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

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Conclusion

Comedia Nueva: A Theatre of Emotions?

In the Low Countries, *comedia nueva* was for a period of time the most popular theatrical genre. In this study, I endeavoured to explain that popularity. Basing my methodology largely on Reddy's ground-breaking study *The Navigation of Feeling*, I hypothesised that we can ascribe the genre's success to the manifestation of emotions in these plays which, in comparison to 'home-grown' plays, offered audiences a drastic alternative. In its adapted Dutch form, *comedia nueva* offered a reprieve from the strict emotional, social, and moral expectations of the early modern cultural environment: in the theatre, it was okay to indulge in emotions associated with love, honour, and vengeance in the ways that characters displayed them in *comedias*. Through offering this safe alternative environment for the expression of forbidden emotions, by staging Spanish *comedias*, Dutch and Flemish theatres offered an *emotional refuge* from the conditions that existed outside the theatre within the staunch neostoic or phlegmatic *emotional regime* reinforced by contemporary philosophers and moralists.

I discussed how the audience's emotional relief could only be achieved because *comedias* effectively brought spectators pleasure, instilling in them a sense of wonder and fascination. Dutch psychologist Nico Frijda called these *responding emotions*; the plays further evoked *complementing emotions* such as joy and sadness, and compassion and fear.¹ These emotions are contingent upon thematic features, which means for *comedia nueva*, and theatre more broadly, that these passions and precisely the way they were displayed by characters and the actors portraying them, influenced how the spectators' own emotions were produced. That is, to see sorrow makes the spectator sorrowful, and to witness joy brings forth joy, in an almost contagious process of emotional transmission.²

Taking that *comedias* offered spectators an emotional release and evoked emotional response, I identified eight different aspects of these Dutch *comedias* and their staging which I believe helped produce in spectators both responding and complementing emotions. These are:

1. A baroque preoccupation with illusion, including the exotic *mise-en-scène*, which creates tragicomic distance;

¹ Frijda 1986, 356.

² Cf. Heinsius 1611, 12–13.

2. Spectacle, including the duel, *tableau vivant*, theatre technologies, and tricks of sound and light;
3. Employment of the best Dutch actors and actresses who relied heavily on the embodiment of *emotional practices* built on cultural norms and notions of emotional expression in early modern Dutch society;
4. High frequency of, and emphasis on, the emotions dedication, desire, fear, hatred, honour, hope, love, loyalty, offense, and wonder in comparison to their manifestation in Senecan-Scaligerian plays, Horror and Spectacle plays, and Vondel's plays;
5. Emotional conflict between two insoluble emotions—predominantly between honour and love, or more generally between public interests and private desires—in the protagonist lovers;
6. Multiple dramatic reversals of mood from one extreme to the other (*peripeteias*) established through *woelingen* in *comedias*, in contrast to the singular *peripeteia* in 'home-grown' plays, by which *comedias* could effectively engage and move spectators;
7. Positive representation of vengefulness and legitimised display of vengeance onstage in response to emotional conflicts between honour and love, and as a drastic alternative to the contemporary morality of restraint, thus establishing an *emotional refuge* in the theatre;
8. Manifestation of subversive and emancipatory acts of characters in the form of disguise (cross-dressing and social masquerades) and soliloquies (monologues and song) as a form of *emotional rebellion*.

We can see these eight aspects as the ingredients of successful adaptations of Spanish *comedias* for the Dutch stage. Dutch adaptors kept pleasurable elements in the Spanish originals and added or altered certain events or themes that were more agreeable in the eyes of Dutch and Flemish spectators, such as *tableaux vivants*, song, *woelingen*, and convincing modes of performance by actors. Heynck put it nicely when he wrote in the preface of *Veranderlyk geval* that he had not simply translated Spanish plays, but rather offered an adaptation, 'sometimes doing what [he] then thought proper; not so much overseeing a precise reproduction, but according to [the customs of] our present-day theatre, making it appear somewhat agreeable in the eyes of spectators.'³

3 Heynck 1663, fol. A2v: 'daar af en toe doende wat my toen goet dacht; niet zozeer lettende op een

Popular Aspects of *Comedia Nueva*

My discussion of different theatrical modes, features, and interpretations throughout this study, summarised in the eight points above, show how these elements all worked together to contribute to the appeal of *comedia nueva* in the Low Countries. They can be divided into two groups: aspects that originated in the performance of *comedias* and thus appealed to the eyes of spectators (aspects 1 to 3), and aspects that originated in the plot structures and events of *comedias* and appealed to the emotional state and well-being of spectators (aspects 4 to 8).

Performance Aspects

The baroque preoccupation with illusion (aspect 1), which was discussed in Chapter 1, shows how theatre-makers continuously reinvented the Dutch stage. In fact, from architectural and technological perspectives, Dutch theatres underwent considerable development during the seventeenth century. While the original stage designs were relatively simple, later in the seventeenth century the refurbishment of the Amsterdam Public Theatre (1638) and the opening of the Brussels Public Theatre (c. 1650) facilitated more grand productions, such as the two parallel adaptations of Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*. While the Spanish original had played with magic and illusion in a way that amazed spectators within in the Buen Retiro palace gardens, a found environment which enforced the illusion of Circe's world, the Dutch adaptations by De Grieck in Brussels and De Leeuw in Amsterdam relied on stage machinery, *changements à vue*, and stage props: the live animals from the original production were, for example, replaced by actors in animal costumes.

It is clear, however, that not all adaptations were as elaborate as De Grieck's *Ulysses in't eylandt van Circe* and De Leeuw's *De toveres Circe*. Many playwrights played with the theatrical and dramatic space available in the earlier theatres of Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Brussels by representing a variety of spaces and distant places in simultaneous stage setting (*décor simultané*). This use of the so-called polytopic stage created the illusion that the play represented different spaces in contemporaneous time. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, this was apparently enough to create the desired illusion for spectators. I also underlined that the distant and exotic places

naukeurige navolging, als wel, om het na ons hedendaags Tooneel eenigins aangenaam in d'ogen der aanschouwers te doen schynen.'

represented in *comedias* heavily contributed to this experience, and created a sense of illusionistic-geographical distance which, in some plays, also offered tragicomic distance and comic relief.

In Chapter 2, I elaborated on the ways that the baroque illusions in *comedias* created pleasure and wonder by means of spectacle (aspect 2). Using the concept of *imagineering*, I argued that the spectacle inherent to Spanish *comedias* mesmerised the Dutch spectators gathered in the theatres of Amsterdam, Brussels, Antwerp, and Liege. This concept highlighted that the creation of spectacle depended on a collaboration of theatre-makers and the audience. The spectacle was engineered through the employment of both traditional and new techniques to create the desired theatrical effects and encouraged audiences to imagine other (im)possible worlds. When Rodenburgh introduced *comedia nueva* to the Low Countries in 1617, he needed to translate the spectacle in the Spanish originals into a Dutch vernacular understood by his audiences, while keeping in mind the technical possibilities of the rhetoricians' chamber The Eglantine. Rodenburgh solved this by adding *tableaux vivants* to his four adaptations. As a theatrical device, it had proven its use to rhetoricians since the fifteenth century, and was a well-established method of *imagineering* gripping scenes that could move audiences with fascination, horror, wonder, and admiration. Meanwhile, the duels that were already part of the Spanish plots would offer much-needed action onstage.

I asserted that the introduction of *comedia nueva* to the Low Countries consequently led to a surge of spectacle. Later in the seventeenth century, more elaborate *comedias* with more extensive stage machinery (*tramoyas*) were introduced on Flemish and Dutch stages. This also meant that more complex stage machines were needed in these theatres, and thus theatres in Brussels and Amsterdam were remodelled and stage machinery was installed. The driving force behind all structural alterations was, in the end, always the spectators. They loved to be mesmerised by the spectacle in the Spanish plays, and therefore demanded more. In sum, in addition to the illusions made possible by architectural and technological improvements, the Dutch adaptors of *comedia nueva* expanded their adaptations with elements of spectacle popular in Dutch 'home-grown' plays: *tableaux vivants* and *contrafacts* (music).

The embodiment and enactment of emotions by star actors (aspect 3) is the third aspect I considered in relation to the performative power of the adaptations. As discussed in Chapter 7, *comedia nueva* was a highly embodied genre. That made it well suited to star actors like Van Germez for the roles of spirited, young lovers, as well as the first actresses Van den Bergh and Van Lee, who took the demanding roles of beautiful and emancipated women in these adaptations. Not only were these parts ideal for these actors, but the actors were ideal for these parts: their fame contrib-

uted to the widespread popularity of the genre. By looking at the enactment and embodiment of love, honour, anger, and fear through the lens of *emotional practices*, I demonstrated that the bodily rhetoric of actors was pivotal to the transmission of emotions on stage. Actors and actresses relied on Dutch cultural norms of emotional expression to move spectators to empathic engagement. Furthermore, actors could rely on various contemporary textual and rhetorical sources to embody the often-contradictive emotions that characters cycle through within a single *comedia* scene. I illustrated how the concepts of *emotional practices* and the embodiment of emotions are complementary to Reddy's concept of *emotives*, and emphasise how theatre relies equally on text and the acting body.

Plot Aspects

In the context of plot elements, I first discussed the frequency of various emotions in *comedia nueva* in comparison to other dramatic genres current in the Low Countries by applying the Historic Embodied Emotions Model (HEEM) which classifies and quantifies emotions in early modern Dutch drama (aspect 4). By comparing Dutch adaptations of Spanish plays to Vondel's plays, Senecan-Scaligerian plays, and 'Horror and Spectacle' plays, I identified in Chapter 3 that ten emotions—dedication, desire, fear, hatred, honour, hope, love, loyalty, offense, and wonder—often occurred more frequently in *comedias*. From this collection of ten emotions, I also deduced that emotions honour, love, offense, and hatred—emotions typically associated with acts of vengeance—were more important in Spanish drama than in any of the other three genres examined. As such, the quantitative method showed that the Dutch *comedia* adaptations, just as the Spanish originals, may have focused more on these emotions than did the Senecan-Scaligerian plays, Vondel's plays, and even the Horror and Spectacle plays. As such, *comedia nueva* may have offered spectators an engagement with, and release of, emotions that were less apparent in other genres that were performed in the theatres of the Low Countries.

The next two chapters looked more closely at the specific construction of these ten emotions throughout Dutch adaptations. Emotional conflicts experienced by the star-crossed lover protagonists (aspect 5) was discussed in Chapter 4. In Dutch adaptations of *comedias*, the conflict between love and honour, is expressed as an emotional conflict between private desires and public duty. This conflict between the private and the public characterised Spanish *comedia nueva*, and subsequently also Dutch adaptations. Thus, through *comedias*, spectators were offered what Reddy calls an *emotional refuge* from dominant morality (the *emotional regime*) surrounding sex and marriage

in Dutch society as propagated by writers like Cats. *Comedias* brought to the fore, and addressed in their own literary way, society's taboos surrounding socially inappropriate love, jealousy, and unjust rulership through protagonists facing impossible dilemmas and antagonists who tried to control or appropriate their love. Despite controversial plotlines and characters, I hypothesised that spectators were inevitably moved to empathy for the lovers who had to navigate their feelings in society and manage their emotions accordingly to achieve their goal to be together.

Through this analysis, I identified five standard *comedia nueva* plot types that were popular in the Low Countries: 1) *comedias* about forbidden desires; 2) *comedias* in which protagonists are falsely accused of some crime or moral failing to prevent them from pursuing their love interests; 3) *comedias* in which an antagonist is jealous of the protagonists' love and becomes delusional because of his overwhelming passions; 4) *comedias* in which an antagonist—a male family member of the female protagonist—is overprotective and disapproves of the protagonists' love; and 5) *comedias* in which antagonists abuse their power, by which they prevent protagonists from maintaining a love relationship.

I looked at the multiple dramatic reversals and *woelingen* in *comedias* (aspect 6) in Chapter 4 as well. I argued that the adapted *comedias* substantially differed from 'home-grown' plays in the way that emotions were rendered. Unlike the 'oogenblikke beweeging' of emotions in Senecan-Scaligerian plays, or the singular 'staetveranderinge' (*peripeteia*) in Vondel's plays, the plot structures of Spanish plays rather offered multiple *agnitios* (recognitions) and *peripeteias* (dramatic reversals) in several different protagonists and antagonists. The *comedias* are characterised by their continuous rise and fall. Moreover, characters often reflect on these dramatic reversals by expressing their inner conflicts in the form of *woelingen*. All these *woelingen* had to engage spectators. While Vondel's plays presented characters who have *woelingen* related to an ethical dilemma of a public nature, the characters in the Spanish plays experience *woelingen* related to their personal desires, ambitions, honour, duty, and sometimes also reason. Compared to the modest and evenly-tempered nature of Vondel's plays, the adaptations of Spanish *comedias* overturned the dramatic model of Aristotle which was otherwise the established format of especially Vondel's theatre.

I addressed the appeal of vengeance (aspect 7) in Chapter 5, where I showed that vengeance was a controversial subject in the Low Countries, which made it no less appealing. With the Bible prohibiting revenge—an extension of judgement and Divine Providence, and thus solely the right of God—Dutch moralists established an emotional regime that fiercely condemned any form of private vengeance. In Dutch tragedy, vengeance was generally rejected as a viable response to dishonour or personal

grievances: instead, the genre propagated either absolute rule, the characters' emotional self-conquest, or their exile. Dutch adaptations of the *dramas de honor* staged the honour-vengeance theme in a way that enabled spectators to cope with their own social anxieties, offering a drastic alternative to the restraint so insistently vocalised by Dutch moralists. As such, the theatre could become an *emotional refuge*, where spectators could temporarily rid themselves of the yoke with which they restrained their passions. With their sensational representation of unbridled passions and especially spectacular acts of vengeance, these adapted *dramas de honor* provided the opposite to the morality of restraint characteristic of Vondel's high art.

In Chapter 6, I introduced the concept of *emotional rebellion* to discuss the manifestation of subversive and emancipatory acts of characters in *comedia nueva* (aspect 8). To effectively analyse the self-conscious and transformative reflections on love and honour of characters in *comedias*, Reddy's concept of the *emotional refuge* is insufficient, in my opinion. As literature makes conflicts explicitly dichotomous, the reactions of the characters are also more extreme. Therefore, I introduced the concept *emotional rebellion* to describe this literary *topos*. I particularly looked at forms of disguise (cross-dressing and social masquerade) and soliloquies (monologue and song). I argued that *emotional rebellion* occurs when characters could no longer accept their *emotional suffering*, nor find relief within an *emotional refuge* from the restraints of their *emotional regime*.

In *comedia nueva*, *emotional rebellion* is needed to create new social realities. Through the establishment of a polyphone discourse, characters use song or monologue as a rejection of the authoritative voice of a ruler, or more generally, of patriarchy. Meanwhile, cross-dressing offers women more freedom of movement, both literally and symbolically. By dressing as men, these women realise that they hold as much agency as their male lovers, for whom they undertook cross-dressing in the first place. As such, cross-dressing has an emancipatory function in *comedia nueva*. Moreover, social masquerade helps high-born men and women move among the general population undetected, a position from which they rebel against authority and work to restore their honour and reputation. By introducing the concept of *emotional rebellion*, I considered the theatre, and *comedia nueva* specifically, as a testing ground, an *emotional refuge*, where rebellion and their appropriate emotions, or *emotives*, were rehearsed before spectators' eyes.

The Varieties of Pleasure and Wonder

The *comedias* that I discussed in this study demonstrate how various overlapping aspects were used to entertain spectators, but these aspects are not common to every single *comedia*. Here, in closing, I use Wittgenstein's metaphor of family resemblances (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) to assert that the more of those eight aspects were present in an adaptation, the more likely it was to have been popular in the Flemish and Dutch theatres.⁴

One aspect behind the popularity of *comedia nueva* was that Lope de Vega made endless variations on the same successful theme.⁵ This equally applies to the available forms of spectacle, frequency of emotional expression, and subversive yet entertaining forms of deception and disguise. In this study, I have discussed many of these variations and argued that they brought pleasure, admiration, wonder, and awe. Considering all aspects together, it is possible to see how often they appear in the ten most popular *comedias* of the period 1638–1672. Basing the popularity of these plays on findings in the ONSTAGE database, and ranking them according to their position in the popularity charts from their premiere onwards (relative ranking),⁶ makes apparent that aspects 1 (illusions & exoticism), 2 (spectacle), 3 (acting), 5 (emotional conflicts), 6 (dramatic reversals), and 8 (emotional rebellion) contributed most significantly to the popularity of the *comedia* adapted for the Amsterdam Public Theatre (Table 8.1).⁷

At the same time, aspect 4 (frequency of emotions) was probably also an important contributing factor. However, quantitative data does not exist for all plays. Aspect 7 (appeal of vengeance) seems to particularly add to the excitement offered by aspect 5 (emotional conflicts) when the irreconcilability of certain conflicts is emphasised within the play's plot.

A 'Home-Grown' Comparison

How unique are the eight aspects I identify as being characteristic of *comedia nueva*? Are they exclusive to the Dutch *comedias*? In this study, Dutch adaptations of Spanish *comedias* were discussed in relation to Dutch 'home-grown' plays by authors such

4 Wittgenstein [1953] 1958, § 66–67 (31–32°).

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

6 The ranking includes all plays, not only *comedias*, hence the ranking is not strictly ordinal.

7 See the introduction for an explanation of why I use a relative ranking system.

TABLE 8.1 Presence of eight characteristic aspects in the Amsterdam Public Theatre’s top ten comedias, 1638–1672, based on ONSTAGE data

Rank in onstage	Comedia adaptation	Premier year	Identified aspects
1	Heynck, <i>Veranderlyk geval</i>	1663	1, 2, 5, 6, 8
3	Van Heemskerck, <i>De verduytste Cid</i>	1641	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
4	De Fuyter, <i>Verwarde hof</i>	1647	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8
5	Vrye Lief-hebbers, <i>Sigismundus</i>	1654	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
5	I. Vos, <i>Gedwongen vrient</i>	1646	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8
6	I. Vos, <i>De beklaaglycke dwangh</i>	1648	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
6	Serwouters, <i>Den grooten Tamerlan</i>	1657	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
8	Rodenburgh, <i>Casandra en Karel</i>	1617	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
9	Van Germez, <i>Vervolgde Laura</i>	1645	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8
11	Serwouters, <i>Hester</i>	1659	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

as Hooft, Bredero, Coster, and Vondel. Although it was not my aim to exhaustively compare comedias to ‘home-grown’ plays, I still found several differences between these two groups of plays.

Part of this difference—and perhaps a partial explanation for the popularity of comedias—originates in the tragicomic nature of *comedia nueva*. Lope wrote about the plays of the Spanish Siglo de Oro that they were like ‘the Minotaur of Pasiphaë,’ a mix of tragic and comic, which thus resembled nature and particularly delighted his audiences.⁸ As such, comedias include both popular tragic characteristics and popular comic characteristics: on the one hand, comedias are tragic because they deal with an emotional conflict that has potentially catastrophic results for individuals and the state, they consist of dramatic reversals from one extreme to another, and they are peopled with many high-born characters who can fall very far down the social ladder; on the other, comedias are comic because they include such deceptive acts as cross-dressing, in them there appear typical comic characters such as the *gracioso*, and many of the emotional conflicts revolve around a pair of lovers, who ultimately marry. However, the aforementioned dramatic reversals in comedias were different

8 Lope de Vega [1609] 2003, vv. 174–180.

from that in a typically Dutch play, such as Vondel's *Jeptha*. I showed that in Vondel's play the *peripeteia* was singular and only occurred in the main protagonist, whereas the *comedias* staged multiple of such reversals in various characters.

As spectacle became a more important factor in entertaining theatregoers in the course of the seventeenth century, *comedias* became more popular, since many of them relied heavily on spectacle. At the same time, Vondel became less popular: Vondel established emotions through *enargeia* rather than through spectacle, whereas *comedias* were staged with duels and *tableaux vivants*, stirring emotions in spectators. This could explain Vondel's diminishing popularity in the 1660s, encouraging theatre director Jan Vos to add new and spectacular *tableaux vivants* to Vondel's plays with the aim of creating more spectacle. The heavy reliance on spectacle in *comedias* reflect the tastes of theatre audiences in the mid-seventeenth century, as Vos wrote himself a spectacle play: *Medea*, a horror which relied on spectacle produced with artifice and flying machines ('kunst- en vliegwerk'). Although I believe that people still agreed that Vondel wrote ingenious dramas, his plays no longer met the tastes and expectations of spectators in the 1660s.

Likewise, vengeance became a very popular theme in Dutch theatre in the seventeenth century. Hooft was one of the first to thematise this subject in his historical *Geeraert van Velsen*, but he clearly denounced acts of vengeance with the argument that it would undermine the state. In later plays, vengeance becomes a more appealing subject; it had not become less controversial, but fascinated spectators nonetheless. In this study, Hooft's *Geeraert van Velsen* was therefore compared to several *comedias*, and especially to Heynck's *Don Louis de Vargas*. Although Hooft's *Geeraert van Velsen* staged an emotional conflict that involved honour and led to vengeance, love was not a factor as in the *comedias*. Characters in the *comedias* seek revenge because they feel their honour tarnished by of a love entanglement. The character Geeraert, on the other hand, was led by his hatred for Count Floris v, which resulted in a conflict between his duty to his liege lord and his desire to avenge himself and restore his honour. The play shows Geeraert's psychological decay. In its clear moral denouncement of vengeance, *Geeraert van Velsen* differs from the positive representation of vengeance in *Don Louis de Vargas*, in which the protagonist's vengeance ensures that poetic justice is achieved. The large number and variety of such emotions in the Dutch adaptations of *comedias* challenged the auto-image of the Dutch as phlegmatic or stoic, which was many times adopted and confirmed by 'home-grown' plays like *Geeraert van Velsen*. This suggests that there existed a need for emotional relief among Dutch and Flemish populations, which was created by means of a fictional reality in which love and honour are continuously in conflict, and in which outrageous reactions,

such as vengeance, became possible. Therefore, Jan Vos' *Aran en Titus* and Dullaart's *Karel Stuart*, in which revenge and counter-revenge are staged as spectacular events, became particularly popular revenge tragedies alongside the *dramas de honor*. They were, essentially, a cultural manifestation of the anxieties existing around arbitrary rule and the societal decay.

With the increasing popularity of *comedia nueva* in the seventeenth century, another of their considerable differences from 'home-grown' plays is the prevalence of cross-dressing. As a form of deception, cross-dressing does not occur in Vondel's oeuvre at all, nor is deception as dominant in Vondel's plays as it is in the *comedias*. Vondel preferred to show deception as a corruptive act committed by villainous people, such as Vosmeer in *Gysbreght van Aemstel* or Delilah in *Samson*. Where it concerns other 'home-grown' plays, cross-dressing occurs primarily in Bredero's *Moortje* and Hooft's and Coster's *Warenar*. Yet, I argue that in these 'home-grown' comedies, cross-dressing is a racist and sexist form of deception in comparison to the physically, socially, and most important to my study, emotionally emancipatory nature of cross-dressing and other forms of disguise in *comedia nueva*.

A Theatre of Emotions

At the beginning of this study, I set out to explore and explain how and why *comedia nueva* could become—at least for a time—the most popular theatre genre in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Brussels. Hypothesising that much of *comedia nueva*'s popularity was rooted in the way that various emotions were represented in this genre, I asked whether *comedia nueva* could be considered a 'theatre of emotions.' It is clear that this was indeed the case. Not only did *comedias* present more emotions than most other contemporary plays, but love and honour were much more important within them than in other genres in Dutch theatre. Moreover, the abundant spectacles in *comedias* captivated spectators, drawing them back to the theatre again and again, and they must have been wonderstruck by the technical innovations that adaptors of *comedia nueva* employed. At the same time, these Spanish plays, with their alternative social realities, offered a different kind of comic and emotional relief from the moral restraints in Dutch society.

I contend that in scholarship of Dutch historical literature, and especially in studies of Dutch theatre, we have too often focused on a myopic perception of literary quality, examining and re-examining literary trends from Hooft, Vondel, and Vos, always placing drama at centre stage. Rather, if performance and the intended (and

where possible, reported) effects of this literature on an audience are added to analysis, we may also begin to say something about reception. This study has demonstrated various ways that we can build an impression of the overwhelming effects that *comedia nueva* had on Dutch and Flemish audiences. Here, I have aimed to promote inclusion of early modern Dutch theatre in international discussion about cultural exchange, particularly in the arts. Finally, with my specific focus on emotions in Dutch theatre, I hope that we continue to explore the interplay between the creation of literature and its consumption by audiences in the early modern period.