

Carew presents his informant's herpetological 'conceit' as one of the more questionable ones. While it derives from ancient beliefs still 'retained' by the 'countray people', it clearly conflicts with Carew's own sense of educated, intellectual superiority. When one of these people gives him such a token — a blue and yellow stone ring — as a snakebite remedy, he accepts it with tolerant amusement and dismisses it with a Latin tag, an educated man's remedy against foolish<sup>15</sup> conceits: *Penes authorem sit fides* ('If one can believe the author').<sup>16</sup> In this way, he exercises his reporter's mandate. He must report this folk belief because he must not 'conceale any truth;' but he must also reject that belief because he must 'auerre no falsehood'.

For these reasons, Carew is anxious to document the sources of this passage to make it the more credible to his reader. A specific person — one of the 'countray people' — gave him the token and explained to him its significance. Carew thus held in his hand an example of the blue stone ring with the yellow figure of a snake and so he can claim to report what he has actually seen. He likewise offers convincing details about the discomfiture of the 'merry Cornish gentleman', and even if he did not personally witness his snakebitten tongue, he provides specific details that only someone close to the episode would know (i.e., he breaks out the snake's teeth, carries the reptile in his bosom, terrifies ladies by letting it lick his spittle, and tells us specifically that he was bitten on the tongue that has swollen so large that his mouth could scarcely contain it). Finally, he identifies the hapless man as Martin Trewynard, a Cornish gentleman who has left traces of lawsuits over property disputes and inheritance in Stannary Courts and Chancery records.<sup>17</sup> In both cases, the details and documentation in these episodes put Carew very convincingly at the source of the information he passes on.

Elsewhere, he frequently accepts second-hand information into his *Survey*. Often he cites his sources by name, if they are reputable gentlemen or, better still, kinsmen: 'This I learned by the report of Sir *Peter Carew*, the elder of that name' (102<sup>v</sup>). He never identifies those of the lower classes by name, even if he may accept their testimony as valid. He is content, for instance, to report the practice of 'bowssening' at St Nunnes well to unidentified witnesses: 'I wil, (if you please) deliuer you the practise, as I receyued it from the beholders' (123<sup>r</sup>). Often, he identifies his informants still more obliquely, particularly if they are common workmen: 'I haue receiued credible information, that some three yeeres sithence, certaine hedgers deuiding a crosse on the sea side hereabouts, chanced, in

their digging, vpon a great chest of stone' (136<sup>v</sup>–137<sup>r</sup>). The rural informant who presents Carew with a blue stone ring and a story about snakes is perhaps still more distanced. Carew clearly does not believe that the information he receives is credible, but it serves very well to illustrate the characteristically foolish 'conceits' of the 'country people'. He takes his self-professed role as 'a reporter' seriously, and he therefore usually seeks to make his sources, and their reliability, clear.

By contrast, Carew never claims to have personally witnessed a 'Guary miracle'. The 'Country people' may well 'flock from all sides, many miles off, to heare & see it', but Carew does not. Had he actually seen such a performance, one might expect him to tell us specific details about what he saw performed in such an 'earthen Amphitheatre:' a play of the Creation, perhaps, or of a particular saint, or of Arthur. Instead, we get 'some scripture history', and he further places the amphitheatre not in a particular site but 'in some open field', a description that further distances him from actual observation. The country people, he tells us, come to the Guary not for its scriptural history, but because such plays appeal to their characteristically strange and foolish conceits: 'they haue therein, deuils and deuices, to delight as well the eye as the eare'. But what devils and devices has he personally seen and heard? As he does in rejecting the snakebite remedy, he dismisses the appeal of the Guary with a university-educated man's reproach: they contain 'that grossenes, which accompanied the Romanes *vetus Comedia*'.<sup>18</sup>

All this suggests considerable distance between Carew and the performance of a Guary. This is no eyewitness account peppered with personally observed details as he does elsewhere in order to make it abundantly clear what he has personally seen and heard. Here he seems to be relying upon a report or reports that he has heard about from someone somewhere. No witness is identified, neither country person nor merry Cornish gentleman. The source or sources of the anecdote plainly are at some distance from Carew's telling.

The absence of sources in the 'Guary miracle' passage should therefore alert us to some distance between Carew's knowledge and the sources of that knowledge. This distance from his sources of information likewise characterises those details that might seem very specific: he tells us that the 'earthen amphitheatre' he describes has 'the diameter of his enclosed playne some 40. or 50. foot'. Although this is considerably smaller than those *plains-an-guary* still extant at St Just and Perranzuloe, such 'playing places may not have been uniform in size', as Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S.