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Magic and Mobility:
Theatrical Travels in Marlowe and Shakespeare

1. Introduction: Mobility and Modernity

“When shall we three meet again?” (Macbeth, 1.1.1)¹ Whatever else this famous opening line of Shakespeare’s tragedy Macbeth may mean or do, it certainly suggests at once that the three witches who are meeting here must have a very busy schedule. To spectators, still dazzled by the theatrical effect of thunder and lightning at the start, the conversation of the hurried figures they observe on stage is likely to appear as one occasion among many, perhaps regular, encounters when these three come together so as to compare notes, promote exchange or possibly decide upon some course of action – rather like busy CEOs checking their diaries or, indeed, busy academics fixing the date for the next conference, amidst the hurly-burly of their demanding professional lives. And true enough, when this next conference eventually takes place and the three sisters meet again, as we observe a couple of scenes later, what they talk about gives ample evidence of their professional involvement in the business of travel, trade and transport. “Where hast thou been, sister?” (1.3.1) the question goes, to which they must all reply so as to reveal their tours and routes. The First Witch in particular recounts a series of activities – about the sailor’s wife she visited, whose husband captained a ship to Aleppo, where she now intends to sail – which clearly show her strong engagement with the culture of contemporary seafaring and maritime adventure. Sailing, especially sailing in sieves, used to be a common notion of witch-lore; in fact, this was one of the accusations brought against the Scottish witches whom King James personally interrogated.² Though meeting on the Scottish heath, that is to say, the witches in Macbeth are by no means landlocked figures. On the contrary, we realize that they operate in and through the modes of voyaging, as suggested in their chant: “The weird sisters hand in hand,/ Posters of the sea and land,/ Thus do go about, about” (1.3.30-32). The term posters, by which they like to call themselves, is glossed as “swift

¹ All Shakespeare texts are cited according to The Norton Shakespeare, based on the Oxford edition, eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997).
travellers”³ and thus confirms their involvement in the culture of travel. “They can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, either vpon Sea or land,” as King James writes of witches in his Daemonologie,⁴ specifying their routine interference in essential modes of transport. Whatever else they come to represent or mean, therefore, the witches in Macbeth should first of all be seen as figures of mobility.

It is for two reasons that I begin with this example and would like to pursue its implications in the course of this essay. Firstly, Shakespeare’s Scottish witches serve as a manifestation of the supernatural, magic or demonic stuff that so much of early modern theatre is made of and that forms a regular or, at any rate, quite popular feature of many plays, promising strong stage effects, spectacular action and commercial success.⁵ Yet, in addition to these reasons, magic may have been so popular and pervasive in the early modern playhouse because it also pointed to the magic of the theatre which I propose to look at in more detail in relation to the history and culture of mobility. For secondly, Shakespeare’s witches also help, I think, to question the general assumption, often made tacitly but sometimes openly expressed, that mobility functions as a marker of modernity. This view, arguably based on Giddens’ concepts of modernity and self-identity,⁶ seems to underlie many present-day engagements with the dynamics of global trade or travel, migration or displacement: that these are recent, new, or at least specifically modern processes that set off the present age of intensified exchange and dynamism against some older, static and pre-modern period where people found themselves arrested in archaic and immobilizing structures. This view proceeds on the assumption that there is a close connection between mobility, perspective and identity which appears to be an elementary signature of modernity and modernization. Consequently, to break free of any given station is a means to mobilize and, in this way, to modernize society – a narrative of progress by mobility advancement which we should see with skepticism. Instead, the challenge is to historicize – hence question – any such pervading notions, through the various contributions to this volume, by in-

³ Norton Shakespeare, 2567.
⁴ King James, Daemonologie [1597], facsimile reprint (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1966), 46.
⁶ Which are, as a matter of fact, a lot more complex than often recounted and do not allow for any simplistic equation of modernity and mobility; see e.g. Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) or Modernity and Self-Identity (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991).
vestigating practices and products of mobility across time and against the teleological accounts which would make us believe in the essential newness of the phenomenon we study. This is what the witches warn against. The “weird” or “wayward” sisters in *Macbeth*, as the Old English connections of their designation as the three “fates” suggest, certainly reach back into the distant past and represent an old, archaic cultural frame. On the other hand, everything they actually say and do throughout this play, initiating its various plots of violent upward mobility, puts them into the topical framework of voyaging and wide-ranging travel. As figures of mobility, then, these witches are neither new nor old but simply all-pervasive.

Mobility studies, this example may suggest, are essentially about “what medieval theologians called *contingentia*, the sense that the world as we know it is not necessary: the point is not only that the world will pass away, but also that it could all have been otherwise.” This is how Stephen Greenblatt summarizes the agenda that we face. In a joint project with some other cultural analysts, established as a working group at the Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin, he published in 2010 what he called “a manifesto” on the principles of cultural mobility and the central issues which we, as scholars or investigators, must address in our efforts to describe, let alone to theorize, long-standing processes of transfer, mutual exchange and interaction. These constantly defy all systematic accounts that have been attempted, by virtue of their randomness, pervasiveness and ultimate contingency – or, as we might also put it, by virtue of the general hurly-burly, i.e. the state of our world as essentially so tumultuous, mutable and ever-changing that fair and foul or win or loss can no longer be distinguished. This is the state of general mobility-as-contingency that we must face even if it is often denied; as Greenblatt writes,

to be fully convincing, mobility studies also need to account for the intense illusion that mobility in one particular direction or another is predestined. They need to account as well for the fact that cultures are experienced again and again – in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence – not as contingent at all but as fixed, inevitable, and strangely enduring.

Where nothing endures, we may perhaps add, the notion of endurance turns out to be even stronger.

In response to such a diagnosis, Greenblatt demands that we turn to what he calls the “microhistories of ‘displaced’ things and persons,” case studies which try to keep track of one such particular item and trace its movements through all its complex transhistorical and transcultural manifestations. This

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8 Ibid.
9 Greenblatt 17.
is what the various chapters in his volume want to offer. His own chapter entitled “Theatrical Mobility,” however, seems to disappoint on this account. Largely a report about his efforts to produce a new, collaborative and contemporary version of Shakespeare’s lost play Cardenio and about its subsequent rewriting and staging by a Japanese director, his chapter is a long and slightly self-indulgent way of arguing that the phenomenon of cultural mobility is nothing but “misunderstanding”¹⁰—a bleak conclusion to a tale of loss. Yet its title “Theatrical Mobility” still raises a programmatic challenge and has given me a strong cue for my own attempt to explore some ways in which mobility studies might be intertwined with, and profit from, theatre studies and, in particular, from early modern drama.

If mobility were constitutive of modernity, we should be able to identify specific practices and institutions which in early modern England first began to work towards significant increases in the culture of mobility and the mobility of culture. As just indicated, I suspect that this would turn out to be difficult, since social practices like trade or travel were not new at all but continued what had long been happening before the sixteenth century. However, one new institution certainly rose to prominence and power in this period and soon functioned as a model also of a greater social sphere and, in some cases, of the world at large: the theatre. The professional London playhouses, I suggest, present as well as represent both social mobility and cultural exchange. As the editors of a recent study argue, early modern theatre is remarkable “both in the ways it represented transnational exchanges and in the ways that it enacted them.”¹¹ It did so through engaging with all three “mechanisms of exchange” identified by Nicholson and Henke,¹² i.e. trade, diplomacy and travel, not just through the conditions of production by constantly touring companies of players across geographical and social borders but also through the cultural effects of their reception: playhouses offered sites for spectators from different social spheres to meet and be confronted with stage spectacles where often such encounters are played out; they frequently imagine foreign locales or distant places and stage the consequences of maritime experience, exploration, spatial moves or New World travels which may, in the sense suggested earlier, indeed be seen as signatures of modernity. The playhouse, in short, may well be the thing by which we catch, or at the least observe, the contingencies of mobility.

This, then, is the hypothesis which I would like to test by way of discussing two short excerpts from two canonical plays. I have chosen these examples precisely because such well-known and widely circulating texts may

¹⁰ Greenblatt 95.
have, I hope, some diagnostic power and possibly allow for tentative conclusions. In particular, what I am interested in are passages and plays in which the theatre observes itself and stages its own mediality and cultural force by staging scenes of magic and witchcraft. Whenever onstage conjuring takes place, whenever supernatural practices or agents are presented so as to transform reality, bewitch their audience or perform some other magic spectacle, I would like to suggest that the theatre here mobilizes its own powers of performance and thus explores the working of its very art. If, as Greenblatt argues, the point of mobility studies is to show that the world we know is never necessary but could also have been otherwise, then the playhouse seems to be a useful cultural space to rehearse such an awareness of contingency. And if the theatre is thus engaged in training spectators in the transformability of their worldly frame, then magic and mobility converge. The following section sets out, on the basis of two short, concrete examples, to develop critical readings which may support, or perhaps qualify, this argument, before venturing towards some tentative conclusions in the final part.

2. *Othello* and *Doctor Faustus*: Metatheatrical Magic

In the first act of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, the titular hero is summoned to the senate to defend himself against the accusation that he has bewitched the daughter of a rich Venetian family to become his wife. In his reply to this charge, he tells his life story of travel and adventure:

Her father loved me, oft invited me,
Still questioned me the story of my life
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed.
I ran it through even from my boyish days
To th’ very moment that he bade me tell it,
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth scapes i’th’ imminent deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,
And portance in my traveller’s history,
Wherein of antres vast and desert idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak. Such was my process,
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grown beneath their shoulders. These things to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline […]
[…]

In the first act of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, the titular hero is summoned to the senate to defend himself against the accusation that he has bewitched the daughter of a rich Venetian family to become his wife. In his reply to this charge, he tells his life story of travel and adventure:
My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of kisses.
She swore in faith ‘twas strange, ‘twas passing strange,
‘Twas pitiful, ‘twas wondrous pitiful.
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished
That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.

This only is the witchcraft I have used. (Othello, 1.3.127-168)

In this celebrated speech, a long-distance traveller confronts an audience of sceptic listeners who eventually find themselves transfixed by his adventures. Accused of witchcraft and illicit practices in winning his young wife, he now recounts his travelling with as much vivid detail to his judges, who form his present audience, as he previously used to tell the same story to the young woman and her father, who formed his first audience – and in so doing, crucially, the traveller and story-teller now achieves the same effect his tale had then: he charms his listeners. “I think this tale would win my daughter, too” (1.3.170), the Duke replies as soon as the tale has ended. Thus testifying to the power of Othello’s narrative performance, the Duke is speaking not just for his daughter but also for himself, and not just for himself but also for the entire audience of the senate, and not just for the senate, but also for us, the actual audience in the playhouse witnessing how this onstage audience must witness and experience the efficacy of words.

Three points are relevant for us in this example. First of all, Othello clearly figures here as a representative of cultural mobility and a verbal vehicle of popular travelogues, both in their Renaissance versions as collected in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* and in their earlier, medieval manifestations with *Mandeville’s Travels*, several details of which are alluded to throughout this speech. The theatre, we note, constitutes a platform to present and promote contemporary as well as conventional – indeed rather clichéd – travel discourse. In Othello’s case, however, this is not simply a matter of verbal citation but also of display and physical encounter: as “the moor,” Othello embodies the foreignness and stages the experience of otherness which, to the Venetians in the diegesis of the play just as to the Londoners of Shakespeare’s early audience, occur as the result of travel and migration. Such encounters and experiences are, in fact, frequently a central matter of the playhouse where their effects were often shown and seen as part of early

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modern entertainment culture with its commercial displays of monstrosities.\textsuperscript{14} “Were I in England now,” Shakespeare’s Trinculo exclaims upon discovering a strange and fascinating creature on the foreign island of The Tempest (2.2.26-29), “not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man.” Whether monstrous or alluring, effects and products of mobility are clearly used to sell domestically as a great attraction.

Secondly, Othello’s senate speech also demonstrates how to do things with words: his words have power, as we see, to move their audience, both then and now, and make the world a different place in making Desdemona just as the Duke or indeed all members of this audience, including ourselves, change in outlook, attitude, awareness and behaviour. This is the magical effect of language in performance which Brabantio describes as “witchcraft” and which constitutes, I would suggest, a metatheatrical element: the onstage effect of Othello’s narrative shows and proves what miracles the stage can work. Theatre here draws attention to its own perlocutionary force – to borrow John Searle’s salient term – to wield power over others.

This is relevant because, thirdly, the senate scene also assigns a specific model of behaviour to theatrical spectators, a model which, significantly, works against the practice of mobility. Othello’s audience is ‘riveted’ or ‘captivated,’ we could say, by the breathtaking adventures he recounts; that is to say, in listening to this story of mobility the listeners in fact lose their own mobility. The degree of their own fascination translates into physical arrest and may again, in this way, offer us a model of what happens in the playhouse. However much the theatre may serve to publicize the social consequences of long-distance trade and travel and so celebrate the culture of mobility in what it shows on stage, the early modern playhouse also formed an institution of spatial confinement and physical arrest. To be sure, the architecture of the public playhouses was a lot less rigid in disciplining spectators or proscribing their bodily movements than later proscenium arch theatres. Still, they certainly confined and kept people within a strictly measured space – in contrast to the best-known earlier forms of public play-acting such as late medieval miracle or mystery plays, which were performed, promenade-style, in the open. Comparatively speaking, then, the social space of purpose-built theatres in Shakespeare’s London was a great deal more confining so that possibilities for people to move around were strongly regulated and restricted. Yet, as the example of Othello shows, within this confined space of viewing and enactment, the playhouse confronts people verbally and visually with foreign narratives and sights and so stimulates spectators often to imagine distant worlds not actually present. The experience of travel

\textsuperscript{14} See Mark Thornton Burnett, Constructing ‘Monsters’ in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture (London, New York: Palgrave, 2002).
that a figure like Othello recounts as well as represents is therefore predicated on the experience of arrest for listeners and viewers: imaginative investments in mobility are actually paid for by confinement.

Let us compare this analysis to the following travel narrative from a somewhat earlier tragedy:

Chorus:
Learned Faustus, to find the secrets of astronomy
Graven in the book of Jove’s high firmament,
Did mount him up to scale Olympus’ top
Where, sitting in a chariot burning bright,
Drawn by the strength of yoked dragons’ necks,
He views the clouds, the planets, and the stars,
The tropics, zones, and quarters of the sky,
From the bright circle of the horned moon
Even to the height of Primum Mobile;
And, whirling round with this circumference,
Within the concave compass of the pole,
From east to west his dragons swiftly glide
And in eight days did bring him home again.
Not long he stayed within his quiet house
To rest his bones after his weary toil,
But new exploits do hale him out again,
And, mounted then upon a dragon’s back,
That with his wings did part the subtle air,
He now is gone to prove cosmography, [...].
(Chorus 3.0, B-text)\[15\]

This passage from Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* – the quotation follows the so-called B-text of the play; in the A-text the speech is shorter and assigned to Wagner – offers an interesting comparison, for our purposes, to Othello’s travelogue. The “greatest of all Elizabethan plays of travel,” as Peter Holland has described it,\[16\] *The Tragicall Historie of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* is entirely structured on the pattern of *peregrinatio vitae*, i.e. the life-as-journey trope, which turns the best part of the play into a series of stops or stations – at the Vatican, at the Emperor’s court, at the Duke’s of Vanholt and so on – all part of the larger journey on which the titular hero has embarked. From the confinement of his study, where we first meet Faustus and where the first third of the play is set, the tragedy continuously widens its horizon and shifts its theatrical setting to a number of locales in order to present a veritable tour


of Europe. As Faustus mentions in one of his speeches, he has visited the cities of Trier, Paris, Naples, Venice and Padua before eventually arriving at Rome; in this way, he presents himself as a wandering scholar and gentleman on a grand tour, which he has booked by giving his soul to the devil. Yet what the Chorus recounts in the passage cited goes well beyond even the known geography of Europe to include truly cosmic dimensions: Faustus’s journey onto Olympus’ top, with the aim to penetrate the secrets of astronomy, is to provide the answer to his pressing questions by which he earlier urged Mephistopheles to dispute with him the spheres, the moon and the celestial bodies. Mount Olympus is to offer him a useful point of observation for these scientific interests, and his journey therefore is to realize the same insatiable – and morally doubtful – desire for always greater knowledge, which King James described in his *Daemonologie* as the ruinous path to magic: “so mounting from degree to degree, upon the slipperie and vncertaine scale of curiositie; they are at last enticed, that where lawfull artes or sciences failes, to satisfie their restles minds, even to seeke to that black and vnlawfull science of Magie.” Unlike Othello’s journey, then, which leads him from a foreign sphere of wonders and adventures into the familiar world of urban and domestic life in Venice, where he may charm us with his tale, Faustus’ journey leads the other way, from the small and familiar world of academic study into ever larger, greater, darker and more dangerous spheres, beyond the limits of the lawful, right up to the *Primum Mobile*. His travelling performs his peculiar quality as “overreacher” – to use Levin’s classic term – and thus also involves an admonitory tale, in King James’ sense, against the dangers of mobility. Whereas Othello manages to domesticate cultural mobility, Faustus’ restlessness is risk.

Comparing these two passages, we should also note some other contrasts, not least in their communicative situations: whereas Othello’s speech is in character and part of a scene, the report of Faustus’ travels is rendered *ad spectatores* by a Chorus. Yet in one respect they are also alike: in both cases, no actual movement is enacted on the stage, all mobility is merely rendered as a narrative. We simply *hear* about the journeys of these tragic heroes but do not *see* them doing what is told. For reasons easily appreciated, the theatre does not allow for any witnessing of actual journeys. Mobility, in *Doctor Faustus*, in *Othello* and quite possibly in all the other relevant plays, is almost exclusively part of the diegesis, not the mimesis, of the stage: a matter of telling rather than showing. What does this suggest for our general interest?

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17 Marlowe 82.
18 Marlowe 76.
19 King James 10.
I think this observation points us to a fundamental paradox in the economy of theatrical mobility. Even though playhouses, as has been argued, epitomize, promote and publicize early modern mobility, we must reiterate the point that audiences are in fact immobilized during performance and willingly suspend their own physical motion in order to imagine it all the more readily on stage. Movement predominately takes place in the diegesis of the travel stories that figures like Faustus or Othello have to tell, whereas the actual mimesis of performance confines all motion just to words. This is a central and, I would argue, telling problem of theatrical mobility. No matter how many travellers and overreachers may be staged, how breathtaking their escapes and adventures or how much inspiration or dramatic substance playwrights may have gained from the kind of travelogues or popular pamphlets Shakespeare and Marlowe would have drawn on – when it comes to stage enactment, all this must somehow be confined to the strictly measured platform of the playhouse, all crammed into the famous “wooden O,” presented so as to suggest the world at large.

Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
The perilous ocean parts asunder. (Henry V, 0.19-22)
Pleas, instructions and imperatives like this one – “suppose,” “imagine,” “think” –, constantly repeated by the Chorus of Shakespeare’s Henry V, remind us not just of the awkwardness in trying to stage ocean voyages and travels but also of the high imaginative investment on the part of theatre spectators, which is clearly necessary so as to make theatrical mobility work. We see at this point how the very medium of theatre is predicated on the radical contingency which Greenblatt, as quoted earlier, identified at the heart of cultural mobility: the Chorus in Henry V powerfully conveys to us the sense that it could all be otherwise.

It is for this reason that classically-minded playwrights such as Ben Jonson had an easy time to criticize “the ill customs of the age” by ridiculing plays like Henry V which desperately grapple with the paradox of theatrical mobility. The prologue to Every Man in His Humour instead promises a play where no such offence against reason and decorum is to be expected and where no chorus “wafts” us “o’er the seas.”21 And yet, there is a sense in which the Shakespearean chorus mocked here advertises the discrepancies between the mobility of stage figures and the immobility of spectators almost defiantly – even to the point of promising us to provide transport across the

sea without causing sea sickness: in actual fact, the Chorus knows that we know that we never move. Theatrical mobility therefore involves self-reflexive engagements with the very medium and practice of the theatre to which all spectators submit.

This is also manifest in the two examples just considered. In the case of Othello’s senate speech, we already noted the metatheatrical twist by which the effect of his narrative performance replicates and highlights the transfixed power of theatrical performance. In the case of Faustus, too, such elements are unmistakable. When we follow his itinerary through the play, from the Vatican to the Emperor’s court to the Duke’s of Vanholt and so on, in each place staging some performance of his magic art, his travelling might well appear to us as a *mise en scène* – or indeed *mise en abyme* – of the early modern touring companies that presented Marlowe’s tragedy to different audiences, not just within England but, in all likelihood, also on the continent and so quite possibly retracing the same itinerary – Trier, Paris, Naples, Venice and so on – which Faustus specifies himself. In this way, the fictional moves and tours of the stage magician are actually undertaken – literalized, as it were – by the early modern players and their entertainment industry. Thus, the magical and the theatrical performance of mobility converge.

What is more, the Chorus narrative also describes Faustus’ means of transport in ways which make his magic flights contingent on the helpful figure of a dragon who either pulls the chariot or spreads its wings in order to fulfill the master’s longing for mobility. This dragon, then, serves rather the same function that is also served by Mephistopheles in making Faustus’ magic happen and in performing everything that he commands. It is striking to observe how many of the conjurers and magi we encounter on the early modern stage have such personal assistants to carry out their words and make things happen (Faustus has his Mephistopheles, just as Oberon his Puck or Prospero his Ariel), as if their conjuring power cannot work just through and by itself but needs the intervention of such crucial go-betweens. But it is even more striking to realize that these magic helpmates are not just figures of intense mobility – swift posters, travellers or merry wanderers of the night who may easily fetch dew from the Bermudas or put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes – but that they are also always figures that produce theatrical effects. For this is how we witness these mobility assistants to achieve their greatest feats: in performing just the kind of spectacles that the playhouse promises its patrons. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Puck’s involvement is with lovers’ eyes and their faculty of seeing and so

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22 “There is the playhouse now, there must you sit,/ And thence to France shall we convey you safe,/ And bring you back, charming the narrow seas/ To give you gentle pass – for if we may/ We’ll not offend one stomach with our play.” *Henry V*, Chorus 2.0.36-40.
involves also the faults or faculties of actual theatre spectators; in The Tempest, Ariel’s major task is, as we see right at the outset of the play, to stage the tempest and spectacular shipwreck, which are soon revealed to be the work of Prospero’s “art” working through his servant. And Mephistopheles appears throughout Marlowe’s tragedy like a true master of revels organizing, supervising and producing all the various shows – from the Seven Deadly Sins to Helen of Troy – that delight his master’s mind just as they delight us in the theatre. So, if these mobile servants of the most famous stage magicians routinely turn out to be stage performers and chief theatrical producers, then theatrical mobility is predicated on metatheatrical magic. Where does this lead us in our enquiry?

3. The Paradox of Theatrical Mobility

Before coming to a tentative conclusion, I would like to try and summarize the sketchy and somewhat impressionistic discussion of these short dramatic excerpts into four arguments or hypotheses which should, I hope, suggest directions for future and more comprehensive research in theatrical mobility.

Firstly, the early modern playhouse is an institution to explore the culture of mobility, precisely by immobilizing spectators, and to make them witness its effects. Offering them “infinite riches in a little room,” in the memorable phrase of Marlowe’s Barabas, the theatre presents as well as represents both the impact and the outcome of geographical and cultural movements across boundaries and through space, even though it can never actually show mobility in progress; instead, it rather displays cultural or social consequences that result from these intense activities of transport. This may be the reason why a play like The Tempest, often seen and read in the context of contemporary voyaging and colonial expansion, is in fact one of Shakespeare’s spatially most confined and static dramas, unusually adhering to the classic unities of space and time and not suggesting, as in so many other cases of Shakespearean drama, wide-ranging travels as part of the performance. Theatrical mobility, this goes to show, lies mainly in the mind of spectators.

Secondly, the paradox by which theatrical travels constitute themselves is principally staged through acts of magic and their metatheatricality, i.e. on-stage performances of conjuring by which the theatre displays its own effects and explores the powers of its medium while also reflecting on the predicament between “stillness and motion” – in the terms of P.A. Skantze – that spectators must face. Whenever travels are performed, we need to activate

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our own powers of imagination so as to make the stage show work. Whenever magic is performed, we also need to question the prevailing notions of the real so as to see how early modern theatre here ventures into border zones of make-believe which underwrite its very practice. Indeed, both travelling and conjuring also constitute a risk for all involved, as neither act can ever be controlled with confidence nor always be predicted in its outcome. Any voyage may result in shipwreck, just as any act of onstage magic may lead to unwanted results – as in the famous anecdote about a Faustus performance in Exeter which, according to a contemporary report, was broken off in horror when the players realized with dismay that all of a sudden one devil too many had appeared on stage. This openness and unpredictability is a constitutive risk in all forms of mobility just as in live performance.

Thirdly, the early modern theatre, Henke and Nicholson argue, was capable of generating “contact zones” and of communicating across boundaries of regions, classes, cultures. I take this as another indication of the risks involved in theatrical mobility, for contact zones – according to M.L. Pratt’s own seminal account when she first coined this potent concept – are notoriously difficult to manage and control. The issue here is not just how to enter but also how to exit contact zones and, especially, how to emerge from them unscathed. This question is raised, for instance, by Faustus when he is planning his grand tour and would also like to undertake a short excursion to hell: “O, might I see hell and return again safe; how happy were I then.” As it happens, he will miss his return trip and, for all we know, remain there in the end. This goes to show, as argued earlier, that mobility rests on contingency and does not easily allow for predetermined, calculated or predestined routes.

Fourthly, Johannes Fabian once introduced a useful distinction by establishing the difference between travel to and travel from and suggesting a historical shift in paradigm. In the old practice of pilgrimage, he argued, “travel had been to the centers of religion,” whereas in the modern period “secular travel was from the centers of learning and power to places where man was to find nothing but himself.” The difference therefore lies with the point of reference and authority to which the activity of travel is related in each case and from which it derives its meaning. In the early modern play-

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26 Marlowe, Faustus 181.
27 Henke/Nicholson 1.
29 Marlowe, Faustus 80.
To conclude, while I hesitate to subscribe to a teleological view and measure modernity by an increase in mobility, I think we may be justified to see crucial modernizing tendencies in some newly established institutions like the early modern playhouse which served to stage mobility and so enabled people to observe it and to reflect on its effects. As Greenblatt reminds us in his study, “in matters of culture, the local has always been irradiated, as it were, by the larger world.” Yet it may have needed more specific cultural media to register and represent these kinds of irradiations and thus to work also towards a better understanding of the local. After all, the first world atlas by Abraham Ortelius, as is well known, was entitled *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, just as the most famous London playhouse, as is equally well known, was called The Globe. Seen together, these two cultural media may ultimately show the uses of theatrical mobility: to redefine the local as a place where, despite the hurly-burly of contingency, we may eventually, like Shakespeare’s witches, actually meet again.

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31 Greenblatt 4.
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