



Renaissance Mad Voyages: Experiments in Early Modern English Travel (Cultures of Play, 1300- 1700)

Anthony Parr

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A vogue for travel "stunts" flourished in England between 1590 and the 1620s: playful imitations or burlesques of maritime enterprise and overland travel that collectively appear to be a response to particular innovations and developments in English culture. This study is the first full length scholarly work to focus on the curious phenomenon of "madde voyages", as the writer William Rowley called them. Anthony Parr shows that the mad voyage (as Rowley and others conceived it) had surprisingly deep and diverse roots in traditional travel practices, in courtly play and mercantile custom, and in literary culture. Looking in detail at several of the best-documented exploits, Parr situates them in the ferment of such ventures during the period in question; but also reaches back to explore their classical and mediaeval antecedents, and considers their role in creating a template for eccentric English adventure in later centuries. Renaissance Mad Voyages brings together literary and historical enquiry in order to address the implications of an interesting and neglected cultural trend. Parr's investigation of the rash of travel exploits in the period leads to extensive research on the origins of the wager on travel and its role in the expansion of English tourism and trading activity.

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