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

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Emotions on the Fringe

The Appeal of Vengeance in Dutch Comedias

Love is beautiful ... until it is not. Although honour is an important force in many *comedias de capa y espada*, the most important motif remains the love between the unmarried protagonists. After all, any dishonour can be easily restored through marriage.¹ Sometimes a suitor might be jealous and this can complicate the love, as seen in Rodenburgh's *Ialoersche studenten*: in the end, however, no one was deeply hurt and everyone could eventually still marry the partner of their choice, except for Martio. But what if not only the jealousy of another suitor is in play, but also your family's honour? What if your family's name is tarnished by the actions of your lover? Should you then allow your brother or father to take vengeance? What about your fiancé or husband? Or what if another man tarnishes your daughter's, sister's or wife's virtue? Will you then take revenge for yourself? These are the central questions in many *comedias* that have been described as *dramas de honor*. In them, unlike other types of *comedia*, the solution of marriage cannot be relied on to repair conflict. The restoration of the family's honour through other means becomes the main focus in these plays, and these means are bloodier and messier even than the action in *comedias de capa y espada*. This also applies to the Dutch adaptations.

An example of how vengeance and the associated emotion of vengefulness are shaped is found in a Dutch *comedia* of this type: 't *Quaedt syn meester loondt*, Rodenburgh's adaptation of Aguilar's *La venganza honrosa*. This play was discussed in Chapter 2 for the blatant vengeance of Duke Norandino of Milan and the Duke of Mantua enacted on the two star-crossed lovers Porcea and Duke Astolfo of Ferrara. Norandino is the wronged fiancé of Porcea and the Duke of Mantua is the shamed father of the bride. The two wronged men frame their vengeance as reasonable:

DUKE OF MANTUA. There is a reason that we avenge ourselves on them,
 who dare to break the holy matrimony because of lust,
 staining my honour and princely name.

1 Abrahamse 1997, 102.

NORANDINO. They are stealing my honour and the glory of my fame.
 With this steel sword I will restore myself with their blood [...] because she steals your fame, my fame, and my honour.²

In Aguilar's original, their desire for private vengeance is presented as morally acceptable—the play is called 'The Honourable Vengeance' after all—and likewise in Rodenburgh's adaptation. Abrahamse remarked that the play contrasts with Rodenburgh's other work; he had trouble reconciling 't *Quaedt syn meester loondt* with the rest of the playwright's oeuvre. The approval of vengeance in this play contradicts the stoic ideal of tempering the passions, and also the Judeo-Christian doctrine whereby God alone has the right to exact vengeance: 'Vengeance is mine, and recompense' (Deut. 32:35).³ Furthermore, mankind is prohibited from killing: 'You shall not murder' (Ex. 20:13).⁴ Abrahamse believes that Rodenburgh with this play disregarded Dutch society's non-acceptance of vengeance. His doing so is remarkable, as 'in the Low Countries people certainly did not share the Spanish notion about honour and retaliation.'⁵ Abrahamse's argument implies that seventeenth-century Dutch people went to court to settle disputes concerning honour. And although he does not say it in so many words, he also suggests here that the Spanish might instead seek personal revenge.⁶

Abrahamse is not alone in these assumptions: they actually reflect writings from the early modern period. An auto-image by Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius argued that his countrymen were free of 'that vain tickling of the thirst for glory' which plagued Mediterranean peoples, according to his comparison between Athenians, Romans, and Batavians (the romanticised ancestors of the Dutch and Flemish) in his early *Parallelon rerumpublicarum* (1602).⁷ The Dutch were neither led to 'fiercely pursue'

2 Rodenburgh 1618, fol. B3^r: 'DUKE OF MANTUA. 't Is reden dat wy 't wreken / Aen heur, die d'Heyl'ghe echt door minne lust durft breken, / Bemorssende mijn eer, en Princelijcke name. NORANDINO. Zy rovende mijn eer, en glory van mijn faem. / Met dees verstaelde klingh recht ick my aen heur bloede [...] Vermits zy rooft uw faem, mijn faeme, en mijn eer.'

3 Abrahamse 1997, 102–103.

4 See also Weisgerber 2008, 353. At the same time, the religious laws as formulated in Exodus 21:24 and Deuteronomy 19:21 say 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,' which suggests that under certain circumstances vengeance is allowed.

5 Abrahamse 1997, 103.

6 Abrahamse 1997, 103.

7 Grotius [1602] 1801, 92, 98 (translation by Sturkenboom 2014, 187). Grotius did not specify the kind

revenge, nor to ‘ignore her completely,’ allowing them to be brave in battle without being cruel, as opposed to the cruelty and immoderation of the southern Europeans.⁸ Grotius’ argument was, in a large part, based on the idea that the Dutch were phlegmatic, a result of the Low Countries’ wet climate. On the contrary, the dry southern climate made the Romans and Athenians hot-blooded and therefore more prone to emotional dysregulation, including vengefulness. By this logic, Grotius argued that what applied to the Romans and Athenians applied equally to early modern peoples living around the Mediterranean Sea—including the Spanish.⁹ However, such stereotypes are always one-dimensional and the reality is always more complex.¹⁰ The religious conflicts between the Arminian and Gomarist parties during the Twelve Years’ Truce (1609–1621) had, for instance, demonstrated that Dutch moderation was far from absolute.¹¹

In general, we can see that in line with the Flemish-Dutch auto-image, playwrights usually rejected acts of violence and revenge, and even vengeful emotions in the tragedies of the early seventeenth century. In the same way, moralists like Cats and physicians like Van Beverwijck rejected vengefulness in Dutch society as a passion related to the mad passion of wrath, which itself was believed to be the cause of irrationality. Therefore, either vengefulness or wrath should be suppressed, overcome, or only expressed by a single tear.¹² At the same time, playwrights, moralists, and scholars alike acknowledged that the desire for revenge was innate to mankind, for it was in man’s animal nature to be violent, often causing more violence in retaliation.¹³ But even then, Grotius ‘adamantly advocates divinely justified vengeance over private revenge’ in another of his early works, *De republica emendanda* (c. 1600).¹⁴ In it, he writes that under no circumstances should one resort to private vengeance because, as Van Beverwijck also argued, revenge is the product of anger. For the Dutch Republic to reach ‘harmony with the Lord’s precepts,’ Grotius writes, ‘[n]o expectancy, no fear should ever be so great as to impel us to injure a fellow-man in any way.’¹⁵

of honour to which he was referring, but in his works primarily discusses honour in relation to reputation.

8 Grotius 1602 [1801], 92, 98 (translation by Helmers 2016, 364).

9 Grotius 1602 [1801], 92–93, 97–99. See also Meijer Drees 1997, 25–56; Sturkenboom 2014, 175–180.

10 This is also the subject of Bood’s dissertation. See Bood 2020a.

11 Helmers 2016, 365.

12 Cats 1625, fols. Kk4^v, Ll3^v, Rr4^r, *cc4^r; Van Beverwijck 1637, fol. N1^r.

13 Weisgerber 2008, 354.

14 Laureys 2020, 105.

15 Grotius 1984, 77; Laureys 2020, 105.

Hooft especially seems to have rejected revenge in *Geeraerd van Velsen* (1613) and in *Baeto* (1617, published 1626), as did Vondel in *Palamedes* (1625) and in *Maria Stuart* (1646). These history plays presented the playwrights' perspectives on republican politics and especially in a republic there was no place for vengeance. Seventeenth-century Dutch tragedy seems to have stressed the need for moderation of vengeance, although the plays are brimming with detailed depictions of other expressions of violence including murders, duels, and executions.

From a moral perspective, it was imperative that Dutch playwrights stressed the inappropriateness of vengeance; in the highly urbanised Low Countries, peace and order among citizens was crucial to the maintenance of a cooperative civil society. Likewise, craftsmen, merchants, and other economic stakeholders profited from order, whereas conflict would interrupt their businesses. In addition to theatre, other Dutch literature unsurprisingly also reflects this desire for peace and order as far back as the fourteenth century.¹⁶ Jean Weisgerber identified three strategies used to counter revenge in Dutch Renaissance tragedy: in the first, hostile powers were suppressed by establishing absolute rule. The second was of a moral nature, and required that one suppress counterproductive urges towards vengeance, something that was effectively considered self-conquest (i.e., to 'be the bigger person'). The third strategy was practical and functional, but hardly honourable in the early modern social context: one should flee when wronged rather than respond, a strategy that Christ advised in Matthew 10:23. This latter strategy was also preferred by Christian neo-stoicism, current in the work of Lipsius and his students Hooft and Coster.¹⁷

In Dutch revenge tragedies of the mid seventeenth century, as Ton Hoenselaars and Helmer Helmers argue, the only just vengeance was divine revenge. It could only be enacted by God or one of His terrestrial representatives. For example, politically motivated revenge, or royal revenge, was legitimate when carried out by a king to gain recompense according to his divine right.¹⁸ In such a case, it is not an individual who exacts revenge, but the embodiment of the state itself who pursues justice for crimes committed against his body politic. However, as Weisgerber argues, in an absolute monarchy vengeance is unnecessary because of the monarch's firm state control, which many early modern tragedies—including Dutch tragedies such as *Geeraerd van Velsen* and *Baeto*—make clear.¹⁹

16 Pleij 2009, *passim*; Hugenholtz 1959, *passim*.

17 Weisgerber 2008, 356.

18 Helmers 2011, 231–233, 237; Hoenselaars and Helmers 2016, 209, 211–212.

19 Weisgerber 2008, 357–358.

Contrary to what Weisgerber, Hoenselaars, and Helmers argue about the place of revenge in Dutch tragedy, *dramas de honor* adapted from Spanish presented worlds in which the use of revenge was sanctioned as a form of poetic justice. When looking at the popularity charts and registers of the Amsterdam Public Theatre, the three perspectives outlined above—a full rejection of vengeance, its allowance within the context of divine goals, or its use as a means of poetic justice—existed concurrently without one view achieving dominance.²⁰ Nevertheless, vengeance was still a subversive subject in Dutch and Flemish society: it stood in stark contrast with the teachings of the aforementioned seventeenth-century moralists and their moderate auto-image. This might be considered as a very successful *emotional regime* that shaped early modern social behaviour, and continues to shape the Dutch and Flemish perception of this period today. It arguably has implications for the way modern Dutch and Flemish society currently sees itself: revenge and vengefulness result from overwhelming *perturbationes*, undesirable mental disturbances.²¹

Why, then, did Rodenburgh adapt Aguilar's particularly bloody *La venganza honrosa*? It may have been a response to the subversive, taboo nature of vengeance in Dutch and Flemish society. This play could have appealed to spectators as a way to escape legal and social behavioural limits: that which is forbidden is often all the more exciting. Abrahamse's difficulties in locating Rodenburgh's 't *Quaedt syn meester loont* within his oeuvre may be partly explained by this motivation. Although Abrahamse acknowledged the effects that cultural transfer can have on the transmitted cultural product, he did not acknowledge the effects that a cultural product from a foreign culture can have on the receiving culture. In that regard, transfer studies is based on the understanding that an important, often unforeseen, and extreme effect of cultural transfer is a shifting of boundaries within the cultural system of the receiving culture.²² I assert that this play, like other adaptations of *dramas de honor*, should not be understood within the dominant emotion discourse in the Low Countries, but instead within the frameworks of cultural transfer, emotional exotism, and emotional relief. In this context it becomes clear that the honour-vengeance theme is a cultural

20 See ONSTAGE 2015, Analysis/Popularity Charts. Among the top ten most popular plays in 1638–1672, we find plays which propagate these different views, such as Vos' revenge tragedy *Aran en Titus* (1641), Van Heemskerck's *comedia De verduyfte Cid*, Hooff's tragedy *Geeraerd van Velsen*, Joan Dullaart's *comedia Alexander de Medicis* (1653) and Dullaart's tragedy *Karel Stuart, of Rampzalige majesteit* (1652).

21 Konst 1993, 9, 15, 38. See also Schama 1987, 567–570, who argues that moralists and scholars saw these auto-images as representative of Dutch culture; Schama accepts these auto-images, furthermore as truthful.

22 Espagne and Werner 1985, 508.

product of Spanish society that found its way into the Low Countries and appealed to Dutch audiences as a literary construct that offered an *emotional refuge*. Dramas de honor like Rodenburgh's 't *Quaedt syn meester loondt* presented audiences with hypothetical situations (set in foreign countries) in which characters struggle with their emotions and eventually choose to pursue violent solutions that could not be pursued in real life because of legal and social restrictions on these types of emotional expression.

Considering seventeenth-century Dutch theatre in the context of cultural transfer shows that Dutch and Flemish scholars in the previous decades have put too sharply in contrast 'home-grown' plays and adaptations of Spanish comedias: vengeance is not an anomaly in Dutch theatre or something that is only excusable when it serves very specific, divine aims. My analysis instead shows that the honour-vengeance theme became popular in the Low Countries because it offered an alternative to the sustained tone and restraint so insistently vocalised by Dutch moralists in other literature. Similarly, in their study of Dutch adaptations of English revenge tragedies, Hoenselaars and Helmers argued that their sensational representation of unbridled passions provided a radical alternative to restrained morality characteristic of Vondel's high art.²³ I explore similar themes in this chapter. It may be that Dutch and Flemish adaptors recognised the potential of the honour-vengeance theme in the *dramas de honor* which transferred to the Low Countries by means of trade and cultural exchange. By translating and adapting these Spanish dramas, local playwrights, like their Spanish colleagues, offered an alternative, but strictly literary, solution to real-life concerns within an exotic frame.

This function of the adaptations is rooted within the Spanish originals. Their honour-vengeance theme is presumed to be a manifestation of a cultural anxiety towards the social and economic consequences of contemporary *limpieza* statutes which made those with Jewish, North African, or mixed race heritage effectively second-class citizens.²⁴ Yet, the concerns of Spanish playwrights such as Lope de Vega and Aguilar were not entirely the same as those of the Dutch and Flemish adaptors. By comparing the manifestation of the honour-vengeance theme in the Spanish originals to their specific refiguration in the Dutch adaptations, I demonstrate that 1) exacting vengeance is a way for characters to retain or regain agency in a world governed by Fortune; 2) vengeance does not always stem from degenerative or corruptive passions when it is wielded by magnanimous characters; and 3) when the legal system fails to

23 Hoenselaars and Helmers 2016.

24 McKendrick 1984, 318–333.

judge the guilty party, vengeance can instead offer recompense, although it is illicit according to that same system.

Additionally, several Dutch adaptations of *comedia nueva* add a political dimension to these three socio-literary benefits. In these, vengeance is sometimes legitimised as a means to gain support for local politico-religious goals, which Hoenselaars and Helmers have demonstrated for Dutch adaptations of English revenge tragedies as well as Dutch ‘home-grown’ revenge tragedies.²⁵ It seems that Dutch playwrights adapted Spanish *comedias* with the same aim. I continue this analysis by first discussing the alternative ‘solution’ (i.e., vengeance) found in *comedias*, then identify the political message added to some of these adapted plays either to warn against the role of vengeance in the fall of empires (*translatio imperii*), or as a way to evoke Orangist sentiments.

The Honour-Vengeance Theme in Spain

In Spanish scholarship, it has been argued that bloodshed, revenge, and retaliation are omnipresent in *dramas de honor* because they reflected the cultural reality. As demonstrated above, it was generally believed by Dutch moralists that the Spanish and their southern peers were more hot-tempered than their northern counterparts.²⁶ Some scholars of Spanish history and literature have suggested that Spain’s early modern society was particularly vengeful and that this inspired the subjects of *dramas de honor*. Hispanists Amedée Mas and Margaret Wilson cited, for instance, the journal of Valencian priest Mosén Juan Porcar, who described eight cases of wife-murder in the city over forty years (1589–1629).²⁷ McKendrick tested this assumption in her discussion of the role that honour and vengeance play in *comedia nueva*. She comes, however, to the conclusion that it is hard to take Porcar’s journal as a complete or representative account; moreover, eight such cases in forty years within a large city can hardly be considered a high incidence. Therefore, she proposes that *comedia nueva*—and especially *dramas de honor*—did not reflect a historical truth, but rather a poetic truth. That is to say, the plays mirrored ‘not how men acted but how they would have liked to act’ according to a strong sense of (male) honour in Spanish society.²⁸ An

25 Hoenselaars and Helmers 2016.

26 Meijer Drees 1997, 79–114.

27 Mas 1957, 348; Wilson 1969, 46.

28 McKendrick 1984, 316.

assessment made by Karl Vossler—‘In the Golden Age in Spain, life was made literate and literature was lived’—is especially poignant in this context.²⁹

Like McKendrick, Donald Larson thought that the honour code as depicted in Spanish theatre was likely little more than a dramatic convention revived from the Middle Ages as a way for Spain to cope with the loss of its military grip on Europe, a way of grappling with a collective emasculation. The Spaniard compensated for this with an assumed *machismo*, which the stage *caballero* perfectly reflected by imposing his sense of honour on himself and on those around him.³⁰ The honour-vengeance theme was a theatrical device that explores a series of relationships between a man and his environment, between man and his conscience, between a man’s view of himself and how others view him, and above all between man and his sexual honour.³¹ The theatrical explorations of real-life concerns shaped how spectators in Spain perceived *dramas de honor* and how this honour-vengeance theme was subsequently received and restructured in Dutch adaptations of these vengeance-laden plays, when they were translated and adapted for the Netherlandish stage.

McKendrick asserts that in the Spanish honour code there is an almost exclusive emphasis on honour as social reputation, which she connects with contemporary anxiety about purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*). In Spanish society at large, the *limpieza* statutes of many Spanish civil and ecclesiastical institutions propagated racist views that identified *conversos* (Catholics with Jewish heritage) and *moriscos* (Catholics with Muslim lineage) as having ‘bad blood’ (*mala sangre*). Such an accusation was accompanied by social and political exclusion: those with *mala sangre* could not hold important posts within *colegios mayores* (higher education preparing students for top administration or church positions), nobility, or religious orders. Purity of blood was especially important among the nobility, as having bad blood led to a loss of social standing. In Spain, *limpieza de sangre*, *honor/honra*, and *nobleza (de sangre)* were interdependent and virtually the same.³²

This is a form of social insecurity that according to McKendrick was articulated in terms of sexual insecurity on the stage. While in real life the court settled all disputes and allegations, the legal system could never offer a satisfactory emotional solution. In the theatre, any possibility of sexual dishonour must be dealt with accordingly, usually by means of bloodshed. In the fictional world, a man can respond to sexual dis-

29 Vossler 1933, 209: ‘En el siglo de oro en España se literizaba la vida y se vivía la literatura.’

30 Larson 1977; see also McKendrick 1984, 316–317.

31 McKendrick 1984, 317.

32 McKendrick 1984, 318–333.

honour with a fierce reaction, more so than in real life. In the hypothetical situations played out in early modern Spanish theatre, characters cultivated and nourished their desire for vengeance in response to their sexuality and their heritage.³³

However, Spanish *comedias* are not unique in how they exploit the honour-vengeance theme as a subversive theatrical device. Hoenselaars identified that Dutch and English playwrights used vengeance to address differences between fiction and reality: since vengeance was illegal, avengers must operate in secret and put on a mask. Thus, they took on the role of actor; the avengers challenge the boundaries of the theatrical and hold a mirror up to spectators.³⁴ In *comedia nueva*, characters do often wear masks to fulfil their desire for vengeance, but not because vengeance is illegal. Rather, they legitimise or rationalise acts of vengeance as a way to protect their persona within the social sphere. On stage, a stain on the family's honour caused by a wife's infidelity or the simple accusation of infidelity robbed a man of his honour, which demanded from him that he sought vengeance, for in the logic of the *limpieza* statutes the purity of the bloodline had to be protected at all cost. A mask then helped men to cover up their sexual dishonour: the need to preserve their public face was so important that it was advised that men sought secret vengeance for secret dishonour.³⁵

The emotional response of revenge enables in *comedia nueva* an expression of urges otherwise repressed within contemporary social conventions and the honour code. Within an emotional regime which highly prized rationality, moderation, and emotional modulation, vengeance realised onstage provided spectators with a vicarious outlet for 'passions of love and jealousy alien to the self-respecting, self-controlled individual.'³⁶ In fact, McKendrick argues that the issue of honour in virtually all *comedias* is dramatised in terms of 'sexual aggression, sexual jealousy, or sexual threat,' behaviours and responses which could not be overtly or rationally acted out within the societal boundaries observed and reinforced by theatre audiences.³⁷

McKendrick acknowledges, however, that there is another consideration for the popularity of vengeance-laden *dramas de honor*. Spanish theatre depended on the common Spaniard for support. *Limpieza de sangre* was primarily a concern for nobles, who had a socio-economic reputation to protect.³⁸ Likewise, every stage *caballero* was

33 McKendrick 1984, 330–331.

34 Hoenselaars 1991, esp. 115–117.

35 McKendrick 1984, 331.

36 McKendrick 1984, 333.

37 McKendrick 1984, 332.

38 McKendrick 1984, 331.

represented in the *corrales de comedias* as being obsessed with those same concerns. As Juana de José Prades concludes, ‘the gentlemen of the *comedia nueva* are not accommodating, opportunistic, or venal. Their virtues, like their defects, have only one root: the overvaluation of a most rigorous ethic’ of chivalry and nobility.³⁹ When the average Spaniard saw these gentlemen walk onstage, he did not share their more noble concerns, but did recognise their preoccupation with protecting the honour of their female relatives. McKendrick affirms that Spanish spectators recognised the honour of noble characters because they knew what honour meant in their own familial context: it was universal, or democratised, and a deeply ingrained characteristic of their performative masculinity.⁴⁰ In other words, Spanish audiences were uninterested in plays about political and social intrigue, but attended in droves those plays in which men were *machos* and pursued *macho* ideals.⁴¹ Within this framework of honourable masculinity, the correct recourse to dishonour was bloodshed and revenge.

What are the implications of these interpretations by McKendrick and others of Spanish *comedia nueva* for the Dutch adaptations that I discuss? They may show that Spanish characterisations of honour and vengeance were, at least to some degree, understood within Netherlandish culture, and may have contributed to their traction in the Low Countries. There are, however, important cultural differences between the original and receiving cultures of *comedias*. While McKendrick argued that anxiety around purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*) was what was behind the popularity of the honour-vengeance theme in many Spanish *comedias*, giving a possible explanation as to why the Spaniards thrilled at ‘*casos de la honra*,’ this particular concern did not apply to the Dutch context. It is less clear why Dutch and Flemish spectators seem to have been equally mesmerised by the honour-vengeance theme, a question that Abrahamse was also unable to answer.⁴²

The *limpieza de sangre* was of no concern in northern Europe, but the consideration that all men—even Dutch and Flemish men—defined their honour in relation to their sexuality likely also applies in the Dutch-Flemish context. The Dutch adaptations of *comedias* could similarly offer an *emotional refuge* by means of a hypothetical

39 José Prades 1963, 101: ‘los galanes de la comedia nueva no son acomodaticios, ni oportunistas ni venales. Sus virtudes, como sus defectos, tienen una sola raíz: la sobrevaloración de una ética rigurosimísima.’

40 McKendrick 1984, 331.

41 McKendrick 1984, 332. This might also explain the increase of *chansons de geste* in sixteenth-century Spain. There was a general surge of chivalric romances throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; see Van Anrooij 2004, 163–165, 173–176.

42 Abrahamse 1997, 102–103.

situation, and give space to emotions that were otherwise impossible to act upon. Yet, McKendrick's perspective is male-centric—which Jelena Sánchez and Amy L. Tigner have challenged.⁴³ It begs the question of whether the same appeal can be made with regards to a performed *machismo* in the Low Countries, which is the subject of Chapter 6. The Low Countries had a relatively emancipated female population, more so than did Spain, which would be less favourable towards the male definition of sexual honour, nor the sexual aggression that was associated with it.⁴⁴ Moreover, research suggests that the vengeance theme in Dutch 'home-grown' revenge tragedies was predominantly a response to political concerns with regards to 'translation of empire' (*translatio imperii*) and explored ideals of governance.⁴⁵ Similar concerns may have been at the basis of the popularity of several Dutch adaptations of *dramas de honor*.

In the following, I look at the appeal of revenge as a theme in Van Heemskerck's *De verduyteste Cid* and Heynk's *Don Louis de Vargas*, while comparing and contrasting these two adaptations with Hooft's signature *Geeraerd van Velsen. Vos' Aran en Titus*, an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1589–1592) is used to compare the manifestation of political vengeance in this play to De Grieck's *Cenobia* and Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis*, two adaptations of Spanish *comedias*. In line with McKendrick, I consider the dramatic manifestation of revenge as a literary answer to social and legal restrictions in Dutch and Flemish society for people to fully express their emotions.

The Socio-Literary Benefits of Vengeance in Dutch *Comedias*

In opposition to the dominant ideals about vengeance in the Dutch seventeenth century, *comedias* demonstrate that vengeance can be a positive force. I compare different perspectives on poetic justice, magnanimity, and emotional control in the three aforementioned plays: *Geeraerd van Velsen*, *Don Louis de Vargas*, and *De verduyteste Cid*. By this, I demonstrate that their adaptations from Spanish originals offer a drastic alternative to Hooft or Vondel's propagation of emotional restraint that were current in the moralistic writings of Cats and Van Beverwijck.

43 Sánchez 2012; Tigner 2012, 183–187.

44 Van der Heijden 1998, 224–228.

45 See e.g., Helmers 2016; Laureys 2020.

Revenge as a Form of Agency in the Battle against Fortune

Within the group of dramas *de honor* that were translated into Dutch, the most exemplary play is the adaptation of *El tejedor de Segovia* (1619, 'The Weaver of Segovia') by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza. Scholars agree that the second part was written by Alarcón, but it is contested whether Alarcón is also the author of the first part.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Dirck Pietersz Heynck condensed these two plays into one as *Don Louis de Vargas, of Edelmoedige wraek* (1668, 'Don Louis de Vargas, or Magnanimous Revenge'), which meant that he had to connect both parts in a natural way; the dialogue of the third act of the first part and the first act of the second part are consequently largely different in Heynck's adaptation than in the original.⁴⁷ And yet, Sullivan took the view that Heynck's translation conveyed the Spanish text 'with uncanny accuracy.'⁴⁸ My analysis shows, however, that Heynck adapted the play to the Dutch context to better cater to the tastes of his audiences.

In *Don Louis de Vargas*, the conflict is fuelled by passion and reason, while the protagonist's tainted *honra* (his good name and titles) is the motor behind the conflict.⁴⁹ Louis de Vargas held an honourable position at court, until another nobleman began plotting against Louis' father and had him executed. Louis self-exiled to prevent his own execution. With the play's reflexive subtitle, Heynck dramatised how the irrational passion of vengeance can still be honourable or can at least reinstate one's honour.

The legitimacy of vengeance as a form of justice, and the legitimacy of resistance to violence, were in the early modern period still heavily influenced by the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274); his thoughts appear often in the Spanish originals. He believed that God manifests his plan through natural law and gives man an ethical code. Aquinas considered every man to also be a rational being with free will to choose paths of good or evil. The principles articulated in his ethics were thought to guide man to his proper end in life, his ultimate destiny. This implies that civil and human laws are subsidiary to natural, eternal law. As such, there are situations in which

46 Von der Walde Moheno 2010, n. 9 (1086–1087). Following the eighteenth-century prints of *El tejedor de Segovia*, I refer to the play in its first and second parts, rather than as two distinct plays (see Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza c. 1728–1770 and 1736).

47 This adaptation process has been reconstructed in 2017 by Sanne Hermans in a paper, written in the context of a master course on *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries. Cf. Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza c. 1728–1770, fols. D2^r–D4^v; Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza 1736, A1^r–A4^v; Heynck 1668, 59–66.

48 Sullivan 1983, 55.

49 See also the analysis of this play by Bood 2020b, 157–159.

human laws might illegalise a certain course of action, such as vengeance, while *Providentia Dei* (Divine Providence) allows for people to choose their responses.⁵⁰

In Spanish drama, natural law manifests as poetic justice. Fiore has made this clear for Lope's *Fuenteovejuna* (c. 1612–1614; first published in 1619), in which the populace of the town of Fuente Obejuna kill the tyrannical Comendador after he has disrupted the natural order on every level. Fiore writes that 'natural law permits the use of force, even the killing of an unjust aggressor (in this case the Comendador) to defend such goods' as limbs and faculties, liberty, chastity, and material goods of great value.⁵¹ In *El tejedor de Segovia*, at the end of the first part, the protagonist Fernando Ramirez (known in the Dutch adaptation as Louis de Vargas) asks God if he is allowed to exact his revenge in the second *comedia*: 'Thus, it cannot be in this one, God must give me revenge in the second *comedia*.'⁵² In Spain's drama, there is a prominent focus on poetic justice as an expression of Divine Providence: nothing is left to chance. Thus, transgressive characters are justly punished, as Fernando Ramirez makes explicit in his final words in the *primera parte* of *El tejedor de Segovia*.⁵³

The popularity of Thomism was not maintained in Protestant countries in Northern Europe in the same way as it was in Catholic Spain. This is not to say that natural law was not discussed in Dutch humanist discourse. Grotius wrote in his *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625, 'On the Law of War and Peace') that according to natural law people had the right to resist violence.⁵⁴ In Dutch plays, however, it is not natural law that is significant but rather the three divine forces of Fortune, Fate, and the superior force of *Providentia Dei*, which exact their influence over individuals. Average spectators were, however, most likely unfamiliar with the neostoic philosophy behind these concepts, but probably understood the relationship these concepts share with Christian doctrines of free will and predestination.⁵⁵ The *dramatis personae* in Dutch plays from the early seventeenth century trust that God will help the righteous and punish wrongdoers, which implies that the individual maintains a rather passive or accepting position towards his misfortune.

50 Fiore 1975, 8–15.

51 Fiore 1975, 19.

52 Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza c. 1728–1770, fol. D4^v: 'Pues no puede ser en esta, / Dios me ha de dar la venganza / en la segunda Comedia.'

53 Fiore 1975, 7–10.

54 Grotius 1625 [1939], I.3.i–I.3.ii.

55 The neostoic interpretation of Fortune, Fate, and *Providentia Dei* in *comedias* and its relationship to Christian doctrines of free will and predestination as understood by a mixed audience of Catholics and Protestants is the subject of a future publication. For more on religious thought in Netherlandish theatre, see e.g., Konst 2003, 11–15; Steenbergh 2014.

Similarities between Spanish and Dutch drama exist, but characters in Dutch plays do not consider the course of justice to be the working of natural law; rather they ascribe this function to a neostoic Fate, which had already predetermined the course of events. Fate had tightly forged together separate incidents into an inevitable chain. These events were also subject to Fortune, who as a classical goddess was the personification of Chance: her actions are completely unreliable and one cannot predict her actions. For early seventeenth-century Dutch dramatists, the sole form of defence against these forces was *constantia*, which Justus Lipsius described in *De constantia in publicis malis* (1584) as the ability to resign oneself to one's fate regardless of the circumstances. In other words, one should contain their emotions so as not to be affected by life's catastrophes. Konst has elaborately described that early seventeenth-century Dutch drama propagates that man obtains a certain psychic autonomy to be able to stand tall in a world in which nothing is certain.⁵⁶

Fortune and fate had appeared more often in Dutch drama, especially in Coster, Hooft, and Vondel's plays from the early seventeenth century. Although the influence of fortune and fate were preferred over natural law, divine providence was the ultimate force that judged and governed all things.⁵⁷ Why, then, did Dutch playwrights prefer fortune over Thomistic natural law? Konst argued that Fortune developed from the Goddess of Chance into the tool of *Providentia Dei*, which is responsible for negative turns of fate; she is by substitution responsible for the fall of empires, the sudden deaths of loved ones, and the loss of freedom, riches, and reputation. Dutch literature is not unique in this regard, but in combination with the neostoic moral of many Dutch tragedies, Fortune is a recurrent and popular force.⁵⁸ Therefore, Fortune was a force with which Dutch theatre visitors were familiar and they understood it as God's way to interact with His creation. This long-standing practice of highlighting the role of this classical force of nature was a solution that could count on the spectators' approval.

Traces of this philosophy can also be recognised in Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas*. And yet, it is at the same time restructured. Although the characters ascribe their misfortune to Fortune and Fate, they do not resign themselves to those fates nor trust in Divine Providence as was advised by humanist scholars Lipsius and Grotius, and moralists like Cats and Van Beverwijck. The characters in these plays rather use their agency to improve their conditions by acting on their desire for vengeance, which they

⁵⁶ Konst 2003, 27–119.

⁵⁷ Konst 2003, 11–13.

⁵⁸ Konst 2003, 68–72.

justify with a variety of arguments. In that sense their agency is related to free will, which offers the choice to act on the desire for revenge or accept fate. From a Dutch perspective, the choice is not between good and evil *per se*, but rather between giving in to one's passions or accepting fate on rational grounds. However, the choice to act on the desire for vengeance does not have the negative consequences usually found in Dutch discourse. The result is a peculiar mixture between different perspectives on the usefulness of vengeance and how to react to misfortune. As such, the play can offer spectators consolation and show them that there are alternative forms of emotional management available that do not require self-restraint and to remain unmoved by passions.

While Sullivan argued that Heynck followed the original closely in his translation with the exception of changing some names,⁵⁹ Heynck himself said that he made several changes including 'leaving out what seemed unnatural to me, keeping and adding what seemed to be more in agreement with our temper.' He did this 'to entertain the eyes of spectators through the actions of *dramatis personae*, and through their changes in passions.'⁶⁰ What catches the eye is that Heynck explicitly states that he also changed parts of the original that were not in accordance with the Dutch temper: he changed the emotional features of the Spanish story. Alarcón is known for his superb plot construction, psychological subtlety, and ethical teachings.⁶¹ As such, Pedro Alonso (Fernando Ramirez' alias in the second part of *El tejedor de Segovia*) 'has more the makings of a gentlemanly highwayman, a folk hero, than a desperate bandit,' although *El tejedor de Segovia* is, in essence, a bandit play. The original play had shown a moderation foreign to the genre: Pedro often threatens to take revenge for all the wrongs done to him, but never goes on a killing spree, and only makes a gesture towards robbery.⁶² So, then, what remained and what changed in Heynck's adaptation to cater to Dutch spectators' tastes?

In *Don Louis de Vargas*, Heynck indeed kept most of the original plot. In line with the Spanish honour code, Louis wants his sister Lizandra to take poison so that she will not be married off to the son of a rival family, Don Julian:

59 Sullivan 1983, 55.

60 Heynck 1668, fols. *2^r–*2^v: '[...] daer uit latende wat, mijns bedunkens, onnatuerlijk scheen, behoudende en bydoende wat my gevoeglijker daght met onze driften over een te komen [...] om d'ooen der aenschouwers door de werking der Bedrijvers, en hunne veranderingen in hartsoghten, te verlustigen.'

61 McKendrick 1989, 133–134.

62 McKendrick 1989, 134.

LOUIS. And so that this will not be, I have intended for
 You to die, before he has enjoyed your company because of his lust.
 I would rather sacrifice your bosom with this steel,
 Than that his lechery soils your pure womb.
 Thus, you will have to quickly choose this pointed weapon or this
 poison:
 I would rather mourn your death once, than continuously your hon-
 our.⁶³

This is a drastic measure and a fierce display of sexual aggression and jealousy, but it is the only way Louis believes that he can save his sister's *honor* and retain some of his agency as a disgraced nobleman.⁶⁴ In fact, it is a way to save himself as head of the family from dishonour, and specifically sexual dishonour. Lizandra obeys her brother and takes the poison, but also says that she will take an antidote, securing some agency for herself despite her sad fate. The printed text is unclear about whether Louis knows this last fact, although dramaturgically this cannot be the case.⁶⁵ Louis thinks that Lizandra is dead until they meet again at the end of the fourth act. She has not been able to protect her *honor* and has given in to Don Julian's marriage proposal. Yet, Louis rejoices at the fact that Lizandra has survived the poison, because as soon as he had made her take it, he regretted his decision. To save her *honor*, Louis decides to propose an arranged marriage between Lizandra and Garzeran, Louis' best friend and companion, instead, to which both agree in the final scene.⁶⁶

Another change Heynck made in his adaptation is the role that Louis explicitly ascribes to fate when he describes his father's death as originating 'from fate's punishment.' In the original, the protagonist Fernando does not make the explicit link to fate but rather to the 'excessive and scrupulous severity' of fortune in one reading of

63 Heynck 1668, 35: 'LOUIS. En op dat zulx niet zy, zo heb ik vast besloten / Uw doodt, eer hy u, door zijn geilheit, heeft genoten, / 'k Heb liever aen dit stael nu t'offren uwe borst, / Als dat zijn wulpshheit hier uw zuivre schoot bemorst. / Dies zult gy strak dees pook of dit fenijn uit keuren: / 'k Wil liever eens uw doodt, als staeg uw eêr betreuren.'

64 Bood 2020a, 139–140.

65 Heynck 1668, 35–36. It is unclear whether Lizandra's statement, 'k Heb tegengift, ik zal de doodt zelf overwinnen' should be regarded as an aside. On the one hand, Heynck always indicates stage whispers by a double comma (,,) at the start of the verse. This is not the case here. On the other hand, this statement only works dramatically if it is regarded as an aside, because otherwise it is strange that Louis, Guarin, and Garzeran think she has died. In the original, there is no indication that Ana Ramirez is saying this as an aside; see Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza c. 1728–1770, fol. C3^r.

66 Heynck 1668, 68–69, 90–91.

the word 'rigor.' Read another way, 'rigor' may instead refer to man's ultimate destiny as described in Thomistic natural law: 'the ultimate ending that things can reach [rigor] has been fatal.'⁶⁷ Likewise, the references to fortune in the Dutch adaptation are numerous. Louis questions, for example, 'How wickedly does changing Fortune treat me?'⁶⁸ His sister Lizaura, in turn, explains that she has been 'pendulated by Fortune as you see; her house, formerly raised high, fell so swiftly down.'⁶⁹ Don Louis and his sister Lizaura explicitly blame the unavoidable order of things, but their subsequent actions show that they do not accept fate easily and retain their agency. Vengeance is Louis' objective; in achieving it he will restore his and his sister's rightful positions in life.

The implications of Heynck's different approach to fortune, fate, and divine providence, as propagated in *Don Louis de Vargas*, become much clearer when the play is compared to Hooft's 1613 *Geeraert van Velsen*. Heynck had different ideas about honour, vengeance, and emotions than did Hooft, but at the same time adapted Alarcón's original in certain respects to the Dutch context. As has been well recorded in Dutch scholarship, Dutch-language plays dealt with themes that were at the time politically and religiously important.⁷⁰ The dilemmas faced are, however, less applicable to the day-to-day lives of the individual spectator. In this respect *comedia nueva* differs greatly from Dutch theatre. Spanish plays were not political in the same way that Dutch 'home-grown' plays were. Still, it must be said that the playwrights of the Spanish Siglo de Oro also touched upon political and social issues—such as Lope's *Fuenteovejuna* or Calderón's *El alcalde de Zalamea* (1651)—but those were always framed within a romantic plot.⁷¹ Moreover, Spanish plays that are typically known to engage in contemporary political or social matters were often not adapted for Dutch-language stages. In this sense, it is striking that today *Fuenteovejuna* may be regarded

67 Heynck 1668, 26: 'dees wreetheit is niet door / Verradery geteelt, o neen! zy komt voor / Uyt nootlots straf, door vals en nijd'ge hoofse slangen.' Cf. Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza 1728, fol. B2^r: 'no ha podido ser traycion / fiereza, y cuidado igual, rigor ha sido fatal / y de la embidia estos fines, que en los Regios camarines / corre peligro el crystal.' The three first definitions of 'rigor' in the *Diccionario de la lengua española* describe 'rigor' as 'excesiva y escrupulos severidad,' 'aspereza, dureza o acrimonia en el genio o en el trato,' and 'último término a que pueden llegar las cosas.' The Thomistic reading of 'rigor' is based on the third definition.

68 Heynck 1668, 74: 'Hoe snoodt bejegent my 't veranderlijk geval.'

69 Heynck 1668, 72: '(...) door 't geval / Geslingert als gy ziet, diens huys, eêr hoog gerezen, zo schielijk nederviel.'

70 Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, 217–218, 222–225.

71 McKendrick 1984, 332.

as one of Lope de Vega's best plays, but was never translated into Dutch during the early modern period.

Revenge as a Sign of an Unbridled Mind?

How, then, did Hooft perceive honour, and more importantly, what was his perspective on vengeance? In 1968, Fokke Veenstra made an exceptional analysis of how honour is represented in Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velsen*. In the following, I use his analysis to confront how the honour-vengeance theme returns in Dutch adaptations of *dramas de honor*. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Lope and Calderón had successfully limited Fortune as an all-governing force in their oeuvre, which meant that their *dramatis personae* were more clearly confronted with a dilemma which would affect their social standing and their romantic life. In Hooft's play, the *dramatis personae* are also tortured, though not because they must make a difficult choice. There Fortune is a powerful force to be reckoned with in the same way that it had been in Sophocles' *Oedipus rex*.

While revenge is regarded to be magnanimous in Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas*, fifty-five years earlier Hooft had condemned revenge in his *Geeraerd van Velsen*, as vengeance was the result of unbridled passions. Additionally, *Geeraerd van Velsen* as a representation of domestic politics had to show that vengeance had no fruitful purpose. In his play, Hooft dramatised an episode in the history of the County of Holland for the first time. It questioned whether a populace may dethrone their monarch, touching upon the sensitive issue of the Dutch Revolt's legitimacy. This meant that, according to Henk Duits, any audience would have been invested in the plot when it premiered in 1613.⁷² And while Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velsen* revolves around the greater question of whether citizens can depose their monarch, it also had an individual crisis. Geeraerd wants revenge because Count Floris v—his liege lord—defiled his wife, an act against Geeraerd's sexual honour. In this way, the play's theme is actually comparable to those of Spanish *dramas de honor*.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that *Geeraerd van Velsen* was a dramatisation of *De antiquitate reipublicae Batavae* by Grotius, in which he had argued that sovereignty had always rested with the distinct states rather than with a Machiavellian prince. Hooft had identified with this point of view through Count Floris v's declaration that he should be judged by the states.⁷³ That this was an anachronism was of no

⁷² Duits 2005, 219–224.

⁷³ Hooft 1613, fol. C3^r: 'G. FLORIS. Soo stelt my dan te recht voor 't lichaem van de Staeten. / 'T gheen my mijn kranse gaf, dat oordeel van mijn kranse.'

concern.⁷⁴ Geeraerd van Velsen and his father-in-law Harman van Woerden want instead to judge the count themselves; not so much because they think they have the right to, but because they want to be sure that Floris is punished and that their desire for revenge is satisfied.

The protagonists' anger towards their liege-lord had originated in the moment that Floris convicted Van Velsen's brother for treason. Floris had, furthermore, confiscated his estate; unjustly in Geeraerd's opinion. However, the direct reason for rebellion emerged, as noted above, when the count raped Machteld van Woerden, Geeraerd's wife and Harman's daughter, a most serious offense against one's sense of freedom and integrity in the seventeenth century. In other words, it was the worst defamation possible in the early modern mind. As such, both men are vengeful and their actions are those of radicals.⁷⁵ Geeraerd's remark that 'the humblest among the people is an executioner of the tyrant' is a sign that Geeraerd lacks temperance and is consumed by his emotions, wanting revenge and being too concerned about his honour.⁷⁶ (It is, however, vindicating in light of the Dutch Revolt's success.) The only one still led by reason is Gysbreght van Aemstel, although he is too naïve to see the malicious objectives of his co-conspirators.

While looking through the lens of honour, Veenstra made clear that in the seventeenth century it was understood that nobles were inherently so because of the secret properties of the seed from which they sprouted. Because of this physic-psychic ('fysisch-psychisch') phenomenon, Reason stimulates the nobleman to follow the acknowledged virtue of his ancestors. His honour motivates him to stay away from vicious deeds and to keep up his parents' good name. According to Veenstra, Count Floris v had neglected the honour of his father, William II, by (unjustly) sentencing Geeraerd's brother to death and by raping Machteld van Woerden.⁷⁷ Floris' honour reflects upon the whole of Holland's nobility, and by his actions, he lost it all. Despite Floris' malefactions, Sierhuis says that '[t]he play gains in complexity once we realise that Van Velsen does not simply "fall prey" to intemperance, but that he actually chooses to give in to it.'⁷⁸

Because Machteld's honour has been tarnished, Geeraerd feels obliged to restore her—but especially his—good name. To speak in Reddy's terms, Geeraerd's goal

74 Duits 2005, 222; see also Grotius [1610] 2000, *passim*.

75 Duits 2005, 210, 212–215, 218.

76 Hooft 1613, fol. C3^r: 'De minste van het volck is Halsheer des tyrans.'

77 Veenstra 1968, 25–30.

78 Sierhuis 2010, 124.

conflict between the reasonable choice for legal judgement and the lust for revenge is decided in favour of the latter quite easily. Duits argues that Geeraerdts seems to express the political philosophy of the Scottish (and Calvinist) humanist George Buchanan as laid out in his *De iure regni apud Scotos* (1579), which described a rather radical politics that legitimised tyrannicide.⁷⁹ In Hooft's play, there follows, however, an immediate moral and neostoic denouncement in the spirit of Lipsius. This means that Geeraerdts is left on his own, unsupported by his wife, for whom he claimed to have undertaken the abduction of his liege-lord in the first place.⁸⁰ In *Geeraerdts van Velsen*, the irony is that Floris lost his honour through his criminal behaviour (something which should be wholly foreign to nobility), but Geeraerdts demonstrates similar ignominious behaviour in response. In sum, both men are discredited for it.

It is instantly clear that Geeraerdts undervalues virtue and reason, and that he displays behaviour unbefitting a Dutchman, and especially a Dutch nobleman. Despite that, Geeraerdts himself thinks he and his family magnanimous:

But if you regarded me to be so weak of courage,
 Traitor, did you not think that someone of my blood,
 Prominent in higher honour, and knightly descentance,
 Who are common to behave chaste in darkness and in light,
 That someone of my stature and noble kinship,
 Held in high regard by the Country (...)
 Would bare his dagger
 To push it in your heart by also pushing it in his own breast
 In order to redeem this most-worthy Fatherland,
 And the vengeance of God, and the honour-forgotten disgrace.⁸¹

As Veenstra has argued, *magnanimitas*—or 'edelhoedigheid' in Dutch—included in the first place the sublimity of the noble house, which also meant that its members were considerate of their honour, and secondly their steadfastness (or Lipsius' *constantia*)

⁷⁹ Duits 1985, 412.

⁸⁰ Duits 1985, 412–413.

⁸¹ Hooft 1613, fol. C2^v. 'Maer oft ghy my al aensaecht voor soo slap van moedt, / Verrader, dacht ghy niet dat yemandt van mijn bloedt, / In hoogher eer verweent, en ridderlycke maeghen, / Die haer in duystre' en licht ghewoon zijn preutsch te draeghen (...) Dat yemandt van myn grootte' en edle swaghery / Den Lande deur ontsien (...) Zijn dagge soud' ontblooten / Om, door zyn eyghen borst oock, dy in 't hart te stooten; / Tot lossing van dit allerwaertste Vaderlandt, / En wraecke vande God, en Eervergheten schandt.'

in tasks and duties performed. Influences from outside could never interfere in the tasks of the magnanimous nobleman (neither in light nor darkness, as Geeraerd says).⁸² According to himself, Geeraerd aspires to this ideal, while Floris does not. From his next actions, we learn that Geeraerd is neither magnanimous nor steadfast. His honour is primarily dependent on the judgement of his countrymen, his outward honour. And thus, Geeraerd's passions are subject to public opinion.⁸³ This eventually leads to his tragic downfall. Hooft's definition of *magnanimitas* shows that Geeraerd has lost sight of everything that was required of him as a nobleman.

While Harman and Geeraerd act on their inner feelings, Gysbreght offers a judicial counter voice by always legitimising his actions according to the arguments laid out by Grotius in his *De antiquitate* and by Lipsius' *Politica* (1589).⁸⁴ Gysbreght says, for example, that tyranny should be endured when the states decide to side with the prince:

Does the largest part of the people want to be ruled by tyrants,
It is their judgement: thus if they endure it, then everyone
Should endure with them, or should leave elsewhere.⁸⁵

Obviously, Geeraerd and Harman disagree with Gysbreght's 'reasonable' words. The clearest example of Geeraerd's unreasonableness is demonstrated in the second dialogue with his wife, later that same evening. Gysbreght had pushed for clemency for Floris, and Machtelt (the true wronged party) does the same. Geeraerd is irritated by Gysbreght's meticulousness and scrupulousness, but Machtelt tries, in turn, to convince Geeraerd of his irrational behaviour:

If a woman is allowed to express her feelings,
Then I ask, let the fire of our sorrow cool down,
So much, that our pain, and the exceptional hate,
Not come before love for the commonwealth.⁸⁶

⁸² Veenstra 1968, 45–49.

⁸³ Veenstra 1968, 42–43.

⁸⁴ Duits 2005, 213, 223.

⁸⁵ Hooft 1613, fol. D4^r: 'Wil 't beste deel des volcx verheert zijn van Tyrannen / Het oordeel staat an haar: des dulden zy, elck een / Die dulde dan met haar, oft geev' hem elders heen.'

⁸⁶ Hooft 1613, fol. D4^r: 'Indien een vrouw betaemt te seggen haar ghevoelen, / Soo bid ick laet den brandt van onse smart bekoelen, / Soo veel, dat onse leedt, en de besondren haet, / Niet boven liefde van't ghemeene best en gaet.'

Machtelt literally asks permission to speak her mind, or better yet, her feelings, through an *emotive* to call for *patientia*. It is clear that she goes cautiously forward to not further aggravate her husband. Her honor is not as important as the interests of the state, she argues. Although she says that they should both have composure, here Machtelt actually uses rhetoric: she speaks about herself and her husband as a unified front by using the inclusive ‘we,’ a way to ensure that her husband is made to feel responsible.⁸⁷ Her aim is to make clear that he should regain his reasonable strength, because she is, in fact, more reasonable than he is at the moment. From their discussion, the audience learns that revenge would be harmful in this situation, because Geeraerd makes impulsive decisions.⁸⁸ The fact that Geeraerd has sent his shield-bearer to ‘Timon toveraar’ (‘The necromancer Timon’) proves Machtelt right. Machtelt justifiably questions this decision: ‘A most evil counsellor, my dear, you do consult!’ Those decisions are devilish in nature, and by that Geeraerd’s fate has been sealed.⁸⁹

Magnanimous Revenge as Poetic Justice

While Hooft saw revenge and *magnanimitas* as two opposite and irreconcilable forces, Heynck brought both together in the protagonist of his play *Don Louis de Vargas*: Don Louis has a magnanimous character, uses vengeance to restore his reputation, and even regards his revenge on his enemies to be a magnanimous act, which is nowhere disputed by the other characters or in the paratexts of the play. A closer look at the specific definition of *magnanimitas* in Heynck’s play shows that it is completely different from Hooft’s more generally accepted definition. This difference in definition can be explained in part by the Spanish origins of Heynck’s *Don Louis de Vargas*, for Hooft was likely bound by the local, ‘real’ history staged in *Geeraerd van Velsen*, which may have required a more realistic, native system of values. The fiction of the Spaniards (as did the fiction of the English) perhaps allowed for greater excesses. These excesses could then at the same time offer an alternative perspective on vengeance.

In the play, De Vargas family name should be protected from any dishonour, and likewise Louis’ sexual honour as *pater familias*. And yet, Heynck not only subtitled his

87 Although the trope is not explicitly discussed as such by the foremost handbook on rhetoric, i.e. Quintilianus, we may deduce from the use of the trope that it is a variation on the apostrophe; see Quintilianus 2001, IX.2.38–39.

88 Duits 2005, 213.

89 Hooft 1613, fol. D4^v: ‘Wat quaeder raetsman, lief, daer ghy mee gaet te raedel’

play ‘magnanimous revenge,’ he also let several characters explicitly describe Louis’ actions as such while questioning the *magnanimitas* of the rival Pelaës family.⁹⁰ This is demonstrated by Lizandra de Vargas, who fears Julian de Pelaës is irrational. She says that this is often the reason people cannot be magnanimous:

- IULIAN. Give me your fair hand.
 LIZANDRA. And with that I give
 My soul also to you, lord. Thus, I ask do show
 Now your magnanimity for my peace of mind.
 IULIAN. Now that you govern my heart, how do you doubt this, my fair
 one?
 LIZANDRA. Even though that which seems impossible, is often made possible.
 It can go wrong if one leaves the path of reason.⁹¹

In line with the definition of *magnanimitas* in Hooft’s *Geeraerd van Velsen*, Lizandra indeed says that magnanimous behaviour can be corrupted by unbridled emotional response. As such, Lizandra verbalises an idea present in many Dutch plays: people should have rational composure and should not allow their passions to go unbridled.⁹²

The Spanish dialogue of the first part is similar, but there is an important difference. Ana Ramirez (Lizandra de Vargas’ name in the Spanish original) focuses on how nobility can become vile (*vil*) and villainous (*villana*), and does not mention magnanimity:

- ANA. I give you the spousal hand.
 Proceed as a noble.
 CONDE. When I obtain
 Such a divine beauty.
 Do you doubt my nobility?

⁹⁰ See e.g. Heynck 1668, 65.

⁹¹ Heynck 1668, 43: ‘IULIAN. Geef my uw schone handt. / LIZANDRA. En met die geef ik u / Mijn ziel ook over Heer, dies bid ik doch, wilt nu / Uw edelmoedigheid tot mijn gerustheit tonen. / IULIAN. Nu gy mijn hart beheert, wat twijffelt gy, mijn Schone? / LIZANDRA. Schoon dat onmooglijk schijnt vaak mooglijk wert gemaect, / ’t Kan missen als men van het spoor der reden raekt.’

⁹² Konst 1993, 8–18.

ANA. Nobility,
When it evens out the impossible things,
Maybe tends to be vile, and villainous.⁹³

The words closest to *magnanimitas* in this scene are *noble* and *nobleza*. The two concepts are articulated throughout the two plays in terms of blood, most exemplary as *noble sangre*, which the Pedro Alonso articulates in relation to Teodora (his sister Ana's alias) in the second play and not to himself. Alternatively, he is said to be of *ilustre sangre* by his sister.⁹⁴ I believe that the references to *noble* and *nobleza* in the Spanish should be understood in relation to the *limpieza de sangre* discussion, which in effect means that your noble blood also determines whether you are a good marriage candidate.⁹⁵

Thus when Ana Ramirez agrees to marry Don Juan, she asks him to proceed as befits a nobleman of good breeding. This demonstrates at the same time that Ana believes that there is also an aspect of behaviour to *noble* and *nobleza*, and not solely one's blood. In this, the definition of the Dutch *edelmoedigheid* and of the Spanish *nobleza* are actually again similar. Yet, in the Dutch definition of *magnanimitas*, there exists a strong relationship between magnanimity and reason, as Lizandra shows. Therefore, it is interesting that in 1668 Heynck does not entirely articulate the desire for revenge vis-à-vis magnanimity as Hooft had done in 1613. While in the neostoic tradition the desire for vengeance was regarded as a sign of a perturbed mind, the different perspective on the magnanimity of revenge in Heynck's play is acknowledged when King Alfonso says in one of the last scenes that Louis committed righteous revenge by following natural law, receiving also the legal immunity for his actions. Through this altered perspective on magnanimity, Louis' revenge can become poetic justice:

KING. Your deeds
O brave Don Louis! deserve our clemency;
Your militant war gang has indebted me; I confess
That I owe the victory to your devoutness.
So that, although you had committed a crime,

93 Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza c. 1728–1770, fol. D1^r: 'ANA. De esposa os doy la mano, / proceded como noble. / CONDE. Quando gano / tan divina belleza. / Dudais en mi Nobleza? / ANA. La Nobleza, / Si imposibles allana, / Tal vez suele ser vil, y ser villana.'

94 Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza [1619] 1990, vv. II, 523 and III, 979.

95 See also Von der Walde Moheno 2010.

I am obliged to forgive this for your service.
 Now I know that you only sought righteous revenge,
 And thus my favours are devoted to your bravery.
 May your soldiers appear then all before me,
 I want to know them and reward their loyal service.⁹⁶

What strikes the reader's eye is that Don Louis exacts his revenge and that the king forgives Louis for seeking that revenge, although Louis' actions are, strictly speaking, illicit according to the laws of the land. Moreover, the king even rewards Louis and calls him in the final lines of the play an Atlas of his Kingdom.⁹⁷ In *Don Louis de Vargas*, this is a demonstration of poetic justice articulated through natural law.

Such interferences by a king also occur in other dramas *de honor*, but the voice of the King seems rather bleak compared to Louis' strong declaration of his own agency. While Fortune's power is demonstrated throughout *Don Louis de Vargas*, its failure to further thwart Louis is especially visible in the very last lines spoken by our hero. There, Louis concludes the play by saying that his magnanimous revenge rightfully demonstrates that no crime will ever go unpunished. It also appears as a Latin motto on the play's titlepage, where it reads that 'rarely does Retribution fail to catch up with the criminal despite her limping gait'—a quote from Horace's *Odes* 3.2.⁹⁸ This motto is Heynck's own addition to the closing scene of his adaptation and reflects a common saying in Dutch culture at that time: 'mischief rewards its master'.⁹⁹ Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas* focuses on poetic justice, which becomes more important in the Dutch drama theory of this period. The theorist Pels argued that spectators learned the most

96 Heynck 1668, 88–89: 'KONING. Uw daden / O dapp'ren Don Louis! verdienen ons genaden; / Uw strijtbren oorlogstroep heeft my verplicht; 'k beken / Ik d'overwinning aen uw vroomheit schuldig ben. / Zo dat, of gy al schoon een misdaet hadt bedreven, / Ik ben gehouden, om uw dienst; zulks te vergeven. / Nu weet ik, hebt gy maer rechtvaerd'ge wrack gezocht, / Dies zijn mijn gunsten aen uw moedigheid verknocht. / Dat uw soldaten zich vry alle voor my tonen, / Ik wil haer kennen, en hun trouwe dienst belonen.'

97 Heynck 1668, 91.

98 Horace 2004, 3.2, vv. 31–32. The translation was taken from the edition in the Loeb Classical Library. The original on the title page of Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas* reads: 'Raro antecedentem scelestum / Deseruit pede poena claudo.'

99 The Dutch saying is recorded by Spieghel in his *Byspraax Almanak* (Spieghel c. 1600–1625, fol. B1^r): 'Tschalxken loont zijn meester'. Similarly, Rodenburgh selected a variant of this saying as the title of his *'t Quaedt syn meester loont*. The English saying 'he who mischief hatches, mischief catches' means more or less the same. A more common version of the Dutch saying is known among others from a fairy tale told in Jan Vos' *De klucht van Oene* (1642): 'boontje komt om zijn loontje' ('little bean receives his little reward'). For this, see Stoett 1923.

from drama when the virtuous characters are rewarded and the villains punished.¹⁰⁰ In the context of *Don Louis de Vargas*, vengeance is emphasised as a righteous act, which had also been the moral of *El tejedor de Segovia*. This was not expressed, however, in the same conclusive and instructive way as Heynck did in his adaptation.¹⁰¹

As such, Louis emphasises that he took measures into his own hands. And unlike Fernando in Alarcón's original, Louis gives no indication that Divine Providence intervened or that the law of a king punished his enemies. God's active hand seems, in fact, to be mostly absent in *Don Louis de Vargas*, or at least His influence goes unacknowledged by the protagonist and his supporters.¹⁰² Louis rather reflects on events in terms of Fortune, who strikes at people. His ability to act despite his misfortune and despite a failing legal system gives him the justice he was looking for. The reference to Horace's *Odes* 3.2 still implies that Fate will always punish the guilty, but this is not because Louis patiently waited for Fate to intervene; this is rather because Louis followed natural law. Vengeance can provide (poetic) justice to the magnanimous person. And the other way around, it also means that only the magnanimous person can commit an act of private revenge to obtain (poetic) justice.¹⁰³

In this regard, Heynck's adaptation is influenced by neostoic thought; the play searches to resolve the frustration with Divine Providence's inaction on behalf of victims. *Don Louis de Vargas* offers an answer to this strict philosophy current in the Low Countries without accepting Aquinas' alternative.¹⁰⁴

100 Konst 1996, 144. While the outcome of *Providentia Dei* and poetic justice are similar, their working is different: poetic justice is a way of structuring drama, whereas *Providentia Dei* as an ordering principle of human life has more extensive implications for the protagonists.

101 Von der Walde Moheno 2010, esp. 1090–1092.

102 A good example is given by Garzeran, who doubts whether God or the King will intervene; see Heynck 1668, 58: 'Kan dit een Koning dan gedogen, / Dat een verrader hier zo god'loos voor zijn ogen / De vroomheit zelf belaeget en hoont? / En werdt den hemel dan noch niet bewogen, / Om dees te straffen, daer / Hun boosheit, als den dag zo klaer, / Ten toon staet, die verwoet geen mensch op aerd' verschoont.'

103 There are also examples where not the protagonists, but the antagonists use vengeance to receive poetic justice, such as the Duke of Mantua in Wouters' *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, and Duke Norandino of Milan and his father-in-law Duke Fabricio of Mantua in Rodenburgh's 't *Quaedt syn meester loont*. The obvious opposition is that within the play's logic this might be poetic justice, but as I pointed out in Chapter 4 for Wouters' *De verliefde stiefmoeder*, it is hard to have compassion for the antagonists, because the spectators were likely already moved by Duchess Cassandra and her stepson Frederico. This opposition between vengeance as a tool in the hands of the protagonists versus vengeance as a tool in the hands of the antagonists will be the subject of a future publication.

104 For the stoic interpretation of Horace's *Odes* 3.2 see, e.g., Moles 2007, 172–173.

LOUIS. My magnanimous revenge gives here justified evidence,
That rarely will a piece of villainy continue to roam around,
Or limping punishment be able to catch up in the end.¹⁰⁵

Although Fortune killed Louis' father and Fate already prescribed that he could avenge his father's death, Louis maintains his own agency, which helps him succeed in his search for recompense. Only in the end did Divine Providence see to it that Louis was rewarded. While this might be similar to the Spanish original, the focus has shifted. Meanwhile, the king seems to be nothing more than a tool of Divine Providence. In the play, the king merely ratifies what Fate already decided. Although the king indeed shows Louis mercy, this is not what Louis needs nor desires.¹⁰⁶ Louis' *honra*—his position at court—had been tainted, but this did not mean that he had lost his honor—his virtue or his *nobleza*.

Meanwhile, spectators realise that although vengeance could never be realistically approved by the authorities, Louis did receive justice and was right to look for it according to natural law. As such, Louis becomes a magnanimous *exemplum*; within the world of the theatre Louis' actions are a demonstration not of how spectators acted in real life, but of how they would like to act. While staging this *comedia*, the theatre becomes an *emotional refuge* to the spectators who are otherwise expected to reign in their emotions and accept their fates.

Vengeance and the Rule of Law

The tension between the king on the one hand and Fortune on the other is also present in Corneille's *Le Cid* and in its Dutch translation *De verduypte Cid*, where vengeance becomes a way to circumnavigate a legal system which fails to judge the guilty party. In this case, vengeance can offer the recompense that is sought.

That tension becomes clear after Don Rodrigo defeated Chimene's champion. The king resolves the conflict by commanding Chimene to marry Rodrigo despite his murder of her father; he calls it a *commandement* in French:

105 Heynck 1668, 91: 'LOUIS. Mijn Edelmoed'ge wraek geeft hier geregte blij, / Dat zelden schellemstuk zo voorgaan zal in 't dwalen, / Of kreuple straf die kan 't in 't eindt noch achterhalen.'

106 Bood 2020a, 140 and 2020b, 159. Bood has a diametrically opposite reading of the role of the king in Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas*. She sees him as the highest authority in the play who can therefore rightfully grant Louis mercy.

You see how Heaven ordained differently,
 You, having done so much for him, do something for yourself,
 And do not rebel against my command
 Which gives you a spouse loved so dearly.¹⁰⁷

In Dutch, this commandment is rendered similarly with the same performative power: it makes clear that the decision of the king agrees with a certain turn of events.¹⁰⁸

You see Heaven make a very different decision,
 Having done so much for him, do now your own business,
 Do not resist my royal decree anymore,
 Which gives you a groom who you love so dearly.¹⁰⁹

It is suggested that both in French and in Dutch, Heaven's will coincides with the king's will. This was completely in line with the idea at that time that the king was divinely appointed by God, which was the basis of seventeenth-century absolutism. In this form, kingship returns more often in Dutch drama, for example, as in Hooft's *Baeto*.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it is not strange that the king says this. Chimene accepts the king's decision in the French version simply because he is her king: 'You are my king, I must obey you.'¹¹¹ In the Dutch translation, we read: 'And you are my King, there is no refusing.'¹¹²

And here it becomes interesting. Not only was the royal commandment entirely absent in the Spanish original *Las mocedades del Cid* by De Castro y Bellvís, it is nowhere suggested that the king's decision and Heaven's will are equal or converge. In the Spanish, the scene is rendered quite differently. After Rodrigo has explained himself, the king rules in his favour. When Chimene does not seem immediately happy about

107 Corneille 1637, v, vi: 'Tu vois comme le Ciel autrement en dispose, / Ayant tant fait pour luy, fay pour toy quelque chose, / Et ne sois point rebelle à mon commandement / Qui te donne un espoux aimé si cherement.'

108 Weisgerber 2008, 365.

109 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. F8v: 'Ghy siet den Hemel een heel ander schicking maken, / So veel voor hem gedaen doet nu u eygen saken, / Noch wederstreeft niet meer my Conincklijck bevel, / Dat u een Bruygom geeft die ghy bemint soo wel.'

110 Weisgerber 2008, 365.

111 Corneille 1637, v, vii: 'Et vous estes mon Roy, ie vous dois obeïr.'

112 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. G1r: 'En ghy mijn Coninck sijt, daer is gheen weyghren an.'

this course of events, her suitor Don Sanche and Don Rodrigo's brothers Arias Gonçalo and Peransules ask Chimene to agree to this outcome, and she answers that she will do what the Heavens order.¹¹³ Chimene's answer in the Spanish original is not in response to what the king decided. There seems to be indeed a shift in Corneille's *Le Cid*—and therefore in Van Heemskerck's *De verduytsste Cid*—towards the will of the king as society's unequivocal authority.¹¹⁴

And yet, I think that there has not yet been sufficient attention to the duel, which should give Chimene recompense and which decides Rodrigo's guilt. In Van Heemskerck's *De verduytsste Cid*, I assert that it is Fortune who decides Rodrigo's fate and the king cannot ensure his courtiers abide by the legal system. In fact, I argue that the king is not actually the ultimate judge, and his voice is initially muted so that his courtiers—and especially Chimene—can pursue the justice that they think they deserve. When the king does not want to charge Rodrigo, who is, in his eyes, a hero because he defeated the Moors on the battlefield, Chimene is aggrieved because Rodrigo had also killed her father. Therefore, she asks that she may seek justice by combat. She even says that the trial by combat will be her refuge, and in a way also her *emotional refuge*:

Will there be done so little with my complaints,
That it seems to me a service is done by not taking notice!
Lord King, now that you refuse justice to my tears,
Allow then that I seek refuge in combat.¹¹⁵

The king cannot ignore this request and tries to acquit Rodrigo at first, because he does not want to punish the man who has saved Castille from the Moors. The king is willing to ignore the rule of law because he needs Don Rodrigo to fight more battles against the Moorish invaders. He is an opportunist: his public interests conflict with the personal interests of Chimene. This posed a problem that the king had hoped

113 De Castro y Bellvís 1618, 34: 'REY. Rodrigo tiene razon, / yo pronuncio la sentencia / en su favor. / XIMENA. ¡Ha! de mî impideme la verguenza. / DON SANCHE. Ximena, haceldo por mí. / ARIAS GONÇALO. Esas dudas no os detengan. / PERANSULES. Muy bien os está, sobrina. / XIMENA. Harè lo que el Cielo ordena.'

114 Cf. Weisgerber 2008, 365; Bood 2020b, 157; see also the analysis of *Le Cid* and *De verduytsste Cid* by Bood 2020a, 158–164.

115 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E8r: 'Wert dan so weynig wercx gemaect van myne klachten, / Dat my schynt dienst gedaen met daer niet op te achten! / Heer Koninck, nu ghy aen myn tranen weygert recht, / Laet toe dan dat ick neem mijn toevlucht tot 't ghevecht.'

to solve by sending Rodrigo to the front. He did not count on the fact that Chimene would persist in her plea for justice. She cannot accept that dying in service of one's fatherland is a punishment, more so because Rodrigo was victorious, which only increased his honour and earned him the title of Cid:

If he dies of his wounds received for the fatherland,
 My revenge is without revenge, my proposal turns against me.
 Such a great end offers me only sorrow;
 Alas! I desire his death, but do not want it to be honourable.
 I do not want that it gives him such great glory.
 I do not want him to ascend the bed of honour, but a scaffold instead;
 That he dies because of my father, and not because of the fatherland,
 So that his name remains tainted by this with his shame.
 To die for the state is not a pitiful death.
 It is to be rewarded eternal glory through a courageous death.¹¹⁶

The king is unable to make Chimene accept his initial, opportunistic judgement. In other words, the king fails to serve justice to those who demand it; he does not adequately fulfil the role of a divinely appointed, just ruler.

The king now must fashion himself in the final scenes of the play as having a divinely legal voice in order to regain some form of authority over the (quasi-)legal proceedings. Then, it becomes clear that Rodrigo regains his *honra* not because the king forgives the hero's crimes as has been argued before.¹¹⁷ Rather, Rodrigo successfully defended himself against Chimene, who in the absence of sufficient legal recourse (as one should expect in a just and rational society) invoked the outdated medieval right to justice: trial by combat ('Camp-recht'). Even the king, not recognising his own legal failure, considers it 'an old custom, instated here long ago as punishment, when proof is lacking of an unproven crime.'¹¹⁸ Originally, trial by

116 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E7^v: 'Soo hy van wonden sterft voor 't vaderlant verkregen, / Mijn wraec is sonder wraec, mijn voorstel loopt my tegen / Soo heerlijcken eynd streckt my slechts tot verdriet, / Helaes! Ick wil sijn dood, maer wils eerlijck niet. / Ick wil niet dat s'hem doe so grooten roem verkrigen, / Hem niet op 't bed van eer maer een Schavot doe stijgen, / Hy om mijn Vader sterff, en niet om 't Vaderland, / Op dat zijn naem daer door beveleckt blijf met sijn schant. / Te sterven voor den staet is geen ellendigh sterven. / 't Is door een brave dood een eeuwich lof be-erven.'

117 Weisgerber 2008; Bood 2020b.

118 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E8^r: 'een oud ghebruyck, hier inghevoert voor desen, / Tot straf, by proefs ghebreck, van misdaed onbewesen.'

combat or by ordeal were indeed used in this way as a form of God's judgement in medieval (primarily Germanic) judicial practice.¹¹⁹ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, both civil and ecclesiastical courts were, however, coming to prefer legal proceedings under their own direction: 'the administering classes were growing more self-reliant, more confident of their ability to unravel problems instead of leaving them to God, or chance.'¹²⁰

Although the opportunistic king tries to bend the rule of law in his favour, it is unavoidable that his initial dismissal of Chimene's request conflicts with the legitimacy and divinity that other characters ascribe to the trial by combat. This makes clear why the king has no divinely legal voice and why his will is disunited from that of Heaven in *De verduyfte Cid*. The king believes that allowing his subjects to receive justice in this way will weaken the state too much. Legitimising the duel might deprive the state of its best fighters and, by extension, it undermines the state's monopoly on violence, a common concern in the early modern period.¹²¹ In this, the king had Dutch moralists on his side. A similar argument was provided by the minister Godefridus Udemans as early as 1612 in his *Practijcke, dat is, werkelijkke oeffeninge van de christelijcke hooft-deugden* ('Practice, that is, the True Practice of the Christian Cardinal Virtues'):

[If] these proud fighters take the sword from the Magistrate with the fist, to avenge their own grievances [...] there comes no profit from this for the Republic, but great damage, because they rob the commonwealth of a pious citizen or brave soldier, from whom the Republic could still receive noticeable service; therefore, this *devilish spectacle* ought to be prohibited on pain of corporal punishment.¹²²

Furthermore, the legitimacy of trial by combat is questionable in the eyes of the king, because 'the outcome is often the spokesman of abuse, while this cruel custom,

119 Janin 2009, esp. 149–151; Kiernan 1988, 35–37.

120 Kiernan 1988, 36.

121 See also Matthey 2012, 111–135, 388–390.

122 Udemans 1640, 260–261: 'dese trotse vechters nemen den Magistraet het sweert uyt met de vuyst, om haer eyghen leedt te wreken [...] daer en komt geen profijt uyt voor de Republijcke, maer groote schade, want sy berooven het ghemeyne beste van eenen vromen Burgher oft kloecken Soldaet, daer van dat de Republijcke noch merckelijcken dienst soude kunnen ontfanghen, daeromme behoorde dat duvvelsch spectacel, scherpelijck verboden te worden op lijf-straffe.'

unreliable to depend on, represses the innocent, and supports he who is guilty.¹²³ In these words, we hear an echo of jurist Constantijn Huygens, who objected to the duel.¹²⁴ In ‘Een wys hoveling’ (‘A Wise Courtier’), Huygens writes that ‘he who has honour, can only lose her because of himself.’¹²⁵ And even then, if someone was robbed of their honour—which was obviously impossible according to Huygens—they should never demand retribution in a duel because then a bigger evil would be committed to repay another evil. Thus, Huygens rhetorically asks what one seeks ‘in the murder of the creation that solely belongs to its Maker?’¹²⁶ More so than Huygens, the Utrecht jurist Paulus Voet discussed in his *De duellis licitis et illicitis* (1646, ‘On Licit and Illicit Duels’) that trial by combat is especially unjustified, since it runs counter to profane, religious and divine law, but is also contrary to natural law in that the weaker party could also win.¹²⁷ Here, we see an echo of the king’s decision.

This decision is, however, challenged by Rodrigo’s father, Don Diego, who demands that Rodrigo has the opportunity to defend himself, otherwise his glory—his *honra*—will be stained: ‘spare him this favour [of clemency] and tarnish his glory.’¹²⁸ Diego makes clear that custom orders this, as do the people who might think that justice did not run its course: ‘What will the people, what will envy say of this?’¹²⁹ Moreover, Don Diego believes that his son will willingly take up the gauntlet as would any nobleman at Castile’s court. Huygens believed this to be a sign of ‘Een sott hoveling,’ (‘A Foolish Courtier’) who would use armed force to restore his honour.¹³⁰ Huygens’ critique of the duel is, however, not explicitly echoed in *De verduytste Cid*, although the king makes an effort to offer this counter-perspective. Therefore, the king loses control over the law that is his to enforce, and also over his subjects who, led by their emotions and their sense of honour, pursue personal justice to the detriment of the common good. As discussed in Chapter 2, the duel was essentially a demonstration of emotion and symptom of unchecked wrath and ire. As such, the duel is a manifestation of unbridled passions.

123 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E8^v: ‘En d’uytkomst menighmael is van ’t mis bruyck de tolck, / Terwijl dees wreede wijs, onwis om op te bouwen, / D’Onschuldige verdruckt, die schult heeft ’t velt doet houwen.’

124 Blom 2007, 239–240.

125 Huygens 1625, v, 66: ‘[w]ie Eer heeft kanse maer verliesen door sijn self’

126 Huygens 1625, v, 66: ‘in de moord / Van’t maexel dat alleen sijn’ Maker toebehoort?’

127 Voet 1658, 50–69; see also Matthey 2012, 390.

128 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E8^v: ‘spaert dees gunst die sijnen roem sou vlecken.’

129 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. E8^v: ‘Wat sal het volck daer van, wat sal de nijdt niet seggen?’

130 Huygens 1625, v, 54–55.

At this point, Chimene has not received any justice and is therefore denied peace of mind. Thus, Chimene throws down the figurative gauntlet before Rodrigo's feet, while Don Sanche takes up this gauntlet on her behalf: he will be her champion. In the duel that follows, Rodrigo naturally wins, on account of his superior skill with the sword, but lets Sanche live, demonstrating his magnanimity. Relieved that he did not lose his best fighters, the king acknowledges that Rodrigo did not achieve mercy by the king's own verdict, but rather by Rodrigo's own sword:

Time has many times praised as lawful,
That which seemed unlawful from the onset.
Rodrigo has made you [i.e., Chimene] his own through combat.¹³¹

In a world governed by the caprice of Fortune, Rodrigo's agency secured his victory and affirms his *honra*. For this reason, Chimene must accept that the trial by combat obliges the king to forgive Rodrigo and give him Chimene's hand in marriage. In *De verduytste Cid*, it is Fortune who decides the outcome, and not Justice. In fact, jurisprudence effectively fails to hold the guilty party accountable, which led Chimene to demand a trial by combat in the first place.

Spectators are, in turn, shown that justice will always be served, if not by earthly powers like the king, then by universal ones like Fate, Fortune, and Divine Providence. While in real life Chimene's demand of trial by combat had become an impossible solution to serve one's desire for vengeance or recompense, in the literary world of *comedia* there were no bounds to the possibilities for characters to obtain justice by these means. What moralists told the general public about the reprehensible nature of the duel did not apply in the theatre, which while staging *De verduytste Cid* or any other Spanish *comedia* could become an *emotional refuge*.

This does not mean that the king is powerless in the verdict's execution. He can actually influence when Rodrigo receives his reward (or punishment) for being victorious (or for failing), and what precisely it will be. Although he has relinquished his right to judge Rodrigo's guilt, he retains his right to ratify the outcome of the trial by combat. Chimene had agreed that the one who won the duel would get her hand in marriage, but to balance at least some of Chimene's concerns, the King postpones the wedding date: Chimene has the chance to mourn her father's death for a year before

¹³¹ Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. G1r: 'De tijdt heeft menighmael voor wettigh aen-ghepresen, / 't Gheen vry onwettigh scheen in sijn begin te wesen. / Rodrigo door 't ghevecht u [d.i. Chimene] sijne heeft ghemaect.'

she must marry Rodrigo. Meanwhile, Rodrigo is sent to the front and must oust the enemy from Castile. In a way, the king tests the hero, who must prove that he indeed deserves Chimene's hand in marriage:

Rodrigo, meanwhile you must go to the front,
 And after you have driven the Moors from
 Our land by the violence of your stern hand,
 Bring them the war to their nest again,
 Take their cities, plunder village and farms.
 [...]
 But during the business of war remain loyal to your love,
 Come back, if it is possible, more worthy than before:
 And through your high status gain such a reputation,
 That you may be hers with pleasing honour.¹³²

The wedding's postponement was not part of the original *Las mocedades del cid* by de Castro y Bellvís, nor did Rodrigo have to go to the front to first prove himself.¹³³ As such, Corneille's French adaptation changed in such a way that Rodrigo must actually do penance in the service of Christianity. Van Heemskerck followed Corneille's version to the letter in this respect. Through his year of 'good' deeds, Rodrigo will achieve greater worthiness (more *honra*) and this should be enough for Chimene to forgive him.¹³⁴

Vengeance in Dutch Politics

Many Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias* served one or more socio-literary goals, but some were also politicised within the Dutch context. With their drastically altern-

132 Van Heemskerck 1641, fol. G1^r: Rodrigo, midlerwijl moet ghy ter heyrvaert heenen, / En nademael ghy hebt de Mooren uyt ons Land / Ghedreven door 't geweld van u ghestrenghe hand, / Gaet hun tot in haer nest den Oorlogh weer toe-voeren, / Neemt hare Steden in en, plondert Dorp en Boeren. [...] Maer onder 't Krijgs-bedrijf u Lief ghetrouw wilt wesen, / Comt weder, kan het sijn, meer waerdigh als voor desen: / En door u groot bestaen verkrijght u sulcken naem, / Dat ghy haer dan mooght sijn met eeren aenghenaem.'

133 Cf. de Castro y Bellvís 1618, 33–34; see also Floeck 1969, 132.

134 See also Bood 2020b, 156–157, who argues something similar for another, earlier scene in *Le Cid* and *De verduytste Cid*.

ative perspective on vengeance, these plays could be said to react to Dutch revenge tragedies published in the same period. *Comedias* assert that vengeance could be a legitimate course of action in some specific situation, and not only when vengeance served a divine goal.

Spanish Vengeance in the Translation of Empire

That adaptations of *comedias* demonstrated an interest in political themes was not new in Dutch theatre. Hooft and Vondel already addressed political issues, and often also constitutional law, in their early seventeenth-century plays. Yet, around 1650, issues related to constitutional law were also addressed in *dramas de honor*. *Dramas de honor* had already had political significance in Spain, as stated before, but now the adaptations also gained meaning in the political context of the Dutch Republic. *Dramas de honor* were not unique in this respect, nor the first genre to address conflicts about governance in Dutch politics. As a political subject, revenge has often been discussed in the context of its most representative genre in Dutch drama: the revenge tragedy. This genre was originally introduced from England, but gradually gained increasing popularity among Dutch playwrights. I argue that several *dramas de honor* demonstrate concerns similar to those of revenge tragedies such as *Aran en Titus* by theatre director Jan Vos.

An adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Vos' *Aran en Titus* is an example of *translatio imperii*, that is, the inheritance of Roman power. Helmers reads both the English and Dutch versions of this revenge tragedy in light of Spain's collapse as an empire. He argues that in them we should see the Gothic opposition to Rome as a parallel of the translation of power from Habsburg Spain and the Austrian Habsburgs to the Protestant bulwarks of England and the Dutch Republic.¹³⁵ Helmers explains that Vos classicised Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which was in effect a modernisation in the Dutch context: by reverting to the authoritative standards of classical antiquity, Vos intentionally 'achieved the greatness of classical antiquity befitting an aspiring new world power,' an effort that was not lost on his early critics or Dutch administrators.¹³⁶ That is, a modern empire should not only reflect the political might of the Roman Empire, but should also emulate the height of its culture. As Stephen Greenblatt argues in *Cultural Mobility*, the idea of *translatio imperii* stimulated the appropriation of foreign cultural products. In the same way that Rome had

¹³⁵ Helmers 2016, 349.

¹³⁶ Helmers 2016, 354.

appropriated Greek culture, early modern states appropriated Roman culture.¹³⁷ By classicising Shakespeare, Vos politically appropriated the play, and made it suitable for the New Rome that Amsterdam considered itself to be.

However, Helmers makes clear that there is another side to the *translatio imperii*, which revenge plays in particular make obvious: all empires will eventually fall. As regards *Aran en Titus*, for instance, '[i]t is evident that all seventeenth-century Titus plays are replete with topical anxieties about the collapse of government rule and the violent anarchy that might follow it.'¹³⁸ As an unchecked emotion, vengefulness causes instability and the commonwealth is abandoned. Tom Laureys has similarly argued that Vos' *Aran en Titus* differentiates between the secular authority of Emperor Saturninus and Titus' reliance on Divine Providence. However, when Titus' house descends into carnage and mayhem, even the hero loses his trust in the divine, and loses his mind. Having lost his faith and rationality, he ceases to honour 'the divine prerogative to exact revenge' and seeks it himself, to disastrous consequences.¹³⁹ The other characters, however, misinterpret his personal vengeance, believing it to be issued from Heaven; to them, there is no hope to achieve recompense without the help of the gods.¹⁴⁰

Private revenge, on the contrary, leads to a (self-)destructive chain of reactions which is not easily stopped. Within seconds, the characters destroy the foundations of Roman politics with their revenge and counter-revenge: the emperor and his general both find their deaths. Thus, revenge not only destroys the physical bodies of all the characters who hold public office, but also the body politic of Rome itself.¹⁴¹ By the end of *Aran en Titus*, the once-flourishing Roman Empire is 'entirely disintegrated as a result of unbridled vindictiveness,' which as the play makes clear, can overcome every state.¹⁴²

'Topical anxiety' about the disintegration of empire is also present in *Don Louis de Vargas*. When Louis is exiled, the Spanish state is robbed of its two most loyal servants, Louis and his father. In turn, Julian and Zuëro, his enemies, traitorously wish to deliver Castile to the Moorish king in Cordoba. When their own King Alfonso must fight the Moors, Louis comes to the rescue of the Castilian forces, saving Castile from its

137 Greenblatt 2012, 7–12.

138 Helmers 2016, 350.

139 Laureys 2020, 104.

140 Laureys 2020, 105.

141 Laureys 2020, 110.

142 Laureys 2020, 113.

downfall without a second to spare. However, despite this epic theme, *Don Louis de Vargas* is not an example of *translatio imperii*, because it lacks roots in classical history, arguably the only mode by which it could have been a successful *exemplum*.

De Grieck's *Cenobia*, *Met de doodt van Kaizer Aureliaen* is also replete with topical anxiety, which within the frame of *translatio imperii* serves as an *exemplum* against the collapse of government rule and the violent anarchy that might follow. The original *La gran Cenobia* by Calderón was already political, upon which De Grieck's adaptation builds and adapts. As Hildner demonstrated for Calderón's original, *La gran Cenobia* dramatises the imperative of the monarch learning the 'razón de estado de sí mismo,' the art of governing oneself, which is 'absolutely necessary to becoming a hero in the circumstances of monarchical and imperial states.'¹⁴³ Emperor Aureliaen exemplifies a self-indulgent (and thus unjust) ruler, in contrast to his antagonist Queen Cenobia, the prudent ruler of the Orient, and General Decius, a dutiful but reviled servant of Rome.¹⁴⁴ Within the failing judiciary governed by the divinely motivated, but arbitrary rule of Emperor Aureliaen, violence and vengeance are the only options to liberate oneself from oppression. This is explored by Dutch playwright Adriaen de Leeuw in one of the laudatory poems added as paratext to the play:

Aureliaen, raised to monarch of the Roman Empire,
Fights Queen Cenobia at the Euphrates;
Her cousin Prince Lybio, moved by desire for power,
Betrays that fighting heroine, that wonder without equal:
Thus Aureliaen brings her to the wide-ruling Rome,
There he brings her much defamation and shame in a victory parade.
The reviled Decius, all his patience now lost,
Kills in secret that surly tyrant:
After which he is crowned emperor, and makes her his wife.
Thus from a slave she becomes a Roman empress.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Hildner 1982, 55.

¹⁴⁴ Hildner 1982, 55.

¹⁴⁵ De Leeuw 1667, fol. * 2^r: 'Aureliaen, tot Vorst van 't Roomsche Rijk verheven, / Bestrijdt by den Eufraat Vorstin Cenobia; / Haar neef Prins Lybio, door staatzucht aangedreven, / Verraadt die Krijgsheldin, dat wonder zonder gâ: / Dies voert Aureliaan haar na 't wijdtheerschendt Romén, / Daar hy in zegepraal haar doet veel smaat en schandt. / Gehoonde Decius, 't gedult nu heel ontnomen, / Vermoordt in 't heimelik dien norssen dwingelandt: / Waar op hy Vorst gekroont, haar maakt zijn Gemaalinne. / Zo wordt zy van slavin een Roomsche Keizerinne.'

De Griek's *Cenobia* plays with ideas of legitimate rule and explores, like *Geeraerd van Velsen*, the idea of tyrannicide. First, legitimate rule is discussed in light of the well-known 'sword in the stone' motif of the Arthurian romance. In *Cenobia*, Aureliaen appears in the first scene dressed in pelts and tells in a monologue about the dreams he had of Quintilius, the former Roman Emperor. Quintilius told him in these dreams that he would rule Rome. As he doubts the truth of his dreams, Aureliaen sees a sceptre and crown appear lying atop a rock: 'There reveals itself on a rock a crown with a sceptre.'¹⁴⁶ As in Calderón's original, Aureliaen recognises the divine nature of this appearance, but his desire for power is stronger than his fear of the divine.¹⁴⁷ He places the crown on his head, takes the sceptre in his hands, and beholds his image in a fountain, drawing a parallel between himself and the ill-fated Narcissus:

Narcissus in a spring in love with the attractive
Appearance of his limbs, left life there; but
I, who do not aspire to fairness, nor stare at it,
Also have a worry that drives much higher:
I think I am made a Narcissus by my pride, to slave
Because of this till my death.¹⁴⁸

Through these reflections, Aureliaen has already shared with the audience his one weakness: he is prone to hubris. He is then found by the priestess Astrea and the Roman army. Astrea explains that after the previous emperor's death she predicted, while 'taken by the ghost of god-speech,' that Aureliaen would succeed him. This suggests that a supernatural force legitimises the monarch's right to rule.¹⁴⁹ Having found him, the Roman soldiers recognise Aureliaen as their new emperor.

Next, General Decius enters stage, defeated by Queen *Cenobia* of Palmyra. He tells his new emperor what happened and how he underestimated the queen: 'How could a brave man keep upright, who both battles beauty and bravery.'¹⁵⁰ He also

¹⁴⁶ De Griek 1667, 2: 'Daer ontdeekt zich op een rots, een kroon met een scepter.'

¹⁴⁷ Hildner 1982, 52; Calderón de la Barca 1640a, fol. 79^r.

¹⁴⁸ De Griek 1667, 3: 'Narcissus in een bron verliefd op d'aengenaeme / Gesteltenis zijns leën, liet daer het leven; maer / Ick die naer geene schoont en doele, noch en staer, / Hebb' oock een zorge die veel hooger komt te draven, / 'k Meyn een Narcis te zijn van mijnen trots, te slaven / Om deze tot mijn doodt.'

¹⁴⁹ De Griek 1667, 4: 'door den geest der godtspraek ingenomen.' See also Hildner 1982, 53.

¹⁵⁰ De Griek 1667, 10: 'Hoe zou een moedig man zich kunnen houden recht, / Die t'zaem de schoonheynt en de dapperheynt bevecht.'

warns Aureliaen that he should not make the same mistake, because she, a woman, will also easily defeat him.¹⁵¹ Aureliaen's hubris cannot bear such an insult to his masculinity and he strips Decius of all his titles. Left behind alone, Decius promises the following: 'And that I eventually, with this my own hand, will stab with your own dagger through your intestines.'¹⁵² He is convinced that Aureliaen will not rule long, because 'it is a common saying that tyrants never continue to live in peace. That the reviled, who can wait on time to pass, can see himself eventually become a well-avenged man.'¹⁵³

Arrogantly, Emperor Aureliaen wages war on Queen Cenobia. When asked if the emperor will be victorious, the priestess Astrea predicts this to be true. When the battle is instead lost, Aureliaen holds Astrea accountable and throws her into a ravine. She barely survives but is saved by Decius. Together they plot Aureliaen's downfall. Meanwhile, Prince Lybio, the nephew of Queen Cenobia, was unable to accept that his aunt had instead inherited the throne he believed his higher position in the succession would grant him. And thus, he plots against and betrays her. Following his aunt's defeat of the Roman emperor, Lybio offers his services to Aureliaen: he leads the Roman soldiers to Cenobia's tent, where they rape her and take her as a prisoner. Through this ruse, Aureliaen is eventually delivered his unjust victory. However, for his betrayal, Aureliaen intends to punish Lybio by having him thrown off a cliff. Lybio's beloved Irena, Princess of Palmyra, saves him in the nick of time. Together they begin to plot Aureliaen's downfall.

Back in Rome, Aureliaen is received as emperor during a victory parade, which adds to his glory and self-aggrandisement, and should help to establish his imperial legitimacy.¹⁵⁴ The scene is portrayed as a pantomime in De Griek's adaptation:

There sounds music, while several soldiers appear, and behind them a triumphal wagon, with Aureliaen in it, with Cenobia at his feet, who is fully outfitted and has her hands bound: the wagon is being pulled

151 De Griek 1667, 10: 'Een vrouw, die u zelf zou verwinnen.'

152 De Griek 1667, 12: 'En dat ick endeling, met deez' mijn eygen hant, / U met uw eygen poock doorstoote 't ingewant.'

153 De Griek 1667, 12–13: 't Is doch een zekre spreuck, en duizentmael geschreven, / Dat dwingelanden noyt gerust en blijven leven. / Dat den gehoonden, die den tijdt verwachten kan, / Zich end'ling komt te zien een welgewroken man.'

154 Hildner 1982, 55.

by a number of slaves and prisoners, having a following of Roman noblemen.¹⁵⁵

However, this victory parade also creates a smoke screen for Decius, Astrea, Lybio, and Irena to arrive in Rome undetected. In fact, Aureliaen is unaware and too proud to realise that these four wronged characters intend to assassinate him. Moreover, he continues to wrong others around him, thus losing the support of the army and his people. The four wronged characters attempt an attack on Aureliaen's life in the subsequent scenes, but only Decius is successful. Standing over the dead emperor's body with bloodied hands, Decius is caught by the imperial guard. The general is prepared to surrender for his crimes, but the soldiers' response is unexpected:

- 1ST SOLDIER. They already lie down, but what has happened here?
 DECIUS. My vengefulness, Romans, killed the tyrant,
 I had to maintain my lost honour by his death;
 If I deserve something for this, see here, I surrender;
 Kill me freely, I want to die willingly,
 While I might buy glory by dying,
 It is true after all that I, because I have
 Suffocated Aureliaen in his blood, have committed a crime,
 So I deserve death because I liberated Rome.
- 2ND SOLDIER. You have finished the work that we had already started.
 It is a rightful vengeance; and it is not at all
 Our desire that you are therefore in danger,
 That on the contrary we recognise you as our emperor,
 And for this we proclaim, that you freed us by breaking
 A tyrant; the holy laurel should
 Adorn Decius' head, and make him an emperor.
- ALL SOLDIERS. Long live Decius.¹⁵⁶

155 De Griek 1667, 51: 'Daer wort een musijck opgeheven, onderwijlen verschijnen 'er eenige soldaten, en achter hun een triumfwagen, Aureliaen in den zelve, met Cenobia aen zijne voeten, die heel toe-gerust is, en de handen gebonden heeft: den wagen wordt van een deel slaven en gevangenen voortgedrocken, hebbende van achter een gevolg van Roomsche Edellieden.'

156 De Griek 1667, 65: 'I SOLDAAT. Zy liggen al om ver, maer wat is hier bedreven? / DECIUS. Mijn wraeck-zucht, Roomers, bracht den Dwingelandt om 't leven, / 'k Moest mijn verloren eer handthaven door zijn doot; / Verdien ick daer iet door, zie hier, ick geef my bloot; / Vermoort my vryelijck, 'k wil 't leven willig derven, / Terwijl ick koopen kon de glori door mijn sterven, / Is 't dat ick immers, om

By this, the revenge plot of *Cenobia* is foundationally very similar to that of Vos' *Aran en Titus*: when self-interest overtakes magnanimous service to the commonwealth, the state and the rule of law are in danger of collapse. However, there is one aspect in De Grieck's *Cenobia* that is unique in comparison to Vos' *Aran en Titus*. The play differentiates between Aureliaen and Decius' coronations. Just as in the original by Calderón, the adaptation by De Grieck shows how Aureliaen crowns himself after a supernatural force gifts him the crown and sceptre, while Decius is proclaimed emperor by his people for his selfless service to the state.¹⁵⁷ As such, the text may, within the Dutch context specifically, have supported a perspective on rule and sovereignty as something that originates with and derives from the people, which is also present in *Geeraerdt van Velsen* and *De antiquitate*.¹⁵⁸ The difference with Hooft's play is, however, that vengeance is condoned in *Cenobia* as a legitimate act against tyranny. In this, the *comedia* defers from the perspective offered in *Geeraerdt van Velsen*: tyrannicide is no longer seen as a radical act, but as a permissible form of justice when the rule of law is obstructed.¹⁵⁹ Revenge and counter-revenge stories are generally a warning against overindulgence and personal gain. Dramas *de honor* adapted from Spanish, such as De Grieck's *Cenobia*, seem to have served at times a counter-perspective, while also serving to warn against violent and arbitrary rule. As Helmers and Laureys have argued, some Dutch revenge tragedies thus legitimated the use of counter-violence and counter-revenge.

Spanish Vengeance in the Service of Dutch Patriotism and 'Oranjegevoel'

Another case in which violence and vengeance are sanctioned in the context of arbitrary rule as a means to restore order is found in Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis* (1653), an adaptation of Diego Jiménez de Enciso's *Los Medicis de Florencia* (before 1634; published 1647). As I previously identified, the vengeance motif in Dutch revenge tragedies was sometimes used to garner support for current issues in domestic politics, and

dat ick Aureliaen / Heb in zijn bloedt versmoort, een misslag heb begaen, / Zoo ick de doot verdien om dat ick Room verlost. / 2 SOLDAAT. Gy hebt het werck voltooyt dat wy alree begosten, / Het is een rechte wraeck; en 't is zoo ver van daer, / Dat wy begeeren dat gy daerom loopt gevaer, / Dat wy in 't tegendeel u voor ons Kaizer kennen, / En daer voor roepen uyt, gy vryden ons voor 't schennen / Van enen dwingelandt, den heyligen laurier / Cier Decius zijn kruyn, en maeck hem Kaizer hier. / AL DE SOLDATEN SAMEN. Lang leve Decius.'

157 Hildner 1982, 57.

158 Duits 2005, 222–224.

159 Duits 1985, 412–413.

TABLE 5.1 Primary characters in the Spanish and Dutch plays and their historical counterparts

Historical person	Enciso, <i>Los Medicis de Florencia</i>	Dullaart, <i>Alexander de Medicis</i>
Alessandro de' Medici	El Duque Alexandro	Alexander de Medicis, Hartoog van Florence
Cosimo de' Medici	Cosme de Medicis	Cosmus de Medicis, Minnaar van Izabelle
Lorenzino de' Medici	Laurencio de Medicis	Laurens de Medicis
n/a	Isabela dama	Izabelle de Pacis, zijn [Cefio's] dochter
n/a	Cefio viejo su padre	Cefio de Pacis

especially for royalist causes. Dullaart particularly politicised the honour-vengeance theme in his adaptation by clearly distinguishing between the dangers of private revenge and the unavoidable necessity of public revenge. As Dullaart was a known supporter of the House of Orange, the political message in his adaptation also supports the Dutch Stadtholders, and specifically Prince William III.

The Spanish original narrated the assassination in 1537 of the Duke of Florence, Alessandro de' Medici (Alexandro in the play), at the hand of his cousin Lorenzino de' Medici (Laurencio in the play; see Table 5.1). Subsequently, the narrative explores how Cosimo de' Medici (Cosme in the play) takes revenge on the assassins and ascends to the ducal throne. Notably, however, the political plot of *Los Medicis de Florencia* was reduced to an amorous history between Isabela and Cosme. The couple are secretly betrothed against the wishes of Cefio de' Pazzi, Isabela's father, who in turn opposes the tyranny of the Medici family.

While Cosme is engaged to Isabela, Alexandro and Laurencio unknowingly try to court her. The amorous and political rivalry between the three men culminates in tyrannicide at the play's dénouement. Immediately after Alexandro is assassinated, Cosme in turn kills the traitor Laurencio in response to the tyrannicide and restores legal order. The play concludes with Cosme being declared duke and his marriage to Isabela.

The Spanish plot is generally adopted in Dullaart's adaptation, although it has different political implications in the Dutch context. The Republic of Florence was a point of reference for the Dutch, and was arguably regarded with similar esteem to the Roman Republic. The Republic of Florence was one of the most powerful Italian city states of the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch, therefore, looked towards it when establishing their own republic. Depending on one's perspective, the Medici were either the instigators of this city's Renaissance, or the tyrants who prevented Florence from reaching its full republican potential.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Helmers 2016, 361.

TABLE 5.2 Allegorical comparison of historical characters and those of Hooft and Dullaart

Historical person	Allegorical comparison by Hooft	Allegorical comparison by Dullaart
Alessandro de' Medici	Sextus Tarquinius Superbus	Julius Caesar
Cosimo de' Medici	n/a	Octavian
Lorenzino de' Medici	Lucius Junius Brutus	Marcus Junius Brutus

The latter interpretation was adopted in Hooft's 1649 historical treatise with the revealing title *Rampsaligheden der verheffinge van den Huize van Medicis* ('Disasters Following the Elevation of the House of Medici'). Although Hooft never said it explicitly, he suggested that the same disasters could befall the Dutch Republic if the House of Orange gained absolute power.¹⁶¹ In his own text, Hooft condemned Alessandro's assassination, just as he had condemned the assassination of Floris v in *Geeraerdt van Velsen*: 'To kill, indeed tyrants, without lawful administration of justice, and at the sole judgement of a subject, is surely a worrisome practice.'¹⁶² Yet, Hooft did not disapprove of Lorenzino's desire to free his home city from the Medici tyranny. This becomes apparent in the way his Lorenzino is introduced to the reader: he acts a fool to get into Duke Alessandro's good graces. In many ways, Hooft considered Lorenzino to be a failed and tragic Brutus—one of the liberators of Rome from Tarquinius' grasp—by drawing various parallels between the two (see Table 5.2). Although both men demonstrated a 'pure zeal to the praise of liberating his fatherland,' the direct reason for their rebellion boiled down in both cases to the fact that one of the royals had raped one of the two men's relatives.¹⁶³ Tarquinius' son, Sextus Tarquinius, had raped Lucretia, the wife of the king's cousin Collatinus (to whom Brutus was also related), and she killed herself in shame. Alessandro had apparently raped a cousin of Lorenzino: 'In Florence it is said that he could not bear the scorn of a cousin spoiled by Alexander.'¹⁶⁴

Hooft then draws another direct parallel between Lorenzino and Brutus: 'The opposing party raised his glory to heaven, and made him a second Brutus; because the first father of Roman liberty through similar deception, (but not so hateful and

161 Helmers 2016, 361.

162 Hooft 1649, fol. C8^v: 'Van om te brengen, jaa tierannen, zonder wettelijke rechtspleeving, en op enkel vonnis eens onderdaans, 't is, zeeker, een zorgelijke reegel.'

163 Hooft 1649, fol. C7^v: 'puiren yver tót den lóf van't verlossen zijns vaderlands.'

164 Hooft 1649, fol. C7^v: 'tót Florense gezeidt wort, dat hem in de króp stak de hóón eener nichte, oonteer door Alexander.'

improper) had Tarquinius Superbus give up his advantage.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Hooft thought that Lorenzino made a poor judgement when he decided to kill Alessandro by assault rather than poison. If Lorenzino had been smart, Hooft writes, he would have become the next duke and ensured Florence's freedom with greater glory and less danger.¹⁶⁶

With his adaptation, Dullaart responded to Hooft's nuanced reading of the conspiracy and offers an opposite interpretation. In *Alexander de Medicis*, Laurens is turned into a different Brutus, the famed friend of Julius Caesar. Initially, Brutus was a loyal confidant of Julius Caesar, but ultimately became his traitor and killer. This parallel is attested by what Alexander says to Laurens in the final moments of his life: 'Do you kill me, traitor?' and a bit later, 'Traitor, do you pay my favour so evilly and falsely?', until he finally tells Laurens: 'You will die with me.'¹⁶⁷ These words certainly echo Caesar's supposed last words to that same effect: 'καὶ σὺ τέκνον' ('you too, child') which is meant as a warning that with Caesar's death, Brutus seals his own similar fate. It may also echo Caesar's famous last words according to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599): 'Et tu, Brute?' ('You too, Brutus?'), which instead emphasises Caesar's disappointment with Brutus' betrayal.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Cosmus is compared to Octavian, who was adopted by Julius Caesar as his heir and succeeded him as Augustus, the first Roman emperor. Such classical comparisons with Roman heroes and tyrants have a long tradition in Dutch literature beginning in the late sixteenth century during the Dutch Revolt.¹⁶⁹ I believe that the comparisons made by Dutch authors and playwrights have consequences for the status that private and public vengeance are granted in Dullaart's adaptation.

Contrary to Hooft's account of Alessandro's assassination, Dullaart shows that Lorenzino acts on behalf of his own interests: because Lorenzino cannot bear that the Duke is also pursuing Izabelle, he wants to eliminate his competition. Nevertheless, Dullaart's way of treating the play is not remarkably different from Enciso's *Los*

165 Hooft 1649, fol. C8^v: 'De weërparthy verhief zijn glory ten heemel, ende maakte van hem, eenen tweeden Brutus, door ghelijke beveinstheit, [maar niet zóó haatlijk en wanvoeglijk] een voordeel aan Tarquinius Superbus hadd' afghezien.'

166 Hooft 1649, fol. D1^r.

167 Dullaart 1653, 82: 'Vermoort ghy my, veraar? [...] Verraâr, / Betaalt ghy my mijn gunst zoo schelms en valsch? [...] Ghy sterven zult met my.' Cf. Jiménez de Enciso 1647, fol. 242^v: 'Tu me matas? [...] O traydor, / que bien me pagas ingrato, [...] Pero oy morirás conmigo.'

168 Ziogas 2016, 135. Ziogas proposes a reading that disconnects those words from Elizabethan theatre and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) in particular. In the Dutch context, however, the Shakespearian interpretation of Caesar's famous last words suffices.

169 Spies 1994, 151–152.

Medicis de Florencia. Enciso had already presented the characters as black and white: Cosme is the hero without a blot on his escutcheon; Laurencio is an ambitious traitor without any virtue; Duke Alexandro is noble but naïve; and Cefio is a mortal enemy of the Medici and as a republican repudiates all forms of dynastic tyranny.¹⁷⁰ Dullaart retained these basic character traits in his *dramatis personae*. Lorenzino's character as a deceptive opportunist is emphasised when he uses Cefio's hate of the Medici and his fear of losing his only daughter to the Duke's lusts for his own self-interest.¹⁷¹ This might suggest that Dullaart responded to Hooff's perspective on the House of Medici as an analogy for the House of Orange by using that same analogy.

As mentioned above, the hero of both Enciso's original and Dullaart's version is Cosmus. Furthermore, his childhood in Dullaart's adaptation bears an obvious resemblance to Stadtholder-King William III's childhood (and, indeed, Octavian's), a parallel that becomes increasingly important when Cosmus seeks vengeance later in the play. Therefore, Cosmus describes his troubled youth to Izabelle:

You know, dear soul, that after the sad death
Of Jan de' Medici, my father, full of bravery,
Who, after many heroic acts, had sacrificed
His pious and noble blood for the Holy Church.
I, being small and young of age, then moved,
With my mother, to Trebbio Castle in Mugello, in the time
When our family was so persecuted and hated.
Captain Otto was moved by my mother's misfortune
And my innocence, and hid us from their eyes.¹⁷²

Although Enciso's original features almost the same monologue, Cosmus' words received a new interpretation in the Dutch context.¹⁷³ When William II died of small pox in 1650, five of the seven States of the Dutch Republic decided to leave the office of

170 Cotarelo y Mori 1914, 62–63. This representation is understandable within a Spanish context, as Alessandro was married to Margaret of Parma, the Governor of the Netherlands between 1559–1567, and thus the Duke was related to Emperor Charles V and King Felipe II of Spain.

171 For the characterisation of his *dramatis personae*, see Dullaart 1653, esp. 16, 33–36.

172 Dullaart 1653, 16: 'Ghy weet wel, waarde ziel, dat na het droevig sterven / Van Jan de Medicis mijn' Vader, vol van moet, / Die, na veel heldendaan, zijn vroom en edel bloet / Heeft voor de Heilge kerk geoffert met zijn leven. / Ik, zijnde klein en jongh van jaren, heb begeven / My, met mijn moeder, toen na Trebie, in die tijdt / Toen ons geslacht zoo wiert vervollegt en benijt. / Den Hopman Otto wiert met moeders ramp bewogen / En mijne onnozelheit, en school ons uit hunne oogten.'

173 The original Spanish monologue is found in Jiménez de Enciso 1647, fol. 219^v.

Stadtholder vacant indefinitely, which came to be known as the First Stadtholderless Era (1650–1672). The young William III was born just days after his father's death and raised by his mother, the English Princess Royal Mary Stuart.

William II died at an unlucky moment. Stuart supporters believed that he could reinstate Charles' son, Charles II, as King of England, if he could rouse support from the States General in The Hague, and thus end the English Civil War. Helmers has argued that several Dutch plays propagate the political hopes of the exiled Stuart party in the Dutch Republic, including Dullaart's own martyr play *Karel Stuart of Rampzalige Majesteyt* ('Charles Stuart or Disastrous Majesty', written 1649), which responded to the contemporary situation in England.¹⁷⁴ I argue that Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis* should be interpreted similarly: it also thematises the dangers of pursuing private interests and personal vengeance over the public good and legal restitution. Like *Karel Stuart*, *Alexander de Medicis* was first published in 1652 and premiered onstage in 1653, in the middle of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) fought between the Dutch Republic and the Commonwealth of England that formed after the execution of Charles I in 1649. It is possible that Dullaart's adaptation of Enciso's *Los Medicis de Florencia* was, like *Karel Stuart*, a propagandist play for both the House of Stuart and the House of Orange. The play condemns tyrannicide in reaction to Charles I's execution, and also justifies vengeance in service of a royal cause.¹⁷⁵ More broadly, however, the play is part of a larger Orangist movement that began to take shape in the 1650s to instate William III as stadtholder of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelre, and Overijssel.¹⁷⁶ As Dullaart was a known supporter of the Stuarts in England, he must have also been an Orangist, as their causes were united by marriage.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, Dullaart's version serves multiple functions as politicised theatre.

If spectators recognised the similarities between Cosmus, William III, and Octavian, then several of Cosmus' actions have important political messages and demonstrate that the House of Orange, like Cosmus, can restore legal order and offer stability by establishing a new *pax romana*. The newly proclaimed Duke Cosmus does not exact vengeance for the murder of his predecessor Duke Alexander de Medicis. Instead, he declares:

¹⁷⁴ Helmers 2011, 226–227.

¹⁷⁵ Hoenselaars and Helmers 2016.

¹⁷⁶ Pollmann 2014, 27, 30; Ebben 2014, 60.

¹⁷⁷ Helmers 2011, 224. Furthermore, William II of Orange was Mary Stuart's husband; William III of Orange was their son and married Mary II Stuart, who together became king and queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland after the Glorious Revolution in 1688.

COSMUS. Such I accept, to punish the betrayal
 According to its merits; your oath and loyalty we believe. [...]
 I will not rule this state peacefully, until the punishment
 Has reconciled his death, and until all our enemies
 Are destroyed.¹⁷⁸

Cosmus presents his decision to bring Laurens to justice not as retribution or restitution, but rather as reconciliation. Unlike the original by Enciso, Dullaart's adaptation does not feature Cosmus' retaliation against Laurens; we only learn that he intends to do so before he can fully become Duke of Florence.¹⁷⁹

Dullaart changed the plot of *Alexander de Medicis* in such a way that Cosmus is first declared duke and then makes his decision to kill Laurens. This makes Cosmus' decision an act of justice and not merely a violent response, as it had been in *Los Medicis de Florencia*. There, Cosme acts immediately when he learns that Alexandro has been assassinated by Laurencio. He kills the traitor and only then does the old man Cefio announce that the whole of Florence accepts Cosme's rule. He describes the people's reaction as 'el popular aplauso' ('the popular applause') and says that the people yell 'Cosme viva' ('Long live Cosme'), which is not only a legitimation of Cosme's rule but also the people's pardon of his act of vengeance against his cousin.¹⁸⁰ In Dullaart's Dutch version, this act of vengeance is instead embedded within a legal institution and is therefore effectively camouflaged as an inevitable and necessary form of public vengeance against a criminal.

While Cosmus may be presented as a ruler who justly punishes criminals, he also shows to be a merciful ruler when he must judge the old man Cefio de Pacis (that is, Cefio de' Pazzi, a fictional son of Guglielmo de' Pazzi). Comparable to the original, Cefio relates at the beginning of the play why he hates the House of Medici by recalling the events leading to the real-life Pazzi conspiracy of 1478:

Laurens and Julius, two heads of a prideful nature,
 Who, by their great authority and offices, completely degenerate,
 Taunted the blood of our august lineage; much more valued

178 Dullaart 1653, 84–85: 'COSMOS. Zulx neem ik aan, om het verraadt, na de waardy, / Te straffen, uwen eedt en trouw gelooven wy. [...] 'k Zal deze staat met rust niet heerschen, voor de straf / Zijn doodt verzoent heeft, en voor dat al ons vyanden / Verdelgt zijn.'

179 This was technically true as Lorenzino was ahead of Cosimo in the line of succession.

180 Dullaart 1653, 84–85; Jiménez de Enciso 1647, fol. 242^v.

And higher raised than their father's.
 But because the noble blood cannot bear
 The slanderous scorn, we assembled our complete house
 And decided among ourselves to avenge that defamation,
 And to liberate us from them and their rule.¹⁸¹

The Pazzi family successfully killed Julius, but they had not expected that the irrational rabble of Florence would take counter-revenge on their family afterwards:

But the imprudent populace, seeing Julius beaten,
 Yelled: let us wet our sword in the blood of the Pazzi.
 Then they fell inveterately on us and our people,
 And they exterminated our house with their cruel dagger.
 My friends lost their lives there so helplessly:
 Such that one could not hear in all of Italy
 Whether one of the House of Pazzi had survived.
 I, who fled it all, arose anew as a Phoenix from his ashes.¹⁸²

Cefio's historical account helps contextualise the new conspiracy in both the original and the adaptation, while his monologue also presents Laurens' and Cefio's actions throughout the play as a repetition of that past conspiracy, something of which both the Spanish and Dutch audiences are made aware.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, Cefio also speaks about the wounded honour that he must restore for his family. This private motivation to retaliate against the Medici becomes Cefio's main motive to assist Laurens in this second conspiracy; his nephew's promises of freedom and a return to the true republic shore up his agreement to assassinate Duke Alexander.

181 Dullaart 1653, 8–9: 'Laurens en Julio, twee hoofden trots van aart, / Die, door hun groot gezagh en ampten, heel ontaart / Beschimpten 't bloet van ons deurlugte stam; veel waarder / En hooger afgedaalt als dat van haren vader. / Maar mits het edel bloet geen lasterzieke hoon / Kan dulden, hebben wy al ons geslagt ontboôn, / En onderling bestemt ons, van die smaats, te wreken, / En haar van 't zelve en van 't heerschen te versteken.'

182 Dullaart 1653, 8–9: 'Maar 't onverstandig graau, zierend' Julio verslagen, / Riep: laten wy ons zwaart in 't bloet der Pacen laven. / Doen vielenze, als verwoet, op ons en op ons volk, / En roeide ons geslagt uit met haar wreede dolk. / Mijn vrienden 't leeven daar zoo weerloos verlooren: / Zulx dat men deur geheel Italje niet kon hooeren, / Of een van Pacis stam noch in het leven was. / Ik, die 't ontvlood, rees als een Fenix uit zijn asch.'

183 Jiménez de Enciso 1647, fol. 217^r.

When Laurens mentions Alexander's attempts to seduce his daughter Izabelle, Cefio is quickly convinced, because a Medici will never have his daughter as wife. Cefio's acceptance is understandable as he explained himself and his motives at the play's beginning.

After Alexander's death, Cosmus can also easily forgive Cefio for his actions, since they were not those of an ambitious traitor, but rather of an aggrieved man who was robbed of his family's honour and feared losing his daughter as well. Therefore, Enciso's Cosme punished Cefio in a particularly interesting way:

Give me, great Cefio, a hug,
that in this way I punish you,
let the past remain the past.¹⁸⁴

In the Dutch adaptation, Cefio gets a similarly strange punishment:

Lord Cefio, rise, because I am so angry with you
That I will forgive the suffering endured, and I want to forget it all.¹⁸⁵

Both Enciso and Dullaart stress that an act of vengeance can ultimately be forgiven, if the desire for vengeance was justified (or at least understandable) in the first place.

Dullaart used Cosmus' compassionate and magnanimous character to show that like Cosmus, young William III may also be a just ruler of the Dutch people were he to be installed as stadtholder. He too could bring the stability and strong authority that Cosmus provided. We can see that spectators are meant to be won over to the Orangist cause. Cosmus becomes a second *pater patriae* in succession to his namesake Cosimo de' Medici "the Elder" (1389–1464).¹⁸⁶ Likewise, William III could become a new *pater patriae* to the Dutch, just as William "the Silent" of Orange had been. Revenge is, then, a politicised motif that can be used to show that Cosmus/William III is a hero and the saviour who protects the state from chaos. His revenge is a just form of vengeance, which serves to defend the state. More importantly, Cosmus shows his ability to

184 Jiménez de Enciso 1647, fol. 243^r: 'Dame, gran Cefio, los braços, / que desta suerte os castigo, / lo passado sea passado.'

185 Dullaart 1653, 85: Heer Cefio, staat op, 'k ben zoo op u gebeten, / Dat ik 't geleede leedt vergeef, en wil vergeten.

186 Dullaart 1653, 8.

refrain from vengeance when it best serves the state, just as William III would do. This should appeal to Orangist sentiments (still known today as 'oranjevoel') among the general population and enforce a form of patriotism by supporting the return of the Prince of Orange as stadtholder of the majority of the Dutch Republic's states.¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

As this chapter shows, vengeance was a controversial subject in the Low Countries, which made it no less appealing. With the Bible prohibiting revenge and defining it as God's sole right, Dutch moralists established in their writings an *emotional regime* that fiercely condemned any form of private vengeance or its associated passions, in favour of composure and accepting one's fate or, if need be, following legal procedure through the judicial courts. As part of this *emotional regime*, these moralists also reinforced the auto-image of the Dutch as characteristically unvengeful, because of their phlegmatic nature and their supposed stoic composure. In Dutch tragedy, vengeance was rejected as a viable solution to dishonour or personal grievance, and the genre instead propagated either absolute rule, the characters' emotional self-conquest, or their exile as alternatives.

On the basis of the same texts, Dutch scholars have repeatedly concluded that Dutch culture was not at all vengeful in contrast to Spanish culture. Likewise, several Spanish scholars have connected the honour-vengeance theme in *comedia nueva* to the supposed regularity of vengeance carried out in Spanish society. McKendrick has demonstrated that while Spanish culture has been regarded as particularly vengeful, this is actually a distorted and overgeneralised representation of a *topos* in dramatic culture. The honour-vengeance theme played an important role in the Spanish theatre because the honour code reflected Spain's longing for military hegemony and grandeur on the European stage. The stage *caballero* represented this desire by the way he imposed his sense of honour onto himself and those in his vicinity. Together with the anxieties about a loss of social standing if accused of having *mala sangre* ('impure' Jewish or North African blood), the Spaniard continuously experienced a form of social insecurity, for which he must (over-)compensate. In *dramas de honor*, purity of blood was also preserved by the virtue of a family's women. This was something that all Spanish men recognised. The only satisfactory reparation

¹⁸⁷ Pollmann 2014, 27, 30; Ebben 2014, 60.

for sexual dishonour was bloodshed, although in real life this was an impossible route to take, since legal institutions demanded a civil form of reconciliation, even in Spain.

The truth is that Dutch and Flemish spectators adored the honour-vengeance theme for very similar reasons. This dominant pattern in *comedia nueva* also functioned exceptionally well in the Low Countries. Although Dutch moralists and jurists created an auto-image that socially and legally criminalised acts of vengeance, the anxieties about loss of honour and the subsequent desire for recompense were not any less among people in the Low Countries than they were in Spain. Dutch adaptations of *dramas de honor* staged the honour-vengeance theme in a way that enabled spectators to cope with their own social anxieties; they offered a drastic alternative to the restraint so insistently vocalised by Dutch moralists. Further, with their sensational representation of unbridled passions and spectacular acts of vengeance, these adapted *dramas de honor* served as the opposite of the morality of restraint seen elsewhere in contemporary Dutch theatre.

Vengeance then becomes in the Dutch adaptations a way for characters to regain some of their agency within a world governed by Fortune: Heynck showed spectators the usefulness of revenge as a tool to repay dishonour in his 1668 play *Don Louis de Vargas*. When Don Louis loses his social position, his vengeance is the only thing that keeps him going and offers him the justice he sorely misses. As such, vengeance is presented as a form of poetic justice and a tool in the hands of the protagonists to implement God's Divine Providence. Heynck even turned revenge into a magnanimous deed, when carried out by the protagonist, which differentiates his play from Hooft's earlier *Geeraerd van Velsen*, which was itself inspired by neostoicism and fit the *emotional regime* of its period. Magnanimity is not regarded as a call for composure in times of misfortune, but rather to behave loyally and honourably. Don Louis is concerned with his public honour, which in Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velsen* was seen as a sign that Geeraerd was no (longer) magnanimous.

Don Louis needed, and was right, to take vengeance because his legal environment failed to satisfactorily punish the right people. Likewise, a judicial failing is also the source of vengeance in *De verduytste Cid*, where the king will not abide by the law in order to protect his own political interests. By his failure to pass judgement, Chimene turns to bloodshed instead, invoking the right to trial by combat. By this, she lets Fortune decide who wins as a form of divine judgement. Because of his failure to uphold justice, the king symbolically loses his divine right as judge in his kingdom, although he retains the ability to facilitate punishment or reward according to Fortune's favour. *De verduytste Cid* shows that Chimène was in her right to pursue

recompense for her father's death; the fact that Rodrigo wins the fight and wins by this Chimène's hand in marriage is because Fate wanted things to turn out this way.

With the alternative perspective on vengeance as occasionally permissible, there are also means to show that retaliation can be effective in politics. By engaging with *translatio imperii*, the dramas *de honor* warn against arbitrary, self-interested rule. In such cases, violence and vengeance are sometimes needed to restore the rule of law. De Griek's *Cenobia* demonstrates that vengeance can help to restore order when a ruler is unwilling or unable to maintain it. Then, as the play shows, tyrannicide might be the only solution, although it was summarily condemned by Hooft in *Geeraerd van Velsen*. Otherwise, some dramas *de honor*—and specifically Dullaart's *Alexander de Medicis*—were used as tools of domestic politics to gain popular support for the House of Orange, and further to demonstrate that a ruler can use violence in service of the state, but only when he uses it lawfully. In the play, Cosmus de' Medici shows himself to be a moderate ruler who only resorts to violence when it is unavoidable. He is, moreover, a compassionate and magnanimous ruler because he is able to forgive the pursuit of vengeance by other characters. By drawing parallels between Cosmus and Prince William III, the play advocates, furthermore, for the return of William III as Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, asserting that he alone could ensure stability and prevent the fall of the Dutch trading empire.

Despite the different means of legitimation within Dutch adaptations of Spanish comedias, enacting revenge remained difficult in the Dutch Republic and Habsburg Netherlands. Vengeance could be defended in some instances, but was at least as often rejected as a viable solution, something that should only be used in moderation. It is as McKendrick argued: on the stage, more is possible than in real life. This is what fascinated the Spaniard, the Dutchman, and the Fleming alike about theatre. What if you did as the characters did? What if you used violence to take revenge? What would happen then? Those questions have no unequivocal answer, but are fascinating nonetheless.