

Introduction

Poetics and Politics: Net Structures and Agencies in Early Modern Drama

Without the textual and institutional models of the early modern period, the current landscape of European theater would look very different. Early modern theater, in turn, could not have prospered without the occurrence of those dynamic and productive processes that are frequently subsumed under the rubrics of influence, contamination, hybridization, or fertilization. Their effects can be detected in virtually every early modern genre: comedy and tragedy, Italian Renaissance and French Reformation plays, religious pieces and German popular drama, to name but a few pertinent examples. It is therefore not too bold a claim that no truly pan-European history of theater will be written until these phenomena have been widely studied and taken into account. But if the results of the intertextual constellations are evident, their mechanics have so far proved more elusive. A comprehensive theory ought to embrace indirect connections between texts, which the narrow concept of influence, oblivious to shifts and delays, fails to factor in. As a consequence, the revised narrative of the history of theater, even as it does justice to drama's remarkable scope in space and time, will have to allow for periods of stagnation that would undermine any linear account. What is more, since the circulation of forms and contents is often tied to the existence of specific practices and organizations, such as wandering actors' companies, the movements need to be carefully described and conceptualized. In their failure to meet any or all of these demands, the familiar metaphors soon reach their heuristic and epistemological limits. The concept of exchange, for example, would seem to presuppose existing institutions on a lateral basis, whereas "transfer" implies a "colonial" relationship in the widest sense. Similarly, the economic or biological connotations of terms such as "borrowing," "debt," "hybrid," "virus," and "rhizome" are either infelicitous, because they imply illness and a pseudo-Darwinian struggle for life, or misleading, as the development of culture is not predetermined by a DNA blueprint.

It is with a view to these theoretical problems and conceptual challenges that the essays collected in this anthology examine early modern drama from a thoroughly comparative and transnational perspective. In doing so, they draw attention to cultural production as the creative interplay between people and pre-existing cultural artifacts, which are posited here as "floating material" without any ties to a specific group or territory. The guiding metaphor of the

“cultural net” was developed and theoretically substantiated by Joachim Küpper;¹ its applicability to early modern drama was further explored by scholars who carried out studies within the framework of the ERC-funded research project “DramaNet: Early Modern European Drama and the Cultural Net” (Freie Universität Berlin, 2011 to 2016).²

The net metaphor theorizes culture as a virtual network; cultural artifacts are treated as mobile entities that “float” on the net, where they remain available at different times and places and can be freely “withdrawn,” i.e. re-used or creatively appropriated and adapted. The net is a virtual construct because it is an idealized representation of the myriads of contacts between human beings and non-autochthonous cultural artifacts. This, to be sure, does not efface the need for a hypothesis of how the material in question travels from one point to the next; however, emphasis is primarily placed on the net rather than its material substrate. In other words: whether cultural artifacts are encoded in books or brains, and whether these material containers travel by ship or stagecoach is, by and large, of less import than the fundamental mobility of the ideational contents themselves. These observations may already have established two other properties of the net: its re-configurability and its spatio-temporal dimension. It will be evident that the net widens its scope when people enter new places, but it can also be curbed, if only to a degree, by political decisions (isolationist policies, censorship, etc.) that hinder the flow of cultural material. Regarding the net’s extension across space and time, two early modern examples may serve as cases in point: a bestseller such as *Don Quixote* was distributed across Europe in a matter of months or years; conversely, when the humanists went “book hunting,” they were searching for ancient texts that had survived for centuries in monastic libraries – not least, of course, due to the mobility of the material and its extraction from the net by Arab scholars who had written translations and commentaries.

For a full appreciation of the issues raised above, we recommend that readers also consult the multifaceted publications that have, along with the present book, resulted from the DramaNet research project. The following introduction will focus on elucidating the principal tenet of the present volume, that is, that literature is produced in a nexus of power relations, agency, and the cultural net. It will also comment on the paradigmatic status that early modern drama (which appears, crucially, in a pre-national context) can achieve for the theori-

¹ Joachim Küpper. *The Cultural Net: Early Modern Drama as a Paradigm*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018.

² www.fu-berlin.de/erc-dramanet. Accessed 13 February 2018.

zation of cultural production, before concluding with an outline of the essays in this anthology.

By subtitling this book *Net Structures and Agencies*, we wish to call attention to two important steps that are involved in literary production. On the one hand, cultural material needs to be afloat on the net. This may come about as the result of a conscious effort to disseminate this or that cultural unit, but is more often than not a side effect of other human activities: trade, warfare, travel, and so on. On the other hand, material needs to be extracted from the net and used by a human being. This may be the case when the material meets a certain demand, e.g. by responding to pressing psychological needs or by providing answers to moral questions that are pertinent in a given sociohistorical context. Thus, in the most general terms, we posit culture-as-net as the enabling force of literary production, combined with the author as the executive force.

As our main title, *Poetics and Politics*, underlines, we do not aim for naïve universalism or the resurrection of Barthes's dead author. In fact, all of the following chapters endorse the assumption that cultural practices are beset by political, institutional, and social practices that need to be taken into account in the analysis of literary texts. At the same time, though, it would be a mistake to ignore the relevance of contingent encounters and individual agency. Within our collection, Cristina Savettieri's investigation of the productive (mis-)reading of Aristotle in early modern Italy and Bernhard Huss's analysis of the "experiments" conducted in Luigi Groto's literary "laboratory" provide just two examples of creative ingenuity that cannot be seamlessly reduced to the effects of power and discourse. As Edward Said memorably put it, writing, for the author, "is a series of decisions and choices expressed in words"³ – even if we might add that it is often worthwhile to look at the root causes of these choices.

A comprehensive rehearsal of the weal and woe of the self in the academy could fill entire books of its own, of course. To put it succinctly, we acknowledge the manifold attempts to exorcize "the spectre of the Cartesian subject," in Slavoj Žižek's ironic formulation,⁴ whilst also insisting on the unclaimed spaces and potential for subversion that discursive formations – rarely totalizing, often internally inconsistent – must produce. Not least due to the religious

³ Edward W. Said. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 62.

⁴ Slavoj Žižek. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. New edition. London: Verso, 2008, p. xxiii. – Žižek gives a concise, if playful, overview of the 'exorcisms,' citing deconstruction, Habermasian communication, Heideggerian 'Being,' cognitive science, Deep Ecology, post-Marxism, and feminism.

pluralization, early modern literature follows two divergent trajectories: the staging of power and authority (of the king, the church, etc.) on the one hand,⁵ and the search for a stable relationship between the proto-individual and the world on the other.⁶ In order to do justice to the plurality of early modern literature,⁷ we have settled upon the term “agencies” to indicate that we are not talking about the self-transparent “bourgeois” self, nor about the author as origin and center of the text, but that we do wish to uphold ideas about choice and initiative without which the cultural net would hardly be imaginable. Culture in this sense retains traces of the transitive verb *colere*: working the land, shaping the world, adorning; it is a fundamental and indeed inescapable mode of being human in the world. In any case, however, the DramaNet approach is non-reductive with regard to modes of textual criticism. As indicated in the above remarks about literary production as a two-step process, the approach posits the cultural net as a *conditio sine qua non* of cultural production, but does not prescribe any one method for analyzing why a specific text is created and how it is functionalized. Thus, the notion of the cultural net is compatible, on the level of literary theory, with any mode of textual interpretation, from biographical criticism to poststructuralism and beyond. This adapt-

5 An example from this book is the chapter by Jaša Drnovšek, who demonstrates how the practice of religious processions was disseminated throughout Europe by Catholic orders, how it was functionalized by proponents of the counter-Reformation to strengthen not just piety, but also the authority of the church, and how philosophers of the Enlightenment attacked the practice precisely because of its political aims. – One anthology to rise from the DramaNet project has focused specifically on the ways in which plays (and theatrical productions) fashioned and manipulated their audiences: *Dramatic Experience: The Poetics of Drama and the Early Modern Public Sphere(s)*, edited by Katja Gvozdeva, Tatiana Korneeva, and Kirill Ospovat. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

6 One fascinating text in that regard, albeit outside the domain of drama, is Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*, in which the author seeks to justify his metaphysical idiosyncrasies, critically engaging with Catholicism and Roman Antiquity as well as blending Anglicanism with various folk beliefs in angels, witches, and the devil. The *Religio* is arguably not conceivable without Montaigne and the early modern essay. – Cf. also Scott Black’s notion of the early modern essay as a trial not of one’s self and the world, but of one’s self and one’s reading: “One reads in order to get material to work with, but one must digest what one reads, making it one’s own. One writes in order to aid this process of digestion.” (Scott Black. *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 33.)

7 Verena Olejniczak Lobsien, for example, has persuasively argued that the ideologically fraught attempts to assign texts to the camp of either autonomy or heteronomy should be abandoned in favor of analyzing their interrogative and tentative properties when it comes to delineating the contours of selfhood. – Verena Olejniczak. “Heterologie: Konturen frühneuzeitlichen Selbstseins jenseits von Autonomie und Heteronomie.” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, no. 101, 1996, pp. 6–36.

ability is reflected by the chapters in this volume: some of them focus on creative individuals, others on networks and academies as collective producers of knowledge, others again on the ways in which spectators are fashioned as (moral) subjects through sensory effects and embodied cognition.

The net metaphor enables scholars to conceive of a wide range of relationships between texts; rather than focus on linear “influences,” it becomes possible to theorize a connection between texts that are remote in space and time by focusing on parallels in the use of cultural artifacts (a phenomenon that includes both larger conceptual entities such as genres and plots and smaller conceptual items such as ideologemes). The fact that we envision a dyadic process of literary creation – the transnational content on the net, combined with the creational dispositive of a given sociohistorical context – sets this approach apart from transcultural studies, which have latterly been gaining in strength as the cultural studies of the globalized age. While we share the impetus “to de-link literatures from their national-territorial-ethnic loci and at the same time to offer ‘an alternative to the dichotomic paradigm of postcolonialism,’”⁸ the metaphor of culture-as-net focuses on culture as a general human activity; there is, according to this model, only one cultural net. By contrast, transcultural studies focus on particular cultures as separate entities, albeit entities with a tendency to converse and mingle: “cultures are no longer seen as monolithic entities or as mutually exclusive absolutes, but are perceived as hybridizing organisms in constant dialogue with each other.”⁹ As a consequence, transcultural studies are currently predominantly interested in ne-nomadic literatures, which result from migratory experience or tell of uprooted individuals. As fascinating as those studies are, the metaphor of the cultural net that is championed here has a much wider scope, treating any and every text as the result of the drift of inherently transnational cultural material. It is therefore not limited at all to texts that acknowledge difference, alterity, etc. on the content level, even though individuals who are on the move or who are at home in different places do, of course, play an important role in maintaining the material substrate of the cultural net.

Another critical tension exists between the idea of the cultural net and the notion of the author as origin and creator, which ultimately links literary theorists as diverse as Plato, the neurobiologist Wolf Singer, and the Romantics. Where the latest theories enlist neuroscience to understand works of art as

⁸ Arianna Dagnino. “Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s).” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2013, pp. 1-11, p. 4. <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2339>. Accessed 13 February 2018.

⁹ *Ibid.*

world-models that are fabricated by self-reflexive brains and communicated to other brains as part of the evolutionary game (but are quiet on how this communication occurs),¹⁰ the oldest theories turned dependably to the gods. In Plato's *Ion*, Socrates maintains that a poet's abilities do not constitute either knowledge or skill (*epistêmê* or *technê*), because a poet cannot apply them invariably at all times and across all genres; therefore, inspiration must be a "divine power" that moves him like a magnetic force:

[E]ach [poet] is able only to compose that to which the Muse has stirred him, this man dithyrambs, another laudatory odes, another dance-songs, another epic or else iambic verse; but each is at fault in any other kind. For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence; since, if they had fully learnt by art to speak on one kind of theme, they would know how to speak on all. (534c)¹¹

Socrates' argument for the heteronomous character of inspiration is a double bind: it renders the poet immune to criticism, but it also forecloses any discussion of how and why authors compose what they compose. This unaccountability of the origin finds a belated echo in the expressivist poetics of the Romantics, who substitute individual nature for Socrates' Muse. As Earl Wasserman has shown with regard to English Romanticism, the Romantic poem is supposed to "both formulate its own cosmic syntax and shape the autonomous poetic reality that the cosmic syntax permits; 'nature', which was once prior to the poem and available for imitation, now shares with the poem a common origin in the poet's creativity."¹² Final and efficient causes collapse into one: the expression of nature is the poem's *raison d'être*, and nature creates the poem. This line of thinking becomes problematic as soon as it is elevated from the individual to the tribal level: As Charles Taylor argues, the Romantic shift to the sovereignty of the individual poet had its analogue in

Rousseau's notion that the locus of sovereignty must be a people, that is, an entity constituted by a common purpose or identity, something more than a mere 'aggregation'. This root idea is developed further in Herder's conception of a *Volk*, the notion that each people has its own way of being, thinking, and feeling, to which it ought to be true; that

¹⁰ Wolf Singer. "Neurobiologische Anmerkungen zum Wesen und zur Notwendigkeit von Kunst." *Der Beobachter im Gehirn: Essays zur Hirnforschung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2002, pp. 211–234.

¹¹ Plato. *Ion*. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, translated by W. R. M. Lamb. London: William Heinemann, 1925.

¹² Earl Wasserman. *The Subtler Language*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968, p. 10. Cf. also Stuart Peterfreund. "Earl Wasserman: A Critical (Re-)Reading." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2006, pp. 64–67.

each has a right and a duty to realize its own way and not to have an alien one imposed on it.¹³

Thus, the idea of the poet's unique individuality merges with the idea of a 'national character' and gains a normative standing vis-à-vis cultural production: "Different *Völker* [peoples] have their own way of being human, and shouldn't betray it by aping others," or so Taylor paraphrases Herder.¹⁴

The Romantic example shows how easily theories of cultural production can transgress the line between description and prescription, disowning – in postulating autonomy on the individual and the national level – any knowledge about the transnational character of cultural goods. By contrast, early modern writers, the first subjects of a culture of print, were often acutely aware that they were writing in a larger discursive space – and of how that space tended to grow day by day. In every field of scientific and artistic production in the early modern period, the abundance of texts and the forms of their availability was reflected upon, welcomed, rejected, or problematized. What emerged is therefore not only and not essentially a material question, but the destabilization of the concept of textual tradition and authority. Complaints about the "scribbling age" were common, and the physician Thomas Browne came close to condemning the printing press altogether (which, inaccurately, he alleged to be one of three German inventions, along with gunpowder and the pocket watch):

I have heard some with deepe sighs lament the lost lines of Cicero; others with as many groanes deplore the combustion of the Library of Alexandria; for my owne part, I thinke there be too many in the world [...]. Pineda quotes more Authors in one worke, than are necessary in a whole world. Of those three great inventions of Germany, there are two which are not without their incommodities. (Sect. 24)¹⁵

There is a certain irony involved when Browne denounces intertextuality *avant la lettre* and still cannot avoid it (as his exasperated allusion to Pineda's *Monarchia Ecclesiastica* betrays) in a tract that he purportedly intends as a personal meditation on religion and free thinking. Clearly, authors do not fully 'own' their texts. William Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* is among those early modern dramas in which the uneasy negotiation of originality and discurs-

¹³ Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 415.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

¹⁵ Thomas Browne. *Religio Medici. The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, edited by Norman Endicott. New York: W. W. Norton, 1967, pp. 1–90.

siveness can be retraced. Late in the play, when the Athenian king Theseus finally hears about the marvelous events outside his city – fairy encounters, love potions, and even metamorphoses –, he baffles his entourage with a diatribe against the excesses of fancy:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (5.1.12–17)¹⁶

How authoritative – in fact: how ‘authorial’ are these observations? Since Theseus’ wife Hippolyta is the only one who dares to contradict him (arguing, quite sensibly, that the reports from the woods do add up after all), the impromptu lecture on madness and literary inventions remains largely uncontested on the level of character speech. Arguably, though, the king’s dismissal of recent events as “[m]ore strange than true” (5.1.2) threatens to invalidate the better part of the previous stage action, and it is this tension that prompts the audience to question the reliability of Theseus’ claims.

In his monologue, the king sketches the image of a writer who, in a fit of mania, will tap into a well of “airy nothing” somewhere between this world and the next. As metapoetic comments go, this one is fraught with philosophical implications, but might just seem familiar enough. On the one hand, the passage suggests a creation out of nothing¹⁷ and posits, in its metonymical

16 All quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, et al. Second edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.

17 The concept of nothingness is a staple of Shakespeare criticism. Two of the most suggestive lines are Iago’s “I am nothing if not critical” (*Othello* 2.1.121), which can be read as essentializing Iago’s destructiveness, and Lear’s “Nothing can come of nothing” (*The History of King Lear* 1.1.79), which seemingly contradicts Genesis 1:1. There is a real danger of reading too much into such passages, which represent a natural use of language: “nothing if not” simply means “very,” and Lear’s response to Cordelia has a decidedly proverbial ring, with the old king merely stating that his daughter will get nothing (no part of the kingdom) as long as she gives him nothing (no public avowal of devotion). That said, the Christian insistence on God the creator, the rediscovery of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* with its argument that “ex nihilo nihil fit,” and the wide adoption of Hindu-Arabic numerals, including “0,” leads to some fascinating constellations in the Renaissance. – Nothingness in Shakespeare, with a view to the mathematical revolution, has recently been explored in R. S. White. “Making Something out of Nothing in Shakespeare.” *Working with Shakespeare*, edited by Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 232–245. The relevance of Lucretius has been argued for by Stephen Greenblatt. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011.

emphasis on the poet's eye, imagination, and pen, the human being as a point of origin rather than a receptacle for divine whispers. On the other hand, any celebration of autonomy is contained by the fact that Theseus makes his points with the sole intention of proving the equivalence (and equivalent untrustworthiness) of lovers, madmen, and poets. Therefore, his rationalization of the *furor poeticus* could well be seen as innocuous: a Greek character in an early modern play argues for a Greek concept¹⁸ that has – during its early modern handling¹⁹ by Boccaccio, Ficino, Landino, Vadian, the Pléiade, etc. – been mostly stripped of its apologetic value and become a secular trope for the contingency of art.²⁰ Even the claim about mad lovers and poets is perfectly in keeping with the poetological discourse.²¹

Therein, however, lies the rub. Theseus, too, is a character in a work of art, and if none of his lines represent “things unknown” that were fabricated by the author's frenzied imagination, the text establishes a clear contradiction between its metapoetic content and its own *modus operandi*. This argument is borne out, for example, by Barbara Mowat's analysis of the hypertextual construction of the play. As she demonstrates, Theseus,

woven from rhetorically oppositional texts, [...] re-presents Chaucer's “noble duc,” Plutarch's legendary figure of military and sexual prowess, Ovid's “most valiant Prince,” and, at the same time, [Reginald] Scot's opposing passages [in his critique of fiction and credulity, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*] that hold up to scorn all such antique fables.²²

The argument could be taken further by comparing the Elizabethan understanding of the mental faculties, based on the Aristotelian theory of the soul, with the views articulated by Theseus. Here, however, it may suffice to point out that the character's description of poetic fervor closely matches contemporary observations; the poet John Davies, for one, writing in 1599, declares that “if a frenzy do possess the brain; / It so disturbs and blots the forms of

18 E. N. Tigerstedt. “*Furor Poeticus*: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1970, pp. 163–178.

19 Christoph J. Steppich. *Numine afflatur: Die Inspiration des Dichters im Denken der Renaissance*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.

20 Philipp Jeserich. “Legitimität und Kontingenz: Zur Lehre vom *furor poeticus* in der französischen Renaissance-Poetik (Sebillet, Du Bellay, Ronsard, Peletier du Mans).” *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 60, 2009, pp. 108–144.

21 Alexander Cyron. “Amor als Gott der Dichter: Zur Poetologie in Cristoforo Landinos *Aeneis-Allegorese*.” *Das diskursive Erbe Europas: Antike und Antikenrezeption*, edited by Dorothea Klein and Lutz Käppel. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008, pp. 259–271.

22 Barbara A. Mowat. ““A local habitation and a name”: Shakespeare's Text as Construct.” *Style*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1989, pp. 335–351, p. 347.

things.”²³ In fact, Elizabethan interest in the relationship between the imagination and “the shape of things,” or the “the formes of things,” – these phrases are drawn from Stephen Batman,²⁴ and Richard Surphlet’s translation of André DuLaurens,²⁵ respectively – is so wide that the debate tends to turn circuitous and formulaic. Theseus’ explanation of inspiration, then, is far from inspired – and its derivative occurrence in a work of literature undermines the surface meaning of the paragraph. Like Polonius in *Hamlet*, who tries to squeeze the output of the (implicitly Elizabethan) stage into the humanist’s absurd analytical corset of “tragical-comical-historical-pastoral” drama (2.2.381), Theseus ranks among those Shakespearean characters who are well-educated and assertive, but betray – certainly in the eyes of a theater professional – a decisive lack of understanding of literary craftsmanship.

As Leonard Barkan reminds us, we will never be sure of the contents of Shakespeare’s library; the best we can do is retrace his “reading,” which for Barkan encompasses specific source texts as well as what Barthes calls the “mirage of citations” – the intertextual codes that, according to Barthes’s model of the “*déjà lu*,” dwell in every subject of language.²⁶ Likewise, the passage from the *Dream* cannot function as a literary ‘statement of intent,’ and it would be hazardous to use its subversion of authorial originality in any positivist attempt to reconstruct Shakespearean poetics. Nevertheless, the lines are remarkable for their negotiation of the boundaries of self and other, originality and influence. Early modern literature is frequently haunted by the ambiguities of this debate; one well-known example is the beginning of Philip Sidney’s sonnet cycle, *Astrophil and Stella*, in which the Petrarchan subject finds himself “turning others’ leaves” in search of inspiration until he is told by his muse to “look in thy heart and write.”²⁷ Shakespeare’s play, by contrast, ultimately seems to concede that the secret of creation is in the recombination of con-

23 John Davies. *Nosce Teipsum*. Quoted in William Rosky. “Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic.” *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 5, 1958, pp. 49–73. – Rosky’s detailed analysis of contemporary sources remains a useful starting point, implicitly also demonstrating the formulaic quality of the debate.

24 Stephen Batman. *Batman uppon Bartholome*. [London, 1599.] Quoted in Rosky, “Imagination,” p. 51.

25 André DuLaurens. *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: of Melancholike Diseases [...] of Old Age*. [Translated by Richard Surphlet. London, 1599.] Quoted in Rosky, *ibid*.

26 Leonard Barkan. “What did Shakespeare Read?” *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, edited by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 31–48, p. 45.

27 Philip Sidney. “Loving in Truth.” *Astrophil and Stella. The Major Works*, edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 153–211, p. 153.

cepts, not the elusive invention of “airy nothing.” In that, it is comparable to the famous passage from Francis Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, where Burton, in the guise of Democritus Junior, verbosely and playfully informs the reader: “*Omne meum, nihil meum*, ‘tis all mine and not mine. As a good housewife out of divers fleeces weaves one peece of Cloath, [...] I have laboriously collected this *Cento* out of divers Writers [...]. The matter is theirs most part, and yet mine, [...] the method only is mine own.”²⁸

In the face of such early modern self-reflections, the continuing strength of the paradigm of originality (fading, to be sure, in terms of authorial autonomy, but certainly recognizable behind the study of – implicitly distinct – national literatures) ought to come as a surprise. As recently as 2008, for example, Patrick Cheney set out to explore “the full, original, and compound form of Shakespearean authorship in a national setting.”²⁹ Part of the problem may be that even though the stark valorization of the national begins at a later date,³⁰ early traces of the emphasis on the individual and the national, which Romanticism merged and developed into a critical and poetic theory, may already be found in Shakespeare’s lifetime. Much like Sidney’s sonnet cycle, whose speaker pretends that he is writing “from the heart,” the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* betrays its double vision when it comes to recognizing the transnational properties of cultural goods whilst valorizing the self over the other.

Theseus’ speech in the *Dream* raises an important question: how does “the poet’s pen” conspire with the poet’s imagination to “give a local habitation and a name” to something immaterial – to mental constructs? We posit that the answer must leave room for three pertinent forces: culture as a net, which means that cultural artifacts are simultaneously available as the products of culture and as the raw material for continued cultural production; the power relations that determine the conditions of writing; and the author as a person or subject whose agency is liable to historical change. As a consequence, “the poet’s pen” might well be read as shorthand for a nexus of poetics and politics, net structures and agencies. The analysis of these constituent parts of the poet’s pen is as complex as it is rewarding, and the essays in this collection rise to the challenge by casting new light on literary production and the links between alleged national cultures. Originally presented as papers at an inter-

²⁸ Francis Burton. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. 1, edited by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 11.

²⁹ Patrick Cheney. *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 10.

³⁰ Michael Dobson. *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660–1769*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

national conference organized by the DramaNet research group at Freie Universität Berlin in April 2015, the following chapters reflect the contributors' wide range of interests and expertise; to name but a few topics, they deal with academies and religious processions, Aristotelian poetics and the theory of embodiment, acting techniques and political theory. Each text stands on its own and can be read as an illuminating case study. However, in taking us across Europe from Spain to Slovenia and Italy to England, all contributions share a deep conviction that early modern drama was a transnational enterprise, and they furnish proof that the history of early modern drama cannot be adequately told without a net theory of culture.

The collection opens with Joachim Küpper's critique of the concept of national literatures, which may be read as a programmatic essay which elaborates many of the theoretical points that could only be touched upon above. The collection then proceeds chronologically from the Cinquecento to the Enlightenment in order to illuminate sections of the cultural net in various sociopolitical constellations. While the main focus is on early modern drama, which serves as a paradigmatic test case for the application of the net theory of culture, Stephen Nichols's chapter opens up further perspectives: his account of political reform in fourteenth-century France demonstrates how the cultural net facilitated a felicitous collaboration between a late medieval king, a theologian, and an ancient Greek philosopher. The collection concludes with DS Mayfield's argument for *hypólepsis* – the discursive moment of 'tying in with' something that 'everybody knows' – as perhaps the most fundamental of human practices.

Joachim Küpper's "'National Literatures?'" offers a sustained theoretical reflection on the origin and functionalization of the paradigm of national culture and its continued application in the study of national literatures in the humanities. Analyzing the blind spots of any theory that envisions cultural material as having irreducibly autochthonous characteristics, i.e. 'roots,' Küpper engages in a critical discussion of Johann Gottfried Herder and demonstrates that the idea of a 'national literature' that is connected to a certain territory and tribe is willfully ignorant of historical realities, such as migratory movements. Küpper then argues for the necessity of a new conceptualization of cultural production, and illustrates the theory of the cultural net, thereby giving a programmatic overview that resonates with all of the subsequent case studies in this volume.

The title of Stephen Nichols's "American Presidential Candidates at the Court of Charles V: How Political Theory Trumped Political Theology in Fourteenth-Century Paris" is clearly an allusion to Mark Twain. Unlike Twain, however, Nichols is not interested in time travel – unless, of course, one counts

the transtemporal enterprise of culture. Rather, he uses current misconceptions about populism as the vanishing point of his analysis of the far-reaching social reforms implemented by Charles V of France. Nichols argues that the first election of a French chancellor, which was held in 1372, constitutes a crucial step in the transition from divine-right theory to secular and participatory governance. In order to implement this shift, that is, in order to find a model that was practically suitable and ideologically sound, the French king relied on Nicole Oresme, whom he had tasked with a vernacular translation of Aristotle's works. As Nichols's comparative study shows, the king's strategy of using Aristotelian political precepts to minimize discontent within the social order was successful because it was able to make use of a textual network (which imbued the reforms with ancient *auctoritas*) even as it adapted Aristotle, in the translator's glosses and choices, to the needs of the present.

Sandra Richter's "Cross-Cultural Inventions in Drama on the Basis of the Novel in Prose: The Case of *Fortunatus*" offers a transnational and intermedial perspective on a "large narrative complex [...]" that consists of "strong characters, recurring plots and scenes, and moral questions relevant to their audiences." Through the *Fortunatus* complex – a three-generation family story that entails many travels, brushes with death, and a purse that can produce riches beyond belief –, Richter explores a constellation that has largely been neglected in literary histories: the relevance of English drama in the German-speaking parts of early modern Europe, and the contributions of English wandering actors' groups to the professionalization of German theater. Tracing the *Fortunatus* material across countries and genres, from a 1509 German prose novel to Thomas Dekker's "pleasant comedy" in the seventeenth century, and then back to Germany and to multiple European "*Fortunati*" in the eighteenth century, Richter makes a strong case for the *Fortunatus* artifacts as floating material. She also demonstrates how the extraction of the material from the net was interlaced with the writers' context-driven changes to the story, e.g. Thomas Dekker's supplementation of an Anglican perspective.

Esther Schomacher's "Sex on Stage: How Does the Audience Know?" introduces a comparison of two seemingly unrelated scenes: Act III, Scene 10 of Dovizi da Bibbiena's *La Calandra* and Act V, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Both scenes stage sexual relations; however, this superficial similarity is of less importance to Schomacher than the divergent ways in which the scenes shape the audience's perception and create "particular relationships" between the spectators and the action represented on the stage. Out of the early modern debate for and against the theater, Schomacher distills several questions that guide her interpretation: Are stage illusions bad, or can they impart some form of (moral) truth? Does the (moral) understanding of a play rest upon cognition,

or is sensory perception important to ‘make sense’ of a play? Schomacher’s interpretation of her examples reveals that the plays actualize conflicting stances from these contemporary discussions: *La Calandra* comes down on the side of uninvolved, detached observation, whereas *Henry V* presumes that the audience must understand the action through emotional involvement and “participatory sense-making.” As a consequence, *Henry V* addresses its spectators as embodied subjects. Suggesting a new perspective with regard to the function of the two scenes, the essay stresses the influence of politics, i.e. the moral and anthropological debate, on the poetics of the theater.

Like Schomacher’s contribution, Stefano Gulizia’s “Castiglione’s ‘Green’ Sense of Theater” investigates the importance of embodiment in the theatrical context. In a letter to the bishop Ludovico Canossa, Castiglione describes his production of Dovizi’s *La Calandra* in Urbino in 1513. Gulizia interprets this “unusual engagement as a stage-manager” as “a representative instance of networks and public-making in early modern Italy.” Finding in the letter “a genuine concern for ‘media effects,’” Gulizia proceeds to analyze the precepts behind Castiglione’s evident concern for the material reality of the theatrical space and its effects on the audience. The author of *The Courtier* seems fascinated by the notion of theater as an affair of the body that banks on the five senses through decoration and stage machinery, noise, involuntary laughter, or one neighbor’s reactions. In Gulizia’s reading of the letter to Canossa, Castiglione is far from affecting *sprezzatura* in the face of his somewhat grubby duties as stage manager. Rather, he seems to feel pride in his managerial tasks, his supervision of the actors and craftsmen, the installation of “greenery” in the theater hall. Gulizia therefore concludes that the letter is deeply engaged in negotiations of personhood and public appearance: “the groups of workers that [Castiglione] moves around as the show’s director express the necessary relationship between publicity and personhood.” A careful reading of the letter makes it possible “to localize the discrete publics or interest groups that made up the theatrical polity in the early modern period.”

Bernhard Huss’s “Luigi Groto’s *Adriana*: A Laboratory Experiment on Literary Genre” introduces Groto (1541–1585) as one of the most renowned literary mannerists of the Secondo Cinquecento. A member of several academies and a frequent supervisor of the productions of his own plays, Groto was known for testing the breaking point of contemporary poetological tenets; his work in different genres – tragedies, comedies, pastoral plays – served as an “experimental set-up [...] designed to put the existing ingredients under pressure.” Huss’s main example, Groto’s tragedy *La Hadriana* (1578), presents a sad love story and concentrates on the creation of compassion while it virtually eliminates the second tragic affect, i.e. fear. Huss’s analysis reveals how Groto takes

on Pietro Bembo's postulate that poetry (including verse drama) should be modelled on the diction of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. The result, Huss finds, is a tragedy that is saturated with the stylemes of lyrical Petrarchism: a drama whose action tends to stand still. By writing play that so pointedly tests the limits of the tragic genre, Groto, as Huss argues, puts the role of the author as experimenter to the fore.

This series of assessments of the Italian sixteenth century is completed by Cristina Savettieri's paper entitled "The Agency of Errors: *Hamartia* and its (Mis)interpretations in the Italian Cinquecento." Savettieri traces how the Aristotelian concept was remodeled and thus sketches what could be called a net of interconnecting poetological positions that functions as a theoretical substratum to the artistic productions and experiments mentioned beforehand. The authors she scrutinizes range from Sperone Speroni and Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio to Francesco Robortello, Lodovico Castelvetro, and Giason Denores. In addition to her contributing to the more specific philological debate within the field of Italian Studies, Savettieri gives a deep insight into the early modern concern about human responsibility and suffering that still informs our modern and postmodern dealing with tragedy.

The title of Stephanie Bung's "Playful Institutions: Social and Textual Practices in Early Spanish Academies" points to a dichotomy in the history of the academies: the venerable state-sponsored institutions such as the Académie Française (1635) and the Real Academia Española (1713) were only established long after the Renaissance; for quite some time, "academy" was an ambiguous term that could refer to occasional gatherings as much as to permanent institutions. With respect to Golden Age Spain, this relative degree of freedom is borne out by the (somewhat unfortunate) fact that the early academies are poorly documented. It is on the basis of this fragile textual evidence that the Academia de los Nocturnos (1591) is often cited as a paradigm, not least because it has some structural resemblance to the academies of the following centuries. Bung's comparative analysis of the statutes of the Nocturnos and La Pitima (1608), however, identifies divergent models of what an academy could be. Even after they had been signed, the *instituciones* of La Pitima were, as Bung shows, expanded and contested for "the sheer pleasure of invention" and "the pleasure of writing." Bung argues that this textual fluidity suggests a playfulness which may well be rooted in medieval tournaments and jousts and which formed an important part of the idea of the academy in Golden Age Spain. Thus, the essay offers an important perspective on cultural networking whilst also emphasizing how easily linear trajectories (from Italian humanism to the Nocturnos to the chartered academies in France and Spain) can lead to misrepresentations of textual and institutional interconnections.

Franz Gratl's "Music in Folk Drama: An Investigation of Tyrolean Sources" explores a topic that is located somewhere "between" theater studies and musicology and consequently all too often neglected. Departing from the observation that the scarcity of research into music in folk drama by no means reflects the historical importance of music in folk theater, Gratl outlines several desiderata: What did the music sound like? Was it folk music, as one might be inclined to expect? Who composed (or arranged) it? Who performed it? What were its functions? Gratl analyzes three main sources to find answers: the Joseph Play of Axams (1677), the Christmas Play of Matrei, and the Mariahilf Play, the latter two both from the eighteenth century. After discussing some of the problems that beset research into music in folk drama (drama is often preserved in the form of the actors' scripts, which lack the musical score), Gratl is able to introduce recent discoveries in Tyrolean archives that may remedy the situation in the future. Most fascinatingly, perhaps, Gratl is able to identify instances of art music (arias, recitatives, etc.) in folk plays, and so comes to the conclusion that there are important connections between folk theater, the Baroque opera, and the German singspiel – with obvious implications for the analysis of folk theater as a constituent of the cultural net, rather than an expressivist, 'authentic' form of literature tied to local folk culture.

Erika Fischer-Lichte's "From a Rhetorical to a 'Natural' Art of Acting: What the Networks of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Achieved" compares two interest groups that were very successful in shaping the theory (and hence practice) of acting at their time: a Jesuit network in the seventeenth century, which included artists, philosophers, and scholars of Antiquity, and an eighteenth-century network comprised of leading artists and intellectuals in England, France, Germany, and beyond. Both networks were acutely interested in finding the best way to represent a sentiment in such a way that the same feeling would be triggered in the spectator. Comparing the approaches to acting championed by the two networks, Fischer-Lichte identifies three common areas of interest: the "conceptualization of feelings" (e.g. the Jesuits' belief in a limited number of affects that seize the human subject from outside); the sources that were used "to determine and describe the most efficient representation of each feeling" (e.g. the Jesuits' reliance on Quintilian's teachings about rhetoric); and "the definition of the aims of the art of acting and theater in general" (e.g. the Jesuits' aim to create "deeply moved men" as part of the larger aim to fight back against the Reformation). Analyzing the changes from one century to the next, Fischer-Lichte connects the older Jesuit precepts to Norbert Elias's concept of the civilizing process and the pacification of the (aristocratic) body. The essay moves on to a discussion of the new ideas of sensibility and 'natural behavior' that were engendered by the rise of the bour-

geois mentality. Drawing upon rich textual material to trace the cross-European discussion of empathy, Fischer-Lichte elucidates what was at stake when ‘natural’ acting became the norm.

Jaša Drnovšek’s “Early Modern Religious Processions: The Rise and Fall of a Political Genre” locates religious processions firmly in the field of politics *sensu lato*, arguing that processions, while not unknown in Late Antiquity, became a common practice of the Roman Catholic Church only as late as the sixteenth century. Leaving behind the conventional heuristic concept of piety, Drnovšek shows that the golden age of religious processions is, not by chance, the age of Catholic renewal; therefore, he argues that processions like the one held in Montepulciano in 1539 must be seen in the context of the politics of the Tridentine church. The essay connects the spread of religious processions across (Catholic) Europe to the transnational mobility of religious orders, in particular the Society of Jesus and the Capuchin Friars Minor. Having thus tied the spread of this genre to its political capital and its institutional prerequisites (the agencies and the net structures that characterize the dyadic model suggested in our book), Drnovšek concludes his chapter with an investigation of the passion play of the Slovenian town of Škofja Loka (1725–1727). The play is remarkable not least because the whole codex including the dramatic manuscript is still extant, and Drnovšek’s analysis reveals how the procession play could stage power by producing a “closed crowd” (Canetti). The anti-procession satires of Enlightenment philosophers like Anton von Bucher serve as final proof of the early modern recognition of the political value of this genre – and as an early signal of its demise, at least as a supremely political tool.

Igor Grdina’s “Directions, Examples, and Incentives: Slovenian Playwriting in the Second Half of the eighteenth century” focuses on a formative period for the national identity of Slovenia and analyzes its repercussions for literary production. Grdina shows that there had been no autochthonous dramatic tradition in Slovenia before the eighteenth century, which makes evident one central claim of this book: the idea of a national culture as somehow rooted in territory and essentialized ethnicity is a Romantic fiction that obscures the inherently transnational traits of culture. Turning to the paradigmatic case of Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–1795), Grdina discusses various aspects of the uneasy negotiation of national identity in the project of an original national literature. He shows how Linhart progressed to drama in the Slovene language, having previously written in German. The *Sturm und Drang* play *Miss Jenny Love* (1780) serves as a case in point; one might add that Linhart had even picked up the anglophilia of the likes of Goethe and Karl Philipp Moritz. In any case, and notwithstanding its lack of success, Linhart’s project, as Grdina argues, always remained one of synthesis: the adaptation of cultural material from across Europe to a local context.

DS Mayfield's "Variants of *hypólepsis*: Rhetorical, Anthropistic, Dramatic (With remarks on Terence, Machiavelli, Shakespeare)" explores *hypólepsis* as the textual, discursive movement of 'picking up' what 'everyone knows,' or implicitly referring to 'what is commonly said.' Mayfield engages critically with various definitions of the term, rejecting the claim that it is a "controlled variation" (Jan Assmann) in favor of Odo Marquard's description of "Anknüpfung" ('tying in with'). This 'tying in' was envisioned by Aristotle, who used the concept of *hypólepsis* to emphasize "that philosophy takes its initial assumptions and terms from common ken, (linguistic) conventions." It is therefore evident that *hypólepsis* constitutes an important effect of the cultural net: it uses something that is "common currency," i.e. material floating in the net, and it "may also involve longer distances between the time when a notion enters cultural circulation (in a context or discourse of emittance), and when it is (randomly, non-systematically) taken up again from common knowledge." Mayfield cites anthropology as one domain in which *hypólepsis* is particularly prevalent because the question "what is a human being" is capable of producing an infinite number of replies. It is no surprise, then, that it has often been answered with statements of the hypoleptic type: "man is what everyone knows." Turning to early modern drama, Mayfield finds in Shakespeare frequent "hypoleptic allusions to the Aristotelizing 'human invariant' of man as the 'animal rationale,'" for example in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Moreover, Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar*, which subtly undermines the previous speech by Brutus, is cited as a "striking example as to how a concrete 'tying in with' need not share the same assumptions (to say nothing of 'principles'), nor have exclusively textual implications." Concluding his phenomenistic approach with observations on Terence, Mayfield argues that the best definition of a human being might be self-affirming: we are, as will hopefully become evident in all chapters in this volume, the "hypoleptic animal" that "takes up, ties in with, and varies".

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