

Gaby Pailer – SSHRC Insight Grant, 2022-27 – Summary

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES ADDRESSED: This project is dedicated to the development of “Women’s Drama and Theatre in German-speaking Europe, 1600-2025”. Drama and theatre are cultural phenomena in which “roles” are enacted, either as poetic writing or staged performance. In both realms women’s engagement and involvement has been obscured for most of recorded history. In the period circa 1800 – largely influenced by philosophical Idealism – the notion of the modern “autonomous” individual emerged as a cultural norm, idealizing both the producer (or “author”) and literary/stage protagonist (or “hero”) as bourgeois, white and male. “Tragedy”, the highest form of art (according to Hegel), was deemed the domain of playwrights matching this norm. Consequently, in spite of women’s consistent involvement as actresses, playwrights, and directors, their contributions have dropped out of cultural memory. This binary perception of male vs. female productivity shaped the scholarly perception and perspectives of European drama and theatre in central Europe over the last four centuries, resulting in a still predominantly “white male” canon of works available and accessible for research and teaching.

OBJECTIVES AND ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE: Regarding the project context of women’s cultural history, we are pursuing an open and inclusive approach striving to reveal the historical processes and mechanisms that led to heteronormative distinctions and evaluations of “male” and “female” productivity in the realms of drama and theatre. The research team (Gaby Pailer and Jason Lieblang, UBC; Annette Bühler-Dietrich, University of Stuttgart, Germany) are proposing an ambitious plan targeted at a threefold publication outcome: (1) A first and groundbreaking monograph on “German Female Dramatists of the Baroque and Early Enlightenment (1630-1770)”, authored by Pailer (principal investigator) and to appear with Lexington Books, prospectively in 2024. (2) A first and comprehensive handbook of “Women’s Drama and Theatre in German Cultural History”, co-edited by Pailer, Lieblang (co-applicant) and Bühler-Dietrich (collaborator), to appear with De Gruyter-Verlag Berlin (print and eBook), prospectively in 2027. (3) Two new bi-lingual (German-English) drama editions of neglected works by female playwrights, Charlotte von Stein’s “Dido” (1794) and Ilse Langner’s “Iphigenie und Orestes” (1977), jointly translated and edited by all three, to appear with Wehrhahn-Verlag, Hannover, prospectively in 2022 and 2024.

BROADER POTENTIAL BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT: Pursuing a transcultural and post-national approach, our project is aimed at both scholarly and educational outcomes and will encourage and enhance awareness of women's contributions to drama and theatre in the past and present, in future scholarship as well as teaching-and-learning processes. Our project will involve the employment, training and scholarly contributions of two UBC Graduate Research Assistants on multiple levels. Concrete educational outcomes will be the design and offering of new graduate and undergraduate courses, including a Global Seminar Online between both institutions and a Theatre Production Course at UBC, bringing Bühler-Dietrich to our campus as DAAD visiting scholar, and staging a public student performance.