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Chapter 5
Jonson's *Volpone* and the
Information Economy of
Anglo-Venetian Travel and Intelligence

Mark Netzloff

England's geographic distance from the Mediterranean world, along with its belated arrival and marginal presence in the region, caused its relations with Mediterranean cultures to be necessarily tenuous throughout the early modern period. A range of subjects therefore played an integral role in circulating political and cultural knowledge of the Mediterranean back to England, not only credentialed agents such as ambassadors but also a variety of informants, including common travelers, merchants, and mariners. The identity of English subjects in the early modern Mediterranean was inextricably tied to their role as the purveyors of information. Because England's political and commercial knowledge of the region depended on oftentimes illicit networks of spies and informants, the idea of *information* was itself an emergent and controversial concept, one that manifested cultural anxieties relating to the forms of agency made possible through England's precarious efforts to extend the nation's interests in the region.

This essay will examine the ways in which the early modern concept of information was produced out of a specific cultural context: the practices of intelligence gathering that served as an integral component of state formation. Studies of information and knowledge production have analyzed information flows predominantly in reference to the state. In this context, the creation of a state bureaucracy managing the flow of information served as a key component enabling early modern states to centralize and consolidate their authority.[1] But information circulated in far more diffuse and unpredictable ways beyond the nation's boundaries. Intelligence gathering was therefore more than just a mechanism that served the early modern state, and the flow of information in extraterritorial settings necessarily operated along more mediated networks of transmission. Information occupied an ambiguous position in relation to state authority. What

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[1] Among discussions of the information state, see John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001).

constituted the "state" were the agents who performed its functions; and, while some of these operations took place along recognized channels, particularly in connection to the reception and interpretation of information, the state's need for intelligence also created an information economy that was characterized by a centrifugal dissemination of state authority. Travelers possessed a unique status in that they occupied several positions in these networks, at various times functioning as the first-hand gatherers of information, the recipients of news conveyed by an informer, or the transmitters of information to state officers back in England.

What I will be describing as an early modern "information economy" took shape over the course of the sixteenth century in response to the institutional needs of the English state in forging diplomatic and commercial links with Europe and the Mediterranean world. Venice, in its unique role as commercial center for Eastern trade as well as hub in the transnational circulation of news and printed materials, served as a frequent nexus in the emergence of networks of information.[2] It is therefore appropriate that Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606), set in Venice, is also populated with three English characters: the young aristocratic traveler Peregrine, the aptly named political aspirant Sir Politic Would-Be, and his wife Lady Would-Be, who demonstrates the extent to which an early modern information economy was not an exclusively masculine domain. Several contexts converge with Jonson's play, which reflects not only the significance of Venice as a space in which England encountered the Mediterranean world but also some of the important transformations to Anglo-Venetian relations that were occurring early in the reign of James I. The play is set at a moment when England's newly forged peace with Catholic European states made widespread travel possible for the first time in a half-century, and discussions of the emergence of the "Grand Tour" often identify the Jacobean era as the period in which a recognizable itinerary of travel first took shape.[3] The association of travel with intelligence-gathering persisted nonetheless, prompting travel texts to insist on distinguishing fashionable and educational travel from the suspect activities traditionally linked with Englishmen traveling in Italy. *Volpone* is situated at a point of transition between two successive traditions found in the travel literature of the period: a waning tradition, of advice literature, which intended to train political agents and elaborate writing regimes that could ensure the accuracy of their information, and an emerging innovation—the first-person

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2   See Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State*, ed. John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 389–419. On Venice's communication networks abroad, see Eric Dursteler, "Power and Information: The Venetian Postal System in the Mediterranean, 1573–1645," in *From Florence to the Mediterranean: Studies in Honor of Anthony Molho*, ed. Diogo Curto et al. (Florence: Olschki, 2009), pp. 601–23.

3   Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations Since the Renaissance* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 108.

travel narrative—that made a belated arrival in the Jacobean period. As reflected in the extensive coverage devoted to Venice in Thomas Coryat's *Crudities* (1611), the first published account of an English traveler's European tour, Venice was the epicenter for English travel in the period.[4]

There were additional political factors that made Venice crucially important for the English in the reign of James I. Shortly following James' accession and the Treaty of Paris establishing peaceful relations with Hapsburg Europe, Venice's relations with the Papacy and other Catholic powers reached a point of crisis during the Venetian Interdict of 1606–07, as the Republic's assertion of civic power over Papal authority and ecclesiastical institutions within Venetian territory nearly led to war with the Papacy and Spain.[5] English authorities, especially Sir Henry Wotton, England's new resident ambassador in Venice, aspired to use this conflict as an opening for forging more extensive links with the Republic. A possible alliance with Venice was seen as an initial step in creating a bloc of Italian states, including Venice and the Duchy of Savoy, that would be hospitable to English interests and increasing presence in the region. Wotton even hoped that this diplomatic advance would lead to Protestant seminaries in the region, institutions to counter the network of English colleges established by Catholic exiles on the Continent. In addition, Wotton mentored Italian Protestant converts, employing them as members of his staff and enlisting them as intelligence agents. He also sponsored their journeys to England, where he hoped they would provide a visible record of England's ascendant influence in the Mediterranean at the expense of Catholic Hapsburg power. The ultimate failure of Wotton's schemes, however, reflects the precarious position that England continued to hold in the region throughout the period.[6]

The comic subplot of Jonson's *Volpone* begins with two Englishmen unexpectedly encountering one another in Venice. The elder of the two, the obtuse political aspirant Sir Politic Would-Be, announces himself with a characteristic, self-deluded emphasis on his cosmopolitanism: "Sir, to a wise man, all the world's his soil" (2.1.1).[7] By the end of the play, Sir Pol's pretensions will be exposed as he is ultimately revealed to be a far more insular figure. But the nature of his affectation illustrates some of the implications of the term "cosmopolitan" itself. As reflected in its first citation in English, by the travel writer James Howell, early moderns defined the cosmopolitan as "cosmopolitic," an idea they understood not

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4   See Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities* (1611; Glasgow: MacLehose, 1905), vol. 2.

5   On the Venetian Interdict, see especially William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); on its effect on information networks, see De Vivo, *Information*, pp. 157–99.

6   Wotton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 1:94.

7   Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Philip Brockbank (New York: Norton/New Mermaids, 1988). All further references to this edition will be cited in-text.

in relation to cultural identity but rather political knowledge and association,[8] a mode of transcultural citizenship that viewed identity primarily in terms of political membership, rights, and alliance. The cosmopolitical position additionally stemmed from the transcultural circulation of knowledge made possible in the first century of print, as print culture enabled political ideas to circulate in more extensive ways beyond national boundaries. The cosmopolitical was therefore concerned not with the subjective effects of cross-cultural exchange but instead with the ways that transcultural communities could be created as an effect of information flows. It is appropriate that Jürgen Habermas argues that a key component in the formation of the public sphere in the early modern period was a transcultural "traffic in news."[9]

Past critical discussions of Jonson's play have often attempted to read the figure of Sir Politic Would-Be as a coded reference to a specific individual, with Sir Henry Wotton most often proposed as a candidate.[10] But analyzing the character as a roman à clef misses the point: Sir Politic does not stand in for an individual but rather represents a particular mode of knowledge production and transcultural information exchange. Offsetting a long-standing cultural anxiety over the dangerous knowledge that could potentially circulate through the hands of travelers, he serves to mock the pretense that travel will render one more "politic." As his name suggests, Sir Politic is merely a "Would-Be," one whose pretensions render the utopian claims of the cosmopolitical in comic terms. In contrast to the cosmopolitical perspective of comparative politics that structures many early modern travel texts, Sir Pol rejects "that idle, antique, stale, grey-headed project / Of knowing men's minds" (2.1.9–10). The political, for him, is confined solely to the seedy underworld of intelligence gathering, as seen with his obsession with plots and conspiracies.

Like "cosmopolitic," the term "politic" similarly possessed a specific sense in the context of early modern political thought. The idea is especially associated with the early modern Italian political thinker Giovanni Botero, whose work on the doctrine of "reason of state" was just gaining currency in England at the time of Jonson's play. In a joke testifying to the dissemination of these political ideas down the social ladder, Sir Politic refers to an improvised "discourse" he had with a Dutch merchant in the course of his day in Venice concerning "*ragion del stato*" (4.1.141), a term invoking the title of Botero's most influential treatise, *Della ragion di Stato*, published in Venice in 1589. Botero was topical in another sense as well: although based in Savoy rather than Venice, these two city-states were both seen as potential allies by Wotton and other English officials.[11] Botero's work is additionally relevant

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[8]   See James Howell, *Epistolæ Ho-Elianæ: The Familiar Letters of James Howell, Historiographer Royal to Charles II*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (London: David Nutt, 1890), p. 8; cf. pp. 373 and 662.

[9]   Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (1962; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 15.

[10]   For a survey and critique of these topical readings, see C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925–52), 9:680–82.

[11]   Wotton, *Life and Letters*, 1:76, 363.

because of the ways that it challenged traditional models of sovereignty. For Botero, politics studied not the power of the prince but the arts of managing the resources of the state, particularly in terms of the productive capacities of the population.[12] He therefore outlined an early model of the information state, analyzing its indebtedness to emerging forms of knowledge, from statistics and demographics to technological improvements to land cultivation. Although Maurizio Viroli sees reason of state as a doctrine that helped to consolidate sovereign power,[13] Botero presented a more decentralized process of knowledge production, one not only organized by the state's experts and representative officials but also dependent on the productive capacities of the population itself.[14]

At Sir Pol's initial meeting with Peregrine, the former's longwinded trumpeting of his cosmopolitan credentials is disrupted with a sudden thought of caution, as Sir Pol realizes he is unsure of the identity of his new acquaintance. It is only after his anxious question—"I hope you travel, sir, with license?" (2.1.14)—is answered in the affirmative that he resumes his monologue, comforted with the knowledge that "I dare the safelier converse" (2.1.15). As reflected in this exchange, travel licenses were an important mechanism through which the English state attempted to maintain its authority over subjects traveling beyond the nation's boundaries.[15] In principle, all travelers, before leaving the country, had to petition members of the Privy Council for a license approving their travel. This degree of state surveillance was prompted by the travel of Catholic subjects across England's borders: not only those departing for the English seminaries on the Continent, or for extended periods of exile or service, but also the even more troubling prospect of those returning to England as newly-ordained Catholic priests. The numerous Royal Proclamations relating to travel generally followed the beginning of the English Mission in 1580, after which time travelers and Catholic exiles were associated with one another in laws and regulations.[16] Given this context, it is understandable

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[12]   Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 237–9, 287ff. As proof of Botero's popularity at the time of *Volpone*, five different editions of his works were translated and published in England from 1601 to 1606.

[13]   Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics, 1250–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[14]   Botero also correlates travel with the circulation of political knowledge: in his dedication, he relates that he was motivated to write his text after finding the ideas of Machiavelli being generally discussed throughout Europe during his travels (*The Reason of State*, trans. P.J. Waley and D.P. Waley [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956], p. xiii).

[15]   On state regulation of overseas travel, see Sara Warneke, *Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England* (New York: Brill, 1995), pp. 51, 162ff.

[16]   For further discussion, see Mark Netzloff, "The English Colleges and the English Nation: Allen, Persons, Verstegan, and Diasporic Nationalism," in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Ronald Corthell, Frances Dolan, Christopher Highley, and Arthur Marotti (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 240–42.

why Sir Politic, in introducing himself to Peregrine, insists that his travel was not motivated by political discontent, realizing the need to distinguish himself from the English Catholic exiles who dominated networks of travel (2.1.6).

The English state's response to the threat of traveling Catholics was also the driving force behind the development of a new genre of travel writing: the travel advice letter. Significantly, the earliest examples of advice texts were written by the officers who were in charge of state intelligence in their successive tenures as Elizabeth I's Principal Secretary: William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham.[17] Even while these texts adopt a paternalistic tone in order to protect young travelers from the dangers of Catholic Europe and the possibilities of conversion, they also tacitly acknowledge the role of travelers in England's growing networks of intelligence gathering. Because authority over travel licenses was delegated to individual officials, counselors like Burghley and Walsingham were able to establish jurisdiction over their own semiautonomous networks of agents. State authority was thereby dispersed among multiple and sometimes competing networks controlled by rival factions at court. This situation was exacerbated under the ambitious courtiers of a succeeding generation, such as Burghley's son Sir Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex, who became more competitive in recruiting informants as a way of gaining leverage over their rivals. The information economy of early modern England was very much a seller's market due to the demand for information from traveling subjects among these competing intelligence networks. English travelers were able to exercise kinds of agency that were unavailable to them in English domestic culture, and this new-found authority led to anxieties regarding the extent of power arrogated by these necessary yet potentially autonomous informants.

In an effort to contain the power of their sources, Burghley's and Walsingham's advice texts adopt a homiletic tone of paternalistic counsel. As a result, the intelligence networks of state power provided the framework through which to represent familial bonds as well as the identity of the subject. If this process was one of subjectification, in the Foucauldian sense of the term, it occurred not through the spectacular imprint of discipline on the subject but rather through an internalization of the workings of surveillance and the flow of information. As Foucault notes, this process—of "governmentality"—is a method that transposes the "meticulous attention of the father towards his family" and introduces it "into the management of the state."[18] State power was thus given shape and affective power as a result of its articulation through a paternalistic framework of familial relations.

But governmentality was also contingent on its mimetic potential, its ability to reproduce a filial loyalty among its subjects. It was therefore constituted through a process that disciplined subjects by causing them to think like the father and by extension conform to the logic of state authority. In inculcating rules for behavior and comportment, a primary disciplinary framework entailed protocols of composition that outlined the means for converting the experience of travel into an informational narrative. Although these methods of writing offered a patriarchal template in which the mimeticism of writing reproduced a conservative social order, the transposable, replicable nature of these frameworks nonetheless extended literacy and political participation to previously subordinate classes. Unlike later travel texts, which have a predominant concern for the formation of gentlemanly conduct, the identity of the traveler was above all a professional one: Burghley and Walsingham outline the contours of a new kind of career, recognizing that the operations of sovereignty depend upon an emergent class, a *noblesse de robe*, whose domain was not military accomplishments or courtly prowess but instead the management and control of information. As a way of regulating information, the experience of travel was made to conform to a set of compositional procedures laid out in advance, a factor that explains why most texts dealing with travel in sixteenth-century England were advice texts rather than first-person narratives.

In *Volpone*, the ultimate revenge exacted by the younger, more elite English traveler Peregrine on his elder counterpart Sir Politic serves to invert the paternalistic hierarchies integral to the travel advice tradition. Similar to the comic rendering of Polonius' advice to Laertes in 1.3 of *Hamlet*, Sir Pol's predilection for offering unsolicited "instructions" (4.1.3) is depicted as an outmoded discourse, a focus solely on "rules for travel" (2.1.112) that Peregrine mocks as an obsession with "the forms … And nothing else" (4.1.39). The contempt expressed toward the (emptily) rhetorical basis of Sir Pol's knowledge nonetheless betrays an anxiety about the forms of mobility made possible through textual knowledge. Whereas Sir Pol's social-climbing wife, Lady Would-Be, lays claim to an extensive knowledge of Italian literature (3.4.81), Sir Pol himself cites that most dangerous of foreign imports—Machiavelli—in endorsing conformity to one's host culture (4.1.26) while also boasting of how his reading of Contarini enabled him to pass for a Venetian citizen within a week of his arrival (4.1.40). In the beast-fable framework of Jonson's play, Sir Politic is not a *politique* but a *pol*, a parrot mimicking the forms of Italian culture. While Lady Would-Be emulates many of the superficial attributes of Venetian consumer culture, Sir Pol attempts to assimilate himself to what he takes to be the abiding characteristic of Venice with his obsession with plots and intelligence.

The malice that Sir Pol elicits from Peregrine has roots in class antagonism as well as intergenerational conflict. Sir Pol can be seen as a comic inversion of the advice tradition, showing the dangerous implications of the mimetic model of identity endorsed in these texts. The fact that Sir Pol can lay claim to having "been consulted with, / In this high kind, touching some great men's sons" (2.1.120–21) demonstrates the extent to which the textual circulation of travel knowledge

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[17] Walsingham's text is published in Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 1:18–20, while Cecil's letters are included in Louis B. Wright, ed., *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 3–6, 9–13.

[18] Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 92.

created vocational opportunities for less elite subjects that even enabled them to usurp the paternalistic role previously monopolized by state patriarchs like Burghley and Walsingham. As an arriviste and social climber, Sir Pol also attempts to distinguish himself from the poor scholars and other social inferiors who serve as tutors and bear wardens for elite travelers. Jonson himself would later become a member of this group, accompanying Sir Walter Ralegh's son Wat on his travels in 1612, as would Thomas Hobbes, as tutor to the Cavendish family, and Giovanni Botero, who at the time of the play's performance was tutor to the Duke of Savoy's sons on their tour of Spain.[19] While the professional role of these intellectuals demonstrates how travel was directly associated with the circulation of ideas, the material means for travel relegated them to a subordinate position within the terms of service and pedagogy. Sir Pol dismisses the unnamed figure who instructed Peregrine prior to his travels, casting him as a "pedant" who lacked the prerequisite "rules" for travel outlined in advice literature (2.1.112), and he critiques the fallen state of affairs in which the English elite must be "Trusting our hopeful gentry unto pedants" (2.1.116). Peregrine, playing along with the joke, casts himself as deprived of "instruction / For my behavior" (2.1.109–10) due to the deficiencies of his tutor, a figure marked by class and foreignness, who merely "cried Italian" to him and repeated "common" rules out of "that vulgar grammar" (2.1.113–14).[20]

Sir Politic is further associated with the advice tradition through an emphasis on the detailed, meticulous manner in which he converts his travel experience into narrative form. Sir Pol prides himself on his writing regime, and, in language evocative of the models outlined in advice texts, emphasizes his own similarly comprehensive, labor-intensive method: in "my diary. / Wherein I note my actions of the day" (4.1.133–4), he claims, "I do slip / No action of my life, thus, but I quote it" (4.1.145–6). Ultimately, however, these documents are revealed to hold not political intelligence but literary diversions, consisting only of "notes, / Drawn out of play-books" (5.4.41–2). It is appropriate that the comic violence exacted on Sir Pol's body is extended to the corpus of his writings. The end of Sir Pol's political aspirations is represented as the demise of his methodical writing, a "funeral of your notes" (5.4.76), as Peregrine mockingly terms it. One of the primary functions of advice texts was to offer compositional models for travelers to follow in writing accounts of their own travels. Burghley, for instance, advises his son Thomas to "keep a book like a journal" in which to write out his daily activities each night.[21] In contrast to a modern, autobiographical sense

of journal writing, this document was always already a public one, as journals could serve as an "advertisement" of the traveler's abilities and be forwarded as intelligence reports to state officials. Sir Politic offers similar recommendations in *Volpone*, imploring Peregrine to "Advertise to the state" and gain promotion for his intelligence (4.1.94). The journals functioned to internalize a paternalistic form of surveillance by forcing the traveler to document his activities abroad in a disciplined regime of daily writing.[22] As Burghley advises his son, he should keep his journal so that "at your return you may see as in a calendar your whole doings and travel."[23] In likening his son's journal to a "calendar," he is comparing its mode of organization to the classificatory system used for intelligence reports and other state documents. The double-entry ledger system of merchants' accounts provided another compositional model for travel writing, and advice texts similarly prescribed keeping two journals: one carried throughout the day in which the traveler could transcribe details as he saw them, and another composed each night in which he could organize this material according to a Ramist system of organization based on "heads," or rubrics, and their subsets.[24] These methods attempted to systematize travel so as to eliminate the subjectivity of writers and thereby establish their information as having the status of "fact." Because they were gathering politically sensitive information, travelers' reports had to be replicable and reliable, and therefore devoid of any personal imprint.

The desire to elaborate objective protocols for travel writing was also prompted by a concern regarding the mediated nature of information gathering and the role of the human agents and networks through which information was not merely transmitted but also potentially transformed.[25] Many travel advice texts urged travelers to seek out information from a range of class groups—merchants, sailors, craftsmen, and servants—subjects who were accessible to communicate with travelers but who could remain inconspicuous due to their marginal social position.[26] In *Volpone*, Sir Pol's description of his average day in Venice is similarly comprised of a number of information exchanges with a range of subjects, from a Dutch merchant in Venice (4.1.141) and a "common sergeant" (4.1.78) to a letter from the cheesemonger who serves as his source in Rotterdam (4.1.56). The role of such mediating agents diminished over the course of the seventeenth

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[19]   David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 189.

[20]   As Brian Parker notes, Jonson is also making a comic reference to his friend John Florio ("Jonson's Venice," in *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance*, ed. J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991], pp. 97–8). Richard Dutton discusses the influence of Florio on Jonson's play in "*Volpone*: Venice in London, London in Venice," in *Mighty Europe 1400–1700: Writing an Early Modern Continent*, ed. Andrew Hiscock (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 137–9.

[21]   Burghley, *Advice*, ed. Wright, p. 6.

[22]   Clare Howard, *English Travellers of the Renaissance* (1914; New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), p. 39.

[23]   Burghley, *Advice*, ed. Wright, p. 6.

[24]   Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550–1800* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), p. 79.

[25]   Relevant to this point is Mary Louise Pratt's discussion of guides and other "travelees" in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 136.

[26]   See, for example, the Earl of Essex's travel advice letter, published in *Profitable Instructions* (1633), pp. 27–8; Montaigne, "Of Cannibals," in *Essays*, ed. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1958), p. 108; Sir Francis Bacon, "Of Negociating," in *Essays*, ed. Michael J. Hawkins (London: J.M. Dent 1972), p. 144.

century, when, following the publication of the travel accounts of Fynes Moryson, Thomas Coryat, and others, travel writing became synonymous with the model of the published, first-person travel narrative. In demarcating travel writing as the domain of the eyewitness, the intrepid and often solitary observer, subsequent texts elided the networks of information that produced these narratives, including the textual traces left by the contributions of those reliable yet often suspect informants whose labor made possible the early modern information economy.

The effective end of the advice literature tradition coincides with the performance of Jonson's play, as the final text in this genre was published the very same year: Thomas Palmer's *An essay of the meanes how to make our travailes into forrain countries the more profitable and honourable* (1606).[27] Palmer attempts to separate travel from its earlier association with intelligence gathering in order to differentiate the "honorable" traveler from his more suspect counterparts. Yet even he progressively concedes the traveler's necessary and unavoidable tasks of political intelligence (sig. M3). As a way of reconstituting the information economy as a safe domain for the elite, he emphasizes the informal, gentlemanly aspects of information gathering. The traveler should remain a "Gentleman" and distance himself from the traits of "ambition" and "policie" associated with a "*Machiavel*" (sig. S1v). Rather than contacting the Privy Council prior to travel, which gives the impression of an underlying political motive for the journey, he instead merely passes along whatever information comes his way (sig. R4).

Although the traveler enters into an economy of information at one end of the circuit of exchange, buying intelligence on the open market, Palmer insists on maintaining monopolies within the English market: only members of the Privy Council may be purchasers of this information, and a traveler must enter the service of a single counselor rather than shopping his wares among competing officials (sig. R4). Although Palmer cannot name Sir Robert Cecil openly, his stipulation reflects the monopoly that James I's chief minister had assumed over the circulation of political intelligence, particularly in the immediate wake of the Gunpowder Plot. Yet even in this more centralized information state, the traveler nonetheless serves a crucial role in maintaining and reproducing circuits of information. Palmer advises the traveler, following his return to England, to recruit other travelers for intelligence. Inserting himself as a middleman in these networks of information exchange, he may then use his recruits to ensure the reliability of his own accounts, keeping abreast of "dayly intelligence" so as to keep his knowledge "in continuall tilthe [*sic*]" (sig. S2). To assume the role of subject, one must gain a proprietary interest in the production and circulation of intelligence, and become the purveyor—not merely the conveyor—of this commodity.

Palmer's text, like Jonson's *Volpone*, is shaped by anxieties over the role of Catholic exiles following the Gunpowder Plot. Palmer acknowledges that his entire project was motivated by a desire to counter England's reputation as a

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[27] Thomas Palmer, *An essay of the meanes how to make our travailes into forrain countries the more profitable and honourable* (1606). All citations of Palmer will appear in-text.

supplier of fugitive subjects, "irregular travelers," such as Catholic exiles, who have traveled without license and "haue communicated with all euill and mischiefe in their trauiles" (sig. A1v). The category of the irregular traveler represents a contradiction intrinsic to Palmer's project: how to ensure the honor and loyalty of traveling subjects while still preserving the economy of information they help sustain. Palmer therefore creates two additional categories of intelligencer: the base intelligencer, or double agent, to spy on expatriated irregular travelers, as well as an "honorable" intelligencer, a gentleman traveler able to maintain surveillance over his double agent counterpart. This latter group assumes a position of paternalistic authority; having internalized the precepts offered in texts like those by Walsingham and Burghley, the honorable intelligencer now wields this power himself, enabling the state to extend its authority abroad over its "irregular," potentially unruly subjects.

If Palmer's labored classification of travelers takes on comic proportions, it is only appropriate that the travel advice tradition which culminates with his text should be reworked into comedy in Jonson's depiction of Sir Politic Would-Be. As Peregrine notes upon meeting Sir Politic, he "would be a precious thing / To fit our English stage" (2.1.57–8). Jonson's play, performed the same year that Palmer's text appeared in print, reflects the extent to which the Elizabethan information economy was transformed in the early Jacobean period. England's new resident embassies assumed a more direct and authorized control over the circulation of news and intelligence, thereby limiting the need for more illicit networks of information.[28] The English state centralized its authority over the circulation of intelligence in a domestic context as well, and state officers no longer maintained separate intelligence networks under their own jurisdiction. As traveler-spies lost their political currency, travel began to assume the contours of the later Grand Tour, with education and cultivation becoming the primary motives of young, fashionable travelers. This emerging market led to the publication of the earliest first-person travel narratives by Coryat, Moryson, and others, texts that in turn laid a textual foundation for a recognizable, consumerist itinerary of travel on the Continent.

Jonson's choice to situate Sir Politic in the context of Venice is in keeping with the role of the city-state as a nexus for political intelligence in the European and Mediterranean worlds.[29] The information economy that converged in Venice is transformed in the play into Sir Pol's comic "projects," from his effort to secure a monopoly at favorable rates for importing Dutch "red herrings" to Venice (4.1.51) to other plots that he plans to reveal to Venetian authorities, from the prohibition of tinder boxes, for preventing arson-based espionage (4.1.86–91), to the use of a mechanized water-works, fueled by onion water, for detecting plague-infested

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[28] For an expanded discussion of this context, see Mark Netzloff, "The Ambassador's Household: Sir Henry Wotton, Domesticity, and Diplomatic Writing," in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (London and New York: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 155–71.

[29] See especially De Vivo, *Information*, pp. 72–85.

ships arriving in harbor (4.1.110). At the heart of this satire is a dismissal of any possible agency on the part of a figure not directly affiliated with the state. Instead of gaining progressive access to the inner echelons of the Venetian state, Sir Pol's final humiliation consists of being literally driven into his shell, as he is forced by Peregrine to hide within a tortoise shell to evade arrest as a spy.

Sir Pol's attempt to impose his authority on his younger protégé also inverts Thomas Palmer's hierarchy of travelers, with "honorable" intelligencers maintaining control over their base counterparts. The agency appropriated by figures such as Sir Pol through travel and intelligence gathering challenges definitions of English nationhood along with class hierarchies. Peregrine revealingly jokes that Sir Pol's exploits threaten to be included in nationalistic textual accounts like Hakluyt and "registered, for truth" (5.4.6). The symbolic violence levied against Sir Pol thereby serves to put him back in his textual as well as political place, with his head in his "politic shell" (5.4.89). The curious staging of Sir Pol's ignominious exit hidden under a tortoise shell has often puzzled readers and audiences. But it serves as an appropriate device to embody the limitations of Sir Pol's "intelligence," since, as Ian Donaldson notes, "the tortoise is an emblem of policy: safe so long as it remains within its shell, vulnerable as soon as it ventures any part of its body outside."[30]

The flurry of intelligence from Venice was particularly acute in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, an event that put a severe strain on James' peace policies as well as a possible alliance with Venice. The Plot exposed the state's gaps in intelligence and reinvigorated the need for information from the Continent.[31] Due to his unique position as a Catholic convert who was acquainted with many of the conspirators, Jonson himself was questioned by authorities following the Plot and recruited to gather intelligence from the Venetian embassy in London.[32] As Richard Dutton has extensively shown, Jonson reflects on these contemporary events throughout the play.[33] After such a recent encounter with the coercive reach of the information state, Jonson's antipathy toward intelligencers was especially acute in this period. Spies, as Jonson addresses them in an epigram, "are lights in state, but of base stuffe," who are ultimately discarded by the state when they have served their ends.[34] Jonson elsewhere termed the spies preying on English Catholics as a "*Pooly*, or *Parrot*," a term evocative of Sir Pol's own mimicking of a logic of intelligence.[35] Sir Pol's obsession with plots can be seen as a satire on

the mobilization of the population as part of anti-Catholic surveillance following the Gunpowder Plot. As with anti-Catholic hysteria of the time, Sir Pol sees plots everywhere, even in the dining habits of the fool Stone, whom he thinks has "received weekly intelligence" from the Low Countries, the imputed site of an international conspiracy behind the Plot, in the form of cabbages, muskmelons, and oysters, with a cipher even hidden in a trencher of meat and responses communicated via toothpicks (2.1.68–80). The panic over cultural boundaries that manifested itself in English culture at the time takes the comic form of a whale appearing in the Thames; this marvel is seen as an extension of Catholic plots and called "Spinola's whale," a reference to the head of Spanish forces in the Low Countries: as Sir Pol exclaims, "Will they not leave these projects?" (2.1.52).

Similar to how the start of the English Mission had prompted an earlier round of travel regulations in the 1580s, the Gunpowder Plot provoked another series of travel restrictions attempting to limit the dangerous mobility of Catholic subjects. One piece of legislation, a proclamation "touching Passengers" from August 1606, targeted a surprising and overlooked population: female travelers.[36] Studies of early modern travel have generally neglected to acknowledge the presence of female travelers in this period. Their absence from critical discussions is partly attributable to the fact that no woman published a travel narrative in this period, and relatively few women are even mentioned in manuscript travel accounts, reinforcing the long-standing presumption that the Grand Tour was an exclusively masculine experience. But the one cross-cultural domain in which women held a visible prominence was as members of the English Catholic exile community in Europe. References to female travelers therefore offered a coded way to refer to female Catholic exiles, a context that renders intelligible the position of Lady Would-Be in Jonson's play.

Whereas Sir Politic offers a satire of the information economy that motivated English travel throughout the Elizabethan period, Lady Would-Be testifies to the advent of fashionable travel in the reign of James I and the progressive ascendancy of a consumerist model of the Grand Tour. She, too, comes to Venice for "intelligence," but of "tires, and fashions, and behavior / Among the courtesans" (2.1.27–9). Her role speaks to a conventional gendering of fashion—and fashionable travel—with the figure of the woman standing in for the luxury shopping attendant to the rise of the modern city. By studying Venetian courtesans as her model, she also repeats the association of the traveling woman with sex, the equation of traversing geographic boundaries with an open, promiscuously unbounded body.[37] This idea is metonymically extended not only to her unbridled tongue—"the everlasting voice" in "perpetual motion" (3.5.4, 6)—but also to her indiscriminate consumption of Italian literature (3.4.79–81, 86–97) and other

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30   Ian Donaldson, "Jonson's Tortoise," *Review of English Studies* 19 (1968): 163. This association, deriving from Livy, was also found in Venetian *commedia dell'arte* (Parker, "Jonson's Venice," pp. 101–2).

31   For further discussion, see Mark Netzloff, "Catholic Exiles and the English State After the Gunpowder Plot," *Reformation* 15 (2010): 151–67.

32   Herford and Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, 1:41.

33   Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson,* Volpone *and the Gunpowder Plot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

34   Jonson, "Epigram 59. On Spies," in Herford and Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, 8:45.

35   Jonson, "Epigram 101. Inviting a Friend to Supper," in Herford and Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, 8:65.

36   "Proclamation touching Passengers," 23 August 1606, in James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1:147.

37   Jerome Turler's *The Traveiler* (1575) similarly correlated travel with uncontrolled female sexual desire: "Whereupon the Tragicall and Comicall Poets, when they bring in any far traueling Woman, for the most parte they feine her to be incontinent" (p. 9).

markers of Italian culture. In addition, Lady Would-Be's presence complicates some of the traditional features of the "myth of Venice" that circulated in early modern English culture.[38] Ideas of Venetian "liberty" are transformed from a cosmopolitical ideal of political citizenship to a bathetic version of sexual license and intrigue, as seen with her jealousy over the fabricated news of Sir Pol appearing in public with a courtesan (3.5.20). Because she intrudes on the homosocial spaces of both travel and political intelligence, Lady Would-Be serves as a convenient scapegoat for the underlying materialism of cross-cultural exchange. Yet as this discussion has shown, the information economy of travel and information gathering was not only rooted in the economic terms of exchange but also provided a means for political knowledge and agency for a variety of marginalized groups marked by class, confessional identity, and gender.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The information economy of English travel was further transformed over the course of the early seventeenth century, as print culture ensured that the circulation of news and information gained an increasingly public status. Information was consequently no longer confined to the networks of state intelligence and entered the domain of an institutional framework, a "news trade." The earliest examples of serialized newspapers in England derived from the demand for information from the Continent, a market that began with interest in the French civil wars of the 1590s and accelerated in the course of the Thirty Years' War, leading in the 1620s to the first news corantos published in England.[39] This period also overlaps with the initial publication of the earliest first-person travel narratives, a development that occurred just as news-sheets were beginning to take over a central domain of travel writing: the conveying of intelligence from the Continent. From this point forward, the circulation of news became more pervasive, more inclusive, and increasingly more public. It is no coincidence that reports from travelers largely disappeared from the State Papers by the end of the seventeenth century.[40] As news and information entered the public sphere, they also became the specialized field of private individuals who were not agents of the state. At the same time, the traffic in intelligence became the province of professionals, of diplomats and spies, and was restricted to the monopolistic domain of the state and its official agents. The political significance of an early modern information economy receded even further following the creation of the Royal Post in 1635.[41]

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[38]　For an extended discussion, see David C. McPherson, *Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Myth of Venice* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990).

[39]　Among other sources, see Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 98–160.

[40]　Warneke, *Images*, p. 50.

[41]　Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, eds., *Letterwriting in Renaissance England* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004), p. 123.

As the state "went postal," the intersubjective, epistolary channels through which news and intelligence circulated lost their liminal position, one that traversed public and private spheres, so that the boundaries demarcating state service from private correspondence were ever more sharply drawn.

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