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

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CHAPTER 2

Imagineering Emotions through the Eyes

The Adaptation of Spectacle in Dutch Comedias

THEATRE. Oh, oh, oh!
VISITOR. What's the matter with you? Why are you like this? Are you sick? You seem to be wearing a head bandage. [...]
THEATRE. Can't you see the state I am in? I am wounded, my legs and arms broken; I am full of holes and trapdoors, with thousands of nails hammered into me. [...]
I find myself in a most sorrowful state and I suspect that this is due to one of three things: either there are no longer good actors, or the poets are all bad, or the audiences lack discernment. For dramaturgs think of nothing but stage machines, poets think of nothing but carpenters and spectators think only with their eyes.[1]

The 'Theatre' is in pain. People are putting nails, holes, and trapdoors into him, all because playwrights, actors, and even the audiences do not know anymore what a good play requires. Dramaturgs dream of stage machinery and spectators only want a feast for the eyes. In this excerpt from the *Prologo dialogistico* to Lope de Vega's *Decimasexta parte de las comedias* (1621, 'Sixteenth Part of [the Collection of] the *Comedias*'), 'Theatre' lodges a complaint that he is being hurt and transformed into something else, so that the most spectacular *comedias* can be staged. One thing becomes clear about the dramatic reality in Spain around 1621: spectators 'thought' only with their eyes and this was considered to be a sign of the audience's incapability of legitimate

1 Lope de Vega 1621, fol. ¶r, as translated by Ruano de la Haza 2008, 46: 'TEATRO. ¡Ay, ay, ay! / FORASTERO. ¿Qué tienes? ¿Qué novedad es esta? ¿Estás enfermo, que parece tocador ese que tienes por la frente? [...] TEATRO. ¿Es posible que no me ves herido, quebradas las piernas y los brazos, lleno de mil agujeros, de mil trampas y de mil clavos? [...] Yo he llegado a gran desdicha y presumo que tiene origen de una de tres causas: o por no haber buenos representantes, o por ser malos los poetas, o por faltar entendimiento a los oyentes; pues los autores se valen de las máquinas, los poetas de los carpinteros y los oyentes de los ojos.' Ruana de la Haza's translation 'head dressing' for 'tocador ese [...] por la frente' I have retranslated as 'head bandage.'

aesthetic judgement, such as I have discussed for Corneille's *Le Cid* in the previous chapter. Although 'Theatre' does not present it as such, this predominant focus on the eyes consequently led to the heavy use of spectacle and stage machinery. Despite 'Theatre's' complaint, the excerpt suggests that spectators very much enjoyed the technical inventions.

These technical inventions appealed to the eyes and, thus, created a fantastic theatre experience, eliciting wonder, awe, fascination, and admiration among spectators—emotions that Frijda has characterised as responding emotions, which are evoked by the quality of the stimuli beheld.[2] The eyes 'ha[d] no small feat in the manifestation of people's emotions' as 'Theatre' says in the same *Prologo*.[3] And what spectators witnessed with their eyes was indeed a spectacle! A word derived via French (*spectacle*) from Latin (*spectare*; to see), the word spectacle (*spektakel*) was introduced to Dutch around 1501–1525. It means literally 'that which catches someone's eye,' according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.[4] This basic definition of a spectacle includes all technical aspects, stage attributes, and other elements of a performance used to enthral spectators.

However, building on the previous chapter, I am aware that the *mise-en-scène* and scenography equally contribute to spectacle, and can thus enhance the *vraisemblance* of a play, or overwhelm spectators into forgetting about reality. Therefore, I include several additional aspects in my discussion of spectacle. In the *mise-en-scène*, we tend to focus on aspects such as acting (composition, facial expressions, body language, the actor's use of gestures and their interactions), the lighting, the environment or space, costumes, make-up, and hairstyles, and set design.[5] The scenography 'includes stage architecture, scenery, machines, costumes, and lighting.'[6] The *mise-en-scène* and scenography influence the verisimilitude or believability of a play in the eyes of its viewers. In Chapter 1, I discussed the *mise-en-scène* in relation to how playwrights and stage directors created an idea of place and time in their plays and thus contributed to a believable setting. Here, I argue that spectacle is an element of amazement, admiration, and wonder as much as it is an element of verisimilitude; take, for example, the use of special effects to suggest the eruption of Mount Etna ('Mongibelo') in *El mayor encanto, amor*.[7]

2 Frijda 1986, 356.

3 Lope de Vega 1621, fol. ¶r: 'Teatro. Pues siendo los ojos tan principal sentido, no es pequeña la causa con que se mueve el pueblo' (translation mine).

4 See the WNT, lemma 'spektakel': 'Iets dat de aandacht der toeschouwers trekt, schouwspel.'

5 Postlewait 2010.

6 Wilson Smith 2010.

7 Brenan 1951, 277; Castillo Pascual 2015, 85–87; Vergeer 2020c, 327–328.

Spectacle not only includes what in Spain are called *tramoyas*, in Dutch 'konsten vliegwerken,' and in English stage machinery, but also less expected forms of what I regard to be spectacle, or that are significant to the success of a play's overall spectacle. Therefore, I adopt a broad definition of spectacle and consider that *all* elements in a play that captivate the spectator's eye can essentially be spectacular. In the Dutch and Flemish contexts, *tableaux vivants* ('vertooninghen'), *changements à vue*, light effects, sword and pistol duels, and dazzling costumes seem especially to have fulfilled the role of spectacle in the adaptations of *comedia nueva*. Following Natascha Veldhorst and Gustavo Umpierre, I also include musical and sound effects in my analysis, arguing that these could be counted as part of the spectacle, when they enhance the atmosphere or effects of the stage machinery, such as in the case of the theatre's thunder machine.[8]

In the early modern period, it was commonly understood that the *mise-en-scène*—and the scenography—played on people's emotions. Following Aristotle's objection to the *mise-en-scène* in his *Poetica*, early modern playwrights often argued that the abundance of spectacle did not speak to the ingenuity of the poet, but was rather the area of expertise of stage designers and managers.[9] Heavy reliance on the *mise-en-scène* showed that a poet had less mastery of his craft, if he needed to incite emotions in spectators (solely) through these means. When the *mise-en-scène* aimed only to create an ominous effect and was not steered towards arousing fear and compassion—the two foremost emotions of tragedy in Aristotle's vision of drama—the poet did not truly engage himself in the creation of tragedy.[10]

Lope's *Prologo* should be regarded in this same light. José Maria Ruano de la Haza has identified the discrepancy between Lope's *Prologo* and his practical approach to theatre, as he essentially laid it out in his *Arte nuevo*. In fact, Lope often used stage machinery, albeit simple ones, according to Ruano de la Haza.[11] At Madrid's two public playhouses—the Corral de Príncipe and the Corral de la Cruz—Lope and his stage director colleagues had ample means to make use of spectacle. And in the Low Countries, adaptors such as Rodenburgh and the theatre director Vos were eager to

8 Umpierre 1975, 59–90; Veldhorst 2004, 20–24. See also Korsten and Van Dijk 2020, who have looked for traces of sound in early modern Dutch textual and visual sources to argue how through *ekphrasis* sound is rendered hearable, even when it is not actually there. In their discussion of seventeenth-century sources, sound is rather a dramatic than a theatrical element, because it is suggested rather than produced.

9 Aristotle 1995, sec. 1450^{b}, 15–20.

10 Aristotle 1995, sec. 1453^{b}, 6–11.

11 Ruano de la Haza 2008, 46–49.

take the opportunity to showcase spectacle by keeping, transforming, or even adding it in their adaptations, as I argue below.

To effectively discuss the 'Spanish' spectacle in relation to theatrical space, this chapter offers an analysis of how spectacular aspects of the Spanish originals were adapted to the Dutch context. I also provide an overview of how the Netherlandish theatres developed from simple stages at the rhetoricians' chambers into the *théâtres à l'italienne* that the public theatres of Brussels and Amsterdam became in the 1660s.[12] In this regard, I discuss how playwrights and theatre producers worked together to *imagineer* emotions in spectator's eyes, while altering and improving their local venues. Further, I argue that the technical improvements of the Low Countries' theatres were carried out simultaneously to the introduction and flourishing of *comedia nueva*, and sometimes even as a result of *comedia nueva*.[13]

As noted above, in this chapter, I discuss spectacle as a means of *imagineering* emotions in the eyes. As a concept, *imagineering* is, naturally, a contraction of 'imagining' and 'engineering.' Used primarily in urban studies, the concept connotes the translation of imaginary representations of an environment into material reality.[14] Alternatively, according to Knox and Pinch, it can also denote 'the conscious creation of places with characteristics similar to other places [... o]ften seen as the creation of a superficial veneer or façade of culture.'[15] I use *imagineering*, however, in the same way as Frans-Willem Korsten et al. in the context of the creation and working of scenes of violence in the early modern period. They considered 'how the material production of images does not so much constitute a decoration or a mode of appearance but constitutes collective cultural imaginations as a cultural technique that produces distinct historical selves.'[16] *Imagineering*, then, describes a historical shift, 'in which new techniques were deployed to make images speak to the public and to one another.'[17] Korsten et al. assert that *imagineering* does not restrict itself to the visual alone but

12 For this, I build on key studies about the stage design, layout, interior, and inventory of the Amsterdam Public Theatre by Worp (1920), Hummelen (1967), Albach (1970), Smits-Veldt and Teusink (1978), and Amir (1996), before and after its remodelling in 1665. For Antwerp, I build on a selection of articles and the dissertation of De Paepe (2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2015). For Brussels, I take De Keyser (1925), De Baere (1945) and Langvik-Johannessen and Porteman (1996) as my point of departure.

13 See Blom 2021a, 353–356, 366–369. Blom discusses the alterations of the Amsterdam Public Theatre in light of the cultural industry and Vos and Fornenbergh's entrepreneurship, while I primarily focus on the emotional effects that the new spectacle could create.

14 Suitner 2015, 98.

15 Knox and Pinch 2010, 328; see also Best 2010, 196.

16 Korsten et al. 2020, 16.

17 Korsten et al. 2020, 15.

it also implies techniques, bodies, machines, and all sorts of artifacts, which involve all the human senses, and propel various forms of imagination. As *imagineering* is a present participle, Korsten et al. argue that it is continuously at work 'in what people see publicly and what they see in their imagination, both in terms of machineries and in terms of behaviour.'[18] In their editorial for a special issue on the spectacle of violence in the early modern period, Karel Vanhaesebrouck and Cornelis van der Haven give the following definition of *imagineering*:

> *Imagineering* refers (1) to imagination as it is used in representing other possible worlds, and (2) to engineering; that is, to the techniques employed and designed to do this—with technique indicating both the technical element of theatre and other public stages, and the broader possibilities of rhetoric, props and acting employed in such theatrical stagings. *Imagineering* describes a historical shift in which new techniques were deployed to make images speak to the public and to one another, with the aim of creating a shared space for cultural identity and memory.[19]

The concept also helps illustrate that cultural techniques, such as the techniques used in theatre, endeavoured to involve beholders in the spectacle in a prolonged and embodied way, while spectators were invited to take personal pleasure from what is seen. This allowed them to immerse themselves in the depicted reality.[20] The *imagineering* of spectacle adds to its theatrical illusion (and the related idea of *theatrum mundi*) discussed in Chapter 1. Agreeing with Korsten et al., I argue that spectacle in the Dutch adaptations of *comedias nueva* exemplifies *imagineering* which, when successful, brought spectators pleasure. *Imagineering* is, thus, a two-sided concept, which includes the perspectives of theatre makers who create spectacle and the effect that spectacle has on audiences.[21]

To this aim, I discuss Rodenburgh's pioneering work on *Casandra Hertoginne van Borgonie en Karel Baldeus* (1617, 'Casandra, Duchess of Burgundy and Charles de

18 Korsten et al. 2020, 17.

19 Vanhaesebrouck and van der Haven 2020, § 12.

20 Korsten et al. 2020, 17.

21 I am aware that the processes that can be analysed by the concept of *imagineering* can also be understood as examples of the sublime, which is discussed for the theatre by Bussels and Van Eck. See Van Eck et al. 2012; Bussels 2016.

Valdez') for the rhetoricians' chamber The Eglantine in Amsterdam, but also the more advanced technologies that Claude de Grieck had at his disposal for his *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* as it was performed in the Brussels Public Theatre. De Leeuw's version of the same play, *De toveres Circe*, marked the final stage in the development of spectacle as it was staged in the remodelled Amsterdam Public Theatre of post-1665.

Yet, the aim is to also discuss other theatres that in the seventeenth century staged a Dutch *comedia* adaptation. Thus, I discuss among others Antonio Francisco Wouther's *De verliefde stiefmoeder* (1665, 'The Stepmother in Love')[22] as it was performed at the Almoners' Theatre ('Aalmoezeniersschouwburg') located in the so-called House of Spain ('Spanjepand') in Antwerp's Great Market Square.[23] The discussion of spectacle in *comedias* from the Habsburg Netherlands takes us, furthermore, on a journey to the Flemish town of Lier, 18 kilometres from Antwerp, where the playwright-politician-jurist Cornelis de Bie reimagined three of Lope's plays in Dutch. These plays were, however, all printed in Antwerp and therefore also circulated in the cultural *space* of this metropolis, for which reason I discuss them alongside the *comedias* staged in Antwerp. It is unclear whether the plays were also staged in Antwerp, hence my discussion of Lier's productions. Since literary histories have usually focused on the three larger metropoles in the Low Countries, De Bie's plays are a welcome additional case study of the expansive dissemination of *comedia nueva*: it was broad enough to have reached a relatively small town and, moreover, one in the Habsburg Netherlands.[24]

The Pioneer: Rodenburgh's Use of Spectacle

In 1617, the diplomat-trader Theodore Rodenburgh returned to Amsterdam. He had travelled all across Europe, including to Madrid, where he had been on a diplomatic mission from 1611 to 1613 as envoy extraordinary to Felipe III's court on behalf of the Guinea traders' company. While residing in Madrid, he must have seen the plays of

22 Transl. of Lope de Vega, *El castigo sin venganza* (1635).

23 According to De Paepe 2011, 187, it is certain that *De verliefde stiefmoeder* was performed in the Almoners' Theatre; the title page of *De verliefde stiefmoeder* features the sentence 'ende vertoont op de Antwerpsche Speel-plaets' ('and show-cased on the Antwerp Play Place'). This would mean that the Almoners' Theatre and the 'Antwerpsche Speel-plaets' are one and the same location.

24 I only consider here performances of *comedias* in the established theatres of Amsterdam, Antwerp, Lier, and Brussels. For performances of *comedias* in, for instance, the Haarlemmerhout and other more rural areas, see Blom and Van Marion 2021, 61–63.

Lope de Vega performed either in the Corral de Príncipe or the Corral de la Cruz.[25] When he left Madrid, he took *comedia nueva* home with him, adapting Spanish plays for the Dutch stage. Although staging conventions in Amsterdam and Madrid were comparable, Rodenburgh immediately faced the problem that the Dutch rhetoricians' stages were not yet fit for the use of the—albeit simple—stage machinery that was already used in the *corrales* of Madrid.[26] Therefore, his four adaptations from Spanish are shaped by the practicalities of the stage of The Eglantine, of which he became the foreman ('factor') in 1617.

While Coster, Hooft, and Bredero established the First Dutch Academy in the location where in 1638 the Amsterdam Public Theatre would later be raised, the stage of the Eglantine was likely more in line with the traditional stages of the 'landjuwelen' (competitions of rhetoricians' chambers) in the sixteenth century.[27] There survives a witness to how Amsterdam's rhetoricians already used a proscenium arch and a semi-deep stage in 1609: a print by Claes Jansz. Visscher II depicts the open-air performance of scenes from the history of Lucretia and Sextus Tarquinius Superbus, as devised by Hooft (Fig. 2.1).

The rhetoricians surely knew how to effectively use the stage to create spectacular effects, even though they did not yet possess stage machinery as seen in the *corrales* of Madrid. A man of his time, Rodenburgh also knew that he first should entertain his audience through the eyes, before spectators could be moved by the moral message of the plays (see Chapter 1). He knew furthermore that spectacle was a major part of the Spanish productions that he saw in Madrid. Moreover, the excerpt of Lope's *Prologo dialogistico* from the 1621 edition of the *Decimasexta parte* confirms that spectacle was vital to the success of *comedia nueva* in Spain. To achieve the same effect, Rodenburgh adopted two specific 'textual strategies' to incorporate spectacle into his adaptations: *tableaux vivants* and music. Although the *tableaux vivants*, or 'vertooninghen' as they are called in Dutch, were originally a medieval device of theatrical performances, this highly visual medium was continuously adapted to fit the demands of the seventeenth century's newest poetic movements, 'occupying different narrative and emotional roles in plays in which they appeared,' according to Bussels.[28]

25 Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 41.

26 Ruano de la Haza 2008, 44–47.

27 See Hunningher 1958, 125–132; Hummelen 1996, 100–104; De Paepe 2011, 115–125, 131.

28 Bussels 2019, 80.

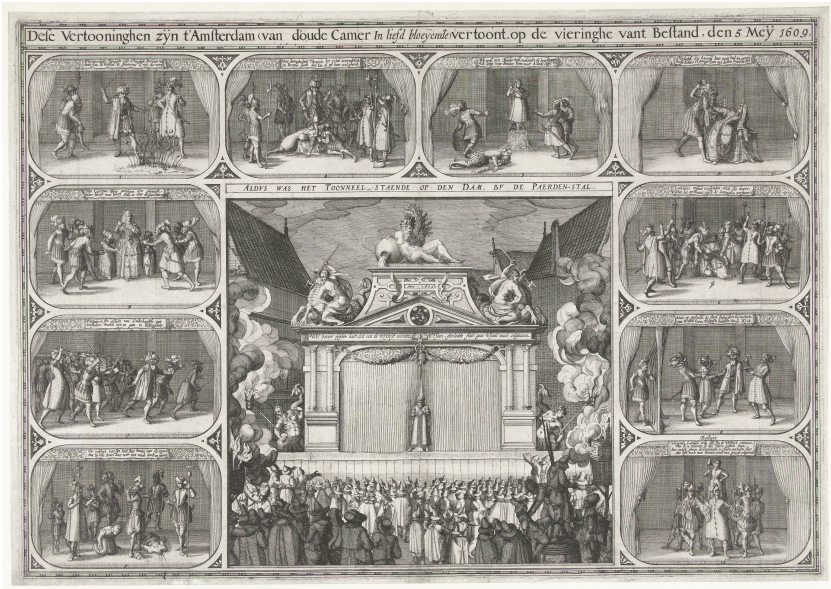

FIG. 2.1 Claes Jansz. Visscher II, *Toneelspel op de Dam bij de viering van het Twaalfjarig Bestand, op 5 mei 1609*, 1609, etching, 483 mm x 693 mm
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In a 2016 article, Olga van Marion and I discuss Rodenburgh's 'textual strategies' in his adaptations from Spanish. We argued that 'the 1617 plays were animated with songs, rhetorician poems, rondeaus, refrains, lamentations, duets, *tableaux vivants* and many other elements.' Such northern theatrical devices were unknown within the Spanish *comedias*; these Dutch aspects, as we call them, changed the very nature of Lope's plays.[29] In fact, I argue that other adaptors throughout the Low Countries followed Rodenburgh's solution for Spanish-style spectacles when stage machinery was unavailable.

Having seen the use of stage machinery in Madrid, Rodenburgh needed a way to produce the same spectacular effects. He chose the *tableau vivant* in particular for his adaptations, following a long-standing rhetoricians' tradition. By the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth century, these *tableaux* featured in many morality plays and those of Hooft, Bredero, Coster, and Vondel (most notably in his *Gysbreght van Aemstel*).[30] Wiebe Hogendoorn argued that the middle class preferred

29 Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 59.

30 For the sixteenth-century use of *tableaux vivants* by the rhetoricians, see van Dijk and Ramakers 2001,

visual spectacle: 'Dutch theatre in general reflected the taste of the "burghers", with a distinct preference for strong didacticism based on spectacular pictorial effects. The continuous popularity of *tableaux vivants* as a part of drama performances is clear evidence of this preference.'[31] *Tableaux vivants*, which theoretically were meant to emphasise the plays' allegorical instruction, were often criticised for being primarily a feast for the eyes, a way of *imagineering* gripping scenes to elicit pleasure and appreciation in spectators. *Tableaux vivants* offered everything that an audience could desire: suspense, sensation, action, horror, and eroticism.[32] The revenue collected by spectacular *tableaux* was enormous. The famous *Vertooningen bij 't Ontset van Leyden* (1660) by Jan Vos, for instance, were performed an prodigious twenty-four times in 1660 alone, and brought in an average of more than 400 guilders per day, an amount comparable to €4080 today.[33]

Although Vos would arguably become the most productive user of *tableaux vivants* in his role as theatre director from 1647 onwards, Rodenburgh was the first to incorporate the *tableau vivant* in his adaptations; he was also the first Dutch playwright to adapt *comedias*, as mentioned above. Rodenburgh looked for a way to translate the spectacle from the Spanish originals to the Dutch theatre environment as an act of acculturation; the *tableaux vivants* were a major part of this. Besides, they could also be employed to excuse travelling, to relate events that happened elsewhere, or to blatantly depict murder. These plot elements were important in Spanish theatre, but almost inexcusable in the contemporary Dutch theatre dominated by Hooft and Coster based on Scaliger's theory of the classical tragedy.[34] Thus, Rodenburgh had to come up with a solution to unite the intricacies of the Spanish plots with the Scaligerian movement; *tableaux vivants* consequently became a common convention in the Low Countries to showcase the spectacle of *comedia nueva*.

And yet, these 'life paintings' had been already at the cradle of *comedia nueva* in Spain, as was argued by McKendrick in 1989. As in many other places in Europe, she identified that *tableaux vivants* were a particularly popular method of enacting

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16, 30–31; Van Bruaene 2008, 205–206, 214, 219–221; Bussels 2010; 2019. For the seventeenth-century use of these *tableaux*, see de Haas 1996a; Hogendoorn 1978; Hummelen 1992; Oey-de Vita 1984; Smits-Veldt 1995. For a discussion of the *tableau vivant* in Vondel's *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, see specifically Albach 1987; van Marion and Vergeer 2015; Vergeer 2015.

31 Hogendoorn 1993, 338.

32 Albach 1977, 49.

33 Elenbaas 2004, 294. For this calculation, see Zijdeman 2021. The calculation is based on the purchasing power of the guilder in 1660 as compared to the purchasing power of the euro in 2020.

34 Smits-Veldt 1991, 52.

religious themes during processions in fifteenth-century Castile and Catalonia. By the time Lope entered the stage in Madrid, however, only traces of the *tableau vivant* remained in Spanish theatre practices.[35] In the Middle Ages, *tableaux vivants* were likewise used during religious events, but also as part of secular celebrations in the Low Countries.[36] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the *tableaux* remained as important vehicles for baroque spectacle in Dutch plays.[37] Anna de Haas demonstrates how many of the *tableaux vivants* known to us today exist in tragedies: the Dutch Renaissance tragedy's rich dramatic tradition—including victories, defeats, murder, and betrayal—offered plenty of opportunities to stage impressive, gripping, or spectacular *tableaux*.[38] As many *comedias* also dealt with victories, defeats, murder, and betrayal, Rodenburgh's introduction of *tableaux vivants* to his adaptations of Lope's *comedias* are a logical consequence of acculturation.

Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel* is a stereotypical example of how *tableaux vivants* were used to acculturate the Spanish spectacle. The *comedia* concerns the adulterous lust of Duchess Casandra for her husband's chamberlain Karel. The *tableaux vivants* in this play are used by Rodenburgh to depict Casandra's attempt at revenge on Karel by means of spectacle, while the moral message usually explicated during the showing of *tableaux vivants* in the Low Countries is completely absent. First, Casandra suggests to her sister-in-law Leonora over a game of cards that she and Karel had sex by semiotically using the cards of the queen and the farmer. Leonora, who was secretly married to Karel, accuses her husband of adultery. She decides in a Medea-like outburst to kill their secret son, Grimaldus, as punishment for Karel's infidelity. Karel tries desperately to find his son, not knowing that Leonora has regained her senses and that, in fact, Casandra wants revenge by attempting to kill Grimaldus. While Karel looks for his son, spectators see a series of three *tableaux vivants* which are *imagineering* a successive display of attempted violence and, therefore, they can build suspense: the first shows how Casandra ties Grimaldus' hands, the second how she threatens to kill the six-year-old boy, and the final how she raises her dagger ready to strike, when by coincidence a gardener passes by. Meanwhile, Karel calls desperately for his son, and asks another courtier where Grimaldus could be:

35 McKendrick 1989, 6, 8–9, 22.

36 Van Dijk and Ramakers 2001, e.g. 14; Bussels and Van Oostveldt 2015.

37 Van Dijk and Ramakers 2001, 16.

38 De Haas 1996a, 256.

Tableau vivant showing how Casandra binds Grimaldus' arms.

KAREL. Oh God, I cannot find him; this makes me fear frightfully
That he must be in the hands of Lady Leonora,
He is not in the court, I do not know where I am,
I look for Grimaldus in the laurel forest, and hope
That I will find my child. Oh heaven, let it be prevented
That his mother can set her revenge in motion. *within.*

Tableau vivant showing Casandra threatening to kill Grimaldus, having bound him.

KAREL. Alas, I cannot find him; oh how my heart shakes.

Enter Prudentio.

KAREL. Prudentio, have you seen Grimaldus? Would you,
I pray you, go look for him.
PRUDENTIO. But Karel what is the matter?
KAREL. Prudentio, my friend, I cannot explain to you
What is the matter; I pray you look for the child.
PRUDENTIO. What is the matter?
KAREL. I pray you, go, and protect him when you find him.
PRUDENTIO. It will happen. *both within.*

Tableau vivant showing Casandra having a poniard in her hand and a gardener comes with flowers and stops her.

KAREL. Oh heaven, how shocked is Karel's poor heart,
She has the child. Mighty God have mercy on this bitter pain
Which my soul feels. Oh world, what kind of sorrow
Will it be that Karel has to see this misfortune befall his child.
What do I hear? Is it not a voice?
GRIMALDUS. Hey help, help.
KAREL. I hear him scream.
Oh most beloved child, I hear you.
GRIMALDUS. Woe me, woe me.

KAREL. We never saw
A more sad misfortune. Where are you my angel, Grimaldus?
The greatest misfortune befalls my heart.

Enter Grimaldus.

KAREL. Oh most beloved child, have I found you again?[39]

After showcasing these *tableaux vivants*, Grimaldus finally answers. Between his tears, the child tells his father everything that the audience has just witnessed, and how the Duchess said that it was just a game, after the gardener stumbled upon this shocking situation. The series of three, or triptych of *tableaux vivants* as seen here are also particular to Dutch-language plays. According to Hummelen, *tableaux* which were showcased in a series of three are characterised by developing action. In these *tableaux*, actions are performed which push the storyline forward as can be seen in *Casandra en Karel*.[40]

The Spanish original *El perseguido* (1590) by Lope de Vega does not stage this attempted murder as such; at least, this cannot be deduced from the published text of Lope's *Parte*, although the *Corral de Príncipe* and the *Corral de la Cruz* both had a discovery space, a stage compartment often covered by a curtain that could be used for instantaneous appearances or important and surprising events. The attempted murder could have

39 Rodenburgh 1617a, fols. H4^{v}–J1^{r}: '*Vertooning hoe Casandra Grimaldus zijn armen bindt.* / KAREL. O God 'k en vind hem niet, dit doet my angstich vreesen / Dat hy in handen van vrou Leonoor moet wezen, / Int Hof en is hy niet, ik weet niet waer ik loop, / Int lauren bosch ik zoeck Grimaldus, en verhoop / Ik mijn kind vinden zal, ach hemel wilt beletten / Zijn moeder heure wraek int werk niet en mach zetten. / *binnen.* / *Vertooning waer Casandra Grimaldus ghebonden hebbende hem dreygt te vermoorden.* / KAREL. Helaes, ik vind hem niet, ach hoe mijn herte trilt. / *Prudentio.* / KAREL. Prudentio, hebt ghy gezien Grimaldus? wilt, / Ik bid u, nae hem zien. / PRUDENTIO. Wel Karel watser gaende? / KAREL. Prudentio, mijn vriend, ik kan u dus niet staende / Verklaren watter is, ik bid u ziet nae 't kind, / PRUDENTIO. Wat isser? / KAREL. Ik bid u gaet, en houdt hem zo g'hem vindt. / PRUDENTIO. 't Zal geschieden. / *beyde binnen.* / *Vertooning waer Casandra de pongiaert inde hand heeft en de hovenier comt met bloemen en belet heur.* / KAREL. Ha hemel hoe verschrikt is arme Karels herte, / 't Kind heeft zy. hooge God meedooght de bitt're zmerte / Die myne ziel ghevoelt, ha wereld wat verdriet / Zal't zijn zo Karel aen zijn kind dit onluk ziet. / Wat hoor ik? is't geen stem? / GRIMALDUS. Ey help, help, / KAREL. Ik hoor hem klagen. / Ha waerdste kind, ik hoort. / GRIMALDUS. Oy me, oy me. / KAREL. Wy zagen. / Noyt droeviger misval. waer zijt ghy lief, Grimald'? / Het grootste ongeluk mijn herte overvalt. / *Grimaldus.* / Ach waerde lieve kind, heb ik u weer gevonden?'

40 Hummelen 1973, 152.

been showcased within this space.[41] Rodenburgh might have witnessed this himself while residing in Madrid.[42] Following the published text of Lope's original, however, we meet the boy, Grimaldico, after he escaped the Duchess' grip by the intervention of the same gardener. Grimaldico then finds his father and tells him exactly the same story that the Dutch spectators would have heard and seen in Rodenburgh's version. Both in the original and the adaptation, Grimaldico/Grimaldus offers an elaborate account of how the Duchess bound his hands and put the dagger to his breast until the gardener intervened. In both versions, the boy says that Casandra dismissed the whole scene as mere roleplay, but only in the Dutch adaptation can we be sure that spectators actually witnessed with their own eyes the Duchess' determination to kill Karel's son.[43] The spectacle's effect would be maximised if the *tableaux vivants* were staged behind a curtain opened at exactly the right moment, or with extra light effects.[44] Similar analyses are possible for Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten* and his *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt* (1618, 'Evil Rewards Its Master').

Rodenburgh's *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt* shows particularly vividly that *tableaux vivants* were not only used as a means of showcasing the spectacle, but also to put extra focus on the moral friction that exists in many *comedias*. *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt* is an adaptation of *La venganza honrosa* (1616, 'The Honourable Vengeance') by the Valencian playwright Gaspar Aguilar. The adaptation is an honour drama about the two star-crossed lovers Astolfo and Porcea, and the retaliation of Porcea's fiancé the Duke of Milan Norandino, and her father, the Duke of Mantua. Like Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel*, this adaptation includes a triptych of *tableaux vivants*, here of the decapitation on the star-crossed lovers by the vengeful Norandino and his loyal servant Fabricio. Norandino exacts revenge because Astolfo and Porcea eloped, damaging the honour of both him and his father-in-law:

> At once, when they are inside, there should be showcased a *tableau vivant*, showing that Norandino and Fabricio have beheaded Astolfo

41 Thacker 2002, 5–6, 2007, 125–126; Ruano de la Haza 2008, 41–45; Kaufmant 2010, 11.

42 See van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 41.

43 Lope de Vega 1604b, fols. 63^{v}–64^{r}; see also Abrahamse 1997, 92.

44 In a 2016 reprise of Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel* performed by the theatre group *Theater Kwast*, the *tableaux* were staged by killing the lights, while Casandra (Saskia Voorbach) and Grimaldus (Bert Apeldoorn) changed their positions, after which the spotlight was put on the actors again. While the next *tableau* was prepared, Imre Besanger in his role of narrator told what would be seen next. The alternation between putting the spotlight on Casandra and Grimaldus, performing the three *tableaux*, and then on the narrator, had a captivating effect.

> and Porcea, namely, Norandino beheads Astolfo, and Fabricio Porcea; a second *tableau vivant* showing that the heads are lying in a plate; a third *tableau vivant* showing that Norandino puts a written paper down on the bodies.[45]

The moral friction of the text is made explicit by these *tableaux vivants*, because they freeze the action and provide an opportunity for a dialogue between the spectators and actors. The central question is with whom to agree: Norandino and Porcea's father? Or rather Porcea and Astolfo? The star-crossed lovers may be rightly punished according to some, although the message of the drama may also be that the two young lovers would have been a better match than Norandino and Porcea could ever hope to be. The consequent lack of any explicitly formulated moral denunciation of the decapitation, as shown in the *tableaux vivants*, may at first suggest that it had never been an issue for Rodenburgh whether the men's vengeance was justified, as Abrahamse argues.[46] To me, however, the text brings the (un)lawfulness of the decapitation to the fore in a lived experience by means of the *tableaux* staging.

This lived experience meant that during the first performances at The Eglantine, the audience was made 'present' as spectator and auditor at this murder, 'seeing and hearing with their own senses.' They were encouraged to change from spectators without an active role into witnesses, who are also assigned jury responsibility during this scene.[47] This participatory effect would be particularly striking, because in this early theatre, the audience was seated more closely to the stage than in the later Italianate theatres. With this more vague distinction between stage and auditorium, the active participation of spectators was more common and even encouraged, as argued in Chapter 1.

Spectacles, and especially murder spectacles as presented here, can evince in spectators a more radical reaction when present at such a 'living' scene than if it were only narrated or reported by the characters thereafter. Meg F. Pearson writes that:

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45 Rodenburgh 1618, fol. F3r: 'Terstont als zy binnen zyn, moeter een vertooningh gestelt werden, waer Norandino, en Fabricio hebben Astolfo, en Porcea onthooft, te weten, Norandino onthooft Astolfo, en Fabricio Porcea, voor de tweedemael, dat de hoofden in een schotel leggen, en voor de derde mael, dat Norandino een geschreven pampier op de lichaemen leyt.'

46 Abrahamse 1997, 101–107. See also my Chapter 5.

47 Pearson 2011, 93.

> Onstage deaths, perhaps more than any other theatrical moment, contain the potential to engage or alienate an audience. To be a witness in these instances is to become "one who is called on, selected, or appointed to be present at a transaction, so as to be able to testify to its having taken place."[48]

As such, Rodenburgh does not try (or have) to persuade his audiences, but rather encourages them to judge for themselves: in Rodenburgh's poetics, visual stimuli must bring about moral rather than aesthetical judgement.

According to Pearson, the summoning of a witnessing audience might be a prerequisite of the success of certain plays. The pathetic appeal of onstage deaths can be undermined in favour of a distancing, grim humour, but many deaths—especially in Dutch theatre, I argue—demand an emotional response of pity and horror, which is elicited when spectators experience a mixture of fascination, sensationalism, and disgust at the event.[49] Pearson makes clear that presence and spectatorial engagement contribute to the trustworthiness of an account: to the viewer, it really happened.[50] That is why in the early modern period convicted felons were also executed in a public area: it was both entertainment and a way to activate the audience's judgement. The crowd is turned from a passive recipient into an active participant; the spectator will thus look carefully and earnestly for the tragedy, expecting it, and maybe even demanding it.[51] In the world of *comedia nueva*, the honour of one man must typically be restored by retaliation against another, sometimes even sought after in a court of law or before the king. In those cases, bloodshed can even be a valid demand by the plaintiff, and it is sometimes considered the only fitting form of justice. As a substitute to a true judicial procedure, the *tableau vivant* then functions as the ritual execution of a sentence. By being called upon as witness, spectators are forced to judge whether the execution was justified, although they cannot change the outcome, only reflect on it.

Although Rodenburgh did not explicitly condemn the vengeance of Porcea's father and fiancé in *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt*, the playwright opens a dialogue and creates friction between the different interpretations that audiences may have of the play's outcome. In the end, what is the right thing to do? I contend that there was space for

48 Pearson 2011, 93.

49 Pearson 2011, 93–94. For the qualification of horror, see Ruff 2001, 13–28.

50 Pearson 2011, 94.

51 Pearson 2011, 95–96.

spectators to reach the conclusion that the murder of Porcea and Astolfo in *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt* was too cruel, or to think it a fair sentence for children who disobey their parents. Most *tableaux vivants* in the Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias* are steered towards this effect, including the decapitations in *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt*.

Comedia Nueva in Antwerp and Lier

When the Antwerp rhetoricians' chamber The Gillyflowers ('De Violieren') reorganised their activities in 1618/1619, Rodenburgh wrote *Deuchts violieren krans* (1619) for the occasion, which was performed in 1620. However, there is no sign that he actually visited Antwerp in 1619 to support The Gillyflowers.

Rather than Rodenburgh, it was Frederico Cornelio De Conincq who introduced *comedia nueva* in the style of Lope de Vega to Antwerp. Following his admission to The Gillyflowers in 1629, he wrote three plays: *Bedwongen liefde baert veel onrust', leet en' pijn: Maer vry verkoren trouw is heyl en' medecijn* (1635, 'Suppressed Love Bears Much Unrest, Sorrow, and Pain: But Chosen Loyalty is Welfare and Medicine'); *De Liefde en 't geval speelt somwijl met den mensch: Maer waere trouw en deucht brenght hem noch tot sijn wensch* (1636, 'Love and Fortune Play Sometimes with Mankind: But True Loyalty and Virtue Bring Him Still to His Desire'); and *Liefdens Behendicheyt Bestaende Inde listighe ghelijkwesendtheyt eens anders* (1638, 'Love's Dexterity Existing in the Cunning Equality of Each Other').[52] These plays are, however, not adaptations of original Spanish *comedias*, but rather original plays based on Lope's *comedias de capa y espada*. Johanna Ferket showed that De Conincq incorporated formal elements and themes from Spanish *comedia nueva*, but with the aim to make a parody of the genre, and more specifically, of the Spanish customs adopted by his countrymen.[53] Apart from De Conincq, no other Antwerp playwright would endeavour to follow (or parody) the Spanish fashion in this period. Moreover, any other initiatives were obstructed when The Gillyflowers stopped their activities around 1650. De Conincq's experiment with the *comedia* remained that of a peerless pioneer.

In fact, the Antwerp spectators had to wait until 1661 before original Spanish *comedias* were adapted and performed in Antwerp. In that year, the Antwerp Almoners established their Almoners' Theatre on the ground floor of the House of Spain on

52 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 281, 444–446.

53 Ferket 2016, 62–64, 80.

Great Market Square.[54] Adopting a similar revenue model as that of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, the Almoners started looking for a new, potentially popular repertoire: enter *comedia nueva*. In contrast to the development started by Rodenburgh in Amsterdam with the incorporation of *tableaux vivants* as means of spectacle, they were not used in the Antwerp adaptations; spectacle was introduced in other ways.

The Almoners' Theatre in Antwerp

The Antwerp Almoners succeeded in monopolising all theatre productions in Antwerp, either because they employed a theatre company or a troupe to play at the Almoners' Theatre, or because other theatre companies and troupes had to hand over a substantial part of their profits, even when they played elsewhere.[55] In Antwerp, all Spanish plays can be retraced to the Almoners' Theatre.[56] One of the more important playwrights active in this period was Antonio Wouthers, who adapted five *comedias* directly from Spanish, however, only two were performed at the Almoners' Theatre with absolute certainty. The first is *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, which according to the titlepage was performed at the 'Antwerpsche Speel-plaets,'[57] and the second is *Den Moscoïtschen knets* (c. 1665, 'The Muscovite Rift').[58] Wouthers' three other adaptations of Spanish plays are *Den volmaekten ridder* (c. 1665, 'The Perfect Knight'),[59] *De devotie van Eusebius tot het H. kruys* (1665, 'The Devotion of Eusebius towards the Holy Cross'),[60] and *Strijd van de min en het geluk* (c. 1665, 'Struggle for Love and Happiness').[61] These last three plays were printed in Brussels and likely also performed there.[62] Of these five Spanish-style plays by Wouthers, only three survive in an original printed edition: *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, *Den volmaekten ridder*, and *De devotie van Eusebius*.

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54 The House of Spain had previously been home to the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke and The Gillyflowers, who were dormant until 1662 after three decades of silence, and moved to rooms above the stock exchange in 1664. See De Paepe 2011, 106, 187, 405–410.

55 De Paepe 2008b, 25.

56 For an overview of locations were Spanish plays were performed, see De Paepe 2008b, 26–27 and 2011, 178, 187, 738.

57 See Keersmaekers 1996, 214–215. Other possibilities include the 'Aelmoesseniers-pand' on the Grote Markt.

58 Translation of Lope de Vega's *El gran duque de Moscovia* (1617).

59 Translation of Guillén de Castro y Bellvis' *El perfecto caballero*.

60 Translation of Calderón's *La devoción de la cruz* (1636).

61 Either a translation of Calderón's *Duelos de amor y lealtad* or his *Lances de amor y fortuna*.

62 De Paepe 2011, 187.

These factors complicate the analysis of *comedia nueva* as staged in the Almoners' Theatre, but nevertheless allow for a discussion of the visual impressions of these *comedias*, albeit limited. Another play known to have been performed in Antwerp is D*e mislukte liefde* by the anonymous author E.D.S.M.[63] Here, I focus first and foremost on Wouthers' D*e verliefde stiefmoeder* and E.D.S.M.'s D*e mislukte liefde*.

The Almoners' Theatre of 1661 had quite a simple stage compared to that of the refurbished Amsterdam Public Theatre when it reopened its doors in 1665. In the digital renderings made by Timothy De Paepe, we can see how small the space actually was. De Paepe writes the following about the Almoners' Theatre:

> The theatre was about 16.5 m long, 8.4 m wide and 6.5 m high. The initial design of the theatre consisted of a simple raised stage, spanning the entire width of the building and decorated with curtains. The audience members were expected to stand or be seated on a small amphitheatre. These accommodations were seen as sufficient for both the audience and the actors, be it local or visiting companies. The plays reflect this simplicity and rely on spoken décor, while they forgo any kind of spectacle.[64]

As noted above, in the seventeenth century Italy was frontrunner in developments of stage architecture, and France gave its own interpretation. We can quickly deduce from the renderings (Fig. 2.2, Fig. 2.3, Fig. 2.4, and Fig. 2.5) that the notion of a spectacular, baroque theatre should be left behind; it is likely that the six panels on either side of the stage making up the coulisse décor (see Fig. 2.3 and Fig. 2.4) were only installed in 1682 with the introduction of opera in Antwerp.[65] Before 1682, the coulisses were separated from the stage by curtains. Nevertheless, the Antwerp Almoners were aware of the latest fashions in stage architecture and their theatre was outfitted with a proscenium arch when it first opened its doors in 1661 (Fig. 2.5).

63 Several Spanish plays adapted by northern authors were performed in Antwerp, probably including Isaak Vos' D*e beklaagelycke dwangh* (1648, 'The Pitiful Force'), Van Heemskerck's D*e verduytste Cid* (1641), Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis* (1653), Van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura* (1645), and De Leeuw's *Kosroés* (1656). De Paepe lists one of the scarce documents containing information on revenue of the Almoners' Theatre dating from the season 1681–1682 (2011, 192–193).

64 De Paepe 2010, 36.

65 De Paepe 2008b, 34–35.

FIG. 2.2 The House of Spain ('Spanjepand'), with the rooms of The Gillyflowers (second floor, 1619–1664) and the Almoners' Theatre (ground floor, 1661–1709)
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

FIG. 2.3 Hypothetical reconstruction of the interior of the Almoners' Theatre c. 1682
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

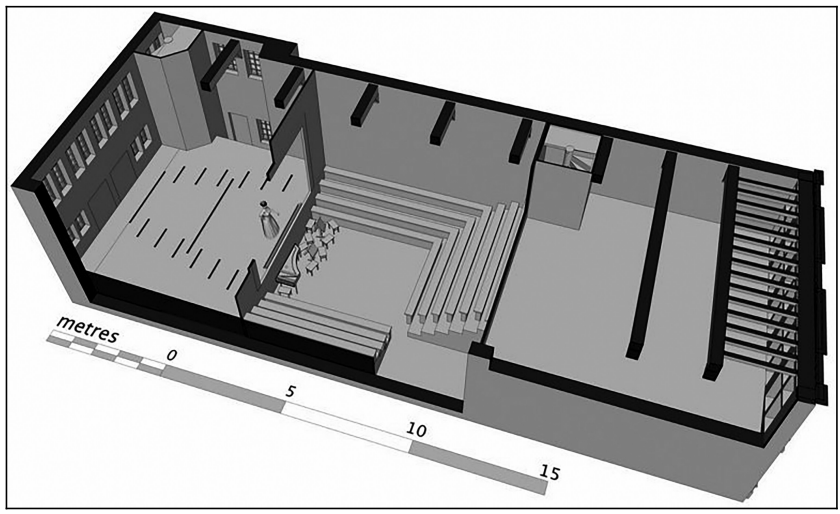

FIG. 2.4 Isometric view of a hypothetical reconstruction of the Almoners' Theatre, c. 1682
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (3DTHEATER.WORDPRESS.COM)

FIG. 2.5 Hypothetical reconstruction of the stage of the Almoners' Theatre between 1661–1682 COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (DE PAEPE 2011, 255)

So, how might D*e verliefde stiefmoeder* have been staged? In the frontmatter of the printed edition, it says that the stage represents the area around Ferrara. The play indicates that it takes place in at least two different locations; no more seem necessary to perform this tragic *comedia*. Although Frederico and his *gracioso* Batín come out 'on a journey' in the first act, and Batín says that he finds it puzzling that his master sojourns near a willow tree[66]—suggesting a kind of wilderness—this setting is not kept beyond the first scene.[67] How this wilderness was represented on stage is impossible to determine; it is unclear whether it was a separate décor or, as De Paepe hypothesises for other plays, a spoken décor. In the latter instance, the décor is summoned through suggestion and naming, like Batín does by mentioning the willow tree, which also occurs in another instance when Aurora asks Carel to come listen to her in 'this flower garden.'[68] As Turner writes about such spoken décor,

66 Wouthers 1665b, 1.
67 Wouthers 1665b, 1–7.
68 De Paepe 2011, 132, 247; Wouthers 1665b, v. 768.

the use of dialogue can open or bifurcate the illusion 'by introducing a disjuncture between the verbal signs [...] and the proxemic signs that are visible' of one character's 'movement across a flat surface, and which *his* language weakly confirms.' In this moment, an audience must decide to accept the words of the character summoning a décor or reject the endeavour, 'which immediately forces an awareness of the larger enabling illusion taking place on the stage before them' (that is, a suspension of disbelief).[69] While we might not consider this spectacular, it certainly has an impact on the visual impressions of the play and, thus, how spectators experience the whole scene and whether they are moved. Language summons the world in *De verliefde stiefmoeder* and, we might assume, spectators are knowingly and gladly deceived.

The rest of the play was probably performed against the backdrop of a palatial décor, as is suggested several scenes later with the mention of a throne in the stage directions, but this could very well have been the only décor piece to create the suggestion of a palace.[70] Moreover, the Spanish original *El castigo sin venganza* by Lope does not seem to have needed much stage machinery or topographic changes in order to stage the play.[71] De Paepe concludes that the Almoners' Theatre had little to no ability to stage grand spectacle plays on the basis of his analysis of the surviving Antwerp repertoire between 1661 and 1682: none of the surviving prints indicate that stage machinery and spectacle were necessary.[72] However, Wouthers' *Den Moscoïtsche knets* proves that grand spectacles were not the only way to move spectators (if indeed this play was performed in Antwerp). The practical directions for a gruesome scene make clear how the desired effect was generated through the use of stage props:

> one places a plate with plate cover on the table wherein a hole is made and one places it over the hole in the table, and when the plate cover is taken away, spectators see the head of the child that is under the table.[73]

69 Turner 2006, 168.

70 Wouthers 1665b, 11.

71 Lope de Vega 1635.

72 De Paepe 2011, 246.

73 As quoted from De Paepe 2011, 246: 'men set een ghedeckte schotel op de tafel daer een gat door is ende men set se over een gat dat in de tafel is, ende alsdan wordt de schotel ontdeckt waer in men siet het hooft van het kint dat onder de tafel is.'

This horrific sight must have elicited some kind of reaction from spectators, and probably worked especially well in the small space of Antwerp's Almoner's Theatre because of the audience's relatively close distance to the stage.

The same can be said for E.D.S.M.'s *De mislukte liefde*, in which the Count of Barcelona enters the stage in the opening scene while struggling with a serpent that has entangled him. Only the hero, Rugero, can save him. The count's *graciosos*, Riquelmo and Ramiro, are unable to free the count or kill the serpent, because of their cowardly natures. If we are to believe the Amsterdam printer, E.D.S.M.'s play had been relatively popular, although I could not discover any particular spectacle in the printed text that may have contributed to this popularity. The printer reports:

> [I]f I am not wrong, the play, which has been showcased impeccably for thirteen or fourteen years in Antwerp, and not without an uncommon surge of people, often eagerly restaged, and always praised with delight, has (to my knowledge) never been made public in print.[74]

This implies that spectators certainly *saw* something that they enjoyed. Now, we must ask what could have been showcased on the relatively simple Antwerp stage shown in Fig. 2.5 (above).

One complication of *De mislukte liefde* is that we have an edition of the text which was printed in Amsterdam, which means that we cannot be sure that the Amsterdam edition reflects the performance practices in Antwerp or those in Amsterdam. De Paepe addresses this specific complication for several other Antwerp plays as well. He demonstrates that several of those plays were adapted to the local situation where the play texts were printed and performed, such as he showed for Wouthers' *De devotie van Eusebius* that was performed in Brussels around 1665: a text by an Antwerp author that was adjusted to the performance situation in Brussels.[75] However, *De mislukte liefde* was never performed in Amsterdam and it seems, therefore, unlikely that the text reflects a performance situation in the Amsterdam Public Theatre. There are, moreover, also signs that this particular edition is the 'original' Antwerp play: by comparing the original Spanish to its Antwerp adaptations, we can find various spectacular or exciting scenes that E.D.S.M. literally translated directly from Spanish.

74 E.D.S.M. 1674, fol. A2r: 'Mis ick niet, over 13 a 14 jaren onbegrepen t'Antwerpen vertoont niet sonder ongemeenen toeloop, meenichmael naer begeerte erhaelt, en altoos met verlustinge prijsbaer geordeelt, noit even (naer best weeten) gemeijn door den druck gemaeckt.'

75 De Paepe 2011, 248.

We can, consequently, be relatively certain that the anonymous E.D.S.M. transposed the struggle with the serpent from the Spanish original into his Antwerp version, as in Lope's *Los donaires de matico*, the play likewise opens with a struggle between the count and a snake: 'Sale el Conde luchando con una sierpe' ('The Count comes out while fighting a snake').[76] It is not likely that this snake was a live serpent, although this could have added to the build-up of tension if this was the case. Regardless, it is made clear that the Count is in danger because soon after both the Spanish and Flemish Rugero attacks the serpent with his rapier drawn. In the first scene, spectators were immediately seduced with a duelling match. And this is not the only duel in the play. In gratitude for saving the Count, he gives Rugero his daughter's hand in marriage. The rest of the court disagrees with the decision, since Rugero is a foreign peasant. Barcelona's highest military officer and his soldiers attack Rugero, who defends himself fiercely.[77] Such duels were a typically exciting element in the Spanish *comedias* and were considered spectacular, although these scenes did not need elaborate installations for stage machinery.

Generally speaking, the duel was essentially a dramatic device that could serve as a vehicle for emotion. To understand how the duel is in theatre a vehicle for emotion, I turn to a text from the German language area. In the sixth part of the *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* (1646), a set of written dialogues by the German baroque poet Georg-Philipp Harsdörffer, the duel is the subject of a dialogue about theatre, where the question is: which emotion does the duel express? In other words, how can the duel *imagineer* emotions that can be subsequently recognised by spectators? According to Harsdörffer, spectators had to recognise from the duel the emotions of wrath and ire by means of the bilious colour of the skin and the facial expression of the duellists.[78] Thus, duels were fought often in *comedia nueva* because of their emotional impact on spectators. Duels provided many *comedias* with the much-desired action scenes.

Although De Paepe theorises that the stage of the Almoners' Theatre was elementary in design, and playwrights relied on secondary forms of spectacle such as duelling, this should be nuanced for *De mislukte liefde*. Nearing the end of this play, Rosimunda yells to the *graciosos* Riquelmo and Ramiro from atop a tower ('Rosimunda uyt den Thooren'). This does not happen within the coulisses, since immediately after, the stage directions note that there is 'van binnen blijschap' ('from within [the coulisses] happiness'). This suggests that the Almoners' Theatre had a décor piece which looked

76 Lope de Vega 1604a, fol. 1r.

77 E.D.S.M. 1674, vv. 1325–1333.

78 Harsdörffer 1646, fols. F3v–F4r. See also Niefanger 2011, 79–80.

like a tower, creating the possibility of balcony scenes.[79] These balcony scenes—famous today for that in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*—were essential in *comedias de capa y espada*: when a man tried to convince a woman to let him inside—and thus spend the night together—he appeared at that woman's balcony, while serenading her. In this regard, Veldhorst discusses the balcony scene as a classic musical scene in Dutch theatre.[80] We may accept that such balcony scenes were also used in the other *comedias* staged in Antwerp.

Let us return to D*e verliefde stiefmoeder*. There is no indication that a performance of the play featured a gruesome decapitation scene as in D*en Moscoïtschen knets*, or duelling such as in D*e mislukte liefde*. The ruse that the Duke uses to punish the adultery between his wife Cassandra and his son Frederico, and which results in Frederico killing his own stepmother and lover, is only reported by the Duke. This murder apparently happens off-stage. Subsequently, Frederico is killed as well by one of the Duke's nobles to do justice. Frederico is killed off-stage like Cassandra and therefore spectators cannot be called upon as judges to the scene as had been the case for the decapitation in Rodenburgh's *'t Quaedt syn meester loondt*. This means that the vivid impression of a murder is never created visually. Instead, D*e verliefde stiefmoeder* relies on effects of a different nature. One of the paratexts of this play mentions the impact of the characters Frederico and Cassandra on the audience.[81] Perhaps their dazzling costumes adorned with ribbons and trimmed with spangles[82] contributed to this effect. Basing his findings on the sheer number of costumes in the archival sources of the Antwerp rhetoricians' chambers, De Paepe notes that until the 1690s, costumes remained one of the most important means of mesmerising spectators.[83] This probably holds true for those worn in D*e verliefde stiefmoeder* as well. We can see how costumes could possibly influence how successful the actors were at delivering their parts, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

Notwithstanding their costumes, there is one specific piece of dialogue that stands out: in the second act, Frederico and Cassandra sing a duet lamenting that they are unable to be together because of her marriage to Frederico's father, the Duke of Ferrara.

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79 E.D.S.M. 1674, between vv. 1434–1435 and 1438–1439.

80 Similar scenes can be found in Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel*, *Celia en Prospero*, *Ialoerscheˆ studenten*, and Van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura*, among others. For the musical construction of the balcony scene in Dutch theatre, see Veldhorst 2004, 105–133.

81 Wouthers 1665b, fol. $\pi 3^{v}$.

82 These were in the early modern period decorative metal disks that were sown onto costumes and hammered flat for sturdiness.

83 De Paepe 2011, 139–141, 239.

Frederico initially sings six strophes. In the seventh, Cassandra relieves her stepson as he exits, and continues singing for another six strophes. *De verliefde stiefmoeder* stresses that the love that Frederico and Cassandra share conflicts with their honour (that is, if they were to be discovered, it would bring shame upon them because the relationship is considered incestuous according to early modern law, Frederico is a bastard, and Cassandra is already married). Witnessing these emotional conflicts in the *dramatis personae* brought about in spectators a feeling of pity, as I discuss further in Chapter 4. The duet in *De verliefde stiefmoeder* enhances and emphasises the spectacle of their predicament. Both instrumental and vocal music can have this effect, as is famously argued for Shakespearean tragedy by F.W. Sternfeld.[84] Even today, scholars of film consider that the soundtrack or score enhances the emotional atmosphere of almost every scene.[85]

Lope de Vega in Lier

About 18 kilometres from Antwerp, in the Belgian town of Lier, Cornelis de Bie adapted *comedia nueva* with a different approach to spectacle than that of Wouthers in Antwerp. In general, De Bie had to work with a more traditional performance situation of a rhetoricians' stage than in the Almoners' Theatre: there was, for example, no proscenium arch and the stage was likely a thrust-stage platform with a discovery space and two tiring houses on both sides. And yet, he seems to have been more inventive than his colleague in Antwerp. De Bie adapted three *comedias* by Lope de Vega: *Alphonsus en Thebasile, oft her-stelde onnooselheydt* (performed in 1659, printed in 1673, 'Alphonsus and Thebasile, or Restored Innocence');[86] *Armoede vanden graeve Florellus, oft lyden sonder wraeck* (performed in c. 1660, printed in 1671, 'Poverty of Count Florellus, or Suffering without Revenge');[87] and *Gheweldighe Heerschappye Vanden onrechtveerdighen Boris Ghedempt ende ghestraft door den jonghen Prince Demetrius Als eenighen en rechten Erfgenaem van het groot Hertoghdom van Moskovien* (c. 1672, 'Violent Rule of the Unjust Boris, Tempered and Punished by the Young Prince Demetrius, the Only and Rightful Heir of the Great Duchy of Muscovy').[88] I focus primarily on the second play,

84 Sternfeld 1963, 3–4, 195–249. This has, furthermore, been argued for early modern stage songs by Van Marion and Vergeer 2014;see also Veldhorst 2004, 14–16, 20–24.

85 See, among many others, Hoeckner et al. 2011.

86 Translation of Lope de Vega's *El gallardo catalán* (1611).

87 Translation of Lope de Vega's *Las pobrezas de reynaldos* (1617).

88 Translation of Lope de Vega's *El gran duque de Moscovia* (1617).

Armoede vanden graeve Florellus, about the struggles of the titular Count Florellus who is banished from Charlemagne's court and seeks the re-establishment of his honour.

De Bie was the foreman of the rhetoricians' chamber The Blossoming Tree ('De Groeiende Boom'). Unlike in Antwerp, the rhetoricians of Lier owned their building, called House The Oak Tree ('D'Eycken Boom') at Great Market Square since 1502, which enabled them to better meet the requirements to stage plays with spectacle. After the building had been thoroughly damaged by fire in 1638, the wooden façade was rebuilt in 1709 in the contemporary baroque style.[89] Although today's outer appearance does not reflect that of the mid-seventeenth century, we can be sure that Lier's rhetoricians inhabited a considerably similar building (Fig. 2.6). Essentially, it was a townhouse with a provisional stage for separate performances. The central space in any rhetoricians' building had several purposes: that of a reception room, party room, meeting room, and also a theatre hall.[90] This also meant that the stage was usually temporary, being rebuilt as needed. This might have been slightly different in Lier, where the meeting room was upstairs on the first floor, while the ground floor could function as a performance space and party or reception room. The charitable aims of the Lier rhetoricians required, furthermore, that they could easily stage a play when needed. With this in mind, a permanent stage is not unthinkable.

In order to reconstruct the performances of the three Spanish adaptations, we can best turn to the extensive research done initially by Hummelen and expanded upon by De Paepe. They have suggested that the stages and performance practices of rhetoricians throughout the Low Countries were similar. The stages of the Landjuwelen, the rhetoricians' competitions of Ghent in 1539 and Antwerp in 1561 had to accommodate different rhetoricians chambers from across the Low Countries, from Holland and Groningen to Flanders and Luxembourg.[91] Therefore, De Paepe was able to reconstruct a hypothetical stage of the rhetoricians' chamber of The Gillyflowers in Antwerp consisting of three compartments with dimensions equalling 1:2:1 (see Fig. 2.7). This reconstruction can be taken as an average of the 'rhetoricians' stage' in the Low Countries, where the side compartments, called tiring houses (A & C), are used as entrances, while the middle compartment (B) functions as a discovery space and the designated space for *tableaux vivants*.

89 Kennes and Vandeweghe 2017.
90 De Paepe 2006, 328, and 2011, 111.
91 De Paepe 2011, 115–125.

FIG. 2.6 House The Oak Tree in Lier 2011. Since 1502, the rhetoricians' chamber The Blossoming Tree was accommodated in the building that previously stood in its place
PHOTO BY T. VEREENOOGHE 2011 (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0), WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/ERFGOED/

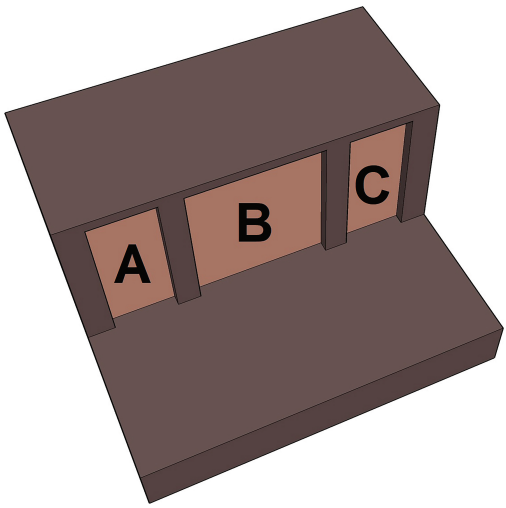

FIG. 2.7
Schematic reconstruction of the stage of the Chamber of The Gillyflowers. The side compartments (A & C) mainly functioned as entrances, while the middle compartment (B) is the compartment for *tableaux vivants*
COURTESY OF TIMOTHY DE PAEPE (2011, 131)

Another practice among rhetoricians were performances under the open sky in the market square. We cannot ignore that this may have also occurred in Lier. Then, the rhetoricians might have built a stage in front of The Oak Tree to play outside during summer; in winter, they would move inside.

As elsewhere in the Low Countries, there was a financial incentive to entertain spectators in any way possible; the rhetoricians of Lier needed to attract an audience in order to finance the local charitable institutions. De Bie makes these financial incentives clear in his foreword to *Armoede vanden graeve Florellus*: 'For this reason, I have more freely mustered courage by playfully presenting the miserable poverty of a powerful count for the entertainment of the rich and the consolation of the poor.'[92] The play was thus performed before a paying audience, whose money would benefit the poor. Suitable spectacle, then, was a necessity.

The basic stage like the one The Blossoming Tree probably had, made it impossible to use elaborate stage machinery. The text of *Armoede vanden graeve Florellus* makes clear that the middle compartment (B) was extensively used instead. As said, a typical use for this specific compartment was showcasing *tableaux vivants*. In De Bie's adaptation, there are five in total: in one we see how Charlemagne's army is in disarray from the Moors. In the next *tableau vivant*, which after a few lines of text follows

92 De Bie 1671, fol. A3^{v}: 'Daerom hebbe ick des te vrijer my selven verstout tot vermaeck van den Rijcken en troost van den Armen de allendighe Armoede van eenen machtigen Grave speelwijs te voorschijn te brenghen.'

shortly upon the first as a kind of reaction, spectators could see how Florellus relieves Charlemagne's army. The third *tableau vivant* shows a victory feast:

> Tableau Vivant.
> The Moors make the people of Charlemagne waver.
> [...]
> Tableau Vivant.
> Florellus with the weapon, the banner and clothes of Florantus positions himself before the French army and beats the Moors. *Exit* Florellus while fighting with the King of the Moors.
> [...]
> Tableau Vivant.
> The Emperor with his courtiers at the table and a ballet is performed.[93]

The last of these three *tableaux vivants* makes clear that a ballet is performed, an obvious influence from French court culture that also became popular in Amsterdam and Brussels. A few pages earlier, we can read in the stage directions how the middle compartment (B) is used to reveal a church or chapel space: 'A curtain will be drawn, behind which an altar is revealed.'[94] Then, the discovery space functions as a building, as a separate space, that the characters can enter. The uses of this middle compartment (B) are numerous in De Bie's adaptation of Lope's *Las pobrezas de reynaldos* (1617). De Bie not only demonstrates effective use of the traditional *tableau vivant*, but also adapts it to the current tastes of his audience by including the ballet. Moreover, the second *tableau* exemplifies De Bie's baroque aesthetics: the scene creates a realistic illusion of the battle by the sheer number of people present onstage. This same effect is described by Yannice De Bruyn in reference to Govard Bidloo's *Het zegepraalende Oostenryk of Verovering van Offen* (1686, 'Austria Victorious, or The Conquest of Buda').[95] Thus, the staging of this event could potentially generate the impression of being in the midst of battle.

Another spectacle in De Bie's play is Florellus' self-inflicted injury and his blood that runs down the stage; like Christ he is willing to sacrifice himself for his son as

93 De Bie 1671, 19, 21, 34: 'verschooningh. De Mooren slaen het volck van Keyser Carel inde vlucht. [...] verschooningh. Florellus met de wapen, standaert en Kleeren van Florantus voeght sich voor den legher vande Franschen en slaet de Mooren. Florellus al vechtende met den Coninck der Mooren uyt. [...] verschooningh. Den Keyser met sijn Hovelinghen aen de Tafel en wordt ghedanst een Ballet.'

94 De Bie 1671, 31: 'Men sal een gordijn openen al-waer eenen Autaer verschijnt.'

95 De Bruyn 2017.

the ultimate symbol of compassionate and fatherly love.[96] In line with the era, a duel with pistols is also included: 'They shoot each other and two valets are injured by Olivier and the other is arrested.'[97] These examples call to mind the words of Jan Vos, who had said that the hearts of Dutch spectators were affected so much by such scenes that their eyes teared up as much as 'the artificial blood that was running down the stage.'[98] Judging by the two examples discussed here, blood was apparently also a crowd pleaser in Lier. Other international vogues were likewise administered, including the so-called prison scene, famous in Spain's and England's dramas, but also in plays in the Low Countries. For Amsterdam, Veldhorst has demonstrated that prison scenes were often musical in nature.[99] De Bie's play also stages a prison scene, but it is impossible to determine whether this would have included music. The stage directions indicate that Florellus is incarcerated, but he is soon rescued by his brother and a devil.

The devil is a seemingly odd, but rather spectacular element in the text. In rhetoricians' drama of the late Middle Ages, it was not uncommon that a devil made an appearance. Traditionally, the devil played the part of seducer, offering knowledge or wealth seemingly without a price. In the end, however, the seduced woman—women were usually the devil's targets—died and condemned her eternal soul, or had to somehow atone for her sins, as in the early sixteenth-century miracle play *Mariken van Nieumeghen*. Yet, in the case of *Armoede vanden graeve Florellus*, the devil's appearance is as much a classic element incorporated from rhetoricians' drama as it is an interpretation of Lope's *Las pobrezas de reynaldos*. In the Dutch adaptation, the devil has the same supportive role as 'el diablo Zaquiel' in the Spanish original. Zaquiel (Phapesmo in the Dutch play) is not explicitly the representation of temptation and evil, but rather an ingenious shape-shifter of sorts. In both plays, he can be said to feature as the *deus ex machina*, who saves Florellus (Reynaldos in the original) with a screen of smoke and fire: Florellus' brother summons Phapesmo to aid him in his rescue mission. They decide on a fast-change trick: the devil will take Florellus' place in prison by changing into his clothes. The next day, at Florellus' execution, the headsman raises his axe,

96 De Bie 1671, 3.

97 De Bie 1671, 47: 'Sy schieten teghen malcanderen en 2 lijf knechten blijven door Olivier Gequetst en d'ander ghevanghen.'

98 Vos 1667, fol. *3r: 'Zoo meenigmaal als Ulysses in het Treurspel van Polexena, door den vermaarden Samuel Koster gedicht, Astianax, het zoontje van Hektor en Andromache, van de toorentrans wurp, scheen het nagebootste kindt d'aanschouwers zoo hardt op het hart gelijk op d'aardt te vallen: men zagh de traanen niet min uit d'oogen dan het nagebootste bloedt langs het Tooneel vloeien.'

99 Veldhorst 2004, 87–103.

but then the devil-Florellus disappears in smoke and flames.[100] *Dei ex machina*, such as Zaquiel/Phapesmo, were scarcely approved by the critics of *comedia nueva*, generally classicist playwrights, who asserted that the introduction of such deities could only be excused if the dignity of the play required this, but in every other situation they preferred, even demanded, that the dénouement came logically forth from the plot itself.[101]

De Bie's *Alphonsus en Thebasile* shows a similar pattern. The play opens in a grove, but the soothsayer Taurinus can be seen sitting in his study during the second scene of the first act. The switching of location from a grove to the sorcerer's study is a matter of opening the curtains of the middle compartment (B) at the beginning of the scene. This can be regarded as a simplified interpretation of a *changement à vue* as practiced in the big baroque theatres of Italy, Spain, France, and also in Brussels and Amsterdam. Additionally, there are several *tableaux vivants* staged in the play, which relate events that happened elsewhere, or show a character going on a journey; even a hunting scene is showcased in this way. Yet, nothing could be more spectacular than a band of traitors being burned at the stake by means of a *tableau vivant*.[102] The majority of the *tableaux vivants* are shown at the end of every act, also conforming to Lope's idea that such journeys and foreign locations should be allocated to the 'space' between the acts (see Chapter 1).

Finally, in De Bie's *Gheweldighe Heerspchappye Vanden onrechtveerdighen Boris*, a *tableau vivant* shows the coronation of the tyrant Boris as Duke of Muscovy, which is a key moment in the play, since now the rightful heir Demetrius must depose the newly coronated despot.[103] The *tableau* focuses as such on the contradiction between oppressor and liberator, giving Demetrius' actions to overthrow Boris' unlawful reign also more urgency. In this moment, everything that Demetrius fights for seems lost. His immediate response is thus: 'How will we wander as lost sheep! First in Muscovy, now in Poland; How have I slaved as a beggar, wasted away from hunger in service of a murderer of innocence!'[104] This *tableau* should, therefore, establish pity in spectators for Demetrius' fate and the fate of his country. When in a later scene Boris falls asleep, the tyrant-duke starts dreaming, which was staged as a pantomime: 'DREAM. There appear three ghosts who will lift him up and the smallest ghost sits in the throne

100 De Bie 1671, 62–70.

101 See esp. Nil Volentibus Arduum [c. 1678] 1989, 126, 274, 421.

102 De Bie 1673, 7, 18, 24, 44, 52, 71.

103 De Bie c. 1672, 49: 'VERSCHOONINGHE. Boris wordt Hertogh Ghecroont.'

104 De Bie c. 1672, 49: 'hoe gaen wy als verloren schapen dolen, / Dan in Moscovien, nu onder 't Rijck van

with crown and sceptre; two other ghosts appear with mourning costumes and a bier; two more with gallows.'[105] The horrific scene shows similarities to scenes in spectacle plays devised by theatre director Jan Vos in the 1660s, and that were staged at the Amsterdam Public Theatre (see below). The scene in De Bie's play functioned as an omen that Boris' reign would come to a tragic end: indeed, in yet another *tableau* Boris is shown defeated, while his soldiers defect to Demetrius' side.[106] The tyrant is taken captive and hanged at the gallows.[107]

With the relatively simple means that were available in Lier, De Bie adapted three of Lope's *comedias* with sufficient spectacle to entertain his audiences. In fact, I would argue that the *comedias* performed in Lier were slightly more spectacular than those staged in Antwerp. The most important form of spectacle remained the *tableau vivant*, which at times seems to have a rather traditional, late medieval rhetoricians' character, because of the way these *tableaux* are staged by means of the discovery space (the middle compartment). The appearance of the devil onstage is another medieval convention that returns here rather late in the seventeenth century in De Bie's oeuvre, although the smoke and fire used by this character are particularly novel and mesmerising elements in the performance. At the same time, the *tableaux vivants* designed by De Bie are influenced by the baroque aesthetics of exuberance and exaggeration; in Carolingian battle, he overflows the stage with people, creating the illusion that the represented battle was dynamically real. Furthermore, De Bie demonstrated awareness of the modern vogues in spectacle theatre by including a ballet to one of the *tableaux vivants* in *Armoede vanden graeve Florellus*. The productions of *comedia nueva* in Lier are therefore an interesting case study for our broader understanding of how the Spanish *comedias* were adapted and staged in the Low Countries, even outside the big cities, during the seventeenth century.

Polen, / Hoe ben ick af-geslaeft als eenen bedelaer / Van hongher uytgheteert, om eenen moordenaer van de onnooselheyt.'

105 De Bie c. 1672, 64: 'Droom. Verschijnen drie Gheesten die hem sullen op nemen en den kleynsten Gheest sit inden troon met Croon en schepter, twee met rou Capruynen ende baer, twee ander met een galghe.'

106 De Bie c. 1672, 80: 'Verschooningh. Daer Boris gheslaghen wort door het over-loopen van sijn volck by den Prins Demetrius.'

107 De Bie c. 1672, 84.

Spanish Spectacle Plays in Brussels

How different was the theatre environment in Brussels? In this city, theatre had existed in the narrow margins of society between c. 1620–1640, coinciding with Archduke Albert's death in 1621 and the renewed hostilities between the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic after the Twelve Years' Truce ended. However, in the 1640s new initiatives were undertaken in the drama scene. Next to the traditional rhetoricians' chambers, new drama and poetry groups were established. The rhetoricians remained involved in official city parades, whereas these new societies were free to select their own repertoire. Converse to the city's rhetoricians, they selected an international repertoire, including Spanish *comedia nueva*.[108]

In Brussels, the first adaptation of a Spanish *comedia* was Calderón's popular play *La vida es sueño* (1635), adapted as *Het leven is maer droom* (1647).[109] The anonymous translator must have been a member of the society of the Free Enthusiasts for Poetry in Brussels ('de Vrye Lief-hebbers ende der Rymer-Konste binnen Brussel'), which still performed at Brussels' city hall in the 1640s (Fig. 2.8). As such, we may expect that *Het leven is maer droom* was also performed there in 1647.[110] Literary scholar Paul De Keyser asserts that these plays were performed by the Free Enthusiasts in the so-called fencing school, which was the conference hall of the Guild of Saint Michael (one of four historical divisions of the civic guard).[111] Regrettably, the interior of Brussels' city hall was completely destroyed during the French bombardments in 1695. Therefore, we have to rely for the most part on the information provided by the texts themselves to understand the nature of the spectacle in the Spanish plays staged there before the establishment of the Brussels Public Theatre.

For the adaptation *Het leven is maer droom*, it is likely that the play made extensive use of a stage with compartments (as represented in Fig. 2.7 above). Since the play was in all likelihood also performed in the fencing school, we can deduce that the stage must have been temporary as was the case at most rhetoricians' chambers. Nevertheless, the stage directions often mention the use of rapiers (in duels), paintings, tapestries, and a bed as stage props, in addition to the extensive musical accompaniment of violins, trumpets, and drums.[112] This means that the Free Enthu-

108 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 447–448.

109 Blom and Van Marion 2021.

110 Langvik-Johannessen and Porteman 1996, 285, 287.

111 De Keyser 1925, 22.

112 See the stage directions in Vrye Lief-hebbers 1647, e.g. 13, 21, 28, 40, 54, 59.

FIG. 2.8 Today's view of the City Hall of Brussels
PHOTO BY F. PÉCASSOU 2014 (CC BY-SA 4.0)

siasts employed several tactics to entertain spectators. While rapiers were used to create spectacular action scenes, the violins, trumpets, and drums should have set the appropriate mood for the play's events. When King Basilius enters the stage, for example, this is accentuated by a fanfare, emphasising his importance: 'They beat drums and blow trumpets, while King Basilius enters with his courtiers and council. The King's nephew and niece, Aurora and Astolfo, fall at his feet on both sides of his throne.'[113] After the fanfare dies down, Aurora and Astolfo flatter the king, for which the mood was already set by the music.

113 Vrye Lief-hebbers 1647, 23: 'Men slaet trommels en trompetten, ter-wijl den Koningh Basilius uyt-

The experiments of the Free Enthusiasts with spectacle can also explain why this literary society lobbied for the establishment of a permanent theatre in Brussels. In the foreword to his *Rosimunda* (1651), the foreman of the society, Willem van der Borcht (also known by his Spanish name, Guillelmo à Castro) writes about their halted endeavours:

> I intended to establish here in Brussels an eternal Theatre for the benefit of the poor foundlings; therefore, this endeavour is not by my intervention smothered in its own seed, and robbed of its fruits, but the misunderstanding that this has caused has given us Enthusiasts reason to showcase tangibly at their farewell that which might be hoped of such practice in the future.[114]

According to various scholars, they were unsuccessful in their plea, at least until the establishment of the Muntschouwburg (Theatre of the Mint) in 1700.[115] However, after c. 1660, the titlepage of a play by another member of the Free Enthusiasts mentions that it was 'showcased at the Brussels Public Theatre' for the first time. The play is Claude de Grieck's *Samson, oft edel-moedighen Nazareen* (c. 1660, 'Samson, or Magnanimous Nazarene'), an adaptation of Juan Pérez de Montalbán's *El valiente Nazareno*.

The Free Enthusiasts found themselves working under favourable circumstances, as theatre life in Brussels received an extra boost from 1650 onwards during the rule of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, a renowned patron of the arts who was Governor of the Spanish Netherlands between 1647 and 1656. In this period, Brussels gained two new 'comedy houses': the 'Caetsspel' (1649) on the Wolvengracht and the 'Comediehuys' (1652) on the Warmoesberg.[116] Whether one of these playhouses was

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komt met zijn hof ende raet. Aurora ende Astolf vallen hem te weder-sijden in sijnen throon te voet.'

114 Van der Borcht 1651, fol. *2r: '[I]ck [...] hebbe voor-gehadt alhier binnen Brussel op te stichten een eeuwigh Schouborch tot behoef van d'arme Vondel-kinderen, dan also het selve door mijn toe-doen in sijn saet niet en is verstickt, ende van sijne vruchten berooft gheweest, maer dat het misverstandt dat sulcks veroorsaeckt heeft, reden ghegheven heeft aen onse Lief-hebbers by hunnen afscheyt wel tastelijck te bethoonen het gene in toe-komende tijden van dusdanighe oeffeninghe soude moghen ghehoopt [...] zijn.' There are multiple ways to interpret 'Vondel-kinderen' in this excerpt: one is orphans (foundlings), another is children of Vondel, i.e., poets.

115 See e.g., Langvik-Johannessen and Porteman 1996, 285; Blom and Van Marion 2021, 34.

116 De Keyser 1925, 22.

known as the Brussels Public Theatre cannot be verified, again because of the French bombardments of Brussels in 1695, although the 'Comediehuys' is the more likely candidate, since it was established only a year after the publication of Van der Borcht's *Rosimunda*, in which he pleaded for the construction of a public theatre. The new Archduke was particularly fond of the drama of southern Europe, including Italy and Spain. *Comedias nuevas* were already performed in Spanish at court in 1615/1616 by the troupe of Francisco Lopez, and now even more than before.[117]

The Spectacular Role of the Brussels Court

Like Madrid, the city of Brussels was largely dependent on, and shaped by, its court.[118] Thus, an important driver for the theatre business in Brussels was also initially its court. From 1650 onwards, the Brussels court imported spectacle plays from Italy and Spain. Archduke Leopold Wilhelm had ordered the construction of a permanent theatre in the Galerie des Empereurs of Coudenberg Palace, where these Italian and Spanish plays were to be performed (Fig. 2.9, next page). He commissioned the Flemish architect Leonard van Heil for the project. Whether this theatre was public is unclear.

As part of Leopold Wilhelm's cultural revitalisation programme, the first opera was also staged in the Low Countries in 1650. It was *Ulisse all'isola di Circe* by composer Gioseffo Zamponi and librettist Ascanio Amalteo, both Italian artists who were in the service of the Brussels court. As discussed in the previous chapter, Zamponi's opera was an extraordinary event and thus *Ulisse all'isola di Circe* was not performed in the Galerie des Empereurs but in the more impressive Sala Regia. There, the Archduke hired the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Angelini to specifically construct a temporary theatre, complete with stage machinery. Furthermore, the citizens of Brussels were also allowed to attend the performances during its 1655 reprise.[119]

Such grand Italian spectacles offered inspiration for playwrights when adapting Spanish *comedias*: they could harness the most impressive aspects of the opera to implement Italianate spectacle into their Dutch adaptations. This was likely the case for De Grieck's *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe*.[120] The qualification of De Grieck's adaptation as a 'hof-spel' (court play) might echo the famous opera performance at

117 De Keyser 1925, 22.

118 Elliott 2009, 257–258.

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

120 Vergeer 2020c, 322–329.

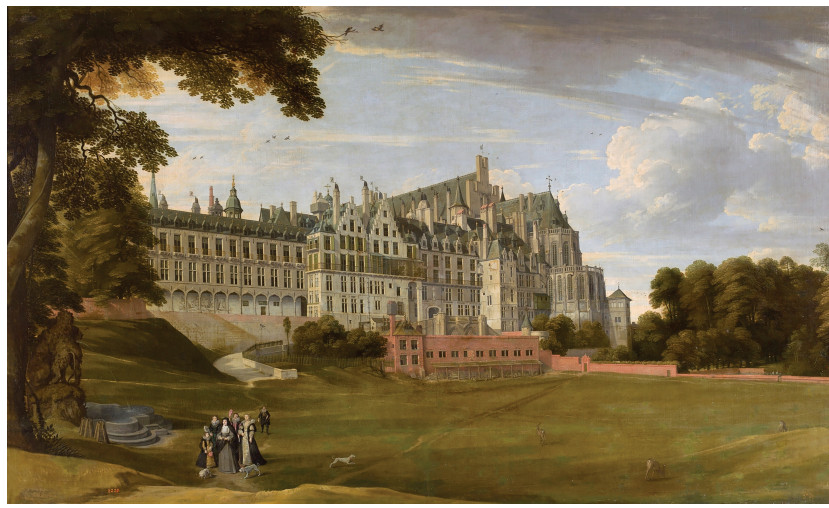

FIG. 2.9 Jan Brueghel the Younger (?), *The Royal Palace in Brussels (The Palace of Coudenberg) seen from the Warande*, c. 1627, oil on canvas, 150 cm x 228 cm
ROYAL COLLECTION, MUSEO DEL PRADO, MADRID

court;[121] otherwise, the genre designation is simply a reference to the Spanish *comedia palatina*, which is often set at court.[122] Either way, De Grieck adapted the Spanish text concisely, but the stage directions show more similarities to Zamponi's text than to Calderón's, although both the opera and the *comedia* had been spectacular events. Yet, unlike Zamponi's opera, there is no indication that Calderón's play was performed in Brussels.[123]

Therefore, De Grieck might have omitted the erupting volcano that Circe had summoned when Ulysses fled her island in the final act of Calderón's original. To compare, there had not been a volcano in Zamponi's opera either. Instead, spectators were treated to a *changement à vue* where Circe's courtyard instantly changed into a ruin.[124] Likewise, in De Grieck's adaptation of Calderón, the stage directions tell us that '[t]he Garden and the Palace change into a ruin.'[125] This was probably done by means of coulisse décor mounted on rails: one set of screens probably depicted a

121 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 554.
122 Vergeer 2020c, 320.
123 De Keyser 1925, 22.
124 Amalteo 1650, 44.
125 De Grieck 1668, 75.

sumptuous palace and garden while another set depicted ruins, which then replaced the first set in a mere moment. These examples demonstrate that De Grieck is almost certain to have attended the reprise of Zamponi's opera in 1655, along with his fellow citizens.[126] Perhaps inspired by Zamponi's opera, De Grieck wanted to make his own version of the love story of Ulysses and Circe, but he must have quickly realised that Calderón's version better suited his expertise as a playwright when he came in the possession of Calderón's *Segunda parte*.[127]

The spectacle present in such plays as *El mayor encanto, amor* could offer a challenge for theatre directors to exploit the potential of a found environment, and consequently some of the most elicit spectacle effects of the Spanish *comedias* were omitted from the Dutch adaptations (as discussed in Chapter 1). Particularly, the eruption of Mount Etna and the complete destruction of Trinacria were aspects of the original Spanish performance in the Estanque Grande that as spectacle must have elicited a strong emotional response evoked by the quality of the stimuli in Calderón's play. As an ending for the 'fiesta,' the eruption of Mount Etna demarcated not only destruction and loss, but also purification and rebirth, a renewal of the sun's energy, 'which was becoming weaker as the winter solstice approached' as Pepa Castillo Pascual asserts.[128] The ending of the 1635 performance was a tremendous way to celebrate Midsummer's Eve, on which the play's staging was planned. As Castillo Pascual explains, 'this type of apocalyptic ending was very much in keeping with the baroque stage design and, surely, it aroused the *admiratio* of all spectators.'[129]

In Madrid, the eruption of Mount Etna was represented by fireworks.[130] King Felipe IV's stage director Lotti's use of fireworks was not unique but surely among the first when in 1635 he designed the décor for Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*. For various Italian operas about Alcina and Medea discussed in the previous chapter, Hedman argued that the open-air found environments used to host court spectacles in the 1660s at Versailles, Munich, and Vienna enabled stage directors to use fireworks to create the sense that Alcina's and Medea's islands were destroyed by magic.[131] The same applies to Lotti's production of *El mayor encanto, amor*, he went even further than the later producers of the abovementioned operas. In his production, Lotti included a

126 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 452.

127 Vergeer 2020c, 321–322.

128 Castillo Pascual 2015, 89.

129 Castillo Pascual 2015, 85. For the aesthetic characterisation of spectators' *admiratio* as a responding emotion, see Frijda 1986, 356.

130 Brenan 1951, 277; Hedman 2019, 80–81.

131 Hedman 2019, 72–74, 77, 79–81.

floating stage lit with 3000 lanterns, a shipwreck, a triumphal water-car pulled by life-like prop dolphins. The destruction of Circe's palace and island with the eruption of Mount Etna to the accompaniment of artillery and fireworks was the ultimate climax.[132] The found environment enhanced the illusion, but the spectacle that the fireworks offered immersed spectators completely.

In the Brussels adaptation of 1668, this event is not described as such, nor was it likely possible to light fireworks within the Brussels Public Theatre, although news must have reached Brussels of the contemporary court spectacles staged elsewhere in Europe. In terms of the spectacle alone, the Flemish adaptation was probably less impressive, although for his adaptation De Grieck included the appearance of the nymph Galathea as *dea ex machina*, who entered the stage in a triumphal water-car. Just as in the Spanish original, we find Galathea in the Brussels adaptation accompanied by mermaids, while tritons announce her arrival by playing musical instruments.[133] It begs to differ whether without the volcanic eruption the Brussels adaptation could elicit the same effect in its Flemish spectators as Calderón's original might have. Nevertheless, the *changements à vue*, which were introduced in the public theatres of Brussels and Amsterdam in the 1660s, should be regarded as a novelty at that time.

Spectacle at the Brussels Public Theatre

De Grieck's *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* was not the only spectacle play performed in Brussels between 1650 and 1672. For Wouthers' *De devotie van Eusebius*, De Paepe concluded that the *changements à vue* were of equal importance. Although perhaps originally an Antwerp play, *De devotie van Eusebius* was performed at the Brussels Public Theatre in an altered form which reflects the possibilities of the venue.[134] According to the printed edition, during the first act, 'The theatre changes into a home; Guilia while lamenting enters with Arminda.'[135] Other stage directions include 'The theatre is changed in a forest' at the beginning of the second act, and a little bit later during the second act, 'The theatre is changed on the one side into a forest, and on the other

132 Brenan 1951, 277; Castillo Pascual 2015, 85–87; Vergeer 2020c, 327–328.

133 De Grieck 1668, 74: 'Het water stilt, ende op het selve verschynt de Nymphe Galathea in een triumph-wagen, die van Mereminnen voort-getrokken wordt, een deel Tritons, om den selven, met instrumenten.' See also Calderón de la Barca 1641, 26r: 'Serenese el mar, y sale por èl en un carro triunfal Galatea, tiranle dos Sirenas y alrededor muchos Tritones con instrumentos.'

134 De Paepe 2011, 248.

135 Wouthers 1665a, 10: 'Het theater verandert in huysinghen, Guilia met Arminda al weenende uyt.'

side a wall. The light is also dimmed a little.'[136] On the next page, we learn that Eusebius has to scale the wall, while flames rage over his head. Surprised, Eusebius 'halts in wonder halfway up the ladder.'[137] This was surely a fascinating sight, if realistic flames (perhaps of fabric) were indeed thrown over the wall. Because of these stage directions, De Paepe asserts that the Brussels Public Theatre possessed coulisse décor and allowed for performances with the technique of *changement à vue*.[138]

De Paepe does not discuss that apparently the lights could be adjusted to align with the play's atmosphere. Judging by the stage direction in *De devotie van Eusebius*, the scene necessitated this adjustment. Furthermore, it is possible to imagine that the handling of the candles used in these early modern theatres—lighting, snuffing, and fizzling out the candles—resulted in a lot of fuss, and perhaps smoke and smell, adding to the experience. It could even be said that without the effects of the candles, the scene might not have been as powerful or captivating. We can imagine how this would have been useful in the production of *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* as well, when in the third act the Greeks fight the animal inhabitants of Trinacria; when in the fourth act the ghost of Achilles and his grave rise from under the stage; or when in the fifth act Ulysses escapes Circe's island and the sorceress-queen conjures a turbulent storm and lets the sea vomit flames. Spectators must have watched with horror as Circe's ladies-in-waiting fled for their lives—the scene was, in a way, a *sacer horror*.[139] The flames that Circe summons would be more exciting if the theatre's auditorium was made dark, just as was the case in the *Devotie van Eusebius*.

In De Grieck's *Samson*, the blinded and captive hero Samson concludes the play in a dramatic and tragic way: he pulls down the columns of the Philistine temple on top of himself as a final act of heroism and bravery, which was likely staged as a *tableau vivant* or a pantomime. There is no indication that during this scene the lights were also dimmed, but the directors probably used the stage curtains to mimic the discovery space of the traditional rhetoricians' stage to the same effect. Therefore, spectators saw Samson grab the pillars, which he pulled over, destroying the temple of Dagon in the act.[140] The *mise-en-scène* here compares to that of Pérez de Montal-

136 Wouthers 1665a, 22, 36. the first quote reads: 'Het theater wort verandert in een Bosschagie'; the second: 'Het theater wordt verandert op d'een seyde bosch, ende op d'ander seyde muragie. Het licht wordt oock een weynigh verdonckert.'

137 Wouthers 1665a, 37: 'Soo Eusebius de leere begint op te klimmen, sal men over den muer vlammen viers doen vliegen, ende Eusebius blyft verbaest half-wegen de leer.'

138 De Paepe 2011, 247–248.

139 De Grieck 1668, 50, 69–70, 74–75.

140 De Grieck 1660, 55: 'Hy om-helst de pilaren, treckt haer te gaer, en doet den tempel invallen.'

FIG. 2.10 Antonie Wierix (II) after Maerten de Vos, *Samson breaks the pillars; the temple of Dagon collapses, killing all inside*, c. 1585–1643, engraving, 215 mm x 288 mm
RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

bán's *El valiente Nazareno*: 'Samson embraces the pillars,' then says that 'thus I die for God, for me, for my fatherland, for my zeal, for my honour, for my *constantia*, and because heaven has ordered it.'[141] To spectators, Samson's blindness offers a humbling, voyeuristic, and almost perverse contrast to the spectacle that the familiar hero is *imagineering*.[142]

When De Grieck's *Samson* pulls down the columns of Dagon's temple, the scene *imagineers* horrific images with potentially great effects on spectators. It was, moreover, a scene depicted many times by artists in the seventeenth century, and would have been familiar to viewers (see e.g., Fig 2.10). When Vondel devised this same Biblical scene for his *Samson of Heilige wraeck* (1660, 'Samson or Holy Revenge'), however, he did not showcase the destruction of Dagon's temple. In Vondel's play, this event remains

141 Pérez de Montalbán 1638, fol. 112r. The first quote reads: 'abraçase Sanson de las colunas'; the second quote reads: 'pues muero por Dios, por mi, / por mi patria, por mi zelo, / por mi honor, por mi constancia, / y porque el cielo ha dispuesto.'

142 See Van der Haven 2019, 34–41, who argued the same for Vondel's parallel play *Samson of Heilige wraeck* (1660).

beyond the spectators' grip, because as the chorus puts it: 'This frightful din deafens our ears. All this dust blinds our eyes.'[143] Instead, the many casualties are reported by a messenger. Yasco Horsman has described the messenger's report as rich and powerful in its use of language, evoking 'the scene of this disaster in all its gory detail':[144]

> I hung from a pillar, which was already tilting over,
> And I saw from above this fully pitiful spectacle;
> More deliberately when the dust had settled:
> Some crushed, other semi-crushed, and neck and leg broken,
> The blood and rubble were mixed, the pale ghosts haunt
> And stay around the torso, either dead, or semi-dead.
> This one still moves his arm, that one distorts his leg in distress.
> Another is about to die; another while moaning
> Comes from beneath the rubble. Shanks, bowels,
> And head, and intestines: a nauseated batter
> Mixed together; and flesh, and leg, and brain defile
> The day with a stench, which will almost bear a plague.[145]

Horsman continues that '[t]he speech of the messenger, and its explicit and violent nature, stands out in the play, and has such a shocking impact that it almost seems to detach itself from the narrative of which it is supposed to be the resolution, leaving Vondel's reader with a visual imprint of a scene of pure violence.'[146] And that is just it: the messenger's report is brought alive before readers and audiences through a pure act of *enargeia*.

In line with Freud and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Horsman argued about the absence of those deaths on stage that death cannot be experienced directly, can only be re-presented, and lies beyond the means of theatre itself, because '[d]eath itself

143 Vondel 1660, 46–47: 'Dit afgrijsselijck geschal / verdooft onze ooren. Al dit stof verblint onze oogen.'

144 Horsman 2012, 446.

145 Vondel 1660, 50–51: 'Ick hing aen een' pylaer, alreede aen 't overhellen, / En zagh van boven al dit deerlijck schouspel aen, / Bescheidelijcker toen het stuiven was vergaen; / Geplet, en half geplet, en hals en been gebroken, / Het bloet en puin gemengt, de bleecke geesten spoocken / En waeren om den romp, of doot, of hallef doot. / Dees rept den arm noch, die vertreckt zijn been in noodt: / Een ander zieltoogh vast: een ander onder 't kermen / Komt onder uit het puin opdondren. schenkels, darmen, / En hooft, en ingewant, een misselijck beslagh, / Door een gemengt, en vleesch, en been, en brein den dagh / Bezwalcken met een lucht, die haest een pest zal baeren.'

146 Horsman 2012, 446.

can never be made present on the stage, since it always takes place on yet another, "different stage", that lies beyond the actual space of the theatre. Death itself is always endlessly deferred and displaced.'[147] This adds an extra dimension to the practical objections to death on stage as offered by Nil Volentibus Arduum.[148] Although I do not contest that death is a difficult—if not impossible—act to make present onstage, I think De Grieck's *Samson* actually succeeded in staging death by means of a *tableau vivant* or a pantomime. Thus, the play lets spectators experience more of Samson's revenge directly as witnesses to the 'holy justice' than in stagings of Vondel's *Samson*. While Vondel's messenger convincingly described the gruesome scene in a report, De Grieck's text indicates that a graphic representation was made visible on stage to a more visual effect: the horrific spectacle in De Grieck's adaptation is recreated—*imagineered*—by theatrical means, whereas the horrors in Vondel's play are dramatically constructed.

In all these situations, the dazzling baroque scenography could enhance the complementing emotions of horror and fear and evoke wonder and admiration in spectators. The *mise-en-scène* establishes an attentive fascination as painters were wont to do with their paintings. The baroque depends in part on the contrast between dark and light; as painting and theatre are in many ways alike, the scenes of these plays would be 'painted' in much the same way. Through the scenography of *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe*, *De devotie van Eusebius*, and *Samson*, the Brussels Public Theatre had the means to seduce the eyes with a sea belching flames, buildings collapsing, tempests and turbulent storms, all through sudden changes of décor. With their eyes caught, spectators could also begin listening to the love and honour stories of the Brussels adaptations.

Amsterdam: *Comedia Nueva* for the Masses

The spectacle witnessed in Brussels is also administered in the productions of *comedias* in Amsterdam. I already discussed the first period with Rodenburgh, but spectacle was obviously also used during the second period of the Amsterdam Public Theatre (1638–1664), and in the third (1665–1672). We can see clear differences between the periods in line with the technical possibilities of The Eglantine and the Amsterdam Public

147 Horsman 2012, 456.

148 Nil Volentibus Arduum [c. 1678] 1989, 274, 387, 424–428.

Theatre itself, but also between the preferences of spectators in the first quarter of the seventeenth century and their changed preferences in the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century.

Spectacle at the Amsterdam Public Theatre (1638–1664)

With the opening of the Amsterdam Public Theatre in January 1638, not much had changed since Rodenburgh adapted his *comedias* in 1617/1618. Both Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel* and his *Ialoursche studenten* were performed at the theatre in 1642 and 1644, respectively. In 1645, *'t Quaedt zijn meester loondt* followed. We can accept that *tableaux vivants* remained an important vehicle to move the audiences in these plays, and the extra space on the stage of the Amsterdam Public Theatre made it possible to produce even more elaborate *tableaux vivants*.

In this period that new plays were adapted, the *tableau vivant* is, however, not always present to meet the need for spectacle. As such, the text of Van Heemskerck's *De verduytste Cid* does not make clear whether the murder of Don Gomes was showcased during the premiere of the play on 2 May 1641. This is due to Van Heemskerck himself, who had intended the play as reading drama and not as a performance piece.[149] Thus, typical spectacular theatrical devices were also absent from the text.[150] Only from later productions of *De verduytste Cid* it is known that the murder was represented by means of two *tableaux vivants*: one showing the murder, the other the immediate situation afterwards where Chimène cries over her father's dead body.[151] Nor is the duel between Don Rodrigo and Don Sanchez in the fifth act represented onstage, or at least not the outcome of the duel, namely that Don Rodrigo had defeated his opponent but being a magnanimous hero he let him live. However, Don Sanchez is less noble and uses this opportunity to speed to court and bring false tidings of Rodrigo's defeat and death to Chimène who like the spectators are unaware of the duel's outcome.[152]

In Van Germez' 1645 adaptation, *Vervolgde Laura*, spectacle is not created by means of a *tableau vivant*. The actor-playwright rather focused on a scene, which today is still very attractive to visitors of average cinema: the passionate scene as foreplay to

149 This is attested by his publisher Nicolaes van Ravesteyn 1641, fol. A2^{r}.

150 Smits-Veldt 1995, 210–211. Smits-Veldt makes clear that the absence of any reference to the *tableau vivant* in the text does not mean that it was not part of the performance.

151 See Stockink 1753, 1–2.

152 Van Heemskerck 1641, fols. F6^{v}–F8^{r}.

the well-known sex scene. In this specific scene, the lady-in-waiting Lidia seduces the valet Octavio, while impersonating her mistress Laura. The King who wanted to break up the young lovers, his son Prince Orantee and Laura, has orchestrated this meeting, bringing his son to overlook the 'spectacle.' While Orantee spies on the two people (the one he believes to be his girlfriend and her apparent suitor Octavio, his valet), spectators see how Lidia in Laura's clothes seduces another man.

> Oh! Do not resist my lust with idle talk!
> But answer me with the heart, and let us stop talking.
> Octavio, repay the fire [...] in loyalty and strong love.[153]

Van Germez gladly used this deception scene that was also present in the original plot, as the scene already was spectacular in and of itself: Orantee sees how "Laura" ardently longs to spend the night with Octavio. Angry, he curses Laura's name and leaves in grief. When Octavio hears other people nearby, he and "Laura" hide from prying eyes. We can only assume that they will share the bed, because the climax itself is not shown.

The use of spectacle in Isaak Vos' *De beklaagelycke dwangh* (1648) is again closer to Rodenburgh's use of spectacle in his three Lope adaptations. The playwright had written in his foreword to the play that it would please the audience, especially since he had paid more attention to the fashion and tastes of 'the time in which he lived' ('na de tijdt daar in hy leefde') than the 'old theatre laws' ('oude Tooneelwetten'). And thus, Vos included three *tableaux vivants*. The first is especially exhilarating, since spectators are now truly witness to a sex scene: the crown princess Dionisia sits in bed at twilight with her lover, whose true identity remains hidden. While she thinks she shares her bed with Henryck, the lover is in fact Oktavio, a detail known to the audience, which therefore warrants a *tableau vivant*, emphasising the plot turn and creating a spectacular moment of surprise and wonder:

> Tableau Vivant
> The play makes place for a tableau vivant. The actors form a still image under the guidance of music. The live painting showcases a tableau in the twilight of Diniosia's bedchamber: the crown princess can be seen with in her lap her lover.[154]

153 Van Germez 1645, 37: 'Ai! wederstreef mijn min doch niet met ydle zaeken! / Maer antwoord met 'et hert, en laet ons woorden staeken. / Octaef, betael de brand, die 'k steets gevoel met pijn, [...] in trouw' en sterk beminne.'

154 As quoted from Blom 2021a, 235. Reconstruction on the basis of the 1661 German *Wandergruppe* version

Yet, this sex scene likely does not compare to sex scenes as we know them from our modern-day movies, since *decorum* limited how much live nudity was allowed to be shown on stage. If a play necessitated on stage nudity, a *tableau vivant* might have offered a solution, but even then it is not always clear whether actors displayed their nudity live or that a painting was shown to spectators.[155] Even then, rarely did an actor have to act his or her role fully naked, because, as Hubert Meeus argues, 'naeckt' (naked) meant often 'in het hemt' (in undergarments).[156] It is likely that Dionysia and Oktavia were indeed dressed in undergarments during this scene.

The other two *tableaux vivants* also highlight plot twists. When Henryck is disappointed that his courtship with Dionisia has failed, he returns to Bristol. There, he rekindles his relationship with Rosaura, whom he marries soon after: 'Tableau Vivant. There Henryck marries Rosaura, the daughter of the Count of Bristol in public.'[157]

Believing that Henryck has betrayed her, Dionisia asks her father, the king, to intervene. Through a ruse, he orders Henryck to kill his own newly-wed wife, so that he can marry Dionisia and restore his daughter's virtue. The third *tableau vivant* shows, however, that Henryck, unable to kill Rosaura, sends her boat adrift onto the open sea towards her certain end. Just in time, Oktavio saves Rosaura before she sighs her last breath:

> Rosaura, being cast on the cliffs of Death,
> Is being helped by Oktavio, the source of her troubles.
> He renews her troubles through his unsavoury lusts,
> And increases them even, instead of fixing them.
> Meanwhile, Henryck rages on,
> Mourning his spouse, and he revolts at the idea of having to live on.[158]

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of *De beklaagelycke dwangh*: 'Musica, Verthönung, wie Octavio der Princessin aüff der Schoß sietzet und schleffet' (see Lope de Vega 1661, scan 15).

155 Meeus 2011, 84–85.

156 Meeus 2011, 90.

157 Vos 1648, fol. B7^{v}: 'Vertooningh. Daar Henrijck met Rosaure des Graaven Dochter van Bristol in't openbaar trouwt.'

158 See Stockink 1753, n.p. The original reads: 'Rosaura, strandende op de klippen van de dood, / Werd door Oktavio, de bronaar haarer kwalen / Geholpen, die haar ramp, in plaats van te bepalen, / Door zyne onkuysche min vernieuwt, en zelfs vergroot. / Terwyl Henrikus door de razerny gedreeven, / Zyn Ega steets betreurt, en walgt van meer te leeven.'

When this *tableau* was added exactly is uncertain. It cannot be found in the original print of 1648, but this does not mean that the play did not include a *tableau vivant*, as has been argued for many other plays from the same period. Our knowledge about the existence of a *tableau vivant* in *De beklaagelycke dwangh* comes from an extra-textual description made by J. van Thil and published in Stockinck's *Verscheide vertooningen, geschikt ter versieringe van eenige tooneel-speelen, die op den Amsteldamschen Schouwburg vertoond werden* (1753, 'Various *Tableaux Vivants*, Designed to Decorate Several Plays, which were Performed at the Amsterdam Public Theatre'). However, it also appears in the same moment of the plot in a 1661 manuscript of a German *Wandergruppe* version of the play.[159] After this *tableau vivant*, Rosaura conceives of her counterplot to save her husband's reputation and expose Oktavio for the lying schemer that he is.

Two years earlier, Isaak Vos used in his *De gedwongen vrient* (1646, 'The Forced Friend') duels as the most important vehicle for spectacle, which were showcased according to the text.[160] The prison break in the fourth act, orchestrated by Astolfo's lover Luzinda, must have also been spectacular, with its skirmishes with the guards comparable to the action in Indiana Jones or James Bond films.[161] Compared to Rodenburgh's adaptations, which rely heavily on the use of *tableaux vivants* for spectacle, Vos' *De gedwongen vrient* shows that plays can already be spectacular if the spectacle is established by means of the 'capa' (cloak) and the 'espada' (rapier), the two most distinct characteristics in *comedia de capa y espada* (for which this subgenre is named).

On the other hand, the absence of *tableaux vivants* in these newly adapted plays could indicate that this dramatic device served out its purpose after 1640 to entertain spectators; it might be that it was considered an old-fashioned and cheap theatrical device compared to more novel seductions. This is, however, not the case. As *comedia nueva* rose in popularity during the second half of the 1640s, spectacle was also increasingly added. The man responsible was Jan Vos, who was theatre director from 1647 until his death in 1667. The playwright adored *tableaux vivants* and other big spectacle and often implemented them in his own plays and those of others.[162] The employment of Jacob Baroces around 1646 as technical translator seems to have been another important influence. With Baroces' technical translations in hand, Leonard de Fuyter

159 See Blom 2021a, 240, 445. Blom has demonstrated that the German manuscript offers insight into how *De beklaagelycke dwangh* was also performed in Amsterdam. Blom quotes from the 1661 German *Wandergruppe* manuscript: 'Musica' and 'Vertönung, wie Rosaura in Schiffe fahret' (see Lope de Vega 1661, scan 31).

160 Vos 1646, fol. B3^{r}.

161 Vos 1646, fol. E4^{r}.

162 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 524–525; Geerdink 2012, 111–112.

added two *tableaux vivants* to his *Verwarde hof* ('Confused Court') in 1647.[163] Baroces also oversaw the spectacular duels in Isaak Vos' *De gedwongen vrient*. The absence of *tableaux vivants* in this play is, however, somewhat remarkable, since Isaak Vos' cousin was the spectacle-hungry Jan Vos.

A different approach to spectacle can be seen in Joris de Wijse's *Voorzigtige Dolheit* (1650, 'Cautious Madness'). There, music is used to spectacularly stage a plot and counterplot situation. De Wijse focused on the power of music to set the mood and to emphasise action. He especially exploited the influence of the contrafact: new songs were continuously written on existing melodies throughout Europe, and especially in the Low Countries. These new songs were, naturally, easy to recognise and to sing.[164] Knowing how successful the contrafact had been in the work of playwrights like Rodenburgh, De Wijse inserted two refrains, which follow one after another in the second act: the first song was sung to the popular melody of 'Je voudrais bien o Cloris' from Gabriel Bataille's *Airs de different autheurs, mis en tablature de luth* (1615), while the second song was sung to the lost melody of 'Non ha sotto il ciel.'[165]

Although both songs used well-known melodies, the second refrain in particular contributed to the creation of suspense. Following Lope's use of song-making, the refrain is directly connected to the action in the play: the King's stepmother Rosania and his fired general Dinardo plot against King Anthony, planning to poison his morning beverage to make him insane and consequently unfit to rule. They try to bribe Robbrecht, Anthony's apothecary, for the poison. Robbrecht is, however, loyal to Anthony and warns him. Anthony pretends that he knows nothing of the plot, and keeps the audience in suspense about his counterplot.

When the time for the poisoning comes, King Anthony sings a song with the incipit 'Op wat losser grondt.' He laments that his advances with Countess Lucinde, one of his courtiers, have been unsuccessful, while he drinks his morning beverage:

ANTHONY. [...]
And yet my eyes, I have been deceived
By two bright beams

163 Translation of Antonio Mira de Amescua's *El palacio confuso* (c. 1628). The Spanish adaptation is ascribed to Lope de Vega.

164 Grijp 1991, 23.

165 De Wijse 1650, fols. $C4^{v}$–$D1^{r}$. According to Veldhorst, the music of 'Non ha sotto il ciel' has not survived (2004, n. 532).

Radiating from your lovely face,
Which now make me stray.[166]

The content of Anthony's song stands in stark contrast to what is about to happen. In the meantime, the knowing audience would be compelled to call out to him to not drink, but know that he knows the beverage has been poisoned—or so they think. Veldhorst has, rightly, argued that the song comes at a precarious moment in the play. The King feigns illness as the result of drinking the poisoned beverage, and utters just in time: 'Oh poor me! My veins are swelling up, [...] My heart is in distress from poison, / I have been betrayed, hold this cup, oh the unbearable pain.'[167] The whole court rushes to the King's side in complete desperation. The music, hence, deceives the king and has an alienating effect, Veldhorst notes.[168] The audience wonders what is happening: they know that Anthony knew that the beverage was poisoned. Thus, they are conflicted, until it is revealed that the King has, in fact, fooled everyone, in order to unmask the plotters. Now he can counterplot against Dinardo and Rosania without them suspecting a thing. The audience are thrilled by the action, which is in turn emphasised by the songs which deceive them through their unsettling effects.

The spectacle in Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis* (1653) is more straightforward. The translation of this play was again delivered by Baroces. The assassination of Duke Alexander in the fifth act is again represented by means of a *tableau vivant*. This time, however, we also have a depiction of the *tableau vivant* (Fig. 2.10). The play's frontispiece shows how the Duke is surprised by his own kin, Laurens de Medicis, and Laurens' valet Pedro, who stab him with poniards. Although the stage directions make no mention of a *tableau vivant* being performed, the frontispiece has the characteristics of one: in addition to the *pictura*, the *subscriptio* is also given, through which the assassination receives a moral dimension.[169] In the *subscriptio*, we read how Alexander is a gullible man, who too easily trusts those who appear to be his closest friends:

166 De Wijse 1650, fol. D1v: 'ANTHONY. Maar mijn oogen, 'k ben bedroogen / Door twee heldre straalen / Van uw lief gezicht, / Die my nu doen dwaalen.'

167 De Wijse 1650, fols. D1r–D1v: 'KONING. Ay my! Mijn adren zwellen, [...] Mijn hert gevoelt de nepen van fenijn, / Ik ben verraân, houw vast, ô duldeloze pijn.'

168 Veldhorst 2004, 170–171.

169 Smits-Veldt 1995, n. 6 (211).

FIG. 2.11 Frontispiece to Joan Dullaart's Alexander de Medicis, 1653
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ALEXANDER DE MEDICIS.
[PICTURA: FIG. 2.11]
Treason rewards now his favourite with much sorrow:
It makes in the appearance of friendship the monarch descend into hell.
True Loyalty makes here the loyal triumphant.
One who lightly believes is lightly [i.e. easily] deceived.[170]

170 Dullaart 1653, 3: 'ALEXANDER DE MEDICIS / 'T verraat beloont nu hier zijn gunst'ling met veel smert; / Het doet in vrientschaps schyn, den vorst ter helle dalen. / D' oprechte Trouw doet hier den trouwe Zegepralen. / Een die te licht gelooft, te licht bedroogen wert.'

Another notable aspect of this frontispiece is the depiction of one of the characters holding a torch, which might suggest that the lights were dimmed in the auditorium during the staging of the *tableau*, *imagineering* a gloomy scene of violence. One concern for the interpretation of this scene is how well-lit the Amsterdam Public Theatre was in the first place. In the bad lighting of Van Campen's theatre, a torch would have been a spectacular sight whether or not the lights were dimmed. Simultaneously, a torch in the left hand and bared sword in the right as shown in the frontispiece are reminiscent of the attributes of *Ira* ('Gramschap'; Ire or Wrath) in the Dutch translation of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghen des Verstants* (1644, 'Iconology or Depiction of Reason') by Dirck Pietersz Pers (Fig. 2.12, below). This similarity further stimulates an allegorical-emotional interpretation of the scene.[171]

As we see, such violent scenes were more common in this period in the adaptations of *comedia nueva*. They also appear in the work of the only female playwright who adapted Spanish *comedias* in Dutch, Catharina Questiers. She designed a *tableau vivant* with movement or pantomimic effect and combined it with a duel to create a spectacular scene in her *Casimier, of gedempte hoogmoed* (1656, 'Casimir, or Subdued Hubris'). In the final act, spectators are treated to a duel between the exiled King Laudislaus and his bastard brother Casimier. When Casimier finally falls to the ground, Duke Tebrando announces: 'The bastard lies down. I scream for joy, the blood seems to curdle in my breast.'[172] This scene was then depicted in a *tableau vivant* or pantomime, as can be discerned from the edition's frontispiece (Fig. 2.13).

In the *subscriptio* to the image, we read that Casimier's hubris is tempered and Fortune will not any longer taunt King Laudislaus:

> Fortune is finally tired of teasing the Polish Monarch:
> She gives him to wear the crown again, after much disaster and slander.
> Clorinde and Sigismund, having intended his return,
> Thus, Casimier's treason and hubris is subdued.[173]

171 Ripa [1644] 1971, 185–186.

172 Questiers 1656, fol. G4^{v}: 'Den bastaart leyt ter neer. / Ick schrey van vreugt, het bloet schijnt in mijn borst te stremmen.'

173 Questiers 1656, fol. π1^{r}: ''t Geval is eind'lijck moe de Poolse Vorst te plaagen: / zij doet hem, naa veel Ramp en Hoon, de Kroon weerdraagen. / Clorind' en Sigismont, zijn weederkomst bestempt, / dies, Casimiers verraat en Hooghmoet wert gedempt.'

FIG. 2.12 'Ira. Gramschap. Toorn.' in Cesare Ripa's Iconologia, 1644

Apart from this pantomimical duel, there are three more *tableaux vivants* shown in succession at the end of the play to celebrate the joyous outcome that King Laudislaus is restored to the Polish throne. Through this triple spectacle of *tableaux vivants*, the action was brought to a satisfactory end, showing first King Laudislaus and his Queen Irene being crowned again, then Laudislaus and his brother Casimier with their wives Irene and Clorinde greeting one another, and finally Laudislaus bestowing laurels on Casimier and Clorinde.[174]

174 Questiers 1656, fol. H2r.

FIG. 2.13 Frontispiece to Questiers' *Casimier, of gedempte hoogmoed*, 1656
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In any case, we can learn from these *tableaux vivants* (and pantomimes) that the spectacle in *comedias* during the first two decades of the Amsterdam Public Theatre built forth on the spectacle that Rodenburgh employed as *factor* of The Eglantine in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. After Questiers' *Casimier*, Serwouters' 1659 play *Hester of verlossing der Jooden* ('Esther or Liberation of the Jews') is possibly the

summit of this development. In his original *La hermosa Ester* (1610), Lope de Vega had used music to create the desired atmosphere, and to stress key moments in the play.[175] This can be seen in one scene specifically: when Ahasuerus asked Haman what he should gift to the noblest man in his empire, Haman responded that this man should be guided through the city on a horse surrounded by musicians before the people. Haman thought he was a fortunate man, but it turned out that Mordechai was the luckier one. Haman truly hated Mordechai, and the fact that he was made to guide the Jewish man through the city was in Haman's eyes dishonourable. In the Spanish version, this scene is performed before spectators and its importance emphasised by the introduction of music:

> *[There appears] Music of shawms—and in the area of an events arena [palenque] amidst great accompaniment—and behind [them] Mordechai [appears] with sceptre and crown on a horse, and with his pallium; Haman will bring him on foot at the rein, and stopping in the theatre, he will say:*
>
> HAMAN. What equals my misfortune?
> Who saw how I see myself
> at the feet of Mordechai,
> while he climbed so high?[176]

In the Dutch adaptation, there is no indication that similar music was played, but this specific scene is constructed as a *tableau vivant*, which was often accompanied by music.[177] What Umpierre wrote about the role music played in Lope's plays is demonstrated here in the Dutch adaptation by a *tableau vivant*. Serwouters structured the scene as such:

> TABLEAU VIVANT
> *Where Mordechai sits on a horse in royal garment,*
> *And is led by Haman through the city Susa,*
> *Under jubilation of all the people.*

175 Umpierre 1975, 21–28, 59–74.

176 Lope de Vega [1610] 1999, III, vv. 265–266, vv. 266–269: '(Música de chirimías, y por un palenque entre grande acompañamiento, y detrás MARDOQUEO con cetro y corona en un caballo, y su palio; traerá al pie de la rienda AMÁN, y en parando en el teatro, dirá). / AMÁN ¿Qué iguala a mi desventura? / ¿Quién se vio como me veo / a los pies de Mardoqueo, / y él subido a tanta altura?'

177 Albach 1977, 40–41.

HAMAN. The Monarch Ahasuerus makes known to all the lords,
That it pleases him to royally honour this man.[178]

The play ends, however, even more spectacularly than a *tableau vivant* could hope to achieve: Haman is executed for his endeavour to kill Esther's kin. On the order of Ahasuerus, Haman is hanged at his own gallows. This execution was staged before the eyes of the audience, who become witnesses, such as at the execution in Rodenburgh's *'t Quaedt syn meester loondt*. Haman speaks his final words, which he uses to convince the onlookers (and thus also spectators) to not allow such an unjust verdict:

HAMAN. Where is the rope? I pray! Give it in my hands.
How am I then preserved until now, to endure
In the most disgraceful way this shame? I will avert it.
You Counsellors of this Empire, you irreproachable lords!
Can such a cruel death be done to me with justice?
May anyone strike down such a Prince like me?
I confess, I have tried to kill the Jewish race.
I recall the order! The King has ordered it,
That I am punished with the hangman's rope. Oh Haman![179]

It is no use. The executioner gives Haman the rope to loop around his neck. In a final protest, Haman accuses Ahasuerus and Esther of being tyrants. And then he chokes to death. By this, the scene is *imagineering* a violent depiction of (in)justice, which must have evoked horror. Thus, spectators saw the following:

178 Serwouters 1659, 44: 'VERTOONING. *daar Mardocheus koningklijk gekleed te paard zit, / en door Haman in de stadt Zusa omgevoert wert, / met toejuichen van al het volk.* / HAMAN. De Vorst Assuerus doet de weet aan alle heeren, / Dat het hem heeft belieft dees Koninglijk te eeren.' See also Blom's discussion of a print by Rembrandt from c. 1640 that might have inspired this *tableau vivant* (2021, 320).

179 Serwouters 1659, 52: 'HAMAN. Waar is de strik? ik bid! men geeftze my in handt. / Hoe ben ik dan bewaart tot nu toe, om de schandt / Op 't aldersmadelijkst te lijden? 'k zal het weeren. / Ghy Raaden van dit Rijk; ghy onbesprooke heeren! / Kan my zoo wreeden doot met recht zijn aangedaan? / Mach iemant zulken Prins, als my, ter neder slaan. / 'k Beken, ik heb getracht de Joodtsche stam te dooden. / Ik wederroep 't bevel! de Koning 't heeft geboden, / Als dat ik met de koort gestraft wert. Haman ach! / Mijn doodt geeft aan mijn staat een alteswaaren slach. / Mijn Vrouw zal onverwacht haar Prins en voorspraak derven, / En mijne kindren doen de rouklacht van mijn sterven.'

MAMUCHA. Prepare yourself for death, the time has already passed.
HAMAN. There is my turban. How do you want me to suffer?
How can I suffer? No. I cannot prepare myself.
I do not want to part honourless from this world.
I must! Alas! I must! And see how I show
That I obey you judges and crown.
There I have put the rope around my neck.
Could I once take revenge on the evil Jews,
I suffered the fiercest pain, which anyone ever thought of.
Where is my greatness now? Where is my old strength?
Ahasuerus tyranny and of his Queen …
MAMUCHA. Begin.
SETAR. The smooth rope kept the slander within.
MAMUCHA. There he lies, who disturbed this Empire by his threats,
And still continuously shakes, as long as she bears the body.
Report Haman's death to the King.
Thus, he is fallen, who yesterday was seated
In heaven as a young and second Phaeton.
He drove too rash the wheels of the sun.[180]

Judging by the frontispiece of the 1659 print of *Hester* (Fig. 2.14), Haman's execution was perhaps also showcased by means of a *tableau vivant* or pantomime: while in the front the final scene of *Hester* is depicted, the *tableau vivant* of Haman leading Mordechai through Susa is shown in the background, as well as the execution scene discussed above. The poem written by Serwouters underlines the possibility that the execution was mediated either through a *tableau vivant* or pantomime:

180 Serwouters 1659, 52: 'MAMUCHA. Bereit u tot de doodt, de tijdt is al verby. / HAMAN. Daar is mijn tullebandt. hoe wiltghe dat ik ly? / Hoe kan ik lijden? neen. ik kan my niet bereiden. / Ik wil dus eereloos niet van de weereldt scheiden. / Ik moet! helaas! ik moet! en zie hoe ik betoon, / Dat ik gehoorzaam ben u Rechteren en kroon. / Daar heb ik dan de strik om mijnen hals gestreeken. / Mocht ik my eenmaal aan de snoode Joden wreeken, / Ik leed de felste pijn, die iemant oyt bedacht. / Waar is mijn grootsheit nu? waar is mijn oude kracht? / Assuerus tiranny en van zijn Koninginne… / MAMUCHA. Vang aan. / SETAR. De gladde koord die hiel den laster binne.' / MAMUCHA. Daar light hy, die dit Rijk door dreigen hadt versaagt, / En noch gedurigh schrikt, zoo lang zy 't lichaam draagt. / Men doet de Koning voort van Hamans sterven weten. / Dus is hy nu gedaalt, die gistren was gezeten / Ten hemel, als een jong' en tweeden Phaëton. / Hy mende 't onbedacht de raders van de zon.'

FIG. 2.14 Frontispiece to Johannes Serwouters' *Hester*, 1659
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[Pictura: Fig. 2.14]
The demise of the Jewish Race was sadly resolved;
Yet, Persia's High King was charmed by the face
Of a Hebrew daughter, who prevented the disaster.
Thus, a woman stops de death of men, women, children;
And Haman's hubris crashes in an instant.
He who wants to eradicate it all, prepares himself a rope.[181]

Thus, the first *tableau vivant* and the execution scene (possibly also by means of a *tableau vivant*) in *Hester*, and the *tableaux vivants* in *Alexander de Medicis* and *De beklaagelyke dwangh*, show that the traditional rhetoricians' theatre device was continuously reinvented to stage elaborate scenes: these *tableaux* were the standard means by which to meet the seventeenth-century audience's desire for spectacle. Furthermore, music emphasised the action and could, as Lope's *La hermosa Ester* and Serwouters' *Hester* demonstrate, enhance the spectacle of *tableaux vivants* in the Dutch adaptations. Otherwise, contrafacts could fulfil a different role by emphasising the action and plot twists, as is the case in De Wijse's *Voorzigtige dolheit*. This way of working lasted at least until 1664. After the Amsterdam Public Theatre was remodelled in 1665, new means of spectacle became available.

Spectacle at the Amsterdam Public Theatre (1665–1672)

Did the structural alterations made to the Amsterdam Public Theatre in 1664/1665 also lead to improvements in staging spectacle? We may expect that this was necessary because the elaborate productions of new *comedias* (as well as other spectacle plays, such as Vos' *Medea*) and spectators' demands for more extravagant spectacles pushed the boundaries of what was possible in the old theatre building of Jacob van Campen.[182]

When in 1662, the actor Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh opened, furthermore, the first permanent theatre in The Hague, also called *Schouwburg*, the Amsterdam Public Theatre received serious competition. Different from Amsterdam, Van Fornenbergh's

181 Serwouters 1659, fol. A2r: 'De val van't Joodts Geslacht stont droevig in geboort: / Doch Parssens Oppervorst, wiert door't gezicht bekoort / Van een Hebreeuwse Telg, die 't onheil deed verhindren. / Zoo stuit een vrouw de doodt van mannen, vrouwen, kindren; / En Hamans hovaardij stort in een oogenblik. / Wie 't al verdelgen wil, bereit zich zelf een strik. / J. Serwouters.'

182 See Amir 1996, 260–261.

theatre in The Hague already possessed coulisse décor and, therefore, offered more means for spectacle. Little is, however, known about the theatre's specific lay-out, but it is generally presumed that the repertoire mainly consisted of the box-office successes of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, including Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias*, such as *De verduytste Cid* (1641) and *Sigismundus, prinçe van Poolen* (1654).[183] As executive director, Jan Vos was in competition with Van Fornenbergh, who even tried to replace Vos as executive director of the Amsterdam Public Theatre with a proposal to fully remodel Amsterdam's city theatre and install the coulisse décor used in The Hague. Vos immediately took measures to counter this attack on his chairmanship and instigated the remodelling of the Amsterdam Public Theatre himself.[184]

The effects of these improvements were immediately visible and are reflected in the popularity charts for the period 1665–1672. In these seven years, eleven new *comedias* were adapted. Three of these new adaptations were well received by spectators and ranked among the ten most popular plays in this period: *De spookende minnaar* (1664, 'The Haunting Suitor')[185] by David Lingelbach; Hendrik de Graef's *Joanna koningin van Napels* (1664, 'Johanna, Queen of Naples');[186] and *Don Louis de Vargas* (1668)[187] by Heynck. The three plays were each performed sixteen times in the short period between their premieres in 1664 and 1668 and the closing of the theatre in 1672.

Another adaptation that should be mentioned here is Questiers' *D'ondanckbare Fulvius en getrouwe Octavia* (1665, 'The Ungrateful Fulvius and Loyal Octavia'),[188] which was the inaugural play at the theatre's reopening on 26 May 1665.[189] Questiers was the sister-in-law of Philip Vingboons, the architect of the remodelled Amsterdam Public Theatre. We may assume, however, that the theatre directors selected her

183 The troupe of Van Fornenbergh had already performed these plays in previous years on their travels in the Baltic Sea area and the Habsburg Netherlands. For more information on Van Fornenbergh's theatre in The Hague, see Albach 1977, 88; Smits-Veldt 1996, 242–244; Blom 2021a, 274–275, 342–344.

184 See Blom 2021a, 348–354.

185 Translation of Calderón's *El galán fantasma* (1637).

186 Translation of Lope de Vega's *La reina Juana de Nápoles* (1615).

187 Translation of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza's *El tejedor de Segovia* (1619).

188 The source text of this adaptation is unknown. In Dutch scholarship, it is generally assumed that like Questiers' other two adaptations from Lope de Vega and Enríquez Gómez, *d'Ondanckbare Fulvius* is likewise an adaptation from Spanish; see Schenkeveld-van der Dussen et al. 1997, 68, 316; Pipkin 2013, 190–191.

189 Questiers 1665, fol. *3r: '*d'Ondanckbare Fulvius* zal voor d'allereerste maal ons nieuwe Schouwburgh de prachtige gardijnen doen openschuyven.'

play as the theatre's opening piece not only because of her family ties, but rather on its own merits and the good revenues her other two Spanish adaptions had drawn.[190]

The spectacle in these plays shows something important. Even with the renovations of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, which offered more opportunities to employ stage machinery, *comedias nuevas* adapted in Dutch do not necessarily include innovative spectacles. This is demonstrated by Questiers' *d'Ondanckbare Fulvius*: Vos had utilised all the new technical possibilities in his *Inwyding van de Schouburg t'Amsterdam* (1665, 'Inauguration of the Theatre in Amsterdam') that was staged as prelude to Questiers' play, but the spectacle in Questiers' play remained limited, although we can probably assume, given her family connections, that she was well aware of the new fittings the theatre was to receive. However, the sound of gunshots from within the coulisses, several songs to set the mood and emphasise the emotions, and two duels were included as the primary spectacular effects in the play.[191] The text also indicates that Questiers indeed used the new coulisse décor and created *changements à vue*: the first act is set at court, but the second and third acts are set in a garden or a *hortus conclusus* according to the dialogue, and in the third act there also appears a balcony as per the stage directions.[192] Questiers' way of working shows that she embraced some features of the renovations, which were here used for the first time with likely spectacular effects and awe among spectators.

In De Graef's *Joanna koningin van Napels* (1664), spectacle is also rather limited compared to what the renewed theatre's technical features would have allowed. In De Graef's case, however, his play was published right before the refurbishment of the Amsterdam Public Theatre in 1664/1665, for which reason the play was probably not written with the new possibilities in mind. Neither does Lope's original include stage machinery or spectacle in general, if we rely solely on what we find in the Spanish source text. Yet, this does not fully explain the absence of spectacle in De Graef's adaptation. We know that Vos devised spectacle for plays that did not originally include

190 See Nozeman 2014b.

191 Questiers 1665, 3, 11, 14, 28, 47, 53–54.

192 For the first act, see Questiers 1665, 3: 'De Koning komt naar 't hof.' For the second act, see Questiers 1665, 14, 16: 'Hoe kort de tijd oock is, dat wy hier zijn gekoomen'; and 'Terwijl de Faam u lof gansch Napels door gaat roemen, / Vind ik u in de tuyn, alwaar de schoonste bloemen / Vast twisten, welcke verf dat best naar u gelijckt, / De lely en de roos van u geen voordeel strijckt; / Gy wint, Mevrouw, de kroon van al dees tuyn-cieraden.' For the balcony scene in the third act, see Questiers 1665, 27: '*Octavia in de venster.*'

any, or drastically altered them to better suit his goals of astonishing the crowd. The best-known examples are those of Vondels plays: for *Jeptha* (1659), Vos designed a *tableau vivant* of Ifis' sacrifice by her own father.[193] He also drastically altered the dance of angels at the end of *Lucifer* (1654), which he made into a dance depicting the golden and silver era.[194] And famously, Vos added extra *tableaux vivants* to Reinier de Bondt's *Beleg en ontset der stadt Leyden* (1645, 'Siege and Relief of the City Leiden') for its 1660 premiere in the Amsterdam Public Theatre.[195] In a similar fashion, Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas* also stages a *tableau vivant* of the execution of Don Beltran, the father of the protagonist, following the apparently continued demand for *tableaux* by spectators.[196]

The 1667 reprint of Serwouters' *Hester* (the original is discussed above) strongly suggests that older Spanish plays were altered in this period to now also include *tableaux*, or even more *tableaux* to supplement the ones they already featured. A fascinating piece of evidence of this play's contemporary reception can be found in an example at Leiden University Libraries (1094 F 67:2). A reader, perhaps its first owner, glued a piece of paper into his book. On this piece of paper, we find a description of a scene in which Haman is dining with Hester and Ahasuerus. The poem is in fact a laudation by Jan Vos of Rembrandt van Rijn's slightly earlier painting *Ahasuerus and Haman at the Feast of Esther* (1660, see Fig. 2.15 below):

> Haman as Esther's and Ahasuerus' Guest [*etcetera*, painted by Rembrandt]
> Here one sees Haman eating with Ahasuerus and Esther.
> But it is in vain; his breast is full of regret and pain.
> He eats Esther's food; but deeper into her heart.
> The king is mad with revenge and rage.
> The wrath of a monarch is horrendous when it rages.
> He who threatens all men, is surprised by a woman.
> Thus, one is precipitated from the top into the vale of adversity;
> The vengeance that comes slowly uses the cruellest rod.[197]

193 Vergeer 2018, 49–51.

194 Harmsen 2016.

195 Elenbaas 2004, 294.

196 Heynck 1668, 18.

197 Serwouters 1667, insert on fols. A1^{v}–A2^{r}: 'Haman bij Hester en Asuerus te gast / Hier sietmen haman [sic.] bij Assueer en Hester eeten / maar't is vergeefs sijn borst is vol van spijt en smart / Hij bijt in

FIG. 2.15 Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Ahasuerus and Haman at the Feast of Esther*, 1660, oil on canvas, 73 cm x 94 cm
PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF ARTS, MOSCOW

Art historians have already related this poem and the associated painting to the performance of Serwouters' *Hester*. At the same time, they assert that Vos' poem defers from both the painting by Rembrandt and the play by Serwouters, exactly because Vos puts such a heavy importance on the passions,[198] while in Serwouters's play and Rembrandt's painting they are more subtly articulated and depicted. Furthermore, the rage of King Ahasuerus is absent in Serwouters' play, while Vos emphasises this emotion in line with Esther 7:8–9.[199] And yet, Geerdink noted that both in Vos' poem and in the final act of Serwouters' play, the despair of Haman takes centre stage.[200] I

Hesters spijs maar dieper in haar hart / de Koning is van wraak en rasernij beseten. / de gramschap van een Vorst is schriklijk alsse raast. / die alle mannen drijgd, word door een vrouw verbaast. / soo stortmen van het top in't dal der tegenspoeden / de wraak die lanksaam komt gebruijkt de wreedste roeden.'

198 Blom 2021a, 335.

199 Schwartz 1984, 276–277.

200 Geerdink 2012, 114 (n. 57).

argue therefore that the rage of King Ahasuerus described in Vos' poem also returns in Serwouters' *Hester*.[201]

Although Vos' poem was originally written separately from Serwouters' *Hester*, the fact that at least this one reader related Vos' poem and Serwouters' play to each other perhaps indicates a closer connection between the two works in the form of a *tableau vivant*. The clause 'Hier sietmen' strongly suggest that indeed spectators could *see* what is described in these verses. The whole *tableau* even bears a title, just like the *tableau vivant* in *Alexander de Medicis*. As so many poems that indicate a *tableau vivant*, the question remains of how the *tableau* was performed if Vos' poem indeed introduced one.

For this, Jan Steen's *The Wrath of Ahasuerus* (c. 1668–1670, see Fig. 2.16 above) might offer an answer. Like Rembrandt's painting, Steen's painting has been related to Serwouters' *Hester*.[202] While Rembrandt depicted the moment exactly before Esther's revelation that she is Jewish, Steen chose to represent the moment right after. This moment is also described in Vos' poem, where Ahasuerus' 'madness with vengeance and rage' is shown, while Haman instead despairs. Steen painted this work c. 1668–1670. The dates of the painting and of the written account in the 1667 example of Serwouters' *Hester* coincide, and both might be a response to the performance of a *tableau vivant* in the 1667 performances of *Hester*. This suggests that Steen's painting in particular was not only inspired by Serwouters' play, but was made after the *tableau vivant* was inserted during the 1660s, and possibly even specifically in 1667. The opposite might also be true, however: the painting may have inspired the play's new *tableau vivant*.[203] Either way, the evidence makes clear that the performance of *Hester* with the new *tableau vivant* left a vivid impression on spectators.

There is even more evidence of theatre's conversation with the other arts at this time. During the same scene, spectators were also treated to a dance that was newly introduced into the 1667 print. The dancers were supposed to represent the four continents of the world (as it was known at the time). This dance's description compares to the dance in Vondel's *Lucifer*, which was devised by theatre director Jan Vos: 'Here is dancing by the Monarchy and the four continents of the world.'[204] The *tableau vivant*

201 Serwouters 1659, 49–50.

202 The catalogue to the exhibition 'Kennerschap—Bredius: Jan Steen en het Mauritshuis' held at The Hague's Museum Bredius in 2014–2015, suggests that Steen primarily took inspiration from a performance of Serwouters' *Hester*; see Jansen, Leistra, and Stal 2014, 108–109.

203 See e.g., Blom 2021a, 337–340.

204 Serwouters 1667, 56: 'Hier wert gedanst door de Monarchie en de vier deelen des wereldts.' The

FIG. 2.16 Jan Steen, *The Wrath of Ahasuerus*, c. 1668–1670, oil on canvas, 81.2 cm x 98.5 cm. Private collection, The Hague

and the dance are, then, additions to the already spectacular *tableau vivant* found at the beginning of the fifth act in the original 1659 print of Serwouters' *Hester*.

As demonstrated by these examples, we see that *tableaux vivants* remained an important part of spectacle in Dutch adaptions of Spanish plays, although the Amsterdam Public Theatre underwent technical improvements that enabled more extravagant displays. This shows that Rodenburgh's pioneering work in 1617–1619 remained successful among later spectators, and his approach persevered throughout the seventeenth century. Rodenburgh's textual strategies meant that he combined old and new poetics, a practice which influenced the way that the poetic ideas of Lope de Vega (and other Spanish playwrights) were 'transferred and transformed' in the Low Countries,

description of this dance compares very much to the description of the dance in *Lucifer* as devised by Vos, for which reason I suspect that he also devised this dance in Serwouters' play. See Vos 1662, 651: 'want in deeze wordt het vervolg van 't spel, de goude en zilvere eeuw uitgebeeldt.' See also Harmsen 2016.

as demonstrated by the recent work of Van Marion and myself.[205] That is not to say that there were no innovations in spectacle in this period. Although dance, including ballet, was introduced to the Amsterdam stage as early as 1642, with the increasing popularity of the ballet in France, and amidst the growing cultural dominance of France in the second half of the seventeenth century, Dutch playwrights and stage directors more often included dance in their work, including in adaptions of Spanish plays.[206] Yet, it remains unknown whether the choreography of these dances was very complex or sophisticated, as the first mention of a designated dance master in the theatre's registers dates from 1681.[207] This further paints the picture of a rather traditional handling of spectacle in *comedias* staged in Amsterdam, although clearly theatre directors continually looked for ways to professionalise and modernise the spectacle according to the newest European trends.

As much as the *tableau vivant* remained an important dramatic device, and new décor and dances were also adopted to impress the audience, architectural elements were likewise used to enhance spectacle at the Amsterdam Public Theatre. David Lingelbach's *De spookende minnaar* (1664), an adaptation of Calderón's *El galán fantasma* (1637), exemplifies how adaptors inserted new forms of spectacle after the structural alterations of the theatre. In this play, one of the seven new trapdoors was used to create a believable effect of Duke Ferdinand's fall into a quarry at the end of the play's fourth act. The trapdoor also represents the gate into an imaginary Kingdom of Death. There, the Duke's rival Fabritius, who the Duke thought he had killed, posed as a ghost to frighten him in revenge for the Duke's obstruction of Fabritius' and Klimene's love. This is similar to how in Vos' *Medea* the protagonist is met by ghosts who rise up from under the stage while she sits in her chariot with her children. When Medea's chariot begins to fly (i.e., is hoisted into the air), the sorceress throws her children out and satisfied, the ghosts retreat below the stage again.[208]

New Forms of Spectacle in 'De toveres Circe'

However, of all the *comedias* adapted in Dutch, only Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor* was a true *comedia de tramoya* (comedy of stage machinery). In contrast to many of the other adapted *comedias*, De Leeuw fully used new stage technologies of the Amster-

205 Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 43.
206 Worp 1920, 108, 146–147.
207 Worp 1920, 155.
208 Vos 1667, 55, 58.

dam Public Theatre which, as described elsewhere, was outfitted with coulisse décor allowing for *changements à vue*. Using this to its full potential in the final scenes where Circe destroys her own island, the setting is rapidly changed from a lovely garden into a ruin and flaming vortex.[209]

De Leeuw based the scenography of his *De toveres Circe* on De Grieck's *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* and consequently on Zamponi's *Ulisse all'isola di Circe*, as discussed in detail above, but he was also influenced by Vos' *Medea*. As outlined in Chapter 1, the adapted play was only completed after the theatre's structural alterations were made in 1665, although Baroces had delivered a translation in 1664; maybe De Leeuw was waiting to see the changes before determining how the play could actually be staged.[210] *El mayor encanto, amor* was the perfect play to take advantage of the renewed venue's features. De Leeuw decided to emphasise the spectacle already present.[211] As a successor to Vos' *Medea*, De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe* also tried to fully use the new capacities of the remodelled theatre, including the deeper stage.

Perhaps for this reason, the title page of De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe* states that it was performed 'With Artifice and Animals.'[212] The fact that this was explicitly displayed on the titlepage means that the publisher started to advertise with the play's spectacle: apparently this was a successful way to draw a full house. In the 1690 reprint of *De toveres Circe*, the publisher puts so much emphasis on the new music, ballets and other forms of spectacle that this seems to have been more important than the play's contents. Moreover, the play's link to Vos' Medea is clearly expressed:

> It is hoped that this tragedy by the famous poet Don Pedro de Calderón, translated from Spanish, and by *A. Leeuw* artfully rearranged and rhymed, with newly made music, new ballets, etc. adorned, will please the devotees and that it will be profitable to the city's orphanage and the old men's home, despite the expenses made because of it.
>
> The successful outcome that *Medea* of Jan Vos had some months ago has been a great stimulus to take in hand with enthusiasm a work of such elaborate action and to stage it with zeal.[213]

209 Vergeer 2020c, 335–336; 2020d, 104–105.
210 De Leeuw 1670, fol. *3r.
211 Harmsen 2016.
212 De Leeuw 1670, fol. *1r.
213 De Leeuw 1690, fol. *2r.

While De Grieck delivered an almost literal translation of the Spanish with his *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe*, De Leeuw took more liberties, including the new music and new ballets explicitly mentioned above. According to Sullivan, 'the musical scores and choreography for the Buen Retiro performances were obviously not available for Amsterdam.' This explains, according to Sullivan, the novelty of the new music and ballets designed for the Amsterdam adaptation.[214] Conversely, Cardono, Cruickshank, and Cunningham argue that the inclusion of new music in the Amsterdam version shows that the performance of Zamponi's opera in Brussels must have influenced De Leeuw's adaption of the play for Amsterdam.[215]

In several scenes, De Leeuw makes use of the theatre's trapdoors, to both comic and tragic effect. One example happens amidst a confrontation between the Greeks and the inhabitants of Circe's island, consisting mainly of animals, trees, and their human commander Prince Arsidas of Trinacria. Unintentionally, Clarín stumbles across his best friend and fellow *gracioso* Lebrel, when they, acting in their true nature, flee to a table standing in the middle of the stage. Since Circe had conjured a dark storm, they can hardly recognise each other. Lebrel thinks that he fights a lion, whereas Clarín thinks he is battling a giant. Unexpectedly, Circe orders the table with the two *graciosos* on top to sink down under the stage.[216] The trapdoors are also used when Circe, surrounded by her ghosts, sinks below the stage in the last scene to signal her death after she has been abandoned by Ulysses. De Leeuw used every form of spectacle at his disposal in the Amsterdam Public Theatre, including the illusion of fire and thunder as is seen in the printed edition's frontispiece (see Fig. 2.17 below).[217]

De Leeuw also used the newly available stage machinery. When Ulysses takes on the sorceress-queen in the first act, 'To the accompaniment of string music, Iris descends on her rainbow which is standing in a sky of clouds.'[218] Other spectacle includes a chest holding a pesky dwarf and a chatterbox chaperone who spring out to pester Clarín. Then, there are the animal metamorphoses (described in Chapter 1), the flame-vomiting sea, and the storms summoned by Circe.[219]

However, the most notable difference between *De toveres Circe*'s spectacle and the spectacle in other *comedias* is the apparent absence of the *tableau vivant* as a dramatic

214 Sullivan 1983, 54.

215 Cardono, Cruickshank, and Cunningham 1990, 140.

216 De Leeuw 1670, 59.

217 Vergeer 2020c, 331–336.

218 De Leeuw 1670, 8: 'Iris, op 't geluid van heel zacht Snaarenspel, daald neder op haar Boog staande in een lucht van wolken.'

219 Vergeer 2020d, 104; see also the theatre's complete inventory of 1688 in Huydecoper c. 1730, inv.nr. 315.

FIG. 2.17
Coloured frontispiece by Adriaan Schoonebeek in a copy of Adriaen Bastiaensz de Leeuw's *De toveres Circe* (1670)
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, 1092 G 1:3

device. Although De Leeuw did not follow Jan Vos' preference for the visually powerful *tableaux vivants*, his adaptation still best reflects the theatre director's influence on the Amsterdam Public Theatre and his beliefs discussed in Chapter 1 that 'seeing precedes speaking' or that spectators' eyes should be captivated 'by appropriate and enchanting strings.'[220] In De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe*, spectators beheld an enchanting world characterised by an explosion of spectacle. With this play, *comedia nueva* reached

220 Vos 1667, fol. *2v, *4r.

its full spectacular potential in the Dutch Republic. Doubtlessly, the scenography of De Leeuw's adaptation must have triggered the *admiratio* of spectators in a similar way as the scenography of the original 1635 production of Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*.

Conclusion

The spectacle of the Spanish *comedias* mesmerised the Dutch-speaking audiences gathered in the theatres of Brussels, Antwerp, Lier, and Amsterdam. With the introduction of *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries by Rodenburgh in 1617, it was necessary to translate the spectacle of the Spanish originals into a form that was both technically possible at The Eglantine, as well as familiar to Dutch spectators. Rodenburgh's solution was the incorporation of the *tableau vivant* in his four adaptations. As a theatrical device, the *tableau* had proven its use from the fifteenth century onwards and was a well-established method of *imagineering* gripping scenes by which these audiences could be moved to fascination, horror, wonder, and admiration.

Rodenburgh's solution seemed to work, because after him many other adaptations include one or more *tableaux vivants*. Additionally, playwrights in Antwerp, Lier, and Amsterdam experimented with lighting and stage props to achieve the same effect or to add to the already great effect of *tableaux vivants*, *imagineering* even more spectacular scenes that could count on the awe of spectators. For the stages of the larger and more modern theatres of the third quarter of the seventeenth century onwards, playwrights introduced new forms of spectacle that were more similar to the original spectacle in the Spanish *comedias*. When Brussels and Amsterdam opened their own Italian-style theatres, the opportunities to showcase spectacle increased. At the same time, the *tableau vivant* remained a beloved form of spectacle; new *tableaux vivants* were even introduced to already existing plays to emphasise the spectacularity of these adapted *comedias*, because the medium proved capable of captivating spectators throughout the whole seventeenth century.

Besides *tableaux vivants*, costumes and music seem to have been especially important. The more austere theatre of Antwerp in particular still relied for the most part on the multifunctionality of costumes and music in the 1660s, more than was done in Brussels or Amsterdam in the same period. In Lier, *tableaux vivants* seemed to have been the most popular form of spectacle until the third quarter of the seventeenth century, although the poet De Bie was aware of the new vogues with regards to dance, and especially ballet. In all the theatres discussed here, the duel was a form of action

spectacle that compensated for the absence of stage machinery and could still mediate the proper emotions of ire and wrath to spectators. Yet, the theatres of Brussels and Amsterdam introduced ever more elaborate forms of spectacle culminating in the two parallel adaptations of Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor* in 1668 and 1670 respectively. Animal transformations, *changements à vue*, the use of trap doors, smoke, fire, and extra ballets must have overwhelmed spectators with wonder at the marvellous baroque scenography. The Amsterdam version was even advertised especially for its spectacular elements.

It seems that the introduction of *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries went hand-in-hand with a surge of spectacle: apparently, the grand emotions of the genre necessitated that they were showcased by means of spectacle and, at the end of the developments described here, also stage machinery. The more elaborate the *comedias* with extensive *tramoyas* on the Flemish and Dutch stages became, the more complex stage machines had to be. As *comedias* and other spectacle plays became more popular, the structural integrities of the theatres in Brussels, Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Lier were affected, partly because the newer *comedias* necessitated elaborate spectacle, and partly because elaborate spectacle made more extravagant *comedia* productions possible. This is, perhaps, best evidenced by the parallel adaptations of Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor* discussed in this chapter. But the driving force behind the structural alterations was, in the end, the public: they clearly loved to be mesmerised by the spectacle in Spanish plays and therefore demanded more. Thus, when the personification of 'Theatre' from Lope's *Prologo dialogistico* complained that he was wounded by the structural alterations inflicted upon him to meet the demand for spectacle and stage machinery, he expressed a trend in early modern Europe of *imagineering* more elaborate productions which would leave spectators in complete awe. This trend found its way to the theatres of the Low Countries and left the eyes of Flemish and Dutch spectators transfixed in complete wonder.