Elizabethan and Jacobean theatregoers needed a substantial effort of imagination to visualize the countries that they would encounter within geographic texts, described as they were from political, ethnographic, and cultural perspectives. This imaginative capacity was aided in the dramatic exchange, where the representation of foreign spaces required a similar effort of visualization, but where people and nations were given life on stage through individual characters within the drama or allusions to national features. In a psychological study focusing on the intellectual and cognitive significance of drama, Richard Courtney describes the route of information processing and concept formation as developmental steps in human cognition and argues that, in Western societies, the predominant images are visual, and when visual images are used in dramatizations they tend to be more vivid than in other forms of representation.1 Some of the ethnographic clichés about the German states and their inhabitants extant in early modern geography texts might have sifted into the drama, but the image here is radically deformed through the shifting mirrors of visual perception and the dramatic interaction. While early modern geographers and historiographers displayed some sense of geography and history when depicting what they believed to be the general characteristics of the Germans – even though writers were lured by the rhetoric of commonplaces and their scientific text revealed a fictional aspect – English playwrights were easygoing and informal in their dramatic portrayal of German individuals or cities, alluding to the foreign and the familiar in one dramatic stroke. Moreover, the dramatic tension was permanently maintained through the comparative dynamics of representing various Western European nations.
What can be so imaginative, however, about the presentation of the group of German states in the early modern period, well-known for rich woods, fields, and wines, a tall and hard-working people who also possessed a genius for mechanical invention? The figurative maps of Germany and the Germans drawn with words and stage movement in early modern English drama convey to Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences images that are at once familiar and foreign, factual and fictional, and which always end in destabilizing preconceived notions of German ethnographic traits in the dramatic interaction. This process transforms the objective physical world of Europe into an allegorical space that negotiates both cultural divide and epistemological affinities, moving between different ways of imagining space. Geography texts cogently describe the German principalities as affluent regions, with solidly established cities and sites of learning, but their arguments are often repetitive because of intertextual transmission and scholarly compilations from the classics. Subverting the rational and well-organized scientific discourses of geography – or even the simultaneously semi-fictional and realistic traits of travel narratives – drama proposes innovative strategies of instability, negotiating hybridity through the distortion of transnational reconstructions of predictable stereotypes. Re-narrating an original form of globalization – different from the one instituted by the new geography – early modern English dramatic allusions to the German states in the Holy Roman Empire and the ethnographic characteristics of their inhabitants demonstrate not only new ways of defining national identity through alterity, but also the multicultural intersections between different notions of home and abroad, native and foreign, activating the tension between competing models of national identity.

**German Länder in the English geographic imagination**

Classical geographic accounts of the German states in Elizabethan English translations expose the fictional qualities of ancient texts, because writers relied mostly on the reports of others when they needed to describe more distant parts of Europe – as northern Germany would have been in ancient times. However, Renaissance translations of such texts were necessary because many contemporary geographers still relied on the classics; such translations also provided a source for comparison with the understandings predicated on the new geographical knowledge. The Latin geographer Pomponius Mela reports in factual and informational terms on German territory, listing the large number