The word “network” is more likely to call to mind computer connection than the “glittering net-work” of a spider-web (E. Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, 1781) or a “Mantle of blacke silke” (*Book of Robes*, 1600). What is the link between such “curious Piece[s] of network” (Addison, *Spectator* 275, 1712) and contemporary social networking? These older uses of network illuminate the development of early modern techniques of loose connection. By contrast with a chain-of-being model, networks are versatile, allowing for manifold modes of association.