

addition to being an exemplary work of comparative literary criticism, *Homer and the Question of Strife* is an indispensable resource on early modern reception history, especially as regards the political concerns that attend it and the critical tradition of which it is a constitutive part.

Sophie Chiari, ed. *The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. xxii + 260 pp. + 1 illus. + 4 photos. \$119.95. Review by KARIN SUSAN FESTER, INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR.

*The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature* is a collection of sixteen essays devoted to various aspects of how knowledge was circulated and miscirculated through literature and drama—texts functioning as agents of change—in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The cultural processes of “transmission,” “initiation,” and “transgression” are explored with the aim of demonstrating how these processes are interrelated. Moreover, this collection sets a precedent because “the three concepts of initiation, transmission and transgression have invariably been studied separately in the past, and no monograph or collection of essays has yet been published on their interaction” (4). The volume begins with a Forward by Gordon McMullen, followed by Sophie Chiari’s General Introduction and an Afterword by Ewan Fernie. There are four parts: I. “Theories and Philosophies of Transmission”; II. “Initiation Practices”; III. “Political and Spiritual Issues”; and IV. “Transgressions of Gender and Genre.”

Part I begins with an essay by Richard Wilson where he considers Foucault in a new light and develops an argument for symbolic transgression. The Ship of Fools might have been initially discredited, but Wilson is convinced that there’s more to be learned from Foucault’s later writings. In his *History of Madness* (2006), written in response to hostile critiques, Foucault “reread Shakespeare not as a staging of the triumphant ‘cortege of reason’, but a commemoration of the incorrigible ‘madman within’ the disciplinary order” (24). The madman, who always surfaced, was a “psychopathic maniac in the seat of power” who exposes the hideous, “Ubu-esque terror” flourishing in sovereign power (24). Thus, in Shakespeare’s dramas of *coup d’état*

Foucault apparently discovered a perplexing, abject form of symbolic transgression.

In Chapter 2, Levin concentrates on the paradoxes of "excellence" in Shakespeare and argues that the "paradoxes derive much of their potency from the way they transgress the basic tenets of Aristotle's logic and theory of knowledge" (32). Levin demonstrates how the perception of excellence is unreliable and untrustworthy due to its inherent and seemingly unending paradoxical possibilities. Levin discusses four main types of paradoxes: (i) how *cexempla* and *paradeigma* are conflated, (ii) how the risk of excellence is redefined or erased due to its being "insistently presented as a relative quality" (37), (iii) how "the example fails or is proven to be false" thereby making any and all judgments uncertain and unstable (36), and (iv) how "extreme redefinition allows endless novelty, and the possibility of unexpected wonder" (36). Expectation and experience invigorate the conceptual paradox, summoning the powerful, the peculiar, the fragile, the passionate and the novel, thus transgressing Aristotle's "judgment of excellence—of the form perfectly in act" (34). And so, something wondrous emerges.

In Chapter 3, Jonathan Pollock attempts to answer the question, did Shakespeare have firsthand knowledge of Titus Carus Lucretius's poem *De rerum natura*? Pollock is convinced that Lucretius's thought directly influenced Shakespeare's dramatic works. He emphasizes that it's known that Shakespeare read Montaigne's *Les Essais*: "according to my calculations, Montaigne includes 438 lines of the poem" (47). To prove Lucretius's influence on Shakespeare, the author provides passages as exemplars from *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*. Especially interesting is the Epicurean preoccupation with cloud formation. In *The Tempest* (4.1.148–56), Pollock points to authentic Lucretian inspiration: "Might not Shakespeare have found his 'cloud-capped towers' and 'solemn temples' here?" (55).

Part II, "Initiation Practices," begins with an essay by Anne-Valérie Dulac. She examines how Sir Philip Sidney transgressed the original meaning of the Italian word *miniatura* by transmitting this word into the English language in the revised version of his pastoral romance *Arcadia*. Moreover, the revised *Arcadia* (1577–1580) includes passages indicative of "Sidney's association of limning with a specific and

immediate form of encounter between poet/painter and his model” (69). Dulac expounds on Sidney’s painting-related vocabulary in the *New Arcadia* and maintains that the many hours he spent in Nicholas Hilliard’s studio—a limner, who uses light illuminating colors and a very gentle technique when painting portraits—influenced his writing. An elaborate discussion ensues that considers miniature paintings, miniatures of women, the sensuality and intimacy of sitting sessions, and the transgressions of social norms in sittings.

In Chapter 5, Christophe Hausermann’s essay focuses on the transmission of knowledge and transgressions in the lives of young apprentices in early modern London as portrayed in various city comedies of the period. The author’s exemplars include Shakespeare’s early comedy *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598); Rowley’s *A Shoemaker, A Gentleman* (1608); and *Eastward Ho!* (1605) by Chapman, Jonson and Marston. Hausermann demonstrates the ingratitude and intolerance of apprentices’ individuality and their invention of new crafting methods: “The master’s maieutic teaching, based on the reproduction of gestures, often opposes the apprentice’s heuristic research for new techniques through individual experiment” (75). In the final scenes of plays, the rebellious apprentices’ transgressions “were usually forgiven” so as not to disrupt the rigid system of transmitting knowledge (79).

In Chapter 6, Chantal Schütz unravels the unsettled ambiguity of the status of various categories of women in Thomas Middleton’s early modern English erotic dramatic work *A Mad World* (1608). The archetype of sexual initiation scenes, as found in Pietro Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* (1534), serves as an impetus for Schütz’s analysis. The discussion focusing on the character-defining speech is especially illustrative, exemplifying the shift of advice-giving in the dialogue exchanges between the Courtesan-Mother and mother-daughter couples in “the two ‘lessons’ staged by Middleton and the way they resonate with two types of early modern texts: conduct manuals and erotic pamphlets” (82). Schütz demonstrates how the instructress figures of Courtesan and Mother transgress the boundaries of societal expectations of women.

In Chapter 7, Claire Guéron examines Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600). This play “is remarkable for its foregrounding of the process of transmission of information and knowledge” in the early

modern period (93), including the roles social and gender identities played in this process. Guéron considers the complicated “chains of transmission” and unreliable routes involved in getting secondhand authority-derived knowledge and information to final destinations (94). Then, she explores if it’s possible to attain objective knowledge, one that is only based on firsthand direct knowledge and is not attached to moral and social concerns. Guéron points to Shakespeare’s “double-plot” (101, 103). Innovatively, the same statement is used with different values in each plot: in the first, “it is epistemological, a guarantee that the [messenger’s] report is authenticated by the proper authority”; in the second, “it is moral and social” (103). It elucidates Shakespeare’s endeavor to include social and moral elements in a firsthand knowledge that could be held as credible.

Part III, “Political and Spiritual Issues,” begins with Roy Eriksen discussing examining Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* B-text (1616), a most remarkable play that is notable for its interweaving of politics and religious politics. The sources Marlowe summoned significantly distinguish the B-text from the A-text of 1604. Eriksen expounds on why he’s convinced that “Faustus does in fact end up in the courts of rulers, in the Vatican Palace in Rome, and at the courts of Emperor Charles V and the Duke of Anhalt” (108). Noteworthy, is Marlowe’s ingenious use of an *ars combinatoria* to articulate the contestation and intrigue among the powerful political and religious actors during the early modern period.

In Chapter 9, Francois Laroque expounds on transmission and transgression in *Doctor Faustus* (1589) and *Measure for Measure* (1604), demonstrating how Marlowe and Shakespeare “diverge in the ways they adapt or transpose the morality in order to make it fit their personal views or aims” (123). In *Doctor Faustus* transgression is portrayed as a self-determined and godforsaken act, whereby Faustus’ *libido sciendi* and relentless obsession with mastering magic not only culminated in terminating himself, but also any possibility for knowledge transmission. Thus, *Doctor Faustus* illustrates the inevitable entanglement of transmission and transgression. In *Measure for Measure*, transgression is identified with vice and with sexual license. Laroque demonstrates the blurring of transmission and communication: dialogues are seemingly indefinite, often “malapropisms and

various linguistic obfuscations” and overemphasis of silence results in equivocation (127).

In Chapter 10, Joseph Sterrett considers Shakespeare’s use of “sanctuary” in *Comedy of Errors* and *Richard III*, including the metaphorical use of sanctuary in later works such as *Hamlet*. In these plays, Sterrett demonstrates sanctuary as a place of transgression. He discusses Jacques Derrida’s articulation of the notion of “immunity” or “protected space or exception”—where the social and the biological metaphors are conflated, suggesting that immunity is not only enclosed by violence but is also inherent to it (134). Transgression threatens immunity: “The social body organizes itself around its immune spaces, its sanctuaries, spaces protected by a violent tension that bear the potential to be overwhelmed at any moment” (135).

Noam Reisner’s essay, Chapter 11, functions as a transition to the fourth part of the volume. Reisner isn’t entirely convinced that *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606) is merely a “wild parody” of *Hamlet* but rather a drama which “is in many ways entirely serious” (147). This time—rather than what’s usually expected—the ‘line’ of transgression is radically transformed: a “peculiar transgressive energy” manifests itself in “an anarchy of revenge acts enacted by shallow characters raging against allegorical moral types in violent, sensual rhetoric, which celebrates (rather than resists) the reality of lived life” (150). The transformation of the concept of transgression is elucidated, and the reality of ‘limited being’ is made explicit.

Finally, Part IV, “Transgressions of Gender and Genre,” consists of five essays. In Chapter 12 Sarah Annes Brown explores the history behind the word ‘syphilis’, which has its origins in a Latin poem, *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530), by the physician Girolamo Fracastoro. Brown claims Fracastoro’s protagonist ‘Syphilis’ originates from Book 7 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Discussed are the story of Cephalus and Procris, the connections between Cephalus and syphilis, and the tale’s transmission during the early modern period. Noteworthy, is the author’s attempt at “trac[ing] a *contaminatio* between Cephalus and Procris and Pyramus and Thisbe, a process which enabled the story to infect *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” (161). Brown also points out that the influence of the tale of Cephalus and Procris “on early modern writers has been rather neglected” (174).

In Chapter 13, Laetitia Sansonetti examines Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593). Remarkable is Sansonetti's demonstration of a "triple convergence of transmission and transgression," which is exemplified in three ways: "The physical overstepping" of the human body's limits—whereby "identity entails a form of trans-gender rhetorical transgression" in the poem's style and storytelling; "The narrator's overstepping of the limits of texts entails a form of trans-world transgression in which his relation to the characters hovers between innocence, experience and detachment"; and "authorial overstepping of the limits of contexts entails a form of trans-genre transgression and creates a new version of authorship" (186). Revealed is a new line of transmission: Shakespeare's retelling of the tale of Venus and Adonis, but Shakespeare "also owns the story" (186).

In Chapter 14, Pierre Kapitaniak scrutinizes Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*. Middleton was inspired to write his tragicomedy against the backdrop of the grandest political scandal during the reign of James I (1615) and the surge of new witch trials which ensued shortly thereafter. Kapitaniak demonstrates "how Middleton made transgression a composing principle of *The Witch*, a play which he meant as an exposure of the transgressive nature of power" (189). Expounded on are the diverse imagery of witches, cats, and metaphors in the multiple plots; the "numerous confusions" implemented by Middleton in the multiple plots (191); the prolific use of sexual puns to exemplify sexual transgressions; and the playing with and blurring of genders.

In Chapter 15, Denis Lagae-Devoldère focuses on post-Shakespearean transgressions in George Villier's *The Rehearsal*. The play's rehearsal structure, which the author calls "radically original," is "a transgressive vehicle based on transliterated or transposed/versed elements" (202). Lagae-Devoldère discusses the various paradigms at work and especially elaborates on the use of merged verb strings, resulting in "a sense of profusion of dynamic actions implying the actualization of predicative relations" and at the same time being "notably *un*-predicated and unconnected, too"—lines in the play being "generated via loose word connections" (200). Thus, the play's structure *is* the transgression, because it *is* the manifestation of the playwright's unwillingness to follow the theatrical conventions and rules of his time, along with inclusion of political critical elements.

In the final essay of this volume, Livia Segurado explores a new twist on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by the Brazilian Grupo Galpao, directed by Gabriel Villela. Segurado considers the numerous reappropriations realized in this play and the new meanings generated. Innovatively, this production featured "hybrid intertextuality between the original English play, a Portuguese translation and a Brazilian literary text" (225). Villela's purpose is "overtly transgressing a well-known theatrical work in order to give it a new shape," something the common people of Brazil could relate to (212). Zesty, dynamic, and very original is Grupo Galpao's portrayal of Shakespeare's most widely adored dramatic work of a universal love story.

A rich, lively, and engaging variety of topics devoted to the circulation of knowledge—including the miscirculation of knowledge—in early modern England makes this collection of essays an excellent contribution to both sixteenth- and seventeenth-century studies. Moreover, it serves as a stepping stone for further research on transmission of knowledge in the literature and drama of early modern England.

Mary C. Fenton and Louis Schwartz, eds. *With Wandering Steps: Generative Ambiguity in Milton's Poetics*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2016. xix + 244 pp. \$70.00. Review by JOHN MULRYAN, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

This collection contains nine valuable essays on Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, but I question the premise contained in the title, viz. that Milton's poetics are (as we read in Louis Schwartz's introduction) characterized by generative ambiguity. Words such as "problematic," "contingent," "ambiguity," "ambivalence" and unresolved "differences" dominate the discourse. We are, as readers, invited to explore differences which can never be resolved: "The poetic and the prose works themselves, moreover, draw readers into aesthetic, rhetorical, and epistemological schemes—plots, tropes, and arguments—that assert the value of differences, assert their own value, while at the same time gesturing offstage to an ultimate but temporally inaccessible source of truth—singular, undifferentiated—that calls all differences into question" (ix). One might recall that *Paradise Lost* is