The theatre of emotions: the success of Spanish drama in the Low Countries (1617-1672)

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CHAPTER 1

The Wondrous World of the *Comedia*

Theatrical Illusions & Worldbuilding in Dutch Comedias

> But is not the life of man a mere dream??
> The outcome, does it not teach that everyone dreams
> their life, and that which they are, and what fortune gives
> them, until they finally awaken in death?
> [...]
> Alas! What is life?
> A shadow, a semblance: because they who rise high,
> See in the final hour that they have dreamed most of it.[1]

With these words, Prince Sigismundus of Poland reflects on his life and on the apparent dream he had when he was allowed to rule for one day. The prince's words are part of a philosophical monologue at the end of the second act of *Sigismundus, prinçe van Poolen* (1654), an adaptation of Calderón's famous *La vida es sueño* (1635, 'Life is dream'). King Basilius of Poland was an astrologer and he had seen at the birth of his son that Sigismundus would one day bring chaos to his kingdom. To prevent this turn of events, the king had imprisoned him since infancy in a secluded tower. When many years later Basilius still needed an heir, he brought Sigismundus to court, first drugging him so he would believe that it was a dream in case the prince actually became the feared tyrant and needed to be returned to his tower.

During his one-day rule, Sigismundus became frenzied when he learned that his reign had been a test devised by his father to see if Sigismundus would rule as a tyrant, or if he would instead become the wise king that Basilius hoped him to be. Yet, his distress having proved his father's prophesy true, Sigismundus was re-drugged and

1 Vrye Lief-hebbers der Rymer-Konste binnen Brussel 1654, vv. 1360–1363, 1382b–1384: 'Maar 't leven van den mensch is dat niet enkkel droom? / De uit-komst, leert die niet dat ieder een zijn leven, / En 't geene dat hy is, en 't luk hem komt te geven, / Droomt, tot dat in de doodt ten laatsten hy ontwaakt? [...] eilaas! wat is het leven? / Een schaduw', eenen schijn: want die op 't hoogste koomt, / Ziet in de laatste uur dat hy meest heeft gedroomt.'

returned to his tower. Now having awakened and realising that everything might have been a mere dream, Sigismundus despairingly asks himself if this short reign was real or an illusion: '¿Qué es la vida? Una ilusión, / una sombra, una ficción.' The iconic words of the Spanish original make clear that life is a dream, and that dreams are but dreams: 'que toda la vida es sueño, / y los sueños, sueños son.'[2] Likewise, the message to spectators, both Spanish and Dutch, is that nothing lasts in this life and everything that we see is false.[3]

The average seventeenth-century Dutch theatre-goer was well aware of the meaning of Sigismundus' words, and knew that theatre itself played with illusion and reality. Dutch men, women, and children were alerted to this every time they visited the Amsterdam Public Theatre by one distinct architectural feature of the playhouse. Before entering, the theatre-goer first had to enter through a gate bearing a verse written around 1638 by the Dutch 'Prince of Poets' Joost van den Vondel:

> De weereld is een speeltooneel,
> Elck speelt zyn rol en kryght zyn deel.[4]
>
> *The world is a stage,*
> *Everyone plays their part and receives their share.*

Although now a faint reminder of the building that was located there in the seventeenth century, the inscription on the gate at Keizersgracht 384 in Amsterdam still demonstrates that this gate signalled to visitors that they immersed themselves into another world by means of their own imagination. And so the gate's quote, like Sigismundus' philosophical reflection, invokes the famous *theatrum mundi* metaphor that was current in Renaissance literature: before Vondel, celebrated playwrights including William Shakespeare in his *As You Like It* (1599), Calderón in his *El gran teatro del mundo* (c. 1634, 'The Grand Theatre of the World'), and Pierre Corneille in *Le Grand Théâtre du monde* (1655)—a translation of Calderón's play—remarked how 'all the world's a stage' according to the dramatic practices of their time and place. In a way, 'life itself was theatrical in a sense more mundane than the *theatrum mundi* metaphor of Calderón's *El gran teatro del mundo* would suggest,' as Thacker pointed out for the *Siglo de Oro*: the Spanish Golden Age.[5]

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2 Calderón de la Barca 1640b, fol. 18r.

3 Blom and Van Marion 2021, 17; Blom 2021a, 292–293.

4 As found inscribed on the gate of The Dylan Hotel (formerly the Amsterdam Public Theatre).

5 Thacker 2002, 1.

In this same vein, René van Stipriaan writes that the paradox of a tragic play gives rise to the feeling that there exists tension at the intersection of tragic gravity and theatrical playfulness. It is inherently connected to an early modern view of the world which explicitly expresses 'the omnipresence of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor. The world is a theatre, life means playing a role. And vice versa: the theatre can also be a representation of the world, and an actor can act out a life.'[6] In theatre, the metaphor also expresses that the world is deceptive, changeable, and volatile. And in this world, the individual plays his own masquerade.[7] In the baroque tradition, the theatre is a space of illusion, where the boundaries of what is real are discovered, tested, and traversed. Spanish *comedia nueva* used the full potential that these illusions could offer, as the example of Calderón's *La vida es sueño* shows. Not only did the theatrical[8] illusions appeal to a shared view of life in early modern Europe, they also offered the human senses a pleasurable deception of the eyes, which continually surprised the spectators. As I argue in this chapter, the *game* of illusion in these plays was one of the reasons why the genre was so successful in the Low Countries.

The seduction of the senses and the pleasurable deception of the eyes are, therefore, the central themes in this chapter. Beginning with Calderón's court spectacle E*l mayor encanto, amor* (1635, 'Love, the Greatest Charm'), I discuss how the Spanish playwright built an illusionistic world for his spectators, and how the Netherlandish adaptors of this *comedia mitológica*, a subgenre of *drama* in Thacker's taxonomy, subsequently reinvented Calderón's game of illusion in its new local contexts. Then, I consider how these illusions were shaped by the architecture and *mise-en-scène* of theatres in Amsterdam and Brussels, theorising about how the eyes are seduced by the immersive environment.

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6 Bernheimer 1956, esp. 240–245; Van Stipriaan 1999, 13; Fischer-Lichte 2002, 80–83.

7 Van Stipriaan 1999, 14.

8 My application of the concept theatricality in this study is based on the understanding that theatricality is a diffuse term that on one side of its semantic spectrum refers simply 'to anything pertaining to the theatre, from props to the script,' while at the other extreme is a heavy-laden ethical and political term. I follow Caroline van Eck and Stijn Bussels in their application of the term to art and architecture, wherein the 'theatricality of art, we might say, resides in the implications of its use of theatrical elements' (2010, 214). Yet, I want to emphasise that in my review of theatrical illusions in *comedia nueva* I also discuss theatricality as theatre's pleasurable distortion of reality and as the exaggeration and affectation attributed to the theatre by premodern thinkers. I do so without passing judgement on any of these views of theatricality, be they neutral, positive, or negative (see Fischer-Lichte 1995, 86–88; Van Eck and Bussels 2010, 212–214). To me, theatricality also refers to its etymological roots as the act of seeing something which is a representation, and also the act of seeing someone who plays a (social) role (Van Eck and Bussels 2010, 212). In this regard, I pay specific attention to the playmaking and playfulness in theatre.

Further, in the context of the early modern notions of *vraisemblance* (verisimilitude) and *bienséance* (decorum), I examine the presence of the unity of place and time in other adaptations from Spanish; the absence of this unity formed an important point of critique on the quality of the Spanish *comedia nueva*. I ask how the unity of place and time influenced the spectators' experience. Lastly, I consider how the illusion created by the *mise-en-scène* contributed to a sense of emotional 'distance from' or 'nearness to' the plays. In other words, I argue in this chapter that the eyes are first and foremost captured by the way that Spanish drama structures space, and how it draws spectators into imagined or other-worldly spaces by offering them an immersive experience. The human imagination summons a three-dimensional world that challenges the boundaries between what is real and fictional, what is here and elsewhere, and what is in the present and in a historical timeline; meanwhile, the spectators are emotionally affected as they relate the dramatic representation before them to their own lives.

The Theatrical Illusions of Circe

In Calderón's 'fiesta' El *mayor encanto, amor*, real-world places represent parts of the fictional world of the Greek King Ulysses and the Sicilian Sorceress-Queen Circe. The play dramatises the one-year period in which Odysseus stayed at Circe's court before resuming his journey, as told in Books X and XII of Homer's *Odyssey*. Upon landing on Circe's island, she magically changed his crew into pigs; during his stay, Ulysses must convince her to change them back into men. Calderón used this enchanted setting for his play to let his spectators be absorbed into another, imaginary world.[9] This spectator immersion was in part achieved through the location of El *mayor encanto, amor*'s performance. The Italian engineer, scenographer, and producer of the play, Cosimo Lotti, had chosen the Estanque Grande (large pond) in the Buen Retiro Palace gardens on the eastern side of Madrid. In the middle of this pond was an artificial island. The palace, its gardens, and the Estanque Grande can be seen on the right hand side of Pedro Teixeira's 1656 map of Madrid (Fig. 1.1; compare its present-day appearance at ground level in Fig. 1.2 below). During the play's performance, this island functioned as Circe's island Trinacria (traditionally believed to be Sicily).[10]

9 Thacker 2007, 129. Although these were initially staged for royalty, Thacker points out that the spectacles were also accessible to the general public after the court had seen them.

10 Eversmann 1996, 136–137; Vergeer 2020b, esp. 324–327, and 2020c, 97–100.

FIG. 1.1 Pedro Teixeira Albernaz and Salomon Savery, *Topographia de la Ville de Madrid*, 1656, 178 cm x 286 cm, engraving in 20 folios. On the right hand side the Buen Retiro Palace and royal gardens with the Estanque Grande.
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The Estanque Grande as a Found Environment

In 1981, theatre scholar Arnold Aronson termed extraordinary performance settings, like the Estanque Grande, as *found environments*: they are performance spaces not originally intended as such and thus do not feature designated stage or audience areas.[11] Found environments can be chosen for a variety of reasons, but are usually used to emphasise the reality of the play or make the fictional worlds of fairy tales, myths, and science fiction seem more real.[12] In the performance of El *mayor encanto, amor*, the illusion of an island is made explicit through the 'found environment.' The play's island setting was actualised by the physical environment in a way not possible in a brick-and-mortar theatre: King Felipe IV (1605–1665) and his entourage viewed the performance from gondolas afloat in the Estanque Grande.[13] Similar examples of court spectacles that used a 'found environment' as stage include operas about the sorceress Alcina from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516), which were performed at the Villa Imperiale near Florence in 1625, Modena in 1626, Venice in 1650, and in the

11 Aronson 1981, 164–166.
12 Eversmann 1996, 22–23, 155–159.
13 McKendrick 1989, 218–220.

FIG. 1.2 The Estanque Grande in Parque del Buen Retiro, Madrid, May 2019
PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

garden of Versailles in 1664. Likewise, drama's about the sorceresses Medea and Circe were performed at Munich's court in 1662, and Vienna's in 1700 respectively.[14]

El mayor encanto, amor has been called one of Calderón's most attractive *comedias*, and is variously termed a *comedia mitólogica* (a mythical play) or a *comedia de tramoya* (a spectacle play).[15] Denise M. DiPuccio has notably discussed the magical wonders in Calderón's play as enigmas that envelope the characters in 'an atmosphere of visual and linguistic ambiguity.' She describes how its spectators' senses are continuously challenged to provoke the thought that the real world is as mysterious as that of the dramatised myth:

> From the moment that the curtain rises on *El mayor encanto, amor* the characters and audience witness numerous events that suspend intellectual logic and challenge sensorial perceptions. [...] After the viewer witnesses the creation of numerous magical and intellectual

14 Hedman 2019, 72–74, 77, 79–81.
15 Neumeister 2013, 807.

> enchantments, he may sense that his own world is as enigmatic as that of his mythical counterparts. Trying to determine what is and is not "enchanting" results in unsettling uncertainty about the spectator's own reality.[16]

The enchantments in this *comedia* spin a web of phenomena around Ulysses' crew, and as a result around the spectators as well. The magical landscape not only forms the setting for the events, but also emphasises the uncanniness of the situation. This is made clear by the *gracioso* Clarín, who as a stock character is ruled by his cowardliness and his ultimate longing for safety and a full belly:[17]

> CLARÍN. Companions of Ulysses,
> Who walk through the barbarous Lands
> Of this enchanted mountain,
> Leave its barbarous horizon.[18]

As mentioned above, this magical landscape was actualised by the performance setting at the Buen Retiro Palace: the park 'alternated paths, lakes, hermitages, grottoes, salons, and small outhouses, each containing a few animals,' report Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier. The presence of live animals also heavily contributed to the realistic feel of *El mayor encanto, amor*, although we cannot be sure that the lions, tigers, and bears were also kept at Buen Retiro. However, we do know that King Felipe IV at least kept lions, tigers, and bears at his Casa de Campo, the royal hunting estate on the western side of Madrid.[19] The lions, tigers, and bears—used to represent the animal transformations of Ulysses' crewmembers in this play—were possibly too dangerous to bring onstage. Therefore, the animals were likely kept in their cages during the performance of *El mayor encanto, amor*, where their presence could be seen and felt nevertheless.[20] And yet, it has been plausibly suggested that some theatre companies in Spain had a tame lion at their disposal, meaning that there exists the possibility that a tame lion was also used in the production of Calderón's *El mayor*

16 DiPuccio 1987, 731.

17 Gómez 2006, 14, 19–26, 74; Hernández Araico 2002, 160–162.

18 Calderón de la Barca 1641, fol. 3r: 'CLARÍN. Compañeros de Ulises, / que discurris los barbaros Paises / deste encantado monte, / desamparad su barbaro Orizonte.'

19 Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier 2002, 20, 47, 50.

20 Vergeer 2020d, 100.

encanto, amor at Buen Retiro. This lion, then, contributed to the play's verisimilitude and supported once more the theatrical illusion.[21]

A Natural Environment in Brussels

When Calderon's E*l mayor encanto, amor* was adapted for the Brussels stage, it was not performed at court. *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* (1668, 'Ulysses on Circe's Island') by Claude de Grieck was adapted for performance at the Brussels Public Theatre ('Brusselsche Thoonneelburgh').[22] Despite the obvious challenges in staging such a magnificent play in a roofed theatre, we realise that De Grieck kept the enchanting setting of Calderón's original when the Flemish Clarín describes Circe's island in words comparable to those of his Spanish counterpart, thus alluding to a similar illusion in the Flemish adaptation as was in the Spanish original:

> CLARÍN. Compatriots of Ulysses, who scout this raw land,
> And the enchanted peak of this mountain range, flee
> From this Horizon; if you hold your life dear,
> Then return to sea. Please believe these animals:
> Their signals reveal that this is in our own interest.[23]

In 1668, the setting of the Brussels Public Theatre was obviously different from the island setting at the Madrid court in 1635. What effect did this have on the way the adaptation was staged? De Grieck did not likely have any records of how Lotti had staged E*l mayor encanto, amor* in Madrid, and the original play was not performed in Brussels, as far as we know.[24] How, then, was the adaptation staged?

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21 See Wilder 1953, 19–26; Leavitt 1961, 272–276. Cf. Vergeer 2020d, 100. In this article, I did not yet take this into account, although I hypothesised that domestic animals, such as the swine that Circe traditionally transformed Ulysses' crew into, were in fact alive and were brought onstage with the actors.

22 Nowhere does the text say that the play was performed at the 'Brusselsche Toonneel-burg/ Thoonneelburgh.' However, De Grieck's play *Samson* was performed there around 1660 as per the titlepage: 'Verthoont op de Brusselsche Toonneel-burg.' Wouther's *Den volmaeckten ridder* was also performed there around 1665 according to the titlepage ('Verthoont op de Brusselsche Toonneel-burg').

23 De Grieck 1668, 6: 'CLARIN. Maets van Ulysses, die dit rouwe landt door-siet, / En het betoovert spits van dit gebergte, vliedt / Van desen Horizon, bemint gy noch het leven, / Keert zee-waerts, wilt geloof' aen dese dieren geven, / Hun teekens wysen uyt dat ons dit noodig is.'

24 Vergeer 2020b.

I discovered that De Grieck based the scenography and worldbuilding of his adaptation on the Italian semi-opera *Ulisse all'isola di Circe* (1650, 'Ulysses on Circe's Island') by the composer Gioseffo Zamponi and librettist Ascanio Amalteo. This opera was, in fact, staged at the Brussels court, and did not have access to a 'natural' environment to enforce the illusion of another fantastical world. Instead, the opera was staged in the Sala Regia of Coudenberg Palace, for which architect Giovanni Battista Angelini built a temporary theatre informed by the newest developments in Italian stage design.[25] The layout of this theatre preferred a frontal view of the spectators, and made room for a proscenium arch, coulisse décor, and a deep stage. Specifically, the proscenium arch accentuated the impression that the world beyond is separate from our own (illusion of the fourth wall). The proscenium arch functions as the frame of a painting by marking a physical border, which also delineates that the space within the frame is different from the space outside of the frame, enforcing the perception that there exists a 'distance' between the spectators' world and the fictional world.[26]

How do we know, though, that De Grieck also saw a performance of *Ulisse all'isola di Circe* and consequently based the scenography for his adaptation on that of this opera if it was only performed at court? As in Madrid for Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*, the citizens of Brussels were allowed to attend the reprise of Zamponi's opera when it was performed at the palace four more times in 1655. By way of encore, Juan Pérez de Montalbán's original play *El valiente Nazareno* (c. 1638, 'The Valiant Nazarene') was performed by Spanish military officers directly after *Ulisse all'isola di Circe*.[27] De Grieck also adapted this play as *Samson, oft edel-moedighen Nazareen* (1660, 'Samson, or Magnanimous Nazarene') for the Brussels stage, which suggests that he had attended both performances. Thus, the influence of the performances at the Brussels court can be felt in these adaptations by De Grieck.

He implemented, for instance, scenographic elements from *Ulisse all'isola di Circe*, including Circe's 'giardino delitioso,' which De Grieck incorporated into the third act of his adaptation when the *gracioso* Clarín is looking for the giant Brutamonte. He interpreted the garden as a 'wildlife park with cypresses,' or a *locus amoenus*, a conception that had been completely absent in Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*.[28]

25 Vergeer 2020c, 320–322.

26 Eversmann 1996, 19, 136–137.

27 Langvik-Johannessen and Porteman 1996, 284; Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 452; De Paepe 2015, 147.

28 Vergeer 2020c, 326–327. See also De Grieck 1668, 37: 'Het Thooneel verbeeldt een' warande van Cypresseboomen'. Calderón de la Barca 1641, fol. 13r.

With the wildlife park De Grieck actually did try to incorporate a 'found environment' into his play, albeit not to the same effect. The Dutch word 'warande' that he used to describe the wildlife park could refer to the Warande in Brussels, a historical hunting area near Coudenberg Palace, which is today the Warandepark (Parc de Bruxelles). Thus, De Grieck connects the play's fictional space to a real location familiar to his Brussels audience: theatrical space and non-fictional place fuse together as one.[29]

These scenographic similarities and the direct relationship between original *comedias* staged at court and their adaptations staged at the Brussels Public Theatre demonstrate that the same Italian layout must have been adopted for the city's public theatre.[30] During the fifth act of De Grieck's adaptation, the text's stage directions indicate that the décor is to be changed through a so-called *changement à vue*. As such, the eruption of Mount Etna (called 'berg Gibel' in the text) and the destruction of Circe's island Trinacria in the final scenes were made possible by improvements in stage design. These technical improvements meant that the animal transformations could happen for the first time before the spectators' eyes, although *vraisemblance* demanded that they were often redirected to the coulisses.[31] We may expect that the aim of these illusions was to capture the spectators' eyes and to evoke their admiration and fascination for that which was represented before them.[32]

Animals in Amsterdam

In the parallel adaptation *De toveres Circe* (1670, 'The Sorceress Circe') by De Leeuw, which was staged in the Amsterdam Public Theatre for a remarkably long period, from 1670 until 1765, the magical world of Circe's island was conjured not so much by appealing to real places, such as the Warande in Brussels, but by the characters: the Dutch Clarín likewise stresses that Ulysses and his crew arrived in a magical land. This time however, it is an enchanted forest, invoking the familiar yet mysterious enchanted forest of fairy tales, folklore, and pieces of Renaissance literature such as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–1596) where, coincidentally, the protagonists are also metamorphosed. As De Leeuw's Clarín says:[33]

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29 Vergeer 2020b, esp. 324–327, and 2020c, 97–100. I did not yet hypothesise this in these articles, but the implications are far-reaching for the audience's perception of time, space, and place, and the idea of *vraisemblance* central to the articles.

30 De Paepe 2011, 247–248, and 2015, 148.

31 Vergeer 2020b, 322–329, and 2020c, 103–104, 111.

32 Castillo Pascual 2015, 85–87.

33 Frye 2000, 182.

> Hear me, compatriots of Ulysses, who now walk
> Boldly and bravely through this enchanted forest,
> Leave this horrid region, and wild and savage places,
> Return quickly to the ship: Ulysses wants to depart.[34]

However, the 'magical' illusions were likely also supported by the structural alterations that the Amsterdam Public Theatre underwent in 1665 to enable larger productions with more 'kunst en vliegwerk' (i.e., spectacle; see Chapter 2). The stage size was doubled (becoming deeper) and coulisse décor added to allow quick stage resetting between scenes (see Fig. 1.3 and Fig. 1.4, following pages). The new structural design, however, also suggested that there exists a separate world beyond the borders of the stage; this same effect was discussed above with respect to Brussels Public Theatre's proscenium arch.[35] De Leeuw clearly played to this theatrical redevelopment and its new possibilities for baroque illusions. On the titlepage of the printed edition, the new stage features were presented as clear selling points: the titlepage states that the play is performed 'With Artifice and Animals' ('Met Konstwerken en Gedierten').[36]

The auditorium also underwent heavy changes. From then on until the destructive fire of 1772, the parterre had been changed. The architect Philips Vingboons added benches before the stage, creating more seating for the middle class here, and moving the cheaper standing room to the back of the auditorium. The benches provided a frontal view of the stage, the orchestra was moved directly between the stage and front row, and a new proscenium arch was added to more distinctly separate audience and stage.

The audience's frontal view of the stage also helped to generate more spectator attention and further immersed them in the performance. Theatre makers throughout Europe wanted to control the crowds, as demonstrated by Paul Menzer's article on the subject of crowd control in early modern England specifically.

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34 De Leeuw 1670, 4: 'Hoort Medebroeders van Ulysses, die nu stout / En moedig henen loopt door dit getovert woudt, / Verlaat dit naar gewest, en wilde en woeste plekken, / Koomt weder ras te scheep, Ulysses wil vertrekken.' It is important to note that the choice to translate 'getovered' here as 'enchanted' only expresses the effect of magic, whereas the original Dutch word indicates that Circe has conjured the forest as in an illusion. However, Clarín cannot yet know within the plot that the forest has been conjured. The translation 'enchanted' seems, therefore, closer to the horrid ('naar') feeling he has, perhaps a result of the magic he senses around him.

35 Vanhaesebrouck 2015, 125; Oomen-Delhaye 2019, 145–151.

36 De Leeuw 1670, fol. *1r.

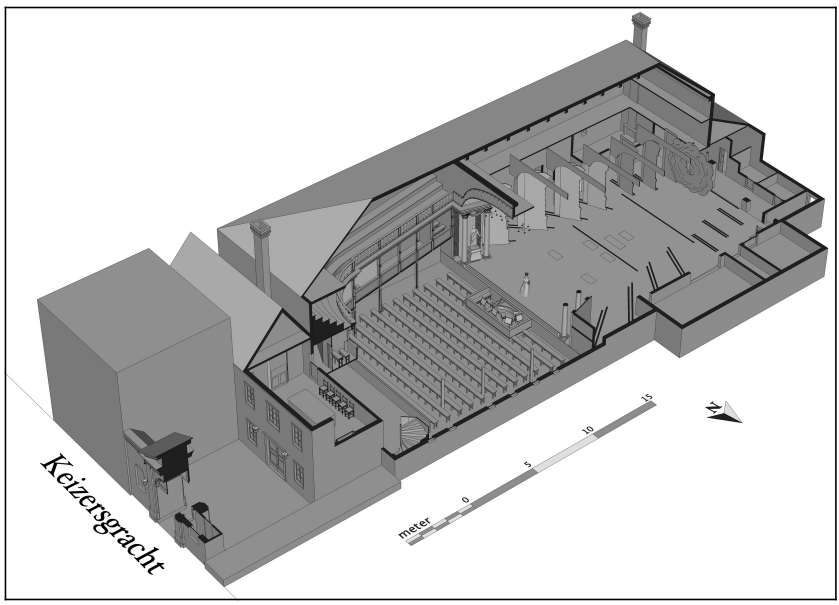

FIG. 1.3 Cross-section (computer visualisation) of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, 1665–1772 COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM).

He showed that London's theatre industry endeavoured to domesticate spectators by gathering bodies in one place and creating space among them, 'sanitizing the crowd of its violent potentialities and rendering them habitually complacent.'[37] The addition of benches to the parterre in the eighteenth century was employed in France to regulate the crowd by preventing them from walking around. Amber Oomen-Delhaye asserts however that the Amsterdam Public Theatre was a century earlier with this measure when Vingboons added benches to the parterre in 1665.[38] This effectively turned the audiences across Europe into an *audience*, 'a collective entity that is brought into existence by the theatrical venue itself', which 'dramatists might know and appeal to (and even create) as a group.'[39] Consequently, this concept of the audience as a collective entity also favours the performative authority of the play. With this organising structure in place, the baroque illusion had the greatest possible effect on spectators, who were then suitably corralled to focus on the onstage action rather than that of their neighbours.

37 Menzer 2011, 24.
38 Oomen-Delhaye 2019, 151.
39 Myhill and Low 2011, 2.

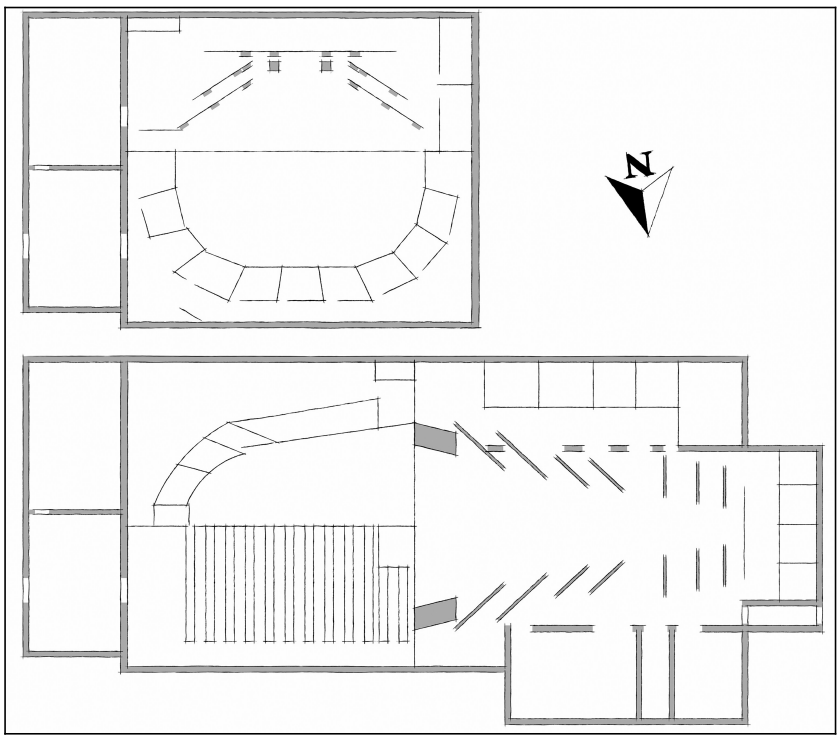

FIG. 1.4 Ground plan of the Amsterdam Public Theatre in 1638 (above) and 1665 (below) COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM).

In De Leeuw's Amsterdam adaptation, costumes played an especially important role in the presentation of baroque illusions: they were part of the 'artifice and animals' credited on the text's titlepage.[40] Although the play's artifice also clearly referred to the newly installed coulisse décor and stage machinery, I have considered elsewhere whether the information 'With [...] Animals' meant that live pigs were used during the Amsterdam performance to represent the crew Circe metamorphosed into pigs.[41] This would have surely elicited a comical reaction from the spectators, especially if the pigs ran around the stage, getting in the way of the actors, and perhaps eating their costumes. Instead, the use of animal costumes made of real animal skin and taxidermy mounts may have created enough of a lifelike

40 De Leeuw 1670, fol. *1r.

41 De Paepe 2015, 148; Vergeer 2020d, 104.

effect, alongside the advantage that the actors would be better able to represent the magical liminality between human and animal of the transformed characters.[42]

The surviving records of the Amsterdam Public Theatre show that it possessed animal costumes of a monkey and a dolphin, animal hides of bears and lions, as well as several undesignated furs, taxidermy mounts of two horses, a peacock, an elephant, a camel, a large eagle, two pairs of swans, an owl, and a dragon. These were likely all used in the productions of De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe* to represent its animals.[43] Through this, De Leeuw must have shown the spectators how Circe seemed to magically command everything around her with so much conviction that it was impossible to not be in wonder. Fellow playwright Johannes Serwouters credits De Leeuw with as much:

> In this way, De Leeuw closely follows
> The Ancients, now that he makes Circe
> Shake and thunder in the Theatre,
> That everyone has to be in *wonder*:
> Because the earth shakes on her command:
> What is alive is with a swerve
> Reshaped by her magical powers:
> The animals change their genus.[44]

By qualifying spectators' experiences of seeing Circe's magic as manifestations of wonder, Serwouters calls onto Greco-Roman and Christian traditions that connect wonder to the divine. In the seventeenth century, wonder must be understood as a form of *sacer horror* (divine horror), which as Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt point out indicates 'the religious consternation in which admiration goes together with complete astonishment and fear caused by the belief that the gods or cosmic powers are near, but that contact is at the same time presented as a sanctifying gift.'[45] Otherwise, a Calvinist

42 Vergeer 2020d, 105–110.

43 In a transcript of the theatre's complete inventory of 1688, we find an overview of the taxations on different animal costumes and taxidermy mounts. See Huydecoper c. 1730, inv.nr. 315. See also Vergeer 2020d, 104.

44 Serwouters 1670, fol. *4r: 'Op deze wijz' volgt Leeuw den voet / Der Ouden, nu hy Circe doet / Ter Schouwburg daveren en donderen, / Dat zich een yder moet *verwonderen*. / Want d'aarde siddert op haar wenk: / Wat wezen heeft, word met een' zwenk / Herschapen, door haar toverkrachten: / De dieren wislen van geslachten' (italics mine).

45 Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt 2021, 15.

minister, such as Petrus Wittewrongel (1609–1662) regarded wonder to be more than mere anxiety. Wonder was a sensation that was a contrasted combination of anxiety and awe, of delight and consternation.[46] In case of Circe's enchantments represented in *De toveres Circe*, the divine definition of wonder is clearly foregrounded. Yet, Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt show in their discussion of Amsterdam's City Hall built between 1648 and 1700 that the definition of wonder as a *sacer horror* was used in many secular texts to describe the new building. In those cases, they said wonder was more closely connected to sublime experiences: a 'total shock as well as pure admiration going far beyond everyday experiences,' that are mainly associated 'with powerful, but human, means of persuasion.'[47] In this sense, *admiratio* or wonder is what Stephen Greenblatt has described for the early modern period as 'an instinctive recognition of difference, the sign of heightened attention.' He calls it a sudden surprise of the soul in the face of the new, iterating Descartes.[48] I think that both the religious and secular applications of the concept work very well to understand how *comedia* transported the spectators by means of theatrical illusions and spectacle (see Chapter 2).

However, in studying Dutch adaptations of *comedia nueva* we encounter here a problem: the grand spectacle and magical illusions of *El mayor encanto, amor*, such as those described above, are examples of technical advancements made in baroque theatre during the seventeenth century, both in Spain and the rest of Europe, while most of the *comedias* studied here were performed in the theatres of the Low Countries before they were remodelled in the 1660s. Like in the *corrales* of Madrid, there was no physical barrier between stage and auditorium in these theatres. Nor was there coulisse décor, but rather a thrust-stage platform with a discovery space and two tiring houses on both sides; Lope wrote his *comedias* specifically with this performance situation in mind: the *mise-en-espace* had to be "painted" through clear and minimal use of symbols.[49] In the Low Countries, the rhetoricians used similar stages until the 1660s with two side compartments and a central discovery compartment (see Chapter 2).[50] Thus, most of the *comedias* that were adapted in Dutch and regularly performed in the Amsterdam Public Theatre, the Brussels Public Theatre, or the theatres in Antwerp and Lier were already fit for the Dutch and Flemish stages, which did not have coulisse décor and a proscenium arch.

46 Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt 2021, 16.
47 Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt 2021, 17.
48 Greenblatt 1991, 20.
49 Thacker 2002, 5–6; 2007, 125–126; Ruano de la Haza 2008, 41–45; Kaufmant 2010, 11.
50 De Paepe 2011, 115–125.

The Amsterdam Public Theatre was notably remodelled in 1665 after the so-called *théâtres a l'italienne*, whereas most adaptations appeared in Amsterdam before that time.[51] How then did these *comedias* create similar illusions to those found in the adaptations of *El mayor encanto, amor*? According to DiPuccio and Pepa Castillo Pascual, these illusions and enchantments were in keeping with the baroque *mise-en-scène* and they surely aroused the *admiratio* of all spectators for Calderón and his *comedia de tramoya*.[52] In the absence of the same extensive stage machinery and décor in the Amsterdam Public Theatre before 1665, we also must ask what made the spectators of other, less-elaborate *comedias* marvel in the same way they marvelled at the enchantments in *El mayor encanto, amor*.

Deception of the Eyes?

As the examples of *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* and *De toveres Circe* demonstrate, the spectators entered an environment that meant to present a world that was fictional, but nevertheless created the illusion that the events in the play *could* be real, or even *were* real, when they attended the performance of a *comedia* in one of the theatres of Amsterdam, Antwerp, or Brussels. However, the theatrical illusions did not stand alone, but rather reflected a broader baroque understanding of the world as expressed by the *theatrum mundi* metaphor.

In the *paragone* of poetry and painting ('ut pictura poesis'), seventeenth-century intellectuals considered the arts of music, painting, poetry, and ultimately also theatre, to be related, although there was a hierarchy, which differed depending on the artist defending his specific art. Nevertheless, it was often argued and acknowledged that painting and theatre in particular aimed for the same thing; according to Van Eck and Bussels, 'the theatre, just as the visual arts, pretends something natural and therefore infects the true and natural by lies and deceit.'[53] With respect to painting, art historian Eric Jan Sluijter asserts that people were acutely aware that art could conquer and capture the eyes of the onlooker by means of the power of what is *seemingly* real. Sluijter writes that the Dutch painter Adriaen van de Venne thought that

51 Amir 1996, 258–259. Europe's *théâtres à l'italienne* were based on the baroque theatres of Italy as regards their layout, architecture, and the way that stage machinery and spectacle were used to entertain spectators.

52 DiPuccio 1987, 732; Castillo Pascual 2015, 85.

53 Van Eck and Bussels 2010, 213.

painting aroused an intense longing 'precisely because the image seems almost real, yet is nothing more than a semblance created out of nothing—presenting our eyes with enticements that do not really exist.' Hence, great importance was ascribed to the persuasive '"visual deception" (oogbedrog), a "semblance without being" (schijn sonder sijn).'[54]

In the same context, Sluijter discusses how Dutch intellectual and philosopher Jan de Brune de Jonge writes in his *Wetsteen der vernuften* (1644, 'Whetstone of Ingenuity') that we as humans in fact enjoy seeing things that do not really exist. About theatre specifically, De Brune de Jonge writes that we enjoy seeing acted sorrow, whereas the real thing is unbearable. Following the stoic idea that the heart is the seat of the mind and processes information received from the bodily senses, De Brune de Jonge supposes that the joy we receive from watching a play is primarily emotional, as it originates in the heart. When the heart is fed with reason, we start to truly enjoy what we behold:

> [...] to gape at things that do not exist as though they actually do exist, and to be influenced by them to such an extent that we—of our own accord—harmlessly make believe they exist; how can that not give us pleasure? Certainly it gives great joy when one is deceived by a false likeness of things. [...] *we do not receive pleasure through the naked vision and hearing; and therefore, we listen to the feigned weeping with a curious desire, while we often detest the candid wailing* [...] since the joy, which we receive from plays, music, and similar things, solely originates in the heart, which when fed with reason adores and is astonished by something in which art and pleasantness is mixed.[55]

54 Sluijter 2000, 13.

55 De Brune de Jonge 1644, 343–345. This translation is based on Sluijter 2000, 13 and expanded on by myself. The original reads: '[...] aan dingen, die niet en zijn zich zoo te vergapen, als ofze waren, en daar zoo van geleit te worden dat wy ons zelven, zonder schade, diets te maken datze zijn; hoe kan dat tot de verlusting onze gemoederen niet dienstigh wezen? Zeker, het vervroolikt yemand buiten maat, wanneer hy door een valsche gelikenis der dingen wort bedrogen. [...] *ons, door't bloote gezicht en gehoor, geen genucht wort toegebracht; en daarom is het dat wy't gemaakt geween met een zonderlinge lust aanhooren, daar wy nochtans van't ongeveinzde gekrijt een afkeer hebben* [...] het vermaak, 't geen wy uit schouwspeelen, musijk, en diergelike dingen meer, ontfangen, enkelik uit het gemoed hervoortkomt, dat met reden begaaft, yetwes daar konst, en aardicheid, mee vermengt is, bemint en verwondert.'

From this, Sluijter concludes that if the attempt to achieve a lifelike effect ('als 't leven') is successful, and if this closely corresponds with the viewer's experienced or imagined world, they will be more convinced by the image, becoming involved or immersed into that imagined world.[56] Sluijter's assertions also apply to theatre: De Brune de Jonge explicitly discusses painting and theatre in conjunction, which is fitting, given that painters were involved in stage design, creating entire worlds from cardboard that were persuasive visual deceptions.[57] As such, theatre reflected the idea that spectators lived in a world in which they were confronted with deception and illusion on a daily basis, says Van Stipriaan.[58] Karel Vanhaesebrouck agrees with this, noting that early modern baroque theatre capitalises the gaze of the viewer. Baroque is in this regard a visual culture aimed towards the viewer's experience, 'a paradoxical experience, which both tries to immerse the spectator in an experience and to play with the rules of its own system of representation.' This kind of art 'experiments with the porous distinction between reality and fiction, between theatre stage and the world *out there*'; what happens on the stage relates to the spectators' social and physical world, and vice versa.[59]

With its origins in imagination, *comedia* existed in a fictional realm that appealed to the imaginative powers of the human mind in a way unparalleled in other drama: as Lope wrote, 'the plot of tragedy comes from history and that of comedy from the imagination.'[60] With regard to *vraisemblance*, which underpins much of Lope's *Arte nuevo*, the playwright 'merely wants to ensure that the audience is not alienated' by 'disqualifying impossible events from the stage.'[61] When playwrights began adapting *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries, the critiques from classicistic dramatists, who held a more stringent interpretation of the principle of *vraisemblance*, likewise began, and would grow in intensity as it neared the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century.[62]

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56 Sluijter 2000, 13. Kwak argued the same for the kitchen still-life in the North-Netherlandish art of the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. He also emphasised the comic and farcical elements in these Dutch paintings: the illusions and the deception had to offer pleasure and were elements of play (2014, esp. 34–39, 210–212).

57 Gibson 1981, esp. 432; Bruijnen 2003, esp. 250; Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 31–32, 411, 561–562; Bussels 2010, *passim*.

58 Van Stipriaan 1996, 10.

59 Vanhaesebrouck 2015, 121, 124–125.

60 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 111–112. The translation is by Thacker (2008, 112); the original reads: 'por argumento la tragedia tiene / la historia, y la comedia el fingimiento.'

61 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 284–285, cited in Thacker 2008, 116.

62 See esp. Nil Volentibus Arduum [c. 1678] 1989, 177–180.

Theatre Architecture and the Influence on the Eyes

As discussed above, verisimilitude was an important topic in the seventeenth century. With the desire for grander spectacle, more elaborate installations, and the continued interest in the idea of *theatrum mundi*, the Amsterdam Public Theatre was refurbished in the season 1664/1665. This theatre was, however, not the theatre at which most of the *comedias* studied here premiered, nor was it the theatre for which Vondel originally invoked the *theatrum mundi* metaphor. In 1638, the original Amsterdam theatre was built after a design of the architect Jacob van Campen. His theatre had been relatively mindful of the lower and middle classes with its big parterre, although it was still surrounded by loges that could be closed off with curtains (see Fig. 1.5, Fig. 1.6, and Fig. 1.7 below). As a result, between 1638 and 1664 the cheapest places were directly in front of the stage, although Amsterdam's gentry and urban elite could still physically distance themselves from the populace. Furthermore, Van Campen designed a *scaenae frons* (stage wall), which he had seen at several locations during his travels in Italy, such as at the *Teatro Olimpico* built by Andrea Palladio in Vicenza in 1585 (cf. Fig. 1.8).[63] Van Campen's design for the *scaenae frons* is, however, a reflection of local rhetoricians' practices, although like Palladio's *scaenae frons* it gave the impression of a Roman palace. This lack of a frame to separate the fictional world of the play from reality, means that there is no defined border between auditorium and stage; the illusion of the fourth wall does not apply.[64] This also means that on such a baroque stage, different places and times can exist side by side, sometimes within the same physical space, while spectators are invited to see what cannot be seen and use their imagination.[65] I argue in the following sections that Van Campen's theatre was, in fact, the perfect space to stage the Spanish *comedias*, especially those which were adapted in Dutch before the mid-seventeenth century. On such a stage, the many changes of locations and even locations that are separated by hundreds of kilometres, such as they occur in *comedia nueva*, could easily be represented.

63 Weissman 1911, 461; Hunningher 1958, 112–114; Hummelen 1967, 3–5. Hunningher demonstrated that Van Campen was not directly influenced by Palladio's *Teatro Olimpico* for his own theatre, although the use of a *scaenae frons* does vaguely remind us of the theatres that Van Campen saw during his Italian travels, including Palladio's theatre in Vicenza. Hummelen says that at least the possibility to use the stage in the Amsterdam Public Theatre as a monotopic stage, such as the one in the *Teatro Olimpico*, is a demonstration of Van Campen's experiences in Italy.

64 Vanhaesebrouck 2015, 125. This was especially the case in France. During performances at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, spectators were seated on the stage; see Hunningher 1958, 145.

65 Vanhaesebrouck 2015, 125–127.

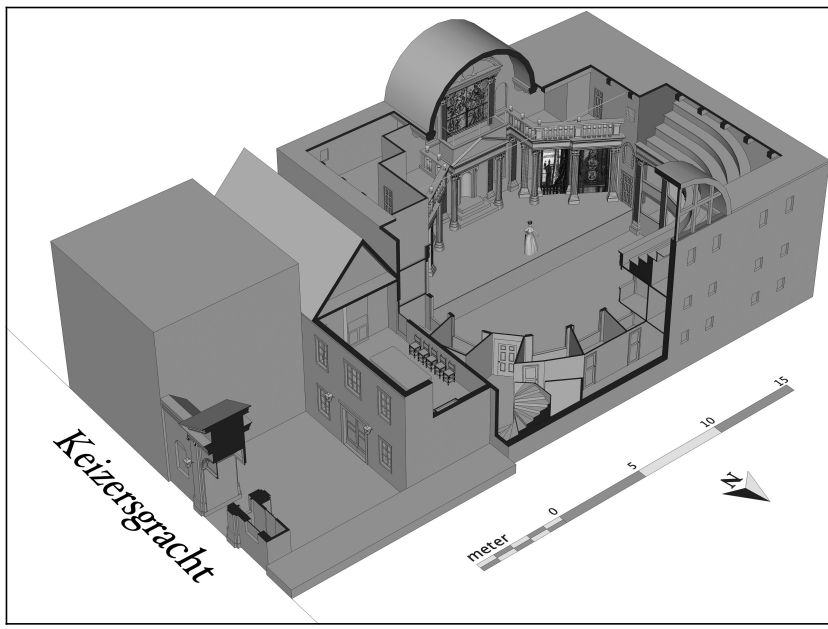

FIG. 1.5 Cross-section (computer visualisation) of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, 1638–1664
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

FIG. 1.6 Computer visualisation of the Amsterdam Public Theatre's auditorium, 1638–1664
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

FIG. 1.7 Computer visualisation of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, 1638–1664. View of the stage
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

FIG. 1.8 Interior of Teatro Olimpico (Vicenza), stage wall (*scaenae frons*) and stage
PHOTO BY DIDIER DESCOUENS 2016 (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The design of Van Campen's theatre also invited theatre visitors to interact with each other. Contrary to Menzer's description of theatre features designed for crowd control, the venue simultaneously allows for audiences of 'individuals who never cease to function distinctly and who never leave behind the particularities that will shape their responses as much as anything they see on the stage.' Furthermore, it allows spectators to interact with what is represented on stage in different ways on the basis of their past experiences and the personal viewing practices that they brought to the early modern theatre.[66] Endeavouring to restructure the theatrical space, the venue also becomes a hierarchical space as the audience is divided between the groundlings, who are perceived as uncontrolled, untrained audiences, and those who could afford seats in the loges, who are effectively the restrained or intended audience of the play. This is, however, not true of *comedia nueva*, which relied on public approval and therefore appealed to more common tastes.[67] The design of Van Campen's theatre with its big parterre likewise appealed directly to these common tastes.

This does not mean that this style of theatre design was not called into question. In France, for example, the 'Querelle du *Cid*' drew attention to whether common audience members should influence the repertoire and could evaluate the quality of a play. Critics thought that the audiences should be "domesticated" as would later be the trend. The quarrel concerned Corneille's *Le Cid* (1635), an adaptation of the Spanish play *Las mocedades del Cid* (1605–1615, 'The Younger Years of the Cid'), written by Valencian playwright Guillén de Castro y Bellvís in two parts, of which the first part served as the source for *Le Cid*. The French discussion also affected Dutch theatre life. Corneille's adaptation would in turn serve as the source of Johan van Heemskerck's *De verduytste Cid* (1641, 'The "Dutchified" Cid'), which meant that the text was subject to changes made by Corneille following French dramatic practices.

For my discussion of the Dutch *comedias* as they were adapted, partly on the basis of French poetics, I rely mostly on what Clotilde Thouret argued for the 'Querelle du *Cid*.' She stated that in the 'Querelle du *Cid*,' the viewer's gaze was brought into concordance with the architecture of the theatre space: as your social station ruled your place in the theatre, what you could see depended on whether you had to stand in the main court or whether you could comfortably enjoy the play from one of the few loges while seated. Your place in the theatre ruled, therefore, not only your visual perception of *Le Cid*, but your aesthetic perception as well. According to Georges de

66 Myhill and Low 2011, 2.

67 McKendrick 1989, 74.

Scudéry (1601–1667), from the loges the upper classes could take some reflective (and reasonable) distance from the play and see it with all its poetical faults, while the populace could not. The critics believed that proximity to the theatrical performance made it impossible for the spectators to recognise that their eyes deceived them and, thus, they could not distance themselves from the spectacular event, nor reasonably reflect on it.[68]

This was perhaps one of the reasons that Johan van Heemskerck never intended for his translation of Corneille's play to be performed or published. However, the publisher Nicolaes van Ravesteyn (according to his own words) convinced Van Heemskerck to publish his own version, after a pirated edition of Van Heemskerck's autograph was published and the play was made public for it to be performed.[69] Once *De verduytste Cid* was performed in the Amsterdam Public Theatre, it quickly grew in popularity to become the venue's most successful *comedia*, and the third most popular play overall behind Vondel's *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1638) and Vos' *Aran en Titus* (1641), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1589–1592).[70]

The 'Querelle du Cid' lays, however, bare one of the features of *comedia nueva*: it is visual drama that relies on the spectators' willingness to be immersed in a fictional world. Then, the spectators' experience becomes more important than an aesthetic reflection. Corneille's attackers clearly had a problem with the spectators' response to the play and tried to domesticate the crowd. They claimed that the enthusiasm of the audience was so great that their applause disturbed the perception of people who were, in fact, capable of aesthetic judgement. Their criticism reflects ideas of the crowd as having a '"group mind" whose working does not echo that of the individual.'[71] In 1605, Francis Bacon had already hinted at this when he observed that 'the minds of men in company are more open to affection and impression than when alone.'[72] Early modern commentators and civic officials were both impressed and concerned by 'the melting into collective consciousness of individual subjectivity.'[73] The packing together of men, women, and children into a theatre's designated space—or alternatively, in a circle around a stage in the market square—establishes a group identity; it was therefore the aim of early modern civic officials and dramatists to

68 Thouret 2013, 100–101.
69 Van Ravesteyn 1641, fol. A2r.
70 ONSTAGE 2015, Analysis/Popularity charts.
71 Menzer 2011, 23.
72 Bacon [1605] 1926, 116.
73 Menzer 2011, 23.

'turn a collective into a collective noun': to turn individual audience members into a singular audience, which could be successfully instructed, despite the impossibility to actually fully monitor the audience's behaviour or response as the 'Querelle du *Cid*' demonstrates.[74]

Appealing to Dutch Eyes in the Early 17th Century

The discrepancy between the desire to create "an audience" and the existence of a plurality of "audiences" can also demonstrate how the Amsterdam Public Theatre functioned before and after Vingboons implemented his structural alterations. It can also signal an effort of Amsterdam Public Theatre's directors to domesticate the audience. In this section, I demonstrate that this domestication is deeply rooted in early modern ideas of how spectators can be most effectively seduced. To do so, I discuss Theodore Rodenburgh's poetic treatise *Eglentiers Poëtens Borst-weringh* (1619, 'The Eglantine's Defence of Poets'), in which he was the first in the Low Countries to vocalise that an audience should be entertained both through the eyes and the ears. As the first adaptor of *comedia nueva* in the Dutch language area, we may assume that these poetic thoughts, which underpin Rodenburgh's complete dramatic oeuvre,[75] also formed the basis for Rodenburgh's adaptations of Lope's three *comedias*, *El perseguido* (1590, 'The Persecuted'), *El Molino* (before 1593, 'The Miller'), and *La escolástica celosa* (1596–1602, 'The Jealous Student Body'), and of *La venganza honrosa* (1616, 'The Honourable Vengeance') by Gaspar Aguilar. Almost fifty years later, theatre director Jan Vos would write something similar in the preface to his play *Medea* (1667). While at the helm of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, Vos was responsible for, or at least involved in, the materialisation of many adaptations of Spanish *comedias*.

Rodenburgh was the first Dutch adaptor of the Spanish *comedia* to implement Lope's advice from the *Arte nuevo* to cater towards the audiences' tastes. Rodenburgh addresses in his work that there indeed exists a friction between the plurality of "audiences" and the collective "audience" and he relates this to the act of spectating a play. In his *Eglentiers Poëtens Borst-weringh*, he places great emphasis on the role of the eyes in the immersive experience of a play. He distinguishes between a play's ultimate goal of delightful instruction (Horace's principle of *utile dulci*) aimed at the auditor ('aenhoorder') and the poet's task to move the spectator ('aenschouwer' or 'aenziender'). Rodenburgh utilises two different approaches to the *general* auditors

74 Menzer 2011, 23.

75 Abrahamse 1997, esp. 19–30.

('ghemeene aenhoorders'), that is 'spectating auditors,' who want to be seduced first through the eyes, before they can be affected through the ears.[76] Rodenburgh's aim as a playwright is, therefore, not in the first place to stimulate aesthetical judgement in spectators, but rather to encourage moral judgement, which must be brought about by pleasant and visual stimuli.

The friction that Rodenburgh discusses here is typical of this period and demonstrates how an author had to manoeuvre between poetic ideals and the desire for commercial success. This dilemma is also addressed by Nicolas Cronk while discussing the concept of reader response. Cronk made clear that in the early modern period, Horace's principle of *utile dulci*, which he considered in his influential *Ars poetica*, recurs often in the early modern period in, for example, the writings of Scaliger, Sir Philip Sidney, and Molière.[77] Yet, this principle of delightful instruction implies a rather passive role for the spectators; it reduces theatrical performance to delightful instruction which is, in a sense, a one-way street.[78] This is confirmed by Horace's dismissal of readers with the remark that 'the ranks of elder citizens chase things off the stage if there's no good meat in them, and the high-spirited youngsters won't vote for dry poetry.'[79] Subsequently, we see how influential Horace's neglect of the reader has been, as this is echoed in Rodenburgh's evaluation of the taste of youngsters in his own time: 'Not withholding that the randy youngsters sometimes take more delight in seeing something sloppy, than to hear something dignified.'[80]

For the early modern period, however, it would be misleading to take at face value this apparent neglect of the reader. With regard to reader response, Cronk points out that literary critics of the Renaissance and seventeenth century built on the 'rhetorical inheritance' of Horace, Aristotle, and Longinus to address the subject of reader-response.[81] This may foster a view of the early modern reader or spectator as the object of the text's or play's 'affective impact', but I follow Cronk in his argument that there existed a fine awareness of 'reader-competence', taste, and emotive impact among readers, spectators, and theorists.[82]

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76 Rodenburgh clearly links the idea of *utile dulci* to the ears, while his idea of 'movere' is expressly linked to the eyes. See, e.g., Rodenburgh 1619, 29, 50–51, 212.

77 Cronk 1999, 199–200.

78 Cronk 1999, 200.

79 Horace 1972, vv. 341–342; see also Cronk 1999, 199.

80 Rodenburgh 1619, 189: 'Niet tegenstaende dat de geyle jeucht zomwylen meer behaghen raepen yets slordichs te zien, als yets deftichs te hooren'.

81 Cronk 1999, 199.

82 Cronk 1999, 204.

This notion can also be witnessed in Rodenburgh's own theoretical work. The playwright argued that the spectator should be moved ('movere' in Latin, 'beweghen' in Dutch) for a play to have any effect at all. Thus, he asserts that 'moving is as much appreciated as instruction, because who can learn something, if he is not moved with the will for instruction?'[83] Here, he reiterates Sidney's words from *The Defence of Poesy* (1595), where the Englishman writes 'that moving is of a higher degree than teaching [...] For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught?'[84] In this regard, theatre was an excellent medium. These playwrights demonstrated this by means of the same example of the Greek tyrant Alexander of Pherae, who was moved by the fiction of the theatre, although he remained unmoved by his own cruelty.[85]

By this, Rodenburgh (and Sidney) hold that theatrical illusions can affect—move—spectators, after which they can also be instructed. Sidney wrote, furthermore, that 'with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration,' spectators are taught about 'the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded.'[86] Meanwhile, without making explicit which passions must be evoked for instruction to occur, Rodenburgh seemingly communicates that the heart should be moved by all emotions to this aim.[87]

It may be clear that Rodenburgh expressly focused on the active engagement of spectators through their eyes. Whether a play should primarily focus on the senses or the mind was grounds for debate, however. And in the debate of active emotional participation versus delightful but passive instruction, the critics stressed the deception of the eyes, while spectators underline their passionate and attentive engagement.[88] Responding to that debate, Rodenburgh wrote that 'some' poets—perhaps even including Lope de Vega—make never-ending concessions to common audiences: 'It is true that some [poets] give in to strange ways regarding their plays, as long as the common auditor jubilates and laughs.'[89] However, Rodenburgh thinks

83 Rodenburgh 1619, 22: 'bewegingh is zo hoog te achten, als leering, want wien kan yets leeren, zo hy niet beweeght is tot de leering?'

84 Sidney [1595] 2002, 94. See also Witstein 1964, 229–247. Sonja Witstein showed that Rodenburgh's treatise is an adaptation of Sidney's *The Defence of Poesy* (1595) and Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553).

85 Rodenburgh 1619, 134.

86 Sidney [1595] 2002, 98.

87 Rodenburgh 1619, 28.

88 Thouret 2013, 104.

89 Rodenburgh 1619, 189: ''t Is waer dat zommighen niet ontzien op hun toonelen aen te rechten vreemde grillen, als zy daer door de ghemeene aenhoorders maer kunnen doen juyghen en schat'ren.'

it is more laudable when eyes are filled with tears from sad examples, and when the hearts are moved by moralising acts. Meanwhile, one should shy away from employing a certain way of speaking, which is better not repeated for its shameful character.[90]

Appealing to Dutch Eyes in the Second Half of the 17th Century

Fifty years later (in 1667), Vos put an even heavier emphasis on the eyes than did Rodenburgh. The structural changes to the Amsterdam Public Theatre that Vingboons implemented were instigated by Vos and were meant to improve the immersive experience of spectators.[91] Vos showed what he envisioned for the new theatre with *Inwyding van de Schouburg t'Amsterdam* (1665, 'Inauguration of the Amsterdam Theatre') and notably with the abovementioned *Medea*, in which he used stage machinery to let Medea fly through the air, creating the illusion that Medea actually used magic. Vos did not conform to any of the stringent prescriptions of contemporary theatre, for which his critics considered him to be a *poeta vulgaris*: a poet who aims to please the rabble ('grauw' in Dutch) by vulgar means. Many also found Vos conceited, because he thought to know better than the Greco-Roman poets.[92] And indeed, Vos did not think that the classical poets should be given authority without question, for which reason he repeats a Roman saying in his *Medea* that 'He who is in Rome has to comply with Roman customs; and thus if you are elsewhere, then comply with the customs of the place where you are.'[93] He then concludes that Dutch people, who have a different disposition than the Romans, live in a different place, which justifies that as a playwright he complies with the tastes of the people among whom he lives.[94] Lope and Vos both approached their audience in a similar fashion by catering to its tastes, believing that a play should fit its environment. This consequently meant that *comedias*, when translated in Dutch, were often changed as well to fit the Dutch tastes, for Amsterdam is no Rome, but also no Madrid.

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90 Rodenburgh 1619, 189.

91 Strictly speaking, it was Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh who, as prospective executive director, proposed the Amsterdam Public Theatre's redesign to the regents of the city's orphanage and the old men's retirement home. After intervening, Jan Vos had the opportunity to redesign the theatre himself. See Blom 2021a, 348–354.

92 Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1978, 17.

93 Vos 1667, fol. *4r: '*Wie te Roomen is moet zich na de Roomsche zeeden voegen: zoo gy elders zijt, zoo voeg u na de plaats daar gy zijt.*'

94 Vos 1667, fol. *4r.

As director of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, Vos' adage was 'het zien gaat voor 't zeggen' ('seeing precedes speaking'),[95] which vividly captures the essence of Vos' perspective on theatre-making. He writes: 'for I believe that the mimetic homicide (when violently represented) can move the tempers of the people by seeing it.'[96] He continues that 'hearing about something moves the temper less, than the things one has seen with one's eyes and have been taken in by the beholder.' He illustrates this by mentioning Coster's play *Polyxena* (1619). He recounts how spectators 'wept no less than the amount of artificial blood one could see running down the stage.'[97] Moreover, Vos argued that 'he who wants to keep the people coming to the Public Theatre, must bind their eyes to the stage by the means of appropriate and enchanting strings.'[98] Vos was thus a man of spectacle, fancying himself a manipulator of the eyes.

To stage such vivid scenes more convincingly through new theatre techniques and technologies, Vos instigated the refurbishment of the Amsterdam Public Theatre. This also enabled the performance of several highly visual *comedias*, such as De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe*. Although this play had already been translated by Jacob Baroces in 1664, it seems likely that it could not be staged in the old Amsterdam Public Theatre of 1638 due to its heavy reliance on stage machinery, as can be read in the preface of the play's text.[99] Furthermore, Vos' planned refurbishments sought to make the plays that were already staged on a regular basis (that is to say, the repertoire plays), more enjoyable.[100]

Similarly to Vos, another playwright, Dirck Pietersz Heynck, expressed in his preface to *Don Louis de Vargas* (1668), an adaptation of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza's *El tejedor de Segovia* (1619) , that he had tried to 'comply as best as possible with our drama [i.e., drama as customary in the 1660s], as to pleasure the eyes of spectators by the characters' action, and their transformations in passions.'[101] Heynck explains

95 Vos 1667, fol. *2v.

96 Vos 1667, fols. *2v–*3r: '[...] want ik geloof dat de naagebootse menschemoordt, alsze stark uitgebeeldt wordt, de gemoederen van het volk door het zien kan beweegen.'

97 Vos 1667, fol. *3r: '[...] het gehoorde raakt min het gemoedt, dan 't gene men met zijn oogen gezien heeft, en van den ziender zelf ingenoomen wordt. [...] men zagh de traanen niet min uit d'oogen dan het nagebootste bloedt langs het Tooneel vloeien.'

98 Vos 1667, fol. *4r: 'Wie het volk in de Schouwburg wil houden, moet hun oogen met de koorden van gevoege-lijke bekoorelijkheeden aan het Tooneel binden.'

99 De Leeuw 1670, fols. *3r–*3v.

100 Nevertheless, we must remind ourselves that Vingboons' redesign was also aimed at crowd control, at the same time that Vos and the other *comedia* playwrights tried to please spectators.

101 Heynck 1668, fols. *2r–*2v: 'voor my ik trachte maer het op't beste mogelijk na ons Toneel te voe-

that he has in no way followed the urgent necessity (*necessitas urgens*; 'nootdwang') of the theatre laws which classical authors had devised, because they also followed the customs of their time:

> I have not bound myself to any theatre law;
> The Ancients did it like they understood it then:
> I do not follow their urgent necessity, but I conform to the current time,
> Which, after the demand of the case, does not suffer stipulations.
> One ought to caress the eye and the ears together through play,
> Or else reading brings equal pleasure as the performance.[102]

Heynck makes clear that the aim of theatre should be to captivate the eyes and not to stage a perfectly devised text, because theatre is not comparable to the reading of a book. The theatre laws devised by the classical authors are primarily literary laws of quality, and are completely unsuited for the emotional transformations that an author, such as Heynck, strived for.

In Brussels, the 'Vrye Liefhebbers der Rijmer-konste,' a theatre group established in the 1650s, held a similar position on their theatre as Vos, Rodenburgh, and Heynck. One of its members writes in the preface to Wouthers' *Den volmaekten ridder* (c. 1665, 'The Perfect Knight'), an adaptation of Castro y Bellvís' *El perfecto caballero*, that he thinks that 'the common people are difficult and impossible to appease and to please; it seems to me that they first and foremost should be satisfied.'[103] Furthermore, the anonymous editor writes that all the peculiarities ('vreemdigheden') that he introduced into the play only reaffirm his belief: 'to please the rabble is, however, to displease the learned.'[104] Indeed, the unreasonableness of the people is so great that a play is only pleasurable in their eyes either when it is very bad, or when it is

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gen, om d'oogen der aenschouwers door de werking der Bedrijvers, en hunne veranderingen in hartstoghten, te verlustigen.'

102 Heynck 1668, fol. *2v: ''k Heb my aen tijt noch aen Toneelwet niet gebonden, / D'Aelouden deden het gelijk zy't toen verstonden: / Ik volg hun nootdwang niet, maer voeg my na den tijt, / Die, na den eisch der zaek, meest geen bepaling lijdt. / Men moet door Spel het oog, en d'ooren t'zamen strelen, / Of't lezen brengt zoo veel vermaek aen als het spelen.'

103 'Aen de Wel-edel, achtbare, ende konstlievende Heeren' c. 1665, fol. *3r: 'het gemeyne volck, is moeyelijck en onmogelijck om gepaeyt, en vernoeght te worden, het schiet my toe dat het 't eerst, en voor al dient behaeght te zijn.'

104 'Aen de Wel-edel, achtbare, ende konstlievende Heeren' c. 1665, fol. *3v: 'het grou te vernoeghen is dogh de geletterde misnoeghen.'

exceptionally good: 'Very bad, because this corresponds with their nature and uncivilised people gape at crude painting ['Kladt-schildery'], very good, because even the blind will be aware of the shimmers of the Sun.'[105] However, this author neither writes very bad nor very good plays, but rather appeals to those of the audience who are satisfied with a play of medium quality.[106] The negative tone of this member of the 'Vrye Liefhebbers' is notable particularly in regard to the average theatre visitor of the Brussels Public Theatre where D*en volmaeckten ridder* was also performed. In this, he echoes Lope's rhetoric in the *Arte nuevo*, where the Spanish playwright states that he strives for vulgar applause ('vulgar aplauso') and that he thinks it is fair to speak foolishly ('en necio') to spectators to satisfy their taste because, after all, they pay for the *comedias*.[107] In this context, both in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, theatre makers used *comedia nueva* as a means to bring a current repertoire based on the newest theatrical insights which would appeal to a large audience.

Dismissing the Eyes?

The goal of *comedia nueva* to establish pleasure by titillating the eyes is made apparent again in the way that the Amsterdam society of poets Nil Volentibus Arduum responded to the genre. The society was established in 1669 and rose to an influential position in Amsterdam's theatre life, with two of its members becoming directors of the Amsterdam Public Theatre when it reopened in 1677, after it had been closed for the Disaster Year of 1672, when war broke out with France, Cologne, Münster, and England. Before the society obtained this coveted position, they had reacted against most Spanish plays from 1670 onwards by publishing their own approved adaptations of *comedia*, such as *Het spookend weeuwtje* (1670, 'The Haunting Widow').[108] This play was, furthermore, published with the remark that it was 'Never shown at the Amsterdam Public Theatre' ('Nooit op de Amsterdamsche Schouwburgh vertoont'), expressing that it should not be confused with the version by Adriaen Peys' D*e nacht-*

105 'Aen de Wel-edel, achtbare, ende konstlievende Heeren' c. 1665, fol. *3^{v}: 'Heel slecht, om dat sulcx met sijnen aerdt over een komt, en het lompe volck sich aen Kladt-schildery vergaept, heel goedt, om dat de blinde self oock van de Sonne eenighe schemeringhen ghewaer worden.'

106 'Aen de Wel-edel, achtbare, ende konstlievende Heeren,' c. 1665, fol. *4^{r}.

107 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 45–48. About the negative tone in Lope's *Arte nuevo* and how the playwright turns the negative perception of the people into a positive one, see Thacker 2008, 112–113.

108 Transl. of Calderón, *La dama duende* (1629), after the intermediate text l'*Esprit follet* (1641) by Antoine Le Métel d'Ouville.

spookende joffer (1670, 'The Nightly Haunting Widow'). According to Nil Volentibus Arduum, that unapproved staging had only been performed because of a lack of any *good* plays, for which reason they felt that they had to interfere by publishing their own version.[109] In the dedication, the society expressively vocalised their disapproval of Peys' adaptation for the way that the art of poetry, including the unities of time and place, was mishandled, although this had also been the case in the French intermediate text. In their view, a visit to the Amsterdam Public Theatre had become a vulgar activity demonstrating a certain lack in taste ('smaakeloos') to 'people of knowledge and judgement' ('Lieden van kennis ende oordeel'); naturally, they altogether ignored—even rejected—any value in the judgement of the average theatre visitor from among the populace.[110] They express in their foreword of *Het spookend weeuwtje* their disbelief that the directors of the Amsterdam Public Theatre preferred to stage plays that could hardly be considered masterpieces:

> We think it is very strange that they remain so uncompromising at the Amsterdam Public Theatre, where they know that they can get something good [i.e., plays], if they are willing to ask; and that rather than doing this, they exhibit publicly to all the World their poverty. [...] We cannot suffer that they erect a tyranny over there regarding the judgements of the enthusiasts and connoisseurs, and that they serve spectators much rubbish not worth seeing as if it is something excellent and splendid, making spectators believe that these are the masterpieces the Dutch Art of Poetry is capable of producing.[111]

To what, precisely, did Nil Volentibus Arduum object? And what can this new movement in the 1670s tell us about the nature and the development of *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries up until this point?

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109 See Nil Volentibus Arduum 1670, fols. *1r, *2v–*3r.

110 Nil Volentibus Arduum 1670, fol. *6v.

111 Nil Volentibus Arduum 1670, fols. *6r–*6v: 'Zeer vreemdt dunkt het ons allen, dat men op de Schouwburgh, daar men weet, dat men wat goedts kan krijgen, als men'er slechts om spreeken wil, zo halssterk blijft; en liever, dan dat te doen, zijne armoede opentlijk aan al de Weereldt ten toon wil stellen, [...] wy konnen niet lijden, dat men daar een dwinglandy zal oprechten over de oordeelen van de Liefhebbers en Konstkenners, en een hoop niet beziens waerde vodden, voor wat treffelijks en fraays den aanschouweren opdisschen, daar door doende gelooven, dat dat de meesterstukken zijn, die de Neederlandsche Dichtkunst maghtigh is voort te brengen.'

One of their many objections was vocalised in the farce *De gelukte list, óf Bedrooge Mof* (first performed in 1682, printed in 1689, 'The Succeeded Scheme, or Deceived Kraut') by the society's most productive member, Andries Pels. Pels criticises the Spanish vogue by means of the character Herman. In the play, Herman responds in a satirical tone towards Eelhart for his desire to only see plays that "tumble much about." If Eelhart wants to be moved, then he should go and see a Spanish play:

> [...] Then rather take a Spanish play,
> Those tumble about naturally, and please the people much.[112]

In the original Dutch, Herman says that these Spanish plays 'woelen uit de natuur,' which is apparently very pleasing to the audience. A derivation of 'woelen,' 'gewoel' means according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (Dictionary of the Dutch Language, abbreviated as 'WNT') as much as 'the agitated and fierce tumbling of thoughts, [and] emotions in people,' that is, inner agitations.[113] Rather than watch this 'gewoel,' Herman says that he likes French plays; that is, plays written according to the dramatic rules of French classicism. Those French plays are neat and follow the aesthetic rules of poetry:

> I rather praise the French plays above any other plays,
> Because they divide their work very neatly and naturally;
> Although they do not tumble about in the eyes, they affect our soul.[114]

Herman makes clear that French plays do not 'tumble about as much in the eyes' ('woeld het niet in 't oog'), meaning that their emotional effect is not rendered through the eyes, such as the *comedias* of Spanish origin. As the newly refurbished theatre of 1665 favoured the eyes over the mind as per Jan Vos' adage, the space in which these *comedias* were staged was likewise faulty.

Nil Volentibus Arduum's critique does not stand alone, but repeats the criticism of the Académie Française about the visual deception of Corneille's *Le Cid*. Thouret argued that at the heart of the 'Querelle du Cid' there was essentially one subject:

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112 Pels [1682] 1689, 16: '[...] neem dan liever een Spaans Spél, / Die woelen uit de natuur, én gevallen het vólk wél.'

113 See the WNT: '[h]et onrustig, hevig woelen van gedachten, [en] emoties in den mensch.'

114 Pels [1682] 1689, 16: 'Ik voor my prys de Fransche boven alle andere Speelen; / Om dat ze hun wérk zo nét én natuurlyk verdeelen, / Al woeld het niet in 't oog, het raakt ons aan de ziel.'

the gaze. According to Thouret, 'the gaze is always, explicitly or not, articulated in relation to the question of judgement, and thereby touches on a major question that underlies and explains the quarrel,' namely, who was qualified to pass aesthetic judgement? Common spectators, who only use their eyes, or the learned few, who have access to knowledge and reason? And it is also the gaze and the question of aesthetic judgement that becomes the subject of scrutiny by Nil Volentibus Arduum in the late seventeenth century.[115]

The gaze is both in the French and Dutch contexts a hot topic. It is up for debate whether theatre directors should accept the gaze as a valid way to judge a performance and whether they should allow the staging of such genres, like *comedia nueva*, that specifically appeal to that gaze. In her analysis of the 'Querelle du *Cid*,' Thouret notes that there is a mediation between the eyes and judgement, which resides in emotions, by which the relationship between the spectator and the characters is established.[116] One concept is continuously emphasised, says Thouret:

> All the events in the play are diffracted by the prism of emotions: they function as the touchstone of the value of the work, as faithful and true signs of the merit of the favour that *Le Cid* has received from the public. But it is the visual perception that gives rise to fear, trouble, pity, attention.[117]

She continues that in the quarrel the often-used verb 'to see,' which describes how the populace perceived *Le Cid*, refers very directly to the verdict that the people bear 'judgement in their eyes.' However, their eyes do not deceive them as Scudéry argued; rather, the eyes connect the spectator with the action onstage. Sight is the sense that intervenes in the formation of affects, which rests both on pleasure and judgement, towards the characters as well as the play as a whole: 'it is the sensitive way through which the interaction of the soul with the world (here, the spectacle) passes,' as Thouret concludes.[118]

Apart from Nil Volentibus Arduum, the criticism of the French academicians is, furthermore, echoed in the words of another critic. Vondel's first biographer, Geeraerdt Brandt, mentions Spanish plays in his 1681 biography of Vondel. Trying

115 Thouret 2013, 100. Translation my own, as elsewhere.
116 Thouret 2013, 103.
117 Thouret 2013, 105.
118 Thouret 2013, 105.

to explain why Vondel's plays were not performed anymore, Brandt explains that they were disparaged in the second half of the seventeenth century, since Spanish plays were more popular. The turbulent nature of the *comedias* and the various transformations in them exhilarated the spectators, although they were malformed in comparison to Vondel's plays. In his judgement, Brandt emphasises the act of gazing. In Dutch, the specific word that is used, 'vergapen,' conveys here the negative connotation of having no understanding of the thing that is looked at, but can also mean that the spectator, in his inability to rightly judge what he sees, is falsely impressed by it, and thus is deceived. While De Brune de Jonge considered this form of visual deception to be a pleasurable trait of theatre, in the context of *comedias*, Brandt found it horrible:

> [...] that in the course of time, other plays, mostly translated from Spanish, were imported. These pleased the big crowd so much (*gawping* at the vain chitchat and activity) because of the *inner agitations* and the multifarious changes—although sometimes they lacked art and order—that the public praised copper over gold and, thus, Vondel's tragedies were stowed behind the counter.[119]

The 'gewoel' in particular and the 'multifarious transformations' ('veelerley verandering') seemed to bother Brandt, as they were not appropriately contained by conventions of 'art and order.' Brandt's criticism specifically aligns with the rhetoric used in dramatist Jean Mairet's pamphlet *Épître familière du sieur Mairet au sieur Corneille sur la tragi-cómedie du Cid*, in which he brought forward that *Le Cid* held apparent and fantastic beauties and a false (or deceptive) brilliance. He likewise compared the play to scrap metal alongside the gold of traditional French classicist drama.[120] This shared analogy stems from alchemy: for millennia, practitioners sought to turn baser metals into gold. The outcome was, however, a mere illusion.[121]

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119 Brandt 1682, 68: '[...] dat men met der tijdt andere speelen, meest uit het Spaensch vertaelt, invoerde, die door 't *gewoel* en veelerley verandering, hoewel'er somtydts weinigh kunst en orde in was, den grooten hoop, (zich aan 't ydel gezwets en den poppentoestel *vergaapende*) zoo behaagden, dat men kooper boven goudt schatte, en Vondels treurspeelen achter de bank wierp' (italics added).

120 Thouret 2013, 101.

121 This transmutation was called 'chrysopoeia,' Greek for 'gold-making'; see, e.g., Principe 2013, 13, 170.

The Designation of Dramatic Space

What did these theoretical debates mean for how *comedia nueva* was staged? This becomes apparent in Rodenburgh's way of working. One of the reasons that Rodenburgh selected *comedia nueva*, I argue, was that as a genre it fit very well within Amsterdam's contemporary theatre practices, which ultimately influenced how the audiences watched these Spanish plays. When Rodenburgh was *factor* (chairman) of the rhetoricians' chamber The Eglantine, their in-house stage was still designed in a way that it could simultaneously represent two locations that were apart in space and time. These spaces were then used to narrate the separate stories of individual characters, before the characters residing in those different places would come together for the dénouement. This type of stage on which the rhetoricians played was called a polytopic stage. This practice remained until 1664. On such a stage, the many changes of locations and even locations that are separated by hundreds of kilometres could easily be represented side by side. This was essential for the staging of the Dutch adaptations of *comedia nueva*.

Rodenburgh's Handling of Travel and Time in Lope's Comedias

Rodenburgh discussed how he dealt with space in his plays in the abovementioned *Eglentiers Poëtens Borst-weringh*. He wrote that there were enough playwrights who incorporated a multiplicity of locations in their plays but that everyone had to decide for themselves what they liked better: a play set in one single location or in multiple locations. By this, he deferred from the otherwise concise imitation of Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*. Reiterating Sidney's satirical stance towards the polytopic stage, Rodenburgh relates that characters must often announce to their spectators where precisely they are located, but he immediately adds a commentary that tones down Sidney's beliefs. He quotes Lope de Vega, who in his *Arte nuevo* points out that he purposely ignores poetical laws:

> In addition, poets differ in their treatment of their tragedies and comedies: while the stage should only represent one place, and all the action should come to pass in one day (in imitation of Aristotle), often many special places are used on the stage, and additionally many days and a long time passes. One can behold on the one side of the stage Asia, while the other side represents Africa; yes, totally different kingdoms, so the actor himself has to explain where he is, otherwise the

> spectators become confused by the [actor's] entry. With some reason, one can admonish this practice, when one binds oneself by Terence and Plautus. The outstanding poet Lope de Vega Carpio says, however, (in his booklet titled: *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*) that he bans Terence and *Plautus* from his thoughts, when he sets himself to write verses; appending that he is not bound by any timespan, however, dividing his acts cautiously—frequently choosing history for his subject—arguing that it is more appealing to the spectators when the events are told from beginning to end.[122]

This form of simultaneous setting (*décor simultané* in French) was a vestige of medieval theatre, which the Dutch rhetoricians used from their first establishment until well into the seventeenth century.[123] For Rodenburgh, the polytopic stage offered an easy way to represent the many places found in Lope's oeuvre: different places could be represented either simultaneously or in succession without needing to change the décor.

The whole concept of the unity of place was, therefore, non-existent in the early adaptations of Spanish *comedias*. It also allowed spectators to creatively participate in the playmaking by imagining the many places represented, as Hunningher argued for the rhetoricians' stage in the Low Countries.[124] These plays present vast worlds that are shaped by uncertainty of location. As such, the stage could potentially overpower

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122 Rodenburgh 1619, 47–48: 'Daer beneven, verschelen de Poëten inde wijze van handelinghe van hun Truer en Bly-spelen, want waer het toonneel behoordt maer een plaets af te beelden, en oock alle hun bedrijven (na *Aristoteles* leere) te gheschieden in een dachswerck, zo werdender vaecken gebruyckt op het Toonneel veel bezondere plaetzen, en daer beneven veel daghen en langhe tijdt. Men ziet dat het toonneels eene zyde afbeelt *Asia*, en d'ander zyde *Africa*, jae ander Coninghrijcken, zo dat de Toonneel-speelder zelven moet zeggen waer hy is, of d'aenzienders verwerren in d'uytkomste. Met redenen machmen dit berispen, zomen zich bindt aen *Terens* en *Plaut*. Den treffelijcken Poët *Lope de Vega Carpio*, (in zijn boecxken, ghenaemt: *Arte nueuo de hazer comedias en este tiempo*) zeyt: dat hy *Terens* en *Plaut* uyt zijn ghedachten stelt, als hy zijn voorgenomen wercken wil rijmen: daer by voegende, dat hy zich aen geen tijdt bindt, maer voorzichtelijck zijn bedrijven verdeeldt, en meest handelende yets 't geen Historiael is, oordelende dat het bevallycker voor de aenschouwers is, het begin en 't eyndt van alle de ghevallen af te beelden.'

123 In this staging technique, all scenes were simultaneously in view, the various locales being represented by small booths known as *mansions*, or houses, arranged around an unlocalised, neutral acting area of the stage (the *platea*). See Hunningher 1958, 113–114, 147; Hummelen 1967, 5; Albach 1970, 105; Vanhaesebrouck 2015, 125–127.

124 Hunningher 1958, 140.

the viewer.[125] This can be explained by example of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606). Reiterating A.C. Bradley's analysis of this play, theatre scholar Henry Turner argues that the vagueness in the sense of locality gives spectators the feeling that they are watching an immense and vast world, not a particular place; or, more accurately, spectators see a particular place that is also another world.[126] While the play features, for instance, an Earl of Gloucester, Earl of Kent, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Albany, King of France, and Duke of Burgundy, these obvious references to the 'real' world suggest a locality and topicality which is not articulated as such by Shakespeare beyond their referential ability of naming. Although Lear is King of Britannia, locating the action on that island in an ancient time past, it is almost never explicated where exactly the characters actually are, but simply that they are at a hovel, or at one of the many palaces of the various earls and dukes.

Turner asserts that theatre can both represent an immense scope and huge action, and simultaneously hold a vagueness of scene. The stage as the most fully spatialised mode of representation, can only obscure the play's total achievement, as Turner argued: 'To presume location at all points [...] is to take as self-evident a set of logical, imaginative, and mimetic relationships' that plays, such as *King Lear*, seek 'to examine in all their complexity and to hold in tension, rather than to resolve—relationships that lay at the core of the spatial arts and their distinctive epistemology during the [early modern] period.'[127] Imagination overturns reality and the particular has to make way for the general.[128]

How does this apply to the adaptations made by Rodenburgh? Although the Dutch playwright does not seem to choose either Sidney or Lope, he demonstrated that he followed Lope in his own work when different places are represented in one play. In Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten* (1617, 'Jealous Students')—a play about love, jealousy, hidden desires, and deception—its students travel from the Dutch university town Leiden to The Hague during the third act, according to the stage direction in the front matter: 'The Stage is Leiden; though in the last act The Hague.'[129] However, the student Cardenio already appears in The Hague in the last scene of the second

125 Turner 2006, 161.

126 Turner 2006, 159–160. Turner makes clear that Bradley preferred a reception of *King Lear* by a reader rather than a spectator. Bradley argued that this was necessary to fully comprehend the play: '*King Lear*, as a whole, is imperfectly dramatic, and there is something in its very essence which is at war with the senses, and demands a purely imaginative realisation' (as quoted in Turner 2006, 160).

127 Turner 2006, 161.

128 Turner 2006, 160.

129 Rodenburgh 1617d, fol. *4^{v}: 'Het Toonneel is Leyden: doch in't latest bedrijf's Gravenhaghe.'

act after saying goodbye to his friends in Leiden. We only know that he is actually in The Hague because his conversation partner Fabricio inquires after a lady living in Leiden, recognising that Cardenio is from there.[130]

At the beginning of the third act, we are back in Leiden, where Celia decides to follow Cardenio to fight for his heart. They leave the stage, *en route* to The Hague.[131] In the next scene, the spectators see Cardenio dressed as a farmer while walking in The Hague, which is also made explicit in a stage direction: 'Cardenio being in The Hague, in farmer's dress.'[132] To avoid continuous changes of décor, Rodenburgh represented everything in a simultaneous setting. Exactly as in Rodenburgh's adaptation, Lope's Cardenio goes to Alcalá de Henares in *La escolástica celosa*, where he meets Fabricio who inquires instead about a lady in Toledo. Subsequently, the third *jornada* begins again in Toledo with Celia, who decides to travel to Alcalá de Henares. Some scenes later, Cardenio—who is still in Alcalá de Henares—laments about his lost love. Here, Lope had also switched the stage setting from Toledo to Alcalá de Henares and back.[133] Thus, with his simultaneous setting, Rodenburgh followed Lope.

Lope wrote, in fact, in his *Arte nuevo* with regards to the stage setting of his plays that the playwright should use the interspaces ('distancias') between the acts if he wanted to let characters travel or if several years had to pass:

> [...] when the poet writes history
> In which several years must pass,
> He can relegate them to the *interspaces*
> Of two acts, or, if it were necessary,
> A character can make some journey,
> A thing that greatly offends whoever grasps it,
> But he who is offended must *not go see* it.[134]

130 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. $E4^{v}$: 'Vermits ick sie dat ghy van Leyden zijt gekomen / Ick weet niet of ghy kent een Jouffrou wel befaemt.'

131 Rodenburgh 1617c, fols. $F2^{v}$–$F3^{v}$.

132 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. $F3^{v}$: 'Cardenio wesende in den Haghe, in Boere kleren.'

133 Lope de Vega 1604d, fols. 92^{r}, 94^{v}, 96^{r}–96^{v}.

134 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 194–200: '[...] cuando el poeta escriba historia / en que hayan de pasar algunos años, / que éstos podrá poner en las *distancias* / de los dos actos, o, si fuere fuerza, / hacer algún camino una figura, / cosa que tanto ofende a quien lo entiende, / pero *no vaya a verlas* quien se ofende' (italics added).

This is supported by the designation of the separate acts in the Spanish plays as *jornada* (working day): every act should be conceived of as a separate day, each with its own setting. Lope's use of the word 'distancia' ('distance', 'interval', 'range', or 'spacing') for that moment between the acts when the stage is empty. This suggests that there exists a spatiality that can be witnessed or seen by the spectators. As *comedia nueva* depends on multifarious action, Lope discusses that this space should preferably never be left empty: 'Hardly ever should the stage remain without a speaking character, because the people grow restless during these *interspaces* and the story becomes soon longwinded; for, except it being a great defect, continuing without silence increases grace and artifice.'[135] Lope was an expert at preventing onstage lacunae, 'in particular through use of the set-piece sonnet to summarise a situation, as well as through the counter-point of the *gracioso*'s comedy' as per Thacker.[136] Turner writes about witnessable spatiality that:

> [...] the genuinely *spatial* capacity of the platform stage is apprehensible only momentarily—at the instant the performance begins or ends, or in the slight break between scenes, if at all—since these fleeting appearances are simultaneously converted into the specific 'places' of the fiction that the performance brings to life.[137]

These spaces can, therefore, hardly be considered empty. In Dutch tragedy, the space between acts was almost always filled by the 'rei' (chorus), which remained an important structuring device in the 'home-grown' plays of the early seventeenth century. As explained by Lia van Gemert, the 'rei' could be used to mask jumps in time and space, or to fill breaks in the text in front of the spectator's eyes in an excusable way.[138] Turner also discusses how the chorus structures space within a play, by urging the audience to fill the space 'with a dazzling sequence of fictional *places*.'[139] In Spanish drama, the chorus disappeared from the first moment that early playwrights devised a successful formula, until Lope finally announced in the *Arte nuevo* that the chorus is

135 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 240–245: 'Quede muy pocas veces el teatro / sin persona que hable, porque el vulgo / en aquellas *distancias* se inquïeta / y gran rato la fábula se alarga, / que, fuera de ser esto un grande vicio, / aumenta mayor gracia y artificio' (italics added).

136 Thacker 2008, 115.

137 Turner 2006, 175.

138 Van Gemert 1990, 83–86.

139 Turner 2006, 175.

a tedious classicising element, for which reason even the Greek playwright Menander, following Terence, omitted them.[140] Therefore, the chorus is also absent in the Dutch adaptations by Rodenburgh and others.

This did not mean that Lope did not use musical *intermezzi* to mask jumps in space or time. The Spanish stage song often fulfilled the same function as the chorus in Dutch drama. As in the Low Countries, the traditional Spanish practice to establish location was by means of song or spoken word, especially in productions that could not rely on heavy stage design and machinery. Even then, song remained a popular medium to describe locations.[141] In his adaptation *Celia en Prospero* (1617, an adaptation of Lope's *El molino*), Rodenburgh had to deal with the fact that the play is both set in a particular place (Florence) and an imaginative, non-specific, pastoral space (Arcadia).[142] In the middle of the first act, Count Prospero is banished from the Florentine court by Duchess Celia's suitor Aristippus, the Prince of Spain, and Prospero's nemesis. He seeks refuge in the countryside (in Arcadia), where the miller's daughter Laura and his servant Molimpo live. Prospero appears in farmer's clothes and sings a song. This song both offers an insight into Prospero's emotional state, another common purpose of song in both Spanish and Dutch drama,[143] and also tells the spectator that he is walking in a grassland, having fled court:

> In solitude by himself
> You let your slave walk
> In these forgotten pastures
> [...]
> Alas! When I see
> That I must flee court
> [...]
> I lose courage, and strength.[144]

After Prospero has finished and fallen asleep under a tree, Laura enters while throwing flour at Molimpo. In the case of *Celia en Prospero*, Rodenburgh could have inserted

140 De Armas 2014, 35; Lope de Vega 1609, vv. 102–105.

141 Umpierre 1975, 93–94.

142 Rodenburgh 1617b, fol. *4v: 'Het Toonneel is Florença en Arcadia.'

143 Umpierre 1975, 21–28, 59–74; Veldhorst 2004, 20–24.

144 Rodenburgh 1617b, fol. B2v: 'In eenigheid alleen / Laet ghy uw slave treen / In dees vergheten Bemden [...] Helacy! als ik zie / Dat ik het Hof afvlie [...] Verlies ick moed, en kracht.'

the song to mask the jump in time and space, while either the stage setting was changed to reflect the countryside or alternatively to trigger the imagination of the spectator while Prospero mentions that he is now in the countryside. Sidney detested this practice, but Rodenburgh had clearly taken a lenient approach.[145]

With the less stringent stance towards travel in Spanish plays and by using a polytopic stage, there was no need to heed that other unity: the unity of time. Lope writes in his *Arte nuevo* that critics complained that playwrights let years pass in their plays, although Horace and Aristotle had set the limit for a play as a supposedly natural day (described by Lope as a mathematical day). Lope obviously found this absurd:

> Oh, how many become today wretched
> When seeing that years have passed in an affair
> which had to end in twelve hours,
> because they would not even allow a mathematical day![146]

Lope suggested that the play's plot should unfold in as little time as possible ('pase en el menos tiempo que ser pueda').[147] At the same time, Lope was aware that his audiences preferred that the playwright told longer histories of days, months, or even years, rather than that all events are condensed within a twenty-four-hour period:

> But considering that the choleric temperament
> Of a seated Spaniard does not restrain itself
> If not in two hours is shown to him
> Everything from *Genesis* to the Final Judgement,
> I think that it is most fitting,
> If one is to give pleasure, that he follows this.[148]

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145 Lope de Vega 1604c, fol. 143r. On the basis of Lope's first *Parte*, *Las comedias de Lope de Vega Carpio*, I could not corroborate whether the Spanish Prospero also sings in this passage. It is entirely possible that this was so and that Rodenburgh visited a performance of Lope's *El molino* during his diplomatic mission to Madrid, for which reason Rodenburgh may have likewise staged a song here.

146 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 201–204: '¡Oh, cuántos de este tiempo se hacen cruces / de ver que han de pasar años en cosa / que un día artificial tuvo de término, / que aun no quisieron darle el matemático!'

147 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, v. 193.

148 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 205–210: 'Porque considerando que la cólera / de un español sentado no se templa / si no le representan en dos horas / hasta el Final Juïcio desde el *Génesis*, / yo hallo que, si allí se ha de dar gusto, / con lo que se consigue es lo más justo.'

This advice is also understandable from a dramatic perspective, for the conflicts presented in Spanish drama need time to be settled. If a relationship between the protagonists should fully develop with its ups and downs, it should be suggested that enough time has passed. Did this, however, also apply to the Dutch adaptations?

Representing Travel and Time on Stage in Van Campen's Theatre

The more professional theatre in Amsterdam became, the more the stage developed from a polytopic stage into a monotopic stage. This development, however, took decades and knew a period in which the old and new ways of stage setting were both used, as Van Campen's theatre of 1638 demonstrates: it was customary that, exactly as on the old rhetoricians' stages, the actors stepped onto the middle of the stage, which then represented the same place as the compartment of entrance. Hunnigher asserts that the 'hegemony of realism' had not yet begun and spectators thus still had a creative part in the performance, because they were encouraged to give rise to their own imaginations.[149] Such was also the case in Madrid's *corrales de comedias*, the *Corral del Príncipe* and the *Corral de la Cruz*.[150] The unity of place was absent on the Amsterdam stage, but this did not mean that the design of the stage was not a coherent unity. In fact, the diverse places were held together by a symmetrical arrangement (see Fig. 1.7 above).[151] Still, Van Campen was influenced by Italian stage design. The architect had designed a double usage of the stage as either a monotopic or polytopic stage for his theatre: 'unity or multiplicity of place as desired.'[152] Therefore Hummelen concludes that Van Campen maintained the old system of the rhetoricians in his stage design for the Amsterdam Public Theatre, but that he also created the possibility to use the new system he saw on his travels in Italy.[153]

Van Campen's stage design was also informed by playwrights, dramaturgs, and theoretists, who—although they knew about the requirement of unity of place—generally agreed that a unity of region was sufficient for the time being, meaning that there was no reason to break with the 'beloved tradition.'[154] This left much occasion for variation, which becomes apparent in many printed editions of the Dutch adaptations. These scripts almost always state under the list of *dramatis personae* that

149 Hunningher 1958, 140.
150 Hunningher 1958, 147; Thacker 2007, 125–126; Ruano de la Haza 2008, 41–45.
151 Hunningher 1958, 140.
152 Hunningher 1958, 147.
153 Hummelen 1967, 5.
154 Hunningher 1958, 145–147.

the plot unfolds in a specific place and its direct surroundings. This can be seen in Adam Karelsz. van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura* (1645, 'Persecuted Laura').[155] The preface states that the play is set at the Hungarian court in Buda and Laura's townhouse in the same city, and what is more, the whole action only lasts twenty-four hours.[156]

Although this could potentially become difficult, the polytopic stage in Van Campen's theatre offered enough possibility that one side of the stage represented the court, while the other side represented Laura's home.

The unity of region aside, topical references in other Dutch adaptations seem to be purposely kept as vague as possible, perhaps also to keep with the original vague setting of the Spanish plays, of which the printed editions almost never mention the events' location. At the same time, this practice seems to reflect the influence of the 'Querelle du *Cid*' on Dutch theatrical life, resulting in a compromise between the requirement for the unity of place and time, and the desire to represent a variety of places found in the Spanish originals. Thus, the playwrights might have purposely concealed the information entirely or presented the stage setting in line with classicistic demands, although in fact more than one place is represented on stage. Heynck does this, for instance, in his *Veranderlyk geval, of stantvastige liefde* (Amsterdam 1663, 'Changeable Fortune, or Consistent Love').[157] He says that the play is set in and around Naples.[158] In the first scene of this play, the stage likely depicted the Neapolitan court, where the King relates the history behind the upcoming action and tells his courtiers that he is looking for his heir, whom he entrusted to the care of a shepherd. The second scene is set at the farm of this shepherd and depicts the two lovers Karel and Margareta about whom the *comedia* concerns; one of them is the lost heir.

Similarly, the duration of the plot of *Veranderlyk geval* is kept silent. Yet, slowly it becomes clear that more time than twenty-four hours should have passed, especially in the middle of the third act, when the female protagonist Margareta comes out onto the stage during the night between the first day and the second day. This is demarcated by a song added by Heynck to his adaptation, which was sung by Margareta to lament her separation from her fiancé who is the previously lost Prince of Naples, but the song also functions for Margareta as a way to obtain a new-found independence

155 *Vervolgde Laura* is a translation of Jean Rotrou's *Laure persecutée* (1639), which, in turn, was an adaptation of Lope's *Laura perseguida* (c. 1614).

156 Van Germez 1645, fol. *8v: 'Het Tooneel is't Hof te Bude in Hongarijen, en voor / en in het huis van Laura in de zelve stadt. / Het spel begint in de morgen, en eindigt den andre / dach op een zelven tijt.' For the structuring of space in Rotrou's *Laure persecutée*, see Birkemeier 2007, 165–166.

157 Transl. of Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva, *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor* (c. 1649).

158 Heynck 1663, fol. A4v: 'Het Tooneel is in en omtrent Napels.'

and agency as a woman.[159] This song not only likely delighted the audience, but also construed time and space in a crux wherein time behaves differently and becomes a subversive force in the play (as discussed further in Chapter 6). Later in the play, Karel is deprived of his princely status and after a lamentable conversation with his servant Mengo, leaves for the village of his foster father. This event marks the end of the fourth act. The fifth act begins an undetermined amount of time later, when we find Karel in the village singing a song about all that he has lost. Like in Rodenburgh's *Celia en Prospero*, the song is used to mask the jump in time and space.[160]

In another play, Isaak Vos stated that his *Gedwongen vrient* (1646, 'Forced Friend') 'Plays on the Hungarian and Bohemian Borders,' thus meeting the unity of region, but during the play three of the protagonists go on a rescue mission to break the fourth from prison.[161] This prison's location is not made explicit, but it was likely located at the Bohemian court and not on the border as the preliminary pages suggest. As this imprisoned protagonist is a suspect of murder, it seems unlikely—not in line with the *vraisemblance*—that he was imprisoned on the border of the country to which he fled. Furthermore, the first act of the play is set at the court of the Hungarian king, and the rescue party also returns to the Hungarian court.

Often, the Dutch adaptors ignored the unities in more subtle ways, such as Johannes Serwouters did in his *Den grooten Tamerlan* (Amsterdam 1657, 'The Great Tamerlane'), a *comedia* about Timur, the founder of the Timurid Empire, his conquests of Anatolia, and his capture of the Turkish Sultan Bayaset.[162] The play is set both in and outside of Constantinople, according to the text.[163] Textual analysis makes clear, however, that the performed space stretches from Constantinople to the whole of Wallachia.[164] 'Outside Constantinople' ('buyten Constantinopolen') should not be regarded here as directly outside of the city walls of Constantinople, but rather as any space in a reasonable vicinity of that city. The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* confirms that this reading of 'buyten' is, in fact, possible. Once again, this play likewise includes a more general unity of region rather than a strict unity of place: the first two scenes are set at court in Constantinople, whereas the third scene is in

159 Heynck 1663, 32–33.

160 Heynck 1663, 55–56.

161 Vos 1646, fol. A1^{v}: 'Speelt op d'Ongaarze en Boheemze Grenzen.'

162 Transl. of Luis Vélez de Guevara, *La nueva era de Dios y Tamerlán de Persia* (1635).

163 Serwouters 1657, fol. A3^{v}: 'Het Tooneel is in en buyten Constantinopolen.'

164 The play dramatises the Battle of Ankara (1402), fought between the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I and the Mongol Khan Timur Lang, founder of the Timurid Empire. For some unexplainable reason, Anatolia (where Ankara is located) was confused with Wallachia in this play.

a valley in Wallachia. Because of these place settings, it remains vague in the printed editions of these *comedias* whether or not the unities were ignored.

A wholly different approach is seen in Joan Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis* (1653) about the historical ruler Alessandro de' Medici and his assassination.[165] Although the stage setting is as vague as that in *Den grooten Tamerlan*, this play clearly sins against the unity of time when we read in the preface that 'The stage is within and outside Florence. The tragedy starts at midnight, and ends on the fourth morning.'[166] The unity of place is again a unity of region, but the timespan of Dullaart's adaptation does not at all meet the unity of time. In fact, it equals more or less four days. This is unique among Dutch-language plays as there are, to my knowledge, no other examples in which it is stated so explicitly that the play's timespan is longer than a day.

The Move to a New Staging Technique

The staging technique discussed above united very easily the goal of realism and symbolic representation, which was grounded in an emblematic tradition: in other words, spectators could easily interpret the *mise-en-espace* that was created by clear and minimal use of symbols. Thus it was maintained for a long period in the seventeenth century, until reasonability and reality (*vraisemblance* and *bienséance*) became the leading criteria by which a play and its performance were measured. This was a consequence of the logical interpretation of classical writings and the enforcement of the unities.[167] At the same time, we must realise that one of the new possibilities of the Amsterdam Public Theatre after the 1665 structural alterations was *changements à vue*. These enabled theatre makers and playwrights to quickly change the décor and the whole scene setting in just a matter of seconds. From that moment onwards, playwrights could more easily deal with travel, and they could suggest that larger amounts of time had passed in the meantime.

This advance was specifically disliked by Nil Volentibus Arduum. The society recognised that spectators enjoyed the changes of décor and place, and even advised that playwrights included several different locations in their plays, but still warned that they should heed that the *space* between different places represented could be

165 Transl. of Diego Jiménez de Enciso, *Los Medicis de Florencia* (before 1634).

166 Dullaart 1653, 6: 'Het Tooneel is binnen en buiten Florence. Het Treurspel begint te middernacht, en eindigt op den vierden Morgenstont.'

167 Hunningher 1958, 137.

realistically traversed within the twenty-four-hours' time frame of the play. According to them, the Spanish plays were especially lacking in this regard. Their objection to travel was mainly of the following nature: when the limit of a play is always twenty-four hours, a character cannot appear in Paris if he was in London in the previous act, because this would not be believable on the basis of a strict interpretation of *vraisemblance*. Moreover, Nil Volentibus Arduum objected to the fact that many of the Dutch adaptations switched the stage setting between scenes in one and the same act. In their *Onderwys in de tooneel-poëzy* (Amsterdam c. 1678, 'Education in dramatic poetry')—a manuscript that was edited and published by Ton Harmsen in 1989—they write as such:

> Regarding the place in a play, that should always be a fixed and one place, either in a palace, room, garden, etc.; but while many or the majority of spectators take pleasure from seeing a variety of décors, and while sometimes the subject matter which one wants to deal with demands that a distinct décor is depicted in every act, one should beware that the different places which are chosen in every act are not located too far from each other, and that one act depicts London, the other Paris, the third Amsterdam, etc.; but that the places are so succinctly taken together that if the character appears from one act in the second, which depicts another place, the spectator can easily imagine that he can arrive there in the time which passes in between the acts, such as: in case one depicts in one and the same city a royal palace, complete with a majestic pleasure garden, then one may represent the first act in front of the palace, the second in a specific hall, the third in the pleasure garden, the fourth in the courtyard, the fifth in front of the king's throne, etc.; especially making sure that one does not change the place within an act. The authors of the Spanish plays sin against this, as well as in our language the authors of *Lizander en Caliste*, *Ariane*, and the like.[168]

168 Nil Volentibus Arduum [c. 1678] 1989, 245: 'Wat de Plaats in een Tooneelspel aangaat, die behoorde altyd vast en op een plaats te zyn, 't zy in een Palais, Kamer, Tuin enz. maar dewijl veele of de meeste toezienders behaagen scheppen in verscheidene Tooneelen, en dat somtyts de stof, die men verhandelen wil vereischt datmen in ieder bedrijf een byzonder Tooneel vertoont, zoo behoorde men te letten, dat de verscheidene plaatzen die men in ieder bedrijf verkiest, niet al te wydt van malkanderen geleegen zyn, en dat niet het eene bedrijf Londen, het ander Parys, het darde Amsterdam enz. verbeeldt; maar dat de plaats zoo beknopt by malkander is gevat, dat als de Tooneellist

The Spanish dramatic practice was clearly different and this is also visible in the Dutch adaptations of *Ialoersche studenten*, *Celia en Prospero*, *Vervolgde Laura*, *Veranderlyk geval*, *Gedwongen vrient*, *Den grooten Tamerlan*, and *Alexander de Medicis*, which have already been discussed here.

Yet, there were other plays that were, according to Pels, even more lacking in this regard: in addition to *Veranderlyk geval*, Leonard de Fuyter's *Verwarde hof* (1647, 'Confused Court'), Joris de Wijse's *Voorzigtige dolheit* (1650, 'Cautious Madness'), and Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas* (1668) also had to endure Pels' critique. He argued that the disposition of these plays was out of place, although they—one can presume much to his dissatisfaction—brought the spectator pleasure:

> And what would be wrong with many fine Spanish and
> English plays, if people would only stop dividing them
> Into such plots and dénouements, that only one does
> Not see them as gladly as French ones, or only a little
> More so because of their multiplicity of incidents
> And fullness of inventions? Behold *De Verwarde hof*, *de Dolheid*,[169]
> *Lowies de Vargas*, *Het Veranderlijk Geval*;
> They are wild in arrangement, place and time; but all
> The world commends their substance, both learned and unlearned.[170]

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van't eene bedrijf in't tweede dat een andre plaats verbeelt, te voorschyn komt, den toeziender sich gemakkelijk inbeelden kan, dat hy inde tyd, die tusschen de bedryven verloopt, daar kan koomen. als by voorbeeldt: Indien men sich verbeeld in eene zelve Stadt, een kooninglijk Palais, voorzien met een heerlijk lusthof, zo zouwmen moogen neemen het eerste bedrijf voor het Palais, het tweede in een byzondre zaal, het darde inden Lusthof, het vierde in't Hof, het vijfde voor des koonings troon enz. voor al toeziende datmen in een bedrijf geen verandering van plaats brengt. Hier teegens zondigen de maakers van de Spaansche Speelen, gelijk ook in onze taal de Autheuren van *Lizander en Caliste*, *Ariane* en diergelijke.'

169 As editor of Pels' *Gebruik én misbruik des tooneels*, Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (1681, 76) thinks that *de Dolheid* is a reference to Gillis van Staveren's *De dolheyt om de eer* (1661). That play—although it is originally Spanish, after Lope de Vega's *La locura por la honra* (1611)—had only been performed a total of five times in 1661–1662. Therefore, I rather assume that Pels means Joris de Wijse's *Voorzigtige dolheit*, which was performed 52 times between 1649 (premiere of *Voorzigtige dolheit*) and 1681 (publication of *Gebruik én misbruik des tooneels*).

170 Pels [1681] 1978, vv. 1061–1069. The translation is by Sullivan 1983, 55: 'Want wat zal schorten aan veel' fraaije Spaansche Spélen, / En Engelsche, als men wél wil létten op 't verdeelen / In Handelingen, én Uitkomsten, dat men die / Zo lief niet, als de Fransche, óf lichtlyk liever zie / Om hunne veelheid van voorvallen, én hunn' volheid / Van vindingen? Aanschouw 't Verwarde Hóf, de Dolheid, /

Pels' criticism did not matter: spectators hardly cared about the unities of time and place or the disposition of these plays. Their topics pleased both the learned and laymen.

The Representation of Domestic versus Exotic Spaces

Theatrical illusions can, thus, please spectators immensely, while their imaginations are triggered by the specific design of the stage, whether polytopic or a stage with coulisse décor and a proscenium arch. Apart from the illusionistic experience and the pleasurable 'oogbedrog' (visual deception) that this brings, playwrights also used the possibilities of the stage to enforce a moral and emotional experience through the representation of various places in the *comedia*, which I argue is typical for *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries. The so-called *comedias palatinas* in particular kept their original settings, making them on par with the moral world of the tragedy, while also offering a form of escapism also present in chivalric romances and the pastoral *novelle* of Bandello and Boccaccio.

Tragicomic Distance

When Turner writes that the stage represents 'a particular place which is also a world,'[171] we realise that the events in these *comedias* also take place in spaces that seem familiar at first, but which are nonetheless fictional or exist outside of our own spatial-temporal reality. The distant places that are represented in Dutch *comedias*, such as Constantinople in *Den grooten Tamerlan* and Florence in *Alexander de Medicis*, emphasise this idea. When *comedias* are, furthermore, also set in mythical or pastoral spaces, such as Arcadia in *Celia en Prospero*, we might even get the impression that all *comedias* are set in their own exotic world. Alberto Gutiérrez Gil suggests that especially for the subgenre of *comedia palatina*, the representation of these distant spaces is requisite:

> One of the indispensable requirements to ascribe a *comedia* to the genre of the *comedia palatina* is the spatial distance of the action from the

Lowies de Vargas, het Veranderlyk Geval; / Van schikking zyn zy wild in plaats, én tyd; maar all' / De waereld pryst de stóf, Geleerde, én Ongeleerde.'

171 Turner 2006, 160.

> reality of the viewer. The territories outside Castile became the scene of the most surprising stories. Naples, England, Poland, Hungary, France, and also Portugal, Catalonia, Aragon, Navarra or Galicia gave shelter to characters and situations that, little by little, began to be common on the stages.
>
> This distancing from the here (and also from the now) involves an exotic component that traps the viewer in the development of the action, at the same time that it gives the playwright the freedom to deal with topics and situations that would otherwise have raised suspicions among the upper classes (we must remember that the characters' high social stratus—royalty and nobility—is another of the basic pillars of the genre).[172]

As Gutiérrez Gil says, the distance from the 'now' is likewise necessary and emphasises the exotic feel of the *comedias*. The distant geographical framework acts as an evocative filter necessary to separate viewers from the reality that they are contemplating. The real environment of the frame is seldom used: 'the idiosyncrasy of its inhabitants is not painted, nor the singularity of its landscapes.'[173] This also means that these geographic settings remain ductile, and that similar histories can be reworked in different spaces. Thus, the places represented in *comedia nueva* include places in a classical-mythical time, in the Middle Ages, the early Renaissance, or in a semi-pastoral or novelistic landscape (without a clear demarcation of historical time). Therefore, *comedias* can spread geographically and temporally from biblical Israel or mythical Greece, to medieval Spain or pastoral Italy.

Frida Weber de Kurlat remarked that the non-Spanish locations made it possible to safely represent 'betrayals, deceptions, false accusations, death threats, deaths decreed by an arbitrary prince who later repents, loves that imply wide social inequality and that end in happy marriage, etc., etc.' onstage.[174] Of these represented places, one location was the absolute favourite of Spanish *comedia* authors: Hungary. Gutiérrez Gil asserted that Hungary in particular evoked conflict, violence, and conspiracies in the seventeenth century; and this is the hallmark that, in a certain way, distinguishes these Hungarian-themed *comedias palatinas* from other geographical settings.[175]

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172 Translation of Gutiérrez Gil 2013, 217–218.

173 Translation of Gutiérrez Gil 2013, 220.

174 Translation of Weber de Kurlat 1977, 871.

175 Gutiérrez Gil 2013, 220.

Gutiérrez Gil and Adrián J. Sáez asserted that in the Hungarian *comedias* of Lope de Vega, Mira de Amescua, and Rojas Zorilla, Hungary functioned as a mythical space in which the exotic stands out. Specifically, according to Sáez, the spectator's imagination assumes control to configure an autonomous and quasi-fantastic world in these *comedias*, which are then ordered by poetic rules rather than a faithful representation of truth: the plays are dramatised according to the rules of *vraisemblance* and not of reality. *Comedias* take advantage of the exoticism of a country that is geographically far away, but at the same time politically close, as a result of relations of the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg with the Kingdom of Hungary: the setting of these plays becomes the backdrop of a universe of power and politics, which can be contemplated more freely from this remote and somewhat reimagined vantage point.[176] In other words, this setting established wonder (*admiratio*) about a world that is unfamiliar and an undying fascination for that which is different, including the desire to experience it for one's own.[177] According to Blom, this literary process explains much of the ongoing popularity of the *Odyssey* and of medieval quests and travel literature in the seventeenth century.[178]

I argue that similar processes shaped the popularity of *comedias palatinas* in the Low Countries. Although the plays set in Hungary are also present in the Dutch adaptations, it is not the only part of the world that is dramatised, nor is it the most important. I argue that the setting for the Dutch-language *comedias* can actually be divided into five more-or-less equally important categories, which both represent distant places and distant historical time periods, because Spanish playwrights, such as Lope, recognised the enormous potential of history as a source for their *comedias*.[179] Time and space are, therefore, two aspects of the representational illusion that are related and cannot be separated. The five categories thus concern *comedias* that are set in:

1. Eastern Europe (either Russia, Poland, Hungary, or the Balkans);
2. A mythical time or Biblical past;
3. A romanticised moment of profane history;
4. A fictionalised past; or
5. A primarily novelistic or pastoral-bucolic landscape (see Table 1.1, following page).

176 Gutiérrez Gil 2013, 218; Sáez 2015b, 294–296.

177 Blom 2014, 8–9.

178 Blom 2014, 7–8.

179 Coates 2008, 132–135, 145–146.

TABLE 1.1 Overview of the Dutch-language *comedias* in the corpus grouped according to their place of representation

1. Eastern Europe	2. Mythical time or religious past	3. Romanticised moment of profane history	4. Fictionalised past	5. Novelistic or pastoral-bucolic landscape
Den groote Hertoghe van Moscovien (Grand Duchy of Moscow)	*Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* (mythical Trinacria/Sicily)	*Cenobia* (third-century Euphrates/Palmyra/Rome)	*Armoede vanden graeve Florellus* (Carolingian France)	*Casandra en Karel Baldeus* (novelistic Burgundy)
Het leven is maer droom (Kingdom of Poland)	*De toveres Circe* (mythical Trinacria/Sicily)	*Den grooten Bellizarius* (sixth-century Constantinople)	*De beklaagelycke dwangh* (medieval England)	*Celia en Prospero* (Tuscan Arcadia)
Sigismundus (Kingdom of Poland)	*Samson* (biblical Israel/Abskalon)	*De verduytste Cid* (eleventh-century Sevilla)	*Verwarde hof* (medieval Sicily)	*'t Quaedt syn meester loondt* (pastoral Milan, Ferrara, Mantua)
Vervolgde Laura (Buda, Hungary)	*Hester* (biblical Susa)	*Den grooten Tamerlan* (early-fifteenth-century Wallachia/Anatolia and Constantinople)	*Don Louis de Vargas* (medieval Spain)	*Veranderlyk geval* (pastoral-bucolic Naples)
Gedwongen vrient (Hungary/Bohemia)		*Joanna, Koningin van Napels* (fourteenth-century Naples)		*De verliefde stiefmoeder* (novelistic Mantua)
Voorzigtige dolheit (Albanian court)		*Alexander de Medicis* (sixteenth-century Tuscany)		*Den volmaeckten ridder* (pastoral-bucolic Naples)
Casimier (Poland/Hungary)				*De mislukte liefde* (pastoral-bucolic Barcelona)
				De devotie van Eusebius (undetermined pastoral landscape)
				Alphonsus en Thebasile (pastoral landscape representing Barcelona, England & Bohemia)

The first group of plays shares characteristics with those set in Hungary identified by Gil and Sáez. For the Low Countries, I propose that the Hungarian plays be included in a larger group of *comedias* set in countries and regions such as Russia, Poland, and the Balkans: these seem to have shared the same traits as Hungary when represented in Dutch *comedias*.

This is rooted in a wider phenomenon of literature about the East, including travel literature, which was popular in the Dutch Republic. Blom reports that Amsterdam was an information hub for intelligence or the soft merchandise of worlds far away. The 'creative industry' as Blom calls the collective of merchants and artists that were able to capitalise this intelligence, did the rest, publishing maps, drawings, letters, descriptions, ship logs, *et cetera*.[180] This merchandise could potentially also bring about a cultural shift in the receiving culture. Russia especially seems to have triggered the Dutch imagination. Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias* contributed to this wonder: *comedias* set at Eastern-European courts seemed far enough away that they could be considered exotic, but also close enough to be familiar because of the trade relations and geopolitical interests of the Dutch Republic in the Baltic Sea. Dutch traders mainly travelled and traded along the coast, however, while the inland of the Muscovite Empire was primarily *terra incognita*, ready to be discovered for economic entrepreneurship.[181] Therefore, any description, map, or logbook dealing with Russia was popular among the Dutch public.[182] The representation of Russia and Poland on the Dutch stage is, as such, comprehensible as these places are mythical lands about which the Dutch were in wonder, but about which they were also eager to learn for future enterprise.

The second group appeals to the spectator's imagination with narratives from Greek and Roman mythology or tales from the Bible. The third group dramatises the stories of important historical characters collectively known by all Europeans. The first, fourth, and fifth group largely overlap, but the groups are distinctive in their relative appeal to historicity: the Eastern-European setting is the most exotic.

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180 Blom 2014, 7–8.

181 Blom 2014, 23–28.

182 During the seventeenth century there appeared, for example, three adaptations of Lope's *El gran duque de Moscovia* (1617): Wouthers, *Den Moscoïtschen Knets, dat is, Den grooten hertog van Moscoviën* (c. 1665, Antwerp); Cornelis de Bie, *Den groote Hertoghe van Moskovien* (1672, Lier); and N.N., *De gewaende Demetrius, grootvorst van Moscoviën* (1680, Amsterdam). Furthermore, Calderón's Polish play *La vida es sueño* was immensely popular with the Brussels translation *Het leven is maer droom* (1647) which was also published and performed in Amsterdam after 1654; see Blom and Van Marion 2021.

Meanwhile, the plays in the fourth group are stories that are inserted into a historical setting, but unlike the plays in the third group, are dramatisations in the margins of history.

The fifth group is most diverse as it includes dramatisations of Bandello's *Novelle*, but at the same time its plays are predominantly set at European courts that at a certain moment make way for pastoral or bucolic landscapes (villages, the countryside, but also Arcadia itself), where the decaying effects of time, urban corruption, and political immoralities do not exist. This was a popular Renaissance theme in Dutch literature and on the Dutch stage of the early seventeenth century which was imported from Italy and France, but which was originally inspired by classical texts such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Vergil's *Bucolica* and *Eclogae*.[183] The green worlds in these plays function in opposition to the 'normal' urban world, offering pastoral ethics and a mirror of idealised behaviour in the process: the protagonists move to the green world to find refuge. There, they undergo a conversion or a metamorphosis in which the comic resolution is achieved, and finally they return to the normal world, stronger and more confident than before (see Chapter 6).[184] Apart from *comedias* set in pastoral-bucolic landscapes, the green world also appears in mythical *comedias* (such as in the parallel adaptations *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* and *De toveres Circe*), in which the imaginary landscape becomes an extraordinary world, existing beyond the daily reality of the urban world.

The plays in these five categories not only served to create or reinforce a theatrical illusion onto themselves, but through their distant locations the spectators could establish a very specific emotional relationship to the plays. When these *comedias* successfully established the illusion of a different fictional space before the spectators' eyes, the illusion puts the sense of a fictional and realistic space very explicitly in opposition to each other. This results in a liminal (transitory) experience which can create, somewhat paradoxically, an attentive distance between stage and auditorium.[185] Eversmann argues that the explicit 'distance' between stage and auditorium that is created in frontal theatre can have the reverse effect that the audience is absorbed into the performance. Immersive theatre can alternatively expose that the fictional world is very different from reality. Therefore, we are in some ways always aware that we are watching a performance; there exists a double awareness that

183 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 220–222.

184 Frye 2000, 182; Kaufmant 2010, 1–3, 39–45; Gutiérrez Gil 2013, 222.

185 For studies on liminality, see notably Turner 1969, esp. 80–81, 156; Thomassen 2009, esp. 16–18; Fischer-Lichte 2002, 3–4; Szakolczai 2009, esp. 142.

enables spectators to experience and recode emotions if necessary, or stimulate an emotional detachment.[186]

In Dutch scholarship, there has been the understanding that there exists 'distance' in comic theatre between the stereotypes represented before the audience and the audience itself, which had to evoke ridicule and repulse, or express through negative self-identification the own superior moral code. The created 'distance' is on the one hand socio-economic where it concerns nobles or rich city dwellers watching a play about farmers and on the other hand cultural, when the play thematises a savage way of living as opposed to the cultivated lifestyles of the spectators. In his analysis of seventeenth-century Dutch comic theatre, Van Stipriaan argued, however, that these plays rather create a *comic distance*: he saw this as a social and moral 'distance'—the prevention of identification with the comical, but common characters—which could open up a domain, where various subjects could be discussed in a comical or farcical way without there being the necessity to reconcile what is shown with the dominant morale.[187]

Van Stipriaan goes as far as to suggest that 'the prevention of ethical identification with the comical, common characters offers the opportunity to focus on the literary game that the author plays with the reader or spectator.'[188] Spectators should not aim to recognise the obvious stereotypes, but the enigmas, reversals, parallels, and associations instead, which they must discern and resolve into meaningful interpretations. With this, the ethical and societal 'distance' gains significance as it fosters intellectual reflection and pleasure.[189] Van Stipriaan's reflections do not take the adaptations of *comedias* into account, which as a genre are different from both classical tragedies and comedies. There exists the potential that the exotic staging of various *comedias* offered a 'relief' or a relaxation, and different from the staging in more traditional Dutch comedies and tragedies, the exotic also offered a distance.

While the stage setting in most *comedias* resembles a foreign court peopled by nobles who often have questionable morals, in many ways comparable to those in the courtly settings of classical tragedies, *comedias* treat similar subjects of deceit and deception as seen in many other Dutch comedies. Therefore, I reinterpret Van Stipriaan's *comic distance* as a *tragicomic distance*. A tragicomic distance is understood here as a conceptual distance that is created in relation to the geographical location

186 Eversmann 1996, 163–166.
187 Van Stipriaan 1996, 161.
188 Van Stipriaan 1996, 161.
189 Van Stipriaan 1996, 161–162.

represented on stage and the extravagant lifestyle of the noble characters, but which also incorporates Van Stipriaan's reflections that spectators must dissect the enigmas, reversals, parallels, and associations that are presented. While spectators watch Van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura*, for instance, they witness a story that is unfolding in Budapest, although their bodies are still in Amsterdam; simultaneously, spectators witness a story of deception, jealousy, and trickery, which must be recognised and understood before they can take pleasure from watching this play.

The effects of this distance can also be regarded as a form of dis*place*ment more common in literature. Displacement is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) in many ways, but here two definitions are especially relevant. In the first, displacement can be considered geographically as the 'removal of a thing from its place; putting out of place; shifting, dislocation,' where it concerns the representation of another space on stage, furthering the emotions of pleasure and astonishment. Theatrical performance is, of course, more effective in this regard than a reading of the same play, since the performance brings these places to 'life' in a pleasurable form of 'oogbedrog' (deception of the eyes), although playwrights were aware that a similar process shapes a literary text.

This is attested by Heynck, who by means of a reference to several popular prose novels in his adaptation *Veranderlyk geval* offers an emotional refuge or a relief from reality. The so-called 'book scene' is not present in the original Spanish play *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor* (c. 1649, 'Changes of Fortune and Steadfastness of Love') by De Monroy y Silva. Heynck added it to cater to a Dutch audience. When the protagonist Karel is revealed not to be a shepherd's son but in fact a prince, the *gracioso* Mengo is the only one surprised at Karel having obtained the title of prince, drawing attention to the dis*place*ment of Karel and subsequently of spectators. Karel asks why the ever-talkative Mengo has fallen silent. The *gracioso* replies that he is wonder-stricken, tongue-tied, and that he stands completely amazed, vocalising much of the spectators' reaction:

MENGO. Yes, I can believe that, I stared my eyes out;
You becoming prince, prince! That seems rather strange to me.
I bet that Klarette also beholds it for a wonder.[190]

190 Heynck 1663, vv. 522–524: 'MENGO. Dat loof ik wel, ik heb myn oogen uitgekeeken; / Gy Prins te worden, Prins! dat dunkt my al wat vreemt. / 'k Wet dat het onze Klaar ook voor een wonder neemt.'

The *graciosa* Klarette (Mengo's sister) is less impressed by the peculiar situation. She says that she has read such things before. Baffled at such idiocy, Mengo says that Klarette is a stupid girl for saying such things, and compares the current events to well-known examples from literature:

MENGO. Read? Here you are fool! Well, where would I then be?
I know of Amadís, and of Esplandián,
Of Ourson, Valentine, the Swan Knight,
Of Don Quixote, and more; yes, I sometimes came as far as
In *L'Astrée* itself: there, a prince easily becomes a shepherd,
A shepherd a prince again, a shepherdess a princess;
They play fast and loose with the facts.
I saw in Ovid also many metamorphoses;
But I never heard of such strange things,
That Karel, raised in a village near Naples,
So swiftly became prince when a king went hunting,
Such as is *seen* here; those are *wondrous* affairs.[191]

Mengo lists several medieval chivalric romances which were in popular demand in the Low Countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadís de Gaula* (c. 1500, but with 62 reprints in Dutch between 1546 and 1628),[192] his *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (c. 1496), *Valentin et Ourson* (written in the fourteenth century, but with various prints in Dutch from the early sixteenth century onwards),[193] the three branches dealing with the Swan Knight in the *Cycle de la Croisade* (1100–1300, printed in Dutch in c. 1547, 1593, 1631, and 1651),[194] and Miguel

191 Heynck 1663, vv. 526–537: 'MENGO. Geleezen, hier malloot! wel waar zou ik dan weezen? / Ik weet Amadis, en van Esplandiaan, / Van Ourzon, Valentyn, de Ridder met de Zwaan, / Van Don Guichot, en meer, ja quam zomtyts noch varder / Tot zelver in d'Astré, daar wort een Prins licht Harder, / Een Harder weder Prins, een Harderin Princes, / Men neemt het daar niet op een leugen vyf of zes. / 'k Zag in Ovidius ook veel veranderingen; / Maar 'k hoorde nimmer niet van zulke vreemde dingen, / Dat Karel, in een dorp by Napels opgebracht, / Zo schielyk Prins wiert als een Koning reet ter jacht, / Gelyk hier is *gezien*; dat zyn eerst *wondre* zaaken' (italics added).

192 Van Selm 2001, 43, 173–176. Moreover, Van Selm describes that the *Amadís* can be found in inventories of book stores until 1650, after which its popularity diminished so much that no reprints were made. See Van Selm 2001, 26.

193 Debaene 1977, 233–234; Quak 1998.

194 Debaene 1977, 81; Claassens 1998; that is to say, *La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, *Le Chevalier au Cygne*, and *La Fin d'Elias*. The cycle was printed in Dutch as *Cronijcke, vanden vromen ende ontsienelijcken ionck-*

de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615, but many times reprinted in Dutch from 1657 onwards).[195] The common denominator of these chivalric romances and the situation in *Veranderlyk geval* is that in all cases the protagonist receives a knighthood or a well-deserved noble title (it is often also their birth right), although in the case of *Don Quixote* we encounter a burlesque attack on the genre. Mengo also mentions Honoré d'Urfé's popular French bucolic novel *L'Astrée* (1607–1627, with reprints in Dutch from 1625 onwards) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (25 reprints in Dutch between 1566–1662), in which change is a constant factor.

L'Astrée is an interesting reference with regard to the plot of *Veranderlyk geval*: it is also clear from Mengo's more elaborate discussion of the plot. The immensely complex plot of *L'Astrée* chronicles the perfect love (much like Karel's and Margareta's love) between a shepherd and shepherdess—the heroine Astrée (named after the classical figure Astraea) and her lover Céladon—in fifth-century Forez. The political ambitions of the other characters result in many misadventures for the couple. In *L'Astrée*, however, the characters do not raise their station as happens in Heynck's play, but rather a prince hides among the rural community in Forez. So, in all the stories that Mengo mentions, the protagonists either ascend the social ladder, or find themselves at the centre of a political game, but not both.

Mengo's response of wonder is illustrative of the scene. By stressing the act of seeing in the final line of his response to Karel, the *gracioso* highlights and underlines the theatrical reality of the play. Through Mengo, the play self-referentially turns attention to its pastoral setting and its literary tradition. The reference to Arcadian, pastoral, bucolic literature frames that fictional reality and represents it as a perfect, idealised mirror of love as it is presented in *Veranderlyk geval*, and that mirror is subsequently extended beyond the reality of the theatre.

Furthermore, the OED definition can be used to understand that the effects of dis*place*ment on an audience are mainly psychological and can be seen as the 'substitution of one idea or impulse for another, as in dreams, obsessions, etc.' or as 'the unconscious transfer of intense feelings or emotions to something of greater or less consequence.' This interpretation implies an emotional detachment from one's own feelings: when the play represents a *place* that is elsewhere or exists in another time period, the spectator can regard the behaviour of the characters from a safe conceptual distance, although the double awareness existing in theatre also paradoxically makes

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heer Floris van Grecien, ghenaemt den ridder metten swanen (1593) and as *Een schone en miraculeuse historie vanden ridder metter swane* (1631, 1651).

195 See e.g., the *Short Title Catalogue of the Netherlands*.

spectators identify with the characters on stage. When Mengo thus expresses his own wonder, he also focalises the spectators' same reaction of wonder as he explicitly reflects on whether there exist such stories in the non-fictional world, reinforcing the exoticism of the setting in *Veranderlyk geval*.

It is here that the conceptual distance could in theory offer an emotional refuge from one's own behaviour and desires, and from the demands put on one's ability to manage emotions within the current emotional regime.[196] The plays are set in places and times beyond the current reality, that is to say, the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. When the theatre shows people that look like the spectators themselves, but who exist in another, exotic reality, theatre as an art form can abstract itself from the emotional expectations that spectators may experience on a daily basis. *Comedia nueva* with their often exotic settings played on those needs for emotional relaxation.

Comic Nearness

Emotional confrontation is the specific aim of a few Dutch adaptations which enjoyed some minor popularity in the Dutch Republic. Some Dutch playwrights made use of *couleur locale* to completely transform the stage setting of the original *comedias* into familiar, realistic, or domestic spaces. Rodenburgh's 1617 adaptation *Ialoersche studenten* is the best-known example of this practice: Toledo in Lope's original *La escolástica celosa* became Leiden in Rodenburgh's adaptation; Alcalá de Henares became The Hague. Playwrights, such as Rodenburgh, recognised the comic overtones rather than the tragicomic nature of the originals in question and decided to relocate the settings for their adaptation to the Low Countries.[197] These plays are mostly categorised as *comedias urbanas*, plays that are set in Spanish cities in a time in the early modern present and that are peopled with familiar characters, namely city dwellers.[198] In these plays, fictional and realistic spaces conflate with the aim of establishing what I call a 'comic nearness,' in opposition to Van Stipriaan's 'comic distance.' The

196 This is more so the case when a play can also be read allegorically; see Chapter 5. There, I discuss how Joan Dullaart reinterpreted Enciso's *Los Medicis de Florencia* (before 1634, published 1647) as a political play within the context of the Dutch Orangist movement. The adaptation is *Alexander de Medicis* (1653).

197 Walthaus 1999, 166–167, 169–170. Walthaus argued that much of the playfulness of Lope's original was lost in translation. Her analysis is, however, steered by a Spanish perspective. In the Dutch context, Rodenburgh's adaptation is still highly comic, perhaps more so than many of his other plays or plays by contemporary playwrights; see Abrahamse 1997, 99.

198 Thacker 2007, 150.

absence of any exotic setting in these *comedias* ensures that the adaptations follow the domestic Dutch comedies. They were in comparison thus also less popular, but no less important.

This comic nearness is established in particular through a created *couleur locale* and serves to confront spectators with the behaviour of the characters, but also with their own behaviour: it aims to make you wryly laugh about the things you recognise to be true in yourself. By this, *comic nearness* inherently has an emotional-comic effect. Van Stipriaan argued something similar when he discussed how most dramatic adaptations of Boccaccio's *Decamerone* were acculturated by transforming the Italian environment into an Amsterdam setting (the *couleur locale*). This applies even more to several famous Dutch comedies from the early seventeenth century, including two that were also adapted in 1617, this time from Latin: Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero's *Moortje* (1617, 'Little Moor') and Pieter Cornelisz Hooft and Samuel Coster's *Warenar* (1617, 'True Fool').[199] In *Moortje*, for example, Bredero adapted Terence's *Eunuchus*, choosing Amsterdam as his setting instead of classical Athens. With *Warenar*, Hooft and Coster adapted Plautus' *Aulularia*, likewise set in Athens. The playwrights also preferred Amsterdam as the setting for their adaptation. By doing this, the plays did not only appeal more to spectators for seeing their own city represented on stage, but the message of Terence's and Plautus' originals also became more topical, disenchanting, and confronting, thus having a greater emotional impact on spectators.[200] For example, the girls that are raped in both plays are not just two Athenian girls who are silent witnesses to their own sexual violation, but rather Amsterdam girls who speak out against these crimes. In effect, they hold up a mirror both before their own parents and their own peers: the Amsterdam spectators. We may term the effects of this comic nearness *emotional confrontation*.

This emotional confrontation happens, for instance, in Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten*.[201] As described above, this play is set in the two specific locations of Leiden and The Hague.[202] Through this local setting, the play's events gain an aura of reality.

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199 Van Stipriaan 1996, 160–162, 173–174, 189–190, and 2018, 217–224. Van Stipriaan is not clear whether 'comic distance' should be seen as a key characteristic of Dutch comedies from the early seventeenth century. When he discussed plays such as Bredero's *Moortje* or Hooft and Coster's *Warenar*, he read them as holding up a mirror to spectators and thus confronting them with their own behaviour.

200 Van Stipriaan 1996, 173–174, 189–190, and 2018, 59, 217–224; Grootes 1999, 381–383, 388–389, 396–399; Jansen 2004, 91, 93, 100–101, 103–115.

201 Transl. of Lope de Vega, *La escolástica celosa*.

202 Walthaus 1999, 158. In Lope's original, the student Cardenio travels from Toledo to the university city Alcalá de Henares (to take a university exam), while Rodenburgh instead has Cardenio travel

Rodenburgh seems to suggest that the spectator witnesses a realistic representation of seventeenth-century Dutch student culture. The playwright also varnishes over the actions of his *dramatis personae*, comparing their bad behaviour to that commonly occurring in daily life, which is much worse in Rodenburgh's opinion:[203]

> Should my farcical Vireno displease you, sweeten him by my serious Cardenio. If Juliana is too fickle at the beginning, excuse it with the marriage ending. Is Fabricio too brusque? Porcelio too proud? Marcio too brave? Valerio too timid? Celia too catastrophic? Tembranda too unlucky? Do not judge before the end. Ponder in your bowl of reasonability the circumstances of our century, the frenzy of the passion of love, the labyrinth of confusion, the caustic vengefulness, the disguised deceptions: notice what faithful suitors dare do to enjoy what they love, and what the pure female lovers do to achieve satisfaction. My play did not manage to do as much; or as happens more often, it is true one tells fables, but beneath that cloak you can often discover the truth.[204]

Although Rodenburgh had never been a student at Leiden University himself and was merely projecting this Spanish story onto Dutch student culture, the fact that the male students go to The Hague to parade along the Lange Voorhout, such as the Dutch 'beau monde' did in the seventeenth century (Fig. 1.9), only reinforced the play's appealing reality and made its characters' actions all the more confront-

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from the university city Leiden to the government city The Hague. I suspect that Rodenburgh made this choice for verisimilitude. Although Walthaus wrote that Rodenburgh does not make clear why Cardenio goes to The Hague, I argue it is more logical in the Dutch context that the students were in Leiden (because they also lived there) and instead travelled to The Hague, a nearby city with a real nightlife in the seventeenth century.

203 See also Abrahamse 1997, 98.

204 Rodenburgh 1617d, fol. *2v: 'Mishaegt u mijn boertighe Vireno, verzoet het door mijn erenstige Cardenio. Is Iuliana in't beginsel te wispeltuurich, verschoont het met het ghetrouwe besluyt. Is Fabricio te bitsich. Porcelio te trotsich. Marcio te moedich. Valerio te schichtich. Celia te rampspoedich. Tembranda t'ongeluckich, oordeld niet voor't eynde. Overwickt inde schaele uwes redelijckheydt de toevallen onses eeuws, de razernye van liefdens passie, de doolhovighe verwarringhe, de vinnighe wraeckgiericheydt, de vermomde bedriegheryen: merckt wat trouwe lievers bestaen om ghenieten 't geen zy lieven, en wat de reyne liefsters bedryven, om te gheraken tot ghenoeging'. Zo veel heeft myn rymert niet verziert, of meerder ghebeurt, 't Is waer hy fabuleert doch vaecken onder dien deckmantel treft men de waerheyd.'

FIG. 1.9 Anonymous, *Het Voorhout vande Kneuterdyk verby de Klooster-kerk*, 1711, etching
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ing. In Rodenburgh's adaptation, the 'beau monde' is, furthermore, represented by a merry company that passes by under the guidance of music, such as depicted in the well-known painting *The Fête champêtre* (1627) by Dirck Hals (Fig. 1.10).[205]

With this appeal to reality, the women in Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten*, who are the daughters of Leiden's citizenry, become the daughters of the spectators, and the male students their sons. These daughters do not accept that the rowdy students use them for their own sexual pleasure and leave them with their honour and virtue tainted: to them, a promise of marriage made is a promise of marriage kept. In turn, the sons do not accept that the women play games with them and demand that they are honest about their true intentions. Thus, Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten* becomes a lesson for the young accompanying their parents to the performance. In this moment, it can be said, the emotional regime is enforced as social norms are reaffirmed.

Rodenburgh was not unique in relocating the settings of his plays close to home, although he was the first to do so for a Spanish play. Several other playwrights also

205 For the interpretation that the people passing by are a merry company, see van Eemeren 1991, 267. Furthermore, there is no merry company present in Lope's original *La escolástica celosa*; see Lope de Vega 1604d, fols. 96^{v}–97^{r}.

FIG. 1.10 Dirck Hals, *The Fête champêtre*, 1627, oil on panel, 77.6 cm x 135.7 cm
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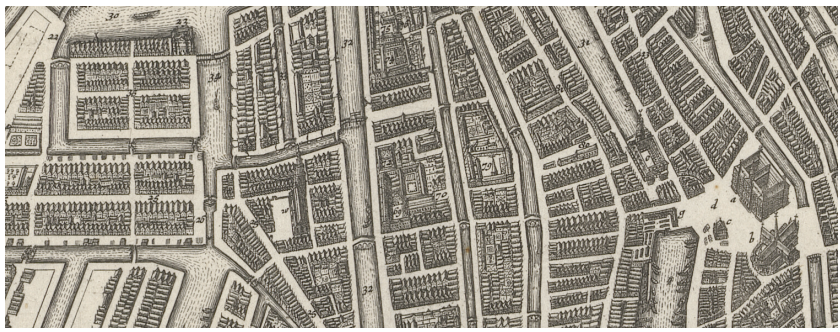

FIG. 1.11 Detail of A. Besnard and Daniel Stalpaert, *Amstelo-damum amplificatum / Nieuwe Beschryvinge van Amsterdam met syne vermeerderinge*, c. 1638–1682, etching, 542 mm x 629 mm. On the top left Vlooijenburg; on the bottom right Dam Square with the new Town Hall and Nieuwe Kerk
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reimagined locations featuring in the Spanish originals, setting them in Amsterdam or elsewhere in the Low Countries. A good example is Jan Zoet's adaptation *Zabynaja, of vermomde loosheid* (1648, 'Zabynaja, or Disguised Slyness'), about a black woman enslaved by a Portuguese nobleman, set among Amsterdam's Portuguese community.[206] Although Zoet writes that the original location of the play had been

206 In the paratext (Zoet 1648, fol. A2[r]), it is mentioned that the play is originally Spanish, but it is

the Spanish city Burgos,[207] in Amsterdam the Portuguese community was practically one and the same as the community of Portuguese Jews: the Sephardim. The Sephardic Jews had a strong presence in Vlooijenburg, which was, therefore, unofficially Amsterdam's Jewish quarter. Bringing a play about the Portuguese community onto the Amsterdam stage meant that the location of this play had to be Vlooijenburg. As some of the Sephardim also had black indentured servants in their households, a play about a black woman enslaved by a Portuguese Jew was apparently a recognisable image to Amsterdam's mid-seventeenth-century theatre-going public.[208] Adding *couleur locale* to any adaptation, whether it be of classical or Spanish origin, has potential for greater emotional effect than that to which the original setting could ever aspire.

Conclusion

Dutch theatre underwent a development during the seventeenth century related to the baroque interest in illusion and deception. It is possible to understand the popularity of the Spanish *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries within this context through two parallel adaptations of Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor* as the ultimate examples. The original Spanish plays use magic and illusion in a way that sought to continuously amaze spectators. This happened within the context of the Buen Retiro palace gardens, a found environment, which enforced the illusion.

The two Dutch adaptations *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* and *De toveres Circe* reflect local traditions more, and were also dependent on local environments: there was no found environment used in staging the play in either in Brussels or Amsterdam, nor were live animals used in the productions. The play's two adaptors, De Grieck and De Leeuw, solved this with the intention to confirm and consolidate the illusion. De Grieck's stage design was based on that of the Italian opera *Ulisse all'isola di Circe*, and he referenced the Warande in Brussels next to Coudenberg Palace, thus connecting the fictional space in his adaptation to a real local place. Meanwhile, De Leeuw relied more on the possibilities of the new Amsterdam Public Theatre, where the décor could be quickly changed. Furthermore, the characters' language re-

unclear which Spanish source text Zoet used for his adaptation. We do know that the technical translator was Gerard Pietersz Schaep; this might indicate the origins of the Dutch adaptation. See also Jautze, Álvarez Francés, and Blom 2016, 38–39.

207 Zoet 1648, fol. A2r.

208 Ponte 2020.

enforced the change of scenery, and the animals in his adaptation were represented by means of animal costumes specifically purchased for the production of his play. Such a fully stage-managed production of *El mayor encanto, amor* was, however, an exception in the Dutch language area and was only possible after the two theatres in Brussels and Amsterdam were refurbished with coulisse décor and a proscenium arch.

An audience only allows itself to be told to a certain extent how it should spectate. In the seventeenth-century Low Countries, its taste was for grand spectacle plays with blood and grand emotions to overwhelm the eyes. This baroque tradition is strongly present in the Spanish originals and their Dutch adaptations, including those of Rodenburgh. This tradition emphasises the illusion and visual seduction of these plays, although not everyone agreed with this focus on the visual. Therefore, Rodenburgh defended his choice to adapt Spanish plays in his *Eglentiers Poëtens Borstweringh*. He argued that by allowing for visual illusions spectators could be better instructed. Almost fifty years later, Vos asserted something similar. In Brussels, the 'Vrye Liefhebbers der Rijmer-konste' likewise placed heavy emphasis on the role of the eyes in theatre's reception.

Thirty-four of the forty-five Spanish *comedias* that were adapted between 1617 and 1672 in the Dutch Republic appeared before 1665, the year that the Amsterdam Public Theatre was refurbished. These plays were first performed at the rhetoricians' chamber The Eglantine, and subsequently in the theatre built after a design by Jacob van Campen in 1638. Both theatres possessed a polytopic stage. This stage type is a baroque element that leaves much to the imagination of the spectators, and *comedia nueva* fit perfectly within this staging tradition, as in Spain the public *corrales de comedias* were designed in a similar way. Because of this, the many places occurring in the adapted Dutch *comedias* could be easily stage-managed in their new context.

Through these successful staging methods, the early modern theatre visitor realised that 'all the world's a stage.' Baroque theatre, *comedia nueva* included, relied on theatrical illusions which captivated spectators though visual means. Dutch playwrights were acutely aware that *comedia nueva* harboured this potential and, therefore, also followed in the footsteps of the Spanish *comedia*-authors by appealing to sight and deferring from the laws of theatre as formulated by the classical authors, a practice scrutinised by the traditionalists of Nil Volentibus Arduum. Nevertheless, it becomes clear from their disputes that the eyes are an important vehicle for the evocation of the 'responding emotions' of pleasure and admiration.

Comedia nueva evokes these responding emotions by representing a variety of places and distant spaces that either exist in a fantastic world of their own, or more

realistically in a space that belongs to the spectators' own social world. I demonstrate that the places dramatised in *comedias* can be categorised according to five groups, ranging from the mythical space of Circe's island in *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe*, to the historical reality of Spain in D*e verduytste Cid*, or the contemporary Dutch cities represented in *Ialoersche studenten*. Meanwhile, the depiction of travel and passing of time enhance the audiences' enjoyment of the plot, although challenging the plays' *vraisemblance*. In this regard, the reconstruction of the Amsterdam Public Theatre and installation of the new proscenium arch was a means to advance the *vraisemblance*.

The distant and exotic spaces that are created onstage must provide an illusionistic-geographical distance, which in turn offers tragicomic distance. Then, there can occur an emotional relaxation on the part of spectators, so that they are no longer required to identify with the characters' actions in order to enjoy the play. On the other hand, plays that incorporate a *couleur locale* create comic nearness, and as a result also an emotional confrontation which shows spectators that the characters' behaviour reflects their own behaviour, for better or worse, back to them. The idea of *theatrum mundi* works beneath the surface in *comedia nueva*, and unconsciously contributed to the genre's success in the Low Countries.