

Generatio(n): The Concept of Genealogy as a Form of Cultural Mobilization in Francis Meres' Honouring of Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*, Ben Jonson's *Timber, or Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter*

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Abstract

This article analyses how the English Renaissance used the concept of genealogy in order to bridge the abyss of time between the Antiquity and Renaissance's culture. The investigation takes texts into account that describe and evaluate the generic foundation of English literature by drawing a diagram of the relations of genres as well as authors and starting with the classical origin. The texts by Philip Sidney, Francis Meres, and Ben Jonson depict a self-concept of cultural heritage and achievements which apparently suggests continuity, tradition and stability. At the same time, the concept of genealogy offers cultural mobilization and flexibility as it is used as a strategy to justify and support cultural transfer of cultural schema, material and ideas.

Keywords: *genealogy, generation, genos, Renaissance, cultural transfer, mobilization, imitation, heritage, identity*

Various fields of study are concerned with the concept of genealogy and its presence in different discourses. For example, literary studies describes the concept as a genealogical pattern that constructs a narrative in novels by depicting the destiny of one family throughout their generations.¹ Marketing concepts draw upon traditions handed down from one generation to another and link their products with them in order to make these products familiar and appealing to one specific group of customers.² This is achieved with the concept of genealogy as a kind of strategy that highlights the similarities between generations. Historiographers debate how to define and apply 'generation' as an analytical tool, especially when it comes to the two main categories of family generations and social generations or cohorts divided along economic, cultural and political lines. Both can indicate continuity, for example by forming a genealogical line but they can also initiate a process of change, for example by interrupting that line.

In the first two cases, genealogy appears as an idea of unity by linking the members of a genealogical line throughout time, across spatial conditions and across

¹ Daniela Niebala, 'Die alten großen Meister: Generationenfolge als literarische Ursprungserzählung', in *Generationen: Multidisziplinäre Perspektiven*, ed. Harald Künemund and Marc Szydlík (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 137.

² Frank Lettke, 'Werbung und Generationenbeziehungen', in *Die Gesellschaft der Werbung: Kontexte und Texte, Produktionen und Rezeptionen, Entwicklungen und Perspektiven*, ed. Herbert Willems (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), esp. 711-12.

cultural systems. The historical approach assesses the analytical value of the concept.³ All in all, each disciplinary approach highlights the functionality of the concept in and for the discourse it is applied to. To understand the functionality and the construction of the concept in all its aspects, it is necessary to dissect the semantic conception of the word 'genealogy' first.

The notion genealogy shows a dual conception, when it is divided into the semantic elements, *genos* and *generatio*. The latter is a Latin term meaning the ability to procreate, and in general, relating to the process of creation.⁴ Besides, it can mean generation when it is used metonymically. According to etymology, *generatio* stands in relation to the Greek noun γένεσις (birth, origin).⁵ In Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *genesis* is classified into three kinds of generation: 'Of things that are being produced, some are produced by nature, and others by art and others by chance'.⁶ The Aristotelian definition clarifies the huge extent of contexts genealogical structure can be applied to. This analysis focuses on the second type, *technê*, which is here defined as a 'controlled' and artificial form that is linked to a process of learning, the use of knowledge about the environment and the concept of the self. So, the first element introduces a starting point of production and, thereby an origin from where a form of art can evolve and develop.

Secondly, *genos* or the Latin term *genus* denotes an applicable and general term, which answers the question 'what is'.⁷ The concrete *genos* involves a process of classification a priori since *genus* means a kind of category as it is valid for genre or gender. Therefore, *genos* refers to a group of elements that are united because of similar and comparable features chosen to define this *genos* in order to make it distinct and recognizable in contrast to other elements and their groups. For example, in literature, *genera* or genres describe different categories of texts with defined principles regarding format, matter, tone, style, and schema; the genre of comedy can be understood as a dramatic text that depicts the weaknesses of mankind in a ridiculous manner, dissolving a troublesome exposition into a happy ending. When *genera* are seen to emanate from former kinds in the process of *technê*, and ordered into a sequence, then a structure is gained that could be defined as a genealogical sequence.

So, the recombination of the elements *genos* and *generatio* offers a source of structure and unity of selected and categorized material as well as a progressive lineage with the promise of continuation. Genealogy represents a bi-fold concept that gives access to a certain time span, to the past and to history if history is simplified as a summary and presentation of past 'facts' in a stemma.⁸ Hence, the concept conveys two

³ Josef Ehmer, 'Generationen in der historischen Forschung: Konzepte und Praktiken', in *Generationen: Multidisziplinäre Perspektiven*, ed. Harald Künemund and Marc Szydlík (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 59-60.

⁴ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'generation', 312.

⁵ *Generatio* is related to the verb *generare*, which evolved from *gignere* (to create, to engender); *gignere* is related to *gignomai* and its derivative *genesis*. *Genos* is also a derivative of *gignomai*. See *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1st ed., s.v. 'γίγνομαι', 272; *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages*, 1st ed., s.v. 'gignere', 260-1.

⁶ Aristotle, *Met* 7. 7, 1032b30 ff. For the translation see Aristotle, *The Metaphysics: Books I-IX*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, repr. 1975).

⁷ *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 1st ed., s.v. 'genos', 233. *Genos* is here termed an 'Allgemeinbegriff'.

⁸ Benjamin Steiner, 'Tatsachen der Geschichte: Kritik, Archäologie und Genealogie frühneuzeitlicher Tabellenwerke als Reservoir und Ordnungssysteme historisch-empirischen Wissens', in *Zwischen Wissen und Politik. Archäologie und Genealogie frühneuzeitlicher Vergangenheitskonstruktionen*, ed. Frank Bezner and Kirsten Mahlke (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 256-7.

perspectives on time and past: the lineage as a unified and continuous whole and secondly, a section of the genealogical line at a certain point of time. In terms of a diachronic perspective, genealogy originates from a source that is bound to a certain point of time and space, a person, an object, or in other words, some root. This emphasizes the genealogical element of *generatio* and the initiation of all further processes of (re)production linking the products together. A synchronic point of view shifts the focus to the semantic feature of categorization when elements that have selected and identifying features in common are grouped to one *genos* or generation. For example, people born in the eighties and later are considered to belong to the generation of new media, or teenagers of these days are said to belong to the 'Facebook generation'.

The indication of origin, the description of reproduction as well as the categorization and structuring of past material suggest some process of historicizing, which seems valid in the framework of the genealogical concept, but can actually be ahistorical. It should be seen as free, flexible and fulfilling some utility depending on how the concept entails the interpretation, deformation, and adaptation of the past material. Thus, this twofold concept provides meaning by structuring and ramifying past complexities and functions as an organizing device for and within the discourse.⁹ In the following, the descriptive approach towards the concept and its constitution reveals the concept's functionality in regard to the mobilization and transfer of cultural material.¹⁰ To achieve that, the paper analyses the construction of genealogy and the use of its element, *genos* and *generatio*, at several chosen passages taken from the three texts to give an insight in Renaissance's self-concept regarding their relationship to antiquity. Meres, Sidney and Jonson wrote against the background of the English Renaissance and the programmatic principles of those Age.¹¹

The notion 'Renaissance', rebirth, alludes to the beginning of a new era and can classify a specific period in Western history. Simultaneously, it can describe the attitude of the very period in Europe towards cultural inheritance and identity, since it means the dissolution from previous generations and the spirit of the former age, the Middle Ages, the preference for the Antiquity, the sources of humanity and civilization, and the revival of those. So, the term Renaissance can refer to a cultural movement as well as a time span. Here, the article highlights the meaning of the cultural movement by understanding Renaissance as a programmatic label that provides an analogical image to the theme of a genealogical sequence. In the 19th century, the term first occurred, expressing the relationship between former generations throughout centuries, their

⁹ Kenneth Allan, *The Meaning of Culture: Moving the Postmodern Critique Forward* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 83. Meaning does not originate from nothing; it is produced.

¹⁰ The term 'objects' refers to physically present objects as well as ideas and concepts. Alternatively, the paper uses the term 'material' in the same sense.

¹¹ The paper does not aim to analyse the English Renaissance in comparison to the one in France or Italy, but to describe the motive of genealogy in the texts and explain its function as well as its relation to the principle of Renaissance as such. In general, one main difference between England and the other nations was the circumstance that the English Renaissance had to cope with the potential of conflict between 'two rival value systems- the religious system of English state Protestantism and the aesthetic, epistemological and intellectual systems of Renaissance Italian culture.' (Alistair Fox, *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford et al.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 6). The reader stood in between the damnation of the sinful and promiscuous Italian literature by the religion and the attraction to 'new' and visionary texts. See Fox, esp. 7f. and 181f.

treatment of cultural heritage and their decision to adopt classical material.¹² In other words, Renaissance constitutes one main principle of the cultural matrix of the time period future generations perceived as such by consuming the cultural material the theoretical treatises of Jonson or Sidney are part of. Hence, the term depends for example on the interpretation of literary discourses and serves to reconstruct the working principles and spirit of the cultural matrix the classicist fosters in his texts. In the end, the paper regards the programme as an outline of a vision of a culture starting in Italy, from where it spread over Europe.¹³ The attitude is best understood by Renaissance's principle *ad fontes*, which represents the call for going back to the origin of sciences and knowledge.

In *Defence of Poesie*, Sidney denominates the sources as 'most fatherly',¹⁴ which can be seen as a metaphor creating the image of a family line. The distant past draws closer to the contemporary. Moreover, Sidney indicates the development of classical disciplines as a father-son relationship. Eloquence as a skill was handed down from 'the great forefathers', Antonius and Crassus, to Cicero.¹⁵ In both cases, the status of a father implies an intimate and natural relation, which includes the process of teaching and learning. These sources or 'fathers' are confirmed as an ideal to be imitated and to be learned from. Still, when the actual timeline is considered, the true fatherly generations are found in the Middle Ages. The picture of a father-son relation seems to create a discrepancy between the preference of the programmatic principle *ad fontes* and the cultural conglomerate of those days, which could not have been and was not completely set apart from the medieval influence.¹⁶ The cultural heritage of prior generations was not completely disregarded in those days, but is here marginalized in order to express the appeal to the Antiquity. This was especially true for poetry, whose English authors sought a direct connection to their idols.¹⁷ Learning from and using the classical material meant to transfer and integrate it into the cultural consciousness that is 'predetermined' by the prior generations.

So, the construction of a father-son relationship shows the status of the material as a natural transmission and demands the integration in the socio-cultural system, which was realized in different areas: at schools and universities, classical texts like Virgil's *Aeneid* were studied; they became part of the education and provided a foundation of knowledge; pupils were trained in rhetoric, one major classical skill to be learned; translations of classical texts were consumed. To sum up, people of those days encountered the transfer of mythology, motives, plot material, rhetorical training, stylistic features and other cultural 'objects' from the Greeks and Romans in theatres,

¹² *OED*, 'Renaissance'; E.H. Gombrich, 'The Renaissance – Period or Movement?', in *The Renaissance: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, ed. Robert Black (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 27-50.

¹³ *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. and intr. Michael Hattaway (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1.

¹⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, 94. All further citations will be given from University of Oregon 'Defence of Poesie (Ponsonby, 1595)'; accessed 13 October 2014, <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~bear/defence.html>.

¹⁵ Sidney, 173.

¹⁶ 'Literary and visual artefacts of the period record patterns of evolution from medieval antecedents that are as least as important as their debts to new models of representation and orientation emerging from Italy and later from France.' (Hattaway, 4-5).

¹⁷ Raphael Falco, *Conceived Presences: Literary Genealogy in Renaissance England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 5.

books, and other media providing transformed classical material, which indicates a certain presence and awareness of ‘Antiquity’s culture’ through the filter of the present account.

In *Timber*, Ben Jonson’s abstract to *claritas patris* may transcend the account and support the natural quality of the genealogical relation:¹⁸

*Claritas patriæ*¹⁹. Greatnesse of name in the Father, oftentimes helps not forth but o’rewhelms the Sonne: they stand too near one another. The shadow kills the growth; so much, that wee see the Grandchild come more, and oftener to be heire of the first, then doth the second: He dies betweene; the possession is the thirds. (94)

It seems to describe the relation between classical times with the greatness of science, the Middle Ages overwhelmed by the fame of the former period, and the Renaissance, the third and true heir. Jonson’s passage reads like a metaphor,²⁰ but there is no direct relation to the historical lineage or note by Jonson that he was alluding to the sequence of the three periods. Still, the passage is embedded in many allusions, imitations, quotations, and direct references to classical material within the book, which suggests that this comment on the heritage of fame might mirror the view on the contemporary achievements. These are assessed as great and comparable to the classical civilizations, whereas the Middle Ages are thought to remain the dark age.

This attitude becomes clearer in the third approach to heritage found in Meres’ passage on Shakespeare:²¹

As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought
to liue in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie
soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous & hony-
tongued *Shakespeare*, witnes his *Venus* and
Adonis, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets [...] (XIV, 26-30)

In analogy to the notion of Renaissance, Shakespeare is said to be a reincarnated Ovid, who inherits the Roman poet’s talent to write marvellous poetry. The heir is no more just the son, but the transformation of soul when Ovid’s soul travels across space and time in order to be reborn in Shakespeare. This passage seems to be the superlative among the description of heritage. Cultural transfer is imaged in the *metempsychosis* of chosen authors to transmit the greatness and the advanced status and therefore, serves the enrichment of the English tongue and culture. On a meta level, Meres reverted to a metaphor that had also been popular in antiquity. The oldest example for this metaphor relating to literary heritage can be found in Ennius’ *Annales*, where it is used in order to link his epic with that of Homer, whereby Ennius attempted to imitate and reach the

¹⁸ The first half of the book seems like a summary of miscellaneous passages hanging together rather loosely and giving the expression of notes. See Ben Jonson, *Discoveries: A Critical Edition*, intr. and notes by Maurice Castelain (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1906), esp. XVIII and XIX. All further citations of Jonson’s *Discoveries* will be given between brackets in the text.

¹⁹ Alternatively, Folio (1640-1641) and *ceteri* suggest *patriæ* instead of *patris*, which would be closer to the image of a nation and its culture (Castelain, 23).

²⁰ See the paragraphs on imitation (7).

²¹ Francis Meres, ‘Poetrie’, intr. and notes Don Cameron Allen, in *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, ed. William A. Oldfather et al. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1931), 76. All further citations will be given between brackets in the text.

Greek idol within and for the Roman cultural context.²² Consequently, the metaphor establishes a genealogical sequence of authors that transfers the genius to foster *generatio* and ease the progressiveness of literary *genera* in the English culture since Shakespeare did not only write poems but also comedies and tragedies. Thus, Meres acknowledges him to be one of the most excellent English writers.

So far, the vocabulary of family, the matter of heritage and even reincarnation outline a genealogical relation between the Renaissance and the Antiquity. It could be argued that the construction of genealogy aims to bridge the abyss of time between those periods. Within that concept, the continuity of the former generations is mainly passed over since the *genos* as the darkness of the Middle Ages is identified as not to be handed down; instead, it supports the access to the classic *genos* that is meant to be achieved. Depicting antiquity as the father, an idol, also means a kind of praising the source and defining it worthy to be praised. So, the classical fathers were not only considered as an ideal to be learned from, but also as an ideal to be engaged in the advancement of culture. Hence, the metaphor serves the Renaissance's programme and mobilizes the cultural material of ancient times to become meaningful in the present for the cultural production and the institutionalized form of the English culture.

But besides this aspect, the genealogical line identifies not only a father but simultaneously, the origin where to start from:

Since then Poetrie is of all humane learnings the most ancient, and of most fatherly antiquitie, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; Since it is so universall, that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it; Since both Romane & Greeke gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making; (94)

The superlatives 'most ancient' and 'most fatherly' suggest the identification of an origin, the origin of poetry presented as the starting point for all other human sciences. According to Sidney, not only did science take its beginning there, but all other genres must have developed from this 'universal' genre the Greeks and then the Romans linked to divinity. He clarifies that the starting point can be found in Greece:

Let learned Greece in any of his manifold Sciences, be able to shew me one booke before Musaeus, Homer, & Hesiod, all three nothing else but Poets. (3-4)

So, Sidney uses Greece as the ultimate reference and defends poetry as the genre every kind of nation has by implying it central to every culture and making it the root of learning, from where everything else could grow. This origin means the starting point of cultural *generatio* and simultaneously of cultural memory since Sidney argues that 'no memorie is so ancient, that hath not the precedens of Poetrie' (108). The identification of an origin allows to build a causal-logical structure of the cultural history in a retrospective that shows the development of *genera* and their interrelatedness. The ability to describe this development and to order the innumerable cultural

²² Stuart Gillespie, 'Literary afterlives: metempsychosis from Ennius to Jorge Luis Borges', in *Classical Literary Careers and Their Reception*, eds Philip Hardie and Helen Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210-11. Gillespie provides a detailed discussion of the reception of *metempsychosis*, which can be interpreted as a device to construct a genealogical pattern between two authors and the cultural environment.

‘achievements’ in *genera* related to each other makes the elements within this genealogical line seem true.

In general, the genealogical line gains an epistemic value since following the process of *generatio* and the development of *genera* means to perceive the past. So, the construction of such a line seems to draw a history of literature and its causal-logical structure offers an understanding and interpretation not only of past literary production, but also of the present as its foundation. For the late Renaissance, the genealogical relation points out a task that is the continuation of the process the classics started by studying the sources, making them an essential part of education and delivering it to posterity. So, the question remains what exactly must be continued. What kind of main category throughout the genealogical sequence can be identified?

This becomes more explicit when Sidney pursues:

Nay let any Historie bee brought, that can say any writers were there before them, [...] who having bene the first of that country that made penes deliverers of their knowledge to the posteritie, nay, justly challenge to bee called their Fathers in learning. For not onely in time they had this prioritie, (although in it selfe antiquitie be venerable) but went before them, as causes to draw with their charming sweetnesse the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. (4-5)

According to Sidney, high culture is here caused by the value of knowledge, which Greece and more respectively, poetry brought along. The Renaissance located the starting point of education and civilization in antiquity, which is still found in the common and present image of Greece as the cradle of civilization. The continuation of this heritage can be identified as the unifying element of the genealogy. So, it might be interpreted as a kind of a general motor the classicist is aware of and determines as his standard. This ambition governs the mobilization and transfer of cultural material and impacts the re-evaluation of the present socio-cultural complex. So, mobilization does not only refer to the transfer of the past material, but also means the selection and interpretation processes of how to standardize the cultural present in the process of production.

Thirdly, the construction of genealogy and the guarantee of continuity entails the decision of how to realize the process of *generatio* or in other words, how a writer could manage the ‘reincarnation’ of classical material in his own Age. The answer can be found in the main principle of imitation the Romans chose as the ideal method to deal with the Greek sources:

The third requisite in our Poet, or Maker, is Imitation [...]. To make choise of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him, till he grow very Hee; or so like him, as the Copie may be mistaken for the Principall. [...] to draw forth out of the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey [...] observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them. How Virgil, and Statius have imitated Homer: how Horace, Archilochus; how Alcoeus, and the other Liricks: and so of the rest. (127)

Jonson relates to Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and Seneca’s description of the writing process as a form of digestion and the image of a writer as the bee turning all into honey.²³

²³ Castelain, 125; Malcolm Hebron, *Key Concepts in Renaissance Literature* (Basingstoke/ New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 153-4. Imitation was commonly imaged as father-son, bee-honey relationship or as a digestion process in antiquity and later in the Renaissance. Jonson’s interpretation of how to perform ‘imitation’ refers to Horace’s kind (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, esp. 131-5); and for the metaphorical

Imitation is not defined as the identical image of the original but as the challenge to select, to choose just the best and to make the original to the imitator's idiosyncratic piece or in broader terms, to a representative of the specific cultural system. Since Jonson's note on the method how to proceed in the writing process is itself an example for imitation of classical texts, it reveals the transfer of the very method it makes use of: Renaissance drew upon the Roman cultural agenda of *imitatio* employing all three phases: *inventio*, *imitatio*, *aemulatio*. The passage of Ben Jonson shares with Seneca and Horace the same view of how the present and vernacular cultural material should become excellent and outdo the chosen fathers in order to create a self-confident, prestigious and proud cultural consciousness in comparison to the other European nations.²⁴

Inventio stands for the selection of the material to be transferred. The method *imitatio* means the realization of the transferred material by aiming to transform the source to something more discrete. *Aemulatio* symbolizes the highest degree of imitation as the writer here succeeded to include the material in the cultural matrix as something new and own. Thereby, this trilogy confirms the proclaimed genealogical sequence but also concretizes the concept of imitation combining change as well as divergence with continuation since the treatment of the past in art production achieves the visualization of the past from a retrospective in the context of the present. For example, Ben Jonson's two tragedies *Sejanus* and *Catiline* 'were held in high regard by many readers in the seventeenth century for bringing Roman history to life in ways that paralleled the times'.²⁵ The parallelism between the imitation and the own age could offer a transcendence and therefore, the recognition of socio-political circumstances as well as sublime criticism. The audience was enabled to reflect on their own life and time. Consequently, cultural mobilization is active in the process of imitation as well as reception: the classical motifs and topics are newly interpreted against the background of the contemporary mobilized during the production; the recipient gains access to the fusion of the past and present and takes part in the further cultural dialogue.

Apart from the image of the imitator and the availability as well as reception of the fused material, the author deals with the schemas of certain genres, their rules, motifs, and other devices. In Jonson's case, he (re)produces comedies and tragedies, contributing English representatives of these genres. In other words, the process of reproduction generates further elements belonging to certain genres, which serves the spread and prevalence of these generic schema in the synchronic cultural consciousness. Moreover, this also happens across cultural systems as part of a collective memory.²⁶ Briefly, genres persist- of course, it should not be denied that there are variations of one

description what the imitator's attitude towards the sources should be, see Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 84, 3-4.

²⁴ Hebron, 153.

²⁵ W. David Kay, 'Ben Jonson', in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 471.

²⁶ Cultural transfer in the form of reception and imitation could be seen as deliberate and programmatic and as well as automatic concerning non-constitutive frameworks. That means that our cultural system and its aesthetic conditioning cannot be considered without the past, the chosen idols, educational agenda, canons, and literary criticism on the one hand. On the other hand, the cultural system and productivity rely on the subtle establishment of aesthetic categories and their iconic figures. The sum of these categories and content could be interpreted as the aesthetic consciousness. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), esp. 12 and 400. Adorno does not write about something concrete or emotionally observable.

genre throughout time, since the generic schema is realized in the specific cultural environment, but on abstract terms, it may be referred to as being available diachronically. Conclusively, imitation mobilizes generic schemas and their devices for cultural production like motifs, ideas or myths. On the other hand, the contemporary socio-cultural content and tools are activated and take part in the challenge of imitation and its realization. The principle 'imitation' describes a programmatic type of cultural transfer and the transformation of cultural 'objects', which provides an insight in the classicist's understanding and evaluation of the own culture.

For instance, evaluation takes place, when Meres praises the success of the imitator Shakespeare in the following:

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among y English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. (XV, 2-6)

Here, the classical scholar equates the Roman elite of the certain genres with Shakespeare, a single writer excelling in both genres. Meres goes on in assessing the value and authority of the English imitations when he writes:

As Epius Stolo said, that the Muses would speake with Plautus tongue, if they would speak Latin: so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeares fine filed phrase, if they would speake English. (XV, 13-17)

In Antiquity, the poet usually asked for the Muses' help and blessing, which could be seen as the starting point for the poet to write and as the affirmation that the poet succeeds.²⁷ In Meres' passage, the Muses embody not only the inspiration of the poet, but also the excellence of imitations done by English writers since the best writer of one period is named to represent all others and their cultural environment. Shakespeare equates Plautus; the English language equates Latin and the English culture achieves their 'English Homer'²⁸. Consequently, the imitator succeeds in his challenge and does not only imitate the idol, but competes with it. The challenge supports mobilization. The cultural transfer of the classical material serves the imitator to emancipate by using the gained knowledge as a foundation upon which he could build and learn more. The genealogy of imitators becomes an evolutionary process the transferring culture assumes to lead. (Past) cultures may be interpreted as *genera* that emerge from valleys to peaks as enlightenments follow the dark ages.²⁹ Hence, past is epistemologically valued and spanned into a grand narrative that mainly serves to outline the synchronic cultural environment, whereby it becomes perceivable. Finally, it can be said that cultural reality is shaped on the foundation of the past given by the genealogical concept and the means of cultural transfer.

Within that reality, the construction of genealogy enables the classicist to situate himself in his cultural environment in comparison to other cultural systems and identify the own cultural achievements in comparison to the idols as well as other cultures following the principle of imitation. For example, Sidney's *Defence* might have been

²⁷ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 60-2. Here, Bloom depicts the concept of Muses in relation to poetic anxiety.

²⁸ Meres, 76. He gives the title 'our English Homer' (XIV, 22) to the author Warner for his epic oeuvre *Albions Englande* drawing the English history from Noah to the Elizabethan Age.

²⁹ Anne Paolucci and Henry Paolucci, *Hegelian Literary Perspectives* (Smyrna, Del.: Griffon House Publ., 2002), 55-6.

inspired by the French scholar Henri Estienne's work *Project du Livre intitulé De la precellence du Langage François* (1579) and could be read as a reaction to it since it opposes Henri's statement and defends English as the excellent literary language.³⁰ For Meres and Sidney, English literature was at least as sophisticated as the Italian and French models and could claim the genealogical foundation in the Antiquity. Therefore, the concept also offers demarcation to the 'other' outside the genealogical sequence and helps to shape identity- the identity of the author, the reader and the cultural system. In that case, declaring the superiority of the English Renaissance literary culture could be termed a 'psycho-genesis of poetic self-authoring and self-authorizing'.³¹

This genesis can be discovered in the poetic discourse of the three texts emphasizing the perspective of the author on himself as an imitator and producer and the understanding and evaluation of the contemporary situation of what English literature and culture is and should be against the background of the Renaissance and the programme of classicists. So, here the author's self-concept the genealogical model is part of argues and legitimizes how the English author should contribute to the English literature and the cultural system as such and what English literature achieved in comparison to other nation's literary systems. The focus lies on the perception of the self and of the cultural system, which can generally be interpreted as processing the cultural environment and its movements, whereby the concept of genealogy can be argued to exemplify a cognitive model to structure the cultural and direct the perception of that.³²

This psychological approach generally explores the concept of genealogy as an applied and artificial formation of cultural structures and their developments, since it is a selective account of cultural movements and production processes. To use a psychological definition, the concept can be considered as a perceptual set: it is an active process involving selection, inference and interpretation.³³ For example, the indication of sources belongs to a selective process, which can mean the choice of the material and ideas to be transferred. Secondly, inference refers to the application of logic and the process of conclusion and is involved in the construction as well as in the comprehension of the concept. Thirdly, interpretation relates to the process of how the concept is made use of for the understanding of the cultural system. All in all, these processes depend on each other, whose sum builds up an order resulting in some inner-logical structure. It is not assumed that this provides an objective truth, but a construction of reality, which is supported by the mobilizing processes indicated so far.

How is this reality constructed and what does it make valid? First of all, genealogy highly depends in its stability on the indication of the 'ultimate' *generatio* or origin, one of two essential elements of the genealogical concept. This aspect provides the genealogical line and its *genera* with authenticity and exclusivity. As a consequence, the ontological foundation of a cultural system involves the ability to

³⁰ Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 233.

³¹ Falco, 4.

³² A cognitive model is here meant as easing the innumerable extent of information one person is confronted with in the constant interaction with the socio-cultural environment.

³³ Perceptual set: 1. A frame of reference or set of schemas that guide the interpretation of sensory information; 2. A momentary readiness to interpret sensory data in a particular way elicited by the context in which perception takes place. (See *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology*, 1st ed., s.v. 'perceptual set', 369).

solve the miracle of the present by the relation to its origin and thus, forms and stabilizes its identity. This means that the present culture can mirror itself at the past material and the interpretation. So, the genealogical concept shows a cognitive function³⁴ as part of a self-concept of the cultural system. Moreover, it implies and demands continuation and can be seen as an outline of the future or more respectively, as a foundation for future generations. So far, it has been shown that the concept of genealogy is used to justify and describe cultural transfer processes as 'natural' and forms of heritage and thereby, it also displays an instrument to construct, identify and label a cultural system as exclusive and authentic offering substance for further imitation.

But the realization of imitation and continuity requires the access to the heritage and sources lost in the original, but available as derivative forms like translations or adaptations. This requirement activates or mobilizes the internal and external cultural material of former and present generations across national borders since the Renaissance's principle of imitation could also be found in transfer processes between the Renaissance nations.³⁵ The English Renaissance in particular got access to the classical sources via the reading of the Italian versions of imitations.³⁶ Shakespeare's drama was highly influenced by Italian drama and other Italian literary sources, in particular in regard to the plot material.³⁷ Therefore, imitation does not only display a direct transfer from Antiquity but mostly from other derivations of the original. These transfer processes discover a European dynamic,³⁸ in which the transfer of antiquity is intermingled with the transfer of Italian, French, English, and other cultural material, since these processes are based on the availability of the *genera* and their elements. Thus, imitation in these cases can be discovered as a complex of cultural transfer processes that imply the mobilization of cultural material beyond the apparent stability of the cultural system and the momentary picture of the genealogical sequence.

In this complex, the concept of genealogy is active as a method to select the cultural knowledge and represent the exclusive and authentic sum of cultural knowledge to be imitated. So, the descendant in the genealogical line, the author, is aware of the past and writes against the background of all past writers, their works and ideas and especially, their appreciation and standardization. His demand to create something 'unique' seems to be prohibited by the inevitable sum of knowledge, a part of the cultural identity. Bloom calls this the anxiety of influence, wherein the poet faces a paradox concerning the aesthetic production.³⁹ Without doubt, the label 'father' of one

³⁴ Michael von Albrecht, *Rom: Spiegel Europas: Das Fortwirken antiker Texte und Themen in Europa* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1998, 2nd edn.), I. Albrecht's book is concerned with the reception of antique texts and traditions and considers their reception as an instrument to mirror oneself.

³⁵ Meres, 75-76, XIV, 13-20.

³⁶ See Fox, 19ff. Fox remarks that 'the first writer in England to respond to the influence of the Italian Renaissance was the man whom later generations would regard as 'the father of poetry', Geoffrey Chaucer.' (20). See also Kevin Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9. The transition between the Middle Ages and the English Renaissance seems to be artificially cut. Chaucer as the first bridged from 'the medieval Latin auctor to the modern English author'.

³⁷ Fox, 182 and ff.

³⁸ It should not be suggested that there was no reception of classical sources or influence outside Europe and on Europe from other countries. In addition, it also depends on how far the term 'Europe' is stretched geographically. The paper is concerned with the investigation of the concept of genealogy and does not aim to describe the relations between France, Italy and England in detail.

³⁹ Bloom, 1ff., and esp. 19ff. See also Niebala, 145-6.

genre supports the permanent patronage attached to this genre and all its future formations. Constant *generatio* seems to be dominated by the genealogical consciousness and the principle of imitation initiating cultural transfer. Here, the genealogical sequence seems to limit the originality of the author but still, does not prevent the mobility of cultural material within the production processes.

Overall, the paper has shown that the concept of genealogy serves as an instrument to structure and interpret culture and cultural schema since it encompasses the structuring of cultural content, which can be interpreted as a selection of historicized cultural relations emphasizing continuity by constructing a cohesive and coherent line of cultural material or *genera*.⁴⁰ Thus, the concept constitutes a symbolic order of meaning, whose elements become available for (further) cultural transfer. The *generatio* of the transferred shows creativity in form of transformation and depicts productivity regarding cultural movement and the continuation of literary schemas. To put it with Foucault terminology, the concept functions as a powerful device for the literary discourse presenting 'truth' in form of an origin.⁴¹ Here, the classicist applies the concept to constitute his status in the literary conglomerate of his days and in accordance to his ancestors and fellow writers.⁴²

To briefly conclude, recognizing the concept's functionality and utility discloses cultural mobilization including multi-directional transfer processes that form the classicist in the phase of learning and studying, define him as an imitator that transforms and reflects the contemporary cultural matrix. The concept unfolds an internal dialogue between categorical persistence and the continuous challenge of originality and contemporary cultural identity.⁴³ In its broadest sense, the concept serves the desire of cultural authenticity and exclusivity bound to mobilization processes beyond the formulated desire.⁴⁴

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⁴⁰ *Generation: Zur Genealogie des Konzepts - Konzepte von Genealogie*, ed. Sigrid Weigel et al. (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), 7.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), esp. 138-40; Foucault uses genealogy as a method of analysis, which excludes the continuity of a stemma, but deals with the contrary: discontinuity, change and heterogeneous paths. This paper refers to the concept of genealogy as part of the discourse influencing the human's behaviour and knowledge. See Paddy McQueen and Hilary McQueen, *Key Concepts in Philosophy* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 79.

⁴² Philipp Jeserich, 'Geschichte und Geschichte der Dichtung in der französischen Renaissance-Poetik: Zu Thomas Sebillet und Jacques Peletier du Mans', in *Zwischen Wissen und Politik. Archäologie und Genealogie frühneuzeitlicher Vergangenheitskonstruktionen*, ed. Frank Bezner and Kirsten Mahlke (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 311-12.

⁴³ The (re)construction of a cultural identity also discovers the chance to continue or break with the genealogical sequence in the further literary discourse stating and evaluating the principle of 'imitation'.

⁴⁴ Gombrich, 28-9. In 1338, Petrarch wrote the poem *Africa*, in which he desired to end the forgetfulness, to seek beauty, national glory and cultural pride for the descendants by leaving the *tenebrae* and the Middle Ages behind and longing for the Roman sources.

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Generații: conceptul de genealogie ca formă de mobilizare culturală în omagiul lui Shakespeare (Francis Meres), Defence of Poesie (Sir Philip Sidney) și Timber, or Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter (Ben Jonson)

Articolul analizează modul în care Renașterea în Anglia a folosit conceptul de genealogie pentru a acoperi golul temporal dintre cultura Antichității și Renașterii. Analiza ia în considerație texte care descriu și evaluează fundația generică a literaturii engleze prin trasarea unei diagrame a relațiilor dintre genuri și dintre autori și pornind de la originea clasică. Textele lui Philip Sidney, Francis Meres și Ben Jonson descriu un concept propriu al moștenirii și al realizărilor culturale care în mod aparent sugerează continuitatea, tradiția și stabilitatea. În același timp, conceptul de genealogie oferă mobilizarea culturală și flexibilitatea așa cum aceasta este folosită ca strategie care justifică și susține transferul cultural al schemei, materialului și ideilor culturale.