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*Michael*  
MURRIN

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“Both immensely erudite and fun to read, Michael Murrin’s *Trade and Romance* chronicles three stages of Europe’s premodern commercial engagements with Asia: the traversing of the Silk Route, the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, and the exploration by Englishmen and Russians of a northern land route to China. It examines, in turn, the role of Asia in inspiring the Western literary imagination. Writing as a geographer who has seen at first hand the Central and South Asian sites and terrain reached by medieval and Renaissance merchants, Murrin examines the relationships between trade and heroic adventure, between geographical distance and fantasy. Spanning the texts of Marco Polo, Chaucer, *Huon of Bordeaux*, Boiardo, Marlowe, Camões, Mendes Pinto, and Milton, Murrin demonstrates how the experiences of traders—the vast distances traversed, the risks and hardships endured, the wondrous sights and strange peoples encountered, the wealth and exotic products brought back—could be transformed by literature into the stuff of heroism and romance. Beneath the seemingly incredible marvels of romance fiction lurk real historical places, human actors, and events; literary genres designed for aristocratic soldier heroes find themselves accommodating, often uneasily, commercial actors and activities. Murrin is a good storyteller. *Trade and Romance* will be enjoyed not only by historians and literary scholars for whom it will be essential reading, but also by a broader educated public that shares Murrin’s interest in historical geography.”

David Quint, Yale University

“A man of many travels, Michael Murrin brings together his years of patient detective work and scholarship to explain how the mystery, wealth, and glitter of distant Asia added a new romance dimension to Renaissance epic poetry. Each chapter sets off through various textual labyrinths in quest of hidden meaning, whether tracing the influence of the Mongol conquests in Asia, the enterprises of the Portuguese around Africa to India, or the English explorations of the 1550s through Russia. The sometimes gnomic but always alluring style of the book is a master teacher’s tool to make us feel the ‘dark cold and empty desolation’ faced by traders in distant lands before Professor Murrin reveals the ‘deeper communion’ that our new knowledge of places and vast distances reveals. Literary history will have to be rewritten, for *Trade and Romance* gives us new worlds, different visions beyond the Mediterranean and the Americas.”

Charles Ross, Purdue University

“How travel feeds literature and feeds on literature: this could well be a subtitle for *Trade and Romance*, a book that fires our imagination about places and peoples at the same time as it enhances scholarship. The section on the Portuguese enters both deeply and audaciously into central issues of Renaissance literature and imperial history, happily supplementing work from Murrin’s earlier books *Allegorical Epic* and *History and Warfare*. As a climax to the section, the new interpretations of the sea-storm and its mythological ending in *Os Lusíadas* will stand as one of the most brilliant moments in the history of Camões criticism.”

H. J. S. Alves, University of Évora

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