Summary of the contributions

In the introductory session dedicated to research into German cultural societies conducted at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Andreas Herz stressed the role of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft (Fruit-bearing society) in an aristocratic culture of knowledge and behaviour, a part of courtier culture and noble identity. Just a few members contributed to the cultural goals of the FG, focused on the Protestant nobility of Germany. The society dedicated itself to stimulating good and natural judgement, natural speech, conversation and dialogue and an anti-pedantic attitude. The literary culture only began to flourish after 1639, when the FG admitted scholars to its ranks. Herz pointed to analogies with the culture of the Italian academies and the ideas of Castiglione and Montaigne: a non-professional amateur culture of nonchalance or „sprezzatura“ (Castiglione). The FG can be seen as a society stimulating the culture of eloquence and education among nobles. Although some poetry for courtly festivities was produced within the FG, most noble members, such as a Von Teutleben, did not produce any literary works; they profited from this culture of education for their work in the administration.

Gabriele Ball outlined the features of the Tugendliche Gesellschaft (Virtuous Society) and its theoretical and programmatic background. The Tugendliche and the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft aimed at cultural as well as political and Christian reform, transmitted through the irenic and virtuous behaviour of the ruling class. They saw themselves as part of a project to create a cultural nation based on sociability and patriotism. The second aim of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft was the development of the vernacular. While this program was not explicitly mentioned in the society book of the Tugendliche Gesellschaft, it is nevertheless discernable in the rejection of the French language, which played a rather remarkable role in other smaller female societies of that time. The link with the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft becomes apparent not only in personal interdependences, but also in certain rituals like the use of a society book and the impresa which include a society name for each member. They received a society word and a „pictura“ which was explained by means of more than one poem and enriched by examples from the Old Testament. The Tugendliche Gesellschaft can be seen as an „order of virtue“ or a „school of virtue“. Its program of virtue was influenced by Wolfgang Ratke, a Lutheran philosopher and pedagogue (1571–1635). Ratke promoted political and pedagogical reform as an answer to the crisis of the German Empire, targeting the ruling elites, both male and female. His ideas were also mediated through Anna Sophia and the Tugendliche Gesellschaft. It is clear, for example, that Ratke’s ideas were reflected in the society book, even literally in parts.

In his introduction to the conference, Arjan van Dixhoorn proposed and defined some key concepts: 1) the Republic of Letters and the World of Learning, 2) intellectual culture, 3) performative literature, oral
literature, public poetry, 4) literary associations, summarizing the argument of „The Reach of the Republic of Letters“ (Brill 2008). He also proposed a set of questions and problems that have to be dealt with in the study of the link between literary associations and the world of learning, as provided in the conference abstract. „The Reach“ already suggests that there were indeed links with the world of learning and the Republic of Letters in particular, but the exact nature of those links remains to be studied thoroughly. Such a study might also help to answer the question of the decline of performative literary culture in the public domain. Was this linked to changes in communicative practices and the growth of (ideals and practices of) the New Learning? What about the decline of the Liberal Arts Faculties in European universities in the seventeenth century, and the foundation of all sorts of learned and especially scholarly associations in the late seventeenth century? [See for example, S. Stegemann, „Patronage and services in the Republic of Letters“, 38-39.] Was the world of performative literary culture a system for exchange of knowledge and learning parallel to the world of learning and the Republic of Letters? And/or were they related directly through (local and regional) networks mingling (minor) scholars and the leadership from vernacular performative culture?

In her comments, Catrien Santing suggested shifting the focus away from the structures to the content of the activities/productions of these organizations: what are they doing in the poems and theatre that they are producing? Conversely, she also stressed looking into the performative literature of the world of learning and its content (especially religious content: the link between religion and becoming a better = Christian person). Santing thus emphasized that we should not forget that Latin culture was part of performative literary culture. For example, Conrad Celtis was producing plays in Vienna, linked to his Collegium. Furthermore, religious meetings and disputations can also be seen as part of a performative continuum. The question could be: what is the culture of ideas behind those forms of expression? Moreover, when focusing on structures, what is the link to the other types of confraternities that often were involved in performative literary culture as well? Performative literary culture, it can be concluded, was dealing with knowledge and learning. It is important to study local circumstances: how were these associations and performative culture linked to the urban landscape? In addition, the focus could be on case studies of individual authors and their role in those societies and performative culture. Santing warned not to focus on the regional levels again.

In the discussion, Dylan Reid suggested that we are focusing on the most elaborate form of performative culture: associational performative literary culture. Katell Lavéant stressed the problematic nature of the concept of a Republic of Letters in relation to literary societies. The R of L suggests a focus on the big names. Therefore, a consensus was reached to change the label to literary societies and the world of learning. In the section on the culture of literary societies, Dylan Reid stressed the importance of corporate culture in the genesis of literary companies and their role in local societies. With reference to Anthony Black’s famous study on guilds and civil society (Black: civil society means liberty and equality before the law), he pointed towards the mentality of the people forming associations, including informal ones. Reid also emphasized the urban context of associational culture in late medieval and early modern Europe. Cities themselves were super-corporations: guilds and confraternities flourished as their sub-corporations from the 14th/15th centuries onwards. This civic culture comprised the notions of a mutual purpose, ritual kinship, brotherhood, fellowship, and harmony. Those notions were linked to strong religious/spiritual aspects, especially to the ideals of a Christian society. Also related were the civil society-notions of equality and the importance of negotiation as expressed in the rotational concept of leadership and the negotiated relationship and mutuality with the authorities. The oral networks through which associational ideas and forms spread can explain the local and regional variations in the associations of Performative Literary Culture (PLC).

Civic associational or corporative culture was not a written culture that was theorized about. Associations create identities through appearing in public, through public performances and presentation. Associational culture was also a group performative culture. In that sense, the literary performance was related to
performative culture in general. The companies of PLC followed the voluntary model of association, with some having a literary primary purpose, and others, with non-literary purposes, highly involved in literary activities (Basoches, Inns of Court, guilds in procession, etc.), and some being only temporary associations for special events. Although they were so linked to local corporate culture, in literary productions we seldom find references to urban corporate life itself, or to specific urban events. The primary concerns seemed therefore to be more universal. Literary societies mingle people from various circles. They mostly are not directly linked to the civic government, but can be representative of the civic community. They also provide a training ground for civic life, civic virtues, and civility. The shift to new models involves a drift away from the corporate model and the spiritual missions to individualism and more practical and more immediate forms of sociability. There was also a shift from horizontal organization towards vertical organization of public life.

Black suggested that learned culture was separated from corporate culture. Instead, the associational approach was picked up and spread through learned culture too.

Henk van Veen underscored how the Italian academies rooted in an unofficial world of people meeting in villas, etc. were linked to festive culture. There were no clear divisions between 'learned' and 'popular' circles. The question is how to differentiate between the informal circles and formal academies; see, for example, informal/regular meetings of artists discussing topics of art. Networks have been studied, but informal meetings have not. They have left no strict rules, no ceremonies, or archival sources. It was an informal world of friendship. It seems that many such informal activities of having an agreeable time or passatempo were formalized into academies, but why? Maybe because the attendants shared an ideal, the achievement of which needed an organization? Did this development weaken the informal world, or did the formal culture reinforce it, and vice versa? Another problem is that the famous works of the period (of Vasari, Castiglione, Galileo) were not set in an academic environment but in the informal world. On the other hand, it is evident that people versed in Latin and Italian could be found in both circuits. So what was the real cultural weight of the Italian academies, and how to measure that importance?

According to Ignacio Garcia Aguilar, Francisco Javier Alvarez and Inmaculada Osuna, the satirical dialogues of Erasmian culture in Spain represented a criticism of society from inside. The burlesque culture that was so essential to popular culture was a form of criticism of society from outside. Referring to Peter Burke’s idea of the great (international, cosmopolitan) and little (local) traditions of culture, they argued that just as learned culture was European, burlesque culture was a European culture too. There were links on the level of literary associational traditions and literary links and similarities in the burlesque tradition. This tradition can be found in the French Basoches, the Spanish and Italian academies, and other associations. This culture was linked to carnival and other practices of the world turned upside down. In the functionalist view, this was all part of a system of social control with criticism of authorities etc. Interestingly, these practices were not only part of popular culture. The great and little traditions had parallels too. For example, the vejamen that was an important poetic genre in the Spanish justas and academies, originated in university life. The vejamen was the mocking of the new doctor before he received his doctorate. From the 1650s onwards, the organizers of justas commissioned burlesque poems. Within the literary associations, at least oral literature was moulded into an educated discourse. The question is, how important was the burlesque tradition within the literary associations, and to what extent was this culture influenced by learned culture, for example, from Erasmus’ satire? Both among elites and other social classes, this playful and festive culture created a link between laughter and more serious issues. This institutionalized tradition of the burlesque dated back to the Middle Ages. Apart from practicing jestful criticism (the functionalist explanation), mock literature was also used for literary socialization and as a way to learn eloquence.

Inge Werner proposed to look into theories of oral culture for a theoretical framework for performative literary culture. Referring to Walter Ong’s work on the link between the oral and the literate, Lord’s „The
singer of tales and Oral Cultures Past and Present: Rappin' and Homer” by Viv Edwards and Thomas J.
Sienkewicz, Werner focused on some general characteristics of oral performances that could be very
enlightening for the study of performative literature. Those include textual and social features, such as 1) the
presence of an entertainer/storyteller, performer and teacher (as a central figure) who creates authority or
charisma (through his oral techniques) and has a role in the education of the young men (mentor-pupil
relation); 2) the use of mnemotechnic elements; 3) the role of the audience in performances (the organic
whole, with the audience controlling the performative action); 4) the formation of a community of performer
and audience, with a common mindset and developing codes, rules, values, and behaviour; 5) the web of
praise, blame, boasting, abuse; 6) the entertainment, competition, and learning situations. Werner finally
stressed the importance of reintroducing analyses of the literary output into the discussion.

Michael Baldzuhn problematized the role of written sources in our analyses of PLC. He proposed to view
these documents as monuments of PLC rather than the lenses through which we examine it. The use of
writing itself was part of the creation of knowledge. Sources themselves are thus part of the knowledge
process that we are studying. They are part of the subject we are interested in, and not just documents of it. It
is therefore important to look into the material objects in detail, such as membership lists, or letters of
announcement. The lack of sources is then in itself a source, and it is equally important to reflect on the lack
of sources, on the specific use of literacy. This is also related to the discussion of how to measure the
institutional level of an organization. The lack of written sources does not necessarily point to a lack of
institutionalization or formalization. Because of the lack of sources, which is typical of many aspects of
PLC-organizations, it is important to use a cocktail of sources. The different functions of sources must then
be taken into account.

In his comments, Bart Ramakers suggested structuring the book that we intend to write on the themes of the
conference, and focusing special attention on the genesis of the PLC-organizations by studying various cases.
With reference to a possible new focus on the content Ramakers, proposed to study performative texts in 1)
their learned content, for example the way they treat theological and philosophical issues; 2) the use of
learned techniques, for example, allegory, homological methods, disputation techniques. He also proposed
that, along with a focus on authors and landscapes, a focus on the study of issues/debates could be helpful:
what is the role of performative literature in the way society or a group deals with common issues?

In the session on 'Expanding the network', Anne F. Sutton introduced the London Puy as a link between
merchant culture, minstrel culture and the literary association. The big London merchants were especially
important in the circulation of literary culture through their travels in Europe. The London Puy, in which
those merchants played an important role, was also linked to the clerics of Guildhall chapel and to the ruling
elites of London. This international literary culture was essentially a song and music culture. The London Puy,
avactive between circa 1270 and 1310, organized an annual song contest. The Puy was part of a French-language
aristocratic, cosmopolitan culture, exemplified by the Puy of Arras, an organization with an international
reputation, which had its origins in a mixture of professional and amateur culture. The London Puy
flourished and perished in the context of political and constitutional conflicts in London, conflicts between
the merchant elites and the middling sort, and also between London and the King. The link between the Puy
and its literary, associational, aristocratic, cosmopolitan world and the ideals of civic culture (harmony) was
also expressed in a book on the liberties of London that included the statutes of the Puy (its most important
source).

Iva Manova proposed an explanation for the lack of literary organizations in the Balkans, with a focus on
present-day Bulgaria. The region was an important autonomous and productive part of the Byzantine cultural
zone (invention of the Cyrillic alphabet) before it came under Ottoman rule in 1396. It seems that during
Ottoman rule, Bulgaria lacked a significant urban elite or middle class and literary public, so that the public
for written culture was absent or very small. Apparently there were no public ceremonies and no con-
fraternities, no structures that could support a public vernacular literary culture like the ones found in the
urban(ized) zones of Western Europe. Greek was the language of the literate, and Greek books circulated in
print. Books in Bulgarian (mainly religious works) circulated in manuscript form. The upper class of Bulgaria
was also influenced by the Turkish way of life. Lower class culture was essentially an oral and folk tradition,
and did not leave any written records. In Russia, for example, one might look for a performative literary
culture of Latin, Greek, and native traditions, mainly from the eighteenth century onwards.

In the session on the links between the world of learning and performative literary culture, Marie Bouhaïk-
Gironès and Katell Lavéant argued that Jean Molinet must be seen as a poet who took part in courtly, Basoche,
learned and joyful culture. They presented the case study of this person and his texts to argue that perform-
ative literary culture is an underestimated means for the exchange of knowledge. His 'Mandement de
Froidure' and 'Mandements joyeux' served to show that Molinet was indeed part of the joyful culture of the
joyous companies. He was also the official chronicler of Charles the Bold at the Court of Burgundy. He was
part of the Grande Rhetorique. Molinet wrote a chronicle, various poems (Les Faictz et Dicz), and works of
prose and poetry on political themes, among others. Several of his poems have the joyful characteristics. The
'Mandement' is one of them. In this 'Mandement' the King of Drink boasts about his victories against the
kings of Tournai, Mons, Bouchain. The text belongs to carnival culture and the feasts of the compagnies
joyeuses. Molinet was present at performances, but there is no evidence of his membership in those
companies. Texts, however, serve as evidence of his links to this culture. The 'Mandement' can be seen as a
summoning of the king of joyful companies, who has defeated other kings at local feasts/contests, and might
have been written by Molinet for the joyous company of Valenciennes. There are joyful summonings from the
13th and 14th centuries and new series from the 15th and 16th centuries, among them Molinet's 'Mandement'.

All the 'Mandements' make reference to the world of theatre. These texts make use of techniques from other
cultural and learned circuits. They can also be linked to Basocheian culture, and are part of a broader theatrical
and judicial culture. They are stuffed with inside jokes and cryptic code language. They thus contain traces of
cultural practices and networks. The 'Mandements' are part of a Burgundian urban culture. Others are in
Dutch (De Blauwe Schuit, 1413), most of them from the 16th century, all integrated in theatre culture.
Bouhaïk-Gironès and Lavéant propose to call this joyful culture (not popular culture) in opposition to the
culture of the elite/learned culture. This culture is a trivial expression of elite culture (courtly/local); it is a
parody, not a depreciation of the model; it is playful and festive; and it enables the demonstration of an
author's skills, his savoir faire, command of language and both oral and written culture. In that way, it could
be very revealing to study the links between several circuits, particularly through parodic texts.

Laura Kendrick argued that the Republic of Letters could be seen as a utopian world devoted to learning. The
festive literary culture was a medieval equivalent utopian world. It offered the opportunity for a temporary
withdrawal from everyday life. The competitions organized in the London Puy, the Toulouse and Valencian
Consistories, the Cour Amoureuse, the literary companies of the Low Countries and Northern France were
utopian games set to rules. Social order was being equalized during festive time, allowing time for the
transgressions of the boundaries of order, and constituting a different, utopian, temporary order. The utopian
world of the later Middle Ages was also linked to ideas on pleasure: the hygienic justification (pleasure and
joy as antidotes to melancholy) and the recreative justification (entertainment leads to the relaxation of
tension). Ideas on poetry were also linked to ideas on the role of harmonious music in creating pleasure. In a
shift in the thinking on poetry, it was stressed that poetry was natural music that came into existence through
reciting, reading, pronouncing poems, even without the use of musical instruments. If poetry is natural
music, then this means that it remains virtual until recited. Joy was also seen as a result of learning. The
conceptual shift from poetry as music to natural music was related to the increasing role of learning which was also expressed in the introduction of rhetoric.

The increasing role of learning in the development of the Occitan vernacular can be partly linked to the involvement of the „universitaires and Parlementaires“ in Toulouse. The urban literary culture also influenced the courtly milieu in Paris, as can be seen from the Cour Amoureuse, also called Puy, in 1400, on Philip the Bold's initiative. Twenty-four Ministers (knights, bourgeois and administrators) were chosen for their knowledge of the science of rhetoric. The surviving manuscripts suggest that the Cour organized several competitions and love debates (like in the Puy of Arras) where debate poems were presented. Among the more than 600 „members“ were many men of letters, known poets, secretaries of the chanceries, early humanists, bibliophiles, etc. The question is: did this organization really exist, or was it a utopian enterprise? In either case, it can be seen as a model for the Republic of Letters before this came into existence.

In her paper, Irene Baldriga dealt with the transformations from literary to learned societies, especially in the seventeenth century. She stressed that knowledge can only be developed and spread when it is shared within groups and fellowships. Conviviality seems to be at the very origin of cultural societies. She also stressed the importance of education: ideas of pedagogy and cultural dissemination might have affected the structure and development of literary companies. Baldriga underscored the importance of taking into account the relationship between learning and institutions; the ideals and purposes of learning; the organization of knowledge. They are vital to understand the transformation from literary (as spontaneous, eclectic, etc.) to learned (specialized gatherings aimed at particular philosophical/ scientific goals) societies. Baldriga argued that, during the Middle Ages, cultural activities were mostly confined to universities and „studia“ (often organized by the Dominican Order). Laypeople meeting outside the academy without a specific educational purpose but interested in sharing experiences and moral teachings through dialogue was related to a sort of aristocratic social game of storytelling. There might be a link between the spontaneous aspect of those lay gatherings and an aristocratic conception of Wisdom/Knowledge. The Renaissance became the time of the great fashion of private and exclusive cultural spaces, which deliberately separated the sphere of Knowledge from the rest of society. The cultural institutions of the Renaissance focused on a non-specialized kind of learning. Correspondence and dialogue were the main methods for the spread of knowledge.

In Italy at this time, some interesting utopian projects should be noted that point to a new approach to the organization and spread of knowledge. The first is the Venetian Academy of Federico Badoer and the publisher Paolo Manuzio, established in 1557. The main goal of the Academy was to create a catalogue of an ideal library covering all the fields of knowledge, with each room dedicated to a different branch of knowledge. This enterprise reminds one of the new utopian ideas on Knowledge of More’s „Utopia“ (1517), Campanella’s „City of Sun“ (1602) and Bacon’s „New Atlantis“. The new type of organization, such as the Accademia dei Lincei, was characterized by a strong desire to share interests, methods, and thoughts, which was particularly effective in those areas of Europe under Catholic censorship. Other utopian projects first pointed in a different direction, such as the Rosicrucian enterprise, dedicated to a mystical idea of Knowledge that was not submitted to discussion and dialogue. The new type of learned societies was not a space for mental refuge, but an area where specific skills and competences could interact. They were institutions of research and investigation; the educational purpose is never the main goal; dissemination of results was mainly through printed books; they started forging their own jargon, which blocked the use of the simple conversation/dialogue style as a principal tool for sharing among members. A second turning point was the passage from spontaneous erudite associations to the foundation of national academies, which undermined the imaginative and conversational culture, also through the publication of the first scholarly magazines.

In the final comments, Catrien Santing stressed the need to broaden the horizon. It is difficult to define one culture (a vernacular) as separate from and then compare it to another (Latin) since there is a lot of overlap.
Some people published in both vernacular and Latin languages, for example. The interaction is interesting too: who influences whom, and what was the impact of vernacular on Latin and vice versa? There is a carnivalesque element of a transgression of boundaries, which is linked to the utopian view, and the creation of identities of communities. With a (critical) reference to Burke's two traditions, Santing suggested that we are dealing with a cosmopolitan culture that was locally based.

Concluding remarks

One of the major conclusions of this conference is that the differences between organized vernacular performative culture and the learned world should not be exaggerated. Therefore, the more inclusive concept of a 'world of learning' was proposed as an alternative to the Republic of Letters concept, since the first might suggest a focus on the world of the big scholars and writers, and is also often associated with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A continuum between the worlds of learning and the worlds of vernacular literary culture can be seen in various ways:

A. Performative literary culture. The contributions to and discussions during this conference have highlighted some crucial analogies and linkages between learned culture and the literary associations. A major area of shared features is the world of performative literary culture (PLC). Shared features that have been discussed include:

- festive conviviality
- oral structures for exchange, learning, training
- strong link between orality and literacy
  - the use of writing itself can be seen as a way of creating/fixing knowledge
- the joyful culture and the burlesque tradition in Latin and the vernacular
- link to universal/cosmopolitan concerns and ways of behaviour and thought
- continuum between PLC-institutions and agents and the Latin world of learning are apparent in structures, networks, careers, goals, literary products and events.

B. The utopian. The utopian is another area of analogies and linkages between both learned and literary culture. This utopian element is expressed in ideas about literature and its functions that are adapted on local and regional levels. It is also linked to ideals of civility, the ideal citizen, and the ideal society, to the perfection of society and men that also pervade the world of PLC (from the Latin to the vernacular). In the seventeenth century, the focus shifts to new forms of literary/scholarly sociability linked to new ideals, and utopian views of learning (cf. Baldriga): as can be found in the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft, the Lincei, and the Royal Society.

C. Informal to formal. Instead of a radical break, there was a continuum between literary circles and formalized societies. The literary meeting (formalized or not) was represented as an ideal type of virtuous pastime of free kindred and equal spirits (which links to the utopian).

D. A (playful) training ground. We also discussed the link between corporate associations, civic ideals, and performative culture. The more sophisticated and elaborate top end of the continuum of performative culture = organized performative literary culture that we focus on can be seen as an informal training ground for civic life, civic virtues, and civic leadership

- what is the link between membership in these associations and the creation of cultural leadership on local levels?
authority
charisma
pupil-mentor

• PLC as a world of the young, a training ground where personal/oral authority is created?
• crucial role of human body/mind as the object of PLC: it is not about pure knowledge, but about civil society and the perfection of the individual and the collective.

E. Cultural relevance. The top end of PLC belongs to a continuum between vernacular literary cultures and Latin learned culture, especially due to local networks/circles of men of letters (again it should be stressed that we do not exclusively focus on the big names of the Republic of Letters).

• linkages between members of literary associations and other cultural networks → how to measure the weight of those associations 1) in contemporary imagination, 2) in local and regional society, 3) in the production of works of culture, and 4) in cultural circuits.

F. Exchange. PLC and its joyful culture can be seen as a cultural infrastructure stimulating interurban intraregional exchange, between various social and cultural circuits, from court to urban society, from an international to a local world, from learned circles to vernacular circles; exchange between laymen, clerics, administrators, jurists, university men. Exchange through „interaction and integration“.

• we thus accept the notion of linkages/analogies between vernacular performative literary culture and the worlds of learning, in the circulation and adaptation of knowledge and ideas
• PLC created a world of free and pleasant expression, stimulating personal language skills, and quick wits, and/or argumentation skills and the ability to express ideas clearly
• a world concerned with the training of the mind, the personality, and building personal and collective charisma and authority
• with the leading agents in the world of PLC often being part of a broad and mixed web of textual production and consumption, of cultural circuits and publics
• professionalisation and intellectualisation of performative culture and public speech → in short, the making of vernacular authority

Arjan van Dixhoorn

Kontakt:
Dr. Volker Bauer
Herzog August Bibliothek
Postfach 1364
D-38299 Wolfenbüttel
Tel. +49 5331 808 207
E-Mail: info@hab.de