

Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Bidwell-Steiner discusses the fantasy of the self-appointed active and omnipotent male “surgical sculptor” (228) who models, transforms, and alters the female body. She finds significant parallels between the “physiognomic theater of illusion” (265), encapsulated in Vesalius’s *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* (1543), Juan Valverde de Amusco’s *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (1556), Laura Mulvey’s feminist film theory, and films such as Almodovar’s *The Skin I Live In*. With Giovan Battista della Porta’s *Magia Naturalis* (1589), Bidwell-Steiner contends, new strategies of body engineering emerge: here, the surgeon acts like a magician seeking to control and use the female body against the backdrop of “heterosexual erotics” (264).

What drives *Das Grenzwesen Mensch* is a deep reflection not only on the human body, but also on the commonalities in the organization of knowledge in premodern and postmodern times. Pushing back against common assumptions, Bidwell-Steiner shows that holistic epistemologies, not only of the body but of knowledge itself, are largely incompatible with the systematic (and thus necessarily fragmented) methodologies of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment (100). I can only hope that this most timely and important book, written in German, will soon be translated and made available to English-speaking readers.

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*Dramatic Geography: Romance, Intertheatricality, and Cultural Encounter in Early Modern Mediterranean Drama*. Laurence Publicover.

Early Modern Literary Geographies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xiv + 204 pp. \$65.

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In *Dramatic Geography*, Laurence Publicover explores how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plays in London engaged the genre of romance to depict geographic space—particularly, the Mediterranean—and how it was mutable, charged with symbolic values, and intertheatrical. Crediting theater historian Jacky Bratton with the term *intertheatricality*, Publicover briefly recapitulates Bratton’s argument that nineteenth-century British repertories formed networks of players, audiences, stage practices, languages, and genres and that playgoers interpreted performances through other contemporary performances (89). According to Publicover, the concept of intertheatricality may be even more useful for scholars of early modern drama: there were fewer theaters—and with much sparser scenery—in early modern London, so “we can make reasonably confident assumptions” about what avid playgoers would have seen (90). Distinguishing his perspective on intertheatricality from others, Publicover asserts that to comprehend fully how theatrical networks materialized, we must “acknowledge

authorial agency” (16). Publicover’s chief purpose, however, is to examine how early modern romance-inflected plays set in the Mediterranean informed and reformed each other’s geographies—or ways of understanding space and those in it—precisely because those plays were staged where they were (4).

Publicover divides his study into two parts. Part 1 details romance conventions that contoured early modern English performances’ emergent geographies. (He explains that he does not, unlike others, discuss the historical Mediterranean because his primary interest is how literary and theatrical networks shaped dramatic geography.) The romances Publicover describes as Hellenistic tend to present geographic space that facilitates productive encounters and cultural exchanges. Chivalric romances typically locate civility in a geographic center and monstrosity in the margins (42). But insofar as chivalric romances demonstrate sympathy with those at the margins, they may complicate definitive distinctions between the Hellenistic and chivalric (59). Focusing on *Clyomon and Clamydes* (ca. 1580) and *Guy of Warwick* (ca. 1590), Publicover shows how chivalric romance conventions fundamentally inform the plays’ geographies and related social values, while clowns—moving between *locus* and *platea*—question the values the plays seemingly take for granted. Both plays, he argues, present a form of geography that fundamentally influences the plays he examines in part 2.

Part 2 turns to how five plays set in the Mediterranean “appropriated, reconfigured, and reflected upon one another’s dramatic geography” (91). Thomas Kyd’s *Soliman and Perseda* (1588–91) is fairly straightforward in presenting a “world codified through [characters’] mutual respect for chivalry” (99). Christopher Marlowe in *Jew of Malta* (ca. 1591), William Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice* (1596–98), and Thomas Heywood in *Fair Maid of the West* (1597–1601) critically explore the romance values of Kyd’s play world. Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* exposes the mercenary self-interest that may motivate chivalric discourse (109). Shakespeare suggests the relationship between chivalry and commerce may not be antithetical, as characters in *Merchant of Venice* pursue romance and commerce together. Heywood “challenges the fundamental value-systems of chivalric literature” by featuring a female tapstress as its protagonist, highlighting class politics (136). *The Travels of Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins further illuminates the uneasy relationship between romance and commerce in early modern drama. Describing the play as a public relations effort to redeem the infamous Shirley brothers’ reputation, Publicover shows how it obfuscates their activities’ “commercial dimensions” while celebrating the brothers as “knights-errant” (144). He finds the play notable in its clear reliance on romance and theatrical conventions to alter political opinion in “the world beyond the playhouse walls” (161).

Overall, Publicover’s analysis of how romance-inflected plays depict cultural encounters is nuanced. Greater attention to audience members’ diverse social identities and the indeterminacies and multivalencies of the plays they saw would enrich *Dramatic Geography*. The study’s attention to authorial agency often seems unnecessary. Publicover might also strengthen his claims about how playgoers experienced performances by citing

accounts of or by the period's well-known playgoers (e.g., Simon Forman). His discussion of lesser-known plays in addition to canonical ones, however, provides critical insight into England's theatrical networks. Part 2's examination of how drama negotiated relationships between chivalric ideals and commerce is another especially valuable contribution to early modern scholarship. Those pursuing early modern genre, maritime, and theater studies will likely find *Dramatic Geography* sophisticated, informative, and thought provoking.

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*Nell'arte narrativa di Giovanni Boccaccio.* Giuseppe Chiecchi.

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Giuseppe Chiecchi's volume takes us inside Boccaccio's narrative art by investigating the genesis and evolution of patterns, figures, and spaces structurally functional to his literary inventions. Following a methodological premise, seven chapters explore Boccaccio's narrative "machinerie" by focusing on his vernacular works. The book offers valuable insight and stimulates reflection on various aspects of Boccaccio's writing technique: from the narrative use of the epistolary genre (chapter 1); to the analysis of "narrative spaces" triggering narration itself, as in the descriptions of the gardens or of the plague (chapters 2 and 4); to the construction of a space surrounding and defining characters and narrators. Freedom of invention and suspension of moral judgment characterize these spaces, which give origin to other possible narrative transformations, as is the case with the character of Fiammetta (chapters 3 and 6).

The first chapter examines Boccaccio's exploitation of the narrative potentiality of the epistolary genre as a form of "dialogue in absence." Chiecchi shows how Boccaccio's technical apprenticeship in the epistolary *dictamen* influenced his use of the letter, which becomes an integral part of the narrative structure of almost all his vernacular works. From a simple means of communication among characters in *Filocolo* or *Filostrato*, the letter gradually evolves to cover the entire narrative in the *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*, and eventually becomes a structural element in the *Decameron*, where the book itself can be interpreted as a letter the writer addresses to his readers. The second chapter, "Dal *Filocolo* al *Decameron*," shows Boccaccio's transformation of natural space into a metaphoric place of literary invention. In the *Decameron*, the topos of the *locus amoenus*, combined with the theology of the *hortus conclusus*, redefines the relationship between artificial and natural landscapes as one of physical and ideal continuity. The proximity of the *brigata's* gardens to the plagued city suggests that these two spaces are complementary rather than antithetical, as in the tradition of the garden as Edenic space of nostalgic evasion. In Chiecchi's view, this reflects