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‘Let me go with him’ (1.3.260).<sup>1</sup> With these five words, Desdemona opens herself up to the vagaries of travel. We might also understand her to be opening herself up to ‘travail’, i.e. childbirth: these words, after all, are spoken on her wedding night, which matters of state and the wrath of her father have curtailed. Desdemona’s decision to refuse to ‘reside’ (242) with her father and endure ‘a heavy interim’ (259) at home is a transgression too far, Shakespeare’s play seems to argue. Joining her husband in Cyprus, in a garrison populated almost entirely by men, leaves her open to accusations of multiple transgressions: in Venice she can claim to be ‘subdued / Even to the very quality of my lord’ (251–2), while in Cyprus she is labeled ‘the general’ (2.3.310); in Venice she is ‘a maiden never bold’ (1.3.95), but in Cyprus she gets called ‘the whore of Venice’ (4.2.91). Had she remained at home, she may well have endured a ‘heavy interim’, an image that surely connotes the weight of pregnancy. Abroad, she endures the weight of her husband as he smothers her. Travel and travail, terms so often interlinked in early modernity (terms sometimes indistinguishable, given the fluidity of spelling), here cancel each other out. Desdemona travels; hence, it seems, she cannot travail, as the form her murder takes violently makes clear.

Desdemona is a key figure in Patricia Akhimie and Bernadette Andrea’s brilliant essay collection, *Travel and Travail: Early Modern Women, English Drama, and the Wider World*. In five of the collection’s sixteen essays she is a central figure, as well as in the introduction. A cautionary tale she may be, but as this collection makes clear, she is not an outlier. We should perhaps remember that nobody in *Othello* thinks it is a bad idea for her to ‘go with him’, even if Iago sees it as an opportunity for revenge. While Desdemona’s story echoes the prohibitions against female travel we find in print, we can (thanks in part to this collection) locate women who pushed against such prescriptiveness, or ignored it altogether, in ultimately far more successful ways than *Othello* allows. To do this work, *Travel and Travail* argues, we need more creative and theoretical entry points to our archival resources. These approaches may evolve out of material cultural theory, compare sources in continental archives, reimagine the body in

the gaps between archival traces, and apply deconstructive reading practices that think through and with issues of class, race, religion, and gender as well as with and against received notions of what constitutes the genre of travel writing.

The first half of the book focuses on women who traveled. Essays on the East India Company (EIC) bring to light case studies of women who both flouted restrictions on travel and found themselves delimited by Company policy, but whose actions and accounts troubled the paths and forms that women's lives were supposed to take in the early modern period. Richmond Barbour contextualizes Desdemona by comparing her plight to that of Anne Broomfield Keeling, whose petition to join her husband Sir William Keeling was denied, in response to which she boarded the East India Company flagship while several months pregnant. Her challenge to EIC dictates may have ultimately been unsuccessful, but, as Barbour argues, Keeling's plight serves to expose *Othello's* pessimism, since she (unlike Desdemona) 'took to exercise her own sexuality and reproductive agency' (33). Karen Robertson's chapter recovers the life of Mariam Khan, the Mughal Armenian woman who married two EIC captains, in a fascinating historical account. Three essays focus on women in the Sherley entourage. Amrita Sen considers the ways in which their class, ethnicity, and religion complicate our picture of the prohibitions against female travel, even in their absence from the imperial archive. Carmen Nocentelli posits that the term 'consort', used in relation to Lady Teresa Sampsonia Sherley in Latin and Italian sources to connote an equal partner free from accusations of transgression, broadens our vocabulary for describing female travel in this period. Bernadette Andrea establishes the significance of a relic of the corpse of St Teresa of Avila, which Teresa Sherley carried with her in widowhood, and more broadly foregrounds the ways in which material culture was crucial to networks of female relationships in and across Christian and Muslim contexts.

The last three essays in this section move away from the East India Company. Patricia Akhimie focuses on the 1650 manuscript 'The Voyage of the Lady Catherine Whetenall', in particular Catherine's visit to Loreto. Through a deft analysis of the account, she argues that while the text deems male travelers to be spiritually transformed by pilgrimage, it imagines women were transformed into objects by their experience. Elisa Oh turns further westward to consider Pocahontas, innovatively reading her gestural performance during her time in London. The final essay, Laura Williamson Ambrose's on Lady Anne Clifford, stays closer to home but is no less expansive. Arguing that her records constituted a new form of 'travel writing', Ambrose contends moreover that they were a way for Clifford to shape her (highly fraught) legacy and memorialize her life and family.

The second section attends to drama. Following a useful chapter by Laura Aydelotte that explores the geographical expansiveness of a number of female characters across the corpus (measured by their evocations of specific place names), three essays return to Desdemona: Stephanie Chamberlain lays out the ways in which female travel becomes eroticized in *Othello* and beyond; Michael Slater reads the play in terms of courtesy literature and its implication for gendered travel; and Eder Jaramillo compares Desdemona to Miranda in *The Tempest*, contending that the latter represents Shakespeare's return to an idea of female travel as fraught (albeit Miranda avoids Desdemona's fate).

The remaining four chapters move beyond *Othello*. In the richest chapter of the second half of the collection, Ruben Espinosa reads Cleopatra in the context of black Madonnas, returning the collection to Loreto to provide yet more context for Akhimie's earlier essay. Dyani Johns Taff tends rigorously to the travel/travail pun in *Pericles* and its very different iteration in Cavendish's *The Blazing World*. Susan Tartamella's chapter argues for the biblical book of Ruth as 'one of the paradigmatic accounts of female companionate travel' (292) and shows how it subtends Rosalind and Celia's journey in *As You Like It*. Gaywyn Moore closes the section with a reading of *The Fair Maid of the West, Part 1*, whose character Bess fittingly counters the pessimistic interpretation of female travel in *Othello*. While the section on drama is perhaps less innovative than the first section, its usefulness resides both in its analysis of the drama and in the models of approach that might subsequently be applied to other female characters who travel: Portia, Nerissa, and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Innogen in *Cymbeline*, and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, to name only Shakespearean examples.

Rather than sum up what has come before, Mary C. Fuller closes the collection in her afterword by putting forward another case study: Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. By so doing, Fuller highlights one of the key insights of this collection and one of its connective threads — what she calls the need to interrogate 'the informational architectures in which this evidence' about women travelers is 'embedded' (331). That is, this collection asks us to reconceive our archive, and reconsider the questions we ask of it, not solely to recuperate lost lives (significant as this historical project is) but also to revisit our formulations of the early modern world through our engagement with our sources — even ones as canonical as Hakluyt and, of course, *Othello*.

Fuller's afterword also exemplifies another great strength of this collection: its unity of purpose. The collection had its origins in a Shakespeare Association of America seminar led by the two editors, and, as we all know, not all collections

that extend conference proceedings fully cohere. Yet it is clear, both in the original seminar and in the subsequent process of putting together the collection, how well thought through this project has been — all the more impressive given that this work represents a first step in a new field of study. This is a collection worth dipping into, to be sure. But it is also a collection that rewards reading as whole since essays build and rebound on each other with remarkable efficacy. More than just a collection of essays, *Travel and Travail* is a thrilling statement of a field in its emergence and will become a touchstone in scholarship on early modern women, early modern travel and colonialism, and early modern drama.

## Notes

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- 1 All citations taken from *Othello: Revised Edition*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann and Ayanna Thompson (London, 2016).