

human costs. In *Dido*, the epic history of nations confronts the tragic biography of individuals; arguing that criticism has widely misinterpreted the relationship between epic history and tragedy in both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Marlowe's play, *Untimely Death* demonstrates that Marlowe's innovation is to reframe Dido as a victim of epic, not of tragic *hamartia*. Dido's death, then, is not explicable according to the logic of tragedy; for Marlowe, her death is "irredeemably untimely," "because history for Marlowe, following a narrow stream of historiographical trends, is fundamentally shapeless" (32).

Chapters 1, 2, and 3, foreground Shakespeare's "historical agnosticism," Middleton's "historical syncretism," and Marlowe's "historical scepticism," respectively, through their engagements with extradramatic historiographic forms. Chapter 4 explores drama's direct participation in early modern historiography with a reading of Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*. The play includes a set piece that dramatizes the Siege of Ostend (1600–03), a three-year military operation against Spain that ended in England's surrender and the deaths of 100,000 people, including 20,000 English soldiers. Detailed and historically accurate, *The Atheist's Tragedy's* set piece attempts to make sense of this catastrophe by positioning it within the narrative logic of revenge tragedy, with its reliable, satisfying administration of vindictive justice. In so doing, the play counters the pervasive impression of the military disaster's senselessness, producing instead a consoling vision of historical order. In its conclusion, *Untimely Deaths* shifts its focus from dramatic emplotment to biography, considering how Ben Jonson negotiated his mid-career success with his relatively long life. That Jonson peaked with the *Works* in folio (1616) and "overlived" his prime has been suggested by early modern and modern critics. *Untimely Deaths* demonstrates Jonson's preemptive rejection of such interpretations by positioning his late works as the culmination of his career that reflect on the fullness of his life as a whole.

Untimely Deaths makes a major contribution to the field of early modern historiography, demonstrating that not only the history play proper but also the dramatic genres of comedy and tragedy played a central role in early modern historical culture, through plays that recognize, articulate, and seriously intervene in the culture's manifold methodological conflicts.

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Stages of Loss: The English Comedians and Their Reception.

George Oppitz-Trotman.

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George Oppitz-Trotman's *Stages of Loss: The English Comedians and Their Reception* elucidates the emergence and development of theater characterized by travel and festivity in

early modern times. It presents a history of English players, known as English comedians, who were traveling and performing outside their homeland in the 1590s. Their experiences and their reception by the public affected art, trade, and international relations in Europe. The English comedians confronted many hindrances, but they managed to make social and economic advances in Europe. Chapter 1 gives a detailed account of the story of two different versions of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The A-text is the shorter and earlier of the two, while B-text is the later and expanded version. According to Oppitz-Trotman, the differences between the two versions are not as trivial as they may seem: *Doctor Faustus* was performed in an itinerant mode, staged by different theater companies following provincial traditions and touring overseas, all of which resulted in alterations to the text.

Chapter 2 focuses on how the itinerant English comedians changed the way things operated, and not just in terms of theater. For example, though a disagreement with the city council's financial terms made the comedians leave Ulm, they were then greeted in Regensburg, Nuremberg, and Frankfurt. In the historical retelling of the events, theatrical performance became a protest against certain regulations. Indeed, English theater had an impact on Nuremberg's political, cultural, and urban identity. Chapter 3 elaborates on the connection between the cloth industry and theater and how this commodity was associated with the English comedians in early modern Europe. Itinerant English comedians' use of cloths in plays turned it into commerce, importing and exporting cloth across Europe. There was a commercial competition between Germany and England involving fashion and luxury. Fascination with clothing, principally wool or silk, and its circulation made clothing a sign of power.

Chapter 4 is about the English comedians' interactions with money. They were constantly traveling, sometimes accompanied by their wives, and transferring materials to new places increased expenses. Furthermore, traveling the whole year under these circumstances was arduous. Despite the obstacles, the comedians continued on their path, and made improvements to European drama. The chapter highlights the Pickelhering character, known as the English clown in German theater; the clown figure came to the forefront, and comedy flourished despite the melancholic mood. Chapter 5 concentrates on the English comedians' influence on the cultural history of Germany by means of language and culture.

Oppitz-Trotman provides a compelling, detailed history of the origins of English theater. Actors, musicians, directors, companies, and courts were engaged in a challenging process of assimilating English drama in Europe. Criticism and disapproval were part of this process. English drama gained acclaim in Europe by overcoming challenges. The book studies transnational theater in its entirety, considering linguistic, cultural, economic, and dramatic effects of early modern performance.

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