The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature. Sophie Chiari, ed.
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Edited by Sophie Chiari, *The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature*
has an intimidatingly wide-reaching title, which leads the reader to wonder how we
conceptualize the formation of knowledge and its circulation. Chiari and her
contributors focus upon knowledge initiation, knowledge as transgression, and
knowledge as transmission. Divided into four parts, each section addresses an aspect
of knowledge transmission and transgression: part 1 explores "Theories and Philosophies
of Transmission"; part 2 is entitled "Initiation Practices"; part 3 addresses "Political and
Spiritual Issues"; and part 4 examines "Transgressions of Gender and Genre."

   In a foreword, Gordon McMullan demonstrates how transgression becomes an
initiating process that enables the transmission of knowledge: the playhouse is a site
where knowledge is circulated and the codependency of reality and representation is
especially apparent. Subsequent chapters mainly deal with the circulation of knowledge
in drama and especially Shakespearean drama; McMullan's foreword thus offers a useful
framing device for the essays to come. Chiari's introduction begins by laying the
methodological and contextual foundations for the volume. Chiari draws out the
paradox at the heart of knowledge and its textual transmission: as writing was more
widely circulated, writers became more mysterious. Chiari observes how seclusion, opacity,

and privacy underpinned culture in early modern England, even as this culture gestured toward publicness. These conflicting impulses toward privacy and publicity render the transmission of knowledge into an initiation into transgression. Initiation is also connected to the fashioning of identity and so initiation and transgression become important to both the epistemological precepts that underpin ways of knowing the wider world and of knowing the self. The body, as much as the playhouse, therefore becomes a site of knowledge.

Part 1 opens with Richard Wilson's "Ship of Fools: Foucault and the Shakespeareans," which addresses symbolic transgression within the Shakespeare canon. Following Wilson, David Levin addresses "Shakespeare's Paradoxes of Excellence," which has detailed attention to a variety of plays to show the ways in which Shakespeare transgresses Aristotelian notions of the perception of excellence as a source of knowledge. "Shakespeare and the Atomist Heritage" by Jonathan Pollock concludes part 1 by exploring the influence of Lucretian thought upon Shakespeare.

Part 2 begins with "Hilliard and Sidney's 'Rule of the Eye'" by Anne-Valérie Dulac, where Dulac explores how Sidney's sitting in Hilliard's limning studio may have influenced his literary works. "Mercurial Apprentices in City Comedies" by Christophe Hausermann examines how the transmission of trade from master to apprentice mediates the mercurial nature of the apprentice in city comedy. This chapter is followed by "The Courtesan and Her Mother in Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters*" by Chantal Schütz. Schütz demonstrates how *A Mad World My Masters* blurs the distinctions between chaste and unchaste women, thereby transgressing social codes and casting doubts with regard to early modern patriarchy. Through exploring "Rumor and Second-Hand Knowledge in *Much Ado About Nothing*," Claire Guéron argues that the play is less about affirming power-based epistemology and more about the transmission of knowledge, miscommunication, and social identity. Through recourse to Castiglione, Guéron highlights how decorum mediates access to truth and how the multiple layers of communication lead us to question what truth is.

Part 3 begins with "Marlowe's Political Balancing Act: Religion and *translation imperii* in *Doctor Faustus* (B)" by Roy Ericksen, who explores how the pope in the B text of *Faustus* enables transgressive commentary upon religio-political concerns. François Laroque continues with drama to examine private, individual transgression in *Faustus* and the transmission of transgression in *Measure for Measure*. Taking a Deriddean approach to immune spaces in "Shakespeare and the Violence of Sanctuary," Joseph Sterrett explores how sanctuary is rarely an immune space. In "Limited Being: Revising *Hamlet* in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," Noam Reisner exposes the tyranny of influence of *Hamlet* on *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Here we see a transformation in conceptions of transgression between the two plays.

Sarah Annes Brown opens part 4 with "Cephalus and Procris: The Transmission of Myth in Early Modern England." Annes Brown outlines ways in which the Ovidian tale of Cephalus and Procris could be read as representative of diseased sexual transgression. This in turn points to the influence of the story and possible etymology of the word *syphilis*. Continuing with Ovid, in "Out-Oviding Ovid in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*," Laetitia Sansonetti notes that Shakespeare was not the first early modern writer to borrow from Ovid before exploring how other authors borrow from Shakespeare and

Ovid. The transportation of narrative and rhetorical devices leads to fluid treatment of gender and queer storytelling, which in turns leads to new modes of textual authority and fluid textual circulation. Moving back to the stage in "From Intertextual to Gender Transgression in Middleton's *The Witch*," Pierre Kapitaniak argues that transgression is a "composing principle of *The Witch*" (189) and enables Middleton to explore the transgressive nature of power. In "'Transversing' and 'Transposing': The Case of George Villiers's *The Rehearsal*," Denis Lagae-Devoldère points to the transgressive impulses within Villiers's play before Livia Segurado ends this section with "*Romeo and Juliet* in Brazil: Grupo Galpão's *Romeu e Julieta*," and Ewan Fernie discusses "Love's Transgression" in *A Winter's Tale* by way of an afterword. Collectively, these essays demonstrate how knowledge can be conceived as a form of initiation, transmission, and transgression in early modern England — especially within Shakespeare's plays.

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