

IV. Concluding Remarks

Culture as Network: Subversive and Innovative Potentialities

0.—My concluding remarks will be brief. The first chapter of this section will address constellations touched upon in passing above while trying to demonstrate the extent to which a “technical” approach to literary and artistic creation as described in this book is able to integrate dimensions of the creative process which are typically considered not to be accounted for by the concept of art as *techné*. A second chapter will formulate some ideas concerning the limits of the approach here submitted.

1.—I should like to resume a point already discussed briefly, namely, that works of art typically convey the impression of “unity”, of coherence. As mentioned previously, it shall remain an open question whether the impression of such internal coherence is the consequence of an effective structuring that is more consistent than in the case of pragmatic texts (or images), or whether this impression is rather the result of an attitude recipients automatically adopt as soon as a text or image is presented to them as a “work of art”. Classical literary theory, for example Aristotle’s *Poetics*, would argue for the former alternative, while many modernist artworks, literary as well as visual, make it even their primary message that there is no “material” difference between pragmatic objects and art objects;⁵⁶⁵ from such a perspective, the difference consists, rather, in the attitude towards the object on the recipients’ part, triggered by decontextualization. The point, however, is that even in the case of such high modernist, seemingly “un-structured” works, the assumptions concerning a sort of “over-structuring”⁵⁶⁶ as a distinctive feature of artworks persist in the process of reception. The difference with regard to the reception of pre-high-modernist works consists in the fact that the assumption is directed at a different level of the work: in the case of high modernism, the over-structuring is supposed to be operative on the level of the conceptual framework underlying the actual work. A random collection of extremely banal objects from everyday life is differentiated from an equally banal collection of objects from everyday life exhibited as a “work of art” in a museum by the fact that the viewers, in the

565 One might think of the works of such influential visual artists as Andy Warhol or Joseph Beuys.

566 See Jürgen Link, “Das lyrische Gedicht als Paradigma des überstrukturierten Textes”, in: *Funk-Kolleg Literatur*, vol. 1, Helmut Brackert and Eberhard Lämmert (eds.), Frankfurt/Main 1977, pp. 234–255.

latter case, are ready to assume that there is a “concept” governing the ensemble, which is thus no longer considered a random group of objects, but rather a carefully chosen arrangement whose logic is to be deciphered. In most cases, this logic is very abstract; it is constituted by basic aesthetic categories, for example the position that art is not necessarily linked to beauty or harmony, but rather to the parameters of defamiliarization and subsequent reflection.

In general terms, this discussion, as interesting as it may be, is not a point of particular relevance to the theoretical approach developed in this book. What is pertinent to my theorizing is the fact that the above-mentioned assumption recipients are ready to make in case they are dealing with objects that are generally accepted as artworks enables the synthesis of extremely diverse material extracted from the net. If one takes the entire history of art into consideration, including high modernism, one is tempted to say that it is art’s privilege to mix materials of such diverse provenance that it would hardly be possible to merge them in non-artistic objects.⁵⁶⁷ In the process of art production, the artist is free to assemble previous material that, at first sight, does not seem to fit together at all, and he may be able to derive effects from such a “wild mix”—aesthetic, semiotic, but also pragmatic—that would otherwise not be attainable. This applies not only to the modern period, but also to more classical times.

The highly sophisticated text known under the name of *Celestina* provides a good opportunity to consider such a particularly complicated, or, to put it in more down-to-earth terms, “wild” manner of dealing with the material circulating in the net. Without exaggeration, one can conceive of the drama as an “intertextuality” in the sense of Julia Kristeva’s theorem. Similar to works of high modernism or even postmodernism, it does not try to feign “originality”; on the contrary, from the perspective of an educated reader, the intertextual character is laid bare in a most obvious fashion. This applies to all textual levels. The deep structure of its “core”, the love story, is taken from medieval (more “realistic”) variations of the pastoral tradition (*Pamphilus de amore* [twelfth century], *Arcipreste de Hita* [fourteenth century], *Arcipreste de Talavera* [1438], etc.), while the maxims that almost all the personages constantly cite are taken from Petrarch’s *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1354–1367) and its classical, mainly Stoic sources, to mention only the two most important pre-existent elements assembled by the text’s author. As already explained, there is also a prominent component deriving from popular discourses, specifically

⁵⁶⁷ Think, for example, of techniques of *collage* in modernist graphic art, as well as in high modernist literary texts.—As to literary texts in particular, see my essay “Was ist Literatur?”.

those belonging to the tradition known as the carnivalesque. One could thus say that the *Celestina* is systematically assembled out of extremely diverse units extracted from the net and re-synthesized into an entirely “new” and—as evidenced by the reception history—fascinating work. The important point to be highlighted, however, is that there seems to be no ideological homogenization to which this highly diverse material is submitted; or, to express it in more simple terms: the text merely presents diverse and contradictory interpretations of the story, without suggesting which might be the most satisfactory one. In addition, it does not show any obvious formal unity that might serve as a compensation for what at first sight appears to be a lack of consistency as to message; the text comprises twenty-one acts of most unequal length—a characteristic that is representative of its overall erratic organization.

Before concluding from such an observation that the *Celestina* is a precursor of high modernist or even postmodernist ways of making use of the cultural net, one should perhaps consider a more historicist alternative and concede that there may be quite diverse functions fulfilled by similar “techniques” of interacting with the net. Taking the text of the *Celestina* as a whole into account, one might discuss the hypothesis that it conveys the following message: the entire fund of moral philosophical knowledge, as well as of knowledge about the world “embodied” in all sorts of previous literary texts, is *not* able to consistently explain or render transparent what takes place in the drama, namely, that two frivolous but not at all immoral youths suffer a violent death as a rather oblique consequence of a banal extramarital love story. The world is incomprehensible. The text makes this message explicit in Pleberio’s lament at the end of the play. Life is impenetrable to the tools we have at our disposal; and there is no “aesthetic” compensation for this absence of order—that seems to be the (in that age subversive) “message” of the extremely extravagant way this text deals with the material it extracts from the net.

2.—A second such example of an audacious, at first sight quasi-modernist use of the highly diverse material floating in the net is Cervantes’s *Entremés del retablo de las maravillas* (1615), briefly addressed above.⁵⁶⁸ As to the underlying processes of circulation, I should stress that the basic motif of the play (the deceived are tricked by prior information that makes them assume it is better for them to assert that they see something than to bluntly say that they do not see anything) is not unique in European literary history. It cannot be excluded that Hans Christian Andersen based his fairytale *The Emperor’s New Clothes*

⁵⁶⁸ See pp. 24–26; for a detailed analysis, see once again Pawlita’s book (*Skeptizismus im europäischen Drama der Frühen Neuzeit*).

(1837) on a reading of Cervantes's *entremés*; but it may as well be the case that the two authors drew independently from corresponding material already available prior to Cervantes. The motif as such can be found in the *ejemplo* 32 of the *Conde Lucanor* (1330–1335), a collection, written in Spanish, of entertaining as well as instructive short narratives that derive from the medieval oral tradition and may go back to autochthonous or to exogenous sources (Arab, Oriental). There is, however, a unique feature of Cervantes's extraction of this motif. In the instances preceding and following it, the audience acquiesces to the veracity of what they have been told in order to avoid censure by the authorities. In Cervantes, by contrast, the bloody ending shows that many of them really believe to see what, according to the deceivers, is “represented” onstage. What might be considered, with respect to the other texts that make use of the motif, an incrimination of conformism by way of ridicule, assumes in Cervantes the rank of a quasi-epistemological speculation: conformism might block cognition to the point of leading to disaster.

There is another point of divergence to be addressed: of the two prerequisites for seeing what is allegedly happening onstage according to the tricksters of Cervantes's play, one finds only the first one in the *Conde Lucanor*, namely, the imperative of legitimate birth. The motif belongs to the traditional repertoire of the comic, since it refers to the body and its permanent resistance to the superimposition of those restrictive norms and laws we call civilizational, societal, or religious. As to what is known about the realities in premodern rural Europe, legitimate birth (as opposed to birth out of wedlock) was more the exception than the rule—which is not astonishing, since legitimacy of birth is of relevance only in case there is something to inherit. For the lower class, it is without any functionality. It is one of those many patterns of behavior that are constantly reasserted verbally while being more or less ignored practically.—Cervantes adds to this traditional comic motif an item he draws from a completely different discursive strand, the contemporary controversies revolving around the “right” religion and the “right” way to practice it. Highly intricate questions of orthodoxy in the literal sense are introduced into comedy⁵⁶⁹

569 As I have argued in an article dedicated to the subgenre of Spanish Baroque *comedia* known as the “peasant drama”, the question of right conduct in terms of sexual practices was of great importance in post-Tridentine times also with respect to the common people (see the reference in n. 318). The Cervantian *entremés*, however, is not about the question of marital or extramarital sexuality, but rather about the question of legitimacy of birth. As strict as the Church's regulation of believers' sexual practices may have been, there was never an official discrimination against those who owed their life to illegitimate intercourse. In that sense, one part of the mix presented by Cervantes is, indeed, comic only in the most conventional sense, while the other is highly explosive ideologically.

and thematized in a way that would have been inconceivable in pragmatic and non-comic texts at that time. The concept of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) refers to the first stages of racism in European history. Pressured by the increasingly successful Christian re-conquerors of the peninsula, many Spanish Jews had converted to Christianity in the fourteenth century. As delighted as the Iberian Christians might have been at first that so many Jews gave up their “stubborn”⁵⁷⁰ resistance to acknowledging that Jesus was the Messiah announced in Scripture, they soon had to face the fact that the “new Christians” (*crisianos nuevos*) were not only sisters and brothers in Christ, but also became, on the grounds of the act of conversion, serious competitors in the worldly sphere. As Jews, they had been excluded from all of military and civil service, including the clergy and higher education. After baptism, these social spheres became accessible to them on equal grounds. With the skills and the adaptability their ancestors had to acquire during a long history of persecution, the *crisianos nuevos* performed well in these sections formerly reserved for the “old Christians”. The reaction to this evolution was a series of pogroms which exceeded in their violence what was known from previous European history. In order to cool the overheated atmosphere, the authorities promulgated the first statutes of *limpieza de sangre* in 1449, that is, rules that made all the aforementioned professions accessible only to those who were able to produce evidence that they were so-called *crisianos viejos*, that is, of non-Jewish lineage. Even without going into the details,⁵⁷¹ one might be able to imagine what the (perhaps unintentional) consequences of these statutes were, namely, the general atmosphere of a witch-hunt that degenerated into a sort of proto-totalitarian racism in the year 1492, when all non-converted Jews and Muslims were exiled from Spain, and even more so in the course of and after the Counter-Reformation and the reinforcement of the Inquisition going along with the Catholic Church’s attempt at regaining ideological control in the West. Being accused of illegitimate birth was nothing that would have had serious real-world consequences in the rural Spain of that time. Being suspected of not being a *crisiano viejo*, in contrast, would lead sooner or later to a trial by the Inquisition under the charge of being a “judaizer”.⁵⁷² In case of a first trial,

570 “Stubbornness” (*obstinatio*), the willful rejection of what one is able to recognize as true but not ready to acknowledge, is the main “vice” ascribed by medieval Christian polemics to the “Synagogue” (the common metonymy for all people of Jewish faith).

571 The seminal publication on the scenario briefly characterized above is David Nirenberg’s *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, NJ 1996.

572 Spanish: *judaizante*. The term, to be found as early as in the New Testament (where it is made use of in order to criticize those Christians who do not entirely “cleanse” their lives, including their daily practices, of the ritualistic behavioral patterns of Judaism), refers in the

acquittal was the statistically prevalent outcome; in case of a second trial, the inverse was the case. Being accused twice of not being *limpio de sangre* meant in those days in almost all cases being submitted to torture and then burnt at the stake following upon an extorted confession.

It is thus an extremely sensitive material that Cervantes touches upon in his *entremés*s. By combining, in a process of assembly, comic material with highly intricate material revolving around the question of orthodoxy and, ultimately, of life and (violent) death, he re-functionalizes a genre whose task had been nothing more than to provide comic relief into an instrument of anti-totalitarian reflection. The pressure exerted by the *limpieza de sangre* statutes and the ensuing atmosphere of all-encompassing conformism is leading Spain into “seeing what is not there and not seeing what is there”, into a complete loss of touch with reality—that is the message conveyed by this at first sight so harmless interlude.

An additional, albeit minor aspect which should be mentioned is that Cervantes extracted another ideologically relevant discursive material from the net when he produced the play in question. The first noun of the title, *retablo*, has two different semantic dimensions. Its primary meaning referred to in this specific context is: “a stage for puppet (or else dumb) shows”. Its well-known secondary meaning—well-known because it is the standard meaning—is “decorative altarpiece”. And there is a second word in the title referring to religion, namely, *maravillas*. The primary reference of the term is the content of the play within the play, the “miraculous” onstage appearance of wild beasts from other continents. The secondary meaning—which in this case as well is the standard meaning—refers to supernatural phenomena that are not only staged, but supposed to be “real”.

The discussion revolving around the question of whether there are indeed miracles or whether these are delusions produced by the will to see them, or by deceivers who profit from making the populace believe that they are real (in this case: by God’s ministers), belongs to the fiercest ideological controversies of early modern Europe. Protestantism as well as the more “enlightened” strands of Catholicism (Erasmianism) held that the Resurrection and the Ascension (etc.) were the last miracles before the end times, when there may be further ones. However, traditional Catholic dogma, and even more so the Church’s ritual practices, were firmly linked to the idea that miracles were an

period of the Counter-Reformation to people of Jewish descent who were said to continue adhering to their former ritual practices after having “hypocritically” embraced Christianity; “evidence” was drawn from practices such as the avoidance of pork or taking a bath on Fridays instead of Saturdays (etc.).

integral part of contemporary reality. Pilgrimages, devotion to saints, miracles happening in such contexts, and the system of money collection linked to such practices were vital for Catholicism. During the deliberations at Trent, these practices had been vigorously reasserted. Neither certain texts by Erasmus of Rotterdam (*Colloquia familiaria* [1518]) nor a literary text like the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, with its famous *buldero* chapter, would have been conceivable after the Council. But Cervantes ingeniously synthesizes this anti-Tridentine material with comic material of—as it seems—completely harmless profile.

Let me recall in this context that Erasmus' critique of miracles, as well as that of the anonymous author of the *Lazarillo*, also took recourse to comic devices (parody, satire) in order to treat a question which would not have been treatable on the peninsula in a "serious" way in those days. In his play, Cervantes reactivates this technique of "re-functionalization through assembly of the diverse" and thus succeeds at producing a decidedly anti-Tridentine text despite his status as an "official" and honored author of contemporary Spain.⁵⁷³ But his text is not an imitation of the precursors mentioned. What Cervantes introduces in order to secure this discursive and ideological margin in more difficult times than those of Erasmus and the *Lazarillo* is a change of register and an ensuing discursive diversity that is hardly conceivable for non-literary texts. It is not satire or parody—comic genres that have always been linked with more serious forms of ideological critique—but the, generically speaking, "lowest" variant of comedy, farce, that is here chosen in order to veil the ideological subversion conveyed by the text.

3. —It is perhaps not necessary to stress that the concept of cultural evolution as presented here stands at a certain distance from teleological models. I prefer to take an agnostic stance vis-à-vis the question of whether or not the historical process as such follows a pattern one could call "progress". It can hardly be denied that our lives are different from those of humans living on the banks of the Euphrates 5,000 years ago, and even more different from those of our common ancestors living in the East African savannah 150,000 years ago. But it

⁵⁷³ Cervantes was as successful as a writer of novels as he was unsuccessful as a playwright. The *entremés* was never performed during his lifetime; but it was printed, wherefore I would doubt that this fact is contingent upon the play's ideological non-conformism. All of Cervantes's plays remained without success during their author's lifetime. Compared to the pieces by the three great dramatists of that age—Lope de Vega, Calderón, and Tirso de Molina—one would be inclined to concede that, notwithstanding Cervantes's exceptional qualities in general, there were more well-wrought plays at hand for stage directors to choose from with a view to actual performances than those by Cervantes.

shall remain an open question whether or not such differences may be adequately modeled by the concept of progress; the assertion of such a claim, as well as its refutation, relies upon ideological choices, which are legitimate but not necessary ingredients of scholarly discourses as I understand them.

When it comes to culture in a narrower sense, e.g. to literature, the theoretical view here developed also stands in a rather clear-cut opposition to (intra-cultural) models of consistent “evolution”. If the “extraction” of cultural material mainly follows, as I have argued, external needs and demands, or conscious processes of active transculturation, cultural evolution may follow a variety of diverse logics which are not immanent ones. This implies that my skepticism vis-à-vis a possible theory of literary dynamics also applies to non-teleological theories like those developed by the Russian formalists. From the perspective of a cultural theory inspired by the metaphor of the net, most artistic development is caused by the random, or at least non-systematizable combination of pre-existent material.

This said, it seems reasonable to consider factors of a limited intrinsic logic of literary evolution, in particular when it comes to answering the question of why there are, albeit not very frequently, literary modes and elements one might legitimately call new, in the sense that it would be counterintuitive to conceive of them as nothing but reconfigurations of material which was already there. One such “novel” mode, which is the basis of the third of the three strands of narrative in modernity proper postulated above, is the meta-fictional, autoreferential narrative text, that is, a text which articulates the poetological assumptions on which it is based not by way of a preface or separate theoretical texts, not (only) by way of explicit theoretical discussions inserted into the text, but by way of illustration on the level of the configuration of the narrative itself.

This strand seems to emerge with Romanticism; it then becomes what is perhaps the most important component of literary modernism, of avant-garde narrative, in the novel as well as in drama. The idea that Romanticism suddenly “appeared” and has no links with previous literary history is a rather naïve assumption which belongs to the rhetorical repertoire of all cultural revolutions, but which should be qualified within scholarly discourses. Literary Romanticism makes, as I have argued elsewhere, ample use of cultural material of medieval and Baroque provenance, and the lyrical poetry of the age is to a significant extent based on the extraction of mystical material from the net, which is then subjected to re-functionalization.⁵⁷⁴ The turn towards autorefer-

574 See my “Zum romantischen Mythos der Subjektivität. Lamartines *Invocation* und Nervals *El Desdichado*”, *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* vol. 98 / 1988, pp. 137-165;

entiality, however, seems difficult to explain.⁵⁷⁵ Is it an authentic “creation”, inspired by the philosophical speculations revolving around art that emerge after Kant’s positing of art as “autonomous”?

Tatiana Korneeva claims that the first autoreferential texts of the European tradition are to be found in the corpus of a widely neglected author of the Italian Enlightenment, Carlo Gozzi,⁵⁷⁶ whose reputation in modern times suffers from the fact that he was politically conservative and poetologically a fierce enemy of the “progressive” Goldoni, who introduced mimeticism to the Italian stage, including on the level of language, by having his characters converse in their local dialects. Gozzi’s *Fiabe teatrali* (1761–1765), whose close links to what would later on be called Romanticism have been brilliantly demonstrated in a recent book by Tiziana Corda,⁵⁷⁷ are wrought according to a pre-existent and indeed archaic pattern, that of the fairytale. They are emancipated right from the start from any claims to verisimilitude, literally understood. Gozzi makes use of this traditional pattern in order to have his characters discuss onstage how a “good” play should be conceived and then to act accordingly. Goldoni’s poetological positions are incriminated as trivial and banal, while Gozzi’s own positions conceive of literature as a device whose pleasurable dimension derives from its capacity to emancipate the mind from the strictures of the given, leaving it free to indulge in its fantasies; according to Gozzi, literature is primarily a means of providing relief from the tediousness of “real” life (“l’unico desiderio di giovare, e di divertire”).⁵⁷⁸ As to the aims to be pursued by literary texts, Gozzi is a mind who belongs to the same school as Freud (of which, to a certain extent, Cervantes is also

see also the chapters on Mme de Staël, Chateaubriand, and Hugo in *Ästhetik der Wirklichkeitsdarstellung* (pp. 59–82).

575 Let me stress that I mean what I say: autoreferential structures are something different from reflexive structures to be found in literary texts; in scholarship, the two concepts are in many cases not distinguished in the way they should be. Of course, certain premodern literary texts do contain passages that reflect upon the structure, the devices, and the style of the text they are part of. The most prominent example may be the conversation between the *Quijote*’s eponymous hero and the canónigo de Toledo about the way a “good” novel should be conceived (I, chap. 47–52). But in all of premodern literature, such reflections are explicitly articulated; they are re-mimeticized tracts. Autoreferential structures are a different thing. The category refers to texts whose narrative level constitutes an illustration of the formal principle according to which they are conceived.

576 See Korneeva, “Entertainment for Melancholics”.

577 Tiziana Corda, *E. T. A. Hoffmann und Carlo Gozzi. Der Einfluß der commedia dell’arte und der Fiabe Teatrali* in Hoffmanns Werk, Würzburg 2013.

578 Gozzi, “Prefazione al *Fajel*” (1772), in: C. G., *Scritti di teoria teatrale*, Anna Scannapieco (ed.), Venice 2013, pp. 186 f.

a member⁵⁷⁹). As to particular devices, in some contrast to Freud's argument, anti-illusionism and the laying bare of fictionality informs the logic of his plays.⁵⁸⁰

As has already been stated, there are many features of Gozzi's texts which can easily be explained as reactivations of pre-existent material: the fairytale elements and the entire complex of the *maraviglioso* are nothing but structures taken from popular strands of the net, where they had been circulating for a long time as primitivized versions of autochthonous, Celtic-Germanic myth. The allegorical mode (for example in *L'amore delle tre melarance* [1761], which stages a love story between three oranges)⁵⁸¹ is also nothing new; its prehistory goes back to medieval literature, and it had experienced a significant revival in the more recent period of the Baroque. But making use of such devices in order to stage poetological questions within the frame of fiction seems to be something authentically novel—is there any way to explain such emergences within the theoretical frame presented above?

The hypothesis I should like to advance focuses on the possibility that net-bound cultural production, while following the logic of extraction and remodeling, might be characterized, as far as the component of remodeling is concerned, by additional factors admitting some degree of systematization. In the case at issue here, one might provisionally call the specific logic at work one of "reaction".

The seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries are marked in all (Western) European countries by an unusually dense discussion of poetological problems revolving around the genre of drama. These discussions, however, are conducted within treatises, prefaces, manifestos, verdicts pronounced by academies, etc. There are—albeit few—implicit references to poetological problems in the plays proper,⁵⁸² but throughout the ample dramatic production of the centuries in

579 —whose close to unique canonical status may be due to the fact that he succeeded in hybridizing in a most compelling way the mimetic and the fantastical modes.

580 In a passage above, I offered some thoughts on how one might integrate anti-illusionist texts into the functional description of fiction as developed by Freud (p. 202).

581 One might mention that the text became, after having been translated into Russian by Vsevolod Mejerchol'd, the basis of a modernist opera of the same title, created by Sergei Prokofiev and first performed in Chicago in 1921.

582 To give just one example, I quote the concluding lines from Lope de Vega's most famous piece, *El castigo sin venganza*: "[...] Aquí acaba, / senado, aquella tragedia / del castigo sin venganza / que, siendo en Italia asombro / hoy es ejemplo en España." // "And with it [the scene in question] ends / This tragedy, a timely lesson for / All Spain, a wondrous sight for all / Of Italy." (Lope de Vega, *Three Major Plays*, Gwynne Edwards [tr.], New York, NY 1999,

question, there is no self-referential mode to be found, in the sense of a thematization of poetological problems within the plays by way of actual mimesis.⁵⁸³ The idea to make use of drama proper in order to propagate one's own ideas regarding the correct way of writing drama was not far-fetched, however, since the stage reached a much greater number of recipients than written discussions or the polemics conducted in the somewhat boring and specialized genre of the treatise. The "modal" transposition of such questions from the theoretical to the fictional-representational level encountered, however, one specific obstacle difficult to overcome. This obstacle was the commitment of late seventeenth-century and, even more so, of eighteenth-century drama to the concept of *imitatio naturae* as encapsulated in the central value of *vraisemblance*. It was a minority position held only by "reactionaries" like Gozzi to discard this "bourgeois" ideal and to propagate instead the right of fictional discourse to make use of whatever fantasy may devise in order to produce pleasure and entertainment. As a playwright who, on behalf of his general convictions, was free from the contemporary commitment to "realism", Gozzi had occasion to make use of the stage for the treatment of poetological problems, for literary polemics, and for the propagation of his ideas by way of emplotment. Ultimately, his own contribution to questions of poeology might be considered marginal or retrograde, but he "created" a new mode of narrative, the autoreferential mode, whose subsequent career would prove to be spectacular.

On a more theoretical level, the instance of an emergence of something "novel" that I have tried to highlight in the above example comes down to a point that is not at all out of reach for a net-bound theory of cultural production as theorized in this book. The new mode created by Gozzi was made possible by the author's freedom from contemporary mainstream poetological commitments, a freedom he used in order to reactivate devices on the level of the plot itself which his competitors were not able to make use of because of their commitment to mimeticism.—It is a point of another order that the mode first created by Gozzi was then re-functionalized to serve purposes unconceivable from the standpoint of this conservative aristocrat. The mode as such, however, persists, and from the historically uninformed perspective of later times, it might be conceived as something new, or even as an instance of cultural revolution. For

p. 266, v. 3017–3021). The lines refer to the fact that the plot was taken from an Italian source, Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554/1573). The poetological relevance of the passage is implied in the dichotomy of "asombro" (marvel, wonder, astonishment) and "ejemplo". Indeed, Lope converted one of the many *strani casi* (strange events) presented by Bandello into an exemplary, that is, didactic narrative.

583 —to be understood in this context according to the dichotomy of *mimesis* vs. *diegesis*.

Gozzi's somewhat strange texts are not the end of the story. Gozzi was received enthusiastically in the period of German Romanticism, including by minds that one would not call "romantic" without qualification, such as Goethe and Friedrich Schlegel. And Gozzi was not the only somewhat "strange" author—considered from a post-Enlightenment perspective—from previous times who was avidly read ("extracted from the net") in the early nineteenth century; Calderón and his dramas became, as mentioned on several occasions in this book, immensely popular during that period of German cultural history. Or, to put it differently: after a hundred years of thoroughgoing rationalization and subsequent disenchantment of the world, the "obscurantism" of the Baroque acquired a renewed attractiveness. Traditional Catholicism; marvel; wonder; miracle; fantasy—all this was drawn from the net once again. The consequence of this renewed withdrawal was, however, not a restoration, it was something "new", namely, the substitution of aesthetics for religion, of the ritualized reception of works of art for cultic practices.

Limits of the Basic Metaphor

0.—Limitation is the basic principle of any serious research; for that reason, it is not necessarily a default of a theoretical model if there are phenomena pertinent to the overall question discussed that to a certain extent remain unaccounted for by the suggested modeling. But it is necessary to be conscious of the limits of the theoretical frame chosen.

1.—I shall therefore briefly discuss, in this very last chapter of the present study, a discursive constellation which is apt to elucidate what other factors should, in principle, be taken into consideration if one were dealing with a comprehensive theory of cultural production; there might be more such factors than the ones outlined in the following, but I believe that these are of particular import.

I should like to come back to a subgenre that has already been addressed in the above chapters, namely, the religious drama.⁵⁸⁴ I wish to emphasize, once again, that my basic metaphor and its detailed description as given in that context is highly useful for explaining the presence of the genre—which is first documented in France—in all European "national" cultures, including colonial cultures. The point that remains to be discussed is the *emergence* of this genre, which dates from a period preceding the one which constitutes the proper tem-

584 See pp. 175–178.

poral scope of this book. Medieval religious dramas (morality plays and biblical plays, mainly Nativity and Passion plays) are certainly not “dramas” in the sense in which the term has been understood since the inception of humanism and the generalization of the Aristotelian descriptive categories concerning that genre. But it can hardly be contested that medieval plays consist of dialogue, that they have plots with a beginning and an end, and that they were performed on stage—in this sense, the pieces are indeed dramas, and any other designation would entail falling prey to a normative conception.

However, it would be problematic to unqualifiedly explain their emergence with reference to the metaphor of drawing on a pre-existing cultural material floating in a virtual network. The dramas of classical pagan times were mostly unknown in the West until the Renaissance, and totally unknown in the period under consideration here, that is, in and prior to the tenth century CE. It would be questionable to posit that there was a secret, as it were subterranean cultural network, or, in proper terms, an extremely long and ramified chain of oral transmission by way of which Europeans from the tenth century gained some more or less vague knowledge of what had been performed in the arenas and amphitheatres whose ruins they were still able to admire. The tremendous quantitative disproportion between the pieces actually mentioned in Aristotle’s tract and those that have been handed down to us constitutes impressive evidence for the fact that the “Dark Ages” (*tenebrae*) bear their name not without reason: when the Western Roman Empire collapsed and large parts of the Eastern Empire were conquered partly by Scandinavian, partly by Arab or Turkish troops and tribes, many written documents were definitively destroyed. One might furthermore adduce the hostility of the Church fathers towards all kinds of *spectacula* as prone to stimulate the affects—that is, the less dignified, if not outright sinful motions of the soul—in order to explain why there was either a cessation of classical dramatic material floating in the net or a consistent interdict to extract it until the Fall of Constantinople and the subsequently renewed circulation of the preserved material.—How, then, can one account for the presence, documented from the tenth century onward, of proto-dramatic genres in Western Europe, first, as it seems, in France and Italy,⁵⁸⁵ and later also in other Western and Central European vernacular communities?

585 My cautious formulations are intended to hint at the fact that, for obvious reasons, there is no full transparency to be gained as to the question of the actual point in time when these proto-dramatic genres first emerged. It is more or less probable that not all of the manuscripts have been preserved and that the written texts we know of were preceded by improvised first sketches. Keeping the entire cultural scenario of the age in mind, I do not find it all too audacious to speculate that these new forms were devised no sooner than in the period when rela-

2.—The deficient documentation does not allow for any reliable remarks concerning the question of what came first, morality plays, which were entirely allegorical, or mystery plays, which dramatized sequences taken from biblical history. In the case of both variants, the oldest (fragmentary) manuscripts preserved date from the tenth century. If I first address the morality plays, this does not imply a claim regarding chronology.⁵⁸⁶

Morality plays, with their plethora of personified virtues and vices, the allegorical representative of humankind (*l'homme* in the French texts), and their quite elaborate allegorically encoded action (the *bivium*, the sea voyage, the *procès de paradis*, the *psychomachia*,⁵⁸⁷ to name the most important motifs underlying the plots⁵⁸⁸), seem to have been preceded by more elementary structures that are proto-dramatic in the proper sense and whose being written in view of performance can only be extrapolated from the content and the general cultural context. These latter pieces, commonly named *altercatio* in Latin, *desputaison* in Old French, or *contrastò* in Italian, consist of elementary moral didacticism; they were not conceived for the educated, but for the illiterate populace. Consequently, the channel of mediation was most probably a public performance. In these early, proto-dramatic morality plays, the debate hinted at by the subgenre's name is conducted between the personifications of body and soul. The body typically accuses the soul of denying it any sensual gratification and consistently restricting its spontaneous actions; the soul accuses the body of being disrespectful of the ethical rules preached by Christianity, of longing only for corporeal pleasures, and of being oblivious to death and, more importantly, the afterlife, that is, the alternative scenarios of eternal beatitude and everlasting pain. The scheme as such is elementary; but over the centuries,⁵⁸⁹ the dialogues became longer and longer and began to include detailed discus-

tive pacification set in, that is, during or after the reign of Charlemagne; but this is, indeed, speculation. As I shall argue in the following, the ideological structures enabling medieval proto-drama did already exist prior to Charlemagne.

586 As to the concrete examples I will present, I am indebted to an article by Gaia Gubbini ("Body and Soul: Medieval Dramatizations"); for details and for the secondary literature, see Gubbini's article.

587 Without going into the details regarding this point, it should be more or less evident that the later, more elaborate form of the morality play is inspired, as far as many of its features are concerned, by a (narrative) text of Prudentius which bears exactly this title and dates from the end of the fourth century CE.

588 The best overview of the allegorical medieval drama I know of is included in the first chapters of Werner Helmich's *Die Allegorie im französischen Theater des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen 1976.

589 The body and soul *altercationes* flourished particularly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

sions of the entire didactic complex addressed, comprising extensive and impressive metaphorical characterizations of death, heaven, and hell, as well as doctrinally elaborate deliberations concerning the intricate question of the extent to which not only the body, but also the soul, even in its redeemed state, has been lastingly damaged by the Fall.⁵⁹⁰

The dichotomy of body and soul is crucial to Christian dogma,⁵⁹¹ which relies on the belief that the soul is godlike, the terms in the Vulgate being *imago* and *similitudo*.⁵⁹² Christian theology specified the rather summary remarks to be found in this respect in the Hebrew Bible by positing that each human soul is created by God Himself and then implanted, as it were, into a body whose structure was also initially created by God, but whose historical instances are produced by *generatio*, that is, a physical act carried out by humans.⁵⁹³ The second

590 Without being an expert on this text corpus, I allow myself to suggest that the theologically exact allegorical presentation of the point in question was achieved no earlier than in the age of the Counter-Reformation; Lope de Vega's *El viaje del alma* (1604) might be considered a good example. In these later plays, there are, in addition to the personification of the soul as such, personifications of its parts, according to the Platonically inspired Augustinian model: Reason, Memory, and Volition. Only Reason is godlike; Memory is weak and vacillating; Volition is impetuous and has a "natural" tendency to will the wrong. In the final analysis, it is only the *pars rationalis* (strengthened by baptism and the regular ritualistic practices of confession, penance, and communion, and occasionally but not systematically supported by memory) that is able to subdue the rebellious Volition, while the latter, after having been tamed, is able to control the "naturally" sinful tendencies of the body. I would speculate that it was the pressure exerted by the emergence of Protestantism, in particular the *theologoumenon* of *servum arbitrium*, which in a way forced the Catholic Church to introduce this differentiation into popular didactic drama. Without assuming that there is at least one "part" of the (baptized) human being which has not been lastingly damaged by the Fall, the assumption that ethical behavior (*mereri*) is possible on behalf of the individual's own choice would hardly have been tenable any longer. Even so, further intricacies of the theological debates, for example Luther's drastic thesis that reason is, after the Fall, nothing but a "whore" willfully subservient to sinful volition (meaning that it speciously justifies the gratification of *ira* and *concupiscentia*), were not thematized in popular didactic drama (as to Lope's play and its context, see my *Discursive Renovatio in Lope de Vega and Calderón*, chap. 3.2.).

591 With respect to the epoch I am addressing, it is evident that I do not include in my above précis the reformed churches' position (which is, to a certain extent, characterized in the preceding footnote).

592 See Gen I: 26 and 27.

593 I should like to add that all of "our" political and ethical concepts (which most Westerners have a tendency to consider "reasonable" or self-evident), namely the equality principle in general, including political, racial, and gender equality, the principle of individual responsibility, as well as "human rights", are contingent upon this myth of humans having an individual soul created by and similar to God. As bodies (as a variant of higher mammals, as present-day natural sciences would have it), humans are very diverse, and, in the final analysis, not that different from certain other higher mammals. Consequently, the "universal" ethical principles Westerners

basic assumption that has to be taken into consideration when discussing the Christian variant of the dichotomy of body and soul is the dogma of original sin, that is, the belief that the sin committed by Adam and Eve was punished by Yahweh in a manner bound to an archaic, basically pre-Christian principle: in traditional human societies,⁵⁹⁴ it is not only the individual perpetrator who is punished, but rather his entire clan or tribe; in particular, his offspring is held responsible for the crime in question.⁵⁹⁵ Accordingly, Yahweh did not only curse Adam and Eve, but also all of their descendants, by imposing death,⁵⁹⁶ that is, the decay of the body, as part of the general human condition.

It was not Judaism, but Christianity that added the idea that this punishment is justified even from the perspective of individual responsibility. Early Christian theology, in particular Paul, who was followed in this regard by Augustine, claimed that every single human being is a sinner, and it defined sin, in general terms, as the rebellion of the body against the action-oriented impulses originating from the (for its part, godlike) soul.⁵⁹⁷ This new anthropology—humans as composites of godlike souls and of bodies which do not tend to do what the soul tells them to do—is essential to Christianity. The main dogma of the new religion, by which it distanced itself from its mother religion, Judaism, consists in postulating that Jesus was physically resurrected after his death and that he performed this resurrection by virtue of his own power (a constellation that provides the basis for a great portion of the second variant of medieval plays to be dis-

believe in are not always easy to grasp for people who do not have a Judaeo-Christian background. The much more significant point is, however, the fact that the basis of Western political ethics consists in a narrative that most present-day Europeans no longer accept as true, at least in its literal understanding. Is there a utilitarian basis for these principles? All existing suggestions (in the first place: the reciprocity principle) appear to be rather poor in substance.

594 As far as ethnology teaches us, this feature applies to all cultural communities on the globe.

595 Subconsciously, this archaic principle continues to be present in more “enlightened” times. Most people who consciously share the principle of individual responsibility would approach an individual of whom they know that his or her father or mother was a murderer in a way that differs from the way in which they would approach someone about whose ancestry they know nothing.

596 As is well known, the Hebrew Bible explicitly mentions birth pangs and hard labor as the punishment imposed by God; there is only implicit mention of death (Gen 2: 17 and 3: 19). It was Christian theology which, while preserving the two punishments referred to, claimed that human life before the Fall had been eternal. The main reason for this alternative accentuation of the account given in Genesis is the possibility thus opened up to construct a typological relation between the loss of eternal life and its restoration after Christ’s resurrection.

597 Crucial passages include Galatians 5: 17, Romans, passim, and 1 Corinthians, passim, as well as *De civitate Dei*, XIV.

cussed in this chapter). If this is true, one has to assume that he was and is (a) God, as humans are not capable of resurrecting themselves. But, why must God sacrifice Himself?—the emergence of this question is a necessary consequence of the postulate of resurrection. If humans, or at least some humans, had the capacity to redeem themselves, that is, to live in accordance with the Decalogue, it would suffice to extrapolate from their behavior certain ethical rules which the others should imitate. Only if such a possibility is to be systematically excluded does it become plausible that God had to sacrifice Himself in order to save humankind. So, by internal dogmatic constraints, Christianity could not do otherwise than to cast all humans as sinners; and since the godlike soul is capable, by virtue of this essential quality, of distinguishing between right and wrong,⁵⁹⁸ deviation from the “right way” can only be ascribed to the, as it were, second component of the human being, the body.

As a consequence, one encounters the topic of the controversy between body and soul in all of medieval Western European vernacular literature. It should be emphasized that there is no such feature in classical pagan literature or thought. The metaphor of body and soul as horse and rider can indeed already be found in Plato; its Christian reinterpretation was perhaps best formulated by Thomas Aquinas.⁵⁹⁹ The preservation of the metaphor notwithstanding, the meanings of the pagan and the Christian variants differ dramatically: in Plato, the soul of a reasonable human being has no difficulties in taming the horse (or, in Plato, the two horses), and the less reasonable human beings will not even be able to grasp the necessity of self-control; they live according to their bodily desires without any inhibition.⁶⁰⁰ In Aquinas, the soul (*anima rationalis*, that is, the rational part) is incapable of taming the bodily desires unless the rider has received baptism and regularly complies with the ritualistic practices prescribed by the Church: confession, penance, and communion.—It seems to be for this reason, namely, that the relation between body and soul is cast as a permanent and inescapable antagonism within Christianity and that the related issues are constitutive of the dogma’s core, that there emerges, in medieval popular didacticism, a proto-dramatic genre commonly called *altercatio*, a controversy staged as a dialogue between personifications, that is, a variant of the genre in its broad sense which is not inspired by classical models.

598 —with the differentiations explained in n. 590.

599 See *Phaedrus* 246a – 254a and *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, qu. quarta (“De peccato originali”), spec. art. 2.I, sol. 4.

600 —and within a world-model without a hell, they are not even punished for their “animalistic” attitude towards life; they are, however, excluded from any higher office in the ideal republic.

Put in theoretical terms: if there is a similarity as to content and/or form between artworks originating from different places and different times, one need not assume by necessity that there has been a previous exchange of a corresponding material by way of network structures. In addition to a monogenesis of genres, motifs, etc., there may as well be polygenesis, that is, cases of similar forms emerging independently from each other in different places and at different times. In the case discussed above, the reason for this second emergence in the Mediterranean West of the generic form called drama is ideological—the new, Christian religion has a propensity for dichotomous conceptualizing which is translated to the level of dissemination by way of proto-dramatic performances, by a staged *agon*. But, as I have tried to convey in my above remarks, this “second” emergence of the genre of drama in Western literary history may also be modeled according to the basic metaphor expounded in this book; the theoretical difficulty which persists and shall remain unresolved consists in finding an adequate answer to the question of whether or not it makes sense to differentiate between phenomena of parallel but independent emergence based on re-assembly and phenomena that may be described as the re-utilization of a precise pattern already circulating in the net.

3.—The following remarks concern the genre of the mystery play, in particular the Passion play, a variant whose insular “survival” into present-day times has been indicated above.⁶⁰¹ It seems that the emergence of this generic pattern, which also occurred in the tenth century, is due to a different background than in the case of the morality play.

Even if common people of pre-Reformation times had been allowed to read Scripture, they would not have been capable of actually doing so. Reading extended passages to believers—a channel of dissemination which was in principle possible—entailed the risk that they would cease to pay attention after some minutes of listening. Staging central events of biblical history, e.g. the Passion, on the contrary, was a most attractive and therefore effective way to communicate the message to an illiterate public. It is not primarily doctrinal content, or the specific structuring of doctrinal content, but rather a medial condition that seems to be at the origin of the emergence of biblical plays in medieval Europe. This postulate is corroborated by the genre’s history: over the three or four centuries during which they flourished, mystery plays, as explained above, underwent a quantitative expansion unparalleled in all of Western literary history, from approximately 300 lines in plays dating from the

601 See n. 256.

twelfth century to approximately 55,000 lines in plays from the fifteenth century. The weakening of the targeted audience's attention, caused by an effect later called "automatization", was counteracted by adding more material to the core scene (the representation of the Crucifixion) every year. The prehistory of this core element, that is, the story of the Creation and the Fall; the eschatological accomplishment of the entire story, that is, the Last Judgment; intercalated scenes dealing with further "ontological" levels of the story (e.g., devils and angels fighting for supremacy during Christ's nightly stay in the Garden of Gethsemane)—these and similar sequences were added in order to complement the basic action and thus rekindle the audience's curiosity.

It is quite fascinating to observe that the religious authorities, by allowing or even propagating the new genre of religious play—in particular the "mimetic" variant, that is, the mystery play—made use of an instrument they considered sinful in principle. What motivated the audience to attend the performances was probably not the burning interest to learn more about Christ's self-sacrifice—the story as such, including its doctrinal dimension, was known to everyone. It was, as I should like to speculate, the sensational interest in viewing cruelties, even atrocities—that is, to put it in theological terms, the gratification of *concupiscentia oculi*, of a sinful desire—which attracted the recipients to the temporary open-air stages on which the plays were performed. Sinful drives were thus made use of in the interest of working towards a repression of sinful drives—a paradoxical situation which might have laid the grounds for the rather smooth penetration into the Christian West of secular, classical pagan drama in the period after the Fall of Constantinople, the subsisting theological reservations regarding *spectacula* notwithstanding.

4.—I should like to conclude by highlighting an aspect of the Passion plays that is apt to elucidate another important dimension of literary and cultural evolution which might be difficult to capture with the metaphor of a cultural network as here discussed. There is a long-standing controversy regarding the emergence of secular love literature, beginning with *troubadour* poetry, within a culture that considers physical pleasure as sinful for the cogent doctrinal reasons just explained.⁶⁰² One main strand of argumentation which, if not "true", is in any case worth the effort of consideration, is based on the observation of rather close links, as to wording, between texts thematizing the Passion in the literal sense—Christ's self-sacrifice—and texts thematizing what has be-

602 —a controversy to which I recently made a contribution pointing in a direction that differs from the view referred to above ("Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore* as Provocative Text: Revelation as Elliptic, Physical Love as Legitimate" [forthcoming]).

come, over the centuries, the standard acceptance of the term, that is, intense and painful erotic desire.⁶⁰³

The phenomenon in question might be described as a multilayered metonymical shift which ultimately provoked far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. The concept of *passio* (which means nothing other than “suffering”) is, in a first step, “positivized”, that is, turned against its primary meaning as found in the mental lexicon, by making Christ’s suffering on the Cross the center of attention: the physical pain is superseded by the effects of this pain, in this case, general salvation. In addition, it is alleviated by giving expression to the voluntary character of the suffering and, most importantly, by indicating the “fact” that it will be counteracted by a final annihilation, by resurrection. In a next step, still occurring within the discursive field of religion, Christ’s pain is metonymically transferred to the pains suffered by those who imitate him, the martyrs. Accordingly, the “positivization” of the suffering is preserved as well. The pains are, in the final analysis, “sweet” pains, because their ultimate effect is the martyr’s immediate eternal beatitude.⁶⁰⁴ The next metonymical shift, which occurs within mystical discourse, transfers the concept of “sweet pain” to a merely spiritual level: the pains, as well as the wounds, are subjectively real, but not objectively so. The mystic may have the impression of being crucified, but the suffering takes place only in his or her imagination. What is entirely preserved, however, is the effect of the suffering, namely, the impression of sweetness linked to it, as well as its supposed redemptive power. The decisive metonymical shift is, of course, the last one, by which wounds and bodily pains which are subjectively real but objectively non-existent are transferred to a broader semantic field called *amor* in Latin and in all Romance languages—whereas in Greek there had been a differentiation between *eros* and

603 I have dedicated an article to the description of these links, dealing with Petrarch’s *Canzone alla Vergine* (*Canz.* CCCLXVI): “Palinodia e polisemia nella *Canzone alla Vergine* del *Canzoniere* (con alcune brevi considerazioni sulle condizioni della differenza tra arte classica ed arte moderna)”, in: Klaus W. Hempfer and Gerhard Regn (eds.), *Letture petrarchesche*, Florence 2007, pp. 147–190.

604 To put it more precisely: since the pains voluntarily suffered by the martyr surpass, as to the implied “quantity” of *mereri*, what is necessary for the individual martyr’s salvation, part of this spiritual “capital” is saved by assigning it to a “treasury” which is administrated by the Church (*thesaurus Ecclesiae*). The Church and its dignitaries are free to make use of this “capital” in cases of particularly grave sins (murder, etc.) which cannot be compensated by regular practices of penance; the prerequisites for being granted parts of this *thesaurus* are confession and contrition. The martyr’s consciousness of not only saving his or her own soul, but also contributing to saving the souls of individuals who are not strong enough to resist sin—grave ones in particular—adds another portion of “sweetness” to the suffering.

agape—while privileging those parts of the field which refer not to religious and spiritual, but rather to secular and physical love.⁶⁰⁵

As a consequence of this chain of metonymical shifts there emerges a strand of literary discourse, namely love poetry,⁶⁰⁶ which makes ample use of discursive configurations first developed within (Christian) religious texts, such as the praising of the suffering resulting from love as a finally pleasurable and gratifying emotion.⁶⁰⁷ At the same time, these emerging secular texts dealing with erotic love propagate an attitude towards life that is considered sinful from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy—a discursive margin that might have succeeded in establishing itself because it was, to a certain extent, legitimized as to its formulaic dimension by the pre-existing, religiously functionalized pattern.

Radical re-functionalizations constitute an important resource of literary and cultural dynamics. But it seems that they can hardly be captured with the metaphor of an extraction and recombination of cultural material floating in a virtual network—a resource which, consequently, needs to be addressed separately and as a complement to a network-based framework if one has the ambition to devise a comprehensive theory of cultural dynamics.⁶⁰⁸

605 This last metonymical shift in particular has been masterfully described in Erich Auerbach's "Passio als Leidenschaft", *PMLA* vol. 56 / 1941, pp. 1179–1196.

606 While diverging in my above-quoted article (n. 602) from this standard explanation of the emergence of love poetry in the Middle Ages, I agree with it insofar as I assume that medieval European love poetry can hardly be explained as an immediate product of the extraction of the classical pagan material floating in the net (Sappho, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius). As I explain in my forthcoming publication, the modeling schemata are all too different to make such a *translatio* hypothesis acceptable. This said, starting in the Renaissance, there is an impact of classical love poetry on the European love poetry of subsequent times. The works of the French *Pléiade* poets could be adequately described within this book's framework: they are based on the extraction of the classical texts from the material floating in the net, a process which was favored by the political events I have referred to in the corresponding context.

607 With respect to the current alternative explanation for the emergence of secular love poetry in medieval Europe, assuming a direct inspiration by Greek and Latin poetry, one might mention that this feature in particular is not to be found in classical love poetry.

608 I should like to remind readers that important work has already been done concerning the description of the eminent role of re-functionalization in the evolution of art; I am thinking in particular of the groundbreaking essays concerning this question by Mukařovský (see above, n. 508).