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

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### **Citation**

Vergeer, T. (2022, April 6). *The theatre of emotions: the success of Spanish drama in the Low Countries (1617-1672)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3281853>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## He Loves Me ... He Loves Me Not

### *The Stakes of Love and Honour in Dutch Comedias*

*Le Cid* by Pierre Corneille may be the most iconic tragedy of the seventeenth century. As an adaptation of the Spanish play *Las mocedades del Cid* (1605–1615, ‘The Younger Years of the Cid’) written by Guillén de Castro y Bellvís in two parts, Corneille’s play stages an exemplary conflict between love and honour for its protagonists Don Rodrigo (El Cid) and his love interest Chimène. The Dutch adaptation by Van Heemskerck followed soon after Corneille’s adaptation gained traction in Paris in 1637. In 1641, Dutch spectators were treated to the intricate affair of the two young lovers, separated by honour and duty to their respective families. The play embodies Lope’s advice as formulated in his *Arte nuevo*: ‘the affairs of honour are the best, / because they powerfully move all people; / with them go virtuous deeds, / for virtue is everywhere loved.’<sup>1</sup>

Corneille’s play and Van Heemskerck’s translation put forward a problematic relationship between honour and the emotions of the characters, who in their attempt to restructure reality in their favour, deceive those around them. Don Rodrigo and Chimène are at one point forced to make an almost impossible choice between the public honour of their families and their personal desires for each other. There is considerable attention to the psychological process in Castro y Bellvís’ *Las mocedades del Cid*, the subsequent adaptation of *Le Cid* by Corneille, and the translation of *De verduyfte Cid* by Van Heemskerck.<sup>2</sup> As such, the Spanish, French, and Dutch spectators of these plays all witness a deep conflict between love and honour: Don Gomes felt that he was passed over for the job of guardian of Castile’s prince in favour of Don Diego. Angered, the former confronts the latter and claims that he would have been a better guardian. Don Diego wants to duel the ungrateful man, but his high age has numbed his fighting arm, which Don Gomes sees as a sign of his incapability to fulfil any public office and he calls him a weak old man. And thus, Don Diego makes his son Rodrigo avenge the shame brought upon him by Don Gomes. Rodrigo

1 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 327–330: ‘los casos de la honra son mejores, / porque mueven con fuerza a toda gente; / con ellos las acciones virtuosas, / que la virtud es dondequiera amada.’

2 See Floeck 1969, 132–133.

must kill Gomes. This presents a dilemma for Rodrigo, since Gomes is the father of Chimène, Rodrigo's love interest. These kinds of conflicts occur in virtually all of Spain's *comedias nuevas* and in turn, in all Dutch adaptations of those plays. The code of honour that is articulated as an expression of natural order is here disregarded, ignored, or challenged by the protagonists when they allow their passions to take centre stage. The inevitable result is conflict, and the tools employed by the characters to resolve this conflict are deception and illusion.

Conflict is the driving force in *comedia nueva*, and in fact all drama is built around conflict. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, conflict is a recurrent subject; the proper representation of conflict generates fear and pity. In fact, the Greek philosopher says that tragedy is the *mimesis* of an action conducted by agents 'who should have certain qualities in both character and thought (as it is these factors which allow us to ascribe qualities to their actions too, and it is in their actions that all men find success or failure).'<sup>3</sup> The Greek word used by Aristotle for acting is 'prattein' (πράττειν), which means acting from or dealing with a problematic situation. The derivation 'praxis' (πράξις) used by Aristotle means action in drama, but in a broader sense it refers to things you must deal with or that concern you, affairs, or things related to politics and political decisions. These acts imply that they manifest in the public space and have consequences for the cosmos. In the tragedy *Antigone* (c. 442 BCE) by Sophocles, the conflict is psychologically rendered in its protagonist as a conflict between two public obligations: does she defy a decree by her uncle Creon and bury her brother Polynices, who was marked a traitor of Thebes, or does she defy the divine law that obligates her to pay respect to a dead family member? In the classical world there were two opposing forces in the public sphere—the laws of the gods and those of the polis—and the conflict between them formed the foundation of classical tragedy.

In sixteenth-century Spain, tragic conflict also emerged between two resolute forces, but particularly between a character's public face (honour) and personal feelings (love). Thus, the political conflict of the classical tragedy became a social conflict. The Spanish *Siglo de Oro* created narratives of the individual's position opposite society (the public), which then explored—and tested—both the individual's movability and society's flexibility with regards to norms and expectations. The conflicts in *comedias* always revolved around individual desires and were not centred on the grand, tragic, nor fatalistic stories of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The conflicts of *comedia*

3 See Aristotle 1995, 48–49. I want to thank Adriaan Rademaker for these insights, which have helped me better understand how conflict is constructed in classical drama and subsequently how early modern drama differs from this foundational conflict between two public interests.

nueva do also not compare to the conflicts of Senecan tragedy, which stood model for so many Renaissance tragedies, especially in the Low Countries.<sup>4</sup>

According to Ramón Muñoz, in *comedia nueva* the characters' desires and especially love represent, problematise, and challenge established cultural norms, among which the pregnant understanding of honour in Spain's literature. In *comedia nueva*, the honour code can either reflect or challenge the status quo when it is used as a literary convention. Honour, therefore, is at the forefront of *comedia nueva*, and it affects the auto-image of the individual both in the context of his lineage and his community. Moreover, honour challenges relationships between men and women in the family environment of blood ties and marital bonds. When love is in play, the honour code is cataclysmic for conflict situations or events, as Lope recorded in his *Arte nuevo*.<sup>5</sup>

Within this broader construct it is, however, necessary to distinguish between the different forms of honour that exist in Spanish *comedia nueva* to understand what is at stake for the protagonists. Robert A. Lauer posits that honour has two different appearances in Spanish: *honra* and *honor*. The former is 'associated with the idea of surplus, ambition, property, wealth, power, high office, war, and culturally-specific masculine values.'<sup>6</sup> In other words, *honra* has an association with physical action: it requires overt displays of praise, bowing, saluting, gifts, statues, property, et cetera. The latter is distinct from *honra* in that it is internal and innate. *Honor* is the reward of virtue and virtuous deeds: it reflects intrinsic characteristics like modesty, chastity, purity, high repute, and a good name, mostly in women. It is also a metaphysical and moral concept of femininity within Abrahamic faiths for which God suffices as a witness, whereas *honra* is primarily bestowed upon someone by their community. And yet, the terms are connected and are both offered in acknowledgement of a person's 'goodness' or 'worthiness.'<sup>7</sup> According to Lauer:

the opinions of others matter with respect to both *honor* and *honra*: for the former, God's judgement suffices for salvific purposes; for the latter, only the king's estimation is legally binding; for either one, public opinion may weigh in; for neither one, would a personal opinion or a matter of conscience matter.<sup>8</sup>

4 Rey Hazas 1991, *passim*; Álvarez Sellers 2013, *passim*; Ramón Muñoz 2015, 54–55.

5 Ramón Muñoz 2015, 54.

6 Lauer 2014, 79.

7 Lauer 2014, 83–85, 90.

8 Lauer 2014, 84.

The concepts of shame, dishonour, and disgrace are important drivers behind re-establishment of a status quo, and which are often resolved through suicide, retaliation, or revenge. Most importantly, honour is universal ‘and not only the property of a social class. If that had been the case, the average theatregoer would not have been entranced by such cases and Lope de Vega would not have written or recommended them’ as Lauer argued.<sup>9</sup>

Many of these considerations with regards to honour also apply to seventeenth-century literature in the Dutch Republic, as Fokke Veenstra contended, although in Dutch there appears to be only one word that includes both definitions of honour.<sup>10</sup> Veenstra discusses Hugo Grotius, who writes in his *Inleiding tot de Hollandsche Rechtsgeleerdheid* (1631) that ‘honour belongs to everyone: first, to protect: it can also be forfeited by crime and it too belongs to those who are declared honourless.’<sup>11</sup> As in other European cultures, the two definitions of honour were commonplace in Dutch society and literature; Veenstra illustrates this in his discussion of Hoofdt’s *Geeraert van Velsen*, for example.<sup>12</sup> Van Heemskerck’s *De verduypte Cid* reconciles honour’s ambiguous meaning by introducing the accompanying concept of *roem*, following Corneille’s use of *gloire* in *Le Cid*. To account for the typical division between the Spanish concepts of *honor* and *honra*, the French text differentiates between *honneur* and *gloire*; the Dutch of Van Heemskerck does the same by using the terms *eer* and *roem* (Figure 4.1).<sup>13</sup>

9 Lauer 2014, 85–86.

10 Veenstra 1968, 21.

11 Grotius 1631, I.14.48: ‘de eer behoort mede een yder toe: eerst om te beschermen: kan oock door misdaet verbeurt werden, als bij den ghenen die eerloos werden verklaert.’

12 Veenstra 1968, 40–42.

13 Floeck 1969, 165–167. The assumption that in Dutch there are no distinct words to distinguish between *honra* and *honor*, and that both forms of honour are expressed by the term *eer* in early modern Dutch (see Bood 2020b, 154) is false. It should be more thoroughly researched how often the terms *eer* and *roem* are used to distinguish between the internal and external manifestations of honour. Wim van Anrooij was among the first to discuss the terms ‘*waeldaet*,’ and ‘*waeldoën*’ (and the complementary ‘*misdaet/misdoen*’) in his 1990 dissertation as good and bad deeds, respectively (172–181). This may be a good starting point to explore the relationship between internal and external forms of honour and the language used to describe both. Varieties of the term ‘*weldaet*’ can be found throughout *De verduypte Cid*; see, e.g., ‘*Helden-daed*’ where it is used in combination with a reference to ‘*roem-ruchtigh tuygh*’ (illustrious sword): ‘*En ghy roem-ruchtigh tuygh van menigh Helden-daed, / Maer nu van stramme leen een noodeloos cieraet; / Gheweer, wel eer ghevreest, maer dat in dit onteeren / My meer dient tot een pronck dan om my te verweeren*’ (Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. B4<sup>r</sup>).

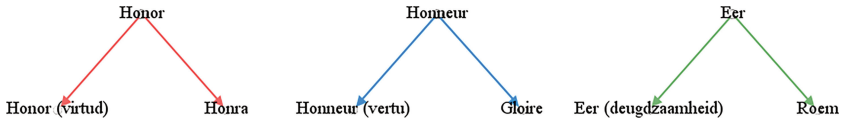


FIG. 4.1 Conceptions of honour in the Spanish, French, and Dutch versions of *The Cid*

As for love, the common ideal in the Low Countries was that love should exist between two equals. The widely-read Dutch poet and politician Jacob Cats (1577–1660) wrote prolifically about moral issues around sex and marriage. Cats argues in his *Houwelick* (1625, ‘Marriage’) that husband and wife should be of similar age, wisdom, riches, faith (even specific denomination), and appearance:

First, make sure to select your equal,  
 Not exceptionally grand, not too powerfully rich.  
 Second, the heart inclines, by powers of reason,  
 Both to a good name, and to healthy loins.  
 Third, look for one, who on equal grounds  
 Embraces, just as you, the Christian faith.  
 Fourth, if you want to pair in right peace,  
 Choose the sweet youth, and not the late years.  
 Finally, do not marry one, who is either more handsome,  
 Or of higher understanding, but one who is on average the same.<sup>14</sup>

Cat’s ideas about marriage formed a doctrine, but they obviously do not reflect the whole of Dutch society in the seventeenth century. Broadly speaking, the Dutch thought it important that spouses felt affection for each other; youth were generally allowed to choose their own partner within certain limits, although families could still object to an unsuitable partnership while their children were minors. With this relative freedom, there are examples in which marriage enabled one spouse to climb the social ladder, as is the archetypical case of Marten Soolmans demonstrates: by

14 Cats 1625, fol. B1<sup>r</sup>: ‘Draecht eerstmael goede sorgh te nemen uws ghelijck, / Niet uytter maeten groot, niet al te machtich rijck. / Ten tweeden neychtet hert, door krachten van de reden, / En near een goede name, en nae ghesonde leden. / Ten derden soucker een, die op ghelijcken gront / Omhelst, benevens u, het Christelick verbont. / Ten vierden, sooje wilt in rechte vrede paeren, / Verkiest de soete jeucht, en niet de late jaren. / Ten lesten trouter geen, noch schoonder in ghelaet / Noch hooger van begrijp, als in de middel-maet.’



FIG. 4.2 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Marten Soolmans*, 1634, oil on canvas, 207.5 cm x 132 cm  
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marrying Oopjen Coppit he became part of the *Regenten*. Social mobility was, therefore, a reality in the Dutch Republic within certain bounds: As Soolmans' family was already prosperous, this made him apparently a suitable match in the eyes of the Coppit family, despite a class difference (see Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.3).<sup>15</sup> In other cases,

<sup>15</sup> Janssen 2020, 32–34.



FIG. 4.3 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Oopjen Coppit*, 1634, oil on canvas, 207.5 cm x 132 cm  
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however, it is unlikely that the lovers' families, or society for that matter, approved of marriage between people of entirely different socio-economic backgrounds,<sup>16</sup> such as the union between a shepherd's daughter and a prince or other instances of extreme

<sup>16</sup> Haks 1985, 130–132, demonstrates that there was a good deal of social as well as religious endo-

social mobility as often occurs in *comedia nueva*.<sup>17</sup> The emotional regime that Cats represents heavily restricted—at least in terms of social mobility—the freedom of potential lovers, although it was enforced less stridently in practice.

In this same theme, love and honour are essential motifs in *comedia nueva*. In this chapter I discuss the role of love and honour in the Dutch adaptations and its interaction with Dutch norms and ideals of love and honour. I demonstrate how Spanish affairs of love and honour as mediated through Dutch adaptations moved spectators in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, and Lier. In Dutch *comedias*, emotional conflict revolves around intricate, forbidden, impossible loves, which become further complicated by notions of honour and society's expectations.

To this end, I specifically look at the trajectories of *comedia de capa y espada* and *comedia palatina*, and analyse their emotional conflicts between love and honour using Reddy's theory as set out in *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001). I have identified five different 'generic plots' (or five different thematic conflicts) in the Dutch adaptations of these *comedias*. These 'generic plots' are divided according to the specific roles of love and honour including *comedias*:

1. about forbidden desires;
2. in which protagonists are falsely accused of some crime or moral failing to prevent them from pursuing their love interests;
3. in which an antagonist is jealous of the protagonists' love and becomes delusional because of his overwhelming passions;
4. in which an antagonist—a male family member of the female protagonist—is overprotective and disapproves of the protagonists' love; and
5. in which antagonists abuse their power, by which they prevent protagonists from maintaining a love relationship.

These five categories do not exclusively follow the Spanish subgenres of *comedia de capa y espada* and *comedia palatina* as described by Thacker. They also include some plays that we may characterise as *drama de honor*, such as Rodenburgh's *Cassandra en Karel*, or as *tragedia al estilo español*, such as Wouther's *De verliefde stiefmoeder*. *Dramas de*

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gamy. See also Van der Heijden, who argues that parents often started legal proceedings to annul an undesirable marriage or betrothal, usually for financial reasons or because of a mismatch in family or personal reputation. Age or religious differences were also cited, although the court rarely accepted these objections (1998, 200–202).

17 Examples of extreme social mobility in Dutch *comedias* are Rodenburgh's *Cassandra en Karel*, Van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura*, Vos' *Gedwongen vriend*, De Fuyter's *Verwarde hof*, Serwouters' *Hester* and his *Den grooten Tamerlan*, Heynck's *Veranderlyk geval* and his *Don Louis de Vargas*, E.D.S.M.'s *De mislukte liefde*, De Bie's *Armoede vanden grave Forellus*, and De Grieck's *Cenobia*.

honor and tragedias are more elaborately discussed in Chapter 5, where the escalation of conflict in these plays is the central subject.

These five 'generic plots' demonstrate that the characters in Dutch *comedias* must navigate their feelings through emotional management, and look for ways to circumnavigate social norms by turning to acts of deception. For spectators, this deception becomes a playful manifestation of dramatic irony, which builds suspense and establishes their attentive engagement.<sup>18</sup> This is not to say that natural law does not make an appearance in the adapted *comedias*. Yet, as Ramón Muñoz argues, natural law becomes problematic when desires come into play. Van Stipriaan argues that ethics and moralistic teachings are an important aspect in Dutch comical plays, but they are not the main aim or primal drive of these plays.<sup>19</sup> Acts of deception help the characters cope with or subvert natural order, while dramatic irony connects audiences to the characters' emotional conflicts in *comedia nueva*.

In this chapter I primarily focus on Wouther's *De verliefde stiefmoeder* and Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten*, Adam Carelsz van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura*, De Fuyter's *Verwarde hof*, De Wijse's *Voorzigtige dolheit*, and Dirck Pietersz. Heynck's *Veranderlyk geval*. A discussion of the 'generic plots' of these plays allows me to consider the cultural relevance that these *comedias nuevas* harboured in the Low Countries, while varying on the theme of love and honour.

### Love versus Honour in Dutch *Comedias*

The star-crossed lovers of the original Spanish *comedias* were continually faced with objections by brothers, fathers, or other family members to their intended marriages, which brought about the lovers' intense emotional conflicts that were central to the plot. The subject of love versus honour as rendered in *comedia nueva* was slightly out-of-place in the context of the storylines Dutch audiences knew from 'home-grown' productions. Before the adaptation of *comedias* by Rodenburgh and others, the Dutch stage was primarily dominated by Dutch playwrights, who initially based their tragic model on Seneca and Lipsius, through which they promoted a perpetual tempering of the passions.<sup>20</sup> The tension between love and

18 Van Stipriaan 1996, 198–200.

19 Van Stipriaan 1996, 199.

20 Konst 1993, 1, 6.

honour is a key point of difference between the Dutch adaptations of *comedias* and local plays such as Hoof's *Geeraerd van Velsen*, Vondel's *Jeptha*, and Bredero's *Moortje*.

The Dutch playwrights largely based the emotional psychology of their protagonists on the ideas of the humanist professor Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), who in 1584 wrote *De Constantia in publicis malis*. In this work, he presents a dialogue between himself and philologist Carolus Langius, to whom he ascribed an ideal neostoic vitalism. Lipsius performs, or better dramatises, in this dialogue his own struggle to endure the distress of *Belgica*. He begins his work with a lamentation of the disorder in the Low Countries. The central issue is how to remain unmoved by civil war and religious turmoil:

‘Who is, Langius,’ I said, ‘so iron-willed that he can endure this misfortune any longer? For years now, we swing, as you can see, back and forth amidst the beating waves of civil war, and just as on a turbulent sea, the troubles of war beat us with intermittent squalls from one place to the other.’<sup>21</sup>

Lipsius then, through Langius, promotes *constantia* (perseverance) and *apatheia* (apathy) as comfort against misfortune, because at one time Fate (*fatum*) would strike one person, and another the next. ‘Let your reason guide you,’ is Lipsius’ conclusion.

For Lipsius, Fate was a force that, like Fortune, influenced the lives of the early modern man, for better or worse. Lipsius would accept what befell him without complaint. This is also what he taught Hoof and Coster as his students at Leiden University. In turn, they incorporated Lipsius’ philosophy into their dramatic oeuvre. In a way, as Reddy posits, these plays sought to ‘provide individuals with the prescriptions and counsel concerning both the best strategies for pursuing emotional learning and the proper end point or ideal of emotional equilibrium.’<sup>22</sup> Here, two clashing ideals of emotional management seem to stand in relief against each another: on the one hand, there exists a moralising emotional discourse that aims to educate people about the proper way to handle their emotions, which can be recognised in Senecan-Scaligerian plays and in Vondel’s plays. On the other hand, there is a literary tradition that leaves space for a jubilation of tumbling and turbulent emotions—predominantly inner agitations—that are rendered on stage by means of the romantic plots of *comedia*

<sup>21</sup> Lipsius [1584] 1983, bk. 1.1, §39.

<sup>22</sup> Reddy 2001, 55.

*nueva*. The latter tradition subverts certain social rules in Dutch society concerning sexual interactions between men and women. The Spanish *comedias nuevas* and subsequently the Dutch adaptations eliminate Fortune as much as possible and substitute this force with examples of love and honour that help characters overcome adversity.

### *Limiting the Influence of Fortune*

The way that Fortune and Fate are substituted in Spanish drama is unique and foregrounds free will as an important motif: events are not predestined or fatal consequences of our actions, but rather the result of our choices and aim for social betterment. By eliminating, or at least limiting, the ancient forces of Fortune and Fate, Spanish *comedias* can focus on the protagonists' emotional conflicts, and on the choices they must make to solve these conflicts. Ramón Muñoz, echoing Rey Hazas, remarks that the dichotomy between love and honour in *comedias nuevas* may be a functional substitute for Fortune in Greco-Roman drama, or a way to limit her power and shift the focus to the characters and their dilemmas.<sup>23</sup> Álvarez Sellers, however, argues that we should not necessarily limit the conflict in Spanish theatre to love and honour; it can also extend to other 'articulated conflicts' between two forces, which are as powerful as they are necessary and irreconcilable. Moreover, they can have a different appearance in every play. Álvarez Sellers identifies four dichotomies in total: love/honour, desire/norm, passion/reason, and past/present.<sup>24</sup>

Although distinct, these different sets of opposing forces are, in a sense, similar. They each represent two opposing worlds that converge, or better, worlds that clash. The conflict is a battle between the free will (*libre albedrío*) of individuals who have many times romantic desires for a person of another social class, and the Machiavelian Reason of State (*Razón de Estado*), which not only extends to political affairs but also to social norms and the honour code: that is, the interests of the individual are subservient to those of the state or regime.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, nature and natural law are important pillars of *comedia nueva* and define the emotional conflicts that are presented. Ramón Muñoz wrote about three of Lope's *comedias* in which '[n]ature acts as a sphere of force, of constriction, that can be borne or explored, but cannot be

23 Rey Hazas 1991, *passim*; Ramón Muñoz 2015, 54–55.

24 Álvarez Sellers 2013, 25.

25 See, e.g., Rey Hazas 1991, *passim*; Álvarez Sellers 2013, *passim*; Ramón Muñoz 2015, *passim*.

ignored, nor can it be changed or moved.<sup>26</sup> Cultural norms and values should, then, be used to manage one's behaviour, relationships, and ideologies in any given social framework, but also one's understanding of nature. However, obeying natural order becomes problematic when characters are faced with their own contrary desires.<sup>27</sup> As in the broader European literary tradition, *mimesis* of natural order was the core pillar through which Spanish theatre was justified. Thomistic law, including natural law, appealed to man's rational ability to live in accordance with the universal law of nature that applies regardless of time and space. Robert L. Fiore convincingly demonstrated that natural law is essential to the main themes in Spanish drama through his discussion of Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, Tirso de Molina's *La major espigadera*, and three of Calderón's *autos sacramentales*.<sup>28</sup>

In the Dutch context, the diminished role of fate makes the adaptations unique in comparison to the early seventeenth-century plays by Hooft and Coster, or Vondel's complete oeuvre. In this sense, 'home-grown' plays stage conflicts that are closer to Greco-Roman drama. Take, for example, Sophocles' *Oedipus tyrannus* / *Oedipus rex* (c. 429 BCE). Oedipus' downfall is the inevitable result of two conflicting public interests and a sharp twist of fate: the gods command that justice is passed on the murderer of King Laios and Oedipus, realising he is the murderer of his own father, has to pass justice on himself. Oedipus blinds himself and goes into exile to solve the conflict. By trying to prevent the oracle's prophesy from coming true, Oedipus does exactly what he fought against: he ultimately kills his father and marries his mother. Similarly, the conflicts in Dutch plays by Hooft, Coster, and Vondel have political implications and revolve around two public interests. Vondel's *Jeptha*, although an adaptation of George Buchanan's *Jepthah*, is shaped by Vondel's poetics and problematises a theological conflict between honouring a promise made to God and the promise of a father to love his daughter unconditionally, which he fails to do. God had already preordained his failure, but this did not make Jephtha less guilty.<sup>29</sup>

We can see that the Dutch adaptations respond to their native situation. In *comedias*, the *libre albedrío* had given individual characters an explicit choice, which is why there is much attention paid to the psychological process. In their respective adaptations, the protagonists understand their emotional conflicts as sharp twists

26 Ramón Muñoz 2015, 54.

27 Ramón Muñoz 2015, 54.

28 Fiore 1975, *passim*.

29 For an interpretation of Jephtha's guilt, see Korsten 2006, 86–89.

of fortune. In a similar way to his French counterpart, Don Rodrigo laments in Van Heemskerck's translation of *Le Cid* that fortune struck him after he was given the task of avenging his father: 'fortune runs me through; there is nothing that may help me.'<sup>30</sup> Rodrigo's outcry in the *stances* of the French adaptation is a familiar theatrical device, a dramatic declaration by the hero in which he elaborates on his emotional conflict at the end of the first act. Van Heemskerck transferred the *stances* directly from Corneille's original *Le Cid*.<sup>31</sup> Wilfried Floeck came to the conclusion that the elaboration by Don Rodrigue (the French Rodrigo) on his emotional conflict is a reflection of French tastes, while discussing Corneille's adaptation in relation to Castro's original.<sup>32</sup> He argued that while the general plot and plot themes of the French adaptation are identical to the Spanish play, Corneille had eliminated many scenes from Castro's original to focus more explicitly on the dramatic conflict of the protagonists Don Rodrigue and Chimène. Because Van Heemskerck's translation stays very true to the French intertext, the Dutch adaptation finds a middle ground between the impossible choice that is always foregrounded in Spanish drama, and the 'home-grown' tradition that stages examples of adversity and misfortune. For the premiere in the Amsterdam Public Theatre, this soliloquy (the *stances*) may have been set to music, to both emphasise the protagonists' internal conflict and to deliver an impressively emotional scene for the spectators.

The characters in these Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias* are governed by their emotions, so that it is sometimes impossible to know whether the characters truly have the free will to choose between their personal desires and their duty or honour. The Dutch adaptations seem to showcase this tension in particular. According to Álvarez Sellers, between both absolutes, whether love and honour or any of the other dichotomies, 'is the emotionally torn protagonist who suffers as he must choose and accept the consequences.' She asserts that the protagonist must hide his passions at all costs, since as soon as he verbalises them, the conflict will erupt. Following one's obligation and answering to the honour code guarantees social integration, but it comes at the high price of total sentimental annihilation, which not everyone is willing to pay.<sup>33</sup> Through recognisable and easily digestible subjects, the dilemma is made understandable to the audience.

30 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. B6<sup>r</sup>: 't Luc loopt my dwers; daer 's niet dat helpen mag.' Cf. Corneille 1637, 22: 'Tout m'est fatal, rien ne me peut guerir.'

31 Cf. Corneille 1637, 21–23; Van Heemskerck 1641, fols. B5<sup>v</sup>–B6<sup>r</sup>.

32 Floeck 1969, 132–133.

33 Álvarez Sellers 2013, 25.

Lauer, furthermore, suspects that when Lope mentions in his *Arte nuevo* ‘los casos de la honra,’ he refers to accidental events, or to plot twists that were unexpected.<sup>34</sup> According to Lauer, honour comedias are capable of:

stirring the emotions not because they deal with something familiar but, on the contrary, precisely because they do not. One may sense initially that one knows what these plays are about, but as the works progress, one realises that one is dealing with something exceptional, unforeseen, accidental, unexpected.<sup>35</sup>

Paradoxically, spectators witness a conflict that is as much recognisable as it is exceptional; an event that is fantastic, but imaginable at the same time. This has to do with the fact that not only do the protagonists have *libre albedrío* (free will) to choose their own fate, but that they may also use their free will to love their partner with a fierce, if ill-advised, *constantia*. In Dirck Heynck’s *Veranderlyk geval* and Antonio Wouthers’ *De devotie van Eusebius tot het H. kruys* (1665), for example, the young lovers remain faithful—steadfast, in their own words—despite the retaliation of their antagonists.<sup>36</sup> In turn, the antagonists also have free will and use it to interfere with the desires of the lovers, pursuing their own heart’s desires, whether those are romantic or originate from a lust for power. This makes the conflicts recognisable and enjoyable to watch.

Heynck’s *Veranderlyk geval* shows this especially well. The play is an adaptation of Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva’s *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor*. In Heynck’s play, Karel and Margareta remain loyal to each other despite their different social stations, and the backlash that they receive from other characters in response to this mismatch. There are moments that Margareta doubts whether Karel is faithful, and vice versa, but they manage to convince each other every time that the other has nothing to worry about. Instead, their greater conflict originates in the desires of others: the other characters each want the dominion of Naples, and attempt to use Karel and Margareta as pawns in order to get it. Here, love and power are in conflict, as are the public and private spheres connected to these themes.

According to the plot, Frederico can inherit the throne if the current king has an heiress; conversely, Porcia can become queen if he instead has an heir. When the

34 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 327.

35 Lauer 2014, 86.

36 Wouthers 1665a, 19, 43; Heynck 1663, 20, 31.

shepherd who took care of the king's wife during his exile, tells the king that he has an heir—Karel—Porcia is overjoyed, while Frederico instantly hates Karel. Frederico begins plotting against Karel and extorts Albano, the shepherd that had raised both Karel and Margareta to lie to the king that Margareta is actually the king's daughter, so that, by marrying her, Frederico will later become king. When Karel is again diminished in status, Porcia loses all interest in the prince and leaves him, as do all the other characters. Under such confusing conditions, and while not knowing the priorities and motives of other characters, Karel and Margareta must navigate their emotions. They remain in the dark, while the audience, from their omnipotent perspective, watches these internal and external, personal and private conflicts unfold before their eyes.

Plays such as *Veranderlyk geval* reflect a broad interest among the aspirational layers of Dutch society in the contemporary 'ideal courtier.' This ideal was described in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* (1528), a book that explicated values that were still relevant throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> The ideal courtier stood as a model for the private ambitions of the Dutch middle class, while the corruption of court life was abhorred and pastoral life romanticised. The ennobling character of love was also a central theme in this famous book. We see this motif clearly return in *Veranderlyk geval*: Karel and Margareta are humble peasants who are respectively recognised as prince and princess in the course of the play, and are connected through their ennobling love for each other. Frederico and Porcia, in contrast, are two power-hungry nobles unafraid to lie and deceive to achieve their political goals. As such, Karel and Margareta were ideal examples for the humble citizen with aristocratic ambitions.

### *Speech versus Silence*

The existing conflict between the opposing forces of private desires and ambitions and the public life at court can be understood through Reddy's concept of the *emotive*, which exemplifies how characters continuously struggle to shape reality in a way that fits their desires. In Reddy's theory, the emotional conflict in *comedia nueva* revolves around withholding emotional thoughts from other characters, but also includes the suppression of emotionally rich thought material, whenever the individual's internal disposition or external body is in danger. The *dramatis personae* must interact with a world full of surprises, a world that is messy. The conflict between the public and the

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

private also means that protagonists are faced with the choice between speech and silence: reveal your true heart's desire and face the consequences, or keep silent about it to maintain your social position.

This ties in with Reddy's understanding of emotion claims: emotions are only emotions insofar as they are expressed verbally or bodily; they become *emotives* (emotion claims) when they are no longer mere sensations existing in the body and the mind. That does not mean, however, that choosing whether to act on emotions cannot be deliberated upon at length in conversation with other characters. Álvarez Sellers demonstrates this for Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*, where Cassandra prompts her stepson to reveal his feelings for her that she knows he has. Federico, however, persists in his silence, but Cassandra transgresses the norm and indulges her passions in order to elicit a confession from Federico. Within two conversations and some three hundred verses, Cassandra and the audience learn for certain what they already suspected: Federico is in love with his stepmother.<sup>38</sup> Translation does nothing to the basic themes of Lope's original. Wouters' *De verliefde stiefmoeder* stages the same conflict existing within Federico and a comparable dialogue with his stepmother Cassandra.

The protagonists' emotional conflicts between love and honour are likely to have moved spectators to sympathy. This is attested in the contemporary debate around *Le Cid*. In the pamphlet *Le jugement du Cid, composé par un bourgeois de Paris, Marguillier de sa paroisse* (1637), an anonymous Parisian spectator (generally believed to be French author Charles Sorel) writes that he was primarily led in his judgement by the pleasurable effect that the emotional conflict between love and honour had on him and other spectators. According to him, the emotional conflict between love and honour was especially moving for the audience:

[...] there is no one who after having seen the intended marriage of the two lovers, is not taken with great fear for them as soon as the fathers begin to quarrel; who is not moved seeing the affront received by Don Diègue; who is not troubled seeing him command his son to avenge him; and who will not be moved with pity seeing Rodrigue torn between his honour and his love.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Álvarez Sellers 2013, 26–27.

<sup>39</sup> As quoted from Thouret 2013, 104; see for the original French Civardi 2004, 779–781: '[...] et il n'y a personne qui après avoir vu le mariage résolu des deux amants, n'entre en de grandes craintes pour eux aussitôt que les pères commencent à se quereller; qui ne soit ému voyant l'affront que reçoit

Yet, more than the choice between love and honour, Sorel particularly emphasises Rodrigue's internal struggle as overwhelmingly emotional:

But nothing has transported the spectators any more than when Rodrigue, having killed the Count, comes to Chimène to ask for his death, and encounters the same struggle in her mind between her love and honour. These two combats, equally great in the two principal characters, and which keep the whole piece alive, give so much pity and pleasure together, that until then nothing had been seen that got so much attention.<sup>40</sup>

This internal struggle was also recognised in the Dutch Republic as the play's main operator of affect. For Van Heemskerck's translation, Pels writes in comparable words that everyone was moved by the disasters that befell the two lovers:

Who hears Chimène, who hears Don Rodrigo lament,  
And is not weakened in the heart to help them bear their misfortune?  
When the duty of a child despite their heart's desire  
Sends such cruel tempests towards their pure love.  
It does not only play out for the ears, nor before the eyes;  
But for the soul, which, lifted up by this example,  
Gets an unconscious inclination to follow virtue,  
Which she esteems in others with delight.<sup>41</sup>

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Don Diègue ; qui ne soit troublé voyant le commandement qu'il fait à son fils de le venger ; et qui ne s'attendrisse de pitié voyant le combat en Rodrigue entre son honneur et son amour.' Italics are my own.

40 As quoted from Thouret 2013, 104; see for the original French Civardi 2004, 779–781: 'Mais jamais rien n'a plus transporté les spectateurs qu' alors que Rodrigue ayant tué le Comte, vient chez Chimène lui demander la mort, et met le même combat en son esprit entre son amour et son honneur. Ces deux combats, également grands dans les deux principaux personnages, et qui entretiennent toute la pièce, donnent tant de pitié et de plaisir ensemble, que jusques ici rien ne s'était vu qui eût tant attaché l' attention.' Italics are my own.

41 Pels [1681] 1978, vv. 981–988: 'Wie hoort Chiméne, wie hoort Don Rodrigo klaagen, / Dien 't hart niet week wordt om hunn' ramp te helpen draagen? / Wén kinderlyke pligt in wéérwil van 't gemoed / Zo wreede stórmén op hunn' zuiv're liefde doet. / Het speelt alleenlyk niet voor de ooren, nóch voor de oogen; / Maar voor de ziel, die, door dat voorbeeld opgetoogen, / Onweetend neiging krygt tót vólging van een' deugd, / Die zy in anderen beschouwt mét zulk een' vreugd.'

Thus, Fortune gives way to the conflict between love and honour in the Spanish *comedias*. In this form, the Spanish *comedias* were transferred to the Low Countries and were then adapted in Dutch. Therefore, the conflict in the Dutch *comedias* is likewise centred on the struggle between private love and public honour, which moved everyone who saw it to a deep empathy for the love-afflicted characters.

#### *An Intricate Web of Conflicting Emotions*

The emotional conflicts in *comedia nueva* are structured within a web of opposing political and private interests. In that light, Dumas argues for the French adaptations by Rotrou that the plays' actions, 'like those of *comedias* on which they are inspired, are based on a tension between love and a power of political origin, sometimes tyrannical, which tries to control or appropriate the love.'<sup>42</sup> The antagonists often fail in their endeavours to appropriate that love, making the plot an entertaining maze of conflicting interests. Like the originals and their French adaptations, all Dutch-language *comedias* likewise involve an intricate web of love relationships and hostile relationships. The plays never simply tell the story of a woman loving a man and vice versa: when one traces out all the relationships in *comedias*, almost every time man A loves woman A and vice versa, while woman B loves man A as well, and man B loves woman A at the same time. Meanwhile, all suitors, both male and female, are enemies, or at least adversaries. Of course there are variations on this basic structure, but the relationships nevertheless form an intricate web of emotions.

Thus, the spectators were treated to characters who experience what Reddy called 'goal conflicts.' This required the characters to exact emotional control or relinquish one of their goals. While they coordinate their actions towards the fulfilment of their desires, they encounter goal conflict as some obstacle prohibits them from acting on those desires. When confronted with goal conflict, such as having to withhold sharing feelings, individual characters are conflicted by different goals that add to their health and wholeness, including, for instance, freedom from the pain caused by acting against 'the honour of one's family, clan, or party, or the moral integrity of one's commitments.'<sup>43</sup> Reddy concludes that whether individuals resist or give in to what causes the goal conflict, he or she will experience *emotional suffering* either way: the resolution is, in effect, a lose-lose situation. Reddy defines emotional suffering as an acute form of goal conflict, which likely accompanies important shifts in life goals:

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<sup>42</sup> Dumas 2017, 108–109.

<sup>43</sup> Reddy 2001, 123.

the suffering could be supplanted by grief, or may result in feelings of guilt or shame, or alternatively, feelings of anger or spite will arise.<sup>44</sup> In *comedias*, the characters must navigate their feelings, while meeting their aims and expectations or alter course to a specific effect.

In the case of De Fuyter's *Verwarde hof*, Matilde loves Carel, but when Carel becomes a tyrant, she is forced to defeat him. Matilde is aided by Frederico and Henrico, her allies and thus Carel's enemies. Porcia and Frederico love each other, but they agree that it is better for the kingdom if Frederico were to marry Matilde. Finally, following his own interests over those of the kingdom, Frederico agrees to marry Porcia. Henrico, meanwhile, loves Helena, who is the Princess of Salerno, and vice versa. Mistaking Carel for Henrico, who are long-lost twin brothers, Helena confesses her love for him, after which Carel rejects her. Helena now hates Henrico (or so she thinks).

The relationships in *Voorzigtige dolheit* are similarly confusing: King Anthony and Lucinde are courting in secret, of which her brother Morosin disapproves, thinking that his sister is involved with a man of lower social standing. To prevent Morosin from finding out about his love affair, the King promotes him to general and sends him to the frontier. This means, however, that the previous general Dinardo loses his job and his mistress Rosania (who is also Anthony's stepmother) is afraid that the King knows that they want to take the throne for themselves. Therefore, they start plotting against the King with more vigour.

Using methods inspired by Social Network Analysis, it is possible to visualise the intricate relationships of *De verduytsste Cid*, *Veranderlyk geval*, *Verwarde hof*, and *Voorzigtige dolheit* in a surveyable way (see Figures 4.4–4.7).<sup>45</sup> Here, I also add the relational stability of relationships, which was informed specifically by the approach of Ingeborg van Vugt, who in her dissertation plotted networks between scholars in the Dutch Republic and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in the seventeenth century according to their stability: positive, negative, or neutral. Van Vugt also determined whether any triangle of relationships between three members within the network was stable or unstable: the relationship between two members might be stable, but the relationship with the third member could lead to friction, causing the whole network to be unstable, and even collapse as a result.<sup>46</sup> These triangular relationships form a crisscross of lines which are sometimes hard to follow. Moreover, relationships are never stable across the whole action of each play. As the plot progresses, characters

44 Reddy 2001, 124–125.

45 Each of these figures is made with the online open-source programme Gephi.

46 Van Vugt 2019, esp. 148–149, 167–185.

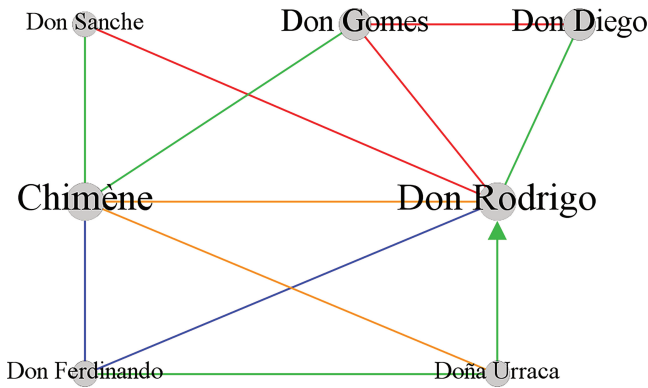


FIG. 4.4 The Triangular Relations in *De verduytste Cid*; green indicates a positive relationship, orange an unstable relationship, blue a neutral relationship, and red a negative or hostile one. The arrows indicate if those feelings have a specific direction

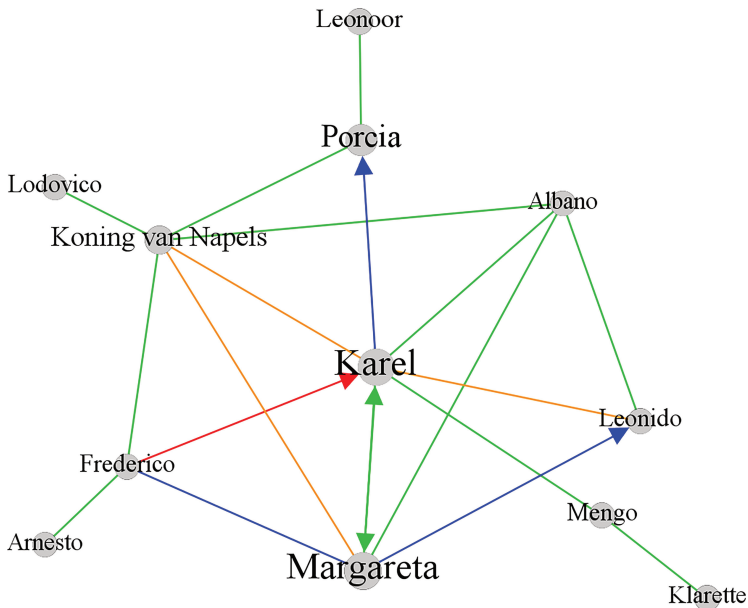


FIG. 4.5 The Triangular Relations in *Veranderlyk geval*; for a legend, see Fig. 4.4



come to hate one another, or begin affairs with others: by virtue of its relational instability, every *comedia* is, thus, contradictorily stable. These kinds of relationships are intrinsic to *comedia nueva* and count for much of the genre's appeal, I argue.

This structure also means that characters cannot reveal their true inward emotions to each other, at least not without losing honour or their social standing at court. Therefore, they turn to deception and lies to protect their emotional stability. In other words, the spectators are treated to emotional intrigue. On the contrary, the emotional conflicts in home-grown plays were fierce, but focused mainly on the conflict of the protagonist, such as the judge Jephthah in Vondel's *Jephtha*.<sup>47</sup> Combined, the intricate web of conflicting emotions and deception form a playful structure for these *comedias*, which enthralled spectators.

### Deception as Comic Relief

In theatre, characters have their own agendas, but do not usually know one another's motives. Yet, the audience does. Their deceptions of one another result in dramatic irony. When the star-crossed lovers cannot easily be together they must find alternative solutions. Likewise, the antagonists who try to appropriate their love for their own political desires do not aim to accomplish their goals by overt means. Therefore, everyone turns to an attractive form of deception. The dramatic irony that comes from this playful deception is established in *comedia nueva* (as in other forms of comic theatre) when the protagonists are overpowered by their passions and quick-witted characters exploit the situation, or cunning characters slyly take advantage of all the confusion and entanglements to forward their own plans. The deception of these adversaries generates suspense. Van Stipriaan writes that deception is metaphorically 'the double beating heart of the comic Renaissance.'<sup>48</sup>

As in comic theatre in general, the dramatic structure of *comedias* relies on deception to establish an ongoing fascination on the part of the playgoers. This dramatic frame shapes the contours of many Spanish plays. Lope himself said as much in his *Arte nuevo*:

Deceiving with the truth is something  
Which has proven successful, [...]

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Konst 1993 and 2000; Korsten 1999 and 2000; Steenbergh 2012; Vergeer 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Van Stipriaan 1996, 167.

Always have equivocal speech and  
 The uncertainty rising from ambiguity held  
 A great place among the common people, wherefore they think  
 That they alone understand what the other says.<sup>49</sup>

Several of Lope's *comedias* are partial dramatisations of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1349–1360) and Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1560). Both collections of texts are full of playful twists and turns used by Lope to inspire the plots of his *comedias* and other plays. These plotlines, rich with deception, also reach the Low Countries through the Dutch adaptations of his plays. Thus, one may understand the deception in Van Germez' adaptation of *Laura perseguida*, *Vervolgde Laura*, as what Van Stipriaan calls 'deception in the style of the *Decameron*' ('Decameronesk bedrog').<sup>50</sup> In *Vervolgde Laura*, spectators witness a form of deceit that requires them to use their senses and their *ratio* to correctly interpret the characters' somewhat opaque dialogue. Laura, when accused of being a prostitute, declares that she is an honest and virtuous woman. Only at the very end does the audience learn that, better yet and to her own surprise, Laura is actually a princess.

Sometimes the setting also helps clarify the plot for spectators: in Rodenburgh's *Celia en Prospero*, Count Prospero hides among villagers in the countryside from his adversary, Prince Aristippus of Spain. When he arrives at a mill, Prospero meets a different character named Laura, here the miller's daughter, and miller's servant, Molimpo.<sup>51</sup> Prospero is dishonest about his identity and introduces himself as Martijn, afraid of persecution by the Prince. Such scenes of deception and roleplay steer the spectators' interpretation of the protagonists' emotional conflicts.<sup>52</sup> Deception in theatre was not unique in the Low Countries when it arrived in *comedias* adapta-

49 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 319–320a, 322–326: 'El engañar con la verdad es cosa / que ha parecido bien, [...] siempre el hablar equívoco ha tenido / y aquella incertidumbre anfibológica / gran lugar en el vulgo, porque piensa / que él solo entiende lo que el otro dice.'

50 Van Stipriaan 1996, 168. For the role of deception in the visual arts, see Kwak 2014, esp. 34–39, 210–212, who attests to something similar.

51 Rodenburgh 1617b, fol. B3<sup>r</sup>.

52 According to Thacker, the instrument 'of social criticism is metatheatrical role-play. Metatheatre allows a glimpse of society stripped of its authority—patriarchy (as a dominant order) takes its own values to be truth, and is therefore undermined (revealed to be just another constructed way of viewing and ordering the world) when its roles are shown to be manufactured and manufacturable theatrically, rather than being essential' (2002, 178–179). The implications of this are explored further for Dutch adaptations in Chapter 6.

tions. In general, deception was a popular theme in Dutch comedies.<sup>53</sup> Given that the Dutch apparently took pleasure from ambiguous and titillating roleplay, it is easily understood that *comedia nueva* met this demand from the audience.

Lope de Vega especially appreciated deception. In his *Arte nuevo* he recommended postponing the *dénouement* to the very last moment to ensure that the audience remained captivated by the events on stage:

Divide the matter in two parts,  
And start the entanglements from the beginning  
Until the action runs down,  
But do not permit the *dénouement*  
Until the very last scene,  
Because, knowing the end, the people  
Turn their face to the door and their backs  
To what they awaited face-to-face for three hours,  
As there is no more to know than how the play ends.<sup>54</sup>

*Comedias* aim to always surprise spectators, as per Lope's advice. According to him, it should always be the aim to deceive the audience's better judgement; if the spectator can correctly guess the outcome early in the play, then the story should end very differently. As he explains:

Present the case in the first act,  
In the second, entangle the events,  
So that until the middle of the third  
Hardly anyone guesses how it ends;  
Always deceive the people's taste and  
If they show to understand where the plot leads,  
Bring the solution then very far from where it is expected to lead.<sup>55</sup>

53 Van Stipriaan 1996, 169.

54 Lope de Vega 1609, vv. 231–239: 'Dividido en dos partes el asunto, / ponga la conexión desde el principio, / hasta que vaya declinando el paso, / pero la solución no la permita / hasta que llegue a la postrera scena, / porque, en sabiendo el vulgo el fin que tiene, / vuelve el rostro a la puerta y las espaldas / al que esperó tres horas cara a cara, / que no hay más que saber que en lo que para.'

55 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 298–304: 'En el acto primero ponga el caso, / en el segundo enlace los sucesos, / de suerte que hasta el medio del tercero / apenas juzgue nadie en lo que para; / engañe siempre el gusto y, donde vea / que se deja entender alguna cosa, / dé muy lejos de aquello que promete.'

Once more giving an example from *Vervolgde Laura*, the surprise in this play is indeed established in the final scenes. There Porcia, the Princess of Poland, reveals to the King that Laura is her sister by showing him a letter. He responds with disbelief and declares his deception: 'By what kind of justice, and wondrous power, could I be more entangled with luck and deceived?'<sup>56</sup> The King, who previously wanted his son Prince Orantee to marry Porcia instead of Laura can now agree with a marriage between his son and the long-lost princess. Such surprising *dénouements* are characteristic of *comedia nueva* and therefore also of their Dutch adaptations.

### Five Times Love in *Comedia Nueva*

All the characters' love entanglements, emotional conflicts, and deceptive acts took various forms. In the Dutch adaptations, the emotional conflict between love and honour were shaped by five different plot structures, in which deception drives the plots forth and entangles them. On first impression, it may seem that the characters in these *comedias* are archetypes or stereotypes. As McKendrick argues almost every play contains at minimum one pair of lovers or potential lovers who are aided by some comic servants. The antagonists are authority figures such as fathers, husbands, or brothers, or 'figures of subversion' such as rivals or jealous suitors. Many times a representative of law and order—dukes, princes, kings—contribute to the solution at the end. The characters in *comedia nueva* are at the outset painted according to their social or biological roles and less so by their personalities. Thus, cast lists are typically stereotyped: the *dramatis personae* are characterised as young heroines, maids, young gentlemen and their friends, older men and servants. Thus, character types are arguably repetitive and plots are complicated and 'action-packed' but follow the same general structures. The emotions in each play are similarly intense—exaggerated even—and characters are usually torn by familiar doubts and internal crises, although their unique motives and surprising resolutions keep them exciting nonetheless. Often, women appear in masculine disguises, and older women are typically absent.<sup>57</sup>

And yet, *comedia nueva* was in fact deeply interested in characterisation. McKendrick writes that characters show to have own volitions, complex reactions to the

56 Van Germez 1645, vv. 1929–1930: 'Door welk een stof van recht, en wonderlijk vermoogen, / Kan ik met meerder luk verstrikt zijn, en bedrogen?'

57 McKendrick 1989, 73–74.

burdens that affect them, and different ways to cope with stress.<sup>58</sup> This formula, says McKendrick, demonstrates the preferences of Spanish spectators and playwrights catered to those tastes. She argues even that these elements in *comedia nueva* answered to audiences' desire for a 'theatre of escapism' that led spectators into a world of romance and away from the world of everyday reality.<sup>59</sup> Is this the same for the Dutch adaptations?

### *Forbidden Desires*

The Dutch adaptations seem indeed to have been a 'theatre of escapism', although some of the more culturally-situated *topoi* are lost in translation, whether intentionally or not. That spectators could indeed escape into a world of romance becomes apparent in the first subtheme: forbidden desires. These may be disallowed because of considerable social mismatch, incest, or adultery. In this plot structure, the emotional conflict is painful and hardly ever ends well, because the protagonists' love is illicit according to early-modern law and practice.

Forbidden desire is central to Lope's *El castigo sin venganza* (1631 'The Punishment without Revenge') and its Dutch adaptation *De verliefde stiefmoeder* (1665, 'The Stepmother in Love') by Antonio Wouthers. While generally similar to the Spanish original, the Dutch characters are partially reimagined to make their emotional conflict even more painful, and their required actions more difficult. In Lope's original, spectators saw that the Duke of Ferrara was a womaniser until he decided that he needed a legitimate heir; his bastard son Federico would not suffice. For this, he needed a woman of good heritage and his sights fell on Cassandra, the protégée of the Marquis of Mantua. In the Dutch adaptation, Wouthers eliminated the opening scene wherein the Duke's previous life was shown. Apparently, the Duke's questionable morals drew objection from either Wouthers, theatre critics, or the Flemish audience. The result is that the Duke was instead a completely virtuous man and need not undergo the transformation seen in the original, which occurs during his service to the pope.<sup>60</sup>

Although the tawdriness of the premarital Duke was eliminated, the crux of the story—namely, Frederico's quasi-incestuous love for his stepmother Cassandra—naturally remained intact in the Dutch adaptation. As opposed to the Duke's now-pristine behaviour, Frederico not only commits something considered in early modern

58 McKendrick 1989, 74.

59 McKendrick 1989, 74.

60 See Friedman 2008, 216–217.

Netherlandish law equally criminal to incest, but also adultery.<sup>61</sup> The doubling of the committed crime was also subject of one of the preliminary poems in the play's script by an anonymous author named by the acronym A.F.W., which was likely Wouters himself. He writes:

All of Spain holds *Vega's* work for perfect,  
 While the Netherlands disapprove of the same work by misunderstanding,  
 And yell: this incest should be adultery,  
 Then it is not adultery, although the son affected  
 By a cursed love towards his father's bed  
 Extinguishes his God-hated fire with his stepmother  
 As long as this tragedy continues to speak Spanish verses.  
 But now you bright lord see through the double trick  
 Of the unequivocal word, which Dutch attention derides,  
 When it camouflages this adultery:  
 If you see through *Lope's* poem, and become a translator,  
 And read the Spanish, and write, and spell a Dutch letter,  
 And translate the Spanish into Dutch, then *Vega's* play  
 Of incest also receives now the name of adultery.<sup>62</sup>

According to seventeenth-century law, both incest and adultery were crimes with dire punishments including the loss of honour, goods, and public offices, as well as prison sentences of two weeks, banishment for fifty years or more, and fines of one to two hundred Carolus guilders (= € 1040 to € 2080 today). Moreover, adultery was one of the

61 In early modern Netherlandish law, also the unmarried person with whom the married party committed adultery was found guilty of this crime. For the Habsburg Netherlands, see *Placcaeten ende ordonnantien* 1648, 280, 386–387; for the Dutch Republic, see *Groot plaacet-Boeck* 1658, fols. X4<sup>r</sup>–X4<sup>v</sup>; see also Van der Heijden 1998, 32, 142; Herlihy 1995, 105–106.

62 Wouters 1665b, fol. π3<sup>r</sup>: 'Heel Spaenien schat het werck van *Vega* voor volmaect, / Daer Neerlandt 't selfde werck door mis-verstant belaeckt, / En roept: *dees* Bloetschant dient een *Overspel* te wesen, / Dan 'tis geen *Overspel*, hoe wel den soon geresen / Door een vervloecte min op 's vaeders ledekant / Met sijn Stiefmoeder blust sijn Got gehaeten brant / Soo lank dit Treurtooneel blyft Spaensche rymen spreken. / Maer nu gy schrandren Heer doorspeurt de dobbel treken / Van het eenstemmig-woort, dat Neerlants indacht hooft, / Als het dit *Overspel* van *Overspel* verschoont: / Doorsiet gy *Lopes* dicht, en wert een oversetter, / En leest het Spaens, en schryft, en spelt een Duytsche letter, / En overspelt het Spaens in Duyts, en *Vegas* spel / Van Bloetschant krygt den naem nu oock van *Overspel*.' Italics reproduced from the original.

few legitimate justifications for divorce.<sup>63</sup> This means that the subject in Wouters' *De verliefde stiefmoeder* was particularly controversial because it turned one crime into two. Therefore, Wouters' version was not only more moralising than the original, but also more fascinating against the background of early modern Netherlandish law. The fact that the duke, Frederico's father, is now of pristine behaviour puts Frederico's actions into a particularly bad light.

In another of the preliminary poems, an anonymous poet identified only as S.A.A., expresses this fascination, when he asks how it could happen that a son and a stepmother ignored the law and any duties they held towards the Duke of Ferrara, Frederico's father and Cassandra's husband. This author is convinced that only bastards could disregard their fathers in such a way:

[...] Whatever could be the cause?  
 A legitimately-conceived son will fear to disgrace  
 His father's marital bed, and fear hell:  
 A bastard does it all, and does not bother about adultery.<sup>64</sup>

Frederico will, therefore, not just be fined or lose his public offices at court in Ferrara, but he will also have to pay with his life for his crimes. Meanwhile, the Duke refuses his right to divorce Cassandra, and instead tricks Frederico into killing her by requesting his son to execute a nobleman who had tried to assassinate the Duke. To make the ruse a success, the Duke had covered Cassandra's face, allegedly as to not upset the executioner. Eager to serve his father, Frederico volunteers and leaves stage. The Duke describes for the audience how Frederico within the coulisses approaches his beloved stepmother and stabs her with his sword. For killing his stepmother, Frederico is himself executed. The Duke presumably takes this course of action in order to not lose face by it becoming public knowledge that his wife committed adultery, and near-incest, with his bastard son.

Before the lovers meet death, however, spectators are treated to a display of emotions by Frederico and Cassandra. A large part of the tragedy resides in the emotional

63 For the Habsburg Netherlands, see *Placcaeten ende ordonnantien 1648*, 386–387; for the Dutch Republic, see *Groot placae-Boeck 1658*, fols. X4<sup>r</sup>–X4<sup>v</sup>; see also Van der Heijden 1998, 48–50. For the recalculation of the fine in euros, see Zijdeman 2021. The calculation is based on the purchasing power of the guilder in 1665 compared to the approximate purchasing power of the euro in 2020.

64 S.A.A. 1665, fol. π4<sup>r</sup>: '[...] wat mach doch d'oorzaak wesen? / Een soon in d'echt geteelt sal vaders echt bedt vreesen / Te naeken met oneer, en schromen voor de hel: / Een bastaert doet het al, en acht geen overspel.'

conflict of both stepson and stepmother, which had also formed the heart of Lope's original. The same conversations in the Spanish original return in the Dutch adaptation. In the first conversation with her stepson, Cassandra urges Frederico to open up to her: 'confess your sorrow to me, and do not die without having spoken.'<sup>65</sup> As did Federico in the original, the Dutch Frederico says that he should better remain silent:

Because I taste such sadness,  
And my dangers are so large,  
Which burden my soul,  
That I will suffer less harm  
(For dying is but one)  
When dying patiently from pain  
Than to express my thoughts.<sup>66</sup>

Like her Spanish counterpart, Cassandra then tells her stepson the history of Prince Antiochus of the Seleucid Empire who fell in love with his stepmother Stratonice. The court physician Erasistratus tried to heal the prince, who was burning with an incurable fever. Having tried almost everything, Erasistratus feared for the prince's life, but when Antiochus' stepmother entered the room, the doctor noticed that Antiochus' face 'caught a renewed fire,' revealing his love for the woman. The doctor concluded that Antiochus was lovesick. After Antiochus' father was told what ailed his son, he rejoiced and allowed Stratonice and Antiochus to marry.

Cassandra lets her stepson know that she sees the same illness in his case and that she is actually aware of his love for her.<sup>67</sup> However, while the love between Stratonice and Antiochus is accepted, the love between Frederico and Cassandra is illicit in their country (as well as early modern Spain and the Low Countries), as discussed above. Thus, Cassandra's comparison of Frederico to Antiochus is deficient. Frederico rather resembles Hippolytus from Seneca's tragedy *Phaedra* (before 54 C.E.), which was based on the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus. The anonymous author S.A.A. suggests as much and Lope had actually also based his tragedy on Seneca's drama.<sup>68</sup> While

65 Wouthers 1665b, vv. 636–637: 'bekent my uwen row, / En sterft niet sonder spraek.'

66 Wouthers 1665b, vv. 671–677: 'Want ick sulck een droefheyt smaek, / En soo groot sijn mijn gevaeren, / Daer ick met mijn siel beswaere, / Dat ick minder schaed' sal werven / (Mits het sterven is maer een) / Met gedult van pijn te sterven, / Als te uyten mijne reen.'

67 Wouthers 1665b, v. 829: 'Frederico loochent niet dat'k sulcks sag in u wesen.'

68 See S.A.A. 1665, π4<sup>1</sup>; Friedman 2008, 216.

married to Theseus, King of Athens, Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytus, the King's son by another woman. When Phaedra confesses her feelings to her stepson, Hippolytus is aghast and draws his sword to kill his stepmother for her crime. Realising that this is what she wants, the prince instead casts away his sword and flees into the forest. Hurt in her honour, Phaedra schemes against Hippolytus: in a dramatic scene where she threatens to commit suicide, she discloses to Theseus that Hippolytus had tried to seduce her. Angered by the supposed actions of Hippolytus, Theseus bans his son from Athens and prays to Poseidon that the god may destroy his son. Poseidon complies with the king's wishes. Feeling guilty, Phaedra confesses to Theseus her betrayal and falls on her sword and dies.

There is a crucial difference between Frederico and both Hippolytus and Antiochus: they were legitimate sons of the king, while Frederico is a bastard. This is taken as the reason for why Frederico 'does not fear his father's bed,' and adds an extra layer of moral repugnancy to his love for Cassandra. Such a moralistic explanation is in line with what Van Marion explains happened in the early modern period with Ovid's work, and his *Heroides* in particular: Ovid's sometimes indecent *Heroides* were interpreted moralistically, including Phaedra's adulterous desires. Therefore they were censored or preceded by an elaborate introduction warning against the obscene nature of some letters, as was also the case for Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, a similar reading of *De verliefde stiefmoeder* as Ovid's *Heroides* is further enforced by the reference to the myth of Myrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10 on the title page of *De verliefde stiefmoeder*: 'Tis a crime to hate one's father, but such love as this is a greater crime than hate.'<sup>70</sup> Myrrha fell in love with her father, but unable to suppress her feelings she fed her father drunk and tricked him in sleeping with her. This reference frames Frederico and Cassandra's near-incestuous relationship likewise as a crime—an action deserving of consequences beyond just displeasure. Although there should be no compassion for Frederico and Cassandra according to the paratexts, there was some for Myrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who was saved by the gods and turned into a myrrh tree when her angered father tried to kill her for her crime. Nine months later, while in plant form, she gave birth to the beautiful Adonis. The intertextuality with the history of Antiochus and Stratonice, the myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra, and the myth of Myrrha, thus, tells the spectators in many ways that a crime always

69 Van Marion 2001, 164–170; Van Marion 2005, 68–71, 101, 182.

70 Ovid 1916, 10.314–315. The translation was taken from the edition in the Loeb Classical Library. The original on the title page of Wouthers' *De verliefde stiefmoeder* reads: '—scelus est odisse parentem / Hic amor est odio maius scelus.'

remains a crime deserving of punishment, but specifically the intertextuality with Myrrha's story allows spectators to have some compassion for the protagonists in the end.

Spectators of *De verliefde stiefmoeder* are presented with the two examples of Antiochus and Hippolytus to steer their interpretation of the play and also help them understand why Frederico is emotionally conflicted: one story had a happy ending, whereas the other had a tragic ending, and Frederico cannot know which direction acting on his own love would take him. Therefore, the dilemma is whether Frederico could, and should, reveal his passions, or if he should remain silent. That choice itself is torture. Having confessed his feelings to Cassandra, he would now rather die than deny his feelings again:

FREDERICO. For you, adorable woman,  
I want to test death in this distress,  
It is the most that Frederico can risk for your beauty.  
I no longer want to live in these sad days,  
I am a body without a soul, and seek death so much,  
That I will not find her, or if I will enjoy her  
My heart would rejoice: I pray then to strive for  
Your hand alone, which made me taste the sweet poison.<sup>71</sup>

Both Cassandra and Frederico's *honor* are on the line but in the end their passions take priority. With that choice, the conflict will finally erupt in the closing act.

Instead of exacting vengeance, Frederico's father devises a plot whereby Frederico will unwittingly kill his own stepmother. In return, Frederico is killed by Carolus Gonzaga, the Marquis of Mantua, for killing his former protégée Cassandra. The Duke never lifts a finger. It is a 'castigo sin venganza' as the Marquis says in the original: 'Behold a punishment without revenge.' The Duke disagrees, however, saying that he regrets what has passed: 'My poor heart begins to break!'<sup>72</sup> He never wanted this to happen, but his honour forced him to punish both his son and his wife. In the

71 Wouthers 1665b, vv. 870–877: 'FREDERICO. Voor u wil ick de doot / Aenbiddelijke vrouw beproeven in dees noot, / 't Is 't meest dat Frederic kan voor uwe schoonte waegen. / Ick wil geen leven meer in dees bedroefde daegen, / 'k ben lichaem sonder siel, en soek soo seer de doot, / Dat 'k haer niet vinden sal, mits soo ick haer genoot / Mijn hert sich heugen sow: 'k bid dan voor 't laest te naken / uw Handt alleen die my het soet vergift dee smaken.'

72 Wouthers 1665b, vv. 1443–1465; Lope de Vega 1635, fol. 113<sup>v</sup>.

end, all characters lose, and their story elicits compassion, but at the same time the Duke's defence may seem 'more incriminatory than convincing' to the spectators.<sup>73</sup> This is because there exists in Lope's original play *El castigo sin venganza* a 'diffused responsibility' wherein all characters share accountability for the consequences their actions have made inevitable.<sup>74</sup> The title of Lope's original also indicates to spectators that the play was meant to be indeed perceived as a 'punishment without revenge', whereas the title of the Dutch adaptation does not guide the spectators to identify this same moral dilemma with its innocuous title. In the Dutch adaptation, however, the Marquis's statement is restructured and the Duke's remorse omitted to resemble a surprising form of poetic justice, focusing more on the retaliation for the near-incest, rather than on the unfortunate turn of events:

CAROLUS.        Thus, the tragedy concludes,  
                          And it shows how Frederico dies in the end, trying  
                          To hide from justice, alongside his Cassandra.  
                          As such, the incest is done having got its punishment.<sup>75</sup>

Although the Dutch version's Marquis does not conclude that the death of the star-crossed lovers is a punishment without revenge, and the Duke never shows tears of remorse, we learn from the author with the acronym S.A.A. that the play was still perceived as an example of a punishment free of any form of vengeance, which suggests that S.A.A. had a lot of knowledge of the original by Lope and possibly read Spanish as well: 'Frederick's death and grave covers the Duke's shame through a punishment without revenge.'<sup>76</sup>

The tragic ending of *De verliefde stiefmoeder* might have been poetically just according to drama theory, and also according to the two earlier-mentioned writers of the laudatory poems, but the spectators may have had a very different, unexpected reaction. According to one other laudatory poem added to the printed paratexts addressed to the author:

<sup>73</sup> Friedman 2008, 217.

<sup>74</sup> Friedman 2008, 217.

<sup>75</sup> Wouters 1665b, vv. 1462–1465. The original reads: 'CAROLUS. en dus het Treurspel gaet ten eynde, / En toont hoe dat den Graef op't laesten, die sich meynden / Te bergen voor het recht, met sijn Cassandra sterft. / Dus is de bloetschant uyt die hare straf verwerft.'

<sup>76</sup> S.A.A. 1665, fol. π4<sup>r</sup>: 'Frederics doot en graf / Bedeckt des Hertogs schant door een wraekloose straf.'

Your piece (Sir) for its illustrious Verses  
 Is requested by all of Antwerp,  
 For you have charmed them by this brilliant work,  
 And you make unsuccessful  
 Hatred & Rage:  
 Ever since Cassandra entered the Theatre  
 Everyone is keen on having a Stepmother.<sup>77</sup>

The poem was written by the author with the acronym A.F.W., who is, as said, likely Wouters himself. Thus, he says of his own play that it was very successful. Wouters' account also suggests that the emotions, which Cassandra represented, were positively received, for they represent something different than the 'hatred and rage' that concludes the play. That the author's very biased account of the play's success holds at least some truth is reflected by two other laudatory poems added to the play's printed paratexts, one in Dutch, another in Latin. First, the further anonymous author 'Door Got, natuur en reen' writes that 'as Frederico and Cassandra make the Theatre echo with applause and cries, the audience celebrates to the heights of Wouter's star's rise.'<sup>78</sup> Second, the anonymous author 'Virtus nobilitas est' describes how incestuous love affairs are nowadays popular among audiences and how *De verliefde stiefmoeder* like any 'exceptionally good poem turns right what is wrong and gives praise to that which deserves no commendation.'<sup>79</sup>

In the eyes of the spectators, Cassandra's and Frederico's fates could not be poetic justice. Following the plot of the Dutch *comedia*, instead, the tragic part of *De verliefde stiefmoeder* is still that neither Cassandra nor Frederico could fulfil their desires, for which their reward is death; the focus is not on the Duke's retaliation, but on Cassandra's and Frederico's tragic love entanglement. *Honor* works here not as a mere retaliating force, but more so as a tyrannical and hateful force, which can never be successfully disregarded, ignored, or challenged. It is not Fortune that makes the lovers bleed, but the punitive *honor* that is ingrained in society.

77 Wouters 1665b, fol. π3<sup>v</sup>: 'Vostre piece (Monsieur) pour ses illustres Vers / Est demandè par tout Anvers, / Car vous l'avez charmé par ce brillant ouvrage, / Et faites aller de travers / La Haine & la Rage: / Depuis que Cassandre a partut sur le Theatre / Chacun est amoureux d' avoir une Marastre.'

78 'Door Got, natuur en reen' 1665, fol. π3<sup>v</sup>: 'want als sy [Frederico and Cassandra] 't Schouburg daveren, / En treuren doen, om 't seerst uijt trompen sy u [Wouters] klaveren'.

79 'Virtus nobilitas est' 1665, fol. fol. π4<sup>v</sup>: 'Qvos canit incoestos numerosus amores, / Nunc (tamen hi quondam displicuere) placent. [...] Carmen nempè bonum, mala quae, bona reddit, & idem / Laude indigna, facit laudibus ire Polo.' With thanks to Louis Verreth for the translation.

Lope wrote in the preface of *El castigo sin venganza* that with this play he had written a tragedy ‘al estilo español.’ His work is not structured according to Greek standards (‘antigüedad griega’) or the severity of the Romans (‘severidad latina’), because tastes change with time, but he argues it is a tragedy nonetheless.<sup>80</sup> Wouters’ adaptation *De verliefde stiefmoeder* shares many of the tragic qualities of the original and its plot is maybe more tragic than most other *comedias* adapted for the Dutch-language stage. In this regard, it is useful to remember what Aristotle wrote about the nature of tragic protagonists. The plot of tragedy should specifically showcase persons who are neither bad nor good, but in-between:

[N]either should decent men be shown changing from prosperity to adversity, as this is not fearful nor yet pitiable but repugnant, nor the depraved changing from adversity to prosperity, because this is the least tragic of all, possessing none of the necessary qualities, since it arouses neither fellow-felling nor pity nor fear. Nor, again, should tragedy show the very wicked person falling from prosperity to adversity: such a pattern might arouse fellow-feeling, but not pity or fear, since the one is felt for the undeserving victim of adversity, the other for one like ourselves (pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves); so the outcome will be neither pitiable nor fearful. This leaves, then, the person in-between these cases.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, Cassandra and Frederico are not wicked people but persons who make an error of judgement. It is possible to have compassion for the two protagonists. We see, therefore, that poetic justice becomes an unsatisfactory solution to the audience. This becomes even more evident taking into account the hate that the audience had for the specific tyrannical manifestation of *honor* in this play; in other words, public opinion disfavoured the outcome of this Dutch *comedia*.

The Antwerp audience was in the end intended to be on the side of Cassandra and Frederico rather than on the side of a society that demanded honourable behaviour of them. It was not the excess of emotions for a stepmother that should be tempered, but rather the cultural anxiety about a mother who is also a sexual woman in the eyes of her son. This cultural anxiety can be recognised in the ardent defence of rational

<sup>80</sup> Lope de Vega 1634, fol. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Aristotle 1995, 68–71.

restraint of the passions by other playwrights and humanists alike.<sup>82</sup> This restraint applied even more to situations where lovesick individuals pursued an incestuous, or otherwise forbidden relationship. In these cases, only God can help, as the famous physician Johan van Beverwijck wrote in his *Schat der gesontheit* when he refers to the familiar example of Prince Antiochus. Trying to cure the 'disease' by allowing the consummation of such love, as the court physician Erasistratus had allowed, would save the body, but it would mean losing one's soul. On the Dutch-language stage, lovesick patients are, thus, 'negative exempla that are to instil fear and compassion and with which audiences can identify themselves' as Van Marion concludes in a 2016 article about lovesickness on stage.<sup>83</sup>

On first impression, the audiences' intended reactions to *comedias* such as *De verliefde stiefmoeder* and their tragic characters, would be to resist the (reasonable) doctrines of natural, divine, and secular law against incest, and overthrow the honour code, especially when finding one's true love. And yet, they would have known that this was impossible in real life. The dénouement of this *comedia* affirms this outlook, although it also questions the stringent role of honour in society. The spectators surely understood Frederico's and Cassandra's suffering, and suffered along with them, about the impossibility of their love, however wrong they knew it to be.

#### False Accusation

In my second group of thematically related *comedias*, the protagonist is falsely accused by a tyrannical antagonist. Lope's *El perseguido* (1590, 'The Persecuted') is one illustrious example. The play was adapted by Rodenburgh for the Amsterdam theatre market in 1617. As in the Spanish, the adaptation *Casandra en Karel* poses a similar dilemma as *El castigo sin venganza*, but now the Duchess Casandra is in love with Karel, the chamberlain of her husband: again a forbidden love. In this play, however, the forbidden love leads Casandra to falsely accuse Karel of rape to protect her reputation. As reiterations of the story of Potiphar's wife from the Bible, both the original and the adaptation relate how Casandra discloses her feelings for Carlo (Karel in the Dutch version) and how he in turn rejects Casandra, because he is secretly married to Leonora, Duke Aernout's sister. Their marriage had remained a secret because Leonora was a woman of a much higher social station, for which reason she feared that her marriage to Karel

82 See primarily Konst 1993, *passim*; Sturkenboom 2014, 163–191.

83 Van Beverwijck 1637, 151–152; Van Marion 2016, 59.

would be met with a rejection by the court and her brother the Duke.<sup>84</sup> A rejected woman, Casandra is afraid that Karel may tarnish her reputation (*honor*). To prevent this, she goes to her husband and falsely accuses Karel of rape. Thus, Casandra uses deception to get her way and lies to take revenge on Karel. Karel remains, however, steadfast and loyal to the Duke.

Karel is incarcerated and only after explaining to Duke Aernout that he is innocent and has been married to Leonora for over six years, he is released from prison. He proves his innocence to Aernout by showing him how he has been visiting Leonora every night through an ingeniously deceptive system the two lovers created: in the middle of the night, Karel comes to Leonora's window and when Leonora's lap dog barks, it is safe for Karel to come up. Learning that Karel is released from prison and is furthermore married to Leonora, Casandra wants to overcome her embarrassment by taking revenge upon Karel, intending to kill both him and his son with Leonora (as discussed in Chapter 2). She fails and is exiled, after which she repents.<sup>85</sup> Generally speaking, the play teaches that love and lust are mutually exclusive, and love the greater of the two, as is expressed in the sextet of the introductory sonnet of this play:

How loyal matrimony of love defends itself bravely,  
And does not moan at temptation; how neither flattery, nor begging,  
nor sly seduction can break matrimony's loyalty,  
And how desires of the flesh do not harm a pure heart,  
How much love and lust differ one from the other,  
Is taught by Karel's love, and the lust of Casandra.<sup>86</sup>

In this regard, Dumas argued for three French adaptations of Lope's *comedias* by Jean Rotrou that the 'theme of persecuted and separated lovers appear to be linked to that of power.'<sup>87</sup> She stated that the actions in these plays, just as in the Spanish originals, 'are based on a tension between love and a power of political origin, sometimes tyrannical, which tries to control or appropriate the love.'<sup>88</sup> This is the case in

84 Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 44–45.

85 Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 59

86 Rodenburgh 1617a, fol. \* 4<sup>r</sup>: 'Hoe trouwe liefdens echt Zich moedelik borstweerd't, / En geen aenvechting kreunt, noch vlaiery noch smeken, / Noch snood' boelagie kan geen echtens trouwe breken, / En vleeschelike lust geen reyn gemoede deert, / Hoe veel de liefd en min verschelen d'een van d'andere / Leert Karels liefde, en de minne van Casandre.'

87 Dumas 2017, 108.

88 Dumas 2017, 108–109.

*Karel en Casandra*, and also appears in another French adaptation: that of Lope's *Laura perseguida*, which was translated by Rotrou in French as *Laure persecutée*. In turn, the actor-playwright Van Germez took this French version as the base text for his own *Vervolgde Laura*.

*Vervolgde Laura*, which like *Karel en Casandra* centres around a false accusation, demonstrates a problematic approach towards love and honour. The false accusation made by the king in this play—like Duchess Casandra, a symbol of stately power—likewise complicates and tries to appropriate the love between the protagonists. Typifying it according to the central false accusation, as Christophe Couderc likewise does, may benefit our understanding of an important group of adaptations that can be primarily found in the Dutch Republic, but less so in Flanders. According to Couderc, 'the play deals with an archetypal conflict between honour, or the social aristocratic law, which demands—apart from other, multiple obligations—the social equality of husband and wife, and love, as individual impulse' says Couderc.<sup>89</sup>

This question of equality is at the crux of *Vervolgde Laura*. The protagonist Laura and Prince Orantee are madly in love, but their different social stations makes them an unsuitable match. If they were to marry, Orantee's *honra* (his physical honour, as described above) is at stake. The king wants his son to instead marry the Princess of Poland. In order for Orantee to agree to this resolution, Laura must be eliminated as the object of his love; she must be removed from the stage, quite literally. Therefore, the king concocts a heinous lie that Laura has been throwing her decorum (*honor*) to the wind, sleeping around with many other suitors, and thus deceiving his son. Laura remains stoic in the face of this lie, as a virtuous protagonist is expected to do in *comedia nueva*. The conflict of *comedias* originate from their characters' strength: it takes courage to stand their ground when social and stately forces work against them, especially when deception, a common theme in *comedias* (as discussed in the opening of this chapter) is used to separate lovers.

Although the reason for her exclusion, Laura's inequality does not define her as a person. She is a self-respecting woman and needs no confirmation or validation from Orantee or the king. Therefore, she does not try to counter the king's accusation that she is a promiscuous woman, when even Orantee momentarily believes the heinous lies his father and his helpers have been telling him, calling her a whore to her face.<sup>90</sup> When the Prince finally realises that Laura was falsely accused, Orantee must prove his worth to her and not the other way around. Here, her *honor* takes precedence over

89 Couderc 2015, 10.

90 Van Germez 1645, v. 1127a.

his *honra*. Therefore, Orantee disguises himself as his own servant, to whom Laura may be more willing to speak, and visits her. He uses this small deception to explain:

- ORANTEE.        The Prince admits his guilt: because he said  
                          That his own passion made him enraged due to distrust.  
                          [...]
- LAURA.           But for a lover to fight me,  
                          like an enemy! and to falsely accuse me of viciousness  
                          With the goal to subject me to spitefulness!  
                          [...]
- To scold me [for a whore]! Oh! To not spare my honour!  
                          Certainly it is unbecoming of a royal son,  
                          Who should continuously combine courtesy with power.<sup>91</sup>

Laura demonstrates that she has an abundance of *honor* and this is not tied to any formal title, despite the fact that she does not have any *honra* to account for. *Vervolgde Laura* presents, therefore, not a mere tension between love and honour, but the play also questions whether the possession of worldly honour is a reasonable prerequisite for two people to love each other. When in the closing scene, Laura is revealed to be a princess herself, this proves that *honra* is fleeting, but *honor* is eternal.

In a third example of this type of *comedia* which revolves around an accusation, the hero might have eternal *honor*, but it cannot save him from a tragic death. General Bellizarius finds his death in De Grieck's *Den grooten Bellizarius* (1658) after Empress Theodora falsely accuses him of rape. Like *Vervolgde Laura*, this play is a translation of an adaptation by Rotrou, *Le Bélisaire* (1644). Empress Theodora is similar to Casandra in *Casandra en Karel*. Therefore, Theodora should also be seen as an incarnation of Potiphar's wife. The trusting General Bellizarius in *Den grooten Bellizarius* becomes, just as the Duke's chamberlain Karel in *Casandra en Karel*, victim of a deep-seated grudge. Although Bellizarius says that he cannot remember it, Theodora has felt her honour harmed since Bellizarius rejected her when she was not yet empress. This drives the plot: Theodora's desire to assassinate Bellizarius for rejecting her,

91 Van Germez 1645, vv. 1376–1377, 1385–1387, 1389–1391: 'ORANTEE. De Prins bekend zelf dat hy schult heeft: want hy zeit / Dat hem zijn eigen drift, door wantrou maect verbolgen. [...] LAURA. Maer my, van minnaer, te bekrijgen, / Gelijk een vyand! en my valsheid op te tijgen / Met voorneem van my valsheid aen te doen! [...] my / Te schelden voor een! ha! mijn eer niet te verschonon! Voorwaer het is de stam eens vorsts niet recht vertonen, / Die steeds de heusheid met de macht vereent.'

which she perceives as dishonouring her, which fuels an even deeper rage as her husband, Emperor Justiniaen, grants Bellizarius titles and proposes they rule the empire together as equals. While the biblical Joseph and Rodenburgh's Karel were released from prison after gaining the favour of Pharaoh and Duke Aernout respectively, Bellizarius is not so lucky.<sup>92</sup> In contrast to his counterparts, Bellizarius is executed by his overlord, Emperor Justiniaen.

Theodora's actions are, however, not condoned by her peers. It becomes evident that other characters think that it is just a matter of perspective whether Theodora has really been dishonoured. The lady-in-waiting Camilla says, for example, that it does not befit an empress to seek revenge, and even more so since the supposed dishonour was received when she was not yet a ruler:

Because the time has now changed your status,  
It is a wonder that this does not happen to your anger;  
To avenge such scorn is unbecoming to Theodora,  
Now that she governs the raising and setting of Aurora  
And puts laws in place: and although you are scorned,  
When you received the scorning, you were not yet crowned.  
Thus, pull out your enlightenment to forget out of bravery.<sup>93</sup>

Camilla is indeed similar to the lady-in-waiting Camilla in *Casandra en Karel*. She too is unable to convince her lady to have temperance. As ladies-in-waiting, both Camillas are archetypal in their service, but also function as temperate counter-voices to their ladies' excessively passionate behaviour. Because Casandra and Theodora are driven by a distorted sense of honour, Karel and Bellizarius can hardly be blamed for their actions. Amidst a group of courtiers who plot their deaths, both heroes stand firm in their beliefs and, like Laura, refuse to strike back.

The focus on human interaction and past decisions mark *Den grooten Bellizarius* as different from the 'home-grown' plays of the early seventeenth century in which the protagonist is chastised for being overly passionate. Bellizarius is clearly impassionate, unlike those around him. And yet, Theodora successfully tricks her husband

<sup>92</sup> Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 45.

<sup>93</sup> De Griek 1658, 8: 'Wanneer den tydt nu heeft verandert uwe staet, / 't Is wonder dat het soo niet met u gramschap gaet, / Te wreecken sulcke hoôn voegt niet aen Theodoore, / Nu zy den ondergang en op-gang van Auroore / Beheerst en wetten stelt, en schoon gy zyt gehoont, / Toen gy het hoôn ontfinckt, en waert gy niet gekroont, / Treckt u verlichting dan uit moedig te vergeten.'

into believing that Bellizarius has betrayed him by making advances on the Empress, and he is consequently executed. Despite what initially appears to be a triumph, Theodora too faces dire consequences. She is rejected and expelled by her husband, precisely as Casandra was in Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel*.<sup>94</sup> Either the spectator can interpret the play as an example of a man who was too good for a harsh world or as a warning against giving in to passions, because power is dangerous and has the ability to corrupt.

*Casandra en Karel* and *Vervolgde Laura* conclude with a celebration of the lovers, whereas *Den grooten Bellizarius*, like *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, ends in tragic death where the figures of authority—Emperor Justiniaen and the Duke of Ferrara—act righteously, but end up alone. While Karel and Leonora were already married but can now live legitimately as lovers, Laura and Orantee's love is legitimated by her new-found pedigree which likewise enables their union. The solution is quite simple, but what becomes clear in this 'generic plot' type is that Karel, Laura, and Bellizarius do not possess worldly *honra* per se, but have significant moral *honor* that prizes their good character above their social station: they have innate nobility, which is purer than any formal title can ever bestow. Leonora and Orantee were never wrong in loving their significant others, even when the rest of the world could not see it. Furthermore, Karel, Laura, and Bellizarius are underdogs, which makes them particularly sympathetic characters. Especially in the bourgeois Dutch Republic, one can imagine how these characters of low(er) birth were received with empathy, especially while the nobility generally appeared in a tyrannical light. This was not an uncommon sentiment in Dutch society.<sup>95</sup> In other words, a title can turn you into a tyrant.

### Jealousy as Delusion

In the third subtheme, love is problematic when the characters are deluded by their overwhelming emotions. In Rodenburgh's play *Ialorsche studenten*, a group of male students engage in the courtship of three women from Leiden. As a *comedia urbana*, Lope's *La escolástica celosa* is peopled with normal citizens, bringing the characters closer to the audience who watched them. The same applies to Rodenburgh's adaptation, who, as discussed in Chapter 1, brought the setting closer to home by using a *couleur locale*. As such, spectators are confronted with an intriguing courtship display: Juliana seems to be in love with Cardenio, who in turn is also falling in love with her.

<sup>94</sup> Van Marion and Vergeer 2016, 58–59.

<sup>95</sup> See e.g., Veenstra 1968, 20–21.

At the same time, Valerio, who is also in love with Juliana, is witness to the scene. A jealous man, he says that he was forced to deceive Juliana by dressing as a farmer while complaining that Juliana had promised herself to him:

*Valerio enters in farmer's dress, with a shovel in hand, and speaks.*

VALERIO. Oh! How does this view kill my poor heart.  
 The mind predicted the truth like I now find.  
 The jealousy made (to see if my beloved  
 Juliana also converses with Cardenio)  
 Me dress in these clothes: (the heart of a suitor is bold)  
 Now I see, it is unnecessary to [merely] suspect.  
 [...]  
 Juliana swore me loyalty,  
 And would this sweet woman  
 Forget me when she is with him?  
 Is female love so light,  
 That out of sight  
 They know of no loyalty?<sup>96</sup>

In the first act of the play, Juliana leads the two boys on, making them so jealous that they want to duel each other. Their friends prevent this bloody engagement, however. Out of spite, Cardenio courts Celia, while Valerio remains ever suspicious.

Celia plays along with the heartbroken boy. The problem is, however, that Celia already had a boyfriend. Her boyfriend Marcio sees Celia and Cardenio together and thinks that his girlfriend has been disloyal. Marcio breaks up with her. Then, Celia meets with her friend Tembranda, who has been left by another student, Fabricio, although they were engaged to be married. Having been dumped herself, Celia remarks that students are 'rogue companions / deceitful and vicious, cunning and full of tricks.'<sup>97</sup> The audience knows, however, that these students and daughters

96 Rodenburgh 1617c, fols. A3<sup>r</sup>-A3<sup>v</sup>: 'Valerio comt uyt in een Boere py, met een spa in de hant, ende spreeckt. / VALERIO. Ha! Hoe dat dit ghesicht mijn arme hert vermoort / 't ghemoet voorseyt de waerheyt g'lijck ich nu bevinde, / De Jalousie deed (om sien of myn beminde / Juliana met Cardeen ooc t'samen spraecke houd) / Ic my in dese cleen: (een lievers hert is stout) / Vercleden, nu ic siet, tis Nood'loos te geloven. [...] Juliana swoer my trou, / En sou dees lieve vrou / Met hem my gans vergeten? / Is vrouwe liefd' soo licht, / Dat zijnde uyt t'gesicht / Sy van geen trouwe weeten?'

97 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. C3<sup>v</sup>: 'schallicke gesellen / Bedrieghelick en valsch, deurtrapt en vol bedroch.'

of Leiden's citizenry easily change partners if it is opportune, and try to deceive one another if it benefits them. The characters continue to betray one another and only when everyone is disguised in the final act, do they share their true feelings and throw away their masks. The deceitful games of the characters gave rise to jealousy and stood in the way of their mutual happiness.

The jealousy of the men in this play is a dangerous passion that produces delusions, which the spectators surely knew from books they had at home: the above-mentioned Van Beverwijck described jealousy ('Nijt') as a sorrow ('Droefheyt'), which 'cannot defend itself when one would accuse her of being the foulest and ugliest of all passions, because so many of the others originate from a weakness of nature, but Jealousy solely from a sheer anger of our own will.'<sup>98</sup> The moralist Cats goes a step further than Van Beverwijck in his *Houwelick*, saying that 'No sickness, no persistent urge of all the fierce passions bears in our mind such strange delusional monstrosities, such mad unreasonableness as this haunting.'<sup>99</sup> Moreover, Cats continues:

[Jealousy] Which she [the Night], strengthened by delusion, has brought forth in the world.

Rumours without ground, continuous suspicion of harmfulness,  
And slander, in the habit of feeding the lie,  
And always renewed shock, and steady fanaticism,  
And thirst for hot vengeance are ceaseless there.

[...]

Never does she show a happier countenance, than when her clever actions  
Aim for deception, and lie in wait to catch;  
Her favour is solely deceit. On the outside [she has] a beautiful visage,  
On the inside only murder, and nothing more than cruel hate.<sup>100</sup>

98 Van Beverwijck 1637, 125–126: 'Sy en kan haer in 't minste niet verantwoordten, als men haer beschuldigt te zijn de vuylste en leelickste van al de Passien, voor soo vele alle d'andere, komen uyt een swackheydt der Nature, maer de Nijt alleen uyt een loutere boosheyt van onsen eygen wil.'

99 Cats 1625, fol. \*ff3<sup>r</sup>: 'Geen sucht, geen harde drift van alle felle tochten / En baert in onsen geest soo vreemde waen-gedrochten / Soo dullen onverstant als dese spokery.'

100 Cats 1625, fol. \*ffi<sup>v</sup>–\*ff2<sup>r</sup>: 'Dat sy [de Nacht], uyt [W]aen begort, ter weerelt heeft gebracht. / Ge-

But *Cats* does not stop there. The popular author also discusses the consequences of unfounded jealousy: 'But he who with clever lurking waits on his companion, learns to do sometimes what was never thought before.'<sup>101</sup> However, the works of *Cats* and Van Beverwijck were likely soon forgotten once the spectators gathered in the theatre to watch Rodenburgh's play and were probably of little influence on their ability to enjoy what unfolded on stage. This does not mean that Rodenburgh did not mean to warn his audience with *Ialoersche studenten*. Although the playwright does not explicitly moralise for his spectators here, the play still holds up a mirror to the audience: Rodenburgh's dedication to Maria Steenburen explains that the real behaviour of contemporary youth is even worse than in his *comedia urbana*.<sup>102</sup>

Juliana's jealous suitors are given free reign to spy on each other and learn through this of Juliana's deceitful, opportunistic ways. And the same applies to Celia when she demonstrates similar behaviour. However, none of their actions have especially negative consequences. Nearly all the youths marry at the end of the play, even though their jealousy could have cost them all dearly. In a way, Rodenburgh even celebrated the actions of these young students when he chose to stage the consequences of spying by means of two *tableaux vivants*, which in this play are not only a form of spectacle but also an inherent part of the action. In the first *tableau vivant*, Juliana and Cardenio hug. As in many contemporary love emblems, such as in Hooft's *Emblemata amatoria* (1611), Cupid shoots the two lovers with his arrows. Meanwhile, Valerio stands in the wings behind one of the stage curtains and sees the whole spectacle. Vireno stands on the other side.<sup>103</sup> A bit later, the roles are reversed. Now, Valerio and Juliana hug very intensely, while the infant god of love shoots them. This time it is Cardenio who spies on the lovers.<sup>104</sup>

Through these *tableaux*, the play establishes dramatic irony and reveals the deception in an pregnant, emblematic way. The many stage directions in *Ialoersche studenten*

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ruchten sonder gront, geduerich Quaet-vermoeden, / En Achter-klap, gewoon de Leugen aen te voeden, / En alijt verssche Schrick, en staeghe Dweepery, / En Dorst tot heete wraeck sijn haer geduerich by. [...] Noyt toontse blyden schijn, dan als haer slimme gangen / Sijn uyt op haer bed-roch, en loeren om te vangen; / Haer gunst is enckel list, van buyten schoon gelaet, / Van binnen enckel moort, en niet als wreeden haet.'

101 *Cats* 1625, fol. \*ff3r: 'Maer die met slim geloer op sijn geselschap wacht, / Die leert haer somtijts doen dat noyt en is gedacht.'

102 Rodenburgh 1617d, fol. \* 2v; see also Abrahamse 1997, 97–98.

103 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. A4r: 'Vertooninghe, waer Iuliana met Cardenio omhelst sijn, en Cupido schiet hun beyde, Valerio staet in een hoeck vant gardijn en siet het, en Vireno aen d'ander syde.'

104 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. C1v: 'Vertooninghe, waer Iuliana met Valerio seer minnelick malkander omhelsen, en cupido schiet hun, Cardenio staet aen een syde, en siet het.'

contribute further to the dramatic irony: they indicate whether a character is present on stage, and whether certain information is known to characters. To the reader (although not to the spectator), this further intensifies the perceived jealousy of the lovers:

*Valerio and Ostilio enter, with the capes over their ears, from the one side. And within there is music in honour of Iuliana; Cardenio and Vireno stay on the other side of the stage, and the music having ended, Valerio speaks.*<sup>105</sup>

Stage directions are also explored by Turner in his examination of the terms ‘within’ (exits) and ‘out’ (enters) in English Renaissance theatre. These stage terms have a counterpart in both Dutch and Spanish with the terms ‘binnen’ and ‘uit,’ and ‘va(n)se’ and ‘sale(n),’ respectively.<sup>106</sup> The implication of these stage terms is that those who are ‘within,’ cannot be witnessed by the characters on stage or witness the events on stage themselves. Meanwhile, those who are ‘out,’ are out in the open and everything they share on stage, they consequently also share with the spectators and the characters lurking in the shadows. Turner explains that the term ‘within’ ‘designates a kind of location, a place that the actor goes “to”, even if this place remains elusive: perhaps it is “offstage”, and thus in the theatre; perhaps it is “elsewhere”, and thus in the fiction[al]’ world of the play discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>107</sup> The directions signify the way that spectators perceive a play as being presented in a theatrical space, indicate where a character exists, and how much he or she knows in comparison to spectators. In a play full of deception, such as Rodenburgh’s *Ialorsche studenten* (and Lope’s original *La escolástica celosa*), this information is imperative for spectators, and the readers at

105 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. B1<sup>v</sup>: ‘Valerio en Ostilio comen uyt, met de mantels om hun ooren aen d’een syde, en binnen wert gespeelt ter eeren Iuliana: Cardenio met Vireno blijven aen d’ander syde, en t’spel geeyndicht zijnde, spreeckt Valerio.’

106 In addition to the variable ‘sale(n)’ (see, e.g., Lope de Vega 1604d, fol. 75<sup>r</sup>), the stage term ‘entra(n)’ is also used in Spanish to signify that a character comes out onto the stage. For two late-sixteenth or early-seventeenth century manuscripts of Miguel de Cervantes’ *El cerco de Numancia*, Silvia Esteban Naranjo has shown that the different stage terms indicate spatial-temporal changes in the play and thus determine our understanding (2016, *passim*). The meaning of the stage term ‘entra(n)’ is the same as ‘sale(n)’ except for the point of view that is taken: ‘sale(n)’ means as much as that the character comes out from a space that is inside, whereas ‘entra(n)’ would mean the opposite, that a character was outside and is now coming onto the stage. The use of these two stage terms is not fixed, however, and alternately occur in a single play, such as Lope’s *La escolástica celosa* demonstrates; see, e.g., Lope de Vega 1604d, fols. 76<sup>r</sup>, 78<sup>v</sup>.

107 Turner 2006, 174–175.

home, to understand who knows what, and in turn, the motives behind their words and actions.

When Celia's boyfriend, Martio, eavesdrops on Celia and Cardenio, his position on the stage is, however, even more elusive than the activity implies. The text indicates that he is not really on stage and can, therefore, not fully hear what Celia and Cardenio are discussing: 'Martio stands half behind the curtain, and hears some of what Celia says.'<sup>108</sup> In situations like Martio's here, the characters are neither out, nor within: they are 'without.' Turner describes 'without' as a spatial 'crux,' which is established when a character, such as the old King Lear in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, refuses 'to move either "within" or "out" and instead wanders "without" into a breach in fictional space to flail in the potential that surrounds him, a point somewhere between a coherent location and the platform stage.'<sup>109</sup>

So, Martio overhears Celia, but is not fully 'out' on stage. Thus, he cannot hear the full extent of her conversation with Cardenio. The most peculiar aspect of Martio's action is, in fact, that he stands half behind the stage curtain, using an architectural element of the theatre as a hiding place, positioning himself somewhere exterior to the fiction of the play, 'between a coherent location and the platform stage.'<sup>110</sup> Martio's inability to hear everything has disastrous consequences for him when he breaks up with Celia, not out of jealousy or spite but out of sorrow: he is the only one who at the end of Rodenburgh's play is left without a fiancée. The other men engaged in scheming and deception, whereas the otherwise well-intentioned Martio drastically broke up with Celia based on incomplete information and consequently ends up alone. Abrahamse saw this as a peculiarity of the plot as there is no poetic justice for Martio, but I instead argue that Martio's inexperience in effectively employing deception and his unlucky position on the stage made him victim to the love game that the other characters play with one another.<sup>111</sup>

Rodenburgh wrote in his dedication that this play showed how in fact 'the frenzy of love passion, the labyrinth of confusion, the caustic vengefulness, the disguised deceptions' reflect reality.<sup>112</sup> Abrahamse interprets this to mean that there is almost no moral lesson, at least not in comparison to Rodenburgh's other adaptations from

108 Rodenburgh 1617c, fol. C2<sup>v</sup>: 'Martio staet half achter t'gordijn, en hoort sommighe reden van Celia.'

109 Turner 2006, 176.

110 Turner 2006, 176.

111 Abrahamse 1997, 98.

112 Rodenburgh 1617d, fol. \* 2<sup>v</sup>: 'de razernye van liefdens passie, de doolhovicghe verwarringhe, de vinnighe wraeckgiericheydt, de vermomde bedriegheren.'

Spanish.<sup>113</sup> Van Stipriaan sees such plot structures as opportunities for Dutch playwrights to focus on the literary game which they wish to play with the reader or spectator, preventing them from identification with the comical, but common characters. This could then open up a domain where various subjects could be discussed in a comical or farcical way without the necessity of reconciling what is shown with the dominant morale.<sup>114</sup> That dominant morale was, according to Abrahamse, hardly reflected in Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten*.<sup>115</sup> Van Stipriaan argues that spectators should not aim to recognise obvious stereotypes, but rather the enigmas, reversals, parallels, and associations which they must discern and resolve into meaningful interpretations.<sup>116</sup> I maintain, however, that in line with Rebecca Yearling and Ferket's analysis of comic theatre, we should see this as a way for Rodenburgh to subtly provoke his audience: the mixed message of *Ialoersche studenten* disoriented spectators and broke with moral codes. Therefore, it was unclear according to which norms and standards the play and the characters should be judged, whether the norms of the fiction or the norms of reality had to prevail.<sup>117</sup> By this, Rodenburgh offered a provocative, though playful *exemplum* to his audience.

### *The Suspicious Man*

In a variation on the theme of delusional jealousy, there are *comedias* in which an over-jealous or protective male—a father, brother, or husband—guards a woman against a male suitor of lower nobility, seemingly to protect her honour, but ultimately protecting his own. McKendrick traces the origins of many of these conflicts in *comedia nueva* to a patriarchal society:

The romantic stage-hero must by definition be able to exert control, to assert himself over whatever situation temporarily threatens his well-being. [...] Where women are conceived of as living by, through, and for men, where a man's wife, daughter, or sister is conceived of as an extension of himself, there are bound to be fertile ambiguities. The women's actions reflect upon the men, who cannot entirely hope

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113 Abrahamse 1997, 97–98.

114 Van Stipriaan 1996, 161–162.

115 Abrahamse 1997, 98.

116 Van Stipriaan 1996, 161–162.

117 Yearling 2016, 164; Ferket 2021, 228.

to prevent any threat to their reputations, but who then, given their social and sexual ascendancy, can do something about it if they wish to. Threat and solution are both contained within the one set of circumstances.<sup>118</sup>

In these cases, the only way to bypass the protector, possessive of his bloodline and his sexual honour, is through deception. This can be witnessed especially in two of Lope's plays, *El cuerdo loco* (1620) and *El mayor imposible* (1647), but also in their respective Dutch adaptations: Joris de Wijse's *Voorzigtige dolheit* (1650) and Joan Blasius' *De malle wedding* (1671).

In the introduction of Blasius' *De malle wedding*, the playwright explains: 'as such, it often happens that a woman breaks free more fiery in her curtailed and obstructed temptations, if she is retained in a stricter manner; similarly, gunpowder explodes fiercer if it is stuffed tighter when fire breaks out.'<sup>119</sup> This is a moralistic (and misogynistic) verdict to be sure, which echoes Cats' pragmatic advice to trust your female family members, because 'she who you fully trust, does not want to be unfaithful.'<sup>120</sup>

Warned by these moralists, spectators can see how the lovers in *De malle wedding* sidestep the Argus-eyed brother through a ruse: by hiding in a book case, the male suitor enters the chambers of his beloved lady. The lady's brother, who is also her guardian, and who hates the suitor to his very core, is unaware of what occurs. It is a famous ruse to be sure, since Hugo Grotius had also hid in a book case to escape Castle Loevestein in 1621; therefore, this ruse becomes a subtle but clever reference to Dutch historical events. This time, however, the hero does not try to escape, but tries to enter.

The guardians in these *comedias* are the lovers' primary adversaries. They try to appropriate their love through misuse of their power; their excuse is always that they are their sisters' or daughters' protectors. Sometimes a father may even decide to place his own child under restraint, as takes place in *Vervolgde Laura*, where the King tries to separate Laura and Orantee not by imprisoning the female suitor but rather his son. Only when that fails does he blacken Laura's reputation. Isaac Vos' *Gedwongen vrient* demonstrates that a male adversary, who is initially wary of his sister's virtue can

118 McKendrick 1984, 323.

119 Blasius 1671, fol. \*5<sup>r</sup>: 'so gebeurt het meenigmaal, dat een Vrow, hoe sy vaster beslooten word, hoe sy vieriger in haar besnoeide en belette begeerlijkheid uitbreekt, gelijk het Bus-kruid, hoe het vaster gestopt is, hoe het krachtiger uitbarst, waneer d'er de brand in slaat.'

120 Cats 1625, fol. 114<sup>r</sup>: 'diemen veel betrou, en wil niet ontrou wesen.'

also become a necessary ally, or a ‘forced friend.’ Realising that his own love Lizaaura is determined to save her brother Count Astolfo from prison, Prince Turbino accompanies her, although he has no affection for the man that has been courting his sister Princess Luzinda without his consent. When Luzinda tells her brother that she will join Lizaaura on her mission, Turbino admits to his sister:

TURBINO. I am not Astolfo, although I am his equal  
 In love; so that I have to be now because of love  
 Astolfo’s forced friend. Luzinda, do not fear me;  
 Do not fear your brother, although he has reason,  
 And cause to kill you because of the audacious deed: I forgive  
 You always. I believe that you and I were born  
 Beneath the same planet: you have chosen the brother,  
 I love the sister. Oh! Heavenly decision,  
 You have made Astolfo, Lizaaura is my bride.<sup>121</sup>

Turbino then indeed joins Luzinda, on her quest to free Astolfo from captivity, because Lizaaura (Astolfo’s sister, and Turbino’s lover) will also be there. So, although he is no friend of Astolfo, his mutual interests—to be with his lover—lead him to join Luzinda and Lizaaura’s cause.

*Voorzigtige dolheit* also stages a male protector. For this, we can look at the opening scene. There, guardian and brother, Morosin, lays claim to his sister’s Lucinde’s honor. It has been tainted, because she has had sex with a man who is unbeknownst to him; he is so blinded by rage at the act itself that he misses the man’s identity. The audience, however, learns what Morosin does not, namely, that this man is King Anthony himself. According to the play’s summary:

The young king in the spring of his youth, [...] sets his heart on the beautiful Countess Lucinde, who acknowledges his love and grants him free passage, after which the king being in her chambers, is discovered one night by Count Morosin (her brother), and is helped in

121 Vos 1646, fol. D1<sup>v</sup>: ‘TURBINO. Ik ben Astolfo niet, al ben ik hem gelijk / In liefdde; zoo dat ik door liefdde nu moet weezen / Astolfs gedwongen vrient. Luzinda wilt niet vreezen; / Schroom voor u Broeder niet, Schoon dat hy reeden heeft, / En oorzaak u te doon door ’t stout bestaan: ’k vergeeft / U al te maal. ’k Gelooff dat gy en ik, gebooren / Zijn onder een Planeet, gy hebt de Broer verkooren, / Ik heb de Zuster lieff, O! Heemelsche besluit, / Gy zijt Astolfus deel, Lizaaura is mijn Bruyt.’

his escape without revealing his identity. The Count inflamed with anger accuses his sister of promiscuity, and wishes, in order to restore his honour, to know the identity of the man who has escaped him.<sup>122</sup>

During this scene, Morosin approaches Lucinde with his sword drawn, but she reproaches him for laying claim to her *honor*. She accepts that he shares her honour, being her brother, but he is not her spouse and so his reaction is overbearing. In reply to her brother's accusations, she says:

LUCINDE. I know very well that I am bound to you by blood,  
 And my honour concerns you partly as my brother, but  
 Not as my husband; you denounce Lucinde's virtue too much,  
 While you dare to contaminate the honourable heart with dis-  
 honour,  
 And dare here to whet your tongue and blade on this bosom.<sup>123</sup>

Morosin then asks himself: 'Do I feel my honour injured, my fighting arm armed, in order to relieve our House of that disgrace by your death?'<sup>124</sup> However, instead of killing his sister he is immediately moved to compassion and wants to know the suitor's identity, deciding that if the man is of noble birth he would allow his sister's romance. Lucinde still feels that not she, but he, has tainted her honour by accusing her of imprudent behaviour. They cannot resolve the issue as Morosin is summoned to court where King Anthony appoints him general of his army, only to prevent Morosin from finding out that he himself is Lucinde's suitor.

King Anthony's decision to promote Morosin unleashes a power struggle between him and his former general, Dinardo, and Dinardo's accomplice (and King Anthony's stepmother) Rosania. Miscommunication and deception are the main reasons for

122 De Wijse 1650, fol. A1<sup>r</sup>: 'De jonge koning in 't bloejenst van zijn jeugt [...] zijn zinnen op de schoone Gravin Lucinde, die zijn liefde erkent en met vrye toegang begunstigt, waar over de Koning zich in haar vertrek vindende, op een nacht van den Graaf Morosin haar broeder beloopt, en onbekent wechgeholpen wiert; de graaf hier door vol gramschap, beschuldigt zijn zuster met onkuisheit, en begeert, om zijn eer te voldoen, de man te weten, die hem ontkomen is.'

123 De Wijse 1650, fol. A3<sup>r</sup>: 'LUCINDE. Ik weet wel dat ik ben door 't bloet aan u verbonden, / En u mijn eer ten dele aangaat als broeder: maar / Niet als gemaal; gy spreekt Lucindes deugt te naar, / Terwijl gy 't eerbaar hert met oneer durft besmetten, / En hier uw tong, en kling op deze boesem wetten.'

124 De Wijse 1650, fol. A4<sup>r</sup>: 'Ik voel mijn eer gequetst, mijn strijdbare arm gemandt, / Om door uw dood ons huis t'ontlasten van die schandt?'

the action: Morosin wants his and his sister's honor restored (because why else does Lucinde conceal her suitor's identity?); the king fears that Morosin will find out about the affair (because the young king's behaviour is unbefitting a ruler, which would taint his honour); and Dinardo and Rosania think that the King knows that they desire the Albanian throne (because why else would he replace Dinardo as general?). Dinardo and Rosania plot against Anthony, deciding to feed him a potion that will turn him mad. Instead, the king is informed of their plot and decides to feign his madness to uncover the plot. Too late he realises that Dinardo and Rosanio intent for Anthony to kill Lucinde in a frenzy in the hope that this will anger her brother Morosin so that he will kill Anthony. Only with the help of Morosin is Lucinde successfully saved and can marry her lover, King Anthony.

In *Voorzigtige dolheit*, it is the characters' fear of losing their honour that drives the 'guardian-type' plot and forces each character to conceal their true intentions. Only the audience knows everyone's motives. This dramatic irony is exhilarating and shows that in a world where love and honour are bound by social rules, people risk losing their social position and therefore life as they know it, if they are not cautious or simply frank about their love.

#### *Abuse of Power and Separated Lovers*

In the final group, the antagonists desire power and in order to gain it, they prevent the protagonists from pursuing their relationship. The plotlines of these plays share that the protagonists became a plaything of the antagonists in a game which allows them to both raise their station and be disgraced, all in the time span of the same performance. These plays have been characterised by Joan Oleza as *comedias del poder injusto* (*comedias of unjust power*), in which a despot is being led—and blinded—by his passions, while he separates the protagonist lovers to further advance his power.<sup>125</sup>

This is expressed in the motto of De Graef's *Joanna Koningin van Napels*. It reads: 'Tolluntur in altum / Ut lapsu graviore ruant' ('He is raised aloft that he may be hurled down in more headlong ruin'), a partial quote of Claudian from *In Rufinum*.<sup>126</sup> In the context of the play it refers to Queen Joanna's adversary Prince Andreas of Hungary, who tries to control and appropriate Queen Johanna's love for Prince Lodewijck

<sup>125</sup> Oleza 2004, *passim*, and 2005, *passim*; see also Sáez 2015a, 97.

<sup>126</sup> Book 1, Ch. 3; see, e.g., Claudian 1992, 28–29. The full quote is: 'No longer can I complain that the unrighteous man reaches the highest pinnacle of success. He is raised aloft that he may be hurled down in more headlong ruin.'

of Taranto. The last part of the quote (i.e., ‘Ut lapsu graviore ruant’) is also used as motto for an emblem in Cats’ *Spiegel van den ouden ende nieuwen tijt* (1632, ‘Mirror of the Old and New Age’). The moral message that Cats communicates is that he who rises higher than he ought to, falls steeper than he expected.<sup>127</sup> The theme was exceptionally popular in the Dutch Republic: it is expected that the protagonists’ fall evoked great pity from spectators, whereas the antagonists fell to much rejoicing. Therefore, it is understandable that this was also the subject of Serwouters’ *Den grooten Tamerlan*, in which the chieftain abuses his newly gained position as leader of Wallachia and humiliates Sultan Bayaset. This leads Aurora, daughter of the Byzantine emperor and wife of Bayaset, to poison the rebel-lord Tamerlan: he who rises higher, falls further.<sup>128</sup>

Joanna Koningin van Napels and *Den grooten Tamerlan* are accompanied by four other adaptations in this group which also happened to be perennial favourites in the seventeenth-century Amsterdam Public Theatre.<sup>129</sup> The plays are De Fuyter’s very popular *Verwarde hof*, De Wijse’s *Voorzigtige dolheit*, the all-time favourite Heynck’s *Veranderlyk geval*, and Heynck’s *Don Louis de Vargas*. Their popularity made them particular targets for Pels’ scrutiny, as discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>130</sup> Both *Verwarde hof* and *Veranderlyk geval* have similar plots: two lovers cannot be together, as a lust for power corrupts one of them (*Verwarde hof*) or corrupts other characters who then try to separate the lovers (*Veranderlyk geval*). The lust for power becomes tyrannical and appropriates their love. In both plays, this appropriation brings about the (temporary) fall of the protagonists. Everyone keeps up appearances and lies about their true desires. Therefore, Fortune seems to be the malefactor, but dramatic irony teaches us that the antagonists are truly responsible for the consequences, although the protagonists only learn this at the dénouement.

Yet, the antagonists are hardly ever punished, but almost always forgiven. Love and honour play a major role in the two comedias: in *Verwarde hof*, Carel is promoted from a mere unknown soldier to marquis so that he can marry Queen Matilde. She is charmed by the stranger and thus easily promotes Carel; as it turns out, she did so too easily. They marry. Having become both a marquis and king in such a short time, he grows arrogant and tyrannical. Although she still loves him, Matilde is compelled to drive him insane in order to temper his hubris. For this, she introduces Carel’s

127 Cats 1632, fols. Ccc3<sup>r</sup>–Ccc4<sup>r</sup>.

128 See Van Marion and Vergeer 2021, forthcoming.

129 For the popularity charts, see ONSTAGE 2015.

130 See Pels [1681] 1978, vv. 1066–1069.

previously unknown twin brother Henrico. Acting as Carel, Henrico will retract Carel's every decision. Driven mad by this turn of events, Carel releases control of the kingdom to Matilde and reconciles himself with Matilde's seniority. Again, honour is a force to be frowned upon, because it corrupts as much as it organises society. They are two sides of the same coin.

As discussed in Chapter 1, *Veranderlyk geval* differs in that Karel is rediscovered by his father, the king, and is immediately promoted to prince. This forces him to leave his beloved Margareta behind. His cousin Frederico wants the Neapolitan throne for himself, but can only become king if there is a female heir. He convinces Karel's adoptive father to admit to the king that not Karel, but rather Margareta is his true heir. Initially risen in station, Karel now falls from grace again, but he still cannot be with Margareta because she is now a princess. The lovers remain separated and Frederico's corrupted lust for power appropriates that love. In Karel's perception, it seems that evil forces work against him, but spectators know Frederico's motives. Karel and Margareta can only be together when in the *dénouement* Karel's adoptive father, Albano, admits that Karel was always the true heir, Frederico admits that he made Albano lie, and when Albano, furthermore, reveals that Margareta is the King's niece.

The plot structures of *comedias* are decidedly different than those of 'home-grown' plays. The early seventeenth-century tradition of Senecan-Scaligerian plays is based on the concept of an 'oogenblikke beweeging': 'an instantaneous motion and emotion that takes place at one single moment.' These must be simple and unambiguous so that the scene engages the viewer 'as if he were one of the bystanders.'<sup>131</sup> It concerns the depiction of the fierce and intense passions themselves, which must move the beholder along strictly rhetorical lines. Sluijter characterised the rendering of these passions as gripping visualisations which made audiences empathetic towards the suffering victim by representing their misery and distress as clearly as possible.<sup>132</sup>

Conversely, for his plays from the 1640s onwards, Vondel followed the Aristotelian model: *Jeptha* follows the dramatic structure of a protagonist who, as the result of a *hamartia* (a tragic flaw, an error of judgement), comes to realise what he did (*agnitio*) and then experiences a *peripeteia* (a dramatic reversal of mood from one extreme to the other which is often emotional in nature).<sup>133</sup> Vondel himself termed this a 'staetveranderinge' ('change of state'). Sluijter maintains that Vondel's plot structures

131 Sluijter 2010, 290–291.

132 Sluijter 2010, 288–292.

133 Sluijter 2010, 294–295.

incited fear and compassion ‘by way of continuous unfolding of the plot, in which inner conflicts, *woelingen* (literally: turbulences, agitations), as Vondel calls them, play an important role.’<sup>134</sup> As such, Vondel attests in his introduction to *Elektra* (1639) that ‘in this tragedy a multitude of passions revolve [*woelen*] most fiercely: anger, audacity, fear, anxiety, hate and love, fidelity and infidelity, grief and happiness.’<sup>135</sup> Such *woelingen* were responsible for eliciting emotions from spectators, and not spectacles of horror, nor gripping and gruesome stories as employed in the Senecan-Scaligerian plays, and later in the Horror and Spectacle plays.<sup>136</sup>

Contrary to these normative ‘home-grown’ traditions, Spanish *comedias* differed from the Aristotelian model, although Spanish playwrights clearly knew of and essentially implemented the plot structure as described by the Greek philosopher. Still, *comedia nueva* is different from Greek tragedy. This meant that the Spanish plays and, therefore, also the Dutch adaptations, not only constituted one *agnitio* and one *peripeteia*, but arguably many in the protagonists and antagonists alike. Furthermore, not all dramatic reversals are internal and thus emotional, although their responses to those reversals are. In some cases, the *peripeteia* is enforced by an external, sometimes despotic power, and is primarily of a social nature, unlike in Vondel’s plays where the protagonist has an ethical dilemma. In *comedias*, different protagonists experience an *agnitio* and a *peripeteia* at least twice but often more times. On the one hand, this is a way to bring social injustice to the fore when the *peripeteia* is of an external nature, and on the other, it is a way to show how unstable the mind of certain characters is when the *peripeteia* is of an internal nature. In the latter case, the dramatic reversals become almost comical or burlesque: how can someone make the same mistake twice?

The inner agitations of all characters swing back and forth between different passions, their ambitions, honour, duty, and not least their reason. In *Veranderlyk geval*, we can even see how the two protagonists mirror each other in when they experience their own *agnitios* and *peripeteias*. Meanwhile, in *Verwarde hof*, Carel is an emotionally-blinded despot who abuses his new-found power, prompting his wife Matilde, who as queen holds legitimate power—realising her mistake in marrying Carel—uses a ruse to bring about his fall. Instead of accepting his fate, Carel tries to regain power, at which he obviously fails. The humbled king experiences two *peripeteias*, but only

134 Sluijter 2010, 295.

135 Vondel 1639, fol. A2<sup>r</sup>: ‘In dit treurspel woelen veelerleie hartstoghten, gramschap, stoutigheid, vreeze, bekommeringe, haet en liefde, trouw, en ontrouw, droefheid en blyschap, elck om’t hevighste.’ Italics mine.

136 Sluijter 2010, 295.

one of his two *agnitios* is a true *agnitio* (Fig. 4.8). As the schematic plots of *Verwarde hof*, *Veranderlyk geval* (Fig. 4.9), and *Jeptha* (Fig. 4.10) demonstrate, the Dutch adaptations of Spanish plays drive the Aristotelian model over the top. Compared to the relatively modest display of *woelingen* in Vondel's plays, they truly overwhelm spectators with their dramatic peaks and valleys.

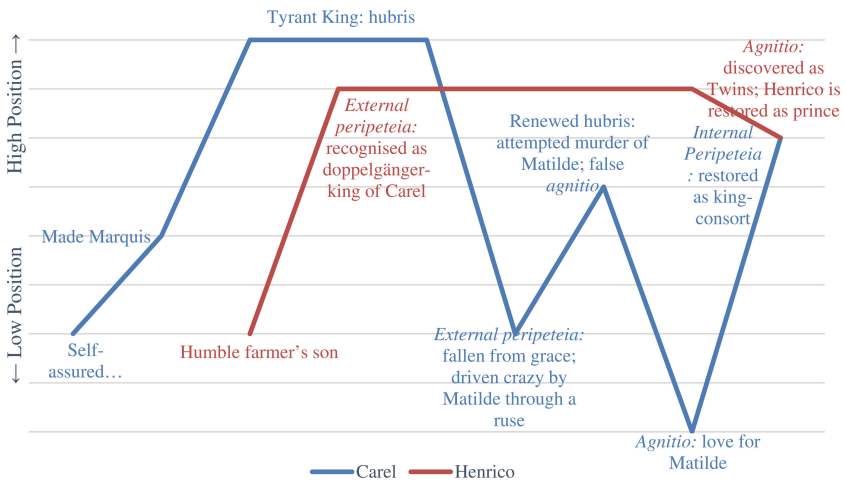


FIG. 4.8 Development of the social positions of Carel and Henrico in *Verwarde hof*

What about the two other perennial favourites that Pels mentioned? In addition to *Voorzigtige dolheit*'s plotline of the disapproving brother as discussed above, the play also problematises the rise and fall of the protagonist, meaning that the play thematises two different generic plotlines at once. The play also stages King Anthony's feigned insanity (his downfall), brought about in response to the attempted coup of Rosania and Dinardo. The expectation was that being insane and thus incapable of ruling his kingdom, he could be easily toppled from the throne. Through his act of deception, the King more easily manoeuvred through the court, exploiting everyone's misperception of him as harmless. The spectators know, in fact, that he is not. The scheming usurpers plan to murder his lover Lucinde and pin it on the apparently insane Anthony, assuming that Morosin will in turn kill Anthony in revenge. Thus, by appropriating the couple's love, Rosania and Dinardo aim to claim the kingdom for themselves.

Likewise, Don Louis in *Don Louis de Vargas* must regain his former position at court after his father has been executed as a traitor for supposedly assisting the Moors in the war against Castile. Louis' disgrace is, however, not enough for his adversary Don Julian, who together with his father are the real traitors and had set up the

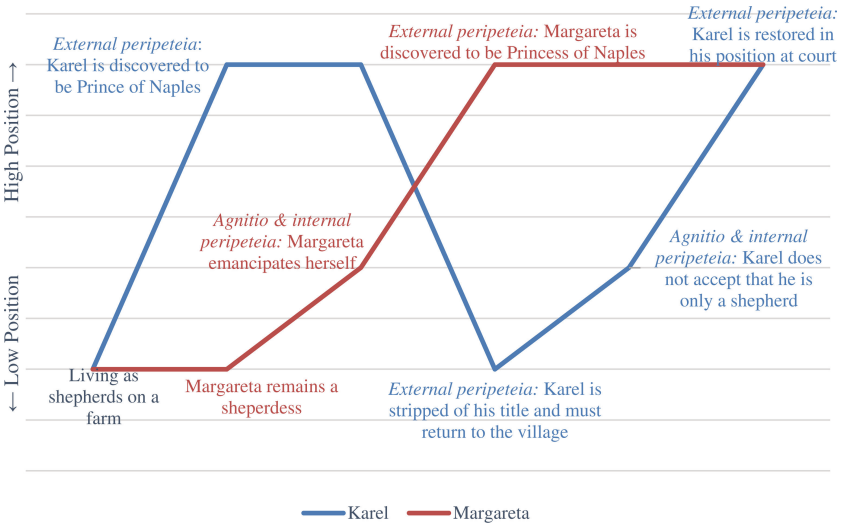


FIG. 4.9 Development of the social positions of Karel and Margareta in *Veranderlyk geval*

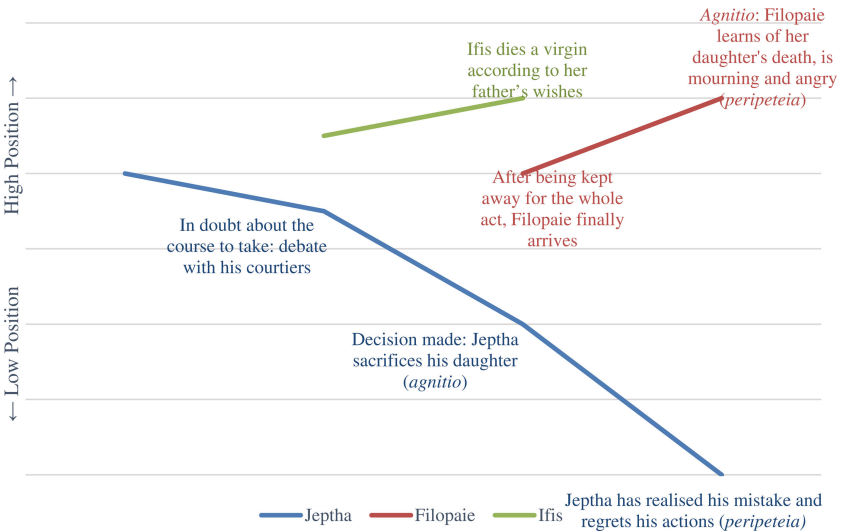


FIG. 4.10 Development of the moral position of Jephtha, Filopaie, and Ifis in *Jephtha*

De Vargas family for their betrayal. To make their humiliation complete he claims Louis' sister, Lizandra, as his betrothed. Louis decides to protect his sister's honor by killing her with poison. The poison turns out to be a sleeping potion and Lizandra awakes, unbeknownst to Louis. Don Julian then abducts the woman to marry her. When finally Louis is reinstated as a respectable noble at the Castilian court, this not only means that his family name (*honra*) is redeemed, but also that his sister's honor is protected from the real traitor Don Julian. Here, the antagonist Don Julian tries to appropriate the love that exists between brother and sister, but only to further humiliate his enemy.

*Honra* is a central concept in these plays and the force can clash with a number of passions, including desire for prestige or power, and desires of the flesh or the heart. This was surely a recipe for spectator enjoyment, which is supported by the sales records of the Amsterdam Public Theatre. Even Pels had to admit their appeal:

The plays are not good through unseemly or mistaken  
Ostentation, but through pleasing instruction.  
In them one generally sees true Love and Love of State  
Opposed to discontent; one hears praiseworthy speeches  
In favour of duty, and honour, and in disfavour of vices:  
So that, even if they lack four-square craftsmanship,  
They thereby bring great pleasure to the audience.<sup>137</sup>

This might explain why Brandt, echoing Pels in his biography of Joost van den Vondel, attested that the adapted Spanish plays especially entertained the 'masses (gawping at the vain chitchat and activity),' because of the characters' abundant 'inner agitations and all kinds of changes.'<sup>138</sup> Brandt rightly observed that Vondel's plays were hardly performed. Especially between 1660 and 1667, his plays gave way for the adapted

137 Pels [1681] 1978, vv. 1070–1076: 'Zy zyn niet fraaij door onbetaamlyke, óf verkeerde / Oppronkingen; maar door zeer leerzaame aardigheên. / Men ziet'er trouwe Liefde, én Staatzugt in 't gemeen / Malkand'ren tégengaan; men hoort 'er lóflyk spreekken / Ter gunst van pligt, én eer, ter ongunst van gebreken; / Zo dat ze, al zyn ze juist niet in de winkelhaak, / Daar door den kykeren aanbréngen groot vermaak.' The translation is taken from Sullivan 1983, 55.

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

comedias and other spectacle pieces.<sup>139</sup> It could be said that the four Spanish plays mentioned by Pels had replaced those of the home-grown wunderkind, Vondel.

## Conclusion

Conflict between love and honour, personal desires and duty, and the private and the public characterise Spanish *comedia nueva*, and subsequently its Dutch adaptations. Faced with social taboos related to marital mismatch, jealousy, and emotionally-blinded despots, spectators were offered an *emotional refuge* from dominant morals (the *emotional regime*) with regards to sex and marriage as they were propagated by figures like Cats and Van Beverwijck. These plays invited spectators to empathise with the lovers who must manoeuvre through society and manage their emotions accordingly to achieve their goal of being together. In *comedia nueva*, the influence of Fortune, omnipresent in Dutch 'home-grown' plays, is replaced by an emotional conflict between love and honour. In this way, Spanish plays and their Dutch adaptations differ from the Senecan-Scaligerian plays written by Hooft and Coster, who more or less followed the neostoic philosophy of their mentor Lipsius.

Instead of Fortune, free will (*libre albedrío*) is highlighted, and requires that the star-crossed lovers must make an explicit choice between their personal desires and their honour, both inner (*honor*) and outer (*honra*). Alongside that of the protagonists, the motives and desires of the antagonists drive the plots. The choice that protagonists must make becomes more difficult because their antagonists likewise express free will, and use it to forward their own interests, often by appropriating or exploiting the protagonists' love. Therefore, the *comedias* are characterised by an intricate web of conflicting emotions and ever-changing relationships between the characters. Because of this, spectators were treated to something that the 'home-grown' plays, in which the emotional conflict was more straightforward, arguably did not offer.

In combination with emotional conflicts between the private and the public, frequent acts of deception surely pleased the spectators. It can be said that deception even offered a particular kind of comic relief, in which illusion, lies, and masquerades created suspense and dramatic irony. The Dutch *comedias* relied on their ability to deceive: the characters routinely deceive one another; theatrical illusion deceives the eyes of spectators; and finally the plot twists deceive the audience who think that they

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139 ONSTAGE 2015.

surely know how the story will end. It was the spectator's responsibility to unravel these delusions and deceptions, which they can do by means of staging and stage directions: while the audience witnessed and heard all, the characters travelled from 'within' and 'out,' observing and hearing (and sometimes misinterpreting) only part of the action and dialogue. Among these intrigues, disguises, and betrayals, it was Lope's aim to stud his original *comedia* plots with so many entanglements that not until the very last scene could anyone in the audience correctly guess the outcome.

The combination of emotional crisis and the subsequent entanglements and deception in the plot were manifested in the Low Countries through five standard plot types. I argue that these five plot types generated pleasure for spectators and ultimately their approval and applause. These five types of *comedias*: 1) are about forbidden desires; 2) include a false accusation against the protagonist to prevent them from pursuing their love interest; 3) feature an antagonist who is jealous of the love between the protagonists and becomes delusional because of his overwhelming passions; 4) have an antagonist—a family member of the female protagonist—who is overprotective and disapproves of the love between the protagonists; and 5) involve antagonists whose lust for power thwarts the protagonists' efforts to be together.

These five plot structures might suggest that the protagonists and the antagonists were nothing more but archetypes or stereotypes: one pair of lovers or potential lovers, some comic servants, and 'complicating' characters who are figures of authority or subversion, and representatives of law and order. All characters are in some way defined, at least initially, by social or biological roles. However, most characters have complex motives and personal desires, by which they obstruct the lovers, at least for a while. Lope and his fellow playwrights exposed and rewrote the conflict, unleashed by social inequality, from a different but complementary prism in each text: the plots of Lope's *comedias* were, indeed, clever variations of the same theme, and often one with roots in ancient literature.

The first of the generic themes in the Dutch adaptations discussed here is forbidden desires and incestuous love. Wouters' *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, the Dutch adaptation of Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*, shows how the quasi-incestuous love between stepmother Cassandra and her stepson Frederico has disastrous consequences for the suitors. Through allusions to the history of Antiochus and Stratonice and the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus, the play exemplifies how such illicitly matched couples are driven by their heart's desire to emotional crisis. Plays such as *De verliefde stiefmoeder* harbour an enormous potential to evoke wonder and admiration, pity and fear, and pleasure and horror: while Antiochus and Stratonice had a happy ending, Cassandra and Frederico meet the same tragic fate as Phaedra and Hippolytus. In

the Dutch adaptation, and in the contemporary social environment it was staged in, Cassandra and Frederico's relationship not only bordered on incestuous, but was also adulterous. In spite of this—or perhaps because of it—empathetic spectators in Antwerp apparently demanded to see more of Cassandra, and rejected the Duke's righteous meting out of poetic justice.

In other *comedias*, a false accusation against the protagonist was popularised in a way that the underdog position of one of the two lovers informed the audience's moral compass. Both Karel in Rodenburgh's *Casandra en Karel* and Laura in Van Germez' *Vervolgde Laura* face false accusations by a despotic figure of authority: Duchess Casandra in *Casandra en Karel* and the King in *Vervolgde Laura*. While Casandra attempts to indulge her lust for Karel, he remains an uplifting example of loyalty, both to his master Duke Aernout and his wife Duchess Leonora. As punishment (i.e., poetic justice), Casandra is banished from court. In *Vervolgde Laura*, the titular character overcomes the false accusation of her infidelity by staying true to herself; her lover Orantee discovers the truth eventually. While she may not have any *honra*, she has ample *honor*. Orantee, who is a prince and has plenty of worldly *honra*, now must prove to Laura that he is deserving of such a virtuous lover.

In a third subtheme, the jealousy of a rival suitor temporarily separates the lovers. Rodenburgh's adaptation of Lope's *La escolástica celosa*, the play *Ialoersche studenten*, offered an example that was both entertaining and, as purported by Rodenburgh himself, true to life. In it, rival suitors become delusional with jealousy and accuse their love interests of unfaithfulness. The characters hurt one another with their deceitful actions and loose (liberated) morals with regards to sex. Although the play contains a moralistic message about the dangers of unrestrained jealousy, the playful, comic overtone offers audiences an *exemplum* that was both provocative and entertaining. In a variation of this theme, the fourth generic plot type, the antagonistic man is overbearingly protective of the honor of his female family members. He is a father, a brother, or a husband. In these plays, the deceptive ways in which the lovers sidestep the hypervigilant adversary offer an entertaining and fascinating frame within which the emotional conflict is shaped: the characters find covert ways to express their personal desires, so that the public honour and duty of all characters involved is not tainted, lost, or rejected.

In the fifth and final theme, power comes in play, corrupting those in a position of authority, who then try to control and appropriate the love existing between the lovers. The four plays *Verwarde hof*, *Voorzigtige dolheit*, *Veranderlyk geval*, and *Don Louis de Vargas* are particularly illustrative of this group. These plays were also the perennial favourites in the Amsterdam Public Theatre, which shows that Dutch audiences

appreciated the *comedias* that dealt with an exertion of unjust power by a tyrant who is led and blinded by his passions. According to the Claudian paradigm, both the protagonists and antagonists are raised to a great height, so that they may tumble with a heavier fall: the former likely with great pity from the spectators, the latter with delight and *schadenfreude*.

These *comedias* also differ substantially from the ‘home-grown’ plays in the way that emotions are rendered. The plot structures of these plays did not offer separate scenes of gruesome and horrific emotions, as did the early seventeenth-century plays belonging to the Senecan-Scaligerian tradition which were rendered as ‘oogenblikkige beweeging.’ Neither did they offer a measured and modest development of the mental and emotional state of the protagonist, who through a *hamartia* recognises the error of his judgement (*agnitio*) and experiences a dramatic reversal (*peripeteia*; ‘*staetveranderinge*’). These plays, including Vondel’s works of the 1640s–1660s, followed the Aristotelian model of a continuous unfolding of the plot in which *woelingen* (internal conflicts) play an important role.

The Spanish *comedias*, and subsequently their Dutch adaptations, warp this Aristotelian model by offering not one *agnitio* and *peripeteia* in a single protagonist, but many such swings among several different protagonists and antagonists. Conversely, *comedias* are characterised by a continuous rise and fall of the protagonists and antagonists alike. Sometimes these dramatic reversals are even mirrored between different characters simultaneously, which they reflect on by expressing their inner conflicts, their *woelingen*. All these *woelingen*, these emotional peaks and valleys, must have overwhelmed spectators. Where Vondel’s plays present to us characters who have an ethical dilemma of a public nature, the characters in the Spanish plays experience *woelingen* related to their personal desires, their ambitions, their honour, their duty, and sometimes also their reason. Compared to the modest and evenly-tempered nature of Vondel’s plays, the adaptations of the Spanish *comedias* push Aristotle’s model over the top. This too explains why the Dutch adaptations were so successful—they both engaged with and subverted familiar models of live storytelling—and why the genre was also received with much criticism from classicistic playwrights, such as Pels.

Lope said that the affairs of honour are the best, but only because the plots of the *comedias* contextualised those affairs of honour within a frame of love, deception, and subversive acts. Faced with an imminent loss of honour, characters manoeuvred themselves in unprecedented and precarious ways that could only move spectators with pity and fear, with wonder and admiration, and with horror and fascination.