

Editorial

S'il n'y a de l'héroïsme que dans l'action, il n'y a de héros que dans et par la parole.

Maurice Blanchot: *Le Héros*

Since Antiquity, heroic figures such as Heracles, El Cid or Joan of Arc have held a central role in the context of cultural imagination and experience. By embodying the values and ideals of a society as an identifying figure, they encourage emulation and possess an integrating function that facilitates social cohesion. At the same time they are often the subject of vigorous debate on how they are to be qualified, interpreted and evaluated. Joan of Arc, for example, was not only regarded as a heroine and martyr during her lifetime but also accused of heresy. It was not until the 19th century that she became a national hero and in the 20th century she was ultimately canonized. When examining how cultures protractedly deal with heroines and heroes, traditions and continuities appear opposite transformations and radical changes, processes of heroization alongside those of deheroization.

The various communicative mediums in addition to the arts play a considerable part in the construction as well as the deconstruction of heroic figures. In their intermediary function, they establish the contact between heroes and their audience by reporting on both the deeds and the sacrifices of the heroic figures. Through this form of preservative mediation, the heroic is kept up-to-date for cults and rituals, for individual and collective memory. That these communicative modes and the arts can also preserve the glory of a personality after their death is a fact emphasized by Ovid, for example, at the end of his *Metamorphoses*. In underlining the relevance of his own poetry, this versifying maker of heroes points out – taking Caesar's posthumous reputation into consideration – that he has authored a work “that fire and sword, Jupiter's fury and the gnawing tooth of time cannot destroy.”

Spanning across cultures and time periods the third issue of *helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal on Cultures of the Heroic* deals with different medial strategies of heroization. The topics range chronologically from the Late Middle Ages to

the 21st century and geographically from South America to the former Soviet Union and contemporary Russia. Among the questions that the contributions from the fields of literary studies, visual culture studies and history address, central is how the diverse forms of heroization in mediums of oral, textual, visual, sculptural, musical, cinematographic or medially hybrid presentation can be described. In addition, these contributions make individual strategies in their analyses comprehensible. Further consideration is also given to the extent to which specific modes, arts or genres were especially suited for heroization processes in the different historical contexts as well as whether or not individual objects or artifacts were even directly part of the creation of heroic semantics. Lastly, the contributions here take into account phenomena such as the inter-medial dimension in the construction of the heroic, the different contexts of its dissemination and reception, and its didactic representation in museums.

Tilman Moritz examines in his contribution the self-heroizing intention in the letters of the Franconian knight Philipp von Hutten. In these letters, von Hutten reports on his experiences as a member of a Welser expedition to Venezuela in the mid-16th century. In addition to the textual heroization strategies the analysis focuses on the possibilities and boundaries of the posthumous integration of this exceptional figure into the family memory.

Christina Posselt-Kuhli elucidates in her article the link between the representation of German rulers in the 17th century and their characterizations as patrons and collectors of art. In choosing the examples of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, prince-elector Frederick Wilhelm of Brandenburg and others, she analyzes from a trans-medial perspective artistic processes of stylizing sovereigns as “heroes of art.”

Isabelle Chariatte identifies in her literary studies approach figurations and transfigurations of the heroic within the *culture mondaine* of the French 17th century. Through a contrastive reading of texts by Madeleine de Scudéry, La Rochefoucauld and de Méré, traditions as well as profound changes in literary heroization strategies in the *siècle classique* become recognizable.

Christina Posselt-Kuhli and **Jakob Willis** turn to two further prominent artists from the French classical period, Molière and Pierre Mignard. In their article they analyze an array of intermedial heroization techniques which can be seen on the text-image level in the poem “La Gloire du Val-de-Grâce” as well as in the engravings from the original publication of 1669. As an introduction they offer some general remarks on the phenomenon of medial heroization.

Nikolas Immer and **Maria Schultz** in their contribution examine the different forms and functions of heroizing Theodor Körner in the 19th and 20th centuries. Using a series of poetic and belletristic texts, pictorial representations, and the cinematic rendition of his vita they trace – starting with Körner’s own poetry – the multi-faceted history of this heroic figure’s medial portrayal and his political-ideological appropriation.

Robert Lukenda examines in his article the medial portrayal of another heroic figure from the 19th century – that of the Italian “hero of two worlds,” Giuseppe Garibaldi. Expressly taking into account the historical contexts with regard to identity and media at the transition to political modernity, the making of this potent heroic legend is reconstructed while asking questions as to its fictionality and facticity as well as its self-marketing and utilization.

Kristina Offterdinger discusses in her contribution the stylization of Leningrad as a hero’s city in West and East German as well as Soviet travel guides from the 1950s to the 1980s. She determines which medial practices were used to heroically mythologize the city space with its numerous memorial sites. In addition, she examines the significance of the different production and reception contexts of the travel guides.

Ulrike Zimmermann in her article takes a look at the posthumous heroization of the English clockmaker John Harrison from a literary and cultural studies perspective. In the early 18th century Harrison invented the marine chronometer thereby solving the problem of precisely determining a ship’s longitude. In an analysis of how Harrison is remembered in literature, mass

media and museum, a picture emerges of the different heroizing practices from the recent past and the immediate present.

Reinhard Nachtigal discusses in a comprehensive literature review the biographies of the generalissimo Alexander Suvorov (1730–1800) that appeared between 2000 and 2014 on the Russian book market. In addition to the medial strategies of heroization, he elaborates on how writing the histories of heroes – influenced both nationally and nationalistically – is currently pursued with a particular function in mind.

Carolyn Bahr elucidates from a musicological perspective the staging of Giacomo Meyerbeer’s opera *Die Hugenotten*, which premiered on June 15, 2014, at the Staatstheater Nürnberg. In her review she discusses the circumstances in reviving this forgotten piece and addresses questions regarding the (de)heroizing functions of dramaturgy, production and musical performance.