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Staging Admiration in John Dryden's *Indian Emperour, or the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards (1667)*

1. Heroic Drama and the Concept of Admiration

The “heroic mode” is considered a signature phenomenon of English Restoration drama. During its short episode of popularity in the 1660s and 70s, it largely replaced tragedy on the London stage. With the re-opening of public playhouses in 1660, authors sought to establish a tradition of theatre adept to the evolving tastes of the capital's nobility as well as the fragile political mood of the early Restoration.¹ However, the heroic plays of the Restoration cannot be reduced to a purely affirmative perspective: As a critical examination of the heroic as a cultural, political and aesthetic concept shows, they are a major medium for uncovering and negotiating the various mechanisms behind it. This essay dedicates particular attention to the staging of admiration as an essential strategy in this process.

According to the preface to John Dryden's drama *Indian Emperour* (first staged 1665/ print 1667), the category of admiration is central to the aesthetic effect of the heroic play:

for delight is the chief, if not the only end of Poesie: instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for Poesie only instructs as it delights. 'Tis true that to imitate well is a Poets work; but to affect the Soul, and excite the Passions, and above all to move admiration (which is the delight of serious Play) a bare imitation will not serve. (IE 5f.)²

A play's effect upon its audience thus depends on its success in exciting the passions. Dryden – coming from a defence of verse in serious drama – outlines a poetic approach of enhanced imitation, which pays respect to the Aristotelian idea of mimesis but shifts it into artistic exaggeration in order to make the performance more effective.

What is essential, however, is not the mere emotional impact of the dramatic action, but the incitement of admiration.

In contemporary psychology, admiration is defined as a “strong emotional response to extraordinarily talented, powerful, or famous people” (Heidt and Seder 4). Considered a non-basic emotion, it appears to be unique in humans and is often understood to have evolved because it provided an advantage for learning. However, in early-modern European philosophy, the concept was far less specific and commonly used in the sense of the present-day “astonishment”, that is, an emotion directed at something which is extraordinary but not necessarily evaluated as positive or exemplary.³ Most prominently, concepts of admiration were discussed in response to Cartesian ideas conceiving admiration as a purely intellectual and thus superordinate passion. Pierre Corneille transferred such paradigms to his theory of serious drama, especially in the influential *Trois Discours* (1660), but also in various dramatic paratexts such as the Examen introducing *Nicomède* (1650). Contesting Aristotelian ideas of tragedy, admiration – in its neutral sense of “astonishment” – was able to attain its central function because of its intellectual nature. The ethical function of tragedy is sustained by splitting admiration into less complex emotions: the audience's admiration thus triggers love for the heroic figure as well as a rejection of the vices causing his (or her) suffering.⁴ In spite of their moral inferiority to the hero(ine) of the play, the spectators are thus significantly involved and influenced in their own ethical decisions.

Various studies have shown how Corneillian ideas were adopted and transformed in Restoration England,⁵ where serious drama similarly started to shift away from traditional concepts of tragedy. Such developments are significantly related to ideas of heroism. However, the

specifically English transformations of Corneille's concept of admiration, and emotion in general, remain somewhat vague in present-day research. And although Dryden's plays may count among the more thoroughly researched works of heroic drama, his theatrical negotiations of admirability on the one hand and the increasingly precarious constructions of the heroic on the other are yet to be explored in detail.⁶

2. The Indian Emperour

I assume that growing discomfort with the heroic, its political instrumentalisation, and the traditional heroisms associated with the fierce, brave, hypermasculine warrior explain the preoccupation of Restoration drama with the dynamics of admiration both as a political and as an aesthetic concept. Dryden's *Indian Emperour* is not so much a play which stages a perfectly admirable character. Rather, it sets out to investigate admiration and astonishment as interrelated processes, analysing how admiration works, what it depends on, and where the concept begins to shift into less positive emotions. The *Indian Emperour* may well be considered an obvious starting-point for such an enquiry. In staging the discovery and conquest of a New World, variants of astonishment would be likely to be relevant, and the prefaces to the play indeed emphasise the greatness of its story matter.⁷ Moreover, situations of conquest have been considered test cases for heroic qualities ever since the archetypical siege of Troy, and are significantly reconsidered within emerging identities of empire.⁸

Dryden's densely compressed plot integrates the political situation of siege and conquest with private conflicts of loyalty and love. Cortez, accompanied by his commanders Vasquez and Pizarro, arrives in Mexico and is led to Montezuma's court. Montezuma, who has just chosen Almeria, daughter of this former rival, as his future queen, refuses the terms of peace offered by the intruders. As both parties leave to prepare for war, Cortez falls in love with Cydaria, the Emperor's daughter. Although the Aztecs are soon forced to retreat within the city walls, they succeed in imprisoning Cortez, and Almeria falls in love with him. When the Spanish take over the city, Montezuma is tortured by Pizarro and a Christian priest, and rescued by Cortez. Both he and Almeria flee to the tower where Cydaria is kept safe. As the Spaniards follow them there, Montezuma takes his own life, and Almeria attempts to kill her rival Cydaria as well as her-

self. Cortez arrives to save Cydaria and offers to share power with Montezuma's surviving son Guyomar and his bride. However, they choose exile instead.

While influential readings (especially Hughes' *Dryden's Heroic Plays*) of the *Indian Emperour* have focused on the heroic potential – or indeed heroic failure – of the conqueror Cortez, the Emperor himself can also be read as a figure constantly constructed and deconstructed as admirable. This is emphasised by the fact that he maintains the highest social status within the play, since the king of Spain, merely represented by Cortez, never enters the conquered world. The transfer of power from conquered to conqueror, as it is put on stage, is thus resolved into modes of representation and delegation. Montezuma's exalted status is performed by abundant instances of court ritual and ceremony, ensuring the spectators' awareness of the Emperor's social position. While Dryden generally gives very little information in stage directions, he outlines the ceremonial patterns involving Montezuma in some detail. Certainly, such forms of visual spectacle were extremely salient and attractive for a Restoration audience – and the more irritating as this exaltation throughout the play is counterbalanced with disturbing aspects. Symptomatically, practices of human sacrifice are what the audience learns first about Montezuma's court, and this is followed by various other pagan rituals and customs performed on stage.⁹ The Emperor's admirability is disturbed not least by his hopeless infatuation with Almeria, his obsession with power, and his eminent haughtiness, which he displays as if it were a desirable characteristic.¹⁰ As the drama-as-text lacks any authoritative instance that might guide the audience's judgement, no internal perspective voiced within the play can count as reliable. Most importantly, this is true of Cortez, whose continuously expressed reverence for Montezuma reveals him to be a man of illusions leading to the verge of self-deception. More generally, ideas of illusion and reliability prove central themes of the *Indian Emperour*, intersecting with a pervading awareness of artificiality.¹¹ Artificiality is a major preoccupation not only of the paratexts, which consider both the adequacy of rhymed verse and of dramatic representations of time and space, but also of the opening scene. Dryden here introduces Cortez astonished at the new world unravelled to the conquerors, but his description can also be read metapoetically, as a metaphor for the world disclosed on stage, which proves as illusional as the paradisiacal novelty of Central America.¹²

It is, however, the end of the play which proves pivotal to Dryden's negotiations of admirability. Considering aspects of heroic behaviour in defeat and victory, Dryden here shifts the perspective to the semiotic paradigm of martyrdom and uses this paradigm to evaluate the heroic potential and admirability of his characters' decisions. Montezuma's own idea of heroism in a conquest setting seems to be fairly clear at the beginning of the play; however, the Emperor tends to present himself as a victim of time, fate, or other powers beyond his influence. He asks for the whereabouts of "all my former fury" (IE I, ii, 175), observing that "[m]y Lyon-heart is with Loves toys beset, / Struggling I fall still deeper in the net" (I, ii, 182f.). While pondering on conventional warrior-type ideals of the hero, his thoughts are increasingly preoccupied with death. He announces that he would prefer death in combat as adequate to his status and concepts of dignity,¹³ but remains passive and indecisive for the largest part of the play (an element of character to be mirrored later in the parting Emperor of Dryden's *Aureng Zebe*). This passive commitment becomes most important in the racking scene of the final act, which has attracted scholarly interest mostly because of its ideas on religion (see Detering, Harris, Spurr). However, it can also be read as a scene where paradigms of (military) heroism and admirability are confronted with inflections of suffering and endurance, as related prototypically to the admirable, yet distressingly cruel image of the martyr.¹⁴

Dryden's approach to the scene is characterised by his emphasis on performance.¹⁵ Montezuma and his High Priest are tied to the racks in order to release information about the whereabouts of Aztec gold; the additional attempts to convert the Emperor to Christianity are clearly subordinated to such material interests (and substituting God for gold clearly and polemically illustrates Dryden's conception of the colonial attitudes of Catholic Spain). Dryden uncovers the mechanics of martyrdom by inverting the overall perspective – having a pagan king suffer the torture initiated by a Christian church – and by dissociating the various aspects constituting the martyr's admirability. For example, the act of testimony that is key to Christian concepts (and the etymology) of martyrdom is ironically omitted. Quite on the contrary, Montezuma refuses any forms of testimony¹⁶ and so lacks the exclusive focus on a divine afterlife which characterises Christian martyrs and for which the play does not substitute a secular equivalent: Both the riches Montezuma is tortured for and the future of his country fade against the habitus of resistance itself, which is

meant to determine his personal dignity and his political status as Emperor. Christian martyrs, by contrast, are usually unconcerned about their worldly status.

Dryden's Montezuma also differs from other martyrs in drama by his attitude towards physical suffering. While he is shown as a victim on the rack, his comments reveal little of a suffering human or an expectable physical response to pain. The intensity of torture is reflected instead in the utterances of the torturers¹⁷ and the Indian High Priest,¹⁸ who considers betrayal and, rebuked by his Emperor, dies.¹⁹ This setting allows the play to emphasise the cruelty of torture while underscoring Montezuma's failure to articulate any physical or emotional response. Although this may be interpreted as evidence of his superiority, it suggests above all that Montezuma lacks the internal conflict and effort to overcome pain and humiliation which is typical for martyrs on stage and affects their interpretation as heroic figures: Heroic figures, however exceptional, share basic physical and emotional characteristics with the common humans who admire them as hero(in)es, explicitly including the capacity for suffering (see von den Hoff et al. 8). By reducing Montezuma's human attributes, Dryden draws attention to his distance from the audience, and ultimately his artificiality. Dryden's most critical revision of the martyr paradigm is Montezuma's rescue by Cortez. The idea that Christian martyrdom is incomplete without the victim's violent death was familiar to the (Christian) audience of the play. But within the action of the play, being rescued by a benevolent conqueror also collides with Montezuma's concepts of personal dignity:

Cort. [...] Ah Father, Father, what do I endure

[*Embracing Montezuma.*]

To see these Wounds my pity cannot Cure!

Mont. Am I so low that you should pity bring,

And give an Infants Comfort to a King?

Ask these if I have once unmanly groan'd;

Or ought have done deserving to be moan'd. [...]

[*Cortez kneels by Montezuma and weeps.*]

Cort. Can you forget those Crimes they did commit?

Mont. I'll do what for my dignity is fit: [...]

You're much to blame;

Your grief is cruel, for it shews my shame,

Does my lost Crown to my remembrance bring:

But weep not you, and I'll be still a King.

(IE V, ii, 117–122, 138f., 142–145)

Importantly, Cortez does not only repudiate the behaviour of his fellow Catholic Spaniards and pity the suffering enemy, but also envisages Montezuma in the position of father. This mirrors

the paradoxical asymmetry of status between the two enemies and Cortez' conflicting ideas of loyalty, but the relevance of the father-son inversion to the idea of martyrdom as *imitatio Christi* is evident as well.²⁰

Once again, the Christological implications are limited to the audience's perspective, but Cortez' ambiguous body language, which suggests both admiration or even worship (when he kneels) as well as intimacy (when he weeps and embraces Montezuma), does not befit Montezuma's self-perception as a sovereign. On the contrary, being subject to pity radically reduces his perceived status; he rejects clemency and magnanimity as key Christian virtues. This setting, interrelating emotions and concepts of honour, aims directly at possible audience reactions. While Montezuma, suffering the brutality of a greedy and pretentious Catholic priest, should evoke compassion, the Emperor refuses any form of pity as but another variant of humiliation. Although his resistance to torture might prove him admirable, heroic admirability is alienated by his radical selfishness, which contrasts sharply with Christian ideas of humility, and the absence of expectable human responses to physical pain.

The deconstruction of the martyr pose culminates at the end of the play, where Montezuma, having been refused a martyr's death, dies at his own hand. Whereas suicide is a substantial part of classical Greek and Roman constructions of the heroic, it obviously collides with Christian interpretations of sin and is certainly incompatible with the idea of martyrdom. Contradicting the Emperor's self-perception, the audience is facing an act of highly ambiguous implications, which is accentuated by the fact that it is effectively the passive character's very first instance of active performance on stage. Substituting the martyr's death Montezuma was facing earlier, his ultimate demonstration of agency concurs with self-destruction. The character himself underlines the interdependence of the two scenes by explicitly referring to the torture he suffered earlier:

Mont. No, *Spaniard*, know, he who to Empire born,
Lives to be less, deserves the Victors scorn:
Kings and their Crowns have but one Destiny:
Power is their Life, when that expires they dye.
Cyd. What Dreadful Words are these!
Mont. -----Name life no more;
'Tis now a Torture worse than all I bore:
I'll not be bribed to suffer Life, but dye
In spite of your mistaken Clemency.
I was your Slave, and I was us'd like one;

The Shame continues when the Pain is gone:
But I'm a King while this is in my Hand, ----
[His Sword.
He wants no Subjects who can Death Command:
You should have ty'd him up, t'have Conquer'd me,
But he's still mine, and thus he sets me free.
[Stabs himself.
Cyd. Oh my dear Father! [...]
Mont. Already mine is past: O powers divine
Take my last thanks: no longer I repine:
I might have liv'd my own mishaps to Mourn,
While some would Pity me, but more would Scorn!
For Pity only on fresh Objects stays:
But with the tedious sight of Woes decays.
Still less and less my boyling Spirits flow;
And I grow stiff as cooling Mettals do:
Farewel Almeria. -----*[Dyes.]*
(IE, V, ii, 224–238, 242–250)

Montezuma's perception of death as his ally, and his view that he is still commanding a kingdom, are rather far from a martyr's humble acceptance of his fate. The moral component of a noble death, which came to be understood as essential in the seventeenth century, is conspicuously absent;²¹ instead, death is metaphorically incorporated into Montezuma's self-perception and merged with his political power. Accordingly, it follows the same rules of ritual and symbolic performance.

As in the torture scene, the layout of the suicide scene underscores the element of performance on several levels. Montezuma, Almeria and Cydaria reveal themselves to the Spaniards as well as the spectators of the play in a secluded chamber above the main stage, separated from their followers by several doors. The spatial concept of the scene thus contrasts intimacy with the publicity of a stage. In addition, the rhetorically prominent juxtaposition of viewing directions in the characters' dialogue – looking up and down – metaphorically mirrors the paradoxically entangled perspectives on the defeated enemy, integrating admiration with pity and contempt:

Alm. Look up, look up, and see if you can know
Those whom, in vain, you think to find below.
Cyd. Look up and see *Cydaria's* lost estate.
Mont. And cast one look on *Montezuma's* Fate.
(IE V, ii, 216–219)

While Montezuma and Almeria proudly insist on their superiority, they clearly assign a spectator role to their followers, who – like the actual spectators of the play in the theatre – are restricted to observation without any opportunity to interfere.²² Moreover, Montezuma's monologue as

quoted above is interrupted by comments anticipating possible audience reactions, drawing attention to the emotional dimension of the situation and therefore counterbalancing the very rational self-staging of the Emperor. The proximity to the earlier torture scene is evident, not only in the rejection of suffering and fear, but also in Cydaria’s address as “Oh my dear Father” (248), accentuating Montezuma’s double role as a sovereign and a human being entangled in human relations. Symptomatically, emotionality and fear of death in particular are not displayed by Montezuma, but shifted to his daughter, thus again externalising the inner conflict between fear and confidence typical of representations of martyrdom in drama: Cydaria’s focus is on her own helplessness as a victim, as she refers repeatedly to youth and innocence (V, ii, 257, 273 and 277) and to physical existence in general. Montezuma, on the other hand, compares his death with the consolidation of fluid metals, thus choosing a decidedly un-organic, as well as un-emotional, symbol for his existence. Finally and most explicitly, this is expressed in antithetically arranged exclamations: While Montezuma commands “Name Life no more” (V, ii, 228), Cydaria, being threatened by Almeria, pleads “O name not Death to me” (V, ii, 254), seizing Cortez’ earlier words (“Speak not such dismal words as wound my Ear: / Nor name Death to me when *Cydaria’s* there” V, ii, 220f.). This strongly gendered²³ contrast is again constitutive to the Emperor’s ambiguous admirability, which fails to be resolved at the end of the play. When Cortez finally proposes “Funeral Pomp” (V, ii, 376) for his conquered opponent, he shifts the failed understanding of father-son intimacy back to a stately performance of deference which ritually brings the reign of Montezuma to a close but also irritatingly institutionalises admiration at a point where his admirability has become most questionable.

Quoting dissociated aspects from the paradigm of martyrdom thus turns the remote Aztec Empire into an apparently familiar entity – and at the very same time highlights its fundamental deviations from a world familiar to the play’s English audience. Dryden shows how martyrdom loses its semiotic relevance once it is dissociated from the Christian paradigm that provides its meaning, and how it fades instead into irritating affinities with heroic agency, assertions of power and physical brutality. In particular, it is revealed how martyrdom, as well as the admirability of the martyr hero(ine), depends on specific, and especially rhetorical, versions of performance and how potential (emotional and intellectual) audience

reactions to suffering, torture and death are constitutively integrated into such performance processes. The *Indian Emperour* may be one of the plays that established the genre of heroic drama, but it is far from presenting an unbiased defence of the heroic: As he emphasises the artificiality of any heroic figure, Dryden enquires into the potential of theatre for presenting hero(in)es, and also into the limitations of creating hero(in)es on stage. Admiration, supposedly the intellectual passion, and acts of human admirability disintegrate into an equally elusive construction of the heroic.

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1 Book-length studies on the heroic drama include Canfield, Lehmann, Owen, McGirr, Waith, Kamm, Lowenthal, and Hughes, *English Drama*. See Berensmeyer for a comprehensive analysis of literary culture during the seventeenth century.

2 All references and quotations are taken from the 1966 edition by Alan Roper, subsequently quoted as IE (using page numbers for the prefaces and indications of act, scene and lines for the main text of the play). The importance of the *Indian Emperour* for the genesis of heroic drama has been commented on variously. Winn (150–157) holds it to be the definite work for Dryden’s positioning as an author, also with respect to his detachment from Howard; it is, however, contested in how far the early heroic plays present more affirmative perspectives on the heroic. Prominently, Hughes (*Dryden’s Heroic Plays* 58) states that the *Indian Emperour* “is the most pessimistic of the heroic plays, and one of the most pessimistic of any of the tragedies”.

3 See Meier for a broader perspective on concepts of admiration in European drama and dramatic theory, and Clarke on Corneille (esp. 76–116).

4 “Dans l’admiration qu’on a pour sa vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions, dont n’a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu’il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte. L’amour qu’elle nous donne pour cette vertu que nous admirons, nous imprime de la haine pour le vice contraire” (Examen, Couton 643).

5 Apart from the general works already cited above, see Kramer (16–62). The dedication to the *Indian Emperour* refers explicitly to Corneille: “‘Tis an irregular piece if compar’d with many of Corneilles, and, if I may make a judgement of it, written with more Flame than Art; in which it represents the mind and intentions of the Author, who is with much more Zeal and Integrity, than Design and Artifice” (IE 25f.).

6 While admiration is obviously not exclusive to constructions of the heroic, it is an essential part of the (un)making of heroes and heroines. As outlined by von den Hoff et al., heroic figures are constituted by groups of followers, and hero(in)es are not conceivable without these essentially so-

cial processes of idolisation.

7 “His [Montezuma’s] story is, perhaps the greatest, which was ever represented in a Poem of this nature; (the action of it including the Discovery and Conquest of a New World” (IE 25). The “Connexion of the Indian Emperour, to the Indian Queen” adds that Montezuma, “in the Truth of History, was a great and glorious Prince; in whose time happened the Discovery and Invasion of Mexico by the Spaniards; under the conduct of Hernando Cortez, who [...] wholly Subverted that flourishing Empire” (IE 27). Admiration is, however, not an emotion reduced to the Indian Emperour: Joseph Roach holds that “[a]stonishment is an oft-represented emotion in Restoration performance, perhaps because it was one of the most desired effects, akin to what [...] Corneille called *admiration*” (Roach 25, see also Wheatley).

8 See Brown, Lowenthal (35–75), and especially Orr, for explorations of these aspects.

9 On the use of superstition, ritual and human sacrifice see Armistead and Hughes, “Human Sacrifice”.

10 “My haughty mind no fate could ever bow” (IE I, ii, 43) is the Emperor’s reply to Almeria’s allegation of inhumanity.

11 Hughes in particular has highlighted illusion, the “disparity between Herculean aspiration and human reality”, as the major theme of Restoration drama (Dryden’s Heroic Plays, 1–2). The general artificiality of Restoration drama has also been discussed at some length; see, for instance, Roach, Powell, Wheatley, and Kamm.

12 This double reading is strengthened by the slightly irritating but structurally salient allusion to birth in the first lines: “As if our old world modestly withdrew, / And here, in private, had brought forth a new!” (IE I, i, 3f.). Surpassing mere resemblance, the new reality discovered depends on the reality beyond it. The paradisiacal appearance of such a “new” world is largely determined by the parameter of time: Cortez asserts that “Here days and nights the only seasons be” (IE I, i, 23); time, in the equatorial setting of the play, is experienced only in a continuous alternation of day and night, and any circularity of the year’s seasons is substituted by repetition. Quite obviously, this negation of change proves illusional in the destructive plot of conquest. When, at the end of the play, Montezuma’s sons choose exile in a northern *locus terribilis*, seasonal change as constructed in time is merely translated into spatial terms. See Sherman 28–35 for an outline of the heroic drama’s consistent preoccupation with change and mutability.

13 “I’le either force my Victory, or Fate; / A glorious death in arms I’le rather prove, / Than stay to perish tamely be my Love” (IE I, ii, V. 200f.).

14 While martyrdom is a central phenomenon all over early modern Europe, the English situation may be considered distinct for various reasons. Recent studies on the importance of martyrdom as a concept in early modern England include Dillon, Monta and Freeman; see also Burschel and the studies compiled in Niewiadomski and Siebenrock or Horsch and Tremel. Freeman particularly argues for a specifically English relevance of martyrdom: Both the national church and various Catholic and Protestant dissenters created competing sets of martyrs and martyrological traditions, including very recent characters; moreover, the political situation and repeated shifts in royal policy made martyrdom seem more relevant. As yet, there is little research on the negotiations of martyrdoms in dramatic texts which do not explicitly stage established martyrs, and on the interference of martyrdom with a general preoccupation of cruelty and spectacles of horror on stage (as outlined, for instance, by Marsden and Thompson). Many readings of Montezuma’s martyrdom in the *Indian Emperour* therefore tend to reduce the scene’s complexity. See, for instance, Thompson, who draws attention to the interference of torture with the racialised body,

or Brown, who shows how “Montezuma clearly evokes the royal martyrdom of immediate English history, the execution of Charles I in 1649” (72).

15 As Weidner claims, martyrdom in drama does not only reveal how martyrdom is intrinsically related to performance, but the martyr figure may itself generate specific forms of theatricality: “Nichts zeigt deutlicher als das Märtyrerdrama, wie sehr Theatralität und Darstellung dem Martyrium inhärent sind, wie aber auch die Figur des Märtyrers spezifische Formen von Theatralität generiert” (260).

16 Weidner (262) points out the importance of the confessional speech act for the semiotics of martyrdom on stage, drawing attention to the intrinsic ambiguity of confession between an act of faith and the acknowledgement of guilt.

17 See the following lines: “Fasten the Engines; stretch ‘um at their length, / And pull the streightned Cords with all your strength” (V, ii, 13f.); “Pull harder yet; he does not feel the rack” (V, ii, 21); “Increase their Pains, the Cords are yet too slack” (V, ii, 98).

18 “When will you end your Barb’rous Cruelty?” (IE V, ii, 23); “I beg to Dye” (V, ii, 24); “I faint away, and find I can no more: / Give leave, O Kind, I may reveal thy store, / And free my self from pains I cannot bear” (V, ii, 100–102). Montezuma, instead, refers to his physicality only to mock his torturers’ attempt: “Pull till my Veins break, and my Sinews crack” (V, ii, 22).

19 Dryden’s technique of splitting characters and creating symmetries of situation on stage is discussed by Sherman (22–28).

20 In addition, the scene recalls and inverts the first encounter of Montezuma and Cortez (I,ii), where the Emperor, at the height of his own power, believes the intruders to be gods and falls on his knees to express his devotion. The interrelation of both scenes contributes to show admiration as a result of misconceptions and delusions.

21 Germa-Romann shows how for the French aristocracy, the concept of ideal death shifted towards a vision of “bien mourir”, incorporating constructions of virtue and ethical behaviour. To my knowledge, there is no systematic study on suicide on the Restoration stage; see, for instance, Wymer on Jacobean drama.

22 More generally, this emphasis on the role of the spectator in theatre might be associated with the specific material developments of the Restoration stage; Powell argues that the “conscious separation of the audience from the play produced a kind of involved detachment that permeated the new dramatic forms the age created for itself” (24).

23 See Howe on the typical forms of victimisation of female figures on stage, including female martyrdom as well as rape and other spectacles of violence, often with ostentatiously physical impact (esp. 43–49). It is worth noting that the dualistic separation of body and mind when experiencing torture and death, as typical for depictions of martyrdom, is shifted to the dying Almeria.

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