Cheshire merchant Charles Leche, whose account-book includes a copy of Sir John Harington’s ‘briefe and summarie allegorie of Orlando Furioso’ and some recipes for the doctoring of sick hawks.

Vine argues for the ‘hidden structure’ of Fitzjames’s ‘Ommegatherum’, seeing it as comprising ‘second-order notes’, and this is convincing. He might, I think, have drawn a clearer theoretical line between cases like this, where a miscellany either shows signs of an ordering process or appears to have been prepared in the expectation of future reordering, and cases—there must surely have been some—where a miscellany is so simply a gallimaufry or hodgepodge that the concept of ‘miscellaneous order’ does not apply well to it. But perhaps this line can never be applied with perfect confidence in practice. And overall, Miscellaneous Order balances the theoretical and the practical most admirably. This really is an exceptionally good book: a delight to read and full of information and insight.

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‘One foot in sea and one on shore’, sings Balthasar in Much Ado About Nothing, expressing the state of flux characterizing so much early modern drama. London’s stages teemed with travelling, journeying, voyaging, venturing, and trafficking, reflecting both an epistemologically expanding world and England’s expansionist ambitions on this wider stage. Claire Jowitt and David McInnis’ Travel and Drama in Early Modern England addresses both these perspectives, investigating travel and its representation in early modern theatre. Building on recent work by contributors Richmond Barber, Anthony Parr, and Jowitt herself, as well as in volumes like Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michèle Willems’ Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time (Cambridge, 2006), this collection offers material, historical, and theoretical entry points. The editors have brought together essays throwing light on the varied stakes of ‘journeying plays’, giving useful definitions of key terms such as this, ‘travel drama’ and ‘voyage drama’. Coupling this terminological disentanglement with an expanding canon of just what might be considered ‘journeying plays’, the volume usefully illuminates intimate connections between travel and drama by examining questions of colonialism and otherness, the status of the traveller themselves, material questions related to cartography, and the uncanny ways in which the self and future confront one another on the early modern stage.

Many of the essays adopt historicist or theoretical approaches to travel as means of exploring relationships, colonialization, and otherness. Barbour and Bernhard Klein investigate the long-standing scholarly debate over whether Hamlet and Richard II were performed onboard the East India Company’s flagship the Dragon, considering the idea of ‘shipboard theatricality’ (151) in a reading that aligns maritime practice, and the writing of it, with drama. Juxtaposed alongside Barbour and Klein’s ‘pre-colonial’ encounters (163), Emily C. Bartels’ chapter instead considers how The Tempest ‘dramatis[es] the second-wave encounters’ (176) between the established and newly arrived Europeans on the island. In this reading, colonial encounters function to support a character’s claim to power, with Shakespeare’s decision to present them only as ‘narratives, indeed within a layering of narratives’ seeming to obliterate the ‘importance and singularity’ (171) of each encounter.

If these chapters, like those of Andrew Gordon and Anthony Parr, focus on the (object of the) encounter, others instead deal with travellers themselves. David McInnis reconsiders early modern audiences’ relationships to travellers by showing how positively charged characters on the stage travel for pleasure, allowing the audience to sympathetically identify with them, accompanying them on their vicarious journeys. Another point of
reconsideration is provided by Daniel Vitkus, who offers a convincing reading of four dramatized early modern historical figures as emblematic of an emerging, mercenary cosmopolitanism. These rogues were (near-)contemporaries of the playwrights and audiences, their real-life transgressions still well-known and acutely relevant politically. However, they seem not to have been condemned on stage, with Vitkus persuasively relating these figures to a burgeoning sense of ‘a potentially unruly English identity’ (145) brought about by the emergence of a transnational mercantile world view. Travel by sea made possible ‘a new type of ambitious historical agency’ (138), a sense of agency that brought the audience to cheer for the rogues on London’s stages, Vitkus argues, as they themselves adopted the impetus of ‘imperial desire’ (146).

Themes of expansion are also considered in Ladan Niayesh’s chapter, which reads Tamburlaine in light of advances in cartography. Centring on the ways in which maps function as symbols of (spatial) dominion, linking the figures of cartographer, playwright, and actor, Niayesh considers the extent to which domain is domination in the early modern period. The audience shares in the ‘panoptic’ (51) visions presented, just as Niayesh argues that the viewer of a chorographic map could achieve a conquest of sorts. A different reading of chorography is found in Julie Sanders’ essay, which focuses less on control than exploring how this emerging genre of mapmaking allows for multiplicity of place and perspective. Reading Henry IV as a play of perambulation that writes England pluralistically, foregrounding regional spaces and identities, Sanders’ chapter is particularly convincing in its concluding case study, which shows drama as a conduit between regional and metropolitan, a cultural expression capable of foregrounding the vernacular in London performances and the topical in household performances.

A number of essays figure the encounters staged by journeying plays as ones between the self and the future. This argument is made most explicitly by the valuable examinations of form provided by Claire Jowitt and Clare McManus, respectively, who both consider theatregrams and travel as ways of inducing self-reflexion. Jowitt reads the cultural encounter in Davenant as a trope that, over the course of the playwright’s entire corpus, becomes ‘versatile and nuanced’ (243) for expressing political meaning, one which he employs critically in the politically charged Interregnum and Restoration periods. This reading brings valuable new depth to Davenant as a social and political commentator. Likewise, McManus demonstrates how two different travel-related theatregrams (the arrival of an attractive man, and the seductive persuasion of a female ruler), serve to bestow additional context, meaning, and connotations to three plays (The Changeling, The Island Princess, and Othello) with ties to the period of the Palatine crisis. What emerges from this discussion is a vision of theatrical culture in which stage travel can be seen as a ‘mode rather than a genre’ (223), one which is utilized as a lens for self-reflexion.

In these two concluding chapters, we see how Travel and Drama in Early Modern England manages to be at once unified and multifocal. Themes of colonialism, anxiety and expansionism, linguistic instability, and power are constant touchstones throughout the collection. However, somewhat like theatregrams, these themes carry various connotations and meanings within their different contexts, the chapters in which they appear, and the texts to which they are applied. As such, this important volume presents a broad discussion about travel on the early modern stage, fittingly for a subject that evoked such different emotions and was an emblem for so many different things. Situating Renaissance drama firmly within the ‘global turn’, new angles and approaches for further investigation also appear, showing the ways in which the discipline continues to produce important new insights. As Balthasar continues: ‘to one thing, constant never’.

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