



**Program Seminar**  
*Transnational Aspects of Early Modern Drama*  
**Ruhr University Bochum – Friday, 25 June 2021**



<https://ruhr-uni-bochum.zoom.us/j/99567822253>

14.00-14.15 Dr. habil. PD Jan Bloemendal (RUB and Huygens Institute – KNAW)

*Introduction*

Early modern drama was often international: theatre companies toured Europe, some writers moved from one country to another, texts were disseminated, playwrights were inspired by plays from other languages. In this sense, the early modern theater was a large cultural network (Küpper) or network of networks. New contexts gave the themes used new meanings. Questions that can be asked include the diffusion, popularity and transmission of topics, the cultural exchange centres by place and time, as well as multilingualism and the active and passive language skills of the authors. At this seminar we would like to further explore this transnational network using more general questions or case studies.

14.15-14.35 Dr. Dinah Wouters (Huygens Institute – KNAW)

*Comoedia Sacra and Comedia Nueva: Traces of Dutch Humanist Comedy in a Biblical Play by Lope de Vega*

This paper will discuss a biblical play by Lope de Vega, *Los Trabajos de Jacob*, and its relation to two Joseph plays by Dutch humanists. Lope's comedy distinguishes itself from other Spanish Joseph plays through its focus on Potiphar and his wife, a focus that is reminiscent of the Latin plays by Cornelius Crocus and Georgius Macropedius, written almost a century earlier. This observation leads to a comparison of Lope's manifesto *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias (The New Art of Writing Plays)* to the humanist defence of the new dramatic genre of the *comoedia sacra*, the biblical comedy developed for schoolboys in Netherlandish schools. Although both projects seemingly take a different stance towards the rules of classical drama, they also show similarities in their defence of a new dramatic form that is purposefully developed with the specific needs of a certain audience in mind.

14.35-14.55 Dr. Sofie Kluge (SDU) and research group: Anastasia Ladefoged Larn (SDU), David Hasberg Zirak-Schmidt (Aarhus U), Niels Nykrog (UCPH), Rasmus Vangshardt (SDU)

*Recontextualising Sophonisba in European Drama 1550-1680*

Early Modern European dramatists took a striking interest in the historical Carthaginian noblewoman Sophonisba who poisoned herself following Carthage's defeat in the Second Punic War to escape the humiliation of being dragged through Rome in Scipio Africanus's triumph. In their treatment of this intriguing figure, dramatists based themselves on the ancient and medieval moral historiographical tradition – Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, Appian's *Roman History*, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Petrarch's *Africa* and Boccaccio's *Famous Women* – yet they gave this tradition a variety of interesting twists and turns, adapting the story of the exotic female "other" to a number of specific contexts and audiences. Our collective presentation explores continuities and discontinuities between French, English and German Sophonisba dramas written 1550-1680, including considerations of generic patterns, historiographical 'takes' and rhetoric along with questions of influence and intertextuality.

14.55-15.15 Discussion

15.30-15.50 Prof. James A. Parente, Jr. (UMN)

*The Anthology as Site of Transnational Literary Exchange*

My project focuses on anthologies of Neo-Latin drama and the ways in which such collections were printed, distributed, and read in the early modern period. Although anthologies have been embraced as evidence for the international appeal of Neo-Latin writing, the anthology itself as a literary form has seldom received any critical

attention. The reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of specific writers, of publishers' motivations for assembling the collection, and of the organizing principles underlying the project remain for the most part unexplored. Using the collections of Nicolaus Brylinger (*Comoediae ac tragoediae aliquot ex novo et vetere et testamento desumptae*, 1541), Joannes Oporinus (*Dramata sacra: Comoediae atque tragoediae aliquot ex veteri testamento desumptae*, 1547), and Jan Cnobbaert (*Selectae patrum Societatis Jesu tragoediae*, 1634) as examples, I argue that anthologies are not simply reprintings of popular, marketable texts, but repackagings strategically designed to fashion internal connections between previously separate works to inspire, commemorate, and challenge established literary practices.

15.50-16.10 Prof. Nigel Smith (Princeton University)

*The Politics of Transnational Early Modern Drama*

I'm interested in this paper in a very literal piece of transnational theatre history. What did audiences in any part of early modern Europe make of plays performed by foreign traveling players, either in the original language or in translation? Some evidence of repertoires shows an international mix of plays offered by single companies, perhaps performed by actors made up of different nationalities. What do we make of response to a tragedy list with Italian, Spanish, English, French and Dutch plays, where the genre includes tragedy, news drama and the play as polemical pamphlet? In this rich mixture, what qualities of kingship, sovereignty, tyranny and martyrdom are being mediated, and to what kinds of audience? If a 1657 Lohenstein play performed in Silesia could cite Milton's discussion of popular rebellion in defence of resistance to Habsburg interference, veneration for monarchical authority, even absolutism, cannot be taken for granted.

16.10-16.30 Discussion

16.45-17.05 Julia Jennifer Beine, M.A. (RUB)

*Ludvig Holberg's Ulysses von Ithacia eller En tysk komedie: A Rainbow of Transnational Drama*

"A tale of giants, siege, escape, / And ominous incantations / Of witchcraft, war and virgin rape / In various locations." In his comedy *Ulysses von Ithacia* (1724), Holberg does not only present a mix of stories from ancient and Norse mythology as well as from the Bible, but also a mix of various theatre traditions. In this play the harlequin Chilian accompanies his master Ulysses, a noble knight, on his epic adventures, amongst them the attempted rescue of the chaste maiden Helen from the clutches of Paris, son of Priapus, king of Troy, or an encounter with the witch Dido, queen of Kajaani in Finland. This talk will focus on how Holberg combines elements of the ancient *fabula palliata*, the early modern *commedia dell'arte*, and the *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen* to reflect on contemporary (trans-)national theatrical practices.

17.05-17.25 Prof. Reinhold Gleis (RUB)

*A Newly Discovered, Old' Dido Tragedy*

Ms. Dresdensis C 121 (16th century) contains an anonymous Neo-Latin Dido play that has been described for the first time by Wilhelm Rüdiger in 1898. Rüdiger ascribed it to the Italian-French humanist Piero Angeli da Barga (1517-1596), who is known for his crusade epic *Syrias* (DDD), based on the fact that the manuscript contains a poem of Bargaeus some folios earlier. Since Rüdiger, there was almost no progress in studying this Dido, and in my collection of Neo-Latin dramas taken from the *Aeneid* (2006), I assumed that the Dido play was an unpublished work of young Bargaeus and therefore not attested anywhere. Thomas Kailuweit, a doctoral student of mine, began to prepare an edition, translation and commentary on this Dresden *Dido*, and he saw that Bargaeus drew not only on Virgil and Seneca, as is usual, but also on Euripides' tragedies translated by Coriolano Martirano (1556). So the assumption that the *Dido* is a work of youth cannot be upheld any longer, and date and authorship is completely open. Recently, Kailuweit discovered in the Vatican library a Dido tragedy, which was hitherto unknown to him, to me and to the whole scientific community. This new *Dido* and its relationship to the Dresden play will be presented in my paper.

17.25-17.45 Discussion

17.45-18.00 Jan Bloemendal

*Closing remarks*