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# Strange Episodes: Race in Stage History

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## Introduction

Sept 4 Towards night, the kinges interpreter came, and brought me a letter from the Portingall, wher in (like the faction) he offered me all kindly services. The bearer is a man of marvailous redie witt and speakes in eloquent Portugues. He layt aboard me.

Sept 5 I sent the interpreter, according to his desire, aboard the Hector, wher he brooke fast, and after came aboard mee, where we gave the tragedie of Hamlett.<sup>1</sup>

(“Keeling’s Journal,” Hair 1981, 34)

To begin with this particular epigraph, an entry from the journal of Admiral William Keeling, a seasoned East India Company man, is to rehearse a rather indelicate editorial act. I might have begun by situating the journal entries as those of the chosen General of the East India Company’s third voyage. I might have further noted that the Company’s objectives on this third voyage involved locating a market for English woolens somewhere beyond the Cape of Good Hope—on the Arabian sea or perhaps Socotra, Aden, or Surat (Keay 73–4). Eventually, though, I would be obliged to point out that the highlight of Keeling’s official account of the voyage is set not in the East Indies, but in West Africa, Sierra Leone, where the fleet spent some thirty-eight days awaiting the recovery of sailors afflicted with scurvy and negotiating with Portuguese-speaking Africans for fresh victuals. Even without such exposition the passage seems to speak for itself: “*Hamlet!*” it says, “Shakespeare!”

“Africa!” In effect, the editorial decision to frame Keeling’s nonchalant account—another day, another performance of Shakespeare—produces a show-stopper. Literary critics, historians, and cultural theorists alike have summoned up this ghost that, for all its suggestive potency, implies more about the summoner than about anything else.

In the course of this essay I examine a good deal of the textual history of the first recorded performance of “the tragedie of Hamlett,” staged aboard a ship anchored off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1607. In the case of the *Hamlet* 1607 performance, an episode in Shakespearean stage history that remains largely unsubstantiated, it is the editors of the extant records who have become, time and again, engaged in the cross-racial casting of this ephemeral and possibly apocryphal production. As I will show, the editorial and interpretive work that produces stage history may also usurp the role of actors and audiences in authorizing representations of race.

In suggesting that both actors and audiences participate in cross-racial casting I employ Antonia Nakano Glenn’s definition of casting as “an ongoing communal process of authorizing representation,” a process that entails “setting forth expectations of ‘type’ and judging the fulfillment of those expectations” (414).<sup>2</sup> The highly evocative, visual vocabulary of stage history is a racially coded one, capable of “casting” actors and audiences of past performances. Scholars and editors are thus not just the chroniclers but also the *agents* of ideological change. Their approaches to textual transmission and description may go beyond interpretation, foreclosing meaning by suggesting the social uses of past performances as fixed. More than a review of the modes and methodologies of textual scholarship, this essay represents an attempt to identify an ethics of critical reporting.

I begin with a reading of the critical prose of those scholars who have alternately buried and revived the account of a 1607 performance of *Hamlet* in Africa. I then recontextualize the purported “strangeness” of the event by reading it alongside a body of travel writing that features performance-as-diplomacy in episodes of encounter. Finally, I offer some strategies for evaluating the role of stage history in the production of race as static and monolithic.

### Strange Episodes

Almost invariably, the *Hamlet* 1607 account is introduced in terms of its peculiarity, rarity, absurdity, or all of the above. The invocation of “strangeness” in academic prose is, consciously or unconsciously, a

loaded gesture. As a descriptor, “strange” functions as a sign, gesturing toward a multifaceted “other” that exists both within and beyond the text under study. I briefly examine four critical works spanning the last century—Frederick Boas’s “‘Hamlet’ & ‘Richard II’ on the High Seas” (1923), P.E.H. Hair’s “*Hamlet* in an Afro-Portuguese Setting” (1978), John Keay’s *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (1991), and Gary Taylor’s even more recent “Hamlet in Africa 1607” (2001)—each of which make just such a gesture.

Boas’s “‘Hamlet’ & ‘Richard II’ on the High Seas” is perhaps most notable because, in it, Boas definitively refutes the allegation that the *Hamlet* 1607 account had been forged or otherwise compromised by the infamous Shakespearean J.P. Collier.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Boas offers the episode as a proof in and of itself for the pervasive power of Shakespeare, affecting a kind of playful reverence.

Has there ever been a stranger episode in stage-history than this shipboard performance of *Hamlet*, “breaking the silence of the seas” near Sierra Leone in honour of Keeling’s dusky guest? It is incredible that anyone should have invented such an incident, had it not actually taken place.  
(Boas 93)

Boas’s question “Has there ever been a stranger episode?” is a rhetorical one. The “strangeness” of the episode as Boas presents it is undeniable. The setting, actors, and audience are utterly unlike those that appear in the usual accounts of English theatrical performances. The question is immediately followed by the conclusion: not only is the episode strange, even the strangest of all such episodes, but also it is so strange that no mind, however fertile, could have invented it.

Though offhand, Boas’s statement contains both implicit information and assumptions. The unstated norm—against which “strangeness” is defined—is the play performed on stage rather than aboard a ship, in England rather than in Sierra Leone, and before an audience of Londoners rather than before a lone and “dusky” African. There is little explicit analysis, literary, historical, or anthropological, in Boas’s prose. Instead there are mounting diversions—having designated the episode “strange,” he employs figurative language to evoke the episode as a sensory experience. The breaking of the “silence of the seas” is not just abrupt but also profane.

The phrase constructs the “high seas” as a place without culture or art, an inert and barren landscape. Into this wilderness, Boas’s Shakespeare appears suddenly, like a phoenix from the ashes—wonderful and strange.

Analysis is delayed again as Boas directs readers to wonder at the episode as he describes it. Clearly, the term “strange” implies a significant qualitative difference, but it also seems to suggest a difference in value. That is, the strangeness of the performance denotes rarity, a quality coveted by scholarly communities. It is perhaps safe to assume that the imagined audience of Boas’s book of essays represents just such a community: English-speaking academics and learned people, familiar with, or experts in, the works of Shakespeare and the history of early modern English theatre. But in his description of Lucas Fernandez, a dark-skinned Luso-African man and local trader, Boas moves abruptly from a discussion of literature and performance (text and sound) to a discussion of the visual. In what way does the “duskiness” of “Keeling’s guest” contribute to Boas’s reading of the episode as “strange” and “incredible”?

To conjure up Keeling’s “dusky guest,” Boas relies upon what I will call a racialist visual vocabulary—descriptive language consisting of visual and verbal cues that are both highly evocative and racially coded. Boas’s use of “dusky” as a descriptive adjective assumes a visual and verbal spectrum of difference based on skin color. The “dusky” Fernandez falls somewhere between Keeling’s own skin color and that of less-exalted locals, who are variously called “negers” or “negros.” It is implicit that the “dusky guest” is not suntanned, or dirty, but “dark”; similarly, the comparison to “dusk” implies that “daylight” or “night” would be inaccurate. It is important to note that although diction is used to denote racial difference on the written page, it often does so by evoking a mental image.

In “*Hamlet* in an Afro-Portuguese Setting,” P.E.H. Hair prefaces a discussion of the *Hamlet* 1607 performance by allowing that the incident may seem preposterous. Rather than addressing his readers’ familiarity with the extant documentation, for example, he refers instead to a purely imaginary *viewing* experience of the event. “At first sight,” he writes, “it is bound to seem implausible that a play as complex as *Hamlet* should be performed aboard ship, not least in circumstances so exotic” (Hair 1978, 23). This anomaly, a visual image of a performance of which there is no extant historical rendering and very few specific details of production, appears again and again in the literary critical writing related to the 1607 performance.

John Keay’s respected history of the East India Company recounts the incident as if he had seen it all on a postcard or vacation brochure for a tropical adventure: “Here, in an island setting of date palms and desert that might have been designed for *The Tempest*, the . . . Shakespearian enthusiasts perversely rehearsed” (Keay 75). He summons up not only a

stereotypical locale, but also a full rehearsal preceding the performance itself. Boas bluntly addresses the “perversity” Keay identifies, suggesting that “*Othello* would perhaps have been more appropriate to the occasion, but no edition appeared till 1622” (Boas 93). Here, Boas gives what is perhaps the most nakedly racist vision of the performance. Going beyond Keay’s proposal that the exotic island setting of *The Tempest* would best correspond to the climate off the coast of Africa, Boas would make the performance a mirror of contemporaneous race relations by offering a production of the only Shakespeare play with a prominent character who is identified in the text as dark-skinned. He thus reduces the historical performance to curious spectacle and wills the plays themselves to reflect an unqualified modern concept of racial difference.

Though more veiled, even recent academic writing about the *Hamlet* 1607 performance sometimes betrays a reliance on anachronistic visual vocabulary. Gary Taylor’s “*Hamlet* in Africa 1607” appeared in Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna Singh’s anthology *Travel Knowledge*s in the section devoted to travels in Africa alongside his edited excerpts from the journal of John Hearne and William Finch. The essay begins:

In your mind’s eye, I would like to conjure up a company of British seamen far from home. These men will spend the afternoon on shore, sweating, shooting an elephant. But in the cool of the morning they gather on board ship for a different kind of sport. Within sight of conspiratorial packs of long-tailed monkeys on the rocks, within earshot of the estuary’s cranes and pelicans, a sailor steps onto the deck. He holds a weapon that combines a spear with a hatchet. He points this weapon in the direction of another man, and says, “Who’s there?”—The first words of Shakespeare spoken outside of Europe. (Taylor 223)

Such approaches may decontextualize what little concrete information exists by insisting on the need for a sense of wonder and surprise that can only come from a first-hand, visual experience of the “other.” In order to create this “other,” a false binary must be employed—the reader must be a contemporary, English-speaking academic for whom Sierra Leone, with its hot weather and exotic flora and fauna, is an alien landscape. This opposition is presented as a necessary preparation. For literary critics and historians, the *Hamlet* 1607 performance is an opportunity to experience Shakespeare in performance as if for the first time, or in a cultural vacuum. The claim is that *Hamlet* pervades postmodern culture, that it is impossible to find a place where *Hamlet* has not already permeated. With a little imagination, however, it is possible to locate the proposed ideal,

critics suggest, a virginal landscape, a blank slate, an empty continent (neither England nor America) where *Hamlet* is not just a stranger but a “strange episode” just as Boas describes.

In the pursuit of these goals the primary material is made *available* in unsettling ways. Sierra Leone is made to serve as both the geographical setting of the historical event and the backdrop for a modern fantasy of the historical event; the historical evidence for the former is used to validate the groundless speculation of the latter. Tautological and in many ways exploitative, this approach takes advantage of the lack of specific details about the *Hamlet* 1607 account in order to conduct a reading largely informed by an ahistorical ideal of the globalization of Shakespeare in performance. This method is further flawed because, as I will discuss in the following section, there is a body of historical evidence that can and should be discussed in any close reading of the primary materials.

### Performance in the Periphery

In direct contrast to the treatments of later editors, Keeling’s own journal entries are characterized by their banality. Indeed, Keeling, amongst all the journalists of the East India Company’s third voyage, is perhaps the most conservative in his descriptions. A comparison of Keeling’s own journal with the first-hand accounts of less exalted mariners reveals a marked difference. The entries for August 6<sup>th</sup> from the journal of Hearn and Finch, merchants traveling aboard Keeling’s flagship, the *Dragon*; and that of Anthony Marlowe, a merchant on board another ship, the *Hector*, recount the same details but diverge in their descriptions of the power dynamics involved.

Within halfe an hower after wee came to an ankor there came some of the people to the waterside, weaving with a white flagg to have us come ashore; so our Generall caused our pinace to bee manned, which rowed ashoare unto them. But none of our people could understand them, onely by signes, so the pinnace returned aborde bringing 4 negros in hir, leaving 2 of our men in gadge for them; which after kynde usage, and making signes unto them for fresh victuals, and giving them many odd trifles, they were sett ashoare and our men returned aborde for that night. (“Hearn and Finch’s Journal,” Hair 1981, 16)

We had no sooner left fall our anckers but wee did see negers wevinge us ashore, whereupon the Generall sent his longe boate and our pinnesse, whoe brought 4 of them aboard him; and 2 men of the boates ginge ashore for them. Theise 4 negers our Generall entertained aboard him kindlye,

who at the first were very full of feare, but before their departure they were well perswaded of us; and our Generall gave them wine and meate in his cabbine. And after they had conceived a good opinion of us the Generall gott of them wordes for all kind of victuale and commodities in their language, and the promise to helpe us to all things for our refreshment as the place afforded, which put us in some good hope to gett means for recovering of our weake and sicke men. ("Marlowe's Journal," Hair 1981, 18)

Hearn and Finch describe a promising welcome, a white flag, complicated only by a problem of communication. The local "people" are named as "negers" in Marlowe's account and offer a slightly less reassuring gesture, waving the English ashore immediately upon their arrival in the estuary. Once on board, the negotiating begins and Hearn and Finch's "kindly usage" and gifts of trifles suggests a somewhat patronizing but genuine diplomacy. Marlowe meanwhile portrays the emissaries as fearful captives who are "persuaded" by means of overwhelming attention from Keeling, who "kindly" bestows "entertainment," including liquor and food, not so much to gain their "good opinion" as to elicit a promise of aid and to acquire a basic vocabulary for future bargaining. The quest for fresh victuals is here represented as either a request for hospitality or an afternoon spent pumping local peons for information.

Keeling's account is far more discreet.

The afternoon, being anchored, we espied men to weave us a-shore. I sent my Boate, which leaving two Hostages, brought foure Negroes, who promised refreshing. ("Keeling's Journal," Hair 1981, 19)

The two men sent ashore in exchange for four of the locals are bluntly identified as "hostages," while the boat is unequivocally Keeling's own. In the General's brief account, it is unclear whether the guests themselves "promised refreshing" out of generosity and entrepreneurial spirit, or whether the mere fact of them, of their availability, signaled to Keeling that the needed supplies were within reach. In its casual ambiguity, Keeling's account of this minor incident represents the extraordinary power of text and editorial will to alter not only the details but also the *significance* of past events. In this sense Keeling, too, numbers among the episode's many editors. Encounter, here, is a matter of course rather than a spectacle.

As records of cross-cultural contact, these three descriptions have a common emphasis on entertainment as an integral part of such meetings, and we might read this variously as embassy, hospitality, negotiation, or



simple bribery. It is this emphasis on entertainment that makes it possible to situate the *Hamlet* 1607 performance itself within a tradition of “entertainment”—including music, dancing, meals, and theatrical performance—as central to encounter episodes in travel writing.<sup>4</sup>

Though scholars have expressed reservations about the likelihood that a theatrical performance of any kind could or would be produced aboard an early modern ship, contemporary documents make it clear that communal performances such as preaching and reading aloud were common shipboard occurrences.<sup>5</sup> Antonio de Guevara, a Spanish cleric who had some experience with sea travel and even with the transatlantic crossing itself authored *Arte de Marear* (1539), a compilation of information and advice for would-be passengers. The book appeared in English in 1578 as *A booke of the inuention of the art of nauigation*. In it he writes:

It is conuenient counsel, for the passenger, that presumeth either of wisdom, or honestie, to procure bookes, both good and pleasaunt, and some of prayers as matter of devotion: for of three exercises which are used at Sea, which is to weete [wit], playe, talke, and reade, the moste profitable and least hurtfull is reading. (Guevara 1578, G2v)<sup>6</sup>

Guevara emphasizes reading as the most profitable of all the activities available to passengers on board ships, encouraging travelers to purchase books before their departures. Few travelers were literate but, as Pérez-Mallaína discusses in *Spain's Men of the Sea*, reading was nevertheless a common pastime among sailors: “Books were expensive and the level of illiteracy among the mariners was very high. That is why the form of reading was not individual but collective, with listeners gathered around a reader who recited aloud the passages of the chosen book” (Pérez-Mallaína 158).<sup>7</sup> In general, shipboard culture seems to have been as varied as that of any city: pastimes included not only reading—either silently or aloud—but also guitar playing, singing, swimming, dancing, and cock fights, along with more surreptitious activities such as gambling at cards or dice (often prohibited by captains or Companies), and clandestine romance (Leonard 159–60, Pérez-Mallaína 153).

In travel writing, specific references to performance in encounter situations frequently demonstrate an emphasis on communication through performance, and employ the particular language of theatre and theatricality.<sup>8</sup> In these accounts, “acting” on the part of both countrymen and foreigners is an important opportunity. It is possible to read performance in travel writing as more than part of a crude ethnography—the accounts represent an *opaque translation*. If transparent translation seeks to render

all evidence of translation invisible to the reader, opaque translation entails a simultaneous interpretation and encryption that preserves the ambiguity of meaning inherent in episodes of cross-cultural encounter. The accounts offer an opaque translation of cultural practices unfamiliar to not one but two audiences: the “other” who is present in the critical moments of encounter, exchange, and entertainment, and the audience of readers who are located in the geographical or the imagined “center.”

To begin with, there are a number of writings that recount events specifically identified as theatre. *Purchas His Pilgrimes* includes a translation of the Portuguese Dominican Friar Gaspar da Cruz’s “Treatise of China,” wherein the author offers praise and criticism of the craft he calls “actions” or “representations”:

They use many times representations by Actors, which doe represent very well and to the life, the Actors having very good apparel and well ordered, and fitting as is requisite for the person hee representeth; and they that represent a Womans part, besides the apparel that is requisite for the part hee representeth, they are painted with Stibium and Ceruse. . . . They have in these Actions two great inconveniences or blemishes, the one is, that if one be to represent two parts, and is to change his attire, he doth it before all the Beholders: the other is, that the Representer as well as hee that speaketh alone, doe speake in a very high voice almost singing. (Purchas XI, 516)

Da Cruz’s is a frank comparison of European theatre with the “representations” he has witnessed in China. He describes costumes, women’s roles played by male actors, the use of cosmetics, and the use of doubled roles. To further demonstrate the pertinence of such episodes to a discussion of the *Hamlet* 1607 account one need only read the following excerpt from da Cruz: “Sometime they goe to the ships to play, that the Portugals may give them money” (Purchas XI, 516). Here, the Chinese actors bring their plays aboard a ship and perform for a foreign audience that is sufficiently appreciative to pay for the entertainment. Da Cruz’s account is rare in that it apparently describes an autonomous or semi-autonomous acting troupe that performs for profit. The description of theatre as an established institution, however, is not at all uncommon.

In another account anthologized in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, Richard Cocks relates a visit to the court of the Emperor of Japan, where the royals themselves put on a rather fabulous play:

The thirtieth day, the Captaine Chinesa . . . came unto me, and told mee of a generall house in the Towne, to send presents of eatable commodities

to the Kings, for the more honor of a great Feast they have tomorrow, with a Comoedie or Play: and so by his counsel (with advice of others) I ordained . . . boxes of banqueting stuffe, to send to their Feast to morrow. And before night the yong King sent one of his men unto me, to furnish them with some English apparel, for the better setting out their Comoedie, namely, a paire of Stamel-cloath breeches. I returned answeare, I had none such, neither did know any other which had: notwithstanding, if any apparel I had would pleasure his Highnesse, I would willingly give it him. (Purchas III, 542)

In this account, the theatrical performance seems to have included the possibility of improvisation. The actors' proposal to incorporate distinctly English clothing draws Cocks, an outsider, into the world of the performance, which, as Cocks goes on to report, is a performance of the Japanese society itself.

But the matter I noted most of all, was their Comoedie (or Play) the Actors being the Kings themselves, with the greatest Noblemen and Princes. The matter was of the valiant deeds of their Ancestors, from the beginning of their Kingdome or Common-wealth, until this present, with much mirth mixed among, to give the common people content. The audience was great, for no house in Towne but brought a Present, nor no Village nor place under their Dominions, but did the like, and were spectators. . . . Yet I never saw a Play wherein I noted so much, for I see their policie is great in doing thereof, and quite contrary to our Comoedies in Christendome, ours being but dumbe shewes, and this the truth itself, acted by the Kings themselves, to keepe in perpetuall remembrance their affaires. (Purchas III, 542-3)

Cocks is taken with the supreme spectacle of the Japanese theatre. He does not recount any of the stories he saw performed, but instead conveys the potency of the theatrical event. Cocks describes Japanese culture both *as* performance and *in terms of* a performance. Despite, or even by means of, this overlap, Cocks's prose relays a loaded interpretation of life in the Emperor's court.

Cocks's relation may be profitably contrasted with the following entry from Thomas Roe's journal documenting his embassy to the Great Mogul.

When I entred within the first rayle I made a reverance; entering in the inward rayle a Nother; and when I came under the king a theird. The Place is a great Court, whither resort all sorts of people. The king sitts in a little Gallery over head; Amabassidors, the great men and strangers

of quality within the inmost rayle under him, raysed from the ground, Covered with Canopyes of velvet and silke, under foote layd with good Carpetts; the Meaner men representing gentry within the first rayle, the people without in a base Court, but soe that all may see the king. The sitting out hath soe much affinitye with a Theatre—the manner of the king in his gallery; The great men lifted on a stage as actors; the vulgar below gazing on—that an easy description will informe of the place and fashion. (Roe 108–9)

In Roe's account the king is not a player. Instead, Roe uses the language of the playhouse to evoke more palpably the dynamics of power and display at the Mogul's court. Roe's account, like Cocks's, describes the Mughal court both as and in terms of a performance. In addition, while Cocks declines to participate in the Japanese comedy by supplying his English clothes, Roe seems to walk directly onto the "stage." Roe's role in his own narrative is ambiguous; is he a member of the audience or of the cast? Here again overlapping meanings contribute to an opaque translation in which Roe acts as interpreter even as he himself becomes encrypted.

To the extent that cross-racial casting is visible or meaningful to audiences, the practice functions as a persistent reminder that meanings of race are not universal but are instead culturally-determined. Cross-racial casting does not remedy but reveal racialism as inherent in both theatre and culture—race is always-already cast and parts always-already racial. Through cross-racial casting actors and audiences are afforded the opportunity to recast race, to acknowledge that racial "types" are as dynamic as theatrical performances.

Performance, when it appears in episodes of encounter, operates diplomatically by means of cross-racial casting and recasting. "Strangers" from abroad are recast as audience members, while indigenous actors take on the roles of the "strangers" themselves. All participants demonstrate a willingness to accept that meaning in these contexts may be fluid. By contrast, critical treatments of such episodes often render meanings and identities static. The power of editorial will to alter the details along with the significance of historical events might ultimately remind us of the dangers, responsibilities, and ethics of critical reporting in stage history. As many of the passages discussed demonstrate, there is certainly a *politics* of critical reporting and this can be linked to any number of motives. For an obvious example we may return to Boas.

I believe that the suspicion cast on Keeling's entries is . . . groundless. And at a time when our mercantile marine has been covering itself with glory on every sea, it is an act of *pietas* to reclaim for it the proud distinction of

having been the pioneer in carrying Shakespearean drama to the uttermost parts of the earth. (Boas 95)

I will agree, in one respect, with this triumphant leap. Boas's reclamation of Shakespeare for the British navy is indeed an *act*, and one of which he is the principal agent. Reaching across the centuries, Boas reunites the nation's seafaring heroes to its canonical giant, Shakespeare. The irony of "covering oneself with glory," however, seems to have been lost on him.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>All quotes from the *Hamlet* 1607 accounts are taken from Hair 1981 unless otherwise noted. Hair's text offers the most complete transcription of all available documents and is accompanied by thorough notes. For a description of all the extant documents see Farrington.

<sup>2</sup>Glenn employs this formulation in her discussion of the "resistant performance strategies" of Los Angeles-based Chicano comedy troupe Culture Clash (414).

<sup>3</sup>Boas's conclusion was generally accepted as authoritative. The essay discusses purported shipboard performances of *two* Shakespeare plays during the EIC's third voyage: *Hamlet* and *Richard II*.

<sup>4</sup>Woodfield offers an in depth account of the role that music, in particular, plays in the practice and discourse of contact, colonialism, conquest, and trade.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Sydney Race, "It is fantastic to think that in a crew of rude sailors, of the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, could be found amateur players capable of producing *Richard the Second* one night and *Hamlet* the next" (345), and William Foster, "I agree with Mr. Race that it is almost incredible that Keeling's illiterate sailors could have produced, in however elementary a fashion, two of Shakespeare's plays (especially the long and difficult *Hamlet*)" (415). Race and Foster were two of a number of individuals who submitted their views on J.P. Collier's alleged forgery and/or theft of the documents surrounding the *Hamlet* 1607 episode to the journal *Notes & Queries*, where the debate was chronicled over the course of an unprecedented fifty years. There were eight entries in all, beginning with Foster's initial posting in 1900.

<sup>6</sup>Here *playing* is translated from the Spanish *jugar* (to play), most likely referring to gambling at cards rather than to playing a part in an amateur theatrical (Guevara 1984, 364).

<sup>7</sup>It is possible to gain some idea of the generic predilections of shipboard readers. Pérez-Mallaina's analysis of Inquisition records gives us this breakdown: of the 198 ships for which data was available, 156 ships were carrying devotional books—including "books of hours, lives of saints, histories of the popes, tales of miracles, moral advice," and others—and 121 ships were carrying adventure stories—including books of chivalry, including titles such as *Orlando Furioso*, and *Amadis de Gaula*. Devotional books and adventures seem to have been the most

popular types of reading material in this sample, but the evidence includes many other genres that were carried to sea including romances, verses and songbooks, histories, travel narratives, novels, poetry, classical authors, and professional works on navigation, law, and weaponry (Pérez-Mallaína 158–9).

<sup>8</sup> My argument here is akin to the theory that narratives of England's earliest attempts at colonization are characterized by the inclusion of culture-specific rituals of possession. This theory has been advanced most notably by Sponsler, Bach, and Seed.

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