because of being different. Such private traders were 'all so obscure men, as if there owne naughtines had not mad them knowne, thei had never bene knowne vnto vs, nor at this tyme named in our L[ett]res'.<sup>153</sup> To be different was to be on the periphery, to be unfamiliar, to be veering on the side of barbarism rather than civility. Elizabeth's conclusion was that these private traders, 'men, by slander, infamie, and fraude, haue delt with vs there Soueraigne, as inobedient Subiectes; w[i]th this there Contrie, as unnaturall Persones'.<sup>154</sup> This undermining of the natural order did not only identify interlopers as rebels, as 'unnaturall persones', as if from another place, and not true, civil Englishmen, but also reflected badly on the Queen's government of the land 'For this matter

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<sup>151</sup> Richard Relph, 'Copie of a letter written on Rose Island in Russia, to Nicholas Spencer & George Henage at Casan before his coming home in August, 1584', BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 360. Significantly Anthony Marsh later rebelled against the Company and teamed up with other Muscovy Company agents and servants involved in private trade, such as Jerome Horsey, see BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.

<sup>152</sup> BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 360.

<sup>153</sup> BL MS Royal 13 B I, ff. 241-249.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

towcheth the Queanes Maiestye muche in hono[ur], that anye of her Subiectes dare attempt suche matter, in Contempt of her Maiesty, and lawes.'<sup>155</sup>

One of the demands that Giles Fletcher presented to the Russian Emperor during his ambassadorial mission to resolve the Muscovy Company's problems, the disarray of their affairs and their internal issues with order and maintaining civility, was 'That no Englishman hereafter shalbee sett on the pudkey, or otherwise tormented, for anie suspition of cryme whatsoever, but onlie safe kept till hir Maiestie bee informed and the truth of the cawse throwghlie knowne'.<sup>156</sup> This comment refers to the unfortunate case of John Horneby, a servant of the Company, who ended up being tortured by the Emperor and his officials, on the accusations of Jerome Horsey.<sup>157</sup> John Horneby appears to have been the innocent victim of the schemes of Horsey in the 1580s. Robert Peacock, chief agent of the company in Russia during 1584, had written letters to the governors of the Company in England detailing the state of trade in Russia and the misbehaviour of Horsey, among others.

According to the Company's reports, John Horneby was caught up in Horsey's attempts to stop the said letters leaving Russia. After all other means of sending the letters out of Russia had been prevented by Horsey, Robert Peacock finally decided to send the letters by way of a Polish merchant who was travelling overland. John Horneby was sent after the Pole in order to pass on the letters. Horsey, hearing of Horneby's departure, 'theruppon ymmediatelic went to the [Russian] Counsaill and enformed them that Rob[er]t peacocke the Agent had sent a messenger to the borders of the enemies with l[ett]res conteyninge matter of

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<sup>155</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 41.

<sup>156</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>157</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

treason against the state.’<sup>158</sup> At which, Horneby was arrested and brought back with the letters, that, when examined, contained only matters of trade. Lord Boris Fedorowich, however, convinced that Horneby had been given a message of treason to relay by word of mouth, ordered that ‘to drawe the trueth from him he was put to the putkey’,<sup>159</sup> an instrument of torture, which involved him being ‘tossed up by the armes uppon a jubite, his armes unjoynted, had xxiiii lashes with a wyer whippe, and was afterwarde put to the fyer to have bene rosted’.<sup>160</sup> Boris graciously called off his torturers as Horneby burned on the fire, finally convinced by his desperate pleas of his innocence.<sup>161</sup>

Several of the official accounts given by the Muscovy Company deal with the affair in a matter-of-fact way.<sup>162</sup> Christopher Borough’s relation of events, however, commented particularly on the harshness of Horneby’s treatment. Borough, who had been called by the Company to give testimony about the disorders of its employees in Russia, had heard of the affair straight from the horse’s mouth, ‘that John horneby accounted him [Horsey] the only cawser of it I am able to iustifie upon talke I had with him presently after his com[m]inge home’. Perhaps Borough’s personal proximity to Horneby accounted for his judgment on Horsey’s actions: ‘a most fowle facte, this soe owtrageous a deed might rather have beseemed Infidels then Christians: If so be Jerom Horsey be not fowned the sole worker herof, yet so cleare him selfe he can not, but he wilbe

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<sup>158</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> This quotation comes from the printed version of the text, entitled ‘Articles exhibited by the Companie of Merchautes Tradinge to Russia Against Hierom Horssey’ and found in Bond, *Russia*, Appendix III, p. 329. Bond references this as BL MS Lansdowne, 62, f. 22. However this citation does not appear to be correct, rather it is BL MS Lansdowne, 62, no. 10, ff. 23-24. The text can also be found in the National Archives entitled ‘Articles exhibited by Muscovy merchants against Hierom Horsey’, NA SP 91/1, ff. 95r-96v.

<sup>161</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 112, no. 40.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, and NA SP 91/1, ff. 95r-96v.



fownde a chiefe instrument in it'.<sup>163</sup> For Borough, it was not the Russians' torture that had represented the barbarism of the infidel, rather it was the actions of Horsey. There was no doubt that Horsey came from a Christian land, was of Christian upbringing and yet his actions resembled more the unnatural behaviour of the barbaric infidel (and Orthodox Russian) rather than the honour of the civil Christian.

The whole affair concerning Horsey had caused Borough to wonder whether Christians still retained any conception of civility in honour and truth, 'yet an auncient saieinge it is that flattery purchaseth frindes, truth hatred; w[hi]ch in effect peradventure is not yet discontinued, but though amonge the heathen in time past it might tollerablie beare swaie, pittie were it nowe, it shoulde still doe soe emonge Christians.'<sup>164</sup> Borough implicitly concluded that although the heathens had, in the past, been given to the practice of favouring flattery over truth, Christians had not progressed beyond this form of barbarism, where a supposedly 'civil' English gentleman got away with barbaric behaviour because civil, Christian society preferred to flatter than to bear true witness to bad behaviour. This was a damning indictment of English Christian civility, provoked by the behaviour of one rebellious traitor and servant of the Company, who had stained English civil identity and epitomised the latent fear in authority structures over the ungoverned Englishman abroad in unfamiliar territory.

The Elizabethan ideals of order and honour very rarely reflected the reality. The many examples of disorder in the Muscovy Company suggest that English encounters with the unfamiliar land of Russia were more likely to result in attributing the idea of barbarity, the antithesis of civility, onto their own people

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<sup>163</sup> Letter from Christopher Borough to the governors of the Russia Company regarding Russian trade, November 1587, BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.

<sup>164</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.

rather than the unfamiliar subject. The case of John Horneby's inhumane treatment at the hands of Russians surely would have presented a perfect opportunity to invoke the discourse of barbarism against the Russians by those who recorded his plight, however it was rather Jerome Horsey who was attributed the barbaric identity.

Yet reputations and representations of corrupt, uncivil behaviour seem to have been fairly fluid and ambiguous, as one of the chief agents of an independent and illegal trading group, who was brought to the attention of the Privy Council by a Muscovy Company petition, was later employed by the Company. It was claimed by the Muscovy Company in 1573 that 'Certeyn malicious and evell disposed p[ar]sonnes' were trading daily in Russia under the pretence of being part of the official company. The petition also claimed that these interlopers were 'practisinge by their false suggestyons and untrue informac[i]ons and slaunderous reportes to bring the saide company into the deepe displeasure of the saide Emperoure and of his Counsell in the said Countries of Russia and Muscovia/ And by these wicked practises utterlie to overthrowe the state of the saide Company'.<sup>165</sup> One of the chief perpetrators accused in this petition was the same John Chapel, employed by the official company in 1584, and described then as 'an honestman sente over to be assistant to thesaid Pecok Agent who loked to his charge there.'<sup>166</sup> The Company were not averse to employing former offenders, styled as traitors and rebels, redeemed for the good of the commonwealth. The overlapping and flexible lines of testimony, experience, activities and communications extended even to lawbreakers and illicit trade. The lines of trust, testimony and honesty appeared to be fluid, when order, honour and

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<sup>165</sup> Supplication from the Russia Company to the Council against infringers of their privileges, 17 Jan 1573 (two documents), BL MS Lansdowne 16, no. 20.

<sup>166</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 42, no. 23.

civility had been displayed and a willingness to come under the patriarchal structure and authority of the Company.

#### **vi.) Negotiating fluidity in the unfamiliar land of Russia**

The ambassadorial and mercantile literature reveals the nature of overlap and fluidity between spheres of interest, representation and identity in the realm of trading and diplomatic relations with Muscovy. Ambassadors, on arrival in Russia, became the visual representation of the Queen; insults to an ambassador's honour were insults to the monarch. Merchants and factors, if they displayed enough honour, order and civility, could quite easily cross over into the ambassadorial arena. Navigators and explorers were sent on predominantly mercantile-motivated expeditions, for instance the continued attempts by the Muscovy Company to discover the North East passage as well as to expand trading ventures into Persia. Thus the lines of communication, of power, influence and interest intersected, producing an overlap and flexibility of roles, writing and experience of Muscovy.

The Company also seemed to have no qualms about employing former offenders and interlopers, as a rich resource for their use, suggesting the lines of civility and honour were flexible, yet crucial to the experience and writing of mercantile and diplomatic activity in Russia. In an unfamiliar land, an environment in which it was difficult to uphold any sense of English civil identity, and where the continuance of profitable trade depended on flexible rules and representations of civil and barbaric identity, it was necessary for individuals, be it the Queen, Muscovy Company governors, the lowly servant or the rebellious interloper, to take on a fluid identity to represent themselves depending on the



situation in which they found themselves. This brief examination of the merchants' and ambassadors' activities and responses to their experiences in Russia points to the importance of the themes of honour, order and obedience in the maintaining of an English brand of civility on encountering the unfamiliar subject. Faced with an unfamiliar other, the commercial and ambassadorial writing focused on the disorder and unnaturalness of its own, it looked in on itself. These themes were similarly borne out in the experience and writings of the ambassador Giles Fletcher, the elder – the subject of the following chapter.

## **Chapter 2 - A Feigned Commonwealth: Giles Fletcher's embassy, experience and response to Russia**

...in the case of the commonwealth and in the matter of giving advice to princes. Even if you cannot pull out evil opinions by the roots, even if you cannot manage to reform well-entrenched vices according to your own beliefs, you must never on that account desert the cause of the commonwealth.

Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516)

This chapter details the embassy of Giles Fletcher, his biography, his experience of Russia, expressed in his diplomatic reports to Elizabeth and Burghley, and his responses to Russia, as revealed in a book-length treatise, later published as *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591). It also begins to untangle the complex publishing history of Fletcher's controversial work on Russia, the most comprehensive sixteenth century account of this unfamiliar land.

### **i.) The Embassy of Giles Fletcher, the elder**

Fletcher was sent as ambassador to Russia at a time when the Muscovy Company and trade were in decline and England at risk of losing her advantageous trading privileges.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, with the ever-increasing threat of Spanish domination in Western Europe and England's constant need to find new markets and compete with the continental powers of Spain and Portugal, the continuance of English privileged trade with Russia was crucial. What both the Elizabethan government and the Muscovy Company wanted was a renewal of

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<sup>1</sup> William Robert Scott, The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720, 3 vols. (1912, reprinted Gloucester, Mass., 1968), vol. 2, p. 48.

their privileged position in Russia and a diplomatic relationship, negotiated on their own terms.

From the outset of Tudor Anglo-Russian relations in 1553, the Muscovy Company faced the problems of securing civil treatment for their merchants and ambassadors from the 'barbaric' Russians and maintaining the civility of the English living in such a savage land, as well as continuing profitable mercantile and diplomatic relations between the two, despite the private trading of the Company's members and illegal interlopers. The more immediate context for Fletcher's mission was framed by the disastrous embassy of Sir Jerome Bowes in 1583-4, the death of the Russian Emperor Ivan IV and the fraudulent, traitorous behaviour of Jerome Horsey.

There was also much confusion surrounding the royal, diplomatic relationship between England and Russia. As we have seen, the previous Emperor Ivan had repeatedly attempted to negotiate a binding political alliance with Elizabeth, through marriage into the English royal family and through the agreement of an offensive and defensive league. At differing points during their diplomatic relationship, Elizabeth had appeared more or less enthusiastic for both, hedging her bets in order to gain commercial privileges, as opposed to Ivan's constant drive for political rather than commercial relations. The relationship perhaps chimed, although in a very different way and with very different consequences, with a similar strategy employed by Elizabeth in what appeared to be her recurrent prevarications surrounding the Anjou match.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the complex twists and turns of the Anjou Marriage negotiations and Elizabeth's pro-active role in policy-making, see Natalie Mears, 'Love-making and Diplomacy:



With the death of Ivan IV and the succession of his son Feodor I, the English Queen and counselors assumed that demands for a definite and defined league and amity between the two monarchs would be immediately forthcoming. In the summer of 1587, it was agreed that an embassy was needed not only to address the problems in the Muscovy Company situation, both their internal decay and their decreasing commercial and political position in Russia, but also to re-establish a privileged diplomatic position for England.<sup>3</sup> It was necessary to renegotiate favourable terms of league and amity, which would still leave England with the upper commercial hand and not tie her too directly to a political alliance.<sup>4</sup> The diplomatic mess made by Jerome Bowes' ambassadorial faux pas in the Russian court required attention<sup>5</sup> and a workable and amicable political relationship needed to be rekindled with Feodor I, following the death of the 'English' emperor, as Ivan was disparagingly labeled by his own Chancellor.<sup>6</sup> To resolve these growing problems of the Muscovy Company in Russia, the ambitious lawyer and diplomat was commissioned as the Queen's ambassador in

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Elizabeth I and the Anjou Marriage Negotiations, c. 1578-1582', *History*, vol. 86, no. 284 (2001), pp. 442-466.

<sup>3</sup> Maria V. Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations, 1580-1696', unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford University, May 1992), p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54. Unkovskaya asserts in her introduction that 'Although Anglo-Russian relations had started in 1555, until the 1580s England could disregard all Ivan IV's political overtures because Muscovy had no political leverage', p. iv. We have seen in Chapter 1, however, that Elizabeth's Privy Council put together a document agreeing on principles of league and amity between the two lands, which was in the process of revision over the years 1575-1577. This suggests that the Privy Council at least took some interest in the political significance of a league with Russia and how the agreement of such a league might aid their economy by safeguarding the Muscovy Company's position in Russia.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome Horsey, 'Travels' in *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry and Robert Owen Crummey (Madison, 1968), p. 313.

June 1588.<sup>7</sup> Fletcher must have been seen as an unusually competent and trusted man, to be chosen for this particular mission in a period of failure and decline and with the threat of a Spanish Europe looming large.

Unkovskaya argues that Fletcher's embassy was predominantly concerned with gaining confirmation of Russia's neutrality in relation to Anglo-Spanish hostilities, rather than any concern to address the problems in the relationship between the Muscovy Company and the Russian Emperor.<sup>8</sup> My reading of Giles Fletcher's diplomatic reports suggests, however, that his mission was much more focused on Muscovy Company affairs and relations with the Emperor, rather than with international political concerns of keeping Russia on side, although Fletcher did recognize the Spanish and Papal threat in the Russian Court during his embassy. In the specific context of Fletcher's diplomatic negotiations, the Pope, it seemed, was attempting, and initially succeeding, in persuading Feodor to join a Catholic league, uniting Spain, Rome and Russia against the Turk. But 'this consultation concerning a league betwixt the Russe & the Spaniard (which was in some forwardness at my coming to Mosko, and already one appointed for Ambassage into Spaine) was marred by means of the ouerthrow giuen to the Spanish king by her Maiestie, the Queene of England, this last yeare'.<sup>9</sup> The English victory over the Armada displayed England's superior power, shaming

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<sup>7</sup> NA, PRO 22/60/9. Also printed in I. V. Tolstoy, The First Forty Years of Intercourse between England and Russia, 1553-1593; Pervyia sorok let sochenii mezhdru Rossieiu I Anglieiu 1553-1593 (St Petersburg, 1875), pp. 288-289. See also Elizabeth's letter to Boris Godunov, June 6 1588, commending Giles Fletcher as her ambassador, in Tolstoy, First Forty Years, pp. 294-295.

<sup>8</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations', pp. iv-v and 132-140.

<sup>9</sup> Giles Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth (London, 1591), p. 80r.



the Spanish and leading to more successful negotiations for Fletcher's embassy, once the Spanish were seen to be defeated.

**a. Giles Fletcher, the elder: poet, parliament-man and diplomat**

Fletcher's upbringing, humanist education and experience had prepared him well for this important and difficult mission. Giles Fletcher, the elder was born in Cranbrook, Hertfordshire in 1546, the second son of the clergyman Richard Fletcher. He studied at Eton where he showed a facility in poetry at a young age. In October 1563, when Queen Elizabeth visited the school, she was presented with a collection of Latin verses, eleven epigrams of which were written by Fletcher – twice as many as any other of the student versifiers.<sup>10</sup> Fletcher entered King's College, Cambridge in 1565. He worked his way up through various appointments at Kings, including lecturer in Greek from 1572 until 1579, deputy public orator in 1577, senior fellow in 1578 and bursar of the college, 1579-80. He demonstrated his talent and intellect as an accomplished renaissance scholar with his appointment as Dean of Arts in 1580-81.<sup>11</sup>

Fletcher's poetic talent flourished at University. Whilst at Cambridge, Fletcher wrote several pastoral poems concerned with further reformation of the Church, displaying his zealous Protestantism, and perhaps making him more appealing to patrons of that ilk, such as Sir Francis Walsingham and Thomas Randolph. During his time at King's, Fletcher produced a poem on the death of Bishop Edmund Bonner, three epitaphs for Bridget Butts, an eclogue in celebration of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford's marriage to Ann Cecil and five

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<sup>10</sup> Lloyd E. Berry, ed. The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder (Madison, 1964), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Berry, English Works, pp. 4, 6-7, 9, 13-15.



poems in memory of Walter Haddon, who died in 1571, for a revised collection of Haddon's poems, *Poematum Libri Duo*.<sup>12</sup> Fletcher also composed a poem on the coat of arms of Maximilian Brooke, eldest son of Lord Cobham and wrote a commendatory poem for Peter Baro's *In Jonam Prophetam Praelectiones*.<sup>13</sup>

In 1576, Fletcher contributed a commendatory poem to Foxe's third edition of *Actes and Monuments*.<sup>14</sup> This was an important text to be associated with, for in April 1571 it was decreed by the convocation of the province of Canterbury that Foxe's work should be placed in all churches and in the halls and houses of the archbishops and deacons of the land. Although this was not sanctioned by the Queen, who feared innovation and independent power in the church against her own, nor enacted by Parliament, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* was adopted almost as a canonical text of the church and retained as regulation and inspiration for clergymen and congregation alike in every church until the ascendancy of Laud.<sup>15</sup> As such, Fletcher's poetry was part of canon literature of the reformed church, though perhaps he was looking for further reformation. His

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<sup>12</sup> Berry, *English Works*, pp. 8-9, 13. Edward de Vere was himself a courtier poet and much in favour with the Queen during the 1570s. The Queen attended his marriage to Ann Cecil. Appealing to the Earl of Oxford through poetry would no doubt have been a political, patronage-orientated move on Fletcher's part, see Alan H. Nelson, 'Vere, Edward de, seventeenth earl of Oxford (1550–1604)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28208> (accessed 5 March 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5, 13. Berry wrongly states that Fletcher's commendatory poem appears in the second edition of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Rather, it is the third edition of the *Actes and Monuments* that Fletcher's commendatory poem is found, see *John Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Variorum Edition Online, version 1.1 (Summer 2006), [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/pref\\_1576\\_0022.jsp](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/pref_1576_0022.jsp) (accessed 11/10/07).

<sup>15</sup> The others who contributed commendatory poems to the *Actes and Monuments* were such notables as Sir Thomas Ridley, Abraham Hartwell, Thomas Drant and Philip Stubbes. Some of these were at Cambridge at the same time as Fletcher, which suggests an association with these men and that Fletcher may have been a member of certain networks – networks that were defined by the aspirations of poetry and further reformation of the church. See *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: with a life of the martyrologist, and vindication of the work*, ed. George Townsend, vols. I-VIII (London, 1843), vol. I, pp. 113-14.

Latin pastoral eclogues were some of the first of their kind in England, although not published until 1678 in *Poemata varii argumenti*.<sup>16</sup>

Fletcher's life, career and writings consistently demonstrated his commitment to English Protestantism. In his early pastoral poetry, Fletcher presented the need to protect and encourage the fledgling Church of England. Fletcher's father, Richard Fletcher, vicar of the parish in Cranbrook, Hertfordshire, allowed three consecutive puritan ministers to preach and advance a seedbed of puritan feeling within his parish in the 1570s and 1580s, although Patrick Collinson suggests that this was more a result of lay pressure than a particular affinity that Richard Fletcher himself had with puritanism.<sup>17</sup> This may have had some influence in forming Fletcher's forward Protestant ideas. And no doubt his studies and time at King's College, Cambridge between 1565 and 1581 - the books he read, the people he met - would all have had some influence on the development of his ideas over time.<sup>18</sup>

He left Cambridge in November 1581 and married Joan Sheafe in January 1582. Fletcher was elected to Parliament in 1584, perhaps with the assistance of Lord Cobham, representing Winchelsea, one of the Cinque Ports.<sup>19</sup> During Fletcher's first Parliament as representative of Winchelsea, he served on a committee to consider abuses in the Church of England and how to reform them.

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<sup>16</sup> Lucy Munro, 'Fletcher, Giles, the elder (*bap.* 1546, *d.* 1611)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn. 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9726> (accessed 5 May, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: popular and un-popular religion in the Kentish Weald' in Reformation principle and practice: essays in honour of Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, ed. P. N. Brooks (London, 1980), pp. 171-202.

<sup>18</sup> For an insightful discussion tracing the ways in which an author's reading influenced his writing and the creation of new texts, see Kevin Sharpe, Reading revolutions: the politics of reading in early modern England (New Haven, CT, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Berry, English Works, pp. 15, 17.



Significantly when the bill of reforms drawn up by the committee finally reached Elizabeth, she dismissed it with the remonstrance that the House of Commons was not to interfere or intervene in matters of the Church, whether it be for reformation or discipline, and that 'she would not receive any motion of innovation' or alter the law or establishment of the Church of England in any way.<sup>20</sup>

Given his scholastic achievements, his study of the classics at Cambridge, and the tenor of his subsequent writings, there is no doubt that Fletcher held a particularly humanist and Protestant view of the world. This kind of worldview would have entailed a strong belief in the role and virtue of the active citizen in the Commonwealth, shaped in the majority by Cicero's *De inventione* and *De officiis*.<sup>21</sup> The possession and practice of the cardinal virtues – *prudentia*, *iustitia*, *magno animo et fortiter* and *temperantia* – showed a man to be *honestus*.<sup>22</sup> The responsibility of any civic humanist was to strive for a life of *honestas*, the *vita activa*, which involved counselling princes and performing the duties of governance and service that they prescribed, 'never....desert[ing] the cause of the commonwealth'.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, Fletcher was able to perform this humanist *vita activa* well as an MP. The Fletchers moved to London in 1585, where Giles obtained the patronage of Sir Francis Walsingham and Thomas Randolph, who had been ambassador to Russia in 1568-9. Fletcher's patronage from staunchly Protestant figures such as Randolph and Walsingham, and later the inheritor of

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<sup>20</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p.18.

<sup>21</sup> See the discussion of renaissance civic humanism, heavily influenced, if not prescribed, by the work of Cicero, in Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics; volume 2: Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 61-62 and 217-224, particularly p. 218.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516) in *The Complete Works of Sir Thomas More*, vol. 4, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (New Haven, Conn., 1965), p. 98, quoted in Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, p. 222.



Leicester's and Sidney's pan-European Protestant zeal, the Earl of Essex, revealed his alignment with the ideology of virtuous, humanist protection of God's true church.<sup>24</sup> Fletcher's patrons may well have also had some significant influence on his beliefs, thoughts, perceptions of the world and his use of certain languages.

In 1586 Fletcher was appointed Remembrancer of the City of London, a post, which he continued in until 1605.<sup>25</sup> Later in this year, Fletcher accompanied Randolph on a mission to Scotland in 1586, most likely being trained up as an ambassador in the process.<sup>26</sup> Fletcher's selection for his subsequent ambassadorial missions of 1587 and 1588 presumably sprang from this patronage and experience.<sup>27</sup> His first ambassadorial mission in his own right was undertaken in May 1587 to Hamburg in order to negotiate the restoration of the Merchant Adventurers' trade rights.<sup>28</sup> Although this mission was fairly controversial, Fletcher managed to gain more favourable privileges with Stade, than with Hamburg, revealing his qualities as a skilful negotiator, an adept representative of the Queen's and Commonwealth's interests and as a man able to make the most of a conflicting situation, transferring England's offer of trade from Hamburg to

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<sup>24</sup> See Paul E. J. Hammer, The Polarisation of Elizabethan: Politics The political career of Robert Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex, 1585-1597 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 51-54.

<sup>25</sup> Corporation of London, Journal 22, f. 77<sup>v</sup>, Remembrancia I, 573, Repertory 21, ff. 384<sup>v</sup>-85 and Repertory 27, f. 40<sup>v</sup>, quoted in Berry, English Works, pp. 19, 20 and 47.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of Elizabethan ambassadorial apprenticeships and training, see Gary M. Bell, 'Elizabethan Diplomacy: The subtle revolution' in Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern England; Essays in Honor of De Lamar Jensen, eds. Malcolm R. Thorp and Arthur J. Slavin (Missouri, 1994), pp. 267-288.

<sup>27</sup> Berry, English Works, pp. 17-18, 346-349.

<sup>28</sup> G. D. Ramsay, 'The Settlement of the Merchants Adventurers at Stade, 1587-1611' in Politics and Society in Reformation Europe; Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his sixty-fifth birthday, eds. E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott (Basingstoke and London, 1987), pp. 452-472.

Stade.<sup>29</sup> This success no doubt placed him in high estimation at Court and Council as an ambassador.

**b. Giles Fletcher's Embassy**

Fletcher's ambassadorial commission was to journey to Russia and present himself at the Russian court as both the Queen's ambassador and on behalf of the Muscovy Company.<sup>30</sup> In representing both the Queen and the Company Fletcher was performing a dual role. This was not uncommon for English diplomats.<sup>31</sup> All of Elizabeth's ambassadors to Russia had to deal with both the political and mercantile; both Royal commissions and the affairs of the Company. In fact the two were inextricably linked, although this was a significant problem in the eyes of the Russian Emperor, who wished rather to deal solely in royal (political) issues as opposed to those of trade, the sphere of the mere 'mousicks'.<sup>32</sup> Fletcher landed in Russia in September of 1588, arrived in Moscow in November and obtained his first audience with the Emperor on the 19 December. His embassy, however, was then interrupted for six months by the arrival of Lukash Paulus, an envoy from the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II. Paulus was sent in advance of Rudolf's ambassador, Nikolaus von Warkotsch, to prepare the political ground for his arrival. Warkotsch was coming from Prague to discuss an alliance with the

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<sup>29</sup> Ramsay, 'Settlement of the Merchant Adventurers', pp. 460-462. See also Berry, English Works, pp. 20-25.

<sup>30</sup> Berry, English Works, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> An example of the dual (and sometimes fluctuating) role of ambassadors to other lands can be seen in the commissions of William Harborne, merchant and later ambassador to Turkey on behalf of both the Queen and the newly established Turkey Company in the winter of 1582. Harborne had previously been sent to Sultan Murad III in 1578, as both a diplomatic agent of Sir Francis Walsingham and a mercantile agent of the merchants Edward Osborne, Richard Staper and himself, his experience gaining him the position of ambassador to Turkey in 1582, see Christine Woodhead, 'Harborne, William (c.1542-1617)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12234> (accessed 23 April 2008).

<sup>32</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no.37 (b), ff. 104v-105r.



Emperor Rudolf, as well as the King of Spain and Archduke of Austria, in order to aid Maximilian III, later to become Archduke of Austria himself, who had been defeated by the Swedish Sigismund III Vasa in Poland in the war for the Polish succession. Warkotsch was also to negotiate with Feodor about aiding Rudolf against the Sultan. Fletcher's negotiations were put on hold as Godunov and Schelkalov, Feodor's closest advisers, favoured the Imperial embassy, over the English.<sup>33</sup> As a result, Fletcher did not conclude all his business until the summer of 1589.<sup>34</sup>

Fletcher was to 'treat with the new Emperour Phedor Iuanowich about league and amitie....as also for the reestablishing and reducing into order the decayed trade of our English men there'.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, this meant settling problems concerning the Muscovy Company's non-payment of arrears and customs demanded by the Emperor Feodor, and to revive the sinking reputation and situation of the Muscovy Company's agents and business, which had dissipated with the expiration and non-renewal of trading privileges in 1584.<sup>36</sup> Peacock had found in 1584 that many of the Company members were heavily involved in a huge fraud.<sup>37</sup> Thus Fletcher's role was also to examine the state of the Muscovy Company affairs and conduct of its employees. Having spent many months petitioning Feodor for an audience, Fletcher eventually gained new privileges for the English merchants, the most favourable they had received since

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<sup>33</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations', pp. 136-137.

<sup>34</sup> Berry, English Works, pp. 26, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Hakluyt, Principall Nauigations (1589), p. 498.

<sup>36</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59. See also Berry, English Works, pp. 25-26 and Willan, Early History, pp. 172-179.

<sup>37</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations', p. 109.



1568, and the cancellation of several debts.<sup>38</sup> Fletcher began the return journey to England, along with Jerome Horsey in the summer of 1589.<sup>39</sup>

Richard Hakluyt, in his *Principall Navigations* (1589) detailed twelve points of privilege that Fletcher gained in his successful embassy, reconfirming the 'league and amitie, betweene hir Highnes, and the saide Emperour Pheodor Iuanowich, in like manner as was before with his father Iuan Vasilowich', re-establishing some of the former privileges that the Company had enjoyed from the beginning of their trade and confirming its 'sole trade through the Emperours countries, by the river Volga, into Media, Persia, Bogharia, and other the East Countries'.<sup>40</sup> Fletcher initiated several new agreements relating to the ordering of Company affairs in Russia, which stipulated that the trading privileges gained must not be revoked in response to 'euery surmise and light quarrell', nor should the Company's goods be forcibly taken away by the Emperor's officers.<sup>41</sup>

Fletcher's diplomatic negotiations also resulted in the agreement that criminal offences committed by Englishmen should not be punished by the Emperor's jurisdiction, nor should any Englishman be tortured in Russia; rather their misdemeanours should be dealt with by the Queen.<sup>42</sup> Overall, Fletcher's negotiations were relatively successful, considering that he was sent into Russia with very little to bargain with and at a difficult junction in the Anglo-Russian relationship. The negotiation of unfettered passage into Persia for Company merchants was a particular success, not matched in the previous reign of Ivan,

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<sup>38</sup> Unkovskaya, 'Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations', p. 139.

<sup>39</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p. 26-28.

<sup>40</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, pp. 502-503.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

especially when set in comparison to the disastrous outcome of Bowes' embassy and the general decay of the Company, in terms of both commerce and civility. Although Fletcher was successful in negotiating these things and regaining some semblance of privileges as well as not committing Elizabeth to any definite political alliance, he returned with many complaints about his experiences in Russia and with a long list of suggestions to remedy the still dire state of the English merchants in Russia.

### c. Fletcher's Ambassadorial Experience

Fletcher wrote two reports about his mission, one to Lord Burghley in September 1589 and one to the Queen, probably around the same time. These reports reflected his experiences and reception in Russia and also his suggestions for remedying the decayed situation of the Muscovy Company, as well as advice on how to handle the diplomatic relationship between England and Russia.<sup>43</sup> His

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<sup>43</sup> Giles Fletcher, 'The summe of my Negotiation', BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59 and 'Means of Decay & remedies for the Russe trade', BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r, respectively. In the British Library Lansdowne manuscripts the 'Means of Decay & remedies for the Russe trade' is dated 1587, see BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37, ff. 104v-105r. However, 1589 is a more likely date for its composition. This document was originally attributed to Christopher Borough and is thus dated as 1587, probably because in the manuscript collection it follows immediately Borough's letter against Horsey, written in 1587 and it is presumed the two were written by him, see BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37, ff. 102r-103v. However the handwriting does not appear to match Borough's previous letter and the document also bears resemblance to Fletcher's report to Burghley in content, style and structure, see Willan, *Early History*, pp. 205-206. In Morgan and Coote's *Early Voyages to Russia* this document is attributed to Christopher Burrough, but referenced as MS. Lansd. 52, no. 27, see E. D. Morgan and C. H. Coote, *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen*, (The Hakluyt Society, no.72, London, 1886, 2 vols.), vol. 1, pp. cviii-cxiii. However, Samuel H. Baron records it as MS. Lansd. 52, f.102 [?], dates it as 1589 and attributes it to Giles Fletcher, rather than Christopher Burrough, see Samuel H. Baron, 'A guide to published and unpublished documents on Anglo-Russian relations in the sixteenth century in the British archives', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol.11, (1977), pp.354-387, also printed in Samuel H. Baron, *Muscovite Russia; collected essays*, (London, 1980), chapter XI. Lloyd E. Berry also attributes it to Giles Fletcher and dates it as 1589, see Berry, *English Works*, pp. 376-381. I am referencing it as BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r and taking 1589 as the most likely date of its composition. I am referencing the previous document in the collection written by Christopher Borough as BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(a), ff. 102r-103v.



report to Lord Burghley, 'The summe of my negotiation' deals with Fletcher's reception and experience in Russia; his report to Elizabeth, 'Means of the decay & remedies for the Russe trade', focused more on the decrease of the Muscovy Company and discussed remedies for the ruinous state of the Russian trade. Fletcher also wrote a descriptive and comprehensive account of the land and peoples of Russia, later printed as *Of the Russe Common Wealth* (1591), which will be discussed in more detail below and in the following chapter.<sup>44</sup> Fletcher's diplomatic reports stand out as distinctive in the Muscovy Company literature, in their concern to suggest specific and quite radical remedies to the problems of the Muscovy trade and the threat to English civility in Russia. No other ambassador to Russia seems to have provided such hands-on advice.

The struggle for diplomatic and political superiority which provided the undertone to Fletcher's reports, as well as the cause for his mission, also dictated the actual experience of his negotiations in Russia. Fletcher's ambassadorial report to Burghley, written on his return to England in September recorded '1 My intertainment. 2 The causes of my hard intertainment. 3 What is doon and brought to effect. 4 What could not bee obtained on the behalf of the marchants.'<sup>45</sup> In detailing the way he was entertained as an ambassador, Fletcher revealed the

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<sup>44</sup> This was written, according to Berry, between August and November of 1589, see Berry, *English Works*, pp. 135-136. Berry suggests that it is highly likely that Fletcher used Horsey's notes and experience to write *Of the Russe Common wealth* since Fletcher had been charged to accompany Horsey back to England, see Berry, *English Works*, pp. 146-148. Indeed, Horsey, in his own account of Russia, praised Fletcher's account as 'scolastically [recording] the originall natur and disposicion of the Russ people, the laws, languages, government, discipline for their church and commonwealth, reveynes, comodities, climatt and sittuacion, wherof it most consists, and with whom they have most leag and comers – with all I did furnish him', see Jerome Horsey, 'The Travels of Sir Jerome Horsey' in *Russia at the close of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Edward A. Bond (London, 1856), p. 256.

<sup>45</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37 (b), ff. 104v-105r and BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.



nature and character of the Russe, and Russia itself as he perceived it and had experienced it. In both of his diplomatic documents, Fletcher implied various negative characteristics and the ultimate barbarity of the Russian - traits and themes that can also be traced to other travel narrative images of Russia.<sup>46</sup>

Fletcher painted a picture of a violent, vindictive Russia: 'the Russ practise any seizure or violence upon o[ur] Marchants goods (as was lykely beefore my coming thither)'.<sup>47</sup> Russia did not have a civil code of practice in terms of mercantile affairs, 'the Russe havinge no respect of hono[ur] and credit in respect of his profit' – as well as lacking 'honour' in comparison to the prescription of a well ordered, civil English mercantile enterprise and conduct in commercial affairs.<sup>48</sup> This issue of the Emperor's attitude towards mercantile affairs hints at a deeper disparity in English and Russian attitudes towards merchants. Within Russian society, the merchant was at times referred to as a 'mousick' – one of the common people, and treated as little better than a peasant, 'their Commons, whom they call *Mousicks*. In which number they reckon their Marchants, and their common artificers'.<sup>49</sup> Fletcher used the term 'mousick' interchangeably for merchant and common man, apparently reflecting the way in which the Russian Emperor had referred to merchants in reference to letters sent by the Queen. Fletcher informed the Queen, that regarding the letters, treatises and presents sent

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<sup>46</sup> For examples, see Richard Chancellor's account of Russia, written by Clement Adams and printed by Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 280-292, especially p. 284, Anthony Jenkinson, 'The Description of Russia with the customes and maners of the Inhabitants', Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 339-347 and George Turberville, 'Certaine letters in verse writ out of Moscouia by George Turberuil, Secretarie to M. Randolfe, touching the state of the country and manners of the people', Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), pp. 408-413.

<sup>47</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 29v.

by her Majesty, the Emperor 'reiecteth them & little regardeth the treatises boon in hir name: bycause (as hee sayeth) they coom but from the Mousicks'.<sup>50</sup>

Fletcher did attempt to reconcile the disparate English and Russian perceptions of mercantile affairs, endeavouring to bridge the gap between the Russian perception of merchants and the English status accorded to them. He related how he had attempted to explain to the Emperor 'that your Highnes had a speciall care what was doon at this time on the behalf of your Marchants, whom yow accounted not as Mousicks or base people (as they termed them) but as verie speciall and necessarie members of your common wealth'.<sup>51</sup> Fletcher further suggested in his 'Summe of my Negotiation' that one of the reasons for the decrease in the trade in Muscovy and for the Russian Emperor's poor treatment of the Queen's ambassadors and merchants was that 'As for your highness Letters written at this time on the Companies behalf, it was informed that the same wear gott by great importunities, that your highness sett your hand to manie things which yow did never read over, and for my self that I was sent but as a messenger not as an Ambassadour, that I never spake with your Highnes.'<sup>52</sup> However, for Elizabeth, the ambassadors and Muscovy Company merchants were quite literally visual representatives of English civility, and at times representatives of the Queen herself.

As ambassadors were the visual representation of the monarch, the reception of an ambassador was a key marker in the acknowledgment of civility and in the identification of a civil host. The Russian reception of Fletcher,

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<sup>50</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37 (b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>51</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

however, did not herald the civility and honour of the Russians, 'My whole intertainment from my first arrival till towards the very end was such as if they had devised meanes of very purpose to shew their vtter disliking both of the trade of the Marchants, and of the whole English nation.'<sup>53</sup> Fletcher's complaints to Burghley regarding his reception in Russia and at the Russian court revealed yet more barbaric traits of the Russians, at least in Fletcher's perception of them if not in reality.

Fletcher was not allowed to send any letters back to England, was given an allowance for food 'so bare and so base' and had to suffer the insult of the Queen's diplomatic gifts being rejected. The day after they had been delivered, the gifts were returned to Fletcher 'and very contemptouslie cast down before mee'. Fletcher decided 'to make soom advantage of my hard interteinment towards the end of my negotioation, by laying it all in on dish before them, and applieng it to your Highnes dishonour (as indeed it was)'.<sup>54</sup> This had the desired effect of causing some Russian remorse and gaining some English diplomatic leverage to negotiate with. However, Fletcher's attempt to establish the superiority of his monarch over the Russian Emperor would not have endeared him to Feodor or secured him any better treatment. All these complaints built up a very negative representation of the Emperor and the Russian character in general, sentiments which were further and more explicitly detailed in Fletcher's 'travel narrative' *Of the Russe Commonwealth*.

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<sup>53</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*



In his report to Burghley, Fletcher went on to describe how he was ‘placed in a howse verie vnhandsoom, and vnwholsoom, of purpose (as it seemed) to doe mee disgrace, and to hurt my health, whear I was kept prisoner, not as an Ambassadour’.<sup>55</sup> This theme of being held captive was one that ran throughout many western European accounts of Russia, revealing a shared stock of terms to represent this unfamiliar land, a language whose themes had been set by Baron Sigismund von Herberstein, ambassador to Russia from the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, in his *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii* published in 1549.<sup>56</sup> Thomas Randolph reported on his time in Russia that he was ‘so straightie kept within his houuse as thoughe he and all his had byn committed prisoners’<sup>57</sup> as did others who had visited Russia, for instance Sir Jerome Bowes, who was imprisoned ‘in mine owne house (as it were a close prisoner) so that for the space of eight or nine weekes, I was forced with all my companie to keepe within doores, not so much as to looke out at the windows, that were upon the streets side, with continuall watche, and gard set to observe all our doings’.<sup>58</sup>

Thomas Banister and Geoffrey Ducket also related similar treatment on their arrival in Russia, as part of the ambassadorial retinue of Randolph, ‘that they were kept shoot up in a house from the 16. October, until the 9. Of February, afore

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<sup>55</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>56</sup> Sigismund Von Herberstein, *Notes Upon Russia*, 2 vols, trans. and ed. R. H. Major (London, 1851-2). For discussion of being held captive in Russia, see Marshall T. Poe, “A People born to Slavery”: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748 (Ithaca and London, 2000), Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Randolph, Embassy Report, reprinted in Morgan and Coote, *Early Voyages*, vol. ii, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup> Sir Jerome Bowes, ‘The Discourse of the Ambassage of Sir Ierome Bowes to the forsayd Emperour’ in Hakluyt *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 499.

they could come to the Emperor presence'.<sup>59</sup> According to Banister and Duckett, however, it was rather due to the disapprobation and instigation of the resident Muscovy Company employees, 'who wrought by some nere about the Emperor so powerfully', that they were kept prisoner by Russian authorities.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the captivity that foreign ambassadors were kept in was a reflection of the lack of freedoms enjoyed by the Russian people, themselves slaves in their own land. As Fletcher noted in his book-length treaty on Russia, 'into what servile condition their libertie is brought, not onely to the Prince, but to the Nobles and Gentlemen of the Countrie.....it may farther appeare by their owne acknowledgments in their supplications.....wherein they name and subscribe themselves *Kolophey*, that is, their villaines or bondslaues'.<sup>61</sup>

Fletcher's diplomatic report addressed to the Queen, 'Means of decay & remedies for the Russe trade' was clearly written in response to the increasing problems faced by the Muscovy Company and details the author's thoughts on the state of Anglo-Russian trade in 1588-1589. It also suggests remedies to the stated problems and it concludes with remarks on the 'Means to terrifie the Russ & keep him in order'.<sup>62</sup> Fletcher suggested four main, and interconnected, reasons why the Muscovy trade was declining and running into problems: firstly the Anglo-Russian conflict over which port to trade to and from. Having lost the port at Narva to Sweden in 1581, Russia wanted to remove all English trade to the port at St Nicholas for the 'wayes by the Narve and Riga.....are many times stopped up

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<sup>59</sup> BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 333.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 46r.

<sup>62</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.



by reason of the warres w[i]th Polonian and Sweden'. The Russian Emperor was also beginning to consider trade offers from the Netherlands and France, who promised 'great numbers and a flourishing trade at that port to the enhausing of their commodities and the Emperours coustooms'.<sup>63</sup> The Muscovy Company trade, on the other hand, was small in volume and the privileges of monopoly they had been granted by the Emperor ostensibly prevented trade with any companies or lands other than the Muscovy Company.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, by keeping their trade at Moscow, the Company was incurring great expenses due to transporting goods from the ports inland, as well as the housekeeping costs of having Company residences at five different places in the land – Moscow, Yaruslave, Vologda, Colmigroe and St Nicholas. Keeping the Company's stock at Moscow was risking its loss to the tyranny of the Russian Emperor, as the 'stock is still in da[u]nger to bee pulled & seized on upon every pretence & picked matter by the Empero[ur] & his Officers'.<sup>65</sup>

Thirdly, Fletcher turned to focus on the servants and employees of the Company, explaining that 'Their servants: which (though honest beefore) ar made ill by these means.1. The profanes of the Countrey and liberty they have to all kynd of syn: wherby it com[m]eth to pass that many of them (being unmarried men) fall to ryott, whoredome....[and] lack of good discipline among themselves'. The fundamental problem that Fletcher highlighted in their servants' bad behaviour was financial: their conduct 'draweth one expenses [:] so having not of their own they spend of the Companies'. Added to this, the servants lack of good

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<sup>63</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>64</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59.

<sup>65</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.



teaching and knowledge in the ways of God and the very small wages and allowance that they received 'maketh them practise other means to mend their estates. first by imbezeling and drawing from the Company and then following a privat trade for themselves'.<sup>66</sup>

The fourth reason that Fletcher highlighted focused on 'priuat trade by certain of the Company that haue their factours thear upon common charge'.<sup>67</sup> Not only were these factors or agents, working on behalf of Company members, engaging in illegal private trade, they were also participating in inland trade 'as if they wear Russe Marchants to the great dislike of the Russ'. To add insult to injury, they were also shipping their commondities in and out of Russia in Flemmish boats, England's commercial arch-rival, 'which hindereth mucche the common trade and profit of the Company'.<sup>68</sup> Members, then, were actually working subversively against the commonwealth-structure of the Company in order to benefit from their own illicit private trade.

The author suggested several remedies for these problems. Most significantly, concerning the problem of private trade, Fletcher suggested discarding the joint-stock, commonwealth-like structure of the company and allowing servants to trade under one master, 'Every man to trade for himself under a governours deputy, that is to attend & follow their business on thother side.'<sup>69</sup> He went on to argue that 'the speciall means that undoeth o[ur] Marchants trade' were 'the seasures doon upon every pretence & cavillation & takings up upon

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<sup>66</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

trust by the Emperour and his Nobles', but that this could be avoided 'the rather when every man dealeth severally for himself w[i]th his own stock, w[hi]ch will not bee so ready to command as when all was in the hand & ordering of one agent'.<sup>70</sup> The author's advice was not taken up readily and problems of order, governance, keeping private trading in check, and retaining some semblance of English, civil identity in Russia was a constant cause of anxiety for governors, ambassadors and the Queen alike, as we have seen in Chapter One.

In Fletcher's observations on the decay of the Russe trade, the interconnected nature of his concerns – economic, social, political and cultural – all rolled into one. The reasons for the decline of the trade focus around the barbaric nature of Russia and how to organise a Company in such a way as to best account for the unfamiliarity of a new land, as well as appeasing the Russian Emperor, and keeping the resident English from turning disorderly, rebellious and traitorous, or worse still going native. In Fletcher's succinct analysis of what he saw to be the contemporary problems with the Muscovy Company's trade in Russia, he asserted that the way the Company was ordered at this time, as a joint-stock company, was hindering its success, putting its privileged position at risk and causing disorder, lack of good discipline and a decline in the civility of the community of servants and factors employed by the Company and residing in Russia.

In stark contrast to other reports on the problems of the Muscovy Company, Fletcher's principal remedy, at times explicit, at times implicit, was to change the structure or 'order' of the company. He mentioned the problems that

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<sup>70</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104v-105r.

the joint-stock organisation of the company had caused, which were being compounded by the social, cultural and political conditions of Russia. Fletcher was at pains to explain that the wages of the servants being so small and private trade being prohibited, the servants resorted to embezzling from the Company, as well as following private trade for themselves, despite the prohibition. These activities the servants were said to have 'less conscience of, because they say they spend their time in so barbarous a Countrey whear they ar made unfit for all other trades, & service in other countries abroad'.<sup>71</sup> Fletcher went on to suggest that allowing the employees of the company to trade either for themselves as factors or for their master as servants would not only increase the trade that could be offered to the Russians, but would also allow the employees to either make or break their own trade, 'Whear every man followeth his business by himself or his factor. Hearby their servants ill dealing will be p[re]vented, and if the servant prove ill & vnthriftie, it hurteth but his M[aste]r.'<sup>72</sup>

A further remedy that Fletcher suggested was the employment of a clergyman to satisfy the spiritual needs of the Englishmen abroad, and to act as a patriarchal head for the Muscovy Company merchants, who lacked any familiar (or familial) societal structures in their liminal existence somewhere in between the cultures of both England and Russia. Fletcher's exhortation to employ a clergyman and encourage the right instruction of religion was obviously related to a pressing need in the context of English servants of the Company converting to Russian Orthodoxy. Indeed Fletcher recommended that it was necessary 'To have

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<sup>71</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37 (b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*



a preacher thear resident with them that they may learn to know God, and so their dueties towards their Maisters.....if they have never so fiew in that Countrey (whear they want all good means of instruction towards God) the Company ought in Christian duety to provide that means for them.<sup>73</sup>

Fletcher's remedies were double-edged. His diplomatic advice to Elizabeth focused around the 'Means to terrifie the Russ & keep him in order' and the 'Means to please the Russe Emperour for the Marchants beehalf'.<sup>74</sup> Fletcher's diplomatic reports are also exceptional in the extant Muscovy Company literature. In overtly blaming Russian culture and society for the bad behaviour of English subjects living and working there, Fletcher's writings diverged noticeably from the extant Muscovy Company material. Implicit in Fletcher's criticism of the Muscovy Company's situation in the 1580s was a judgement of infectious barbarity directed against the Russians and the tyrannical government of their land.

This is an argument that does not appear anywhere else in the extant Muscovy Company literature, and yet it was a key theme for Fletcher, which was further elaborated in his sweeping and celebrated literary account of Russia. The development of this theme is the subject of the following chapter, through a detailed and in-depth analysis of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591). Before analyzing the content of Fletcher's printed treatise, however, it is important to investigate the complex pre-publication history of *The Russe Commonwealth*. The following section takes up this discussion of the creation,

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<sup>73</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 52, no. 37 (b), ff. 104v-105r.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

growth and development of Fletcher's pre-publication text, through an examination of the extant manuscript versions of *The Russe Commonwealth*, revealing Fletcher's treatise as dynamically both 'counsel-to-Queen' and 'counsel-for-commonwealth', as well as developing into a text of reference and information for trade and travel.

## ii.) Fletcher's Response to Russia

Fletcher's treatise, which was not published in print until 1591, was a wide-ranging study of the land, government, social structure and policies of Russia and her colonies. It was the most comprehensive English account of Russia of the early modern period and has been celebrated as such, as its fascinating afterlife reveals. The content ranged from 'the cosmographie of the Countrie' to 'Their warlike prouisions'; from 'The ordering of their State' to their 'priuat behaiour', commenting on their religion, rituals, law and surrounding peoples. It was also a theorizing of their tyrannical government; a thinking through of what the government of a tyrant looked like and its consequences. In this latter sense, it was a 'feigned' or invented commonwealth that served both the purposes of revealing Russian tyranny and analyzing the concept of government in a more theoretical sense.

It appears that the main body of the text was constructed, or imagined at least, on Fletcher's journey back from Russia to England, as he states in his preface, 'hauing reduced the same into some order, by the way as I returned, I

haue presumed to offer it in this smal Booke to your most excellent Maiestie'.<sup>75</sup>

Thus on his return journey, Fletcher took up once again the role of the humanist poet, acting out the responsibility of such a poet to counsel and guide, through the example of 'feigning' or inventing a commonwealth that he had experienced first-hand. For 'Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation, for so *Aristotle* termeth it in this word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or figuring foorth'.<sup>76</sup>

Much like Sidney's imaginative approach to poetry and counsel, Fletcher, as a poet from a young age, was concerned to see the outworking in his own life of the Classical and humanist duty to counsel and participate in the good working of the commonwealth through the medium of poetry. According to Sidney, 'the Phylosophers of Greece, durst not a long time appeare to the worlde but vnder the masks of Poets. So *Thales*, *Empedocles*, and *Parmenides*, sange their naturall Phylosophie in verses: so did *Pythagoras* and *Phocilides* their morral counsells....or rather, they beeing Poets, dyd exercise their delightful vaine in those points of highest knowledge, which before them lay hid to the world'.<sup>77</sup>

Fletcher's treatise on Russia expressed the performance of these poetic, humanist principles.<sup>78</sup>

In a twenty first century context, Fletcher's comprehensive account of Russia would not automatically be identified as poetry; more likely it would be

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<sup>75</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, 'Epistle Dedicatorie', sig. A<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>76</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (1595), sig. C<sub>2v</sub>.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, sig. B<sub>2v</sub>.

<sup>78</sup> See Elizabeth Heale's discussion of the role of poetry in the travail of travelling and writing, Elizabeth Heale, 'Travailing abroad: the poet as adventurer' in *Travels and Translations in the Sixteenth Century; Selected Papers from the Second International Conference of the Tudor Symposium* (2000), ed. Mike Pincombe (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 3-18. For a discussion of the role of oratory and writing in counselling the civil commonwealth at home and abroad see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: an intellectual history of English colonisation, 1500-1625* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 102-111.



defined as travel literature or a 'travel account'. However, the briefest examination of Sidney's *Defense of Poetry* reminds us that sixteenth-century poetry was defined by its content and inventive didacticism, rather than its form or style, 'it is not riming and versing that maketh a Poet...But it is that fayning notable images of vertues, vices or what els, with that delightfull teaching which must be the right describing note to know a Poet by'.<sup>79</sup> Fletcher's works - his account of Russia, his early religious eclogues and his later sonnets<sup>80</sup> - seem to have been directed by the humanist view of the responsibility of the poet to use the skills of invention to feign a narrative, a commonwealth or a series of events and extract didactic advice and foresight from it.<sup>81</sup> It must be noted that Fletcher's account of Russia was not a 'feigning' of a Commonwealth in the same sense as More had created the commonwealth of Utopia, or Spenser had woven so wonderfully the allegory of 'Faerye land', for Russia was indeed a very real, if barbaric and strange, land and Fletcher himself had the experiences and scars to prove it.<sup>82</sup> Yet the very way in which Fletcher constructed his account of Russia functioned as a feigning. The picture that Fletcher created from first-hand experience of Russia in his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* was an act of invention, inspired by his primary role as a humanist poet.

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<sup>79</sup> Sidney, *Defence*, sig. C<sub>4</sub>r.

<sup>80</sup> Fletcher's later love poetry will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>81</sup> Fletcher's ambition to write a Latin history of the Queen's reign was perhaps also guided by a deep-seated belief in the role of poet to counsel the Queen and commonwealth, see Worden's discussion of the poet as counsellor, Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London, 1996), esp. pp. 3-22.

<sup>82</sup> See Spenser's dedicatory letter, prefacing *The Faerie Queene*, addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh, where he explains that 'In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land', Edmund Spenser, 'A letter of the Authors', *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr with the assistance of C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr (London, 1978), p. 16. Books I-III were first published in 1590 and Spenser's dedicatory letter to Raleigh is dated 23 January, 1589. It is possible that Fletcher may have read *The Faerie Queene*.

Fletcher's humanist act of invention can be seen in the development of his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* through three extant manuscript copies of the text. Lloyd E. Berry has done extensive and admirable work on these manuscript texts to argue the case for three clear stages of revision in Fletcher's construction of the *Russe Commonwealth* before it was published in 1591.<sup>83</sup> However, his findings require further examination and analysis, as do the texts themselves in terms of interpreting what was going on in these differing manuscripts and the political, cultural and personal considerations that came into play when Fletcher was revising his text.

According to Berry, the earliest manuscript is the Queen's College, Cambridge manuscript, thought to be a scribal copy of the original papers. This is followed by the University College, Oxford manuscript, which appears to be a scribal copy of a corrected version of the original and Berry suggests that the James Ford Bell Collection, University of Minnesota manuscript indicates a final stage of revision, though extensive additions and corrections were made before the publication of the 1591 edition.<sup>84</sup> Berry ascertains through a very detailed comparison of agreements and disagreements between texts and a collation of all three extant manuscripts and the final printed version, that the relation between the texts is one of subsequent revisions, indicating how the text developed through several stages of correction. Richard Pipes, on the other hand, maintains that the Queens College, Cambridge manuscript being the one closest (in time) to the original version produced by Fletcher, is thus the most important and he uses this

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<sup>83</sup> Berry, *English Works*, pp. 160-166.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.



in his collation and in comparison with the printed text of 1591.<sup>85</sup> Pipes, however, misses the vital point that the development of the text over the period 1589-1591 and seen through the three extant manuscripts reveals some significant factors relating to Fletcher's intentions for the audience of the text and his response to audience reception of his text.

The Cambridge manuscript is written in a neat secretary hand and, as Berry points out, there are three different scribes.<sup>86</sup> The preface is written in Fletcher's hand.<sup>87</sup> The main text is written by two hands, folios 1-12 in one and the rest of the text in another.<sup>88</sup> The Oxford manuscript is written in a neater secretary hand.<sup>89</sup> The differences between the Cambridge and the Oxford manuscript are few in number compared to those between other manuscripts and the printed edition. They appear to be either errors in spelling, misreading of words or extension of sentences with several more explanatory words to aid in the reading of the text. This does seem to suggest, on top of Berry's close reading, that the Cambridge manuscript was written before the Oxford manuscript and that the Oxford manuscript is a revised copy made not long after the Cambridge copy.

Berry and Pipes suggest that the Cambridge version was a scribal copy of the original notes Fletcher made.<sup>90</sup> Two elements of the Cambridge manuscript suggest that this is most likely the case, although neither Berry nor Pipes mention them specifically in this context. Firstly, the existence of the preface to Queen

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Pipes, 'Introduction' to *Of the Russe Commonwealth* by Giles Fletcher (1591), Facsimile edition with variants (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), p. 19, n. 29.

<sup>86</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p. 161.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. BL MS Lansdowne 52 no. 37b, ff.104-105 and Lansdowne 60, no. 59 for examples of Giles Fletcher's hand.

<sup>88</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p. 161.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136 and Pipes 'Introduction', p. 19.



Elizabeth in the Cambridge manuscript – and this is significant not just for establishing the Cambridge manuscript as the closest copy to the original, but in comparing the purposes and expected audience of all three manuscripts. Secondly the Cambridge manuscript curiously alludes to a journal that is apparently included at the end of the text. In discussing the length of the country, the Cambridge manuscript reads ‘it reacheth in length aboute 4260. Verse or Myles, as may appeare by the Journall sett downe in the end of this booke’.<sup>91</sup> Although the journal no longer appears to be extant, the reference to its existence suggests that it was part of Fletcher’s original notes. These two factors suggest that Fletcher was presenting all of his information on Russia to the Queen in a scribal copy of his original notes.

The manuscript in the James Ford Bell Collection, University of Minnesota is significantly different to the other manuscripts and to all intents and purposes, looks as if it is a forerunner draft copy for the printed edition. It is written in a very neat italic hand and includes the marginal notes that are found in the printed edition. Although the printed 1591 edition includes much more information, the similarity between the printed text and the way in which the James Ford Bell manuscript is structured and visually presented suggests that Fletcher was preparing the text for publication. Thus it seems that the Cambridge manuscript was a scribal copy of Fletcher’s original notes and was intended for Elizabeth and the Court. The Oxford manuscript was a corrected version of this,

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<sup>91</sup> Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 1, ll. 47-49. See also University College, Oxford MS 144, p. 2 for this quotation. This reference to a journal at the end of the book is not found in either the James Ford Bell manuscript or the printed edition of 1591. This suggests that somewhere along the way either the journal was lost or Fletcher decided not to include it in his version for print.

not necessarily for Queen or Court, but perhaps for scribal publication.<sup>92</sup> And the James Ford Bell manuscript represented a change in tack on Fletcher's part as a copy that was being prepared for print, hence the marginal notes, the same as those found in the printed copy, the lack of a preface, and no reference to the missing journal.<sup>93</sup>

The 1591 printed edition stands out as the text with the most unique readings and information in it. This can be seen in the briefest examination of all four versions of the texts, as all the manuscript versions only have twenty-four chapters, whereas the 1591 printed edition has twenty-eight. In this respect, it represents the final text, revised for the purposes of printing and intended to be 'counsel for commonwealth'. The differences between the other manuscripts, in terms of the information they include or omit, suggests that they represent earlier stages in the revision process, but with different audiences in mind.

Berry maintains that the most interesting type of revision is the toning-down of passages that are critical of Russia and provides one example of Fletcher omitting from the printed edition a description of the Russian church as similar to the Roman Church and that as well as dead idols, in the form of saints, the Russians worshipped living idols in the form of their Patriarch, Metropolitans and Archbishops.<sup>94</sup> This is indeed an interesting omission and not the only one in terms of biting invective that is omitted from the text during the editing process. A

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<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of the importance and authority of scribal publication in this period, see Harold Love, *Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Giles Fletcher, 'Of the Russe Commonwealth', James Ford Bell collection, University of Minnesota MS.

<sup>94</sup> Berry, *English Works*, pp. 142-143. See also Queens College, Cambridge MS. 25, chapter 17, ll. 329-336; University College, Oxford MS. 144, pp. 73v-74; James Ford Bell collection, University of Minnesota MS, p. 51v; Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591), p. 84v.



revision that Berry does not record, however, again discusses the subject of the Russian church in relation to the Roman church. The Cambridge and Oxford manuscripts discuss the effects of the Russian Church subjecting themselves to the authority of the Pope, explaining that ‘the Emperours of Russia have learned the inconvenience that would grow to their state, by letting in that Beast’.<sup>95</sup> However, in the James Ford Bell manuscript this derogatory title for the Pope, ‘the Beast’, most likely referring to the Beast from Revelation, associated with the Antichrist,<sup>96</sup> is omitted and the sentence changed significantly, reading ‘the Emperours of Russia know well inough by the example of other Christian Princes what inconuenience would growe hearby to their state’.<sup>97</sup> The 1591 printed edition is further revised to make it less overtly offensive, reading ‘the Emperours of Russia know well enough, by the example of other christian Princes, what inconuenience would grow to their state & countrie, by subiecting themselues to the Romish sea’.<sup>98</sup> This is a good example of the editing process involved in the development and changes in Fletcher’s text, where Fletcher’s more controversial and offensive phrases were omitted, perhaps in preparation for the text to be printed and in anticipation of the censors.

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<sup>95</sup> Queens College, Cambridge MS. 25, chapter 17, ll. 190-192 and University College, Oxford Ms. 144, chapter 17, pp. 70v-71r.

<sup>96</sup> Revelation, Chapter 13, The Holy Bible, New International Version, found on The Bible Gateway, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2013&version=31> (accessed 2 June 2008). For a discussion of the identification of Antichrist, see Peter Lake ‘The significance of the Elizabethan identification of the pope as Antichrist’, Journal of Ecclesiastical History, vol. 31, no. 2 (1980), pp. 161-78.

<sup>97</sup> James Ford Bell Collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 17, p. 49v.

<sup>98</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 82.



**a. The significance of Fletcher's Prefaces**

A brief examination of the preface which is found in the Queens College Cambridge manuscript suggests that Fletcher did indeed intend his manuscript originally to be read by the Queen and the court in scribal form. It seems that Fletcher's original intention was counsel for the monarch, 'a mirror for magistrates' as it were, as opposed to a work of travel information for general reference. The Cambridge manuscript is the only manuscript that has a preface to the Queen. The other manuscripts have no preface, suggesting no specific audience for that stage of revision. The 1591 edition, however, includes a preface to the Queen, which is similar in content to the preface of the Queen's College, Cambridge manuscript, but with notable differences. A comparison of the preface in this 'first' manuscript from Queen's College, Cambridge and the preface of the 1591 edition implies that there were different purposes and different intended audiences in the creation of the original manuscript, its following revisions and the final printed version of Fletcher's work in 1591.

The significant difference between the two prefaces is how Fletcher described his work. In the preface to the Cambridge manuscript, Fletcher explained to the Queen his intentions, that 'beeing employed in your Highnes service in the Countrey of *Russia*, I did what I could to learn the state of that common wealth, and their manner of Government'.<sup>99</sup> He did this so that 'having gott soom good and true intelligence, I have reduced the same into order, and presumed to offer it to your Highnes, if it please yow to be troubled with the sight

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<sup>99</sup> Queen's College, Cambridge MS 25, Epistle dedicatorie.

of it'.<sup>100</sup> What Fletcher offered to Queen Elizabeth in this manuscript was 'true intelligence'. The term 'intelligence' in the sixteenth century was used in connection with the work of spies and special agents in communicating information, 'Diuerse aduertisements thereof sent...by other good meanes and intelligences from hir ambassadors and seruants residing in other countries'.<sup>101</sup> The term was equally used to express a certain degree of knowledge of events and special or expert information, gained from others or personal experience, as Purchas employed the term in his *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, 'I suspend [belief] till some eye-intelligence of some of our parts have testified the truth'.<sup>102</sup> In this sense, the preface from the Cambridge manuscript expressed much more of a sense of Fletcher providing classified and expert intelligence for a specific and exclusive audience – the Queen and Court. It was the Queen who had sent him on this ambassadorial mission and no doubt she would have wanted 'true intelligence' of Russia in order to inform her foreign policy. Indeed it was part of an ambassador's role to bring back intelligence and knowledge of unfamiliar lands in order to furnish not just the trading companies but the Queen and court in terms of how they would deal diplomatically with these lands.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Queen's College, Cambridge MS 25, Epistle dedicatorie.

<sup>101</sup> Raphael Holinshed, The firste (laste) volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande (continued by John Hooker and Abraham Fleming, London, 1587), vol. III, p. 1372/1, quoted in Oxford English Dictionary, Online edn., [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50118615?query\\_type=word&queryword=intelligence&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=VGvn-Ct9IV4-9513&hilite=50118615](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50118615?query_type=word&queryword=intelligence&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=VGvn-Ct9IV4-9513&hilite=50118615) (accessed on 10/10/07).

<sup>102</sup> Samuel Purchas, Purchas his Pilgrimage (London, 1614), p. 830, quoted in Oxford English Dictionary, Online edn., [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50118615?query\\_type=word&queryword=intelligence&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=VGvn-Ct9IV4-9513&hilite=50118615](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50118615?query_type=word&queryword=intelligence&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=VGvn-Ct9IV4-9513&hilite=50118615) (accessed on 10/10/07).

<sup>103</sup> The Venetian relazioni provide good examples of the ambassadorial culture of relaying initial and important information back to their governing bodies in Venice, for instance see BL MS Royal



In contrast, the preface for the printed edition suggests more of a sense of open access information - and of course through the act of printing, the audience was automatically broadened beyond royalty and nobility - available to anyone who could afford to buy the work. In the preface to the printed edition in 1591, Fletcher explained that 'I observed the State, and manners of that Countrey. And hauing reduced the same into some order, by the way as I returned, I haue presumed to offer it in this small Booke to your most excellent Maiestie'.<sup>104</sup> This suggests a change in Fletcher's audience and intentions. The phrase 'true intelligence' is omitted from the 1591 edition and Fletcher added to the printed preface for the wider audience an explanation of his intention 'my meaning was to note thinges for mine owne experience, of more importaunce then delight, and rather true then strange', an allusion to the fantastic travellers tales that were prolific in this period, as well as an explicit claim to truth-telling.<sup>105</sup> Fletcher broadened his audience quite considerably by printing his hybrid work of counsel,

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14 A xiii, no. 5 and BL MS Royal 14 A xv, no. 1. See also Tessa Beverley, 'Venetian Ambassadors, 1454-1494: An Italian elite', unpublished Ph.D thesis (Warwick, 1999), especially Chapter 3.

<sup>104</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, sig. A<sub>3</sub>. Cf. Robert Dallington's instructions on travel and how to write about travel experiences, in which he advises: 'from day to day he shall set downe, the diuers Provinces he passeth, with their commodities, the townes, with their manner of buildings, the names, & benefit of the rivers, the distance of places, the condition of the soile, manners of the people, and what else his eye meeteth by the way remarqueable.', Robert Dallington, *A Method for Travell. Shewed by taking the view of France. As it stood in the yeare of our Lord 1598* (London, 1605), sig. Cv. This shows a distinct similarity with the topics of Fletcher's discourse and Dallington's visual explication of the structure and content of his 'view of France' in his 'Analysis of this Discourse' is very reminiscent of Fletcher's contents page and the structuring of his information on Russia.

<sup>105</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, sig. A<sub>3</sub>. For examples of fantastic travel accounts, see Edward Webbe, *The Rare and most wonderfull things which Edw. Webbe and Englishman borne, hath seene and passed in his troublesome trauailes, in the cities of Ierusalem, Damasko, Bethlehem and Galely: and in the landes of Iewrie, Egypt, Grecia, Russia and Prester Iohn* (London, 1590) and Job Hortop, *The trauailes of an Englishman. Containing his sundrie calamities indured by the space of twentie and odd yeres in his absence from his natiue Countrey; wherein is truly decyphered the sundrie shapes of wilde Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Foules, rootes, plante, &c.* (London, 1591).



political science, travel information and cosmographical reference. Fletcher's choice to print, then, represented a departure from the role of ambassador and revealed more of Fletcher's literary and humanist ambitions to write not only his adventures, but to counsel the monarch and commonwealth through the feigned Commonwealth of Russia.

#### **b. Fletcher's Historical Additions**

Rather than analysing the reasons for Fletcher's revisions and additional information, Berry simply highlights these differences, commenting on 'examples of factual correction' and additions 'of explanatory nature', and suggesting sources for their origin.<sup>106</sup> On this point, Berry argues that 'Most additions of this type...indicate that, after the original version had been written, Fletcher read certain accounts, especially of Turkey, and then, before the 1591 edition was published, expanded the sections which dealt with the neighbors of Russia'.<sup>107</sup> Pipes, in comparing only the Cambridge manuscript and the printed edition, also makes the point that all the historical information and references to historical sources found in the printed edition are missing from the Cambridge manuscript, suggesting that 'Fletcher did the bulk of his research on Russia after he had returned to England, during the interval which elapsed between the writing of the Cambridge manuscript and the publication of his book'.<sup>108</sup>

I would argue further that the historical research that went into Fletcher's text in later revisions was not included in his original text of purpose, for this version was intended primarily for Elizabeth and the Court. Rather, the history

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<sup>106</sup> Berry, *English Works*, pp. 137-144.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>108</sup> Pipes, 'Introduction', p. 20.

that Fletcher included in his later version of the *Russe Commonwealth* appears to have been added for the purposes of the printed edition. This suggests that Fletcher was well aware of the requirements and style of the current generic mode of travel information and cosmography, taking works like Richard Eden's translation of Peter Martyr's *Decades of the Newe World*, Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi* and Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* as his example. The term cosmography in its contemporary meaning, conjured up the idea of a description of the world, 'Cosmography is the description...of heaven and earth, and all that is contained therein'.<sup>109</sup> It was also 'As well of History as of Geography. Out of which two compounded and intermixt, ariseth that universal Comprehension of Natural and Civil story, which by a proper and distinct name may be termed Cosmography'.<sup>110</sup>

In line with the cultural and literary prescriptions of the time, Fletcher recognised the need for printed work on travel and strange lands to include the history of the land as told by other commentators, to engage with such commentaries on the land of Russia and in true renaissance humanist style to add to and correct, from his own experience, the great store of knowledge already compiled by the ancients and more recent adventurers into unknown lands. In the first chapter of the 1591 printed edition, Fletcher states

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas Blundeville, *M. Blundeville his exercises containing sixe treatises* (London, 1594), p. 134r.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Heylin, *Cosmographie* (London, 1652), quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online edn., [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50051121?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=cosmography&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50051121?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=cosmography&first=1&max_to_show=10) (accessed 01/10/07).

As for the coniecture which I find in some  
Cosmographers, that the *Russe* nation borrowed the  
name of the people called *Roxellani*, and were the  
very same nation with them, it is without all good  
probabilitie: both in respect of the etymologie of the  
word (which is very far set) and especially for the seat  
and dwelling of that people, which was betwixt the  
two riuers of *Tanais* and *Boristhenes*, (as *Strabo*  
reporteth) quite an other way from the countrey of  
*Russia*.<sup>111</sup>

Fletcher added such historical information into his text to make it more than simply 'counsel for the Queen'. Fletcher altered his text for the purposes of his audience, creating a new text that conveyed multiple generic modes: travel information, promotional literature, practical reference, cosmographical insight, counsel for commonwealth and political science. Fletcher was performing the role of both poet and historian, for the Commonwealth of Russia that he described was a reality, rather than a purely feigned or invented commonwealth. And yet the didactic, advisory nature of the themes Fletcher emphasised in his treatise on Russia – no government at all is better than corrupt government – resonated with the principles of the humanist poet, advising the government and people on how a

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<sup>111</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commowealth*, p. 1v. A printed marginal note also appears next to this section in the text providing Fletcher's reference point. The marginal note reads '*Strabo* in his 7. booke of Geogr.'



land should best be ordered for the happiness of all, through a feigned picture of the ideal or its inverse.<sup>112</sup>

Counsel for the monarch, presented through the vehicle of a feigned commonwealth, did not require such legitimating information as first-hand experience that challenged the acquired historical and geographical knowledge of the ancients. Travel and trade information, on the other hand, did.<sup>113</sup> Fletcher's use of historical sources in his printed text, then, implies both filling in the gaps and an attempt to make the text more consumable and attractive to a wider audience of promoters, investors and adventurers, as well as transforming it into counsel for the commonwealth.

**c. Elaborating on the Tartars: additional information**

A significant difference between the printed edition and the manuscript copies of Fletcher's text is his treatment of the subject of the Tartars. In the 1591 printed edition of his text the information about the Tartars is greatly expanded, presenting a more complex depiction of the Tartars and their role in Fletcher's

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<sup>112</sup> Spenser explained in his preface to *The Faerie Queene* how Plato had written of the reality of government, whereas as Xenophon had created an image of an ideal state of government, 'For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one in the exquisite depth of his iudgement, formed a Commune welth such as it should be, but the other in the person of Cyrus and the Persians fashioned a gouvernement such as might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule', Edmund Spenser, 'A letter of the Authors', *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr with the assistance of C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr (London, 1978), p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> For instructions to those who were travelling to distant lands and the requirements of providing information to their audiences, see Albertus Meierus, Certaine briefe, and speciall Instructions for Gentlemen, merchants, students, souldiers, marriners, &c. Employed in seruices abrode, or anie way occasioned to conuerse in the kingdomes, and gouernementes of forren Princes, trans. Philip Jones, (London, 1589) and Robert Dallington, A Method for Travell. Shewed by taking the view of France (London, 1605). For an example of the kind of information specific to travel and trade being printed at the time, see William Bourne, A Regiment for the Sea, conteining very necessary matters, for all sorts of Sea-men and Trauailers, as Masters of ships, Pilots, Mariners & Marchaunts (London, 1580). For an example of the detailed information found in accounts of other lands, see The Historie of the great and mightie kingdome of China, and the situation thereof: Together with the great riches, huge Citties, politike gouernement, and rare inuentions in the same. Translated out of Spanish by R. Parke. (London, 1588).

invention of the Russian Commonwealth. Fletcher elaborated on the domestic and religious life of the Tartars with additional anthropological information that illustrated further the savage life of the Tartars. In terms of the Tartar religion, Fletcher noted how it differed from the Turks (as opposed to the Russians) and was full of superstition and witchcraft 'for they have certeine idoles puppets made of silke or like stuffe....They are much giuen to witchcraft, & ominous coniectures, vpon euery accident which they heare, or see'.<sup>114</sup>

Regarding marriage, 'they haue no regard of alliance or consanguinitie. Onely with his mother, sister, and daughter a man may not marrie....and hee accounteth her not for his wife, till he haue a childe by her'.<sup>115</sup> The newly added description of the Tartars' physical features found in Fletcher's printed edition shed further light on the ambiguous but important place that the Tartars held in Fletcher's cosmography and their role in Fletcher's arguments as a whole.<sup>116</sup> Fletcher described the Tartars thus: 'For person and complexion they haue broad and flatte visages, of a tanned colour into yellowe and blacke'. They have 'fearse and cruell lookes' yet they are 'light and nimble bodied, with short legges, as if they were made naturally for horsemen'.<sup>117</sup> Their savagery was further displayed

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<sup>114</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 69v.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p. 70r.

<sup>116</sup> Fletcher wrote a treatise on the Tartars suggesting they were the ten lost tribes of Israel, c. 1610. This was printed for the first time in 1677. See Samuel Lee, *Israel Redux: or the Restauration of Israel*, exhibited in two short treatises. The First contains an Essay upon some probable grounds, that the present Tartars near the Caspian Sea, are the posterity of the ten tribes of Israel. By Giles Fletcher LL. D. The Second, a dissertation concerning their ancient and successive state, with some Scripture evidences of their future Conversion, and Establishment in their own Land (London, 1677). Berry also includes a version of *The Tartars or Ten Tribes*, preceded by a commentary on the text, see Berry, *English Works*, pp. 307-331. For a discussion of Fletcher's text on the Tartars, see Richard W. Cogley, ' "The Most Vile and Barbarous Nation of all the World": Giles Fletcher the Elder's 'The Tartars Or, Ten Tribes' (ca. 1610)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 58 (2005), pp. 781-814.

<sup>117</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 72r.



by 'their speech [which] is very suddaine and loude...when they sing you would thinke a kowe lowed, or some great bandogge howled'.<sup>118</sup>

Fletcher, however, also expanded on the warfare of the Tartars, celebrating their skill and development in this area. In his 1591 edition, he referred to and used Laonicus Chalcocondylas' (Chalcondyles) 'Turkish storie' which recounted how, with their strategy and subtle wit, the Tartars 'had welnigh surprised the great and huge armie of *Tamerlan*, but that hee retyred with all speede hee coulde...not without great losse of his men, and carriages'.<sup>119</sup> He also included a relation of the Tartar wars against the Hungarians and their skilful tactics in warfare, demonstrating a greater degree of acumen and understanding than was expected of the savage Tartars, 'Yet their subtiltie is more then may seeme to agree with their barbarous condition...they are very pregnant and ready witted to deuse stratageams vpon the suddaine for their better aduantage'.<sup>120</sup>

In this vein, Fletcher added a comparison of the Tartar, Turkish and Russian soldiers, in which the Tartar came out on top in terms of valour, 'They contemne death so much, as that they chuse rather to die then to yeeld to their enimie, and are seene when they are slaine to bite the very weapon, when they are past striking'.<sup>121</sup> The Russians and Turks, on the other hand, were very different from the Tartar 'in his desperate courage'.<sup>122</sup> The 'Russe soldier...putteth all his safetie in his speedie flight' and failing that, 'if once he be taken by his enimie, he

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<sup>118</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, pp. 72-72v.

<sup>119</sup> ibid., p. 71v.

<sup>120</sup> ibid., p. 67v.

<sup>121</sup> ibid., p. 68v. This sentence can also be found in Queen's College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 16, ll. 112-117; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 16, p. 62v; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota, chapter 16, p. 44v.

<sup>122</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 68v.



neyther defendeth himselfe, nor intreateth for his life, as reckoning straight to die'.<sup>123</sup> Shunning the Russians' resignation to death and not brave enough to condemn death like the Tartar, 'the Turke commonly when he is past hope of escaping...offereth both his handes, as it were to be tyed: hoping to saue his life, by offering himselfe bondsclaue'.<sup>124</sup>

Fletcher's original text encapsulates this fundamental picture of the Tartar as a positive comparative 'other' model, against which the barbaric Russian can be judged as even more depraved than the classical Scythian epitome of barbarity. However, the binary comparison between Russian and Tartar is complicated, but also enhanced in the printed edition by Fletcher providing further details of the differences and complexities in the Tartar people groups and their varying degrees of savagery. Fletcher added to the 1591 edition a description of the Chircasses, a Tartar people 'that border Southwest, towardes *Lituania*'. The crucial distinction of the Chircasses was that they were 'farre more ciuil then the rest of the *Tartars*, of a comely person, and of a stately behauour, as applying themselues to the fashion of the *Polonian*'.<sup>125</sup> The Tartars were divided, in Fletcher's account, into various subgroups based on a sliding scale of civility, the Chircasses being the most civil, almost European in their imitation of the civility of the Polish, whereas the Mordwit Tartar was 'the most rude & barbarous...that hath many self-fashions & strange kinds of behaviour, differing from the rest'.<sup>126</sup> The Russians, in Fletcher's depiction of them, got no such treatment or acknowledgment of their

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<sup>123</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 68v.

<sup>124</sup> ibid.

<sup>125</sup> ibid., p. 73v.

<sup>126</sup> ibid., pp. 73v-74r.

differences. They were all barbaric, idle, drunk and tyrants, no matter what their status, 'For as themselues are verie hardlie and cruellie dealte withall by their chiefe Magistrates, and other superiours, so are they as cruell one against an other, specially ouer their inferious, and such as are vnder them. So that the basest & wretchedest Christianoe (as they call him) that stoupeth and croucheth like a dogge to the Gentleman...is an intollerable tyrant, where he hath the aduantage'.<sup>127</sup>

This increased complexity and differentiation of Tartar people groups served to highlight Fletcher's argument that despite the wild savagery of the most barbaric Tartars, they were still more honest and true than the corrupt Russians, 'They are saide to be iust & true in their dealings', like the noble savages of the New World. This was in contrast to the barbaric Russians 'whom they account to be double, & false in all their dealing' – a result of being corrupted and decayed through tyrannical government.<sup>128</sup> The wild and ungoverned Tartars, depicted in their diversity, served the purpose of exemplifying a fundamental theme of Fletcher's work: corrupt and tyrannical government was worse than no government at all, as we will see in the following chapter.

#### **d. Continuity in Fletcher's texts**

A final point to emphasise as regards the creation and revision process of Fletcher's text is the continuity of the message and themes found in the various

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<sup>127</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 116r. See also Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 24, ll. 225-233; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 24, p. 109; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 24, pp. 69v-70.

<sup>128</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 73v. See also Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 16, ll. 260-264; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 16, p. 65v; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 16, p. 46v.



revisions. All the key points of counsel that appear in the earliest extant manuscript still exist in the final printed edition. In all three manuscript revisions and the printed edition, Fletcher warned of the disastrous effects of tyrannical government to an otherwise fertile and fruitful land and a capable, potentially civil and ostensibly Christian people.<sup>129</sup> He obliquely counseled the Queen (and commonwealth) about the importance of retaining the virtuous and ancient nobility – the very lifeblood of the commonwealth.<sup>130</sup> He cautioned about the destructive effects of tyrannical economic policies and the danger of encouraging monopolies, which did not protect the common wealth.<sup>131</sup> He teased out the consequences of decay to the land and people if God’s providence in the country went unexploited and if his blessing of power to the Emperor was abused, ‘by this meanes the whole Countrie is filled with rapine and murder’ and ‘this wicked pollicy & tyrannous practise...hath so troubled that countrey’.<sup>132</sup> He stated categorically in all versions of his text ‘how harde a matter it were to alter’ a land thus ruled and abused by tyrannical power and that ‘This desperate state of things at home, maketh the people...wishe for some forreine inuasion, which they suppose to bee the onely meanes, to rid them of the heauy yoke of this tyrannous

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<sup>129</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 115v-116v. cf. Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 24, ll. 205-260; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 24, pp. 108-109v; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 24, pp. 69v-70.

<sup>130</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 24v-29v, 33v-34r. cf. Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 6 and chapter 7, ll. 183-234; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 6, pp. 15v-20, chapter 7, pp. 25-26; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 6, pp. 12v-16v, chapter 7, pp. 19v-20v.

<sup>131</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 37r-45r. cf. Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 9; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 9, pp. 28r-38v; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 9, pp. 22-29.

<sup>132</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 26r. cf. Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 6, ll. 80-84; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 6, p. 18; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 6, p. 13v.



gouernment'.<sup>133</sup> Thus the arguments of Fletcher did not change during his revision of the text, except to develop the comparative role of the Tartars as more savage in lifestyle, but less corrupt and decayed in character, due to not being servile to a tyrannical government as the Russians were. This is significant in interpreting the designs of the author, the reception of the text and the text's afterlife.

### iii.) Fletcher's Treatise on Russia and Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1589)

Fletcher's text proves all the more interesting because of its complex publication history. A copy of Fletcher's manuscript, or at least some detailed information about Fletcher's text, clearly came into the hands of Richard Hakluyt very soon after Fletcher's return to England. This is evidenced by the inclusion in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1589) of a brief summary of Fletcher's embassy to Russia in 1588, the privileges that Fletcher had gained on behalf of the Muscovy Company and the Queen and a note that 'the said Ambassador Master Giles Fletcher as I understand, hath drawn a booke, intituled, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*'.<sup>134</sup> This was followed by a list, or contents page, of the chapters

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<sup>133</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 34v. cf. Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, chapter 7, ll. 231-235; University College, Oxford MS 144, chapter 7, p. 26; James Ford Bell collection, Minnesota MS, chapter 7, p. 20v.

<sup>134</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (London, 1589), p. 503 or 499. There are two versions of the 1589 edition of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, due to Jerome Bowes' original (and longer) controversial, first person account of his embassy to Russia being substituted, shortly after initial publication, with a third person anonymous and conservative account of his embassy. Bowes' original account can be found in earlier copies; in later copies can be found only the anonymous (and shorter) third person account of his embassy. This affects the pagination of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1589) from p. 491 onwards. Thus Hakluyt's information on Fletcher's embassy can be found in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 502-504 (in copies that include Bowes' original account) or pp. 498-500 (in later copies in which the original has been substituted with the anonymous account). For more discussion of the relationship between Bowes' account and Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, see Robert M. Croskey, 'Hakluyt's accounts of Sir

in Fletcher's text, bearing resemblance to that found in the Cambridge manuscript version of the work.<sup>135</sup>

A comparison of the list of chapter titles included by Hakluyt in the *Principall Navigations* and the table of contents found in the Cambridge manuscript, the earliest extant version of Fletcher's text, reveals a good degree of similarity between the two. Pipes surmises that Hakluyt must have had access to the original draft of Fletcher's work, for although the table of contents found in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* lists the same number of chapters as that found in the Cambridge manuscript, there are two notable differences. In the Cambridge manuscript, the two chapters found in Hakluyt's version of the contents page, regarding the liturgy of the Russian church and the sacraments of the Russian church respectively, have been consolidated into one chapter and another chapter added, entitled 'The Emperours domestique or priuat behaviour'.<sup>136</sup>

The actual text of the treatise itself was not printed in the 1589 edition of the *Principall Navigations*. Although Hakluyt would have had the time to include the work as the table of contents makes clear, his comments on Fletcher's text suggest that either the apprehension of the author or the editor, or indeed both, stopped the work from being printed in this volume. Hakluyt suggested that it was the author's desire that the work be postponed, 'The booke itself he [Fletcher] thought not good, for divers considerations to make publike at this time', but it is

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Jerome Bowes's embassy to Ivan IV', *Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, vol. 61, no. 4 (1983), pp. 546-564. See also the discussion on the relationship between Hakluyt and Fletcher in D. B. Quinn, C. E. Armstrong and R. A. Skelton, 'The primary Hakluyt bibliography' in *The Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. II, ed. D. B. Quinn (London, 1974), pp. 475-476.

<sup>135</sup> Queens College, Cambridge MS 25, Contents page.

<sup>136</sup> Pipes, 'Introduction', *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 19. See also Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (London, 1589), pp. 503-504 or 499-500.



important to consider whether it was Fletcher who wished to avoid immediate publication, or whether in fact Hakluyt, or other interested parties, may have had some influence in persuading against such action and why this might have been so.<sup>137</sup>

Pipes argues that the Muscovy Company must have put pressure on Fletcher and/ or Hakluyt not to publish the full text, as it was so offensive to the Russians, suggesting that Hakluyt went for the option of simply printing the list of privileges and table of contents instead.<sup>138</sup> This is possible, but Pipes' contention is based only on a consideration of what happened *after* the text was published in its own right in 1591, at which point the Muscovy Company voiced their disapprobation.<sup>139</sup> Pipes' argument is also based on the assumption that members of the Muscovy Company would have had access to Fletcher's text at this very early stage in its composition – a point that would be difficult to prove either way.

It is unclear whether Hakluyt himself thought the text offensive and would not allow it in the 1589 edition of the *Principall Navigations*, or whether it was Fletcher, as Hakluyt claimed, that held back on publishing his text through Hakluyt. Another possibility is that it may have been Walsingham's agent, one Doctor James, appointed to inspect the entirety of the *Principall Navigations* before it was published, who had raised issue with Fletcher's text.<sup>140</sup> There was clearly something sensitive in Fletcher's work which either the self-censorship of

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<sup>137</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (London, 1589), p. 504 or 500. See also Robert O. Lindsay, 'Richard Hakluyt and *Of the Russe Commonwealth*', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 57 (1963), pp. 312-27.

<sup>138</sup> Pipes, 'Introduction', pp. 18-19.

<sup>139</sup> The censorship of the 1591 publication of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

<sup>140</sup> For a very brief discussion of Dr James, see Croskey, 'Hakluyt's accounts', pp. 546-564.



Fletcher or Hakluyt or the censure of government would not allow in the public domain.

Fletcher's was not the only text on Russia that was rejected and/or edited by Hakluyt. Sir Jerome Bowes' account of Russia suffered a similar fate. Bowes wrote a rather arrogant, bombastic and belligerent account of his embassy that appears in only some copies of the 1589 edition of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*.<sup>141</sup> This account was withdrawn from the *Principall Navigations* shortly after its publication and a second anonymous, uncontroversial and third-person account was substituted.<sup>142</sup> Bowes did not present a favourable picture of either himself, the English in Russia or the Russians themselves. The substituted anonymous version, on the other hand, puts a more positive spin on the Anglo-Russian relationship in 1584 and suppresses any account of the unsuccessful elements of Bowes' embassy. It also suggests an appeal to a specific audience of prospective investors, who may have been put off by Bowes' original and negative account of the situation of the English in Moscow.<sup>143</sup>

Hakluyt had declared in his preface to the 1589 edition that 'Whatsoever testimonie I have found in any authour of authoritie appertaining to my argument....I have recorded the same word for word....To the ende that those men which were the paynefull and personall travellers might reape that good opinion and iust commendation which they have deserved, and further that every man

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<sup>141</sup> 'The Ambassage of Sir Hierome Bowes to the Emperour of Moscovie, 1583' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 491-500.

<sup>142</sup> 'A briefe discourse of the voyage of Sir Ierome Bowes knight, her Maiesties ambassador to the Emperour of Muscouia, in the yeere 1582: and printed this second time, according to the true copie I recieved of a gentleman that went in the same voyage, for the correction of the errors in the former impression' in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), pp. 491-496. See also Croskey, 'Hakluyt's Accounts', p. 547.

<sup>143</sup> Croskey, 'Hakluyt's Accounts', p. 564.

might answer for himselfe, iustifie his reports and stand accountable for his owne doings'.<sup>144</sup> This claim for editorial non-intervention and allowing the authors to speak for themselves crumbles in the context of both Fletcher's and Bowes' accounts. In both, the author was prohibited from justifying his reports and standing accountable for his own doings. Nor were these authors able to 'reape that good opinion and iust commendation which they have deserved'. For differing reasons, Bowes' and Fletcher's accounts were deemed unacceptable to Hakluyt's editorial eye, suggesting their take on Anglo-Russian relations and resonances was not deserving of 'iust commendation'. Fletcher's and Bowes' accounts of Russia reveal what was *not* acceptable 'travel narrative' for Hakluyt's English status building project.<sup>145</sup>

**iv.) Complexity and Consequence in the publication history of Fletcher's *Russe Commonwealth***

To summarise, Fletcher appears to have drawn up (from his notes, perhaps) a treatise on Russia on his way home to England. This treatise was to act not only as intelligence for Russia, but also as counsel against the perils of arbitrary government in a Christian commonwealth. It was presented to the Queen as a scribal copy (the Cambridge manuscript) of his original notes. This treatise also provided valuable information on the unfamiliar land of Russia to supplement Fletcher's diplomatic reports to Elizabeth and Burghley. The existence of the

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<sup>144</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (London, 1589), 'Preface to the Reader', sig. A<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>145</sup> Fletcher's text was later included in Hakluyt's 1598-1600 edition of *The Principal Navigations*, but the text had been severely edited by Hakluyt, with the 'offensive' sections taken out. More discussion will be given to the history of Fletcher's text in relation to Hakluyt's second edition of the *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600) in Chapter 5.



Oxford manuscript suggests that this treatise may well have been circulating as a manuscript publication as well, and perhaps this is how Hakluyt got hold of a copy; maybe directly from Fletcher himself, or through Burghley, as Hakluyt clearly had access to the information regarding the privileges that Fletcher had gained. It seems, then, that Fletcher always intended his *Of the Russe Commonwealth* to be a text of counsel, to be presented to the Court and Queen in manuscript form and perhaps to be circulated as a scribal publication. Hakluyt's comment on Fletcher's 'booke' not being fit for print publication in the *Principall Navigations* in late 1589 also suggests that Fletcher already had it in mind, even at this stage, to produce a text that was as much public counsel for commonwealth as for Queen and Court. The Minnesota manuscript points to a clearer intention to move from scribal circulation to print publication and widen access to his treatise. This may have been more important to Fletcher if the text had been ill-received at court, but if it had, his choice to print then became much more controversial.

It is highly unlikely that Fletcher's manuscript being circulated at Court would have been dismissed indifferently. Several councilors in favour of both a humanist form of counsel and ardent pan-European Protestantism, which the Queen viewed with anxiety, died during the late 1580s and early 1590s. This meant that when Fletcher's original manuscript may have been circulating at Court, the court itself was bereft of such sympathetic figures at Leicester, Sidney, Walsingham, Randolph and Sir Walter Mildmay. It seems likely, in any case, that the text could have had a less friendly reception at Court than it might have had a few years earlier. Fletcher could perhaps have been seen as over-stepping his



subject status in attempting to live out his humanist *vita activa* principles by counseling the monarch, as a private subject, as opposed to a chosen counsellor.

Fletcher's attempt, as a private subject, to counsel the Queen (and, with publication, the commonwealth) was risky. Natalie Mears has deftly demonstrated how John Stubb's very direct and public counsel as a 'private citizen' to Elizabeth regarding her marriage negotiations with the Duke of Anjou resulted in him having his hand struck off with a cleaver.<sup>146</sup> Such counsel, in the form of a printed pamphlet entitled *The discoverie of a gaping gulf*, from a subject unauthorized to give advice was anathema to a Queen who believed in her own *imperium* and felt bound only to listen to, and not necessarily to act on, the counsel that her selected counsellors proffered.<sup>147</sup> Stubbs's saw the situation very differently, to his own detriment, and thought of himself and his counsel as driven by 'necessitie' and not 'a busie body...but of a true Englishhman, a sworne liegmen to hir Majestie'.<sup>148</sup>

In November 1590, Fletcher petitioned Lord Burghley to allow and support him to write a Latin history of Elizabeth's reign. He had asked Burghley for access to public documents relating to the Queen's history and reign, but the success of the request remains unknown.<sup>149</sup> Certainly, there is no Latin history by Fletcher extant. It has been suggested by both Berry and Pipes that Fletcher turned his energies towards revising and publishing *Of the Russe Commonwealth* at this point, as his hopes of writing the Latin history of Elizabeth's reign were not

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<sup>146</sup> Natalie Mears, 'Counsel, public debate and queenship: John Stubbs's *The discoverie of a gaping gulf*, 1579', *Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2001), pp. 629-50.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 648-649.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 646-647.

<sup>149</sup> Fletcher to Lord Burghley, 7 November 1590, BL MS Lansdowne 65, no. 59. Also printed in Berry, *English Works*, pp. 383-388.

realised.<sup>150</sup> There is nothing to suggest that Fletcher turned to print publication of *The Russe Commonwealth* simply because his proposal for a Latin history of the mid-Tudor monarchs may have been rejected. It is clear from the form of his letter to Burghley, the language used in it and the outline he included of a structure for the Latin history, that the history was already a work in progress.<sup>151</sup>

It may be that Fletcher did not receive the information (and patronage) he needed from Burghley to finish the history because his literary tendencies were already seen as threatening or subversive. This does not mean, however, that the two projects – the Latin history and the revising of *The Russe Commonwealth* – were mutually exclusive. If Fletcher was preparing his Russian text for a public audience, it is possible, indeed likely, that he may have worked on it over the period of a couple of years, in between 1589 and 1591, in order to put together his historical additions and expand its content. Perhaps, then, he was working on the Latin history and *The Russe Commonwealth* concurrently. A publication of both in the early 1590s would perhaps have been more controversial, given the nature of Fletcher's text on Russia as theorizing tyranny, but also more potent if Fletcher's message was to highlight the potential tyranny of kingship. Could the Latin history have been part of Fletcher's attempt to counsel Queen and Commonwealth by presenting both a mirror for magistrates and a Latin history of Elizabeth at the same time?

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<sup>150</sup> Berry, *English Works*, p. 31 and Pipes, 'Introduction', *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 19. The events of 1590 and 1591 could be seen as a particularly precarious period in Fletcher's career and life. In the summer of 1590, one of Fletcher's daughters died. Fletcher's two patrons, Walsingham and Randolph, also died during this year, which meant that Fletcher needed to find new sources of patronage.

<sup>151</sup> BL MS Lansdowne 65, no. 59.



As it was, only *The Russe Commonwealth* was finished and printed, and in a climate particularly sensitive to the issues Fletcher raised in his counsel for Queen and Commonwealth. Fletcher's choice to print his treatise on Russia in 1591 was met with suppression, a censorship that had perhaps been anticipated in the reluctance (of either Fletcher or Hakluyt) to publish in the *Principall Navigations*. If it was indeed Fletcher himself who chose not to have the full version of *The Russe Commonwealth* printed in Hakluyt's 1589 edition of *The Prinicipall Navigations*, this raises the question of why Fletcher chose to publish in his own right in 1591.

In putting into practice his humanist views about the crucial importance of counselling the monarch for the good of the commonwealth, Fletcher chose whatever form he thought to be most appropriate, necessary and effective, namely the popular mode of adventuring travel information. Fletcher's counsel on how best and how not to rule a commonwealth worked concurrently as intelligence for Elizabeth as well as travel information on Russia, securing not only public appeal, but also protection. It was legitimate for ambassadors to counsel privately their monarch on the particular circumstances relating to their embassies and foreign policy in general, as Fletcher had already done in his diplomatic reports and in a manuscript version of his treatise.<sup>152</sup> However, engaging the public audience in what should have been a private act of counsel was a different matter altogether. It represented not just the audacity of the author, in this case Fletcher, to counsel the

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<sup>152</sup> Stephen Alford, 'The Political Creed of William Cecil' in The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in response to Patrick Collinson, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA, 2007), pp. 85-86. See also Mears, 'Counsel', pp. 647-648. For Fletcher's diplomatic reports, see BL MS Lansdowne 60, no. 59 and Lansdowne 52, no. 37(b), ff. 104-105.



Queen from his inferior position as a private subject, as opposed to being a counsellor chosen specifically by Elizabeth herself, but also made public this audacity, proposing that it was acceptable for such private subjects to counsel the Queen as if, perhaps, they were citizens of a republic, or a 'monarchical republic' at least.<sup>153</sup> Thus Fletcher's text on Russia became increasingly subversive if it was read as 'counsel' from an unauthorised source.

Fletcher's various works regarding English and Russian society, government and culture reflect an attempt to use the unfamiliar space of Russia to grapple with the changing shape of the globe, to critique the England of Elizabeth and equally to question contemporary ideas of the civil, Christian humanist self and the safeguarding of the civil commonwealth through writing about his own experiences in an unknown and potentially very lucrative land. His writings provide a rich and illuminating source of information on the complex relationship, representations and construction of English identity when faced with the unfamiliar land of Russia. The following chapter opens up the content of Fletcher's text by examining in detail his in-depth description of Russia.

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<sup>153</sup> For further discussion of the concept of 'monarchical republic', see Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' in *Elizabethan essays* (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. 31-57. For further discussion of the 'monarchical republic' in the context of the publication of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

### Chapter 3 - A Corrupted Commonwealth: Giles Fletcher's writing of Russia,

#### *Of the Russe Commonwealth*

Above all things I would have you understand the manner of government of the place where you are, where the sovereignty is in one, as in a monarchy, in a few, or in the people; or if it be mixed, to which of these forms it most inclines. Next, what ministers of state and subalternate governors as council and magistrates. Thirdly by what laws or customs it is governed. And lastly, what is the exception of justice in peace, and their discipline in war.

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex<sup>1</sup>

Giles Fletcher's various writings on his encounters with Russia frequently crossed the boundaries between what we might term diplomatic, mercantile literature and the more descriptive travel narrative of unfamiliar lands, as well as political theory, poetry and the literature of counsel. His writing of Russia raises the questions of what images of Russia were *en vogue* in the Elizabethan period and more fundamentally how Russia was used as a stage to reflect on the themes of cultural development and barbarity, the nature of government and tyranny, as well as more specific critiques of Elizabethan rule and commonwealth. These ideas are considered in more detail in this and the following chapters through the dissection and discussion of Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, as seen in the wider context of both diplomatic literature and the image of Russia found in

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation comes from a letter of travel advice printed in Brian Vickers, ed., Francis Bacon: a critical edition of the major works (Oxford, 1996), pp. 69-80. Vickers argues that it was Francis Bacon, rather than Robert Devereux, who wrote these letters of travel advice, the third in particular, from which this quotation is taken, see Vickers, 'The authenticity of Bacon's earliest writings', Studies in Philology, vol. 94 (1997), pp. 248-96. However, Paul E. J. Hammer has plausibly contested Vickers' argument and confirmed Devereux's authorship, see Paul E. J. Hammer, The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The political career of Robert Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex, 1585-1597 (Cambridge, 1999), p. 149, n. 200 and P. E. J. Hammer, 'Letters of travel advice from the earl of Essex to the earl of Rutland: some comments', Philological Quarterly, vol. 74 (1995), pp. 317-325. See also Alexandra Gajda, 'Robert Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Essex and political culture, c. 1595-c. 1601', unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford, 2005), p. 5.



published and thus more widespread texts of travel information and in the domestic politics of Elizabethan England.

Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, printed in 1589 and again in 1598-1600 displays the rich context of information, advice, maps, instructions and correspondence surrounding the discovery of new lands and subsequent relations with those lands. His compilation includes all sorts of documents relating to Russia ranging from 'The distances of diuers places in Russia', 'The excellent orders and instructions of Sebastian Cabot, giuen to Sir Hugh Willoughbie and his Fleete in their voyage intended for Cathay' and 'The coynes weights and measures vsed in Russia', to 'Directions giuen by Richard Hakluyt Esquier to Morgan Hubblethorne, Dyer, sent into Persia' and 'The manner of preferring of sutes in Russia'.<sup>2</sup> Hakluyt's work provides examples of where these various modes of writing about the unfamiliar subject collide and combine, suggesting a certain fluidity and flexibility in the representation of Russia (and by implication other unknown lands) and drawing attention to the interaction, exchange and debt owed to inter-linking narratives of travel, trade and diplomacy. The majority of contemporaneously published English accounts of Russia and the North Eastern lands are to be found in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, both the 1589 and 1598-1600 editions, although there are also English accounts in Richard Eden's *Decades of the Newe Worlde* (1555) and there exist various other writings on Russia published and unpublished.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), table of contents. The *Principall Navigations* (both the 1589 edition and the 1598-1600 edition) is divided in to three parts: voyages made to the South, voyages made to the North and Northeast, and voyages made to the West, Southwest and Northwest regions, although the order of these sections changes in the 1598-1600 edition. Within these three sections, there is a diverse literature that covers journeys of exploration, as well as diplomatic letters, trading privileges and instructions, acts of parliament, promotional treatises and letters patent for new discoveries of various areas of the globe.

<sup>3</sup> See George Turberville, *Tragicall Tales* (London, 1587), Edward Webbe, *The Rare and most wonderfull things which Edw. Webbe an Englishman borne, hath scene and passed in his*



Giles Fletcher's works reveal how fascinated he was with the unfamiliar land of Russia. Fletcher's points of fascination, however, seem to diverge considerably from other accounts of Russia, revealing a distinctive approach towards his subject, as much as any shared language of resemblances regarding the Northeast, emerging during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> The language, imagery and structure that Fletcher chose to use in this work express the attraction and the simultaneous repulsion that he felt and also encountered during his time in Russia, pointing to Fletcher's broader, fundamental argument about the seemingly unbounded potential of Russia, juxtaposed with its current failure as a supposedly Christian and thus civilised land. Fletcher's account focuses less on the gold, the cold and the strange marvels of Russia, as other accounts did, and more on the manipulation, the corruption, the oppression and tyranny of the Emperor, the providential fruitfulness of the land despite its corruption, its

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troublesome trauailes (London, 1591) and Job Hortop, The Trauailes of an Englishman (London, 1591). Also Richard Willes' second and expanded edition of Richard Eden's Decades of the Newe Worlde (1555) includes accounts of Russia, see Richard Willes, The History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies, and other countreys lying ether way. Towards the fruitfull and ryche Moluccas (London, 1577), pp. 254-324. The Travels of Sir Jerome Horsey was published for the first time in 1856, see E. A. Bond, Russia at the close of the sixteenth century (London, 1856). See also S. Konovalov, ed., 'John Tradescant's Diary of a voyage to Russia, June-September 1618', Oxford Slavonic Papers, vol. II (1951), pp. 130-141.

<sup>4</sup> A tendency in the historiography of early modern travel narratives is to see all accounts as sharing a common language of describing unfamiliar lands. Certainly, in the Russian case, there are a lot of similarities between many of the accounts written during the sixteenth century. Samuel Baron has examined the similarities between Herberstein's *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii* (1544) and Giles Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591), see Samuel H. Baron, 'The influence in Sixteenth-Century England of Herberstein's *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*' in Explorations in Muscovite History, ed. Samuel H. Baron (Hampshire, 1991), Chapter XV, pp. 1-17. See also Samuel H. Baron, 'Herberstein's Image of Russia and its Transmission through later writers' reprinted in Baron, Explorations, chapter XIII, pp. 245-273 and 'Herberstein and the English "Discovery" of Muscovy' reprinted in Baron, Explorations, chapter XIV, pp. 43-54. Lloyd E. Berry examines the great influence of Fletcher's account on Milton's *Brief History of Moscovia* (1682), see Lloyd E. Berry, 'Giles Fletcher, the elder, and Milton's *A Brief history of Moscovia*', Review of English Studies, New Series, vol. 11, no. 42 (May, 1960), pp. 150-156. Berry also mentions in the introduction to his reprint of George Turberville's 'Letters in Verse' in *Tragicall Tales* (1587) that his poems reflected 'an embryonic version of Fletcher's argument that bad morals are the direct result of a false religion', see Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, eds., 'Rude and Barbarous Kingdom' Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1968), p. 73.

colonies and borderers, the structure of government, its religion, and finally the people of Russia.

In this sense, Fletcher's account went beneath the surface of what other accounts recorded. He looked for or at least presented explanations for the barbaric state of Russia and its people in a way that other commentators did not. And of course, like many an Elizabethan commentator, his words were not just meant to be read as an analysis of Russia but had multiple meanings, implicating the situation of England's borders and colonies, Scotland and Ireland, potentially the New World, and, more fundamentally, resonances for Elizabethan government and society itself.

The table of contents to Fletcher's work, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, reveals its central purpose. The work is divided into three major sections that are then subdivided into more specific chapters to elucidate on the wider theme of each section (see fig.1). Section 1 discusses the cosmography of the country; that is the general description and representation, both earth and heavens, of Russia subdivided into chapters on the breadth and length of the land, its fertility and climate, commodities and natural resources and finally its chief cities. The second major section covers what Fletcher called the 'Pollicy' of Russia which was subdivided into four subsections entitled '1.The ordering of their State', '2.Their iudiciall proceeding', '3. Their warlike prouisions' and '4. Their Ecclesiastical State'. The various chapters under these subsections discuss topics ranging from the stock of the Emperor, his manner of public government, the Russian Parliament, to martial discipline, Russian colonies and the doctrine of the Russe



Colmoyr 2- phic of the Coeditic.		1. The breadth and length of the Countie, with the names of the States.
The sum of ethisdic. courfe contei- ning the	2. Their judicial proceed- ding	2. The Soyle and Clymate, 3. The maine commodities of the Countie, 4. The chiefe cities of Rusfia.
	3. Their warlike prouis- ions.	5. The head or flocke of the Russe Emperour, 6. The manner of inauguration of the Russe Emperours, 7. The forme or manner of their publike government.
3. Oeconomic or priuatic hauiour.	4. Their Eccle- siasticall State.	8. Their Parliaments and manner of holding them. 9. The Russe Nobilitie and excuses whereby it is kept in an vnder proposition agreeable to that State. 10. The manner of gouerning their Provinces or Shires.
	5. The erring of their State.	11. The Emperours priuie Councell, 12. The Emperours Customes and other Revenues, & what they amount vnto, with the Subsidies practised for the increase of them. 13. The Russe criminallitie & their condempning.
	6. The erring of their State.	14. Their publike iudice and manner of proceeding therein. 15. The Emperours forcees for his warres, with the officers and their Salaries. 16. Their manner of murthering, Amour, prohibition for vitallie, champing, &c. 17. Their order in marching, charging, and their martiall discipline.
	7. The erring of their State.	18. Their colonies and pollicie in maineering their purchases by conuulse. 19. Their borderers, with whom they haue most to doo in warre and peace. 20. Their Church offices, and degrees. 21. Their Leticie or forme of Church seruice, with their manner of administering the Sacraments.
	8. The erring of their State.	22. The doctrine of the Russe Church. 23. Their manner of solemnizing marriages. 24. The other Ceremonies of the Russe Church. 25. The Emperours domestique or priuatic hauiour. 26. The Emperours household, and offices of his house. 27. The Emperours behaviour, and manners of the Russe people.

**The description of the Countie of Rusfia,  
with the breadth, length, and names  
of the Shires.**

The 1. Chapter.



**H**e countrie of Rusfia was sometimes called *Sarmatia*. It changed the name (as some do suppose) for that it was parted into diuers small, and yet absolute governments, not depending, nor being subiect the one to the other. For Russe in that tongue doth signifie as much as to parte, or diuide. The Russe reporteth that foure brethren, *Tymbor*, *Rurice*, *Simer*, and *Varius*, diuided among them the North parts of the countrie. Likewise that the South partes were possessed by foure other, *Kis*, *Seiske*, *Chorim*, and their sister *Libeda*: each calling his

Figure 1: Table of Contents from Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591).



Church. The final major section deals with the 'Oeconomie or priuat behaiour' of the Emperor and manners of the Russian people.<sup>5</sup>

This organisation reflects one key argument, explicated in the very structuring of Fletcher's information. He moves from the natural potential of the country, through an account of its misgovernment to the corruption of its people and the waste of its resources. Fletcher's statement was not novel, in fact it has a very Aristotelian turn to it, namely that good government redeems, bad government corrupts and nothing is so deplorable and evil as a tyrannous and corrupt version of what has the potential to be civil and Christian.<sup>6</sup> Whether Russia simply fitted the mould or whether it had set the agenda for Fletcher's argument is hard to say. Fletcher analysed every aspect of Russian society and life in order to show the extent of the degradation and ruin of the land under barbaric and tyrannical government. His closing remarks add even more weight to his argument, discussing the sad irony of the Russian situation. Even the Tartars – Scythians by descent, savage and with no government whatsoever - appear to have been more virtuous than the Russians, and yet they had been completely dissuaded from Christianity (and thus civility) because of their hatred of Russian falsehood and barbarity, pointing to Fletcher's last (and fundamental) word: no government at all is better than a corrupt one.<sup>7</sup>

### **i.) God's Providence in Russia**

In comparison to the general stock of images used to represent Russia by Western Europeans in this period, Fletcher's assertion of God's providence at

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<sup>5</sup> Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591), table of contents.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book III, 14-18, in *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 83-91.

<sup>7</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 116v.

work in Russia sheds a significantly different light on Russia's situation. No other commentator reflects so positively on the work of God in Russia. If and when God was mentioned in other English accounts it was in reference either to God's protection over his faithful (English) servants, 'Doe you observe good order in your dayly service, and pray unto God, so shall you prosper the better',<sup>8</sup> instructions to the English journeying to Russia to stay godly, 'that no blaspheming of God, or detestable swearing be used in any ship, or communication of ribaldrie, filthy tales, or ungodly talke to be suffred in the company of any ship, neither dicing, carding, tabling, nor other divelish games to be frequented'<sup>9</sup> or as criticism of the Russian religion and the Russians themselves, 'They have no preachers no not one in al the land to instruct the people, so that there are many, & the most part of the poore in the country, who if one aske them how many gods there be, they wil say a great many, meaning that every image which they have is a god'.<sup>10</sup> Turberville is particularly derogative of the Russians' attitude towards God, 'Sith with the hatchet and the hand, their chiefest gods be made. / Their Idolles have their hearts, on God they never call'.<sup>11</sup>

Fletcher, in contrast, identified several ways in which God's purposes, God's blessing and God's concern for Russia and the Russian people were revealed, 'First, fures of all sortes. Wherein the prouidence of God is to be noted, that prouideth a naturall remedie for them, to helpe the naturall inconuenience of

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<sup>8</sup> 'Commission given by sir Rowland Hayward knight and George Barne, Aldermen and Governors of the company of English Merchants, for the discovery of new trades, unto Arthur Pet, and Charles Jackman, for a voyage by them to be made, for discovery of Cathay, 1580', in Richard Hakluyt, The Principall Navigations (1589), p. 455.

<sup>9</sup> 'The excellent orders and instructions of Sebastian Cabot given to Sir Hugh Willoughby and his fleete in their voyage intended for Cathay', in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 260.

<sup>10</sup> 'The voyage, wherin Osep Napea the Moscovite Ambassadour, returned home into his country, with his entertainment at his arrival, at Colmogro: and a large description of the maners of the Countrey', in Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 344.

<sup>11</sup> George Turberville, Tragicall Tales (London, 1587), p. 184v.



their countrie by the colde of the Clymate'.<sup>12</sup> Along similar lines, Fletcher also noted God's hand in the geographical layout of Russia, 'The countrie throughout is very well watred with springs, riuers, and ozeracs, or lakes. Wherein the prouidence of God is to bee noted, for that much of the countrie being so farre inland, as some part lieth a 1000. miles and more euery way from any sea, yet it is serued with faire riuers'.<sup>13</sup> In the culturally underdeveloped and barbaric practise of building their houses of wood (not stone) – even there God had provided Russia with enough trees to do this cheaply 'Wherof the prouidence of God hath giuen them such store, as that you may build a faire house for twentie or thirtie rubbels'.<sup>14</sup>

The providential blessings bestowed on the land of Russia were depicted by Fletcher in his extensive description of the land. Fletcher's account was distinctive from other English accounts of Russia firstly in its thorough detailing of the land, produce and potential resources and secondly in the more positive tone of his description. His portrayal of the Russian woodland in summertime bears much resemblance to that of England 'the woods (for the most part which are all of fir and birch) so fresh and so sweet, the pastures and medowes so greene and well growen, (and that vpon the sudden) such varietie of flowres, such noyse of birdes (specially of Nightingales, that seeme to be more lowde and of a more variable note then in other countries) that a man shall not lightly trauell in a more pleasant countrie'.<sup>15</sup> Such a positive depiction served the purpose of familiarising the unfamiliar, suggesting that Russia was in fact a land which could be a glorious

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<sup>12</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Common Wealth, p. 7r.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 5r.

<sup>14</sup> ibid., p. 14v.

<sup>15</sup> ibid., p. 4v. For a comparable description of England, see Raphael Holinshed, The first and second volumes of Chronicles comprising 1 The description and historie of England, 2 The description and historie of Ireland, 3 The description and historie of Scotland (London, 1587), p. 109-110.



reflection of God's bounty and magnificence as well as an abundant and fertile land for its monarch and people, or indeed any prospective coloniser.

Not only was the land pleasant (in summertime at least), but it had endless potential. Fletcher's account of the produce and commodities of the land is both positive and overwhelming. The Russian land was bountiful in fruits. Instead of simply repeating one of the fabulous stock images found in Herberstein's account of a marvellous plant that 'groweth a frute or a plante very lyke a lambe...for it hath the headde, eyes, eares, and all other partes like vnto a lambe...with also a very thynne skynne wherewith dyuers of thinhabitauntes of those regions are accustomed to line theyr cappes and hattes',<sup>16</sup> Fletcher listed all the real fruit of Russia, 'For kindes of frutes, they haue Appels, Peares, plummes, cherries, redde and blacke....a deene like a muske millian, but more sweete and pleasant, cucumbers and gourds...' and the list goes on.<sup>17</sup> This is also in contrast to Johann Fabri's observation, translated into English in Eden's collection of information on Moscovia and the Northeast in his *Decades* (1555), that there were not 'any other trees that bere any apples or frutes of very plesant or swete sauour or taste...for as much as all tender frutes & trees are burnt of the coulde blastes of the North wynde.'<sup>18</sup> The Russians produced all kinds of grain, wheat, rye, barley and oats. Again the similarity was drawn between what the Russian land provided and the common English produce.<sup>19</sup> The providential blessings of commodities specific to the country were furs, of many kinds, wax, of great quantities, masses of honey,

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Eden, *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or west India* (London, 1555), p. 302.

<sup>17</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 6v.

<sup>18</sup> Eden, *Decades*, p. 260.

<sup>19</sup> See Holinshed, *Chronicles*, pp. 110-112.

tallow, much of which was exported, leather, train oil, caviar, hemp, salt, tar, fish and fish tooth, akin to the Unicorn's horn.<sup>20</sup>

Fletcher's aim in detailing the commodities of Russia was to point to the familiarity and bountiful nature of their produce, and more fundamentally the potential gains to the country that this produce could make. For each commodity that Fletcher described, he also commented on the amount of the commodity that was exported yearly, emphasising the surplus and potential profit made by exporting such surplus, with enough left over for use in the country itself. This was a pertinent point given the dire state of England's markets and produce at the time as well as disastrous harvests in 1587-8.<sup>21</sup> Indeed the 'discovery' of Russia had provided new and much needed markets for England's floundering cloth economy, as well as providing England with essential naval supplies that furnished the English ships that faced the Spanish Armada.<sup>22</sup>

Russia, in comparison to England, had not been wanting in surplus produce, nor was it lacking in markets to export it to, 'The natiue commodities of the countrie (wherewith they serue both their owne turnes, and sende much abroad to the great enriching of the Emperour, and his people) are many and substantiall'.<sup>23</sup> However, as Fletcher's repetitive comments make clear, 'of Wax, whereof hath bene shipped into forraine countries (as I haue heard it reported by those that best know it) the summe of 50000. pood yearlie, eury pood conteyning 40. pound, but now about 10000. pood a yeare....Of tallow there hath bene shipped out of the realme a fewe yeares since about 1000000. pood [?]

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<sup>20</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 7v-12r.

<sup>21</sup> E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871, A Reconstruction* (1989, Cambridge), p. 672.

<sup>22</sup> T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company, 1553-1603* (Manchester, 1956), pp. 53, 185.

<sup>23</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 7r.

yearely, now not past 30000. or thereabouts', the surplus produced by Russia in the past had far exceeded what was now being produced. The dramatic fall in Russia's exports, despite the fertility and natural resources of the land, indicated the economic consequences of a lamentably degraded and degenerate people, under a tyrant and government that was not exploiting the providential bounties of the land they had been given, despite their Christian profession.<sup>24</sup> Fletcher explained the process: 'And hereof it commeth that the commodities of Russia (as was said before) as wax, tallow, hydes, flaxe, hempe, &c. grow and goe abroad in farre lesse plenty then they were woont to doo: because the people being oppressed and spoiled of their gettings, are discouraged from their laboures'.<sup>25</sup>

Despite his distinctive and positive outlook on the 'cosmography' of Russia, Fletcher was realistic in his depiction of the winter, and in this he bore more resemblance to other accounts of Russia, written by the English at this time. Richard Chancellor described Russia thus 'The north parts of the Countrey are reported to be so cold, that the very ice or water which distilleth out of the moist wood which they lay upon the fire is presently congealed and frozen.....that in one and the selfe same firebrand, a man shall see both fire and ice' and went on to relate how the mariners 'in their going up onely from their cabins to the hatches, had their breath oftentimes so suddenly taken away that they eftsoones fell downe as men very neere dead, so great is the sharpnesse of that colde climate'.<sup>26</sup> Similarly Fletcher observed of the Russian climate that 'it would breede a frost in a man to looke abroad at that time, and see the winter face of that cuntry. The sharpnesse of the ayre you may iudge of by this: for that water dropped downe or

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<sup>24</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 7v-8r.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47r.

<sup>26</sup> Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 285.



cast vp into the ayre, congealeth into Ise before it come to the ground...Diuers lose their noses, the tippes of their eares, and the bals of their cheeks'.<sup>27</sup>

Fletcher did, however, redeem the extremities of cold in the winter with the wonders of the Russian summer and marvelled at the strange alteration in the land over the year, 'The whole countrie differeth very much from it selfe, by reason of the yeare: so that a man would meruaile to see the great alteration and difference betwixte the winter, and the sommer *Russia*'. Indeed Fletcher claimed that the huge blanket of snow covering the Russian land during the winter actually served to make it even more fruitful in the summer, 'And this fresh and speedy growth of the spring there, seemeth to proceede from the benefite of the snow: which all the winter time being spred ouer the whole countrie as a white robe...in the spring time....doth so thoroughly drench and soake the ground....that it draweth the herbes and plants forth in great plenty and varietie in a short time'.<sup>28</sup> Again God's providence had allowed for the extreme pinchings of winter to serve a greater purpose that benefited the Russian land and potentially the Russian people during the summer. The harsh winter could perhaps be seen as a metaphor for the oppressive tyranny that the Russian people laboured under. Was Fletcher figuratively suggesting that the Russian people longed for the wintry ice to thaw into fruitful spring and summer and the bounteous and benevolent government that they deserved?

Finally, the providence of God was also visible in the fate of the most infamously tyrannical Emperor of Russia, Ivan IV. God's judgement was noted in the fate of the Emperor that having killed his son with a blow to the head in a fit of rage, 'Wherein may be marked the iustice of God, that punished his delight in

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<sup>27</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 4r-4v.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 4v-5r.

shedding blood with this murder of his sonne by his owne hand', he 'ended his dayes and tyrannie together, with the murdering of himself by extreame griefe, for this his vnhappy and vnnaturall fact'.<sup>29</sup> The tragic end to the Emperor's tyranny came from his own hand, overwhelmed by the evil of his own doings against his very flesh and blood. This was God's punishment and proof that he was watching over Russia in some sense. Fletcher, in his noticeably Protestant voice, also asserted that against all the odds of corrupt clergy, no preaching and learning in religion and a fundamentally heretical religion, which we will return to below, yet 'hauing the word of God in some sort (though without the ordinarie meanes to attaine to a true sense and vnderstanding of it) God hath also his number among them'.<sup>30</sup>

ii.) 'A true and strange face of a *Tyrannical state*': Corruptions of the Commonwealth

For Fletcher's purposes, Russia was 'a very fruitfull and pleasant countrie, yeelding pasture, and corne, with woods and waters in very great plentie' and it had 'a very fruitful and pleasant soile'.<sup>31</sup> Such a description resonated with ideas circulating in England at the time about Ireland and the fertile, pleasant land, unexploited so near at hand, as well as the rich and fruitful land, open to exploitation to anyone who would adventure to the New World.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 16r.

<sup>30</sup> ibid., p. 99v.

<sup>31</sup> ibid., p. 3v.

<sup>32</sup> For instance on Ireland, see Edmund Spenser, 'A View of the Present State of Ireland' (composed c. 1596), first printed in The Historie of Ireland (London, 1633), John Derricke, The image of Irelande (London, 1588) and Barnabe Rich, A short suruey of Ireland (London, 1609). On the New World, see The whole and true discoverye of Terra Florida (englished the flourishing lande). Conteyning aswell the wonderfull straunge natures and maners of the people, with the merueylous commodities and treasures of the country (London, 1563), esp. sigs. Biii-Biiii, Ciii, Willes, History of Trauayle, esp. pp 195, 228, Richard Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverye of America (London, 1582), Thomas Harriot, a briefe and true report of the new found

fundamental problem was, however, that the providentially blessed land was going unexploited, and more than that the land and its people were decaying under the tyrannical government of its ruler.

Fletcher identified two key issues in the misgovernment of Russia: tyranny, associated with the lack of good counsel and the absence of a virtuous nobility, and corrupt religion. These were the evils which led to the degradation of the Russian people and the failure to enjoy God's blessings. Fletcher was very clear about the nature of the tyrannical Russian government. This is perhaps the point at which he writes with the most clarity and least ambiguity, 'The manner of their government is much after the Turkish fashion: which they seeme to imitate as neare as the countrie, and reach of their capacities in pollitique affayres will giue them leaue to doo.' The Russian government, like the stereotypical renaissance representation of the government of the Turk, was 'plaine tyrannical as applying all to the behoofe of the Prince, and that after a most open and barbarous manner'.<sup>33</sup> Fletcher, almost ironically it seems, set aside a whole chapter, entitled 'Their Parliamentes and manner of holding them' to demonstrate the mockery made of public government in Russia. The existence of a parliament should, at one level, suggest some degree of civility, for it was only barbaric peoples who were ruled over by an absolute ruler with no counsel or public representative assembly.<sup>34</sup> However, the Russian Parliament existed, like

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land of Virginia (London, 1588) and Sir Thomas Gates, A Discovery of the Barmudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels (London, 1610), esp. p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 20r. Cf. The Policy of the Turkish Empire. The first booke (London, 1597). For discussion of English renaissance perceptions of the Turk, see Nabil Matar, Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the age of discovery (New York, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Edmund Tremayne's damning indictment of Irish society and government explains that 'he that hath showed himself most mischievous in murdering, spoiling and burning doth soonest attain to the government....not only as an absolute king but as a tyrant or a lord over bondmen....the Irish rule is such a government as the mightiest do what they list against the inferiors'. See 'Edmund Tremayne's Description of Irish Governance, December 1573', Huntington Library manuscript, HEH, EL 1701, f. 1r-4v (transcript provided by Mike Braddick).



everything else in the Emperor's realm, purely to reinforce the absolute tyrannical power the Emperor wielded over his people, under the thin guise of civil government. This was a point with some significance for the Elizabethan English audience too, as we will see in the following chapter.

According to Fletcher, the Russian Parliament was made up of the Clergy and the Nobility of the land, 'As for the Burghers or other to represent the communitie, they haue no place there: the people being of no better account with them then as seruants or bond slaues that are to obey, not to make lawes, nor to knowe any thing of publike matters before they are concluded'.<sup>35</sup> As regarding the bills and actions of the Russian Parliament, 'For to propound bils what euery man thinketh good for the publike benefite (as the maner is in England) the Russe Parliament alloweth no such custome, nor libertie to subiects'.<sup>36</sup> In terms of the way in which laws and bills were decided upon, the Russian Parliament was merely a performance acted out by the clergy and nobility for the justification of the Emperor's tyranny, where all automatically flattered and agreed with the laws and bills that had been propounded by the Emperor. This was the accepted ritual for law-making through parliament in Russia, 'For as touching any Lawe or publique order of the Realme, it is euer determined of before any publique assemblie or Parliament bee summoned'.<sup>37</sup>

The discussion of counsel in *Of the Russe Commonwealth* suggests that in a noticeably Aristotelian sense, the role of the counsel in a civil and godly government was of utmost importance to Fletcher. In this point he echoed Sir Thomas Smith and previous theorists on the subject of counsel, such as Thomas

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<sup>35</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 22v.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23r.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20v.

Elyot, Christopher St German and Thomas Starkey.<sup>38</sup> This explains Fletcher's scathing account of the Russian Emperor's government and the role of his counsel, 'The emperours of Russia giue the name of counsellour to diuers of their chiefe Nobilitie, rather for honors sake, then for any vse they make of them about their matters of state...for they are seldome or neuer called to any publique consultation'.<sup>39</sup> The Emperor's chief counsellors that were actually called to consult on such matters 'are accounted to bee of greater birth then wisdom taken in (as may seem) for that ende, rather to furnish the place with their honours and presence, then with their aduise or counsell'.<sup>40</sup> Even of the Emperor's 'speciall and priuie Counsell...but fewe of them are called to any consultation, for that all maters are aduised and determined vpon by *Borris Federowich Godonoe*, brother to the Emperesse', and who later became Emperor of Russia after Feodor's death.<sup>41</sup> Those who actually came to consult with the Emperor were not there to give counsel but rather to listen, 'If they come, they are rather to heare, then to giue counsel, and doo so demeane themselues'.<sup>42</sup>

A recurring and distinctive theme in Fletcher's treatise was the servile condition of the nobility. As one of the major corruptions in the state of a tyranny, the Russian Emperor did 'endeauour by al meanes to cut of, or keepe downe all of the best and auncientest Nobilitie'.<sup>43</sup> The Emperor worked 'for the keeping of the Nobilitie and Commons in an vnder proportion, and far vneuen balance in their seuerall degrees' and as for the status of nobility 'to bring it downe to a lesser

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<sup>38</sup> Sir Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum* (London, 1583), Sir Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the Governour* (London, 1531), Christopher St German, *An answer to a letter* (London, 1535) and Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T. F. Mayer (London, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 34v-35r.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35r.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35v. On Boris Fedorowich's take-over of the throne, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, fifth edition (Oxford and New York, 1993), pp. 160-162.

<sup>42</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 35v.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27r.



proportion: till in the end he made them not onely his vassals, but his *kolophey*, that is his very villains or bondslaues.....so that now they holde their authorities, landes, liues and all at the Emperours pleasure, as the rest doe'.<sup>44</sup>

The Emperor used various means to keep the nobility servile and under his sway. One was to forcibly confine the heirs of noble families in monasteries so that their line could not be continued. A more extreme example was Ivan IV's establishment of the Oprichnina, a unique political experiment in which the city of Moscow was physically divided into two parts along political lines. The Emperor's chosen and protected part of the city was named the Oprichnina, anyone in his favour was kept in the Oprichnina, under Ivan's arbitrary government.<sup>45</sup> The rest of the city was left outside the remit of the Emperor's protection, and the people were left to their own devises. All of the Emperor's opposition were either purged from the inside or left to die outside the protection of the Oprichnina. In either case, 'there was no amendes to bee sought for by way of publike iustice....And this libertie of the one part to spoyle and kill the other without anie helpe of Magistrate, or lawe', was a perfect opportunity to purge the Emperor's enemies.<sup>46</sup> Fletcher asserted that within one week three hundred gentlemen and nobility had been killed in Moscow, 'This tyrannicall practise of making a general Schisme, and publike diuision among the subiects of his whole Realme, proceeded (as should seeme) from an extreame doubt, and desperate feare, which hee had conceiued of most of his Nobilitie, and Gentlemen of his Realme'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 20r and 25r.

<sup>45</sup> See BL MS Cotton Nero B xi, f. 333. For discussion of the Oprichnina, see Riasanovsky, *History of Russia*, pp. 150-151 and R. O. Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy, 1304-1613* (New York, 1987), pp. 161-164, 170-172.

<sup>46</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 25v.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26r.



The influence of Aristotle on Fletcher's conception of government and politics is particularly apparent in his discussion of the Oprichnina, providing ample evidence of the nature of Russian rule as tyranny, based on the Aristotelian thesis that in a good government a king's friends or counsel provided security for the king, whereas in a tyranny, the king's friends were those with most opportunity and power to effect the overthrow of the king and therefore a threat to the security of his power.<sup>48</sup> Fletcher made a point of listing the names of the oldest and chiefest noble families of Russia, poignantly highlighting the situation of the greatest noble families suffering under a tyrant, 'These are the names of the chiefe families called *Vdelney Knazey*: that in effect haue lost all now, saue the very name it selfe, and fauour of the people, which is like one day to restore them againe, if any be left'.<sup>49</sup> Although Fletcher lamented the fall of the chief noble families in Russia, he also pointed to their restoration and emphasised the important role of the common people by suggesting it would be their favour, and power, that would once more restore a strong, true nobility to Russia.

Perhaps one of the more telling divergences between Fletcher's text and other accounts of Russia is Fletcher's discussion of money and revenues. Fletcher detailed at length the Emperor's revenues, wherein lies the main distinction between his text and other accounts of Russia. The chapter entitled *The Emperours Customes and other Reuenues, and what they amount vnto, with the Sophismes practised for the encrease of them*, is solely dedicated to describing and calculating the income of the Emperor and his means of acquiring wealth.

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<sup>48</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 83-91 and 139-152 See also John Guy, 'Tudor Monarchy and its Critiques' in *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. John Guy (London and New York, 1997), p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 27v.

Fletcher even set out a table to show 'The summe that groweth to the Emperoures treasurie in money onely, for euerie yeere'.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the text, there are also allusions to the Emperor's despotic control over the commerce, trade, resources and commodities of Russia, as well as Fletcher's ten '*Sophismata* or counterfeit pollicies' used by the Emperor to fleece his people.<sup>51</sup> These included allowing the nobility to oppress the commons constantly with extortions, exactions and bribery and then making a public example of such offending nobility, which saw all of their acquisitions run straight into the Emperor's treasury. The Emperor was known 'to make an open shew of want, when anie great taxe or imposition is towards' to justify such a tax, as well as encouraging the people to give generously to the monasteries, which he used as his own storehouse for treasures.<sup>52</sup> Such tactics as forcing his courtiers to feign themselves robbed and then exacting the city for their compensation, as well as monopolising certain commodities and raising prices for his own benefit, were also used by the Russian emperors.<sup>53</sup> The strangest 'cauillation' used by Ivan was to demand of certain regions a commodity that was impossible to supply or produce, such as sending 'into *Permia* for certaine loads of *Cedar Wood*, whereof hee knew that none grew' or demanding 'the citie of *Mosko* to prouide for him a *Colpack*, or measure full of liue fleas for a medicine' which proved impossible 'for if they could get them, yet they could not measure them for leaping out'.<sup>54</sup> In the event of the said region not providing the requested goods, the Emperor exacted money out of them for recompense.

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<sup>50</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 40v.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41r.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 42v.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 41v-45r.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 44v-45r.



Fletcher went to great lengths to describe the mindset and motives behind getting money into the Emperor's treasury:

Besides other their extraordinary impositions, and exactions....not for any apparent necessity or vse of the Prince, or common wealth, but of will and custome: yet with some pretence of a *Scythian*, that is, grosse and barbarous pollicie (as may appeare) by these fewe Sophismata, or counterfeit pollicies, put in practise by the Emperours of Russia, all tending to this end to robbe their people, and to inrich their treasure.<sup>55</sup>

For Fletcher, the fiscal policies of the Russian Emperor were a manifestation of tyranny and barbarism, 'the *Sophismata* or secretes of their gouernment' explaining the extent and type of tyrannical rule that the Russian Emperor wielded over his people, 'aswell for the keeping of the Nobilitie and Commons in an vnder proportion, and far vneven balance in their seuerall degrees, as also in their impositions and exactions, wherein they exceede all iust measure without any regard of Nobilitie or people'.<sup>56</sup>

In stark contrast to the emerging literature on portrayals of unfamiliar and newly discovered lands, any discussion of the importance of gold and the associated images and language surrounding the discovery of riches and luxuries is left out of Fletcher's discussion of the Emperor and Russia. Instead, Fletcher went into great detail about the money that the Emperor gained through his

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<sup>55</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 41v.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20r. Marshall Poe asserts that although all of the renaissance accounts written on Russia were clearly influenced by Aristotle's *Politics*, Fletcher's was the only one that borrowed passages directly from the *Politics*, namely his borrowing of the "Sophismata of secretes", when discussing the government of Russia as 'plaine tyrannical', one of these 'sophismata' being the means by which the Emperor enriched his treasury, Poe, "A People Born to Slavery", p. 151, n. 27.



oppressive taxes over his people, through his monopolies over trade, through his engrossing and spoiling of the commons. The extreme exactions and taxes that the Emperor and lower levels of his corrupt government placed on the people and their produce dissuaded them from cultivating more than they themselves needed, the people were 'very much discouraged by many heauy and intollerable exactions that of late time hath bin imposed vpon them...and therefore regard not to lay vp any thing, or to haue it before hand, for that it causeth them many times to be fleeced and spoiled not only to their goods, but also of their liues'.<sup>57</sup>

Other accounts of Russia, however, placed great emphasis on the gold and riches of this unfamiliar land, which reveals how important a factor gold was in their reflections upon the new discovery of Russia.<sup>58</sup> Fletcher's discussion of gold is minimal in comparison, referring to it only in passing, as gifts or part of the apparel of several characters.<sup>59</sup> The subject of money, and the Emperor's use of it in sustaining his tyrannical reign was clearly more important for him in revealing further the character of the Emperor, the people and the state of the country, as well as his underlying allusions to the threat of tyranny closer to home.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 9v-10r.

<sup>58</sup> For an example of discussions of Russian gold see Anthony Jenkinson, 'The first voyage made by Master Anthony Jenkinson, from the Citie of London, toward the land of Russia, begonne the twelfth daye of Maye in the yeere, 1557', in Richard Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations* (1589), p. 336.

<sup>59</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 81v, 84r, 93r, 114r-v.

<sup>60</sup> Perhaps Fletcher deliberately did not speak of gold because of its connotations with Spanish and Portuguese greed in newly discovered lands. Hakluyt, regarding Frobisher's voyages to find a Northwestern passage, bemoaned the fact that these explorations had of late turned into a hunt for gold and riches as opposed to the virtuous humanistic mission to discover lands where Christian civility could be planted and cultivated, 'I trust that now being taught by their manifold losses, our men will take a more godly course, and use some part of their goodes to his glory: if not, he will turne even ther covetousness to serve him, as he hath done the pride and avarice of the Spaniards and Portingales, who pretending in glorious words that they made ther discoveries chiefly to convert infidelles to our most holy faith (as they say) in deed and truth sought not them, but their goods and riches' from the epistle dedicatorie of Richard Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages touching the discouerie of America* (London, 1582), sig. 2v. This can also be found in *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, The Hakluyt Society, Second Series, no. LXXVI, ed. E. G. R. Taylor (London, 1935), vol. 1, p. 178.

Fletcher's lack of interest in the characteristic obsessions with Russian gold, reflects significantly different concerns in his writing and points to a certain essentialisation in the historiography of early modern travel narratives in its focus on the importance of gold.<sup>61</sup> Fletcher was more concerned to write of Russia in order to illuminate his concerns and fascination with forms of government and the ensuing questions it raised about a people's identity and status within a fluid, but still prescriptive scale of civility and barbarity. It also raises the question of why Fletcher was so concerned at this point in time to analyze and discuss tyranny as a model of bad government, the potential of good government, the nature of civility, barbarity and Christianity, godly and corrupt religion, liberty and slavery and justice versus injustice. Fletcher's dismissal of Russia as a potential resource for gold, riches and luxuries suggests he was seeking not the audience of potential investors but rather the politically aware, humanist reader. He did not herald Russia as a place where gold and riches would be found, but rather as a place where a potentially civilised, Christian people remained barbaric and oppressed without any skill, art or learning and without any desire to develop or better themselves due to the tyranny that they lived under.

The words injustice and justice seem to have been important to Fletcher as he used them often in his treatise. Fletcher suggested that justice in Russia was non-existent. Regarding the government of the provinces, the governors were described by Fletcher as oppressive and tyrannous (like the Emperor), 'they racke and spoile them [the common people] without all regard of iustice, or

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<sup>61</sup> See Mary C. Fuller, 'Making Something of it: Questions of value in the Early English Travel Compilation', *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 10, no. 1-2 (2006), pp. 11-38 and John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: a bibliographical history of English overseas interests to 1620* (Amsterdam, 1965).



conscience'.<sup>62</sup> The chief officers over these provincial governors made 'an advantage of their iniustice and oppression ouer the poore people' by seizing the purloined goods of the provincial governors 'when they call them to account'. The Emperor then, himself, seized the chief officers' goods when he called them to account, resulting in the provincial governors' practice to 'furnish themselues with all the spoile they can for the time of their gouernment, that they may haue for both turnes, aswel for the Emperour, and Lord of the Chetfird, as to reserue some good part for themselues'.<sup>63</sup>

The apparent injustices of the way in which society and power was ordered in Russia were compounded by their lack of a written law to protect the people from arbitrary government and individual wielding of power over anyone who was of a weaker estate. The Russian commons, in particular, found themselves in a situation where 'They haue no written law....Their onely lawe is their *Speaking Law*, that is, the pleasure of the Prince, and of his Magistrates and officers. Which sheweth the miserable condition of this poore people, that are forced to haue them for their law, and direction of iustice, against whose iniustice, and extreame oppression, they had neede to be armed with many good, and strong lawes'.<sup>64</sup> A fundamental characteristic of good government was justice; that the ruler act according to the just laws of the land and that the ruler provide just government for his subjects, protecting them from injustice. In this light, then, the law of the land, be it written or acknowledged as common law, assented to by

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<sup>62</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 32r.

<sup>63</sup> ibid.

<sup>64</sup> ibid., p. 53r. The fundamental corruption of not having any written law to protect the individual was not a novel argument. Tremayne drew a stark comparison between English legal justice and the Irish state of justice and law in 1573, 'And as this Irish tyranny is general so is it grievous and insupportable where the lords be greatest for with more safety may a man dwell in England in the displeasure of the prince then there in the displeasure of a great lord of a country. Here a man is not touched in life land nor goods be the indignation never so great but by the law', see HEH, EL 1701, f. 1r-4v.



ancient customs or the people themselves, held intrinsic value for the protection of the people and the good ordering of the commonwealth. Corrupt government, characterised by the arbitrary, spoken law of a tyrant, such as the Emperor of Russia, led only to chaos, the decay of the land and the decrease of the commonwealth.

Fletcher's chapter on 'The manner of gouerning their Prouinces or Shires' clearly expresses how the corrupt nature of a tyrannical ruler played out in the basic institutions of government and is particularly useful in highlighting Fletcher's broader perspective on the tragic state of Russia and on the practical workings of government.<sup>65</sup> In his discussion of the structure of provincial government, Fletcher presented three connected points. Firstly, he emphasised the potential of the organisation of provincial government in Russia if it were focused towards civil ends, as opposed to the barbaric and tyrannical ends of keeping the nobility and commons in subjection, 'This manner of gouernment of their Prouinces and townes, if it were aswell set for the giuing of iustice indiferently to al sorts, as it is to prevent innouations, by keeping of the Nobilitie within order, and the commons in subiECTION, it might seeme in that kinde to bee no bad, nor vnpolitique way, for conteyning of so large a Commonwealth'.<sup>66</sup> Fletcher's second concern was to raise the question of why a people, particularly the nobility, living in such slavery continued to suffer the tyranny of their Emperor, 'a man would maruell how the Nobilitie and people should suffer themselves to bee brought vnder it, while they had any means to auoid and repulse it'.<sup>67</sup> Bringing these two points to some conclusion, Fletcher surmised 'it appeareth how harde a

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<sup>65</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 29v-34v.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33r-33v.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33v.

matter it were to alter the state of the Russe government' because the nobility displayed no true virtue, authority or strength.<sup>68</sup>

The Emperor placed men of no noble standing as Lords of tetrarchies over the land so they would remain loyal, these were 'but men of a titular dignitie' and were removed every year so they had 'not so much for any care to doo them [the commons] right and iustice, as to keepe them vnder a miserable subiection, and to fliee from them'.<sup>69</sup> Thus the poor 'besides their want of armour and practise of warre (which they are kept from of purpose)...are robbed continually both of their harts and mony' sometimes by a pretence of some service to the common good, sometimes without any reason given, with the result that 'there is no meanes either for Nobilitie, or people to attempt any innouation', against the tyranny of the Emperor's government.<sup>70</sup>

As a result, further degradation of the commons and the commonwealth ensued, 'The great oppression ouer the poore Commons, maketh them to haue no courage in following their trades: for that the more they haue, the more daunger they are in, not onely of their goods, but of their liues also'.<sup>71</sup> The unfortunate consequence of not following their trades and being oppressed by the nobility was to 'maketh the people (though otherwise hardened to beare any toile) to giue themselues to idlenes and drinking: as passing for no more, then from hand to mouth'.<sup>72</sup> As for the Nobility, 'as hauing no farther rewarde nor preferment, whereunto they may bend their endeouours, and imploy themselues to aduaunce their estate', they had no incentive 'to aduaunce any virtue, or to breed any rare excellent qualitie', but rather to languish in their servile subjection, in order to

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<sup>68</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 33v.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 33v-34r.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34r.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 46v.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47r.

avoid 'procuring more danger to themselves, the more they excell in any noble or principall qualitie'.<sup>73</sup>

Through his discussion of provincial government, Fletcher posed the fundamental question of 'how the Emperours themselves can be content to practise the same, with so open iniustice and oppression of their subiects, being themselves of a Christian profession'.<sup>74</sup> This had implications for contemporary interpretations of Russia's identity as a valid Christian, civil land and where to place Russia in a renaissance humanist view of the cosmos, in response to the changes in the newly-discovered worlds of the sixteenth century. Russia could not possibly be presented as a civil, Christian state, despite its few, if dubious, indicators of religious and political civil status. Its tyrannical form of government, the servility of the nobles and the commons and the unexploited goodness of the land precluded it from such civil status. Earlier continental European commentators on Russia had represented the land as decidedly un-Christian, cruel and barbaric, Asian as opposed to European and some even suggested that the Russians were in league with the Turks and Tartars to destroy Christendom.<sup>75</sup> Fletcher, however, in a similar fashion to later commentators recognised the unique ambiguity of Russia's identity with 'the auncient boulder betwixt *Europe* and *Asia*' running right through the land.<sup>76</sup>

### iii.) 'As holie as a Horse': Russia's corrupt Christianity<sup>77</sup>

Fletcher presented a wide-ranging case for the corrupt state of the Russian church in his discussion of their religious rituals, their clergy and their doctrines.

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<sup>73</sup>Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 49r.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33v.

<sup>75</sup> Poe, "A People born to Slavery", pp. 19-21, p. 21 in particular.

<sup>76</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 5v.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104v.



In his treatise, Fletcher drew explicit comparisons between the Russian religion and the 'Popish church'. He noted their ceremony of blessing the water, 'They haue holie water in like vse, and estimation, as the Popish Church hath. But herein they exceede them', to the point of even making their horses drink the blessed water, 'When the men haue done, they bring their horse to the riuer, to drinke of the sanctified water: and so make them as holie as a horse'.<sup>78</sup> Fletcher, along with the majority of other commentators on Russia, also made much of the Russians' idolatry, 'when they fall downe and knock their heads to their idoles, which must be an hundred and seuentie times, iust through the whole night' and particularly the Emperour's practise of worshipping images, 'This he placeth among the rest of his image gods, wherewithall his chamber is decked, as thicke almost as the wall can beare, with lamps and waxe candles burning before them.....bowing himself prostrate vnto them with knocking of his head to the verie ground. Thus he continueth the space of a quarter of an houre'.<sup>79</sup> Their ritual of baptism also bore resemblance to the Popish Church, as did some of their services.<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps, more alarmingly, though not surprisingly given their similarity to the Roman church in religious ritual, 'About the office of Christ, they holde many fowle errours, and the same almost as doth the Popish church'.<sup>81</sup> The great corruption of the Russian church was that it had no learning, and as Fletcher had highlighted in his *epistle dedicatorie* to Queen Elizabeth, no true knowledge of God, 'As for preaching the worde of God, or any teaching or exhorting such as are vnder them, they neyther vse it, nor haue any skill of it: the whole Cleargie being

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<sup>78</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, pp. 103v, 104v.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 105v-106r, 107r-107v.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 91v-96r.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97r.

vtterly vnlearned bothe for other knowledge, and in the word of God'.<sup>82</sup> The clergy were described by Fletcher (and others) as ignorant, godless and ineffectual.<sup>83</sup> The ignorance of the clergy kept the people in such a condition, to avoid innovation, and thus to avoid becoming any threat to the authority of the Emperor.

The Emperor ordered his religion so that it best fitted with his tyrannical rule, 'the clergie, who being ignorant and godlesse themselues, are very warie to keepe the people likewise in their ignorance and blindnesse, for their liuing and bellies sake: partly also from the manner of gouernment settled among them: which the Emperours (whom it specially behoueth) list not to haue chaunged by any innouation, but to retaine that religion that best agreeth with it'.<sup>84</sup> Fletcher connected the ignorance and godlessness of the clergy to the Emperor's master plan of keeping everyone in servility, as if it were part of the Emperor's deliberate policy to keep the clergy that way and thus rule over the ignorant clergy and the ignorant commons, to keep them in their barbarity, rather than encouraging their development.

Fletcher also found the clergy guilty of complicity in the Emperor's conspiracy to keep his people in a servile condition,

As themselues are voyde of all manner of learning so are they warie to keepe out all meanes that might bring any in....To that purpose they haue perswaded the Emperours, that it would breed

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<sup>82</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 84v.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Randolph described them thus 'they eat together and are much giuen to drunkenness; unlearned, write they can; preach they neuer do, ceremonious in their church, and long in their prayers' in 'The ambassage of M. Thomas Randolphe Esquier, from the Queenes Majestie to the Emperour of Russia' in Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1598-1600), p. 376. Cf. Anthony Jenkinson, 'The voyage of Anthony Jenkinson into Russia, wherin Osep Napea first ambassador from the Emperour of Moscouia to Q. Marie was transported into his countrie', Hakluyt, Principall Navigations (1589), p. 344

<sup>84</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 99r-99v.



innouation, and so danger to their state, to haue anie noueltie or learning come within the Realme. Wherein they say but trueth, for that a man of spirit and vnderstanding, helped by learning and liberal education, can hardly endure a tyrannicall gouernment.<sup>85</sup>

Ultimately, Fletcher asserted, the corrupt church existed to serve and support the Emperor's tyrannical government, 'Many other vaine and superstitious ceremonies they haue, which were long and tedious to report. By these it may appeare, how farre they are fallen from the true knowledge and practise of Christian religion: hauing exchanged the worde of God, for their vaine traditions, and brought al to external, and ridiculous ceremonies, without any regard of spirite and trueth, which God requireth in his true worship'.<sup>86</sup> Fletcher's words echoed the infamous criticism of St. Paul against mankind in general and the Romans in particular, who had 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator'<sup>87</sup> and suggested yet again that by English Protestant standards the Russians could not claim to be anything more civil than heretics or heathens, for they were not 'true worshipers [who] will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks'.<sup>88</sup>

In his critique of the Russian church, then, Fletcher was demonstrating the core Reformation concerns with superstition, idolatry and the absence of a learned

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<sup>85</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 85r-85v.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 106v.

<sup>87</sup> Romans, chapter 1, verse 25, *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, found on [Bible gateway](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%201:25;&version=31), <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%201:25;&version=31> (accessed 5 May, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> John, chapter 4, verse 23, *Bible*, Biblegateway, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%204:23;&version=31> (accessed 5 May, 2007).



ministry.<sup>89</sup> On a more sinister note, Fletcher highlighted the danger of the Russian Church's similarity to the Catholic Church. In the language of anti-popery so prevalent in late sixteenth century English culture, the Antichrist was epitomised by the Pope and found at work in the Catholic or 'popish' Church. Thus the Russian Church's affinity to the Popish Church could only mean one thing, Anti-Christ was at work in the land of Russia too, which was correspondingly borne out in the political and social tyranny that the Russian people suffered under.

**vi.) 'For the keeping of the Nobilitie and Commons in an vnder proportion':  
the consequences of corrupt government'<sup>90</sup>**

Sir Thomas Smith in his *De Republica Anglorum* first published in 1583, asserted that 'according to the nature of the people, so the commonwealth is to it fit and proper'.<sup>91</sup> Spenser echoed that sentiment in more aggressive and prescriptive tones in his *A view of the State of Ireland* 'For lawes ought to be fashioned unto the manners and conditions of the people, to whom they are meant, and not to be imposed upon them according to the simple rule of right, for then (as I said) in stead of good they may worke ill, and pervert iustice to extreame iniustice'.<sup>92</sup> Fletcher was, in one sense, engaging with this idea that the 'commonwealth or policie must be according to the nature of the people', but in response to

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<sup>89</sup> Patrick Collinson, The Birthpangs of Protestant England; Religion and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Basingstoke and London, 1988), esp. pp. 94-126 and E. Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars; traditional religion in England, 1400-1580 (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth, p. 20r.

<sup>91</sup> Sir Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum; A discourse on the commonwealth of England, ed. L. Alston, (Cambridge, 1906), p. 28.

<sup>92</sup> Edmund Spenser, A View of the State of Ireland: from the first printed edition (1633), eds. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford, 1997), p. 20. Edmund Spenser's text was written c. 1596, but not published until 1633, although it was circulated in manuscript form, see Andrew Hadfield, 'Spenser, Edmund (1552?-1599)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004, online edn, Oct 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26145> (accessed 5 May, 2007).

Smith's discussion of the positive effects of good government, as opposed to Spenser's prescriptive desire to establish new civil government in Ireland, Fletcher was detailing the detrimental effects of what happened 'if a contrary forme be giuen to a contrary maner of people....so the free people of nature tyrannized or ruled by one against their willes, were he never so good, either faile of corage and wexe servile, or never rest untill they either destroie thir king....or be destroyed themselves'.<sup>93</sup> Russia's situation depicted the former state in which a people failed of courage and became irrevocably servile under a tyrannical ruler.

Fletcher's writing on Russia heralded the plight of such a state where the people lived in servility rather than civility. In his discussion of justice, Fletcher protested not only against the fact that the Russians did not have a written law, as a signifier of their barbarity, but also out of concern for the effects of what it meant to have no written law, particularly for the poor and common people. The oppressed and unjust situation of the poor was exacerbated and prolonged by the fact that they had no recourse to justice, 'which sheweth the miserable condition of this poore people, that are forced to haue them for their law, and direction of iustice, against whose iniustice, and extreame oppression, they had neede to be armed with many good, and strong lawes.'<sup>94</sup> Fletcher displayed a degree of compassion for the poor and commons of Russia not found in other western European accounts of the land. His comments on their situation point to a desire to protect their rights and lament their poor condition. No other account communicates the degree of comprehension and compassion that Fletcher considered in his discussion of the Russian people, nor do any other accounts suggest remedies to the situation.

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<sup>93</sup> Smith, *De Republica*, p. 28.

<sup>94</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 53r.



Although he represented the Russian commons as idle and drunk, full of whoredome and sinfulness, Fletcher also wrote of the people, 'As touching their behaiour, and quality otherwise, they are of reasonable capacities, if they had those means that some other nations haue to traine vp their wittes in good nurture, and learning'.<sup>95</sup> Through his discussion of the state of the commons, Fletcher raised and answered a question that had puzzled commentators in the past and continued to interest the later sixteenth century writers, regarding cultural development, the growth of civility and its connection to government, in this case Russian tyrannical government. Herberstein had posed the question most explicitly in his *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii*, 'It is a matter of doubt whether the brutality of the people has made the prince a tyrant, or whether the people themselves have become thus brutal and cruel through the tyranny of their prince.'<sup>96</sup> Fletcher's text implicitly answered this question by placing blame for the barbarity of the people on the Emperor and his arbitrary government. The emphasis throughout Fletcher's work was on the Emperor's tyrannical schemes to keep the people low, in a servile condition, with no learning and no means to better themselves, encouraging their barbarity.

#### **iv.) Tartars, Scythians and civil heathens**

Fletcher's argument about the corrupting effects of tyranny and false religion was clinched by his unusually lengthy and sympathetic description of the Tartars. The Tartars were 'fearse by nature, but more hardie and blouddy, by continual practise of warre: as men knowing no artes of peace, nor any ciuill

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<sup>95</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 115v.

<sup>96</sup> Sigismund Von Herberstein, *Notes Upon Russia*, 2 vols, trans. and ed. R .H. Major (London, 1851-2), vol. 1, p. 32.



practise'.<sup>97</sup> However, 'they are accounted farre better men then the Russe people' and (unlike the Russians) they were 'iust and true in their dealings: and for that cause they hate the Russe people, whom they account to be double, and false in all their dealing'.<sup>98</sup> In his comparison of Russian and Tartarian peoples, Fletcher evoked the humanist idea that naturally virtuous behaviour, without civility or knowledge of God, was more preferable than a degenerate society, labouring under the weight of tyrannical government; an idea that was employed in the European creation of the 'noble savage' of the New World.<sup>99</sup>

The Tartar peoples were represented as true, the Russians as false, having become degraded and barbaric despite their greater degree of development and despite their recognisable, if heretical, Christian religion. In a similar vein, the behaviour of the English in Russia, without civil discipline, order and religious instruction, disintegrated into barbarity. The conduct of Jerome Horsey was a fine example of this barbarism. The English were becoming (or at least Fletcher feared that they were becoming) as barbaric and sinful as the Russians, although they did not have the excuse of direct tyrannical government, only the excuse of being dislocated from the familiar structures and safety controls of Elizabethan "civil" government and true religion and the need to appease the Russian Emperor.

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<sup>97</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 67v.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 67v, 73v.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of the concept of the 'noble savage' in the New World, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: the meeting of English and Indian cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1980), esp. pp. 1-33 and 141-158 and Bernard W. Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1-36. The Scythians, ancestors of the Tartars, had been designated as 'noble savages' long before the New World identification. Strabo, in particular, praised the simple, virtuous lifestyle of the Scythians and celebrated them as morally superior to the luxuriously degenerate Graeco-Roman way of life. For a classical depiction of the Scythian as noble savage, see Strabo, *Geography*, trans. H. L. Jones, Loeb Classics (London, 1924), Book VII, 3.7, referenced in James William Johnson, 'The Scythian: His rise and fall', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 20, no. 2 (April 1955), pp. 252-253. Horace and Cicero also recognised the Scythian as noble and savage, see Johnson, 'The Scythian', p. 252.

Fletcher stated on the last page of his treatise that the 'false' qualities of the Russians 'make them very odious to all their neighbours, specially to the *Tartars*, that account themselves to be honest and iust, in comparison of the *Russe*'.<sup>100</sup> The closing thought that he left his audience with, alluding to the true nature of the *Tartars*, was not incidental or insignificant for, as we have seen, Fletcher organised the information in his work very thoroughly and went through various stages of revision and re-writing. He intended to close his in-depth political and cultural analysis of the unfamiliar land of Russia with this comment on the Russo-Tartarian relationship,

It is supposed by some that doe well consider of the state of both countries that the offence [the *Tartars*] take at the *Russe* gouernment, and their manner of behaiour, hath beene a great cause to keepe the *Tartar* still Heathenish, and to mislike (as he doeth) of the Christian profession.<sup>101</sup>

Not only did the tyranny of the Russian government and the Russian people themselves (conditioned by such a government) cause oppression, idleness, drunkenness, poverty, degradation, heresy, idolatry and a lack of civility in the Russian people, but far worse than this the tyranny, barbarity and ultimate falsity of the Russians had discouraged a heathen, as yet unsaved people from wanting to join the true Church, the way of salvation. For Fletcher, as a zealous Protestant, for England as the bright, if somewhat fragile, light of true religion, trying to raise its status in western European cultural development and compete in the discovery of new worlds, could Russia have been seen as a potential site for planting civility and true Christianity?

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<sup>100</sup> Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 116v.

<sup>101</sup> ibid.



At a deeper level, Fletcher's positive depiction of the Tartars and his suggestion that the Tartars were antagonistic towards the Russian religion due to Russian falsity reveals the underlying agenda of his treatise. In renaissance humanist thought, the Tartars' ancestry was commonly traced back to the Scythians - the nomadic, savage people group of classical literature, representing the very epitome of barbarism itself.<sup>102</sup> And yet Fletcher praises the Tartars, descendants of the Scythians, as true and brave, in comparison to the Russians.<sup>103</sup> We see, in the conclusion of his work, Fletcher's claim that such a people with no government, who were traditionally seen as the most barbaric on the spectrum of civility, were inherently better than a servile, although potentially civil people overruled by a tyrant, who brought corruption, degradation, decrease and decay.

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<sup>102</sup> For the classical depiction of the Scythian, see Herodotus, *The Histories*, translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt; revised with introductory matter and notes by John Marincola (New edition, London, 1996), Book IV, pp. 217-260, and Ovid, *Tristia*, trans. A. L. Wheeler, Loeb Classics (London, 1924), 11.187. Other people groups were also linked ancestrally and characteristically to the Scythians, for instance 'The pichtes were fierce and Scythian like: much like the Irish', William Warner, *Albion's England* (London, 1586), Book 3, chapter XV, p. 61. For further reading on this subject, see Andrew Hadfield, 'Briton and Scythian: Tudor representations of Irish origins', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 28 (1993), pp. 390-408. The Scots were also referred to as 'the most Scythian-like and barbarous nation, and longest without letters' in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, see Dermot Cavanagh, 'Uncivil Monarchy: Scotland, England and the Reputation of James IV' in Jennifer Richards, ed. *Early Modern Civil Discourses*, (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 146.

<sup>103</sup> John Archer has read Fletcher's *Of the Russe Commonwealth* rather differently. The fundamental argument of his essay, 'Slave-born Muscovites, Sidney, Shakespeare, Fletcher and the Geography of Servitude', is based on a dubious assumption that the Russians, as opposed to the Tartars, were the natural descendants of the Scythians, and in this respect the Russians were therefore the epitome of savagery and destined to always be slaves. Archer outlines Herodotus' savage depiction of the Scythian and provides a brief geography lesson on central Asia in the classical period, referring to it as Sarmatia. Sarmatia was a vast area with boundaries in flux depending on the dominance and nomadism of its inhabitants. Archer suggests that the later Rurikid Russian territories, under Ivan IV and Feodor I, would have fallen into the classical boundaries of Sarmatia, suggesting that it was the Russians who were descended from the Scythians. This is an argument that can be adequately supported in geographical terms due to the vast expanse of the area and its fluid boundaries in time and space, but what Archer fails to mention is that Fletcher himself refers to the *Tartars*, rather than the Russians, as descended from the Scythians: 'They [the Tartars] are the very same that sometimes were called *Scythia Nomades*, or the *Scythian Shepherds*, by the *Greeks* and *Latines*', see Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*, p. 72v. Through this identification, Fletcher makes the Tartars the subject of his 'noble savage' argument - that no government is better than a corrupt one, which had the potential to be civil. Although Fletcher does describe the Russian Emperor's fiscal policy as 'a Scythian...pollicie', the connection is one of similar traits, rather than of ancestral identity. For Archer's misleading argument, see John Michael Archer, 'Slave-born Muscovites, Sidney, Shakespeare, Fletcher and the Geography of Servitude' in *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India and Russia in Early Modern English Writing* (Stanford, California, 2001), pp. 101-138.



Fletcher's criticism was undoubtedly levelled against corrupt forms of government, which had the capacity to be civil, but brought only depravity. Such an argument had relevance not only as a discussion of Russia, of course. The following chapter examines why the printed publication of Fletcher's text may have been so controversial in the immediate context of England in the early 1590s.