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The Patient Griselda Myth and Marriage Anxieties on Early Modern English and Spanish Stages

As the DramaNet research project aims to demonstrate, culture can be considered as a net in which ideas float without a necessary clear starting point and circulate beyond national borders or within countries. In early modern Europe, a good example of the floating material available in this cultural net and from which playwrights took inspiration is the myth of Patient Griselda. Originally the last novella of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353), the Patient Griselda figure and her story have fascinated Europe ever since Petrarch translated Boccaccio's text into Latin in 1373.

When the tale reached the stages of the institutionalised English and Spanish theatres, it underwent great changes. Although they wrote from countries distant from one another and have left no trace of personal contact with each other, Lope de Vega in Spain and Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton in England, produced two plays adapting the Griselda story which attest to similarities between English Elizabethan drama and Spanish *comedia nueva*. This paper hopes to demonstrate that Lope's *Ejemplo de casadas o prueba de la paciencia* (1601-4) and Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *Comedy of Patient and Meek Grissil* (ca. 1599) dramatize and attempt at exorcising anxieties and concerns regarding marriage employing similar devices or kinds of floating material they could draw from the European cultural net: the creative adaptation of their common source (the myth of Patient Griselda); a rhetoric of the monstrous or grotesque; new characters; additional plots or episodes.