

## Project Group C3

### Imagined Competition: 'Exotic' Heroes in English and German Heroic Drama of the Late 17th Century

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The point of departure for the project group was the observation of a trend toward 'exotic' figurations both on the stages of the English Restoration and in late-baroque German theatre. In research, these figurations are usually explained in terms of a mechanism for negotiating one's own crises by projecting them onto a cultural other. Moreover, it is hypothesized that these spectacular portrayals of a cultural other were a reaction to an increased demand for representation on the part of the monarchy and aristocracy. The trend might also be attributed to intensified (albeit varying) cultural contacts. On the whole, our initial idea was that these figurations served as a means of critically examining an increasingly eroding conception of heroic greatness.

Although the English *heroic play* was short-lived as a clearly defined genre, it remained productive as a backdrop for accentuating variations. In this way, the 'foreign' figures and scenes acquire a marked referential character: They are employed as an easily recognizable quote for making one's own aesthetic and political positions clear in dialogue. The spectrum of reference cultures and contact zones is very broad; one topic that is considered increasingly during this period is England's rise to the status of a global mercantile and colonial power. In the German-speaking corpus, the trend is less clearly defined and anchored to a literary and theatrical culture that is less uniform. Most of the works dramatize cultural collisions whose setting and constellation are pivotal for the heroizations of protagonists from foreign cultures. Temporal and geographical distance as well as the fictional reshaping of historical subjects encouraged the reception of oriental heroes particularly in the newly established leading genre of the libretto. However, the foreign heroic figures do not acquire a specific semantics. They usually embody general heroic virtues in that they are portrayed in opposition to a – usually similarly schematized – other, as seen paradigmatically in portrayals of martyrs on the Jesuit stages.

The monograph written in the context of the project group (Christiane Hansen) focuses on the London stages of 1660 to 1690. While the phenomenon of the heroic serves to crystallize the political and social issues of the restored monarchy, the question of the mechanisms of heroic effect become the main focus of the dramatic work: The affective logic of astonishment, admiration, fear, reverence, and suffering (in sympathy) and the implicit positions of the audience on each are illuminated at the point of intersection between theological, political, epistemological, and poetic discourses. The monograph investigates how markings of the other and the foreign (such as gender, civilization, cultural identity) are used as a resource for explaining and problematizing this process. The individual constituents of the heroic are exposed precisely in being diverted to an 'other', as this breaks the immediacy of the overall heroic effect. This reveals the entanglement of the heroic discourses with projections of the sacred, of the masculine, of cultural identity and political or normative orders.

Barbara Korte examined Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter* and Dryden's *Amboyna*, dramas that submit to genre conventions of the *heroic play* as a means of considering the problems

of extended attributions of the heroic through the lens of the foreign. Such extensions to the traditional aristocratic and monarchical personnel were brought about by the growing significance of the middle classes, particularly the actors of the new international trade and colonization. Both analyses demonstrate how the *heroic play* and its conventional-exotic characters could be used to illustrate shifts in English society through shifts in the heroization system.

Achim Aurnhammer and Mirjam Döpfert dealt primarily with the New Latin Japanese dramas of the Society of Jesus performed continuously on Jesuit stages between 1604/07 and the suppression of the order. They systematically researched, copied and digitized, and created the first bibliographic records of such Japanese dramas. References to more than 280 such dramas and 122 German-language programmes (“Periochen”) have now been digitized. The dramas relate violent episodes from the history of the order and its missions but adapt their protagonists to fit the model of the Christian martyr, while drawing on Japanese culture as a heathen foil. The Jesuit *Japonica* may be assigned to two large spheres in the dichotomy between mirrors of virtue and vice: The first group is the ruler dramas, which are meant to serve as a deterrent (*deterreere*). The rulers (and often also their court) function as negative examples illustrating that becoming a slave to one’s emotions and lusting after power as well as focusing on transitory goods leads to ruin. The martyr dramas, which make up around two-thirds of the entire corpus, on the other hand, incite (*incitare*) the audience to active faith by staging the protagonists as heroic models who demand *imitatio*. The most prominent and quantitatively dominant representatives are Japanese converts to Christianity who heroically give up their lives for their faith. The foreign heroes demonstrate their *constantia* on the classical heroic proving grounds of war, love, and death, and their agonizing death is stylized into a glorious victory (*victor quia victima*). In addition, there are also more modest examples of human virtue in which morally exemplary behaviour invites imitation in friendship and family dramas.

In an independent study, Aurnhammer investigated *Montezuma* (1755), the *tragedia per musica* of the conquest of Mexico, written in French by Frederick II of Prussia before being translated into an Italian libretto by his court poet Giovan Pietro Tagliazucchi and set to music by his court conductor Carl Heinrich Graun. The study demonstrated how Friedrich employs a dual perspectivism and typological characterization techniques as his main strategies in the tragedy for glorifying the exotic protagonist and, even more, his female companion as heroes. Montezuma, for example, is idealized as an enlightened ruler in opposition to the Machiavellian foil Cortéz and elevated to the status of a stoic martyr in a tragic martyr–tyrant model; at the same time, his bride Eupaforice is heroized successively as a virago and attains classical greatness by taking her own life. The New World hence represents the humanistic values of European antiquity in Friedrich’s *Montezuma*, whereas the Spanish conquistadors are dehumanized as unscrupulous, ambitious, and greedy power politicians.

The international conference “Foreign Heroes on European Stages, 1600–1900” (2014) and a resulting collection of essays (Aurnhammer, Korte 2017) afforded a more comprehensive view of the points of intersection between the heroic and the foreign.

By means of its dual focus on negotiations of the heroic on the one hand and their overlaps with figurations of the ‘foreign’ on the other, the project group succeeded in supplementing and throwing new light on recent studies on aspects of the *heroic play*. In regard to previously existing studies as well, such as those on issues like colonization or cultural contact with the Orient, the project group managed to elucidate not just how such developments impact constructions of the heroic but also how they are negotiated with the help of heroic figurations.

### Publications of the Project Group

- Aurnhammer, A. / Korte, B. (eds.) 2017: Fremde Helden auf europäischen Bühnen 1600–1900 (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 5), Würzburg [also: “Einleitung”, pp. 9–19.]
- Aurnhammer, A. 2017: Friedrich II. “Montezuma” (1755) – ein aztekischer Anti-Machiavell, in: A. Aurnhammer / B. Korte (eds.), Fremde Helden auf europäischen Bühnen 1600–1900 (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 5), Würzburg, pp. 145–164.
- Döpfert, M. 2017: *Miles Japonus et Christianus*. Japanische Märtyrer im barocken Jesuitentheater, in: A. Aurnhammer / B. Korte (eds.), Fremde Helden auf europäischen Bühnen 1600–1900 (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 5), Würzburg, pp. 49–70.
- Hansen, C. 2017: “This borrow’d shape”: Barbarische Fremdheit und heroische Täuschung in Elkanah Settle’s “The Conquest of China, by the Tartars” (1676), in: A. Aurnhammer / B. Korte (eds.), Fremde Helden auf europäischen Bühnen 1600–1900 (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 5), Würzburg, pp. 91–108.
- Hansen, C. [probably 2018]: Gendering Fear. Transformations of Courage and Masculinity in Heroic Drama, in: C. Bahr / M. Mommertz / A. Schlüter [et al.] (eds.), Tracing the Heroic Through Gender (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 8), Würzburg.
- Hansen, C. 2014: Staging Admiration in John Dryden’s “Indian Emperour, or the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards” (1667), in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen, Special Issue 1: Languages and Functions of the Heroic, pp. 47–53, DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2014/QM/06.
- Korte, B. 2017: John Drydens “Amboyna”: Verfremdungen des Heroischen im Kontext des Welthandels, in: A. Aurnhammer / B. Korte (eds.), Fremde Helden auf europäischen Bühnen 1600–1900 (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 5), Würzburg, pp. 109–126.
- Korte, B. 2016: Konzeptionen des Heroischen bei Shakespeare, in: Shakespeare Jahrbuch 152: Shakespeares Helden und Heldinnen, Bochum, pp. 11–29.
- Korte, B. 2015: Aphra Behn’s “The Widow Ranter”: Theatrical Heroics in a Strange New World, in: Anglia 133, Heft 3, pp. 435–451, DOI 10.1515/Anglia-2015-0040.
- Lechner, D. 2016: “And am I thus rewarded?” The Rejected Hero and the Raped Heroine in Mary Pix’s “Ibrahim”, in: Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik 64, Heft 4, pp. 367–383, DOI: 10.1515/zaa-2016-0035.