Henry the Lion – *Enrico Leone*

A Precious Memory Box of the House of Brunswick

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Henry the Lion (*Heinrich der Löwe*), the Duke of Saxony and Bavaria († 1195) was the most famous ancestor of the House of Brunswick.[1] Although he was deposed of his duchies in 1181 and sent into exile twice, he preserved this reputation for centuries. He retained considerable importance for the memory of the House of Brunswick, even more so than his son, Emperor Otto IV (who had no children and was not a direct ancestor of the later Guelphs). The exciting life of the real Henry offered some starting points for the evolution of a veritable memory box: his striking power, the conflict with Frederic Barbarossa and the German princes, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the marriage with Matilda Plantagenet, the exiles in England and so on. Furthermore, the portrayals of Henry inspired vivid memory, so for example in a famous illustration of his Gospel where he claimed a position similar to a king. And then there was the lion, of course, a unique symbol of the duke's strength and power.

Very soon after Henry's death, the legend of Henry the Lion arose during the thirteenth century, which reshaped some elements of the life and representation of the real Henry in quite a creative way. This legend was also adopted by the later Guelphs in order to promote their dynasty's glory. The literary version of the legend became very influential; it was composed by

1 My thanks go to Charlotte Backerra for translating the German text into English.

Heinrich Göding on behalf of Duke Henry Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel on the occasion of his wedding to Dorothea of Saxony in 1585.[2]

In the late seventeenth century both Henrys, the historical and the legendary, gained a renewed importance for the glorification of the Guelphs. During this period, the younger line of the House of Brunswick, headed by Ernest Augustus of Hanover, was on the verge of obtaining electoral dignity and thus becoming a member of the most exclusive group of princes in the Holy Roman Empire. In order to corroborate their claim to electoral dignity the Guelphs not only enacted their military strength and financial power, but also the venerable ancestry and extraordinary nobility of their dynasty. In effect, Ernest Augustus tried to demonstrate that the House of Brunswick had once ranked among the noblest dynasties of Germany and that the restoration of the Guelphs to their former position was a question of justice.

In this respect Henry the Lion played a crucial role and served as a precious memory box intended to show the old and extraordinary nobility of the House of Brunswick, filled with historical and legendary memories that could be activated, altered or enriched corresponding to the current interests and needs of the dynasty.

One of the most spectacular exhibitions of this memory box occurred in January 1689 when the new opera house of Hanover was inaugurated with the performance of *Enrico Leone* (*Henry the Lion*) in the presence of an illustrious gathering of princes and nobles. The libretto written by the Hanoverian poet laureate Ortensio Mauro was based on the legend of Henry the Lion and set to music by the famous composer Agostino Steffani.

This article shall show how the memory box Henry the Lion was utilised by Ernest Augustus of Hanover during the crucial years of the struggle for the ninth electorate. Having outlined the historical context in a first step, the article shall subsequently evaluate the importance of Henry the Lion (both in his historical and imaginary dimension) for the efforts of Ernest Augustus in a more general way. Finally, it shall analyse the image of Henry the Lion as portrayed in *Enrico Leone,* thus taking a closer look at some of the memories preserved in this memory box.

2 WERTHSCHULTE, 2007, pp. 172-175.

Ernest Augustus of Hanover and the struggle for the ninth electorate

Ernest Augustus of Hanover (1629-1698) was one of the most ambitious German princes during the second half of the seventeenth century; although the youngest of four sons of Duke George of Calenberg, he could count himself lucky to gain the Prince-Bishopric Osnabruck as Protestant prince-bishop in 1661.[3] In 1658, Ernest Augustus was married to Sophia of Palatinate, the youngest daughter of the *Winter King* Frederic V Count Palatine and his wife Princess Elizabeth Stuart. At the time of their wedding, nobody could have known that this marriage would pave the way of the Guelphs to the British throne in 1714, but the union with an elector's daughter and a king's granddaughter was certainly honourable.

In 1679, Ernest Augustus's older brother John Frederic died. He had reigned in Brunswick-Calenberg and was a convert to Catholicism. Ernest Augustus succeeded him and assumed the reins of government in Hanover while retaining his bishopric in Osnabruck. He quickly moved to secure and increase his family's position. In 1682, Ernest August married his oldest son George Louis (1714 George I of Great Britain) to Sophia Dorothea, the only daughter of another brother, George William of Brunswick-Luneburg-Celle. He thereby made provisions for his descendants to once rule over all the territories of the Guelphs' younger line. For the security of the family estate he adopted a second measure in 1682: the institution of the primogeniture in the House of Hanover. This prevented the fragmentation of the family's property by dividing the estate in the future.[4]

Despite all achievements, Ernest Augustus had indeed a noble, but by no means an outstanding status within the hierarchy of the Holy Roman Empire. The Guelphs were certainly one of the noblest German princely houses, but following the height of their reign in the twelfth and early thirteenth century they had obviously lost ground in comparison to other families (in Northern Germany especially the Hohenzollern). Unlike those, they were not part of the college of the electors. The older line of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel even took

3 In accordance with the Peace of Westphalia, Osnabruck was ruled alternately by a Catholic and Protestant Prince-Bishop of the Guelph dynasty.

4 For Ernest Augustus of Hanover and his politics extensively SCHNATH, 1938; short and summarised SCHNATH, 1959; for individual aspects see BARMEYER, 2005; STIEGLITZ, 2001.

precedence in the house of Guelph; from 1671 they ruled once more over Henry the Lion's former seat of power, the city of Brunswick.

To overcome the older line of the Guelphs and to simultaneously gain the proper status for his family with the German princely houses, Ernest Augustus aspired to no less than the elevation to the rank of elector. In principle, the Golden Bull of 1356 by Emperor Charles IV had closed the college of electors. But since the sixteenth century there had been some changes to this illustrious circle. Emperor Charles V transferred the Saxon electorate from the Ernestine to the Albertine Wettins in 1547, after 1623 the electorate of Palatinate then passed to the Bavarian Wittelsbachs and an eighth electorate had been created with the Treaty of Westphalia 1648 in compensation for the Counts Palatine.[5]

When the House of Palatine-Neuburg inherited the Palatine electorate in 1685, the confessional disparity within the college of electors shifted further to the disadvantage of the Protestants. Of eight electors, six were subsequently Catholic, and this strong Catholic ascendancy was in contradiction to the principle of confessional parity in the Empire as was established with the Westphalian Peace. Was it therefore not advisable to mitigate the Catholic majority by creating another Protestant elector? This was one of the arguments particularly aimed at the Protestants within the Empire and was brought forward by Ernest Augustus to promote the admission of the House of Hanover to the electoral council.[6]

First of all, it was necessary to persuade Emperor Leopold I, since such an elevation of rank was not possible in the Empire without his agreement. The right to ennoble was after all one of the most prestigious imperial privileges.[7] In fact, the Habsburgs could do well with a secure Catholic majority of the emperor's electors. This is the reason why Ernest Augustus solicited intensely for the favour of the Vienna Court in the 1680s. He showed himself open-minded towards a reintegration of the Protestants into the Roman-Catholic church and granted generous military aid in the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) and in the Nine Years' War (1688-1697).[8] Temporary approaches to

5 For the transfers of electoral dignity of 1547 and 1623: RUDERSDORF, 2009; KAISER, 2004; STEINER, 1985.

6 SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 186, 474-477.

7 Admittedly, the extent at which the emperor was bound by the affirmation of the prince-electors or all of the Imperial Diet in regard to elevations of rank was contested. For elevations of rank in the early modern Holy Roman Empire: KLEIN, 1986; also SCHLIP, 1987.

8 SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 166-222, 348-354, 373-376.

France increased the pressure on the imperial court to accommodate Hanoverian ambitions.[9]

After long, tedious negotiations that intensified in 1689, Leopold I signed the so-called Electoral Treaty with the Guelph brothers Ernest Augustus of Hanover and George William of Luneburg-Celle in 1692 (dated 22nd March). In return for being bestowed with the electoral hat, Ernest Augustus promised, among other things, to deploy a corps of 6000 men against the Turks for two years, to once pay 500,000 Reichstaler, to provide military aid in the West and to grant free practice of religion for Catholics in Hanover. In December 1692 this was followed by Ernest Augustus being bestowed with the new electoral dignity. Due to the serious opposition of a number of electors and princes, Hanover was in fact admitted to the college of electors as late as 1708.[10]

Ernest Augustus, the Hanoverian opera and Henry the Lion

The Guelphs' considerable concessions were most certainly crucial for Leopold I signing the Electoral Treaty in 1692. However, this did not settle the case, as the opposition to the ninth electorate showed. An elevation of rank was only successful when met with universal approval. It was therefore important to legitimise the new dignity of the House of Guelph for the German and European public – this meant first of all a courtly public. The representation of a prince had to be according to his rank within the *Société des Princes* in the Empire and in Europe. When a prince tried to gain an elevation of rank he did well to adjust his self-imagining towards the requested status beforehand.[11]

This was exactly what Ernest Augustus did by keeping an illustrious court following the example of his older brother John Frederic's efforts in Hanover.[12] From the first moment of his rule he spent large sums on restoring

9 SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 396-437.

10 For the background and the negotiations about the electoral dignity: SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 471-505, 592-651; ARETIN, 1997, pp. 54-62. George William of Celle was at first also part of the opposition against the Hanoverian electoral dignity because he refused to see why he should step back in favour of his younger brother in this prestigious affair, too.

11 STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997; STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2002.

12 MARLES, 1991, pp. 15-20, especially in regard to music and opera.

the castle's interior; with the destruction of a number of town houses, the castle gained a free forecourt towards the river Leine. He also enlarged the court and expanded the gardens at Herrenhausen.[13] Last but not least, Ernest August built a large, impressive opera house. Already during Duke John Frederic's reign there had been a golden age of Hanoverian music with first opera performances (*Orontea* and *Alceste* 1678/79).[14] Duke Ernest Augustus knew the Italian and particularly the Venetian opera very well due to his many travels to Italy.[15] Among others he may have seen Antonio Sartorio's – his brother John Frederic's chapel master – performance of Adelaide in 1672 in Venice. The title character of this opera is Empress Adelheid, the wife of Otto I the Great (936-973) of the Saxon House of Liudolfing – so Ernest Augustus had already encountered the medieval opera that referred to current rulers in Lower Saxony.[16]

And so the construction of a new court opera house followed his personal inclinations and aimed at participating in current developments of European courtly life: at the same time it was a conscious step to draw the German and European courts' attention to Hanover. In the past, the *Kleine Schlosstheater* (Little Court Theatre) by Johann Friedrich had to be used for opera performances. The new opera house, built right next to the palace within just two years in 1688/89, was "one of the greatest and most beautiful opera houses of its times, with seating for 1300 people and much admired technical features".[17] The construction costs for the building were enormous and amounted to 24,746 Taler plus an additional 5500 Taler to purchase the grounds. Even though the number of opera performances was low and the opera house itself had to be closed for financial reasons by the new Prince-

13 SCHNATH, 1962, pp. 59-87; ABBETMEYER, 1931, p. 28; RETTICH, 1992.

14 ABBETMEYER, 1931, pp. 33-67; SCHNATH, 1962, p. 69; MARLES, 1991, p. 21.

15 Ernest Augustus was during his reign in Italy in the years 1664/65, 1669/70, 1671/72, 1680/81, and for a last time in 1685/86; SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 376-381 (with dubious assessments).

16 See on *Adelaide* ABBETMEYER, 1931, pp. 53-59.

17 For the new building of the opera house: SCHNATH, 1962, pp. 69-76, citation p. 71 (translation by Charlotte Backerra); MARLES, 1991, pp. 23 f. Because of the hurried construction of the building – the result of Ernest Augustus's wish not to be later than his cousins in Wolfenbüttel which had opened an opera house in Wolfenbüttel in 1688 and had started the construction of another one in Brunswick – it needed improvements over the following years that led to further costs. The Hanoverian Estates were not least inclined to finance the building because it would prevent the Duke from further travels to Italy.

elector George Louis in 1698, the relevance of the opera is seen as very significant for the Hanoverian court under Ernest Augustus.[18]

Ernest Augustus had also a keen interest in the glorious medieval past of his house that was most fitting to legitimise the claim for an elevation of rank. For this purpose he could count on none less than Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who entered into Guelph services under his predecessor and had already published a memoir *De la Grandeur de la Serenissime Maison de Bronsvic-Lunebourg* in 1685. In this, he emphasised that in former times the Guelph Dukes of Saxony and Bavaria had been electors of the emperors and were therefore in fact prince-electors. Consequently the bestowal of electoral dignity to the House of Brunswick-Luneburg merely restored the former status and rectified old injustice.[19]

Even though Leibniz never finished his great history of the Guelphs, first results of his research were immediately included in the ducal self-imagining, as can be shown with the redesign of the Hall of Knights in the Leine Palace[20] and likewise with the opera *Enrico Leone*. For Henry the Lion – and not his son Emperor Otto IV – seemed to be the fitting point of reference to historically legitimise the current claims of the House of Guelph.[21] Henry the Lion admittedly lost against his Staufer adversaries as Otto IV, but as he was a vigorous and for a long time markedly thriving territorial prince his life was a good example and starting point for the Guelphs of the late seventeenth century. In addition, Henry himself had quite successfully managed to cultivate the memory of his life. The Brunswick Palace with the bronze lion statue and the famous Book of Gospel are the most well-known examples for his efforts.[22] The legend of Henry was long since established as an element of the Guelph glorification.[23] After all Henry was ancestor to all ruling Guelphs while Otto remained childless; furthermore, Otto's reign was by no means always seen positively.[24]

18 MARLES, 1991, p. 17.
19 REESE, 1967; ID., 1995.
20 SCHNATH, 1962, pp. 64f., 67.
21 SEEBALD, 2009, pp. 65-73; REESE, 1967, esp. pp. 1-6, 31-46.
22 OEXLE, 1994; also various articles in the exhibition catalogue LUCKHARDT/ NIEHOFF, 1995.
23 BEHR, 1995; METZGER, 1995; WERTHSCHULTE, 2007.
24 No one else but Leibniz was of the opinion Otto's emperorship had hurt the House of Guelph more than it benefited it; BEI DER WIEDEN/DIEHL, 2009, pp. 307-318. – The dynasty was continued by Henry the Lion's youngest son William.

Enrico Leone

Against this background, the opening of the Hanoverian opera house with *Enrico Leone* – of all operas – held a key position in Ernest Augustus's self-glorification aimed at an elevation of rank. Form and external circumstances as well as the content of the performance should demonstrate the Guelphs as one of the foremost families of the Empire and of Europe. As previously mentioned, the newly built opera house was considered one of the greatest and most beautiful in Europe. Ernest Augustus engaged Agostino Steffani, an experienced and well-known composer,[25] and Italian singers and instrumentalists from Venice, Munich and Modena came to the city on the River Leine; in addition, spectacular stage machinery was used. Consequently, the performance was visited by a number of princes, the Prince-elector of Brandenburg, the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Celle, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel and the Princess of Eastern Frisia as well as all their courts, and it was said to have been impressive and a sensual pleasure.[26] The propaganda was not to be limited to the public of January 1689, but to be spread all over Europe. Thus, the libretto by the Hanoverian poet laureate Ortensio Mauro was also printed. This print included so-called paratexts as the description of scenes and stage machinery to give the readers an impression of the amazing magnificence of the performance beyond the pure reading of the opera's text. By translating all texts into French – the *lingua franca* of the European courts and scholars – and German, maximum publicity was attained.[27]

Preparations for the opera event of January 1689 started early. In spring 1688, when the opera house was still being built and composer Steffani was in Munich, the Hanoverian minister Otto Grote urged Leibniz to quickly return

25 Agostino Steffani (1654-1728) was originally from Castelfranco Veneto and after first musical studies he entered the services of the Electorate of Bavaria in 1667. In 1680, he was ordained as a priest and became known as an opera composer in the service of the court in Munich since 1681. In 1688, he entered Hanoverian service and changed to the court of the Palatine Electorate in Dusseldorf in 1703. At both courts he worked as a composer and held different administrative and diplomatic functions. In 1709, he was created the Apostolic Vicar of Higher and Lower Saxony, but he repeatedly had to face challenges in the exercise of his duties; CROLL, 1961, pp. 9-75; TIMMS, 2003, pp. 3-37; KAUFOLD, 1997, pp. 13-23; for his time in Munich see also WERR, 2010, pp. 64-67.

26 TIMMS, 2003, pp. 53-56; SEEBALD, 2009, p. 71; CROLL, 1961, p. 91.

27 SEEBALD, 2009, pp. 73-75.

from his research trip concerning the Guelph history. The Duke would make plans for an opera about Henry the Lion and the scholar's expertise was urgently required. The choice of subject was thus apparently decided on the personal initiative of Ernest Augustus. At the time, Leibniz was not directly part of the writing process of the libretto. But it is quite possible that Steffani, and maybe also the theatre painter Johann Oswald Harms, supported Mauro because he apparently felt slightly insecure in this field.[28] However, the thorough preparations for the spectacular inauguration of the Hanoverian opera house clearly show that the opening of the memory box Henry the Lion by the performance of *Enrico Leone* in January 1689 was designed to play a key role in duke Ernest August's struggle for the electoral dignity.

But which were the memories to be conveyed by *Enrico Leone*? The opera's libretto begins with an *Elogio d'Henrico Leone* which powerfully visualises for audience or readers Henry the Lion's greatness with a realm covering an area from the River Elbe to the Rhine and from the Alps to the North Sea.[29] In contrast to other princes, who were overthrown by their vices, it was his virtues that doomed him: when he had declined in religious zeal to help Barbarossa, the pope's persecutor, and instead set out for the Holy Land, his envious neighbours had used the convenient opportunity of the emperor's hate, the imperial ban, and Henry's absence to rob him of his lands.[30]

The elogio, most probably also written by Mauro, thus referred to the dramatic events of the years after 1176. During that year, Henry the Lion refused to support Frederic I Barbarossa against the Lombard allies of Pope Alexander III in a meeting in Chiavenna, or rather in exchange he wanted the town of Goslar, even though the emperor beseeched him and possibly even went down on his knees before Henry. Two years later Frederic accepted the charge against Henry preferred by his Saxon adversaries. In 1179, as the Duke did not react to any summons, the emperor administered his imperial ban and –

28 CROLL, 1961, pp. 92f.

29 "[…] l'ampiezza de suoi stati, che negli antichi limiti della sassonia, e della Bauiera da esso possedute si stendeuano dall'Albi al Reno, e dall'Alpi all'Oceano". [STEFFANI]/[MAURO], [1689], p. [4].

30 "[…] furono per esso così perniciose le Virtù, come funesti per gli altri Prencipi sogliono esseri[!] i Vizi. […] Zelo di Religione lo staccò sott'Alessandria dal partito di Federico Barbarossa persecutor del Pontefice, e doppò impegnandolo nelle Guerre di Terra santa diede adito à vicini gelosi delle sue crescenti prosperità di preualersi delle inique congionture dell'odio di Cesare, e della proscrittione, e lontananza d'Henrico per usurparne le spoglie, mentr'egli spogliaua i Barbari delle Prouincie usurpate aì Fedeli." [STEFFANI]/[MAURO], [1689], pp. [4]f.

after another feudal lawsuit and a princely ruling – stripped him of all imperial feoffs. Henry was again outlawed in 1180 and was therefore without any rights. He capitulated in 1181 and lost all his territories with the exception of the allodial property around Brunswick and Luneburg. Furthermore, he was sent into exile to his father-in-law Henry II of England. Because he did not want to take part in Frederic Barbarossa's crusade, he again had to go to England in 1189, but returned arbitrarily after his wife Matilda's death in the same year. Besides all that, he achieved some successes; among other things, he conquered and destroyed the town of Bardowick whose citizens had offended him after his fall. Only in 1194 Henry finally made his peace with the new Emperor Henry VI.[31]

However, the campaigns of Henry the Lion in the Holy Land mentioned in the Elogio have never happened, because he never took part in a crusade to the Levant. He participated solely in the so-called Wendish Crusade of 1147 and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1172. The campaigns in the Holy Land are rather a key point of the Henry legend on which the actual libretto was based.

The Henry legend created in the thirteenth century was not just used exclusively by Ernest Augustus for the glorification of the Guelphs. Duke Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel had for example ordered to perform Henry's fight against gryphons and dragons at his wedding with Dorothea of Saxony (1585). For this occasion the Dresden court painter Heinrich Göding, originally from Brunswick, composed a literary interpretation of the Henry legend that was printed several times until the nineteenth century. This version of the Henry legend could also have served as the basis for Mauro's libretto.[32]

At the centre of the opera's storyline stands the legendary odyssey of Henry the Lion after his alleged fights in the Holy Land and the reunion with his faithful wife Matilda; in the opera, Henry the Lion is translated to Enrico Leone, Matilda to Metilda. To give a brief summary: After his battles in the Holy Land, Duke Enrico is on his way back to Saxony. His ship is in distress at sea; his men sew Enrico into an animal skin to save him, but a gryphon carries him away.

In the palace at Luneburg, the Burgundian Duke Almaro woos Enrico's wife Metilda – even though he is affianced to the emperor's daughter Idalba. To convince Metilda of her husband's death, Almaro allies himself to her wet

31 For the historical background: EHLERS, 2008, esp. pp. 197-211, 317-344; short JORDAN, 1969.

32 REESE, 1967, pp. 1f.; SEEBALD, 2009, pp. 79f.

nurse Errea who tries with sorcery and illusions to encourage the Duchess to marry Almaro.

At the same time, Enrico managed to free himself of the hide and escaped the gryphon. He kills a dragon to save a lion. From then on the lion follows him faithfully everywhere. Enrico and the lion are carried by a cloud on top of the Kalkberg [limestone mountain] near Luneburg. Tired, the duke falls asleep. When he is attacked by a demon, the lion's roar awakens him in warning.

Just in time, Enrico returns to Luneburg to prevent the wedding of Almaro and Metilda who was ultimately convinced of her husband's death. He announces himself as her husband by placing his wedding ring in her wine cup. Instead of the planned wedding, husband and wife celebrate their reunion. Henry forgives Almaro and with his help seizes the rebellious town of Bardowick. During the battle Idalba saves Almaro's life. Enrico announces their marriage and Idalba promises to mediate between her father and the duke.[33]

Enrico Leone was able to show – besides the artists engaged – the technical possibilities of the new opera house in the best light. Among others, the following sets were needed: a wrecking ship, a gryphon and its nest, a lion, a cloud to carry Henry to the Kalkberg, and a triumphal chariot drawn by four live horses.[34] *Enrico Leone* was in fact an enormous spectacular period opera and would accordingly have been cherished in the public's memory. To concretise the memories that should have been transported by the opera, some aspects of the plot and the elogio shall be examined in the following.

Enrico Leone has a marked heroic couple, Enrico and Metilda; their story seems to be some kind of remake of Homer's Odyssey. At the same time, both Henry the Lion and Matilda of England are the only historic figures of the libretto. Matilda however had died during Henry's exile in England and before the conquest of Bardowick on 28 June 1189.

In accordance with the Henry legend and the aim of the opera, Henry the Lion is shown as a knight in shining armour. Courage, intelligence, faithfulness and magnanimity are only some of the positive characteristics awarded to him. Mauro's characterisation of the hero is not especially original, but that is also not his point. He rather aims to show in particular the known elements

33 [STEFFANI]/[MAURO], [1689]; an extensive description of the content gives SEEBALD, 2009, pp. 81-126, with references to the noticeable influences of the Henry legend in the libretto, especially in the form of poetic arrangements by Heinrich Göding; more: CROLL, 1961, pp. 94-104.

34 KAUFOLD, 1997, p. 27.

of the Henry legend to glorify the ancestor of the ruling dynasty and at the same time the House of Brunswick-Luneburg as a whole. As Mauro writes in the elogio, instead of following Horace's rules, he complies with the ruler's dictate.[35]

After the example of the Henry legend, Mauro also did not fail to mention the difficult chapter of Henry's conflict with Frederic Barbarossa and his son Henry VI. In the elogio, he frankly speaks about the "odio di Cesare", the emperor's hate.[36] Of course, the emperor himself does not personally appear within the opera, but is represented by his fictional daughter Ibalda. And at the end, there is the chance of reconciliation with the emperor, already initiated by the marriage of Ibalda and Almaro. A real enemy is not part of the opera. The only evil human is Errea, Metilda's Mephistophelian wet nurse.

Very clearly the primary aim of *Enrico Leone* is the ruler's glorification intended to be recognised by the audience. It closely ties into an already established and known source, the Henry legend. And this legend plays a huge role in the representation of the House of Hanover during those years. In September 1688 Duchess Sophia interpreted the choice of Henry's story for the opening opera in a letter to Leibniz as a reminder for following generations to recall all the territories that were once part of the Guelph dynasty.[37] Actually, the opera related to a lesser extent to a list of Guelph territories, but rather to the greatness of the House of Guelph as seen in the person of its ancestor. Apart from this first and foremost aim to valorise the dynasty by glorifying its most famous predecessor, some more or less direct adaptations or connotations to the political events of the year 1689 are depicted.

So Mauro transferred the Guelph court – quite logically– from Brunswick, the actual town of Henry the Lion, to Luneburg. For Brunswick was reigned by the rivalling older line of the House, the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, while Luneburg was admittedly not under Ernest Augustus's control, but was

35 "[…] s'è hauuto più riguardo al divertimento de' Popoli, co' quali si vive ch'alle regole de Poeti di secoli, e paesi lontani, e s'è giudicato più conveniente l'ubidir à cenni d'Augusto, che necessario l'assoggettirsi a' precetti d'Horatio". [STEFFANI]/ [MAURO], [1689], p. [12].

36 IBID., p. [5].

37 "Cet Sig.r Hortance qui compose la piesse de Henri le Lion, je crois qu'on a pris ce suject afin que la posterité n'oublie point tous les estats qui ont esté autrefoys à cette maison". Duchess Sophia to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. 1688 September 16. Cited from REESE, 1967, p. 2.

at least ruled by his brother George William and therefore the right line of the Guelphs.

Beginning and ending of court operas were especially good for relating to the commissioning prince. This was often done by pre- or postludes separated from the actual plot. In *Enrico Leone* the relation of ancestor and currently ruling descendant is conveniently part of the elogio. Here Mauro attests to the latter playing a "remarkable role" in Europe and following Henry the Lion's zeal in the fight against the infidels. He specifically speaks of the participation of Ernest Augustus's four oldest sons in the Turk Wars in Hungary and Greece.[38] In the year of the five hundredth anniversary of the conquest of Bardowick Mauro bridges five somewhat dark centuries in the history of the Guelphs so that the current members of the dynasty are directly following Henry's example.

The important role played by Metilda/Matilda in the plot can be seen as a reverence to Duchess Sophia's role at the court of Hanover. One comparable characteristic of the two women gained even more importance around the months of the opera's premiere: their English origins. After the expulsion of the Catholic Stuarts in the course of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Protestant granddaughter of James I and her descendants were a significant step closer to succeed to the English throne. However, in January 1689 nobody could have known that Sophia's son George Louis would accede to the throne of Great Britain in 1714.[39]

Lastly, the marginal reference to the conflict of Henry the Lion and Frederic Barbarossa could also be seen as a signal towards the Court of Vienna, because until the autumn of 1688 Ernest Augustus was allied with Louis XIV. This alliance ended only when he strongly supported emperor and empire in the Nine Years' War and personally led a campaign to the River

38 "Resta però degli auanzi di si gran naufragio a suoi Ser.mi Discendenti di che far nell'Europa considerabil figura, e di chè imitar felicem.te, il zelo d'Henrico à danno degl'Jnfedeli.
E che non deue la Cristianità à ualidi soccorsi mandati, e guidati dà questi Prencipi nell'Hungheria, e nella Grecia, et al valore di quattro gloriosi Fratelli, ch'in anni ancor acerbi frà le più memorabili imprese di questa Guerra si sono segnalati con attioni Heroiche, e degne dell'Augusto lor sangue?" [STEFFANI]/[MAURO], [1689], p. [5].

39 BARMEYER, 2005, p. 285. This close connection can also be seen in a medal celebrating the Act of Succession 1701, designed by Leibniz and made by Samuel Lambelet; see for images and description the British Museum online site: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection (26.09.2013).

Rhine. Only at the end of January 1689, thus at the time of the staging of *Enrico Leone*, the French envoys left Hanover.[40] When the emperor's daughter Ibalda therefore promises at the end of the opera to mediate the peace between emperor and duke, it was surely an important part of a *lieto fine*, but it could also be seen as pointing to a renewed political approach of Vienna and Hanover. Furthermore it can be stated that there is no mentioning of Henry's submission to Barbarossa, but of reconciliation – emphasising the confidence of the House of Guelph which, apart from all existing differences in rank, claims to be of equal standing even to the emperor![41] Finally it would not be wrong to assume that the character of Henry the Lion is an alter ego of the reigning duke – the image of Henry the Lion's return is already pointing in that direction, as well as the all in all preeminent importance of the Lion for Ernest Augustus's strategy to glorify his family's wealth.

Consequently, *Enrico Leone* was not the only Henry opera to be performed in Guelph territories during those years. For example, Professor Joachim Meier from Göttingen published the singspiel *Die siegende Großmuth* about the Lion's last years in 1693.[42] And in his glorifying poem *Gloria Brunswigii Leonis* Pastor Peter Richard Evers of Hameln expressly marks Henry the Lion as prince-elector and characterises Ernest Augustus as his reincarnation.[43] These examples should be proof enough to show *Enrico Leone* not as a singularity, but "only one among others".[44] It was just part of many propaganda activities aiming at legitimising the new electoral dignity in recourse to the medieval duke; it was however a prominent component of particular importance.

40 In fact, Ernest Augustus was also later prepared to put pressure on the emperor via a French alliance to coerce him to come to an accommodation in regard to the question of electoral dignity. In 1689, he led his troops another time to the Rhine for emperor and Empire. But in 1690, when negotiations faltered, he again negotiated with France and stood at the forefront of a neutral, so-called "third party" totally following French interests; SCHNATH, 1938, pp. 432-470, 502-556.

41 REESE, 1967, p. 2f., sees in Almaro's rejection of the emperor's daughter Ibalda in favour of Metilda also a valorisation of the House of Guelph.

42 MEIER, 1693.

43 EVERS, 1692.

44 So REESE, 1967, p. 5, who by the fact that he begins his description precisely with *Enrico Leone* recognises however implicitly the opera's importance.

Conclusion

Because of his political successes, his dramatic life and his care for his own memoria as well as the Henry legend that emerged a few decades after his death, Henry the Lion came to be a precious memory box for the House of Guelph. It was a requisite for showing the dynasty's prominent status with the German princely houses and played a major role in the representation of the Guelph dynasty. Henry the Lion's reputation with the aristocracy and the scholars in Christian Europe as a well-known historical character laid the foundation for using the memory box Henry the Lion successfully in competing with other dynasties.

When the House of Hanover opened this memory box with the performance of *Enrico Leone* in January 1689 it happened in a way that remained in the audience's memory and would resonate across the Empire, or even across Europe. In fact, the sensational form in presenting the memory box was perhaps as important as its contents.

With *Enrico Leone* it was less important to transport subtle content but vital to transport a vague although overwhelming message (because of the manner in which it was presented) of the dignified age and greatness of the House of Guelph. Last but not least it meant to raise the claim of a legitimate succession to Henry the Lion before the cousins of the older line of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel who were present for the performance. The memory box Henry the Lion was, so to speak, claimed for the younger line of the Guelph dynasty; Duke Ernest Augustus was even introduced as the new Lion.

The creative combination of the historical and the legendary Henry the Lion shows that the aim was not to spread historically correct memories, but simply to claim the Guelph's rank at the top of the German princely houses even during the High Middle Ages. In some areas, as with the relocation from Brunswick to Luneburg, traditional memories were deliberately altered to match them to the current needs of the House of Hanover. Other aspects, such as the important role of Metilda/Matilda, were already based in history and legend: they had only to be embellished accordingly in reference to the very distant prospect of the succession to the English throne.

But under the circumstances of the year 1689, the claim for electoral dignity was more important. Apart from all short-term political opportunities so expertly used by Ernest Augustus in this regard, his origins in the old and noble House of Guelph should not be undervalued. In this sense the existence

of the already established memory box Henry the Lion, its forceful actualisation in the years around 1690 and not least its spectacular staging in *Enrico Leone,* were important requirements for the assignment of the electoral dignity in 1692.

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