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Korsten, F.W.A.; McGourty, L.H.G.

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Civic Babylonian Pride in Vondel's *Mars Tamed*: Baroque Allegory Performing Contradiction in the Dutch Republic

FRANS-WILLEM KORSTEN AND LUCY MCGOURTY

Frans-Willem Korsten holds the chair 'Literature, Culture, and Law' at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society and the chair by special appointment 'Literature and Society' at the Erasmus School of Philosophy. He has published on the baroque, theatricality, sovereignty, art, justice, and law – including *A Dutch Republican Baroque* (Amsterdam 2017) and *Art as an Interface of Law and Justice* (New York 2021). The NWO/FWO-funded project 'Imagineering Techniques in the Early Modern Period' focused on representations of violence in the Dutch Republic. He currently participates in the nwo-funded project 'Playing Politics. Media Platforms, Making Worlds'. His most recent publication is *Cultural Interactions. Conflict and Cooperation* (Amsterdam 2022).

Lucy McGourty is a research master student in Arts, Literature, and Media at Leiden University. She focuses on early modern literature, with a special interest in how literary texts interact with their political and ideological contexts, and function as sites for negotiating political ideas. She is currently working on the history of emotions and the senses. She has co-authored the chapter 'Narrative Structure, Intervisuality, and Theology in Auladell's *El Paraiso perdido*' together with Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, to be published in *Milton Across Borders and Media* (Oxford forthcoming).

Abstract

In 1647, one year ahead of the official celebrations of the Peace of Westphalia, the Dutch poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel published a long panegyric called *De getemde Mars* ('Mars Tamed'), a poem fully translated into English for the first time in this article. Despite celebrating the Peace, Vondel did not refrain from presenting extremely violent scenes of war in the middle part of the poem. Surprisingly, however, the war scene shifts from the wars that devastated Europe to a war which Mars wages against Jupiter and his circle of gods. Unable to control Mars, and on the verge of

seeing his rule collapse, Jupiter looks for support and finds it in an allegorical maiden representing the Dutch Republic and its main hub Amsterdam. This article argues that the allegory employed by Vondel is set up against itself. The familiar allegorisation of classical material for Christian purposes turns into a baroque allegory that works against principles of theologically underpinned political sovereignty. Here, the poem testifies to a distinct civil pride, with Vondel considering the burgomasters of Amsterdam, which he takes as embodying civil government, as a prominent source of international peace. By 1648, however, the Dutch Republic had also become an imperial and global power that confronted other sovereign states in violent actions. In this context, the poem's baroque contradictions multiply.

Keywords: Vondel, panegyric, baroque contradiction, allegory, Peace of Westphalia, civic government

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This article offers, and comments on, the first full translation in English of a panegyric written by Dutch poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel, entitled *De getemde Mars*, or 'Mars Tamed'.¹ The poem was written in the *Oegst maend*, the harvest month, of August 1647, in celebration of the Peace of Westphalia.² It comes as no surprise that Vondel would write a poem about this festive occasion; he wrote occasional poems related to other national and international events. Neither will it come as a surprise that the poem places Amsterdam at the centre of international politics. Many of Vondel's occasional poems, such as his writings on the opening of the new town hall in 1655, or the new vast building of the admiralty in 1657, concerned his hometown as an international centre of politics and trade. What makes the poem noteworthy is that, despite being a paean to peace (and considering the burgomasters of Amsterdam as its major architects), the text focuses predominantly on describing large-scale acts of violence. Rightly so, one might argue, given all the wars, civil or otherwise, that had raged in and across Europe in recent memory, of which the Thirty Years' War of 1618 to 1648 was a particularly gruesome example. What makes the poem exceptional, however, is not its description of human violence, but of divine violence. Here, as we will argue, the poem's allegorical content and structure performs a set of baroque contradictions that are characteristic of the political, aesthetic, and

1 For the full translation of the poem, see the appendix. This article was first conceived as a lecture for a mini-conference organized by the John Hay Library and the Center for the Study of the Early Modern World of Brown University in June 2021, 'Performing Objects and the Objects of Performance in the Global Early Modern'. The library has a copy of the Vondel's *De getemde Mars*. Small parts of the draft, on the poem's representation of violence, were used for a chapter in Korsten et al., *Marketing*. For their valuable comments we thank the participants of the conference, but especially Helmer Helmers. We also thank Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen for his comments on and improvements of the translation.

2 The peace would be officially acknowledged on 30 January 1648; the ratification of the treaty took place later that year on 15 May. The peace talks had unofficially been concluded on 8 January 1647. The poem was published separately in 1648, in folio, by Abraham de Wees. One year later, in 1649, it was taken up in a publication that compiled many of the panegyrics and pieces written on the occasion, under the title *Olyf-krans der vrede*. See Duits, 'Vondel'.

religious constellation, or religious tensions, within the Dutch Republic. As allegory, the poem does not so much veil these tensions, as offer us an almost perfect example of what Walter Benjamin calls allegory's *Zweideutigkeit*: the text does not offer us the plain truth – the *allos* of allegory suggests it is elsewhere – but embodies a process that works through the contradiction. It thus offers a historical awareness that will never reach its ultimate conclusion.³

Ambivalence, or Baroque Contradiction

One of the Republic's contradictions was political. Its government contained both a quasi-royal element, in the figures of the stadtholders of Orange, and a republican one. This greatly complicated both domestic politics and the Republic's foreign relations, including peace negotiations – as Helmer Helmers has argued in *The Royalist Republic*. The fact that the Republic would, effectively, turn royalist following the execution of King Charles I in England did not eliminate the contradiction; rather, it testified to the Republic's contradictory dynamic.⁴ A second, related contradiction was aesthetic, and contained its own, internal contradiction: a classicist pole stood opposite a baroque one, and within this baroque dynamic a princely or royal pole stood opposite a secular, civil one. These tensions were central to Frans-Willem Korsten's *A Dutch Republican Baroque*.⁵ A third contradiction was religious – and was also a double one. It concerned the tensions between Protestants and Catholics and the relation between religion and state. According to Henk Duits, this is why Vondel must have been ambivalent with regard to the Westphalian peace.⁶ In Duits's reading, Vondel had hoped for full freedom of religion, for Catholics as well as Protestants. This did not obtain, however, as Catholics were to remain second-class citizens. The tensions between religion and state had already been writ large in the conflict between Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt in the first two decades of the century – a conflict that led to Oldenbarnevelt's judicial execution in 1619. In this context, a key conceptual question was: what is the source of, or what underpins, political power? Was the dominant model that of the monarch ruling by divine sanction, or was it civil government that, as such, is groundless – with no justification other than its own existence?⁷

The tensions addressed above are much more than simply a source of 'ambivalence'. The contradictions testified to the potential for civil war, which is why Vondel, as Judith Pollmann has argued, opted for Roman Catholicism as the religious umbrella underneath which such contradictions could be captured.⁸ It was for the same reason that Vondel

3 Benjamin, *Origin*. On Benjamin's conceptualization of baroque allegory, see Cowan, 'Benjamin's Theory'.

4 Helmers, *Royalist Republic*.

5 Korsten, *Dutch Republican Baroque*.

6 Duits, 'Vondel', 189-190, argues that Vondel's piece *Salomon*, written with great haste in 1648, deals with a king of peace who is nevertheless incapable of truly safeguarding the peace.

7 The issue was at the heart of studies by Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy"; Weststeyn, *Commercial Republicanism*; and especially Van Gelderen and Skinner, *Freedom*.

8 Pollmann, 'Vondel's Religion'. See also Helmers, "Een galery".

opted for a political order embodied in a father-like figure, whether in the figure of a king or in the form of civic government, with the burgomasters acting as fathers.⁹ However, the difference between these two possibilities could, again, lead to considerable tensions, as the history of the Republic showed in the run-up to the 1648 peace. Opponents of the peace were mostly Orangists; proponents of the peace were mostly republican. The province of Holland and Amsterdam, for reasons of commercial self-interest, strongly supported the peace, whereas the province of Zeeland mostly opposed it.¹⁰ It is not surprising, then, that the poem participates in the ideological battle between the stadtholder and the States Party to appropriate the peace, and that the poem's preface praises the Amsterdam burgomasters as the true architects of the peace, addressing them via the epigraph as 'our fathers of peace, fathers of the fatherland, the lords burgomasters of Amsterdam'. Still, this is the first of three remarkable elements in the panegyric. By 1647 the term *pater patriae* was strongly associated with William the Silent, but here this phrase is used for civic government, in its fatherly, care-taking role, as the pre-eminent source of peace. At a time when metaphors of national fatherhood were commonly applied only to monarchs, it is here applied to civic government.

The second part of the poem introduces another father: Jupiter, whom the text repeatedly addresses as 'Father' (l. 29, 78, 149). This father-figure is dissatisfied with human beings and sends Mars to punish them – something that would sound familiar to a Christian audience acquainted with a vengeful God. As a result, all the regions of Europe (the poem mentions a host of them) come to suffer.¹¹ With Mars more than willing and capable of performing this task, at some point a horrified Europa – personifying the European continent – laments her ordeal. Jupiter then calls Mars back. This is where the poem takes a completely unexpected turn. In the third part of the poem, out of the blue, Mars rebels and turns against Father Jupiter and his entire circle of gods, in a 'baroque amalgamation of divine and earthly reality of war'.¹² In this conflict, Mars also appears to triumph, and, tellingly, he uses human instruments of war in his battle against the other gods. This, then, is the second remarkable element: Mars revolts against the Supreme Being, against his sovereign, against his father, and does so with the aid of human instruments.

The poem's fourth and final part has another allegorical protagonist at its heart, a peace goddess in the shape of a Dutch maiden. Stunned by this maiden's appearance, Mars drops his weapons, after which she binds him and restores order. This is the third remarkable element. Whereas the violence is divine, the peace, in the first part of the poem, is delivered by Amsterdam's burgomasters, and in the third part by a Dutch maiden who, as we will argue, allegorically represents a combination of the Dutch Republic and civil government in one.

9 Vondel's longing for a care-taking father figure was central to an interpretation of Vondel's *Lucifer* by Van Dijkhuizen and Helmers, 'Religion and Politics'. Considering rulers as fathers was part of a much broader European political tradition: Ng, *Literature and the Politics of Family*.

10 For these tensions, see Groenveld, 'Unie, religie, militie'; Blom, 'Oorlog, handel en staatsbelang'.

11 Vondel had a special position in the collective of those who sang the praise of peace in that he emphasised the position of the Republic in an international context: Geerdink, *Dichters*, 181-186.

12 Helmers, "'Een galery'", 25, in a reading of Vondel's *Lucifer*.



Fig. 1 Allegory on the Peace of Westphalia: Hallowed by the feet of the one announcing the peace, 1648, engraving, 41,6 x 51,7 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

The question as to who or what made the peace is intrinsically related to a perhaps more uncomfortable question: who is ultimately responsible for the violence of war? This question is posed and answered by the poem itself in the second part. War is divine punishment: God, allegorically embodied in Jupiter, allows the violence of warfare as a way to punish mankind. The problem implied in the poem's third part, however, is that the Supreme Being is not capable of making peace. This is where the contradiction between two different types of father-figures is revealed: between Father Jupiter, who is capable of making war but incapable of making peace, and the burgomaster-fathers, who can make peace.

With respect to this contradiction, the peculiar position of the poem becomes clear when comparing it to an allegorical print on the Peace of Westphalia, published in 1648 (fig. 1). In this print, peace is hallowed by the divine light from above, accompanied by the texts 'Glory to God' and 'Peace on Earth'.¹³ At the bottom, peace is symbolized by the

13 'Eer zy God'; 'Vreede op 'd'aard'. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the authors'.

goddess of peace sitting on the instruments of war, now silenced, and on a subdued Mars whose sword is broken. The vignettes to the left show the disasters of war, those to the right the fruits of peace; all are accompanied by short explanations. The centre of the print is filled with those who have *made* the peace, with the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III occupying centre stage, holding the cords that now bind him to other rulers, specifically Queen Christina of Sweden and King Louis XIV of France. Equally informative is the fact that in the background people shake hands (on the left), and collectively make the sign of swearing the oath of truth (on the right).¹⁴ In the closing ceremony of the Peace, historians Cornelia Ridderikhoff and Henk van Nellen have noted, the colourfully dressed Spanish swore on the bible and kissed the cross; the Dutch representatives, dressed in black, raised two fingers and affirmed what their leader had read by saying ‘So help me God’.¹⁵ Peace had indeed been agreed upon, but between parties that remained, politically and religiously, very different and distinct.

The print and Vondel’s poem agree in this respect: peace is man-made. In Vondel’s panegyric, however, any divine sanction or glorification of the peace is missing. This may be remarkable in itself, but even more remarkable is the fact that in the poem the supreme God, Jupiter, calls for someone else to conclude the peace, after which a peace goddess appears who resembles the peace goddess depicted above, be it with a difference. Our reading will differ principally here from Duits’s interpretation, according to whom the allegorical figure is ‘*the* goddess of peace’ (our emphasis), whereas the text announces ‘*a* goddess of peace’ (our emphasis), whom Jupiter does not appear to recognize, which is surely strange since in Greek and Latin mythology the goddess of peace is his daughter. This raises the question, then, which, or what kind, of goddess this is.

As allegory, the text works by means of metaphor: war is figured as Mars, the continent as Europa, and Jupiter as the supreme being. All this concerns the familiar Christian allegorization of classical material. However, as we will see, the classical material also works counter to basic principles of Christianity, especially in its relation to political sovereignty. This is where the text becomes a baroque, inverted allegory: an allegory working against the parameters of a familiar form of allegory. The inverted allegory embodies how a secular, distinctly civil form of power can be sovereign, as opposed to a sovereign power that bases its legitimacy on a divine source. With respect to this, the text is not so much about a civil pride, but the performance of that pride. Calling this a ‘Babylonian pride’, we allude to the biblical story about the human endeavour to build a tower that would reach to the sky.

Allegory’s Edge: The Amsterdam Burgomasters versus a Quasi-Royal Stadholder

Vondel was Holland’s, or rather Amsterdam’s, most famous contemporary playwright. Living from 1587 to 1679, he was witness to, and a powerful voice in favour of, the incredible expansion of the Dutch Republic and of Amsterdam. Vondel even witnessed the

¹⁴ This sign is also prominent in a painting by Gerard ter Borgh, *The Ratification of the Treaty of Münster*, 1648, oil on copper, 45,5 x 58,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

¹⁵ Ridderikhoff and Van Nellen, ‘Hugo de Groot’, 53.

near-collapse of the Republic in 1672, which, although it ultimately survived the French invasion, saw the collapse of a republican political entity. The Dutch Republic was once more ruled by a stadtholder, William III, who was also to become king of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Prior to this, and conceptually speaking, the political entity of a Republic, with a promise of freedom for all, could not be reconciled with its transformation into an empire that presupposed subjection and that would engage in slavery. Vondel's ambiguous and baroque way of dealing with the issue can be traced in his letters as well as in the wide variety of poetic genres in which he worked – from highly personal to philosophically abstract, from occasional, and theological to political texts – and a variety of plays. In light of the sectarian violence of the religious conflicts ravaging his country and Europe, Vondel was inclined to follow Grotius in his argument that the Dutch should be reunited under one faith, namely Roman Catholicism. He officially turned to this religion in the 1640s and became one of the most controversial Dutch authors as a result.¹⁶

Politically speaking, Vondel was controversial as well. He attempted to establish himself as a favourite of stadtholder Frederick Henry (1584-1647), but fell from grace in 1633, fifteen years before the peace, because of a poem. He wrote it to the stadtholder's secretary, Constantijn Huygens, requesting he pressure Frederick Henry to moderate his actions and strive for peace.¹⁷ Another prominent allegorical text by Vondel on the Peace of Westphalia, the play *Leeuwendalers*, opens with a dedication to stadtholder Fredrick Henry but the play itself allegorically considers the civil government of Amsterdam as the true architects of the peace, an argument in line with the opening of *Mars Tamed*.¹⁸ Previous to this, Vondel had despised stadtholder Maurits's alliance with the orthodox Counter-Remonstrants, and he never forgave Maurits for the judicial execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in 1619.¹⁹ This execution was at the heart of Vondel's allegory *Palamedes oft vermoorde onnooselheyd* (Palamedes or the Murder of Innocence), in which he accused Maurits of having quasi-legally murdered Van Oldenbarnevelt.²⁰ Finally, Vondel had an ambiguous, not to say adverse, relationship with William II (1626-1650) whom he considered a political Lucifer – on which more later. William succeeded Frederick Henry as stadtholder at the age of nineteen, and would prove to be a brash and ambitious young man who firmly opposed a peace treaty with the Spanish, because it would rob him of parts of his income and power.²¹

If the Dutch Republic was not strictly a republic, then it owed its title to the messy, complex system of mixed sovereignty.²² The States that constituted the United Provinces were sovereign themselves. Legally speaking, they appointed the stadtholder, who had his own sovereign powers in military affairs nevertheless. The representatives of the States in

16 Smits-Veldt and Spies, 'Vondel's Life'.

17 Poelhekke, *Frederik Hendrik*, 472. For a reconstruction of the conversation between Huygens and Vondel, see Smits-Veldt, 'Vondels *Vredewensch*'.

18 Duits, 'Vondel', 185-186.

19 For Van Oldenbarnevelt's life, work, and politics, see Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*.

20 On the legal set-up of the affair, see Grüttemeier "'De schriftuur'"; Beekman and Grüttemeier, *De wet van de letter*.

21 On Vondel's relation with the separate stadtholders of Orange, see Poelhekke, *Vondel en Oranje*.

22 Kossmann, *Political Thought*; Van Gelderen, 'Aristotelians, Monarchomachs and Republicans'.

The Hague, who made up the States-General, were bound by relentless consultation with the civic elites but ruled the newly occupied territories in Brabant and Limburg and had considerable leeway in international affairs. Then there were also the newly constructed legal bodies like the East and West Indian Companies, which had considerable powers in the Dutch colonies.²³ On the one hand, and on the level of the Republic, Vondel had been, and remained a staunch supporter of Oldenbarnevelt and Grotius. As an inhabitant of Amsterdam, he chose the side of its civic government, in *Mars Tamed* embodied in the Amsterdam burgomasters. Vondel was fiercely opposed to the form of theocracy that some orthodox Calvinists were striving for, but he supported royal or quasi-royal rule (he also was a fan of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand), which is also why, despite his criticism, at times he praised the stadtholders.

Aesthetically speaking, Vondel's works are characterised in several ways by the fact that in the Dutch Republic two forms of baroque existed simultaneously: the princely form on behalf of the stadholders, and a republican form on behalf of, especially, Amsterdam.²⁴ The panegyric distinguishes itself here, also in relation to the political tensions, from a work of art such as Adriaen van Nieulandt's *Allegory on the Peacetime under Stadtholder William II*, discussed in more detail below. In both poem and painting familiar symbols appear: the bounded god of war, jubilant trumpets, and an allegorical maiden indicating the United Provinces – as does the colour orange. Yet the poem also takes a decisively different turn. After the obligatory epigraph to 'our Fathers of Peace, Fathers of the Fatherland, the Lords Burgomasters of Amsterdam', the poem announces a few lines later: 'Oh, true FATHERS of the PEACE of Amsterdam./ Your wisdom helped braid the Orange ribbons,/ And cords, that now have tamed the Violence.'²⁵ Here, the seemingly innocent 'Orange ribbons and cords' acquire a certain 'edge'. Or, the allegory works similar here to what Linda Hutcheon defines as irony's *edge*.

Hutcheon's argument is that irony is not just a trope; it can also have a sharp, hurtful force. Irony's 'edge' materializes, however, only for those who get the irony: 'The final responsibility for deciding whether irony actually happens in an utterance or not [...] rests, in the end, with the interpreter.'²⁶ That is to say, irony can only have its edge for the ones who are sensitive to it. If, in the poem, the 'Orange ribbons and cords' are metaphors for the binding force of the stadtholder of the House of Orange, and metonyms for the peace festivities, their allegorical edge – its message accessible only to those who are sensitive to the irony – is that these orange ribbons and cords were 'braided' by the burgomasters of Amsterdam. This 'braiding' is the opposite of 'unbridled' and thus becomes a small, easily unnoticed allegorical element, that may allude to both Frederick Henry's and William II's desire to be more than simple stadtholders. The former had had a particularly

23 On this complex structure, see Price, *Republic*; Onnekink, 'The Body Politic'.

24 For a definition of the baroque as essentially a mixed aesthetic, see Mérot, *Généalogies*. On the Dutch baroque as a specifically republican one, see Korsten, *Dutch Republican Baroque*.

25 WB, V, 251, l. 3-6: 'Aen onze Vredevaders Vaders des Vaderlands/ De Heeren Burgemeesters van Amsterdam. [...] O Amsterdamsche oprechte VREDEVADERS./ Uw wijsheit help d'Oranje snoeren vlechten./ En banden, daer' t Gewalt aen leit getemt.' All references to Vondel's work are shortened to 'WB', an acronym for the Dutch title of Vondel's collected works, published by the Wereldbibliotheek (WB).

26 Hutcheon, *Irony's edge*, 45.

strong hand in winning the war, but only, so the poem suggests, because he remained controlled by civil powers. In reaction to William's failed coup d'état three years later, Vondel would write: 'Not nobility but a scoundrel lusts, to trample with his hoof the crown of cities; which was bitterly gained in a hundred years wars; one had battled all too long.'²⁷ To this 'crown of cities' we will return, since it may indicate either Amsterdam as the crown of all cities, or the allegorical figure of Cybele wearing a mural crown, as a reference to Amsterdam.

Indisputably, Vondel was aware of how much the Republic needed the stadtholders in its military endeavours. The allegory accepts this, but makes it clear that the powers of the House of Orange-Nassau – their 'ribbons and cords' – should be braided by civil powers in order to tame not only the violence of war, but also the family's desire for sovereign power. This is evidenced in the poem's third and final part, in which the Dutch maiden comes to conquer Mars. The poem offers an extensive description of her appearance in the skies of the Netherlands: how she rides a chariot drawn by two lions; how she is dressed in a white garment decorated with olives; how she wears a wreath of fresh olive leaves, and how she is called for by a divine power:

Then Jupiter called: 'Quick, quick, you Beauteous one;
Now tame with a single amorous glance
This brutal God, who does not bow to lightning bolts:
There is no pearl more beautiful in the foliage of your wreath.'²⁸

If the maiden's act of conquering Mars would be like the most beautiful pearl in her wreath of olive leaves, this either suggests that this wreath does not have pearls yet, or that it does already have pearls, yet the most beautiful one still needs to be acquired. It will be answered later which of the two it is. For now, the important point is that the Dutch maiden disarms Mars with her charms. Having been conquered and rendered defenceless by the maiden's beauty, Mars is then bound with 'soft, orange cords':

She rises up and down and quickly ties
And binds both his arms on his back
Not with metal but with soft, Orange cords.
Thus she drives Mars before her wheels,
And leads him in triumph through the Netherlands.'²⁹

The passage suggests again that military force will be strong but also 'soft' when it serves the aim of taming brutal violence and rendering war unnecessary. In the beginning of the poem these orange cords were braided by civil government. This is clearly the source,

²⁷ WB, V, 512, l. 57-58: 'Geen adel, maar een schelm, heeft lust de Kroon der steden/ te trappen met den hoef: zy wert te zuur gehael/ Met hondert jaren krijghs: men heeft te lang gestreden.' The lines are taken from a 1650 poem that praises two defense bulwarks that were built on the occasion of William II's attack: *Aen de blokhuizen van Amsterdam*.

²⁸ WB, V, 256, l. 181-204: 'Toen riep Iupijn: ry aen, ry aen, ghy Schoone:/ Betem nu met een' lonk van uw gezicht/ Den barssen Godt, die voor geen blixems zwicht:/ Geen schooner parle aen 't loof van uwe kroone.'

²⁹ WB 257, V, l. 194-198: 'Zy stijgt hier op om laegh, en vleugelt vlugh/ En bint hem bey zijn armen op den rugh/ Met geen metael, maer zachte Oranje banden./ Zoo drijftze Mars groothartigh voor haer wielen,/ En voert hem in triomf heel Neêrlant door.'

then, of a soft, bridled power as opposed to the more brutal military power of ambitious stadtholders.

An ambitious, war-mongering character will be at the centre of the poem's second part in the figure of Mars, who is not just a metaphor for the wars plaguing Europe, but who will also come to rebel against his sovereign. Here the allegory gets a more disturbing edge in light of the link between divine and political sovereignty.

Inverted Allegory: Christianizing Classical Material or Questioning Theological Sovereignty

In the very same year that Vondel published *Mars Tamed*, he also wrote a comedy in praise of the peace, *Leeuwendalers*. Although it is not known who commissioned it, it is highly unlikely that it was simply a play that had already been written and lay waiting for the occasion. The play *Leeuwendalers* is an allegory, too, just like several others of Vondel's writings, such as *Palamedes* (1625), *Salmoneus* (1657), and *Faëton* (1663). In all cases the allegorical nature of the texts, or the poet's decision to use allegory, needed to be defended in the play's preface. For example, the preface to *Leeuwendalers* deals primarily with defending Vondel's choice of using the classical god Pan as an allegory for the Christian God.

The reception of Vondel's work has been dominated by that of his tragedies, and these, in turn, have predominantly been studied in the context of classicism, in line with the influence of Heinsius's re-evaluation of Aristotelian poetics.³⁰ The baroque characteristics of Vondel's work have never been forgotten, however.³¹ It is surely valid to read Vondel's texts in a regular allegorical manner, by considering his handling of classical material in light of their Christian reception. As such, Vondel's texts belong to the many examples underpinning the *translatio imperii* from the Roman empire to Christianity or Roman Catholicism. In this context, Hans van Dael, for instance, argues that Vondel's use of Pan in *Leeuwendalers* is a trifle, since it is clearly based on commonly available iconographic material.³² However, if this is the case, why would Vondel have had to address the issue so extensively in the foreword? Is it not strange that Vondel should choose a wild god, half man, half animal, who loves to make music and is sexually aggressive or transgressive, as stand-in for the supreme and sovereign Christian God? The issue has been explained away by considering the allegorical tension as a matter of substitution.³³ This reading would

³⁰ A recent paradigmatic case is Bussels, 'Vondel's *Brothers*', published in 2015, although it builds on the majority of studies on Vondel since the 1960s.

³¹ Kramer, *Vondel*; Korsten, *Sovereignty*; Korsten, *Baroque*.

³² Van Dael, 'Toonbeeld', 89. According to Van Dael, Vondel knew the 1664 translation of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. This translation, *Iconologia of uytbeeldingen des verstands*, was dedicated to Michiel le Blon, as was Vondel's *Leeuwendalers* three years later. This is why Van Dael argues that Vondel's Pan was directly borrowed from Ripa. Still, this does not mean the choice for Pan as a metaphor for God is unproblematic.

³³ Konst, *Fortuna*, is a proponent of the substitution thesis. For an alternative analysis, see Korsten, *Sovereignty*, ch. 5.

have us simply *replace* Pan with the Christian God. We can consider the metaphorical dynamic far better as a matter of baroque double-ness or contradiction.³⁴

In the sparse reception of *Mars Tamed*, one nasty edge of allegory is explained away when Jupiter is automatically considered as the allegorical embodiment of God. Some interpretative unrest is evidenced, for instance, when the editors mention in their explanation of Jupiter's role in the text that 'despite his Christian belief, Vondel's imagination time and again adopts Renaissance forms'.³⁵ If only it had been a renaissance, intertextual affair. In a baroque context, allusions such as the one here – between Jupiter as the vengeful supreme being and God – embody and project a whirl of contradictory imaginations. It appears that a baroque use of allegory is never a matter of substitution, but rather a matter of an aesthetic attraction that consists precisely in the fact that we appear to be seeing double.³⁶

Mars's revolt against his father and the other gods has been read as parallel to Vondel's play *Lucifer*, in which God's most favoured angel and his company rebel because God has created human beings, who appear to be the angels' equals.³⁷ *Lucifer* would be composed in the years to come, from 1648 to 1654.³⁸ In some readings of this piece, the historical context connotes Lucifer as a political figure, rising up against his legitimate Lord, such as Oliver Cromwell in England (explicitly equated to Lucifer in several of Vondel's satirical poems) and William II in the Dutch Republic.³⁹ Yet from the beginning of his career, Vondel was fascinated by the theme of subjects rising up against their sovereign lord. In *Lucifer*, he used the backdrop of the Christian heaven to explore this theme. In fact, this choice was one reason why the orthodox Protestants were repelled by *Lucifer*. As Helmers has proposed, Vondel's treatment of the theme cannot be reduced to one final meaning, but leads rather to a baroque multiplicity of meaning.⁴⁰

In this context, we propose to read *Mars Tamed* as an inverted allegory – as a text that allegorically acts against itself. This is provoked by the fact that the text has an unexpected and seemingly unmotivated double battle and structure in its middle part. While Mars initially functions as the allegorical indication of the war that plagued Europe, he unexpectedly morphs into the allegorical impersonation of a political body rising up against its legitimate ruler. First Mars is given the order to punish the peoples of Europe, as a synecdoche for mankind. Then, however, Mars is called back by Jupiter, which is the moment he

34 As is argued by Van der Lecq, 'Deconstruction'.

35 WB, V, 252: 'Vondels verbeelding neemt, ondanks zijn Christelik geloof, steeds weer Renaissance-vormen aan.'

36 On the baroque as a period of paradox, see, for instance, Buci-Glucksmann, *Folie*; Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque*; Buci-Glucksmann, *Puissance*.

37 Duits, 'Vondel'; Rens, 'Vondel'.

38 See, for instance, Duits, 'Vondel', 186.

39 On Lucifer as Cromwell, see Vondel's poem 'Op den vadermoort in Groot-Brittannië', WB, V, 476, l. 1-2: 'Vermomde LUCIFER had door zijn Parlement/ Den Heer het Swaert ontruikt, de Kerk en 't Hof geschenkt' ('Disguised Lucifer had, by means of his parliament,/ robbed the Lord of his sword, and raped Church and Court'). See also his poem 'Morgenwekker der Sabbatisten', WB, IV, 576, l. 62-63: 'Volght Lucifers banier in 't stormen,/ Die naer zijn Scheppers scepter stont' ('Follow Lucifer's banner in the attack/ who challenged his creator's scepter').

40 Helmers, "'Een galery'".

rebels. This leads to a decisive baroque derailment, as the poem exults in describing, and in detail, how the gods come to fight one another:

Then the Majesty
 Of Gods saw Mars, prepared with all his armies,
 Ready, and burning to attack at once.
 A storm raged, from below and from above.
 [...]
 The heavens seemed a wagon without reins;
 All the heavenly armies a shepherdless flock.
 [...]
 Then Jupiter saw his Rule hang in the balance,
 And the fortunes of heaven turning, blow by blow.
 His enemy would not listen to entreaty,
 Nor defer to laws from on high.
 What counsel, Jupiter? Your court begins to burn.⁴¹

In the full version of the poem (see the appendix), the description revels in violent details, as if the text itself has, thematically, become ‘a wagon without reins’. Yet aesthetically speaking, the description is extremely skilful and effective. Content-wise it must be noted that Mars and his armies, much like Lucifer’s troops, are described in terms of human artifice. Human weapons and techniques – pitting gunpowder against lightning, blunderbusses against thunder – empower Mars. In addition, Mars’s act of robbing the gods of their weapons causes the balance to shift. Finally, the conflict in the heavens is not described in terms of a Supreme Being capable of restoring order, but rather as a political order threatened by someone who will not negotiate, and who will not yield to the rule of law.

This provokes a fundamental reconsideration of the relation between the gods, or God, and their subjects. In political terms, it leads to a reconsideration of the theological fundamentals of political and legal sovereignty.⁴² If Jupiter is, in accordance with the regular allegorical reading, a metaphor for the Christian God, his sovereignty or supreme rule is, to say the least, questioned here. Or, to put it bluntly, he is described as impotent, which is inconsistent with his status as a Supreme Being. This is precisely what opens up the inverted allegory, according to which Mars becomes the leader of human armies and their weapons, which are capable of setting the heavens ablaze and defeating the gods. The text is a performing object, then, due to the baroque contradiction that it acts out. The text works counter to itself in order to allegorically perform a fundamental contradiction existing in the political household of Europe. Historically, God is called upon to theologially

41 WB, V, 254-255, l. 114-145: ‘Daer zagh de Majesteit/ Der Goden Mars met al zijn heir bereit,/ Gereet, en heet om daetlijk storm te loopen./ Hier viel een storm van boven, en van onder./ De hemel stont in enkel vier en gloet./ Het buskruit weeck den blixem niet een’ voet./ De berghkortouw versufte voor geen’ donder./ De hemel kraeckte, en al ’t gestarrent schudde./ Gelijk de blaen by buien aen een’ boom./ De hemel scheen een wagen zonder toom;/ Al ’t hemelsch heir een herderlooze kudde. [...] Toen zagh Iupijn zijn Recht in twijfel hangen,/ En’ s hemels kans aen ’t keeren, slagh op slagh./ Zijn vyant had geen ooren tot verdragh,/ Noch wou geen wet van hooger hant ontfangen./ Wat raet Iupijn? Uw hof begint te blaecken.’

42 Benjamin, *Origin*, 62-76.

underpin political and royal sovereignty, for instance whenever it is stated that kings are kings 'by the grace of God'. This is the argument brought forward, at the time, by figures ranging from Jean Bodin to Robert Filmer.⁴³ In *Mars Tamed*, however, God is incapable of sanctioning a just order. In fact, many of the plays written by Vondel can be seen as an investigation into the foundation of monarchy and government.⁴⁴ Vondel's explorations raise one question: if the sanction of a just order cannot be a divine, supreme being or entity, what *can* the basis of that sanction be?

Babylonian Arrogance: The Boast in a Republican Baroque

The problem of sovereignty and the rule of law, especially in relation to war, is explicitly addressed when Mars starts to gather his forces for what begins as a retaliatory expedition against humanity:

At his Father's command, Mars mounted his wagon
Pulled by two wolves, with cruel muzzles.
The earth took fright, it knew them by their howls
As a portent of atrocious plagues.
Just as the sailor hears the thunderstorm at sea,
Which approaches and threatens him with mortal danger,
And marks its harbinger in time.⁴⁵

The first who is impacted by this war is 'the earth,' emphasizing how the realm of people is targeted by the gods. The response by the peoples living 'down there' is then compared to a sailor's response to a thunderstorm. This is a familiar element for the seafaring populace of the Dutch Republic. More complicated is the fact that the world is plunged into disorder by the very same entity that is supposed to safeguard it: God. This is expressed in the passage below:

In this attack, this storm, from Mars's seat,
Upon the rolling and spinning of his wagon's axle,
All that exists started to thud,
The Scheldt, the Rhine, the Danube and its borders.
All the human vermin, hidden deep
In mountains and woods, in forests and wilderness;
All that is degenerate and wild
Comes storming from its caves towards this smell.
All the rabble march together in armies,
The Plunder, Murder, The Discord, Firebrand

⁴³ Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, first published in 1576.

⁴⁴ The issue was central to Korsten, *Sovereignty*.

⁴⁵ WB, V, 252, l. 29-35: 'Door 's Vaders last klom Mars op zijnen wagen,/ Getrocken van twee wolven, wreet van muil./ Het aertrijck schrickte, en kendeze aen 't gehuil;/ Een voorspooch van afgrijsselijcke plagen,/ Zoo hoort in zee de zeeman 't onweër ruisschen,/ Dat hem genaect, en dreight met dootsgevaer./ Hy neemt hier op by tijts dien veurbo waer.'

Violence, Treachery. Megaera covered the lands
With a flood of heinous misfortunes.⁴⁶

If the cause of the ‘flood of heinous misfortunes’ that ‘struck the lands’ is God, it is especially painful that the earth is not punished by, say, honourable armies of angels, but that the instrument of retribution is ‘the vermin of people’ who come out of their hiding holes. This begs the question who is going to chase them back into their holes – again a problem of sovereignty and the rule of law.

In the poem’s fourth and final part, it becomes clear what power will be able to control both the rebellious Mars, his cruel wolves, and the ‘vermin of people’. In line with reading the text as an inverted allegory, or as an allegory performing a contradiction, the goddess that appears as the ultimate saviour is both a classical goddess of peace *and* a common civil maiden. Pushed to the limit by his son Mars, the impotent Jupiter is forced to seek aid. The text is grammatically ambiguous, here, because of the fact that the text states that Jupiter *zagh* (saw), which means both ‘to look for’ and ‘to see’ at the same time:

The Father looked for comfort in all directions,
And from the skies of the Netherlands he saw a goddess
Appear in a cloud, more or less
As Venus ascends in her wagon:
As Pallas comes soaring through the skies.
It had to be Pallas, or Venus herself, or none
Of the two, or carved from their faces
As if to look like two blended into one.⁴⁷

What it is that Jupiter is *looking for*, and what he *sees*, introduces another tension between a divine domain and a human one, embodied in a skilfully fabricated or artificial being. This becomes clear when the poem notes that what might have been one of two goddesses, Venus or Pallas, is actually a fusion between the two. It is as if – inspired by their two faces – one new face is *gesneên* (‘carved’).⁴⁸ The carving suggests the action of a sculptor: the figure driving a wagon drawn by two ‘Dutch lions’ embodies an artificial entity that may appear to be supernatural, but could equally well be skilfully man-made. Or, its seemingly supernatural appearance is the result of being crafted.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ WB, V, 252, l. 37-49: ‘Op dat gerit, dien storm, uit Mavors oorden,/ Op ’t rollen en het hollen van zijn as,/ Begon het al te dreunen wat’ er was,/ Het Schelt, de Rijn, de Donauw, en zijn boorden./ Al ’t ongediert van menschen, diep gescholen/ In bergh en bosch, in wout en wildernis;/ Al wat veraert, verwoet, verwildert is/ Komt naer dees lucht gestoven uit zijn hollen./ Men zagh al ’t schuim tot heiren t’zamenrucken./ De Roof, de Moort, de Vloeck, de Stokebrant,/ Gewelt, Verraet. Megeer bedeckte ’t lant/ Met eenen vloet van gruwlijke ongelucken.’

⁴⁷ WB, V, 255-256, 149-157: ‘De Vader zagh om troost uit aller wegen,/ En uit de lucht van Neêrlant een Godin/ In eene wolck verschijnen, meer noch min/ Als Venus komt te wagen aengestegen:/ Als Pallas door den hemel aen komt strijcken./ ’t Most Pallas zijn, of Venus zelf, of geen/ Van beide, of uit haer aengezicht gesneên,/ Om twee in een gemengelt te gelijkken.’

⁴⁸ The commentary in WB, V, 255, proposes a figurative meaning of this phrase, suggesting that it means ‘looking almost exactly alike’, but we consider the literal sense to be more meaningful.

⁴⁹ The comparison between a noble or benign lion and a cruel wolf would return elsewhere in the work of Vondel, for instance in his 1641 poem *Aen den Leeuw van Hollant* (To the Lion of Holland): see Gelderblom, ‘*k Wil rijmen*’.

Previous scholarship, such as Duits's reading of *Mars Tamed*, has assumed that this goddess symbolizes 'the' peace goddess.⁵⁰ However, this reading does not account for the fact that the text announces her as 'a' peace goddess, nor does it explain why she is explicitly marked as an artificial construction: 'Or carved from their faces/ As if to look like two blended into one.'⁵¹ Moreover, reading this maiden as a literal embodiment of the peace goddess Pax leads to a number of problems. Pax is the daughter of Jupiter; yet Jupiter does not recognize her and never addresses her as his daughter, but instead addresses her as 'you Beauteous one' (l. 181). In addition, the text explicitly makes the link between this goddess and the lands where she comes from. She appears in a cloud 'from the skies of the Netherlands' (l. 150) and descends in a wagon 'pulled forth by Dutch lions' (l. 165). Since the poem states explicitly that the skies and the lions are *Nederlantsch* ('Netherlandish'), it is clear that Vondel does not only refer to the province of Holland but also to the Dutch Republic: 'two carved into one'.

Such a reading is underscored by Vondel's description of who this goddess is *not*: 'One wonders whether this could be Cybele:/ Yet she is too young, *and wears no mural crown*.'⁵² Indeed, Cybele was regularly depicted as wearing a mural crown, in a chariot drawn by two lions. The text emphasizes that this goddess does not wear a 'mural crown', which also rules out the reading that this goddess represents the Amsterdam city virgin, who in Vondel's play *Gysbrecht van Amstel* is described as wearing a 'mural crown', precisely because the Amsterdam virgin was compared to Cybele (l. 422). This reading is reinforced by the lions drawing her wagon. In the Dutch Republic, the lion was a symbol of both power and restraint.⁵³ In line with this, the lions, as a clear counterpart to the wolves that drew Mars's wagon, 'listen meekly to her rod and discipline/ And know of neither roaring nor yelling'.⁵⁴

Vondel's allegorical representation of the peace in *Mars Tamed* offers a remarkable contrast to Adriaen van Nieuland's painting *Allegory on the Peacetime under Stadtholder William II* (fig. 2). On the upper left side, we see William II depicted as the bringer of peace, while in reality this was the opposite of what he stood for. His father Frederick Henry, depicted to the right, is much closer to the instruments of war. The main character in the drawn carriage, the Virgin of the Republic, carries a shield depicting the Republic's symbol: the heraldic lion. This lion has not lost its force but is now subdued, as is evident from the lion adjacent to her. On the lower right, Mars lies with his hands tied, while to his right and from the skies above him trumpets sing the praise of peace. The colour orange appears throughout the painting, in flags, girdles, and sashes. In light of what follows, we must pay particular attention to the figure kneeling next to William II. It is an uncrowned woman carrying seven arrows, the allegorical figure of the United Provinces. The allegorical figure

50 Duits, 'Vondel', 187.

51 WB, V, 255, l. 155-156: 'Van beide, of uit haer aengezicht gesneên, / Om twee in een gemengelt te gelijkken.'

52 WB, V, 256, l. 169-170: 'Men twijfelt of dit Cibeles magh wezen:/ Maer z'is te jongk, en voert geen torenkroon.' Emphasis added.

53 Spies, 'Verbeeldingen van vrijheid', describes how the image of the lion changed from a fierce, wild, and devouring animal into a powerful yet noble and restrained one in the course of the uprising.

54 WB, V, 256, l. 167: 'Zy luistren mack naer heure roede en tucht,/ En weten nu van brullen, noch van schreeuwen.'



Fig. 2 Adriaen van Nieulandt, *Allegory on the Peacetime under Stadtholder William II*, 1650, oil on canvas, 136 x 105 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

of the Dutch Republic, meanwhile, finds herself in the same carriage as Frederick Henry. In Vondel's text, in contrast, the female figures of Peace, the United Provinces, and the Republic morph into one, while implying yet another political entity, the burgomasters of Amsterdam. The implication of this inverted allegory is that the peace has fairly little to do with God. In fact, the war was ordained by God. One could also say it was motivated by God, since he is embodied in the different religious parties fighting one another. Peace, in contrast, is symbolically made by an allegorical figure that fuses three political bodies: the Republic, the United Provinces, and Amsterdam.

The political and aesthetic implications do not stop there. The poem is, by implication, an argument against any attempt to underpin secular sovereignty with the divine, since the poem demonstrates that the heavens may be as unruly and untrustworthy as any human situation. The poem's attempt is part and parcel of what Korsten has considered to be a republican baroque: a form of baroque that worked counter to the baroque of the Counter-Reformation, or of the baroque of the royalty and princes who all attempted

to underpin their power with divine sanction, and to give themselves a divine aura by aesthetic means.⁵⁵ Whereas the princely baroque has been established and recognised by scholars, the republican baroque is not widely engaged with.⁵⁶ To be sure, all parties in the baroque Republic would rhetorically look for a divine aura, but this is something other than a divine underpinning of political power. The opening and closing parts of the poem are telling in their resonance. Political power, so the beginning suggests, depends on decent administration. The burgomasters of Amsterdam are described as follows: 'Now the Citizens in your borough crown you,/ Because you willingly forfeit your own interests,/ And devote your care, your labour and your sweat/ To the Fatherland, and the common wealth.'⁵⁷ That is to say, peace depends on people who give up their own interests for the sake of service to the commonwealth. If, in the final part, there is divinity involved, this takes the form of an allegorical figure that in light of the poem's beginning not only embodies the Republic and the United Provinces, but also Amsterdam's civic government. The poem thus contributes to a specifically Dutch identity, like many other Dutch works of art at the time praising the peace.⁵⁸

In the international context, the Dutch Republic was perhaps not as exceptional as has long been thought, but it nonetheless occupied a peculiar position in relation to Europe's politico-aesthetic forms of expression.⁵⁹ On the one hand, the Republic's decision to say farewell to their sovereign was not exceptional: conceptions of sovereignty were contested throughout Europe. On the other hand, whereas in the rest of Europe – whether papal or royal, princely or theocratic – sovereign power was expressed in a baroque way, the baroque pride with which the Dutch civic independence was celebrated was rarely found elsewhere. Orthodox Protestants might consider the Republic God-given, but for political theorists the Republic's contingent origins were difficult to reconcile with a divine underpinning.⁶⁰ Symbolically, the Dutch Republic could more easily be related to the Roman Republic, in the same way that the Dutch Revolt was compared to the Batavian uprising against Roman imperial power.⁶¹ Even scholars who argue against the Republic's exceptionalism nonetheless point to exceptional elements. As Helmers has noted for example, 'the Dutch Republic was the first, and possibly the only, state born out of a pamphlet war'.⁶² He also mentions the revolutionary development of the Dutch print industries, in the context of what Maarten Prak describes as 'the most urbanized society of the seventeenth century, in Europe but almost certainly anywhere in the world'.⁶³ Indeed, no less

55 Korsten, *Baroque*.

56 For instance, the essays in Helmers and Janssen (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, pay ample attention to classicism, but not to the specific nature of a Dutch baroque.

57 WB, V, 251, l. 13-16: 'Nu kroonen u de Burgers in uw veste,/ Dewijl ghy gaerne uw eigen nut vergeet,/ En hangt uw zorgh en arbeid en zweet/ Aen 't Vaderlant, en algemeene beste.'

58 Jensen, *Vieren van vrede*.

59 On the revision of the Republic's exceptionalism, see Helmers and Janssen (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion*.

60 Van Gelderen, 'Aristotelians, Monarchomachs and Republicans'.

61 Korsten, 'What Roman Paradigm'.

62 Helmers, 'Popular Participation', 126.

63 Prak, 'Urbanization', 30.



Fig. 3 Gerrit Berckheyde, *The Town Hall on Dam Square*, 1672, oil on canvas, 33,5 x 41,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

than forty-two percent of Holland's population lived in towns, which had an exceptionally high rate of literacy.⁶⁴

These features did not necessarily qualify the Dutch Republic as an anomaly or miracle, although the newly built town hall of Amsterdam was described in its own time as a miracle of the world (fig. 3). Even the poet Constantijn Huygens, who had first served and sided with the stadtholders, now addressed the burgomasters of the city as 'Enlightened founders of the world's eighth wonder/ of so many stones up high, and so much wood down under'.⁶⁵ Surely, there was pride in this, or, at the very least, Huygens played into this pride of the burgomasters. It was a pride that could easily become a matter of boasting, which is why modern commentators could also suggest that the new town hall, in comparison with the houses that surrounded it, or the New Church that stood next to it, was perhaps a little 'too big'.⁶⁶ If this is the case, it only holds for those who fail to recognise the Republic as a baroque entity. In the context of our argument, the building's size is a baroque form of expression that contradicts its classicist front. Additionally, the classicist front is contradicted inside with a host of baroque works of art.

Vondel was very much involved, aesthetically, with the building of this new town hall, which began in 1648 and was completed in 1655. In this context, *Mars Tamed* performs a

64 Helmers, 'Popular Participation', 130.

65 Worp (ed.), *Gedichten van Huygens*, vi, 108: 'Doorluchte stichteren van 's wereld achtste wonder,/ van soo veel steens omhoogh, op soo veel Houts van onder.' Wooden poles were needed to make the building rest on the firmer soil underneath the weak and wet upper layer of the soil; the town hall is built on 13,659 wooden poles.

66 Frijhoff and Spies, *Culture*, 441: 'te groot misschien'. For the most recent and extensive study on the town hall, see Bussels, Van Eck, and Van Oostveldt, *Amsterdam Town Hall*.

Babylonian boast, brought forward with a certain arrogance, or a pride felt in the achievements of Amsterdam.⁶⁷ Explicitly, the poem indicates that the rule of law, and the peace it should protect, could not be based on a divine supreme being. Rather, the sanction of law should be in the hands of people such as the Amsterdam burgomasters, who would not put their own interests before those of the common good, and would instead be willing to care, labour, and sweat for it.

Still, due to the inverted allegory, the poem's edge acquires yet another peculiar and uncomfortable quality: in terms of subjects rising up against their legitimate ruler, Vondel had to reject Lucifer-like characters, yet both the character of Lucifer in Vondel's play and Mars in this poem are not just unscrupulous rascals. Lucifer is an intelligent, responsible actor who is willing to negotiate, up to a point, and whose motivations are understandable. Likewise, Mars may be motivated to revolt due to the fact that he is sent out to do the dirty work – to punish mankind – and is then called back because one of Jupiter's lovers came to complain. In response, he refuses to be an instrument any longer, and attacks the supreme being who used him as such – and proved to be whimsical in doing so. In the inverted allegory, then, there is a prowess involved, a civic one, that needs to be rejected but that also fascinates.

The affectively charged baroque ambiguity and pride can easily be translated to the structure and historical reality of the Dutch Republic. Either as a republic, or as a paradigm of civil government (Amsterdam), the newly produced political entity showed a prowess that rested on what had been achieved against the odds. If we contend that the poem expresses a Babylonian arrogance, this should be understood in light of the fact that the relatively small Republic had realized its own freedom by fighting one of the most powerful empires in the world. However, if the Dutch Republic gained in fame because of its internal equilibrium and prosperity, its imperial brutality was equally infamous. Surely, the Republic's civic government promoted peace, but in becoming a global and quasi-imperial power itself, the Republic showed a prowess that was reckless, violent, and rupturing.⁶⁸ The combination of the two makes this a paradigmatic baroque text of contradiction.⁶⁹ In several senses, the Dutch Republic was a peace goddess and a belligerent Mars in one. Vondel's text performs this duality.

Appendix: Translation of Vondel's De getemde Mars

The source text used for our translation of Vondel's *De getemde Mars* is the Wereldbibliotheek (WB) edition from 1931.⁷⁰ The annotated text can also be found in the DBNL

⁶⁷ Westermann, *Worldly Art*, considered Dutch Republican art as an expression of secular power. Van Stipriaan, *Het volle leven*, focused on the Republic's wealth and its rich, or abundant life. See also Tummers, *Celebrating in the Golden Age*; Weststeijn, 'Feest'.

⁶⁸ For the rapid development of the Dutch Republic into an imperial power, see Koekkoek, Richard and Weststeijn (eds.), *The Dutch Empire*.

⁶⁹ For a definition of the baroque as sensibility, but more importantly here, for its revolutionary potential, see Mandrou, *Baroque européen*.

⁷⁰ Vondel, 'Getemde Mars'.

database.⁷¹ We decided not to try to emulate the seventeenth-century Dutch, but to provide a translation in modern English that is as literal as possible. The translation has been modernized in order to make the poem more accessible, while trying to be as precise as possible with regard to the original. The translation might still be considered archaic in some places: not many contemporary readers will say ‘alas’, for instance. The choice to provide a literal translation of the poem, in order to avoid altering the meaning, also meant that rhyme and meter could not be preserved. We did try to keep the text’s rhythm, that is, one based on lines that have between ten and twelve syllables. For the sake of rhythm, we had to translate the emphatically mentioned noun or adjective ‘Netherlands’ as ‘Dutch’ in three instances. We adhered to the punctuation in the original, but for purposes of legibility, quotation marks have been added to monologues. What we did preserve is an exact parallel between the lines of the translation and the original – apart from three cases where because of grammatical demands, a verb is placed one line earlier.

The translation into modern English is not anachronistic in one sense. Vondel’s style and language, or tone, could be considered innovative and modern in its own time, since in the mid-seventeenth century the so-called ‘correct form of Dutch’ was consciously under construction.⁷² Like others belonging to the intellectual elite of his time, such as Hooft, Huygens, and Tesselschade, Vondel aimed to write in this new type of supposedly pure Dutch. This also implies that Vondel’s language use was by no means homogenous, as he played with shifts in tone. We tried to preserve this in order to do justice to Vondel’s lively and evocative use of language. When describing the excessive violence, for instance, the text becomes more exuberant itself; Jupiter’s tone of voice accords with his role as a ‘Majesty’; and in the description of the Dutch maiden who could be confused with a goddess, the text becomes more lyrical. We hope this translation captures Vondel’s unique use of language.

Joost van den Vondel, De getemde Mars (Mars Tamed)

Translation by Frans-Willem Korsten and Lucy McGourty

To our Fathers of Peace,
Fathers of the Fatherland,
the Lords Burgomasters of Amsterdam.

Now a source of happiness bursts from our veins,
To the clarion call of the silver trumpet of Peace,
On which you sound the world’s Peace.
Oh, true FATHERS of the PEACE of Amsterdam.

⁷¹ ‘De getemde Mars’, https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/vondoo1deweo5_01/vondoo1deweo5_01_0044.php (Accessed on 12 May 2023).

⁷² Grootes, ‘Vondel and Amsterdam’, 103.

5 Your wisdom helped braid the Orange ribbons,
 And cords, that now have tamed the Violence,
 The bitter War, unused to rest for so long,
 To the heart of which no wish of peace could be attached.
 10 Europe, indeed the entire globe, its four continents
 Come rolling towards you, rejoicing,
 Because you have stopped the Well of civil blood,
 And were the first to smother this Hydra of discord.
 Now the Citizens in your borough crown you,
 Because you willingly forgo your own interests
 15 And devote your care, your labour and your sweat
 To the Fatherland and the commonwealth.
 Maintain the true aim of wars
 Which is FREEDOM, your hard-won inheritance,
 Offering shade and Shelter to all.
 20 May your city flourish in harmony and power.

 The world, drunk with luxury and prosperity,
 Had taunted Jupiter, and had denied his Majesty
 his rightful claim for years;
 In the end, this came to ignite his wrath.
 25 ‘It is time,’ he said, amidst the Gods,
 ‘That Mars safeguards Justice with his sword:
 Humans have strayed too far from virtue:
 They care not for rules nor for commands.’
 At his Father’s command, Mars mounted his wagon,
 30 Pulled by two wolves, with cruel muzzles.
 The earth took fright, it knew them by their howls;
 As a portent of atrocious plagues,
 Just as the sailor hears the thunderstorm at sea,
 Which approaches and threatens him with mortal danger,
 35 And marks its harbinger in time,
 Before the waters seethe and loudly start to swirl.
 In this attack, this storm, from Mars’s seat,
 Upon the rolling and spinning of his wagon’s axle,
 All that exists started to thud,
 40 The Scheldt, the Rhine, the Danube and its borders.
 All the human vermin, hidden deep
 In mountains and woods, in forests and wilderness;
 All that is degenerate and wild
 Comes storming from its caves towards this smell.
 45 All the rabble march together in armies,
 Plunder, Murder, Discord, Firebrand,
 Violence, Treachery. Megaera covered the lands
 With a flood of heinous misfortunes.
 The dust began to rise up in the air,

50 Like a sea of sand and smoke and fume.
 The sun, appearing from the East, took cover
 From the lightning of guns and armour.
 Then the night of disasters fell, for so many years,
 Upon the heart of the people, who not a day since,
 55 Witnessed the dawn of joy or prosperity,
 But, dejected, began to roam in darknesses.
 One could, alas! no longer see by stars
 Or sun or moon but instead by the lights of fires
 From town to town; of lands overtaken,
 60 And states, growing more bewildered and confused.
 The hungry fire seized the corners of Spain
 From both sides: rebellious Lisbon,
 And Catalunya, and raging Roussillon.
 The fire spread to Ireland and Britain.
 65 Italy, itself likewise alight,
 Brought water, and warded off the fire,
 That from the mountains of the Adriatic shore
 Overtook her and was hard to quench.
 Truly the flame of war darted across the rooftops
 70 Of Crete, where from the surrounding seas
 It raises its crown. This pained Europa.
 'Alas, it is high time, high time, to wake up'
 Thus she cried, and saw, looking back at Sicily,
 The island in a glow of turmoil
 75 Saw the flame, from there, spread to the court of Naples,
 To the utter fright of Castiglia's Empires.
 She joined Jupiter to lament her pain and need.
 'Oh Father, oh, what good now brings my fame,
 That a part of the world should carry my name,
 80 So dearly bought, for eternity?
 Did I willingly answer your love to such end?
 Did I offer you the blossom of my age,
 To witness now how Mars rips apart my dowry,
 Tearing, raping, plunging it into misery?
 85 Do you neglect the land of your birth,
 Your nurturing place, that gave you life?
 Do you forget your crib and worshipped grave?
 Does Mars now receive my enemies at that gate?
 Enemies of old, envious of my happiness,
 90 The whole of Asia seeks to conquer me with force of arms;
 The Libyan sends forth his monsters.
 How can Europe wrestle her way out, or escape?
 Mercury, on hearing these complaints, descends,
 So that he may recall Mars from the field,

95 Where he stands in glory, surrounded by troops,
 Lusting for blood, murder, and human sacrifice.
 But Mars, alas! instead of calming down,
 Gets irate at supreme Jupiter,
 Leaves the earth alone, to now be Lord of all,
 100 And gathers all the forces of his war machines.
 He cries: 'Now stop this brutal fight, ye Giants:
 Build mountains made of walls, from the debris
 Of destroyed cities, build a siege tower, steep and slanted,
 To shatter Jupiter's skull.
 105 Long enough we wallowed in blood and tears,
 And human flesh: we must reach higher:
 We must vie for the highest sceptre
 And force our way to eternal honour.
 He struggled free from Giants once before,
 110 And buried them under the weight of rocks.
 Now it is time he finally succumbs to the violence
 Of Heroes, who subdued the earth.'
 Thus he spoke, and all the debris rose up in heaps
 Till it reached the sky: Then the Majesty
 115 Of Gods saw Mars, prepared with all his armies,
 Ready, and burning to attack at once.
 A storm raged, from below and from above.
 The heavens were all on fire and aglow.
 Gunpowder yielded to lightning not an inch.
 120 No lightning stunned the mountain cannon.
 The heavens cracked and all the stars were trembling
 Like tree leaves in a rainstorm.
 The heavens seemed a wagon without reins;
 All the heavenly armies a shepherdless flock.
 125 Neptune lost his trident, which shakes the beaches
 And the rocks. The God of War wrenched Vulcan's
 Hammer from his wrists, as the blows fell,
 And struck the sceptre from Pluto's hand.
 He broke the spear of Pallas; ripped the weapon,
 130 Medusa's head, from her left arm
 And was fearful of no snakes, which, still warm
 And moist with poison, gaped for blood and veins.
 Alcides was forced to lay down his hand bludgeon.
 The wine god continually worried about his panthers.
 135 And Triton's shell, up against trumpet and drum
 Was too hoarse to act against the enemy.
 The entire fortress of heaven was stunned.
 Saturn mowed down all that came upward,
 Until Mars took the crooked scythe,

140 Wielding it instead of his sword.
 Then Jupiter saw his Rule hang in the balance,
 And the fortunes of heaven turning, blow by blow.
 His enemy would not listen to entreaty,
 Nor defer to laws from on high.
 145 What counsel, Jupiter? Your court begins to burn
 Your lightning previously used to strike Phaeton,
 That bold son and chariot driver of the Sun
 Who burned it all, and scorched your highest roofs.
 The Father looked for comfort in all directions,
 150 And from the skies of the Netherlands he saw a goddess
 Appear in a cloud, more or less
 As Venus ascends in her wagon:
 As Pallas comes soaring through the skies.
 It had to be Pallas, or Venus herself, or none
 155 Of the two, or carved from their faces
 As if to look like two blended into one.
 Confidence shines forth from her face;
 The olive wreath, freshly woven, decks her head.
 Her countenance promises all a happy day,
 160 And comforts those who cannot catch their breath.
 Her white garment, besprinkled with green olives,
 She enriches with a glow of majesty,
 That exceeds what mortal humanity
 Can achieve. Thus she comes, floating closer.
 165 Her wagon is pulled by Dutch Lions,
 Ever so gently, forward through the sky.
 They submit meekly to her rod and discipline,
 And know of neither roaring, now, nor yelling.
 One wonders whether this could be Cybele:
 170 Yet she is too young, and wears no mural crown.
 Neither is she Juno, on her lion's throne;
 Nor Ceres, at whose scythe snakes tremble in fear.
 Humility and Love sway in front of her
 And emit a fragrance as fresh as dew.
 175 The air softens, and takes on a happier colour.
 Birds can be heard frolicking all around.
 In like manner, in May, the Morning Star will climb,
 Before the dawn's pristine trail of roses,
 Drawing the attention of everyone's gaze
 180 Before the sun raises her hair above the horizon.
 Then Jupiter called: 'Quick, quick, you Beauteous one;
 Now tame with a single amorous glance
 This brutal God, who does not bow to lightning bolts:
 There is no pearl more beautiful in the foliage of your wreath.'

185 Thus she approaches the God of Wars;
 He ceases his storm, the moment he sees her face.
 He is struck blind, not knowing this Divinity
 Absorbing, in awe, the glow cast by her eyes.
 A light breeze plays, blowing the golden locks
 190 Around her neck and throat. The sweet mouth,
 The red rose, on the snow of her cheeks, wounds
 This God's heart, now disgusted by his own malice.
 Without ado the weapon falls from his rough hands;
 She rises up and down and quickly ties
 195 And binds both his arms on his back
 Not with metal but with soft, Orange cords.
 Thus she drives Mars before her wheels,
 And leads him in triumph through the Netherlands.
 She is followed in this glorious path
 200 By a throng of grateful souls,
 Who sing: 'Long rule the Goddess of Peace,
 Awaited for so long; she made Mars meek,
 And placed his sword, that bloody sword, back in its sheath.
 May neither Envy nor Time conquer her sceptre.'

Joost van den Vondel

Composed in the year 1647, during the Harvest month, in hope of a general Peace.

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