GLOBAL TRAFFIC

DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES OF TRADE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE FROM 1550 TO 1700

EDITED BY

BARBARA SEBEK AND STEPHEN DENG
EARLY MODERN CULTURAL STUDIES

Ivo Kamps, Series Editor

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Global Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550 to 1700
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The Early Modern Cultural Studies series is dedicated to the exploration of literature, history, and culture in the context of cultural exchange and globalization. We begin with the assumption that in the twenty-first century, literary criticism, literary theory, historiography, and cultural studies have become so interwoven that we can now think of them as an eclectic and only loosely unified (but still recognizable) approach to formerly distinct fields of inquiry such as literature, society, history, and culture. This series furthermore presumes that the early modern period was witness to an incipient process of transculturation through exploration, mercantilism, colonization, and migration that set into motion a process of globalization that is still with us today. The purpose of this series is to bring together this eclectic approach, which freely and unapologetically crosses disciplinary, theoretical, and political boundaries, with early modern texts and artifacts that bear the traces of transculturation and globalization.

This process can be studied on a large as well as on a small scale, and the books in this series are dedicated to both. It is just as concerned with the analyses of colonial encounters and native representations of those encounters as it is with representations of the other in Shakespeare, gender politics, the cultural impact of the presence of strangers/foreigners in London, or the consequences of farmers’ migration to that same city. This series is as interested in documenting cultural exchanges between British, Portuguese, Spanish, or Dutch colonizers and native peoples as it is in telling the stories of returning English soldiers who served in foreign armies on the continent of Europe in the late sixteenth century.

Ivo Kamps
Series editor
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Global Traffic: 
An Introduction

Barbara Sebek

Recent years have witnessed among scholars of early modern literature and culture an intense interest in economic history, mercantilism, and the emergence of capitalism, as well as in the relations between “culture” and “economy” as broad categories.1 Increasingly, critics have worked to explore the place of England in the emergence of what historian Immanuel Wallerstein calls a “world system” of global exchange. The chapters in this volume consolidate much of this earlier scholarship, bringing new topics and texts to the discussion and modelling innovative ways to construe the relation between the literary and the economic. Premised on the idea that trade was formative in spurring and structuring English forays abroad, Global Traffic bears out William Sherman’s assessment that most English travel in our period “was carried out (explicitly or implicitly) in the name of trade” (25). The volume therefore redresses what Walter Cohen refers to as a “collective underestimation of economics by contemporary criticism” and a need to come to terms with the “probably decisive role of economics in overseas expansion” (128). At the same time, this volume follows the critical axiom that economic practices must be understood as complex cultural and discursive phenomena.

While the vast scale of England’s commercial expansion can be discerned numerically—“modern” facts such as the tonnage of London shipping trebling between 1582 and 1629 (Vitkus below), customs revenues at chief English ports more than quintupling from 1614 to 1687 (Minchinton 33), or the pound value of London imports nearly trebling between 1621 and 1700 (Davis 55)—we can also glimpse the increasingly global purview of English trade by juxtaposing two texts offering practical advice to overseas merchants and their factors: The marchants avizo (1589), by the Bristol-based merchant John Browne, and The merchants mappe of commerce (1638), by Levant and East India merchant Lewis Roberts. In the fifty years or so separating the first editions of these texts, we move from Browne’s slender quarto volume
of seventy pages aimed at the “sons and servants” of merchants venturing “to Spain or Portingale or other countries” (Browne title page) to Roberts’s hefty folio of nearly 700 pages presented to “all Merchants or their Factors that exercise the Art of Merchandizing in any part of the habitable World” (Roberts title page).² Roberts echoes this sweeping promise to encompass the entirety of the “habitable world” in his dedicatory epistle to “the merchants of England in General.” He claims to offer an exhaustive account of “all the fit instruments and materials as at this day is [sic] found practised in the Art of Merchandizing in all parts of the habitable world” (sig. A5v). Admiration for the global scope of Roberts’s tome—which includes five lavishly illustrated maps, 450 pages of prose surveying general trade topics and commodities and conditions around the globe, almost 200 pages of currency conversion tables, and a detailed alphabetical list of the latitude and longitude of the principal cities he surveys—is uttered repeatedly in the commendatory verses that preface the first edition. One admirer says that readers shall “live indebted that thou has brought hither / To us, the Trade of all the World together” (sig. A2v). Another marvels that “here that Massy Ball and all its traffique / At once is scence, as through a perfect optique” (sig. A4v). Yet another celebrates how Roberts “bringst us traffique home from every Coast . . . from every forreigne Soyle” (sig. A5r). Awed by the prospect of such a global commercial vista and the potential profit it entails, Roberts’s admirers express a debt of gratitude for his labors in bringing the world of trade home. For this discourse community, at least, the influx of the foreign on English soil is anything but maligned or reviled.

Throughout our period of study, 1550–1700, the promotional strain that we see in the prefatory materials to The merchants mappe jostles against virulent opposition to the practices and consequences of global trade. Many of the chapters in Global Traffic address writers who register the cultural ambivalence, if not outright condemnation, prompted by the period’s unprecedented commercial expansion. This volume as a whole takes up—sometimes illustrating, sometimes challenging—what Jonathan Gil Harris describes as “an ambivalent conception of transnationality that works to naturalize the global even as it stigmatizes the foreign” (Sick 2). By attending to specific commodities, texts, structures, or economic debates, these chapters particularize the discursive operations by which the abstract and distant world of trade was rendered meaningful and intelligible to contemporaries. Taken together, these chapters offer a methodological blend: premised on a larger narrative of economic expansion and the emergence of capitalism, Global Traffic also offers what Lee Patterson calls “a plurality of micronarratives” (90).³ The volume therefore resists how the “global” paradigm can assume or imply homogeneity across different
cultures, trades, or social groups, or how it can erase the specificities of local conditions.

Read as a group, the chapters here offer a point of entry to the early formation of economic and cultural processes that many consider the crisis of our own age. As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, the 1990s were “deluged with a discourse about globalization. We are told by virtually everyone that we are now living, and for the first time, in an era of globalization. . . . The processes that are usually meant when we speak of globalization are not in fact new at all. They have existed for some 500 years” (Globalization 251–52). Wallerstein’s reminder, aimed at an audience in the social sciences, comes as no surprise to those familiar with his work or to scholars of the early modern period, particularly those who study global trade and its cultural consequences. Global Traffic shows how the early processes of globalization must be viewed as intertwined economic and cultural phenomena. The phrase “discourses and practices of trade” in our subtitle signals this relationship between cultural meanings and economic activities while also implying some distinction between the discursive and actual practice. Thus, the chapters here are working in proximity to materialist problematics. Introducing his collection of nearly two decades of materialist Shakespeare criticism, Ivo Kamps calls attention to what by then was already a “heterogeneous proliferation of its methods and practices” (1). By claiming that materialist critics had yet to offer sufficiently “hard-core economic analyses” (16), Kamps points to some necessary correspondence between materialist and economic analyses. The proliferation of work in the material or economic vein has only increased in the past decade, with concomitant efforts to offer labels characterizing it, among them the “new new historicism,” “the new materialism,” “material culture studies,” and “the new economic criticism.”

Recent critiques of work that falls under these various umbrellas note a recurrent tendency to evade or euphemize Marxist categories of analysis. Addressing the larger “explosion of historical and political criticism” of the early modern period, Howard and Shershow observe that “much of it seems an active evasion of Marxist modes of inquiry even when Marxism’s conceptual tools could prove of use” (3); they lament the “evasion of the specifically Marxist roots of these avowedly ‘materialist’ or ‘political’ projects” (4). Others likewise regard the potential of the newer criticism to be diluted when it fails to engage specifically Marxist traditions of materialist thought. Guillory insists that the “new economic criticism” is obliged to “establish a relation, if only implicit, to the old economic criticism, formerly known as ‘Marxist’” (223). Bruster offers a symptomatic reading of “new materialist” collections from the early 1990s, studies characterized by “an attention to physical things, ‘matter,’ that is, interpreted literally” (191). In place of class
struggle, hegemony, or ideology, Bruster observes, the new materialism attends to objects in the world. He argues for more careful incorporation of the history of materialism itself. Harris also notes recent deployments of the word “material” in which “its residual Marxist baggage has been more or less emptied: the ‘cultural materialism’ of the eighties, with its vestiges of the dialectic of social struggle and transformation, has given way in the nineties to ‘material culture,’ with its whiff of the dialectic of renunciation and allure” (“Wunderkammer” 113). Harris discerns “a nostalgia for some kind of material terra firma as an antidote to the textual mises en abime of a generation of post-structuralist criticism . . . the object seems to provide reassuringly safe ground upon which to acquire a more or less unmediated access to the real” (114).

Most recently, David Hawkes notes the dodging of Marxism—“the less fashionable M-word”—that seems to be at work in the frequent invocations of materialism (“Materialism” 116). Also, like the critics discussed above, Hawkes laments the tendency to focus on literal, tangible objects in the works he surveys, one of them being, interestingly, Harris’s own materialist account of stage properties. “‘Materialism,’ as currently practiced,” Hawkes argues, “endorses and supports” the fetishizing of objects.

Richly contextualized and theorized, the chapters in this volume that do indeed focus on specific commodities (Brookes, Shahani, Test, Tigner) show that commodities can be the object of analysis without the assumption that objects provide unmediated access to the “real.” The collection as a whole considers the role of commodities in social processes—the systems and structures that make the movement of things meaningful—rather than studying objects for their “thingness.” Though engagement with Marxist conceptual tools is not salient in the collection as a whole, both Christensen and Test foreground the dependence of commercial expansion on the exploited labors of those at home and abroad. Even when not the primary focus, attentiveness to the economically disenfranchised or class-specific concerns threads through the analysis of trade in Morrow, Shahani, and Tigner. Race is a central concern to Brookes, but engagements with differences that intersect with or complicate emergent ideologies of race emerge in the chapters by Vitkus, Allen, and Shahani.

In assembling these chapters, we have been conscious of the pitfalls of what Guillory calls literary criticism’s “peculiar” openness to deracinated economic concepts, its tendency to transform notions borrowed from economics into “merely thematic preoccupations, into ‘new subjects for criticism’” (224). We have tried to be thoughtfully literal-minded about what counts as “trade”—the buying and selling or exchange of commodities for profit (OED 8a)—all the while recognizing that economic activity can hardly be isolated from political, religious,
and other discourses, especially in our period, and especially given our
disciplinary orientation, its refusal to read texts, literary or otherwise, as
transparent historical records. Taken together, the chapters here might
be said to follow the “intermediate” perspective that Cohen adopts in
his chapter on Shakespeare’s mercantile geography, navigating between
a kind of criticism “that would swallow up everything into the thematic
preoccupation at hand—in this case trade—and a conservative scholarly
approach that would confine the impact of economic imperialism to
indisputable representations and allusions” (154–55). Given the diverse
array of their theoretical engagements, the chapters here go beyond
a mere thematics of trade while also collectively retaining trade as a
focal point. They tap into or intersect with scholarly interest in travel,
exploration, emergent nationalism, protoimperialism, and emergent
colonialism in the early modern period.8

We have organized the chapters into three sections: “Emergent
Epistemologies of Trade,” “Transforming Home through Trade,” and
“Trade and the Interests of State.” The chapters in the first section,
“Emergent Epistemologies of Trade,” are concerned with the concep-
tual shifts ushered in by the conduct of commerce over vast distances
and protracted periods of time.9

Daniel Vitkus provides an account of the larger sweep of England’s
commercial expansion during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth
centuries, showing how, in this first phase of merchant capitalism, link-
age with the Ottoman world-empire was a key step toward England’s
integration in the global capitalist system. Though England’s successful
trade in the Mediterranean was a crucial part of its movement from the
periphery to the core of this world economy, Vitkus draws on global
systems theory to show how this trade was only part of a complex
and sprawling interstate system. Vitkus lays out the dynamics of this
systemic shift as older feudal notions of plunder or conquest jostled
against new economic structures such as joint-stock companies and
capital investment. These emergent capitalist structures brought with
them a new sense of mobility, mixture, and global venturing that was
pointedly non-Eurocentric. At the same time, Vitkus considers the
interplay of distinctly national interests and transglobal forces. He then
argues that, just as the English were improvising in order to position
themselves more profitably in the global marketplace, so they were
adapting culturally. The London theater crucially intervened in the
process of sorting and sizing up information about the larger world of
long-distance trade, particularly the might and wealth of Islamic empires.
Vitkus turns to Jonson’s The Alchemist to exemplify this theatrical
engagement with Islamic wealth and power. Through his historicized
reading of Sir Epicure Mammon and other dramatic figures, Vitkus
shows how wealth did not reside in the possession of particular objects
but in the ability to control capital transfers, especially when capital was abstracted and manipulated by those whose ventures were measured in mercantile letters of credit.

Furthering our understanding of early modern reconceptualizations of economic practices, Ian MacInnes explores the ambivalent and rapidly changing attitudes toward financial risk in the late sixteenth century. He shows how the emerging mathematics of probability and statistics enabled a view of “hazard” as a calculable entity, a view that profoundly unsettled attitudes toward fortune and providence. As something that one owns or manages rather than something one does, risk becomes a way of knowing and controlling the world that is detached from divine providence. But because the concept of risk functioned in multiple contexts as a way of distinguishing between licit and illicit economic activity, debates about risk remained imbedded in theological discourse. MacInnes reads Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in the context of these developments, replacing the usury debates with nascent practices of maritime insurance, including the 1601 formation of the Court of Assurances, as the topical events resonating in the play. MacInnes argues that the assessment and management of risk is the central economic concern in the play as it systematically turns “hazard” into the basis of both economic and social practice.

If newly reconfigured notions of risk concomitant with the expansion of long-distance trade challenged providential design, David Morrow’s chapter shows how religious discourses could coalesce with or be appropriated by the discourses of global trade. Morrow offers a reading of the merchant Baptist Goodall’s “The Tryall of Travell” (1630), an 80-page poem in heroic couplets that celebrates monopolistic overseas trade. Morrow teases out the overlapping, multiple senses of travel, labor, and difficulty condensed in the polysemic homonym “travell,” a concept that resonates in Christian, existential, and mercantile frames. Even as Goodall exploits Christian tropes and imagery to insist that long-distance trade is harmonizing, even salvific, Morrow argues that the ideology of “travell” is decidedly inflected by his era’s social conflicts and its struggles for access to power and revenues. Morrow discerns how Goodall’s appeal to Christian typology constructs long-distance trade in specifically classed and gendered terms. Goodall defends embattled merchant privileges by creating an ideal of vigorous, manly mercantile comportment that neither artisans nor noblemen could carry off.

Rather than construing voyaging merchants as the redemptive agents who redress the dispersals of Eden and Babel, the mercantile writers Bradley Ryner discusses try to offer a panoramic, godlike vantage point from which the sprawling world of trade could be viewed at a glance. These writers engage the conceptual challenge of representing emergent
economic relationships that were simultaneously personal and alien, individual and systemic, material and abstract. Deploying de Certeau’s notion of the “strategic model” or “map,” Ryner reveals the urge toward systemic thinking at work in writers such as Malynes, Kayll, and Misselden (an urge that illustrates contemporary engagement with the emergent world economy that Vitkus discusses). Ryner contrasts their efforts to represent trade in its totality to Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, a play that insists on the subjective and shifting nature of value, thwarting the totalizing perspective mercantile writings strive for. In stressing the messy particulars of value-formation and the retrospective nature of knowledge, the play deconstructs the contested poetics of mapping at work in mercantile treatises.

Lea Allen’s chapter elaborates on Ryner’s discussion of how long distance trade stimulated contemporary awareness of the vagaries of value, as characters, coins and commodities moved from one context to another. Focusing on the importance of spatial movement and exotic places as means of marking and generating value, Allen challenges the common critical assumption that the expansion of foreign trade necessarily elicited xenophobic anxiety. Allen reads what de Certeau calls the “magic of proper names” in the rhetorical performance of wealth’s increase in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* and Jonson’s *Volpone*, nuancing how we conceptualize the relation between domestic and foreign spaces. Reading the plays’ telescoping of the “whole world” and the “little room,” Allen reveals how home spaces, whether street, market, or bedroom, become transformed and enriched by exotic capital. Allen extends this reading of the plays’ rhetorical enactments of exotic capital to London itself, discerning how the discourse of value at work in the drama becomes materialized in St. Paul’s, the central aisle of which was nicknamed the Mediterraneo. She thus shows how international trade and representations of “things in motion” are central to the production of (a) cultural capital.

As a group, the chapters in the next section, “Transforming Home through Trade,” could be said to extend or tweak Allen’s corrective to the assumption that foreign trade’s transformation of domestic spaces was met with automatic or unmitigated alarm. They reveal a complex dynamic of fascination and fear, celebration and denunciation, that marks early modern understandings of the impact of transglobal trade on England.

Ann Christensen’s chapter opens this section with a discussion of a little known play, Walter Mountfort’s *The Launching of the Mary, or The Seaman’s Honest Wife* (1624). Written on Mountfort’s return voyage from East India, the play registers conflicted attitudes toward the East India trade as both enriching the nation and depleting resources at home. Modelling productive ways to think about the relationship of the
economic and the literary, Christensen identifies the play as a hybrid city comedy in which two plots coexist: a “defense plot” that quotes extensively from Thomas Mun’s *Discourse of Trade from England unto the East-Indies* (1621) and a “domestic plot” that details the trials of the virtuous wife of an absent seaman. The drama of the labors and hardships endured by the wife rubs against the defense plot’s attempts to exonerate the company of those hardships. Thus, even as the play offers a celebratory defense of the company’s ventures, it gives voice to a critique of the costs overseas trade entailed for those who remain at home. In attending explicitly to questions of labor and gender in the processes of a developing global market, Christensen shows how home, represented by its imperiled yet virtuous wife—and an imagined community of working wives—appears as both a heroic source of national identity and a vulnerable space endangered by the requirements of the nation’s economy.

Christensen’s interest in the vexed relations between the domestic and the global continues in the next three chapters that turn to traffic in particular commodities. Amy Tigner explores how the trade in exotic flora—though in itself ancillary to more mainstream wares—had an enormous imaginative and ecological impact, transforming aristocratic English gardens into literal microcosms on English soil. She details the channels through which flora were procured and transported, as well as the shift in horticultural perspective from importing plants for their practical, medicinal uses to acquiring them primarily for their beauty and exoticism. The cultivation of plants from around the globe—venerated for their rarity—was seen as a recreation of Paradise in England (akin to Goodall’s view of the redemptive role of voyaging merchants that Morrow discusses in Section I). Teasing out the ideological and imaginative functions of herbal manuals, Tigner uncovers how these Edenic fantasies and celebrations of aristocratic abundance efface the dependence of the botanical trade on the slave trade. She reads the iconography of Ben Jonson’s masque *Chloridia* (1631) to show how, on the stage and in estate gardens, botanical art promoted a newly forming imperial ideology originating from the English court, while also providing imagery that was exploited by puritans and republicans for their own political purposes.

Glossing over the botanical trade’s dependence on African slave labor, the herbalists Tigner studies construct fantasies of imperial possession that hinge on the veneration of the exotic and the successful incorporation of the foreign. Kristen Brookes analyzes antitobacconist treatises that yoke the New World weed with Africa, deploiring the seeming transformation of English bodies from the inside out. Despite its New World origins, in both promotional and alarmist discourse, tobacco was so frequently associated with Africa and Moors that
a drawn or carved “black boy” was the sign of a tobacconist’s shop. Given a cultural view of a characteristically (and paradoxically) English predilection to take on the habits and habiliments of foreigners, arguments in favor of tobacco as a panacea disrupted notions about corporeal differences between the English and other peoples. Brookes explores the discursive operations of a range of texts that present a nightmare of alien intake in which English bodies become the receptacle and vent of foreign waste. She compares the antitobacco discourse to later seventeenth-century broadsides and treatises on coffee, which reveal the persistence of the racialized image of the African or Turk insinuating himself into English bodies through their economic and corporeal consumption of imported goods. Brookes helps us see how these associations, formed well before the systematic use of slaves in the tobacco colonies, provided a language onto which slavery was later added. In developing this symbology, writers and graphic artists often swerved away from the specificity of a product’s place of origin.

Continuing the previous chapters’ interest in early modern responses to the importation and consumption of foreign wares, Gitanjali Shahani traces the complex and ambiguous processes by which the local negotiates the global as the two coalesce onto Indian calicoes in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Shahani takes up Arjun Appadurai’s formulation that “commodities, like people, have social lives” to examine how an inanimate object such as cloth acquired a heathenish and foreign character in public perception, while also being tied to protocolonial fantasies of possessing the East. Initially a “piece trade” tacked onto the importation of spices and bullion, over the course of the seventeenth century, a rage for chintzes and calicoes erupted among both the middle class and the elite—and even the dead. Both on the backs of Englishwomen and in the interiors of English homes, Indian calicoes came to render the Indies an inescapable part of the minutiae of everyday life in seventeenth-century England. Like Brookes, Shahani notes the longstanding view of an English penchant for the garments and gewgaws of strangers, which tirades against calicoes regard as a monstrous dilution of national identity. Shahani analyzes intertwined constructions of “fashion” and foreignness, examining how Dorothy Distaff’s The Female Manufacturers Complaint (1720) accords both power and blame to the lady of fashion, construing fashion as a uniquely female crime that threatens female autonomy. Echoing Christensen’s analysis of Dorotea’s vocal plaints and others’ attacks on the East India Company in Mountfort’s play, Shahani reads how writers such as Defoe depict India swallowing up all, leaving England an exhausted, wounded, and bleeding entity.

In analyzing the complex interplay between home and away, local and global, the chapters in Section II reveal a continuum of attitudes
about the expansion of trade: from hysterical opposition to trade as a source of contamination, feminization, or destruction of England, to the veneration of the exotic and the celebration of trade as harmonizing, redemptive, and vital to the stability of the English nation. As economically based conceptions of the nation emerged in our period, long-distance trade increasingly became identified with the interests of the state, which is the subject of the final section.

Edward Test begins Section III, “Trade and the Interests of State,” with a study of a trade that received more attention and aid from the throne than any other: north Atlantic salt-dry cod, or “Poor John.” Test examines how the lowly codfish contributed to the highest concerns of the nation-state—domestic stability, national security, and foreign trade—and how it served as a focus for debates about the changing nature of trade in the early seventeenth century. Test explores the exploitation of what he calls the “poorer” half of John—the destitute laborer—and his subservience to England’s commercial pursuits, especially the fishing industry, which the seventeenth-century mercantilist Edward Misselden dubbed England’s “nursery of trade.” Test then elucidates the obscure “finny half” of Shakespeare’s Caliban, reading his materiality as both laborer and product, suggesting how England’s market relied upon a mobile, transitory labor force, a distinctly unsettled economy based on the trade of the New World fish and its return commodity, sack wine. According to Test, England’s early modern Ship of State depended upon the codfish trade to keep afloat, and international trade depended upon employing at sea a vast sector of unsettled and masterless men. Test shows how the island of The Tempest is not conceived as a permanent colony or traditional plantation; rather the magical isle represents the new economics of global exchange, stressing the dependence upon uncolonized foreign spaces for the growth of the early modern nation state.

Matthew Day’s chapter attends to the specific practices at work in bringing accounts of travel and trade into print. Exploring the commercial sensitivity of early modern travel literature and the interaction of private enterprise and state censorship in its publication, he details the complex mechanisms by which the interests of the state and those of trading companies intersected or clashed. Day demonstrates that great trading companies such as the Muscovy Company and the East India Company actively sought to suppress texts either directly or through appeal to the state. In terms of the practice of censorship, such companies were able to use the possibility for employment, the offer of charity, or the threat of unemployment—rather than direct censorship—as methods to achieve their ends. Nevertheless they were also prepared to take such action. No overarching principle governed what was regarded as commercially sensitive; Day reveals how commercial
interest depended on the particular historical, political, and geographical circumstances prevailing at the time of publication. Comparing manuscript sources and published accounts of particular voyages, Day demonstrates that the desire for commercial advantage was a key factor in the restrictions placed on texts, and that financial considerations should be added to our understanding of the causes of early modern censorship.

Stephen Deng delineates the specific contours of England’s fiscal crisis in the 1620s. He explains how mercantilists and playwrights—especially Thomas Mun and Ben Jonson—responded to this crisis by appropriating Aristotelian ideas on the right use of wealth to suit the needs of the state in an international market economy. Much of this discourse aligns the interest of the state and English households against conspiring foreigners, both the exchange dealers spreading “banker canker” and evil merchants who have manipulated the English into an unfavorable balance of trade. Yet Deng insists that commentators also perceived a significant threat within England itself that must be held in check by a strong ethical approach to national and household economy. In fact, he shows how Mun’s principles of investment and arguments for a favorable balance of trade actually *veer from* the proclivity to blame foreigners for England’s economic woes. Deng reads Jonson’s depiction of Lady Pecunia in *The Staple of News* as a figure for this state-oriented ethical approach. The implicit international context of Jonson’s play, which emerged from late morality plays instructing the right use of money, suggests similar concerns with international finance. Both Jonson and Mun are ultimately concerned with England’s economic position within the world, and both prescribe a policy of moderation in monetary flows, contrary to the traditional perception of capitalist excess. Personal choices about how one uses wealth become linked to the national balance of trade, especially to the importance of investment. Deng calls this linking of the household balance sheet and the national balance of trade “global œconomy.”

A number of concerns that thread through the volume reemerge in Deng’s chapter: the early modern preoccupation with the causes and consequences of an influx of foreign commodities; wavering between blaming foreigners and scrutinizing domestic practices; English habits of consumption and the particular associations of women as desiring consumers and objects of exchange; the general relationship between domestic economic practices and global ones; and the continuities between economics, morality, and politics. The chapters in Section III bring into relief how an increasingly global economy led to highly variable formulations of English national interests. They work with the volume as a whole in complicating a simple or straightforward narrative of overseas expansion as an economic or cultural phenomenon.
I conclude with a brief nod to three examples that illustrate how unevenly the English “moved toward” an understanding of the nation as a global economic player in the period we are studying. I began with reference to John Browne’s manual of practical and moral advice for factors engaged in the Iberian trade. First published in the year after Spain’s unsuccessful naval invasion, Browne’s text is pointedly devoid of the chauvinistic zeal so characteristic in the aftermath of the Armada attack. Browne’s muteness on this score attests to how out of sync merchants’ concerns could be with “nationalist” ones. Not only does Browne fail to evince animus against the Spanish, but, as McGrath notes, he even enjoins factors to defer with courtesy and lowliness to the Spaniards with whom they deal (19). Here, national and religious conflicts are subordinated to promoting the harmonious conduct of profitable traffic. Not quite a century later, Carew Reynel’s *The True English Interest* (1674) contrasts Browne’s *Avizo* by conceiving of economic interests in distinctly national terms, as its title alone indicates. Moreover, Reynel privileges internal trade. According to him, England’s collective prosperity hinges on stimulating domestic trade and manufacture: “trade is to be advanced every way at home and abroad, but especially the home as being of more consequence than the foreign” (qtd. in Thirsk 142). Reynel’s insistence on the relative inconsequentiality of foreign trade contrasts tellingly with an early passage cited by Vitkus in the first piece below. Vitkus concludes his study by pointing to Thomas Smith’s 1549 *Discourse of the Commonweal of the Realm of England* (first printed in 1581), which conceived of England not as a separate body politic or isolated national economy. Rather, Smith sees England as part of a global whole, the “common market of all the world.” I have isolated these bits from Browne, Reynel, and Smith in order to offer a quick snapshot of the multiple and competing views of foreign trade available during the period covered in *Global Traffic*. The following chapters fill out the story.

**Notes**

1. In her introduction to a recent collection that exemplifies such work, Linda Woodbridge surveys the explosion of mathematical and commercial publications in Renaissance England, as well as the spate of recent literary scholarship that engages economic concerns. In addition to the works Woodbridge cites, we can add Harris, *Sick Economies*; Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace*; Leinwand; Netzloff; and Turner.

2. Demand for the sort of guidance that Browne offered is evidenced in the appearance of five more editions in 1590, 1591, 1607, 1616, and 1640. For more on Browne, see McGrath, Stevenson 43–44 and
141–44, and Sebek, “After My Humble Dutie Remembered.” Initially published in 1638, Roberts’s Mappe was reprinted in 1677, 1690, 1700, and 1719. For more on Roberts, see Ryner in this volume and Sebek, “Strange Outlandish Wealth” and “Good Turns and the Art of Merchandizing.”

3. Howard and Shershow discuss how focusing on the local and the particular can fail to account for larger patterns of historical change. On the issue of periodization, see Turner and Dolan. Dolan helpfully enjoins scholars to revisit continually the vexed problems of periodization on a project-by-project basis.

4. Fumerton uses the phrase “new new historicism.” Harris adopts this term (“Wunderkammer”), while also addressing “material culture” studies. Bruster uses “new materialism.” “New economic criticism” is the paradigm adopted in Woodbridge’s collection. The label was coined by the Society for Critical Exchange, which hosted an inaugural conference in 1994 and has subsequently sponsored panels at the national and various regional MLA conventions. While “economic” and “material” often go hand in hand (and in fact, according to the complaint of those discussed below, they should), there is a distinction between the new economic criticism, which explicitly deals with the category of the economic (although it does not necessarily deal with material objects) and the new materialism (new new historicism, material culture studies), which is not necessarily economic, and in fact rarely is according to critical complaints. Given their focus on trade, all of these chapters might be construed as falling under the new economic criticism rubric—although they are not necessarily influenced by critics such as Marc Shell or Jean-Joseph Goux, which is how Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee perceive the new economic criticism (21).

5. Interestingly, then, Harris sees some materialist work as dodging both the historical materialism of the Marxist tradition and the sophisticated accounts of textuality ushered in by post-structuralism. Though beyond the scope of this introduction, revisiting this theoretical terrain is important for those debating the relation between “symbolic” and “real” economies, as well as for those interested in theorizing the relation between discursive and material domains.

6. As we have seen, Harris himself shares Hawkes’s concerns, discerning in “material culture” studies an abandonment of the dialectic of social struggle and transformation. In “Shakespeare’s Hair,” Harris argues that by restoring diachronic considerations, scholars might “rematerialize ‘material culture’ in its Aristotelian or Marxist sense and thereby restore to it an understanding of materiality as process” (485).

7. Cohen likewise asserts that, though overseas trade influenced Shakespeare more than is routinely recognized, one must be wary of the “slippery slope” by which “anything can be seen as metaphorically or allegorically related to mercantile expansion” (154).
8. Burton’s discussion of the term “traffique” in the sixteenth century (15–16) captures this interplay between specifically trade-oriented activity and wider discourses of exchange.

9. Although the sense of trade as buying and selling of commodities for profit was dominant by the mid–sixteenth century, the oldest sense of the word—“a course, way, path”—perhaps entered English originally in nautical language for the course or track of a ship (OED 1a). This older meaning reveals how intimately discourses of traffic were bound up with spatial movement and overseas enterprise.

Works Cited


PART I

EMERGENT EPISTEMOLOGIES OF TRADE
At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England’s religion was Roman Catholic, its feudal economy was marginal to global trade flow, and its professional theater was itinerant and largely dependent on household or courtly patronage. At the end of the century, England was predominantly Protestant and its economy was becoming a capitalist economy with stronger ties to global trade; London was rapidly becoming a world city, and its theater, too, had become “global” and commercial. In 1599, at the newly opened Globe Theatre in London, when the actor playing Jaques declared, “All the world’s a stage,” these words glanced at a new sense of English identity as a role that was to be performed on the stage of the world, and performed for profit. The theatrum mundi trope took on new meaning when England’s place in the world was understood differently, as a staging point for action in a global marketplace. In Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750, Jean-Christophe Agnew has shown how both market and theater pursued a parallel course of change, breaking free of local tradition to create new forms and functions that were oriented toward that far-flung process of exchange that