Gendering Fear

Heroic Figurations and Fearful Imagination in Restoration Drama

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In European cultures, concepts of the heroic are closely interrelated with concepts of fear. Fear, to different degrees, is something the hero or heroine not only experiences, but – as a transgressive and perplexing figure – might also inspire. Variously, critics have assumed that a climate or background of collective fear is one of the potential factors associated with the cultural production of and demand for heroic figures. Fear, moreover, intersects with frameworks of awe and admiration, with the poetics of tragedy and the pathetic, and is thus closely linked to the shifting aesthetic paradigms within which heroic figures are (re)shaped. Yet, instead of proposing an essentialist explanation of how fear functions within a cultural syntax of heroic figurations, my essay will adopt an emphatically historical perspective by outlining how cultural negotiations of the heroic in Restoration England made use of contemporary concepts of fear and fearlessness. Focusing on the intersection of heroic concepts with the shifting poetics of the stage, it will single out a distinctive and – as will be argued – crucially important aspect: the interrelation of fear and imagination.[1] In line with the concept of gender as a 'tracer',[2] it will be suggested to use the category of gender, and the relationality it implies, to lay bare the entanglements of fear and fearful imagination with constructions of (heroic) exceptionality.

To that end, samples from prototypical English royalist drama of the early 1670s – John Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* and *Tyrannick Love* – will be compared to plays of the early 1680s, most importantly, Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, which under the impression of political and aesthetic crisis already exemplify a strong drift towards pathetic tragedy. Understanding the later Stuart stage as a key site of 'cultural negotiations' in Stephen Greenblatt's sense,[3] I will show how fear, in its imaginative dimension, and its gendering in particular, is exploited in dramatic negotiations of the heroic. As Restoration drama moves from representing heroic

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1 As has recently been demonstrated by Andreas Bähr, this interrelation is essential to the Early Modern discourse on fear (Furcht und Furchtlosigkeit: Göttliche Gewalt und Selbstkonstitution im 17. Jahrhundert [Berliner Mittelalter- und Frühneuzeitforschung; 14], Tübingen 2013).

2 The methodological background is detailed in Monika Mommertz, Theoriepotentiale 'ferner Vergangenheiten': Geschlecht als Markierung/ Ressource/ Tracer, in: L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft 26, Issue 1 (2015), 79–97.

3 Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England, Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA 1988.

courage to investigations of fear and cowardice, gender is used to re-evaluate heroic agency, and to reshuffle the poetics of admiration, pathos and pity.

While fear appears to be a universal human emotion, situated in the limbic system, fear in human societies has always been subject to cultural encodings and semantic interpretations. Fear is applied to ideas of human nature, to the legitimation of political organisation, and the relation of humankind to conceptions of the Divine – making the cultural history of fear, as Hartmut Böhme phrased it, not so much a history of reason and emotion but rather a history of politics.[4] While Jean Delumeau's study *La Peur en Occident* (1978),[5] rooted in a history of mentality, has drawn attention to fear as a focal point of Early Modern European culture, more recent research has highlighted how negotiations of fear in the seventeenth century were positioned within central discourses of cultural and social norms. In that context, cultural interest was not so much in quantitative experiences of fear than in qualities, attempting to distinguish acceptable, righteous fear from fear as a destructive, mentally dislocating and enslaving power.[6] In later seventeenth-century England, fear was discussed extensively in philosophical studies on the 'passions' (such as Robert Burton, or later Thomas Willis), in sermons, political treatises and in historical writings. Obviously, fear functions as a key point in the anthropology and political theory of Thomas Hobbes, famously characterising the state of nature as one of "continuall feare"[7] which is to be monopolised and legalised by the sovereign. Hobbes even envisaged himself – prominently enough, in the opening passage of his *Vita* – as being born a twin to fear: "And hereupon it was my Mother Dear / Did bring forth Twins at once, both Me, and Fear."[8] This image is striking not least for its very explicit gendering: Fear, brought into the world by a woman, induces a fundamental change of the human condition, on the notion of original sin or Pandora's box.

4 Hartmut Böhme, Vom Phobos zur Angst. Zur Begriffs- und Transformationsgeschichte der Angst, in: Michael Harbsmeier / Sebastian Möckel (Ed.), Pathos, Affekt, Emotion. Transformationen der Antike, Frankfurt am Main 2009, pp. 154–184, here p. 174.

5 Jean Delumeau, La Peur en Occident (XIV.–XVIII. siècles): Une Cité Assiégée, Paris 1978.

6 This is analysed in detail in Bähr, Furcht and Furchtlosigkeit (Fn. 1); see also William G. Naphy / Penny Roberts (Ed.), Fear in Early Modern Society (Studies in Early Modern European History), Manchester 1997.

7 Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan I.13, Revised student edition, Ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge 1996, p. 89. Hobbes draws on Cicero's description of the barbarous (De Inventione I.2), but, decisively, inserts the concept of 'fear'.

8 Thomas Hobbes, The Life of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury. Written by Himself in a Latine Poem, London 1680, p. 2; Thomas Hobbes, Opera philosophica quæ latine scripsit omnia, 5 Vols., Vol. 1., London 1839, pp. LXXXIII–XCIX, here p. LXXXVI. On fear in Hobbesian philosophy, see Andreas Bähr, Die Furcht vor dem Leviathan. Furcht und Liebe in der politischen Theorie des Thomas Hobbes, in: Saeculum 61, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 73–97; id., Furcht und Furchtlosigkeit (Fn. 1), pp. 100–120; and Christopher Tilmouth, Passion's Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester, Oxford 2007, pp. 213–371, who also deals with the legacy of Hobbesian thought in Restoration libertinism.

While the historical situation of seventeenth-century England – characterised by violent confessional oppositions, regicide and civil war – might have fostered a preoccupation with fear, the Restoration settlement of 1660 proved anything but an exhaustive answer. It goes almost conspicuously unchallenged that the plays of the Restoration stage were set to reflect a "traumatised society",[9] with "deep-seated and unresolved anxieties",[10] shaped by "a traumatic *collective* experience"[11] and the "[f]ear of being thrown again into the maelstrom of such a war",[12] which "haunted the Restoration age".[13] As these issues became ever more explosive within the changing political frameworks of the 1670s and 1680s, the heroic was caught in a crossfire of fictions of state on the one hand and countermemorial efforts on the other. An emerging literary culture was a key element in both (re-)scripting royal power and negotiating human exceptionality: The public theatres, which had been closed during the Commonwealth and were re-opened in 1660, and especially the Heroic Play, proved a central instrument – not least as theatricality was perceived as a perplexingly dominant constituent of political culture, pointing – as Mita Choudhury states – to a "larger, more expansive landscape of irrepressible performativity that extends from within to beyond the theatre".[14]

Political Fearlessness: The Conquest of Granada

My first test case, Dryden's two-part *Conquest of Granada* – first staged by the King's Company in 1670 and 1671, and printed in 1672 – self-confidently presents itself as the defining example of the Heroic Play, a sub-genre of serious drama which enjoyed a short boom of popularity on the Restoration stage.[15] Implementing the spectacular visual artifice the new playhouses provided, the Heroic Play could be described as

9 Anne Hermanson, The Horror Plays of the English Restoration, Farnham 2014, p. 33.
10 Ibid.
11 Jonathan Scott, England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context, Cambridge 2000, p. 163.
12 Susan Staves, Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration, Lincoln, NE [et. al.] 1979, p. 1.
13 Kevin Sharpe, Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714, New Haven, CT [et al.] 2013, p. 35.
14 Thus Mita Choudhury, Interculturalism and Resistance in the London Theater, 1660–1800: Identity, Performance, Empire, Lewisburg, PA, 2000, p. 17. See John Spurr, England in the 1670s. 'This Masquerading Age' (A History of Early Modern England), Malden, MA [et al.] 2000; Elaine McGirr, Heroic Mode and Political Crisis, 1660–1745, Newark, DE 2009; Paula R. Backscheider, Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England, Baltimore/London 1993; Matthew Jenkinson, Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II, 1660–1685 (Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Society History; 9), Woodbridge 2010.
15 John Dryden, The Conquest of Granada, in: The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 11: Plays: The Conquest of Granada. Marriage à-la-mode. The Assignation, ed. by John Loftis [et al.], Berkeley, CA 1978, pp. 1–218.

> a kind of grand opera without music, a splendid artifice in which monarchs, nobles, and generals of astonishing virtue or evil endured momentous conflicts of love and honour while nations quaked and audiences admired the magnificence of the thought, language, scenes, and costumes.[16]

Set against the background of the fall of Moorish Granada to the Spanish, Dryden's play focuses on the conflicts between the factions of the Abencerrages and the Zegrys during the final days of the Moorish court. Almanzor, the central hero of the play, fights in service to Boabdelin, king of the Moors. Insistently, he is presented as courageous, fierce, bold, fearless, and brave: "Vast is his Courage; boundless is his mind".[17] This corresponds to Dryden's almost apologetic presentation of his character in the dedication of the play, where he claims that "I have formed a Heroe, I confess, not absolutely perfect, but of an excessive and overboiling courage, but *Homer* and *Tasso* are my precedents."[18] Almanzor's infinite courage is thus traced back to the epic paradigm, that is, to more recent aesthetic contexts in which fear is prototypically used to differentiate between the fearless Christian hero and his opponent, the fearful Heathen.[19] Emphatically, Dryden relates the fearlessness of the hero to questions of genre: Unfailing courage is tied to the reappropriation of epic heroism in the Heroic Play, which aims to bypass the aesthetics of tragedy in favour of admirative frameworks, and, as Chua phrases it, "anchors political obligation in the idealistic, literary idiom of the courtly romance".[20]

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16 Richard W. Bevis, English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660–1789, London 1988, p. 40. For general discussions of Heroic Drama, see Derek Hughes, Dryden's Heroic Plays, Lincoln, NE 1981; id., English Drama, 1660–1700, Oxford 1996; Susan J. Owen, Restoration Theatre and Crisis, Oxford 1996; Nancy Klein Maguire, Regicide and Restoration: English Tragicomedy, 1660–1671, Cambridge 1992; John Douglas Canfield, Heroes and states. On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy, Lexington, KY 2000; Brandon Chua, Ravishment of Reason: Governance and the Heroic Idioms of the Late Stuart Stage, 1660–1690 (Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650–1850), Lewisburg, PA 2014, pp. 111–129.

17 Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part I, I.i, l. 253.

18 Ibid., p. 6.

19 For medieval epics, this is demonstrated in detail by Annette Gerok-Reiter, Die Angst des Helden und die Angst des Hörers. Stationen einer Umbewertung in mittelhochdeutscher Epik. in: id. / Sabine Obermaier (Ed.), Angst und Schrecken im Mittelalter. Ursachen, Funktionen, Bewältigungsstrategien (Das Mittelalter; 12, 1), Berlin 2007, pp. 127–143. Fearlessness, of course, is also characteristic of the heroic characters of Corneille; the influential paratexts to *Nicomède*, for instance, characterise the protagonist as "un prince intrépide, qui voit sa perte assurée sans s'ébranler" (an intrepid prince, who unshakenly foresees his ruin). (Pierre Corneille, Nicomède, in: Œuvres Complètes, Vol. 2, ed. by Georges Couton. Paris 1984, pp. 637–712, here p. 643). All English translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own. On this play, see Jakob Willis, Emotions and Affects of the Heroic. An Analysis of Pierre Corneille's Drama Nicomède (1651), in: helden. heroes. héros. Special Issue 1, 2014: Languages and Functions of the Heroic, pp. 24–35. DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2014/QM; and more generally, André Stegmann, L'Héroïsme cornélien, 2 Vols., Paris 1968.

20 Chua, Ravishment of Reason (Fn. 16), p. 111. On genre and tragic theory, see Eric Rothstein, Restoration Tragedy. Form and the Process of Change, Westport, CT 1978, pp. 3–23;

Against the backdrop of a disintegrating, allegedly 'effeminate' Moorish court, Almanzor's exceptional courage appears as decisively masculine. Significantly, he is introduced as a stranger of unknown birth, a status which implies that he does not acknowledge any worldly or divine authority. This becomes most obvious in the much-quoted passage of the opening act, where Almanzor declares to be "as free as Nature first made man / 'Ere the base Laws of Servitude began / When wild in woods the noble Savage ran",[21] associating heroic valour and savage masculinity with a notion of residual otherness. Moreover, Almanzor rejects majestic splendour as "Pomp and greatness",[22] insisting instead to be a "private man"[23] guided by nothing but his sense of honour. His exceptionality is also reflected in the cosmic imagery exploited in the play: Almanzor, as Abenamar observes, "moves excentrique, like a wandring star; / Whose Motion's just; though 'tis not regular":[24] As opposed to the symbolism of the sun, or more generally fixed stars which were conventionally used to represent kingship, these images underscore the exceptional status but also the irregularity, and lacking predictability, of the heroic figure.

While Dryden hence construes Almanzor as an Achillean figure outside political legitimation, with human imperfections and an excessive emotionality in particular, he is not characterised by episodes of fear. On the contrary, he unequivocally discredits fearfulness, warning against its potential for mental dislocation and loss of honour, and declares other alleged virtues such as modesty to be little more than symptoms of dishonourable fear. An unbroken enthusiasm for military action is put forth as the quintessence of his heroic status:

> The minds of Heroes their own measures are,
> They stand exempted from the rules of War.
> One Loose, one Sallye of the Heroes Soul,
> Does all the Military Art controul.
> While tim'rous Wit goes round, or foords the shore;
> He shoots the Gulph; and is already o're:
> And, when th'Enthusiastique fit is spent,
> Looks back amaz'd at what he underwent.[25]

In this passage, the mindset of the hero is rendered as an image of crossing a chasm, which is revealing in its implications of space and time. Timorous wit, a

more recently, Zenón Luis-Martínez, The Motives of Tragedy, 1677–1682. Theory and Practice, in: Pilar Cuder-Domínguez (Ed.), Genre in English Literature, 1650–1700: Transitions in Drama and Fiction, Amherst, NY 2014, pp. 101–147.

21 Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part I, I.i, ll. 207–209. See on the status of the 'savage' in the political imaginary of the later seventeenth century Ingo Berensmeyer, 'Angles of contingency': Literarische Kultur im England des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts (Buchreihe der Anglia; 39), Tübingen 2007, pp. 177–256; Christopher F. Loar, Political Magic. British Fictions of Savagery and Sovereignty, 1650–1750, New York, NY 2014.

22 Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part I, III.i, l. 36.

23 Ibid., Part I, IV.ii, l. 474.

24 Ibid., Part I, V.i, l. 207–208.

25 Ibid., Part II, IV.ii, ll. 11–18.

combination of fear and cultivated reason, anticipates and minimises risk.[26] The hero, by contrast, is characterised by a complete lack of anticipation: He "is already o'er", drawing from a sudden outburst of enthusiasm beyond rational modulation. Therefore, what appears as heroic courage is unveiled as a specific blindness, omitting any imagination of dangers, consequences or potential failure. Even the hero himself, when his "enthusiastic fit" subsides, marvels at what he has achieved. Heroic greatness is, thus, restricted to a retrospective view; the immediate action is perplexingly evanescent.[27]

His fearlessness comes into even sharper relief when contrasted with Ozmyn, who – being taken prisoner by the Zegry leader Selin – repeatedly articulates his fears, but claims that enduring patience is superior to courage – an attitude clearly reflecting a stoic heroism of endurance, which gained momentum as an alternative to military heroic models in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[28] It is against such inflections of heroic concepts that Almanzor's fraught relation to royal authority is examined in the play: In his state of almost 'savage' liberty, Almanzor is free from what Early Modern scholarship – following Augustine and Thomas Aquinas – discredited as *timor servilis,* slavish fear, but also of what was labelled *timor filialis*, denoting a loving, righteous fear towards a fatherly God – or the monarch as his worldly representative.[29] If one follows Victoria Kahn's assertion that such constructions of obligation implied a gendering of the docile subject as femi-

[26] Loar points out that in Davenant's discussion of poetry and government (as outlined in the *Preface to Gondibert*), 'wit' is not only used as an opposition to the aesthetics of inspiration but also as a property of civilisation (Political Magic [Fn. 21], p. 53); see also Chua, Ravishment of Reason (Fn. 16), pp. 15–22.

[27] The passage is usually read as the expression of a "somnambulistic trance of battle", highlighting the impulsiveness and irrationality of the character which might conspicuously associate him with the prototypical villain (thus, for instance, Hughes, Dryden's Heroic Plays [Fn. 16], p. 97). However, I would argue that Almanzor's transgressivity is in this passage not so much framed in terms of battle frenzy but, decisively, explained as a lack of fearful imagination.

[28] Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part I, III.i, ll. 288–293. This juxtaposition of two heroic prototypes has of course not gone unnoticed. Prominently, Mary Beth Rose (Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature, Chicago, IL [et al.] 2002) has argued that the Early Modern distinction between the heroism of action and a heroism of endurance, towards the end of the seventeenth century, is rendered as a gender difference, with the latter model achieving "sufficient prestige to become the primary model of literary heroism" (p. 86). More importantly, however, the given passage seems to map onto the poetics of heroic impact, as Selin's daughter Benzayda – revealingly, a female character – comes to praise Ozmyn's "manly suffering" (ibid., Part I, V.i, l. 75), which she claims to move her esteem, her compassion, and – ultimately – love. Benzayda's response, however, is not depicted as admirative.

[29] See Bähr, Furcht und Furchtlosigkeit (Fn. 1), pp. 79–95; id., Furcht vor dem Leviathan (Fn. 8); and Stephen Loughlin, The Complexity and Importance of Timor in Aquinas's Summa Theologiae, in: Anne Scott / Cynthia Kosso (Ed.), Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; 6), Turnhout 2002, pp. 1–16; Chua, Ravishment of Reason (Fn. 16), pp. 111–118.

nine,[30] the 'heroic' masculinity attributed to Almanzor decisively contributes to exposing this problematic status of the heroic in structures of political authority.

Conversely, both the king's decision to expel Almanzor from court (in the final act of the first part) and his decision to call him back (in the second act of the second part) are rendered within the conceptual framework of fear. He announces that "With him go all my fears"[31], but reluctantly calls him back in order to appease the disquietingly "deaf madness in a People's fear",[32] reflecting that he is "forc'd to stoop to one I fear and hate".[33] Fear and fearlessness thus paradigmatically crystallise the relational quality of the heroic figuration, and the modes of emotional projection and polarisation which processes of heroisation imply. The fearlessness of the hero both threatens established structures of order and authority and becomes indispensable to their maintenance, as it re-couples the emotionality of the hero with his audience's collective anxieties and shared emotional response: By externalising and projecting a centrifugal experience of disorder onto the fearless hero, the heroisation process consolidates an imagined community by means of exclusion.

In the play, it is only after it emerges that Almanzor is in fact the son of the Spanish Duke of Arcos, and hence a member of the Christian world, that the hero can be integrated into consolidated hierarchical structures of society. Revealingly, his duty within the victorious Spanish monarchy is then redefined as to subdue the "*Moors* in woods and mountains",[34] suggesting he is ultimately to overcome and externalise the 'savage' traits of his own identity. As he happily agrees to serve the Spanish king, the fearlessness of the stranger as a 'private man' seems to be transformed into a responsible *timor filialis,* thus domesticated into a concept of secular and (ultimately) divine authority: He might still be fearless, but is no longer to be feared.

Staging Female Fearlessness: Tyrannick Love, or The Royal Martyr

Emphatic attributions of 'female fears' and 'manly courage' are ubiquitous in Restoration drama, which uses fear to emphasise gender difference and to establish a notion of female deficiency, implying an exclusion from heroic virtue. Prototypi-

30 In particular, Kahn has drawn attention to the influence of treatises on domestic duties, love and marriage in the formation of Early Modern political theory, which decisively influenced this gendering of the political subject ('The Duty to Love': Passion and Obligation in Early Modern Political Theory, in: Representations 68, 1999, pp. 84–107); see id., Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640–1674, Princeton, NJ 2004.

31 Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part I, V.i, l. 490.

32 Ibid., Part II, I.ii, l. 64.

33 Ibid., Part II, I.ii, l. 85. This pattern of withdrawal and return is of course derived from the Achillean paradigm, prominent in the Renaissance epic (see John M. Steadman, Milton and the paradoxes of Renaissance heroism, Baton Rouge, LA [et al.] 1987, pp. 46–50).

34 Dryden, Conquest of Granada (Fn. 15), Part II, V.iii, l. 342.

cally, potential fears of the male hero are transferred onto female characters surrounding him, highlighting the dangers of the heroic venture. Fear is also used to draw attention to ephemeral, 'un-manly' frailties which a hero might articulate, but ultimately overcome. While excessive courage seems to be acceptable in male figures of early Restoration plays, true female virtue allows for, and even requires, a certain degree of fearfulness. Prominently, in his preface to *Aureng-Zebe* (1676), Dryden outlines how he has made his heroine – Indamora – beautifully virtuous, and "fearful of death".[35] Female aspirations to 'masculine' courage are usually shown as either delusive or degenerating into villainy. The fearlessness of prototypical female tyrants, as in Elkanah Settle's *Empress of Morocco* (1673), is a function of their ultimate ruthlessness, often framed as a feigned masculinity, and associated with a perverted, invariably destructive agency. Repeatedly, these characters are claimed not to deserve the name of woman. Effeminacy, on the contrary, is typical of the male villains of the Restoration stage, such as the prototypical 'Oriental' tyrants: these characters regularly experience intense episodes of fear, often culminating in madness, which prove their detachment from divine salvation.[36] In distinctive combinations with gender, fear and fearlessness are thus used to indicate to the audience how a given character should be judged.

Notions of admirable fearlessness in women are largely restricted to the martyr paradigm, which on the early Restoration stage is – suggestively – rare, one prominent example being Dryden's *Tyrannick Love, or The Royal Martyr* (first performance 1669, print 1670). This play presents Saint Catherine of Alexandria as she is subjected to martyrdom by the Roman Emperor Maximin.[37] The representation of female courage and constancy thus relies on the contrastive juxtaposition of a fearlessly triumphant martyr and a fearful male tyrant, who acts a slave to his excessive emotions. While the *Conquest of Granada* highlights the interrelations of heroic virtue and courage, the arrangement in the slightly earlier and much less acclaimed martyr play is almost complementary in structure, insistently pushes at figurations of anticipation and anxiety, and futile human endeavours to gain insights into the future. Most significantly, the play establishes a sharp contrast between Catherine's calm expectation of torture and death, and the

35 John Dryden, Aureng-Zebe, in: The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 12. Plays: Amboyna. The State of Innocence. Aureng-Zebe, ed. by Vinton A. Dearing, Berkeley, CA 1994, pp. 147-250, here p. 156.

36 In some cases, Restoration drama depicts fear as leading to conversion, as in Settle's *Ibrahim, The Illustrious Bassa* (1677).

37 John Dryden, Tyrannick Love, in: The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 10. Plays: The Tempest. Tyrannick Love. An Evening's Love, ed. by Maximilian E. Novak, Berkeley, CA 1970, pp. 105–193. While literary criticism has often rejected the play, most typically on the notion that it was compiled rather quickly and only vaguely connects ideas with dramatic structure (thus, for instance, Hughes, Dryden's Heroic Plays (Fn. 16), p. 59), Jack M. Armistead has recently argued for its re-evaluation as a "paradigm for Restoration culture at a crucial moment" (Otherworldly John Dryden: Occult Rhetoric in His Poems and Plays, Farnham 2014, p. 58).

fearful tyrant's attempts to gain control over future events – prophecies, visions, hidden signs of the future are deployed as (more or less primitive) means to control human fear. At the same time, the dramatisation of the tyrant's violent love for Catherine, the frequent allusions to her beauty and the very physical reality of torture mark her as distinctly feminine. In particular, the infatuated tyrant's gendered perspective on Catherine collides with her explicit self-perception as a Christian philosopher and martyr, and with her exceptional composure when facing death. Although she admits that "my sex is weak, my fear of death is strong",[38] fear is not so much experienced but used to rhetorically underscore her constancy and agency as she transcends a process of physical victimisation. Evidently, such unfailing piety has little in common with Almanzor's "overboiling courage": Catherine does not reject the possibility of death but proves capable of integrating anticipations of physical pain with anticipations of heavenly glory. Her fearlessness is not framed as an "enthusiastic fit" but, on the contrary, as a conscious and emphatically static condition, which is clearly indebted to (neo-) stoic ethics. She is, in addition, not guided by a private sense of honour but proves to be aware of the publicity of her suffering, claiming that she is "placed, as on a theatre, / Where all my acts to all mankind appear, / To imitate my constancy or fear".[39] Juxtaposing fear and constancy, she conveys a sense of exemplary responsibility, but also of a distinctive artificiality: By envisaging herself not so much as a human being but as a character put on stage, she establishes a sense of radical transfiguration which is characteristic of heroic and theatrical practices respectively.[40]

Experiences of fear are transferred from the saintly martyr to her mother – Felicia – and Berenice – the tyrant's wife – who has recently converted to Christianity, and is also awaiting execution. Berenice's fear is represented as a strongly physical experience of radical estrangement, especially affecting the elementary sensory system:

> Now death draws near, a strange perplexity
> Creeps coldly on me, like a fear to die:
> Courage uncertain dangers may abate;
> But who can bear the approach of certain fate?[41]

Virtuous courage, as a specific way of dealing with fear, appears limited to restricting vague imaginations, but fails to control the experience of death. Epito-

38 Dryden, Tyrannick Love (Fn. 37), IV.i, l. 521.
39 Ibid., IV.i, ll. 537–539.
40 See Daniel Weidner, Gespielte Zeugen. Der Schauspieler-Märtyrer auf dem Barocktheater, in: Silvia Horsch / Martin Treml (Ed.), Grenzgänger der Religionskulturen: kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zu Gegenwart und Geschichte der Märtyrer, München 2011, pp. 259–279. My concept of transfiguration is based on Ulf Otto, Internetauftritte. Eine Theatergeschichte der Neuen Medien, Bielefeld 2013, pp. 36–42.
41 Dryden, Tyrannick Love (Fn. 37), IV.i, ll. 472–475.

mising a lack of (heroic) resolution, the imagery employed in Berenice's speech is strikingly similar to the passage from the *Conquest of Granada* discussed above:

> As some faint pilgrim, standing on the shore,
> First views the torrent he would venture o'er;
> And then his inn upon the farther ground,
> Loth to wade through, and lother to go round;
> Then dipping in his staff, does trial make
> How deep it is, and, sighing, pulls it back;
> Sometimes resolved to fetch his leap, and then
> Runs to the bank, but there stops short again;
> So I at once
> Both heavenly faith and human fear obey;
> And feel before me in an unknown way.[42]

Berenice's "human fear", expressed as an irresolvable oscillation between anticipation and hesitation, eludes rational access much in the way Almanzor describes his own courageous heroic feat. Her fears are, however, not analysed as a property of femininity, but as a more general human attitude towards death. While she begs Catherine to save their lives, Catherine re-frames Berenice's plight as yet another extension of heaven's trial, referring her life to heavenly agency rather than her own, and rejecting the more human emotion of pity as inferior to piety.[43] In exposing Catherine's disregard for both Berenice's and her own mother's fears, the play does not only highlight the martyr's radical departure from (gendered) structures of human relatedness, but also points to the structural dynamics of pity and the complex cultural grammar of suffering and response, operating – as Katherine Ibbett shows in detail – on a spectrum of inclusion and exclusion, shared experience and consolidations of distance.[44] In an aesthetic perspective, the rejection of pity moreover links to a Corneillean rejection of tragedy in favour of an admirative model: Corneille, in the preface to *Nicomède*, highlights that his protagonist "ne cherche point à faire pitié" (does not ask for pity), thus requiring to discard the poetics of tragedy in favour of a hero "qui n'excite que de l'admiration dans l'âme du spectateur" (who excites nothing but admiration in the spectator's soul).[45] At the same time, the play's negotiations of pity and piety respectively echo key concerns of the English Renaissance epic and its characteristic depreciation of pity, in particular targeted at Elizabeth I as a female monarch. Most explicitly, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* addresses the intrusion of power into relations of pity, and its conflation with erotic attraction:

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42 Ibid., IV.i, ll. 478–488.

43 Catherine claims to be caught "betwixt my pity and my piety" (Dryden, Tyrannick Love [Fn. 37], IV.i., l. 110). The concept of piety is also highlighted in Dryden's preface to the play.

44 Katherine Ibbett, Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France, Philadelphia, PA 2017.

45 Corneille, Nicomède (Fn. 19), p. 641.

As "pity contaminates love with political servility", it "forms a particularly dangerous part of the conceptual apparatus of absolute rule".[46]

Revealingly, Berenice eventually accepts her fate, but – unlike Catherine – is saved: her suffering is not physically realised, but her suffering is her fear, serving as a trial of her virtue. At the end of the play, when Porphyrius takes the Roman crown from a dead tyrant, and Berenice agrees to become his wife, she explicitly steps back from any involvement in politics, carefully avoiding a conflation of heroic female exceptionality in the sacred sphere with concepts of political heroics. This humility, typical of female protagonists in Heroic Drama, breaks down Saint Catherine's exemplary, yet radically distanced theatrical constancy to a more relatable example of feminine virtue.

Tragedy and Cowardice in Venice Preserv'd

The political fragility of the Restoration settlement was allied with a rapid erosion of the aesthetics of Heroic Drama. Under a growing disillusionment with the restored court, and not least in reaction to dwindling theatre attendance and the resulting competitive pressure, re-arrangements of the later Stuart stage include parodies of the heroic mode, the spectacular 'horror plays', and – maybe most importantly – a 'pathetic turn' of serious drama. This transition from overt heroic ventures to depictions of human suffering corresponds with a preference for female protagonists, often orphans, widows or mothers. Around the turn of the century, these plays came to be labelled 'she-tragedies' (implying, one will note, that 'regular' tragedy is something masculine).[47] Fear, expectably, is regularly experienced by the female protagonists of these plays, such as Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680), Thomas Southerne's *Isabella, or The Fatal Marriage* (1694), Nicholas Rowe's *Fair Penitent* (1703) or William Taverner's *Faithful Bride of Granada* (1704). Notably, the protagonist in John Banks' *Vertue Betray'd, or, Anna Bullen* (1682) incessantly speaks not only of her fears, but of her need to hide these in concession to her political position: While the play strongly alludes to martyrdom, the conquest of fear is shown not to depend on courage or constancy, but on theatrical dissimulation.

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46 This is analysed in detail by Colin Burrow, Epic Romance: Homer to Milton, Oxford 1993, quote p. 125. See Cynthia Nazarian, Sympathy Wounds, Rivers of Blood: The Politics of Fellow Feeling in Spenser's *Fairie Queene* and *A View of the State of Ireland*, in: Modern Philology 113, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 331–352.

47 The term 'she-tragedy', coined by Nicholas Rowe, is notoriously underdefined, even more so as it is often seen as a transitional genre, including "anything mediating between Restoration heroic tragedy and eighteenth-century burgeois drama" (thus Paula de Pando, 'Look to Thy Self, and Guard Thy Character'. She-Tragedy and the Conflicts of Female Visibility, in: Pilar Cuder Domínguez [Ed.], Genre in English Literature, Amherst, NY 2014, pp. 149–180, quote pp. 155–156).

While the female characters of 'she-tragedy' have been a favourite of Restoration studies, it has yet to be clarified what the generic shift accomplishes within cultural negotiations of the heroic. As Luis-Martínez has pointed out, 'pathetic' is to be understood not primarily in terms of increasingly domestic and private settings, but as an aesthetic paradigm, and thus as a critical re-assessment of the dramatic languages developed in the 1660s and 1670s.[48] Again, it shall be argued that examining representations of fear, and its intersections with gender in particular, can contribute to an understanding of how exactly these changes were set – focusing on Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd or The Plot Discover'd* (1682), a play standing out not only for its success, which extends well beyond the Restoration, but also for its meta-poetic complexity.

As hardly any study of the play has failed to notice, *Venice Preserv'd* is set against the background of the 'Popish Plot', an alleged Catholic conspiracy to assassinate the king, and the Exclusion Crisis, with an emerging Whig party trying to exclude the Duke of York – the later King James II – from the succession to the throne. Otway's prologue presents the play very explicitly to "distracted times", "When we have fear'd three years we know not what / Till Witnesses begin to die o'th'rot."[49] With marked irony, the author refutes the allegation of exploiting the political situation in order to sell yet another conspiracy to the London stage. He links fear and distraction not only to the immediate contexts, but also to the more general limitations of human knowledge and to the languages of jurisdiction – aspects which, as will be argued, the play circles around obsessively.[50] Set in republican Venice, it stages a failing plot against the senate. Jaffeir, the male protagonist, is torn between loyalty to his wife, Belvidera, the daughter of a Venetian senator, and his friend Pierre, who convinces him to join the plot. Desperate Jaffeir, bound by incompatible loyalties and shaken by fears, betrays his friends, murders Pierre to save him from a public execution and kills himself on the spot. Belvidera dies in madness.

Otway's dramatic interest in fear is clearly prefigured in his principal source, César Vichard de Saint-Réal's treatise *A Conspiracy of the Spaniards Against the State of Venice*, which was translated into English as early as 1675.[51] Although the

48 Zenón Luis-Martínez, 'Seated in the Heart': *Venice Preserv'd* between Pathos and Politics, in: Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research 23, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 23–42, here pp. 25–27.

49 Thomas Otway, Venice Preserved, ed. by Malcolm M. Kelsall, London 1969, Prol. 1, pp. 3–4.

50 Jessica Munns has traced the appeal of conspiracy narratives to their "combination of the probable – testimonies, evidences, eyewitness accounts – and the wildly improbable" (Restoration Politics and Drama: the Plays of Thomas Otway, 1675–1683, Newark, DE [et al.], 1995, p. 171). On the political background, see Peter Hinds, 'The Horrid Popish Plot': Roger L'Estrange and the Circulation of Political Discourse in Late Seventeenth-Century London, Oxford 2010. Owen's seminal "Restoration Theatre and Crisis" (Fn. 16) examines the impact of the Exclusion Crisis for the dramatic production of the later Stuart Stage.

51 César Vichard Abbé de Saint-Réal, A Conspiracy of the Spaniards against the State of Venice, out of French, London: Printed by J. D. for Richard Chiswel 1675.

author's interest is not explicitly fear – or the heroic – the text brings into focus models of human exceptionality, as well as the mechanisms of fearful imagination in this context. At the very beginning, Saint-Réal outlines how the exceptionality of ambitions to overthrow a government – for which there is "no comparison, either for the danger, or the difficulty"[52] – requires exceptionality in all men involved: "Amongst all Humane Enterprizes, Conspiracies are certainly of greatest consequence; for Courage, Prudence and Fidelity, being equally requisite to every Member, are Qualities rare in themselves, therefore much more rarely found to concur in single persons".[53] More specifically, he points out that a conspiracy has to rely on passionate commitment rather than rational considerations alone: Should the conspirator be a man of judgement and prudence, he is "apter to fall into the contemplations of the great hazard to which he is exposed":[54] A leader thus need not only consider practical matters, but "ought to have as serious and equal regard even to the Panick Fears, and the most airy Imaginations that may occur".[55] Jaffeir, who is to become Otway's central character, is characterised as a man of exceptional bravery, who nevertheless cannot rise up to the imaginative anticipations of extreme violence he comes to associate both with the success of the plot and its discovery, leaving him in a state of desperate irresolution.[56]

Incorporating Saint-Réal's material into the gendered structures of fear in drama, and the equally gendered patterns of heroic agency and victimisation, *Venice Preserv'd* can be read as a play both on feminised fears and failing courage, commenting on the fearless virtue of Dryden's heroes as well as the poetic and aesthetic paradigms they stand for. In the opening acts, Jaffeir's resolution to join the conspiracy is rendered as distinctly masculine: Jaffeir asserts that he will be a 'man' as opposed to a coward or traitor,[57] insisting that fearful imagination is a female deficiency.[58] In addition, the conspirators rely heavily on the background of a corrupt and degenerate, 'effeminate' Venetian government, against which they cast themselves as men of "high calling",[59] "separated by the Choice of

52 Ibid., p. 4.
53 Ibid., p. 3.
54 Ibid., p. 4.
55 Ibid., p. 5. Imagination is, however, not only perceived as destructive, but also as a means of (re-)gaining resolution: "The firmest Resolution Man's Nature is capable of, springs for the most part from the strongest Imagination of the Danger he is to Incur, by Vertue of which Imagination, The Soul in the end becomes familiar with the Circumstances of that Danger, how frightful soever it might seem at first sight, after Duty considered" (ibid., p. 93).
56 Ibid., pp. 90–91.
57 Otway, Venice Preserved (Fn. 49), II., ll. 188–191.
58 He thus asserts that "Women have fantastick Constitutions" (ibid., III.ii, l. 281), while Pierre derides the "feminine Tale" that seems to have frightened Jaffeir (ibid., III.ii, l. 223). Later, however, Jaffeir acknowledges "Prophetick truth" in Belvidera's imaginations (ibid., IV.i, l. 69).
59 Ibid., II., l. 223.

Providence, From the gross heap of Mankind".[60] However, it becomes obvious that such appropriations of a heroic habitus are tinged with fears, most especially as Jaffeir, the outsider, is introduced at the last minute: While the conspirators find him to show signs of distraction, interpreted as fear, and thus suggest to dispose of him, Pierre – in a textbook example of dramatic irony – defends him ardently, arguing in particular that suspicion itself reveals cowardice.

Structurally, the conspirators' fears seem to reflect the fear of the ruthless tyrant as associated with more or less undefined premonitions of conscience. However, while the fearful tyrant leaves little doubt about his non-heroic and fundamentally un-tragic status and is strongly gendered as effeminate, Otway's play significantly lacks such unfailing signals to the audience: It becomes largely impossible to decide whether someone is a hero, a villain, an anti-hero, a failing hero or none of the above. Instead, 'hero' as a lexical item is transferred to the subplot, organised around the ludicrous Venetian senator Antonio and his preferred prostitute, which rather obviously subverts any notion of heroic masculinity. As the play comes to dismantle established concepts of the heroic, it focuses, instead, on the question of who is honest, who is a friend and who is a coward, and, more importantly, on the question of how notions of honesty, loyalty or cowardice can be translated into reliable evidence. This is reflected in the speech acts used by the protagonists throughout the play – including confessions, promises, oaths and passionate professions of friendship and love – which are easily discerned as feeble means to control fearful imagination. This struggle for reliability is also indicated by the characters' increasing preoccupation with labels and categories (like honesty, honour, nobility, cowardice or villainy) – in line with Canfield's diagnosis of a "total breakdown of language".[61] Finally Jaffeir, desperate about having been called a coward, asks Belvidera to judge whether he is one or not.[62] As one can hardly conceive of a

60 Ibid., II., ll. 224–225.

61 Thus Canfield, Heroes and States (Fn. 16), p. 101.

62 Otway, Venice Preserved (Fn. 49), IV, ll. 446–449. It might be argued that concepts of fear and reliability even pervade the image of the dog, which Derek Hughes (Human Sacrifice on the Restoration Stage: The Case of 'Venice Preserv'd', in: Philological Quarterly 88, Issue 4, 2009, pp. 365–384) has interpreted as a joint symbol of submission and aggression: Thomas Willis' *Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes* uses the dog as an example of instinctive, slavish fearfulness (Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes which is that of the vital and sensitive of man. The first is physiological, shewing the nature, parts, powers, and affections of the same. The other is pathological, which unfolds the diseases which affect it and its primary seat; to wit, the brain and nervous stock, and treats of their cures: with copper cuts. By Thomas Willis doctor in physick, professor of natural philosophy in Oxford, and also one of the Royal Society, and of the renowned college of physicians in London. Englished by S. Pordage, student in physick. London 1683, here p. 37; original Latin publication 1672), but also points out how a dog "knows a Man at a great distance; if he be a Friend, he runs to him and fawns on him; If an Enemy and fearful, he barks at him or flies at him, but if armed or threatning him, he flyes away from him" (ibid., p. 39) – a conception which seems to be echoed in Otway's characters' hopeless attempts to pinpoint 'true' nature and loyalties.

hero like Dryden's Almanzor to be in need of such external affirmation, Otway's play is venturing rather far from the notion that "the minds of heroes their own measures are". Instead, the very act of 'measuring' seems to converge with a transforming culture's increasing reliance on calculable patterns and codifications as well as a growing mercantile ethos as invoked in the play, ultimately pointing to a more general cultural divestment in the heroic.[63] The preoccupation with reliability and contingency is, moreover, reflected in various allusions to juridical languages, ranging from concepts of evidence and witnessing to oaths and acts of confession, which lead into the court scene of the fourth act, the employment of torture to extract confessions and the public execution as an act of institutionalised justice.[64] In Otway's play, this is, however, juxtaposed with the imaginative dimension of fear as the Venetian court tries to extort a confession for a crime which never comes to materialise: As Venice is "preserv'd", the play's action is virtually reduced to intentions and contentions, with the notable exception of murder and suicide at the very end.

As the enthusiastic heroic venture of infinite courage and agency is substituted by paralysing delusions of possible realities, Otway's figuration zooms in on exactly what Dryden's hero leaves blank. In particular, maintaining courage as a masculine heroic virtue becomes impossible as the prototypical projection of fear onto the feminine is shown to fail. This is not only exemplified by the male characters experiencing panic fears and the metaphorical tortures of imagination, but can also be traced by looking, once more, at the female protagonist – Belvidera – and her attempts to share in male heroism. Trying to convince Jaffeir to let her in on his secrets, she asks him to disregard her female identity:

> Look not upon me as I am, a Woman,
> But as a Bone, thy Wife, thy Friend who long
> Has had admission to thy heart, and there
> Study'd the Virtues of thy gallant Nature;
> Thy Constancy, thy Courage and thy Truth,
> Have been my daily lesson: I have learnt them,
> Am bold as thou, can suffer or despise
> The worst of Fates for thee, and with thee share them.[65]

63 See Derek Hughes, Human Sacrifice and Seventeenth-Century Economics: Otway's 'Venice Preserv'd', in: SEDERI: Journal of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies 12, 2001, pp. 269–279, here pp. 274–278; and id., Human Sacrifice (Fn. 62).

64 As Staves has shown, oaths and vows emerged as a central topic in the late seventeenth century, resonating in public and parliamentary debate and criminal law as well as literature (Players' Scepters (Fn. 12), pp. 191–251). In addition, various studies have highlighted the importance of proof and evidence in the contemporary juridical and political discourses, especially associated with institutional violence; see Lisa Silverman, Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France, Chicago [et al.] 2001, pp. 43–45; and Bähr, Furcht und Furchtlosigkeit (Fn. 1), pp. 213–340.

65 Otway, Venice Preserved (Fn. 49), III, ll. 119–126.

In the course of the play, Belvidera comes to discard these ideas of sharing masculine courage, perceiving herself once more as a helpless victim to her fate and the tragic pretension of her 'masculine' aspirations. More importantly, the play reveals this confession to masculine courage as fatally ironic, because Jaffeir – the traitor – does not exactly prove an example of "Constancy", "Courage", and "Truth", and the nature of his heart is opaque even to himself. Belvidera's attempt at courageous heroism does not fail because she is a woman, but because she is striving to imitate a concept of heroic masculinity which does not exist.

Ultimately, what the characters are left with is not admirable agency, but pity – a concept which in itself is markedly re-gendered in Otway's play. Reflecting a Hobbesian reading of pity as 'fear for the self', it is first brought in line with fear as something despicably effeminate.[66] Finally, however, pity comes to converge even with a residual notion of nobility: When Pierre is about to be executed on the wheel, he appeals to his friend's compassion, asking to save him from suffering a criminal's death and do him "some way Justice" by killing him – supposedly, the ultimate proof of what he hints at as "Something that's Noble".[67] Strikingly, this does not only re-frame Pierre's death in competing systems of justice and honour, but Jaffeir's interference moreover disrupts the passive spectator position pity appears to imply, and that he had adopted for the largest part of the play.

Thus integrating fear and pity, Otway re-asserts tragedy from a perspective of gender.[68] In particular, the imaginative dimension of fear is related to a meta-tragic

66 Jaffeir, for example, visualizes himself as being shamefully remembered as a man who "In fond compassion to a Womans tears / Forgot his Manhood, Vertue, truth and Honour" (ibid., IV, ll. 16–17.). See Roland Weidle, Unmanning the Self: The Troublesome Effects of Sympathy in Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. A Response to Elizabeth Gruber, in: Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate 17, Issue 2–3, 2007, pp. 200–209, here p. 203. Weidle draws connections to an emerging discourse on sympathy and sensibility. See also Candy B.K. Schille, Reappraising 'Pathetic' Tragedies: *Venice Preserved* and *The Massacre of Paris*, in: Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700 12, Issue 1, 1988, pp. 33–45.

67 Otway, Venice Preserved (Fn. 49), V., l. 453; l. 450. Although Pierre relates that his friends had already honourably "dy'd like men" (ibid., V., l. 422), he begins to cry when imagining his own death on the wheel. Otway's dramaturgy seems to resonate Katherine Ibbett's argument that seventeenth-century dramatic theory increasingly distinguished self-interested instances of pity from compassion as an emotion 'plus généreux' (Pity, Compassion, Commiseration: Theories of Theatrical Relatedness, in: Seventeenth-Century French Studies 30, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 196–208; see also id., Compassion's Edge [Fn. 44], on renegotiations of pity and compassion in the seventeenth century).

68 Otway's play thus bypasses the slightly earlier, more conventionally gendered definition of tragedy in Dryden's *Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, which was prefixed to the 1679 edition of *Troilus and Cressida*: While defining tragedy on Aristotelian terms as a play "which by moving in us fear and pity, is conducive to the purging of those two passions in our minds" (John Dryden, Troilus and Cressida, in: The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 13. Plays: All for Love, Oedipus, Troilus and Cressida, ed. by Maximilian E. Novak, Berkeley 1984. pp. 217-355, here p. 229), Dryden applies gender when comparing major Elizabethan playwrights, claiming the difference to be "that *Shakespear* [sic.] generally moves more terror, and *Fletcher* more compassion: For the first had a more Masculine, a bolder and more fiery Genius; the Second a more soft and Womanish" (ibid., p. 233).

focus on human knowledge and agency. While tragic anagnorisis prototypically manifests itself by transforming fearful imagination into definite knowledge (or 'proof' in the sense of conviction), *Venice Preserv'd* structurally multiplies the moment of anagnorisis, thus reducing it to a shifting set of contingent attributions. Inversely, Belvidera's madness puts on stage a complete lack of knowledge and a reduction to a surface of radical imagination, which displays a gendered transition into categorical otherness: While Pierre is denied a death which would symbolically relate him to the martyr paradigm, Belvidera's end seems to invert the structure of the prototypical martyr play, in which the fears vanquished by the glorious protagonist are transposed onto the effeminate tyrant figure.

Conclusion

Using gender as a tracer in different generic environments of the Restoration stage, it can be shown that both generic distinctions and distinctions of gender become crucial resources for negotiations of human exceptionality. Gender and genre are interrelated in order to dis-articulate increasingly problematic heroic concepts from concepts of fear, and to refocus fear and fearlessness as a conceptual lynchpin of heroic figurations. Thus, gendered structures of fear were used to scrutinise the relational and projective mechanisms that heroic figurations seem to imply, but also to think through structures of political contract and obligation, and, not least, aesthetic emotion and theatrical relatedness.

Dryden's Almanzor, as the prototypical and prototypically masculine epic hero, seems to represent a total absence of fearful anticipation, which is related to a state of uncivilised liberty. The transgressive dimension of such exceptional courage could be shown to translate onto a much more general concern with heroic fearlessness within the framework of political authority and obligation. Staging, by contrast, an exemplary case of female martyrdom gives Dryden the opportunity to explore the impact of fear as disentangled from the unquestioned masculine courage of the epic paradigm. Obviously, many of the differences between the two plays derive directly from the opposition of the martial romance hero to the potential heroics of suffering and martyrdom, and are not immediately and exclusively a function of gender. However, the representation of a female martyr and saint, not least against the backdrop of a fearful and effeminate male tyrant, positions fear – and the conquest of fear – as a missing link between active warrior heroism and heroic martyrdom. Exploring representations of fear and heroism from the perspective of gender, *Tyrannick Love* thus points to the immense significance of martyrdom for cultural negotiations of the heroic in the later seventeenth century.

By contrast, Otway's *Venice Preserv'd,* in the aesthetic context of early 'she-tragedy', could be shown to inflect the established modes of admirative and transfigurative distance that earlier Restoration drama relied on. It does not only ex-

change admirable heroic fearlessness for human suffering, but appears to stage the very mode of exchanging, having the audience witness how aspirations to heroic courage lose ground while agency is shown to dissolve into an unsettling multitude of possibilities. Structurally implemented in the tragic peripeteia of the play as well as in its multiple anagnorises, the play revolves around the reproach of 'unmanly' cowardice and pity, pointing not only to shifting attributions of 'heroic' virtue, but also to more general aesthetic and generic considerations of theatrical effect and audience response. These, ultimately, seem to imply a more general departure from structures of legitimation based on heroic constructions. The tragic poetics of pity and fear, which early Restoration drama tried to transcend, are thus reclaimed in a pronounced disenchantment of the Heroic Play.