CHAPTER TEN

BETWEEN DISREGARD AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION – VONDEL AS A PLAYWRIGHT IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN CONTEXT: ENGLAND, FRANCE AND THE GERMAN LANDS

Guillaume van Gemert

Introduction: Outlines of Non-Dutch Vondel Reception

In Daniel Georg Morhof's *Polyhistor literarius, philosophicus et practicus*, the great manual of education and inventory of contemporary learning, first published in 1688, Vondel's name is not mentioned at all; only those 'Dutch' authors who made their mark in Latin Poetry are listed under the heading *Poetae recentiores*, such as Hugo Grotius, Daniel Heinsius, Janus Dousa, Caspar Barlaeus and Constantijn Huygens.¹ Morhof, however, definitely must have known Vondel: in his *Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie* from 1682, a history of German language and literature, as well as an introduction to poetics and a survey of other Western European literatures, he not only repeatedly quotes from Vondel's *Aenleidinge ter Nederduitsche dichtkunste* (*Introduction to Dutch Poetry*), but also characterizes him as perhaps the most outstanding Dutch playwright of his era.² As regards the French- and English-speaking countries a similar acquaintance with Vondel cannot be perceived for the same time period: in Louis Moréri's *Grand dictionnaire historique* (1674), for example, he is not itemized at

¹ Morhof, *Polyhistor, literarius*, 1 (1732), pp. 1059–72.

² Morhof, *Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie*, p. 135: 'Die Schauspiele sind bey ihnen [the Dutch] zur Vollkommenheit gebracht. Insonderheit hat die Stadt Amsterdam ein grosses daran gewandt. Da haben sich in grosser Menge gefunden/ welche umb den Preiß hierinne gestrieten. Vor andern hat Jost van Vondel sich hierinnen hervor gethan/ von dessen Comoedien und Tragoedien gantze grosse Tomi heraus gekommen [...]' ('They [the Dutch] perfected drama. The city of Amsterdam was a particularly significant contributor to this process. Many authors were to be found there striving for the prize for drama. Joost van den Vondel excelled above all others in this regard, his comedies and tragedies having been published in exceedingly hefty volumes').

all, not even in later editions that appeared in the early 18th century;³ and the first French Vondel appraisal can be found in an anthology, compiled in 1822, which also presented translations of *Gysbrecht van Aemstel* and *Lucifer*, the first Vondel plays ever rendered in French.⁴ Vondel is reckoned here to be 'le Virgile de la Hollande',⁵ and it is suggested that the straightforwardness of his plays could substantially have swayed the main orientation of Dutch playwriting during his lifetime towards France rather than towards England or Spain:

Ultimately Dutch theatre should greatly be indebted to Hooft and Vondel, because they recognized that the classical theatre of antiquity was highly preferable to English, Spanish or Italian playwriting; and although their plays ran contrary to actual trends, it is due to their straightforwardness that newer Dutch theatre caters more to Corneille and Racine than to Shakespeare and Calderón.⁶

From the English side during the 17th and 18th centuries there seem only to have been some sporadic references of minor relevance;⁷ that is to say, a secondhand quote from a letter of Hugo Grotius by John Dunton (1659–1732)⁸ and casual mention in a biographic

³ Cf. Moréri, *Le grand dictionnaire historique* and *Supplément aux anciennes éditions du Grand dictionnaire historique*.

⁴ *Chefs-d'oeuvre du théâtre hollandais*, 1 (1822), pp. 101–98 and 199–07 respectively.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96: 'Enfin, le théâtre hollandais doit à Hooft et à Vondel une grande reconnaissance de ce qu'ils ont su distinguer combien les pièces de l'antiquité étaient préférables à celles de l'Angleterre, de l'Espagne ou de l'Italie; et quoique leurs pièces soient contraires au goût actuel, c'est à leur simplicité que les Hollandais doivent l'avantage d'avoir, dans leurs pièces plus modernes, suivi Corneille et Racine de préférence à Shakspeare [sic!] et Caldéron.'

⁷ For these references I am greatly indebted to Dr. Helmer Helmers.

⁸ Dunton, *Young-Students-Library*, pp. 51–53: 'The most noble part of the Criticks, if we may believe those who make a Profession of it, is that which teacheth us to judge of Authors to discern their true Works, from those which are Suppositious, to distinguish their stile, to find out the defects thereof, and to remark the faults they commit. For that Reason, we shall place here the Judgment that Grotius hath made of divers Books both Ancient and Modern. [...] Justus Vondel. This famous Flemish Poet published in 1638 a Tragedy, which is acted once a year at Amsterdam, entituled Gisbrecht van Amstel. He dedicated it to Grotius, who makes this judgment thereof in a Letter to Vossius the 28th of May the same year: Vondel did me a kindness in dedicating unto me (as to a man who hath some gust of these sort of things) a Tragedy whose subject is noble, whose order is excellent, and expression fine, &c. It is a folly not to have in a subject of 300 years, the customs of that time represented. Thus is that those of Geneva in a French Edition of Philip de Comines, have observ'd every where, where the Author saith that the King heard Mass, that he was at the Lords Supper'. For Dunton see: *ODNB*, 17, coll. 366–67.

article⁹ as well as in the travelogue of Andrew Becket (1749–1843),¹⁰ although some of them may aptly illustrate the contemporary English perspective on Dutch culture. One of the first more comprehensive English statements to Vondel might date back to the traveller and diplomatist John Bowring (1792–1872).¹¹ In his *Sketch of the Language and Literature of Holland*, which appeared in print in 1829, he mainly categorizes Vondel negatively, comparing him with Shakespeare and Milton, although he acknowledges him to be the most famous Dutch poet:

He revels in all the affluence of language – clothes all his thoughts in poetical expression – but those thoughts are not thoughts of the sublimest range, nor have they much in them of the music of philosophy. He – a Shakspeare [sic!] of a lower order – overflows equally with beauties and defects. [...] Compare him with Milton, – for his Lucifer gives the fairest means of comparison, – how weak are his highest flights compared with those of the bard of Paradise; and how much does Vondel sink beneath him in his failures! Now and then the same thought may be found in both, but the points of resemblance are not in passages which do Milton's reputation the highest honour. [...] Vondel has rather been judged of by extracts, which are in every body's mouth in Holland, than by any entire piece of composition, or by the whole of his writings; and undoubtedly he would sink very rapidly if the test of criticism were applied to the mass of his works.¹²

Vondel's contemporary renown abroad, in other European countries, is mostly in accord with the extent of his reception there, in terms of translation of his writings into the respective vernacular, of their adaptations and of referring to them by individual foreign authors. On the whole one must still agree to the conclusion Hendrik Difereë already drew in 1929 implying that contemporary translations only emerged in

⁹ Aikin, *General Biography*, 6 (1807), col. 225 (in voce: Lescaille, Catharine): 'She surpassed her father in the beauty of her verse, and obtained the applauses of Vondel and other celebrated poets of her country.'

¹⁰ Becket, *Trip to Holland*, 2 (1786), pp. 43–44: 'Apropos of poets, said I, pray is there a living one to be found in Holland? Not that I know, returned Monsieur de M–; a Dutch versifier is a *rara avis* indeed. There has been none of any repute, I think, since the days of Vondel. Vondel, continued he, was really a good poet; and he has sufficiently proved by his writings, that the Dutch language (however grating to the ear of an Englishman) is by no means deficient in harmony and sweetness of numbers.'

¹¹ For Bowring see: *ODNB*, 6, coll. 987–90.

¹² Bowring, *Sketch of the Language and Literature of Holland*, pp. 38–40.

the German Lands, and otherwise interest in Vondel outside of the Netherlands was not perceptible until the early 19th century:

We hear nothing more about translations of Vondel's plays in the 17th century [except from those into German]; there is no reference to French or English ones at all, although it is a matter of fact that his tragedies as well as his poems must have been known in England in the 17th century and were read and sometimes studied there by men of letters and historians. [...] During the 18th century not one translation of Vondel's works was published outside of the Netherlands, at least as far as we have been able to establish through thorough research, or rather: have not been able to establish. Yet the 19th century, perhaps pre-eminently the age of revived interest in art, literature and their history, amply compensated the deficiencies of its predecessors which had considered Vondel to be doomed to die.¹³

Diferee's optimistic hope – that future research might bring up some further indications of foreign dealings with Vondel in early modern times – was not fulfilled during the past eight decades. In the meanwhile, on the other hand, the contextualizing of individual agents of reception could much more be differentiated.

German References to Vondel and his Political Mobilization in the German Lands During the Seventeenth Century

All over Europe not one single poem composed by Vondel as a lyricist was translated from Dutch into another vernacular during his lifetime. Some of his plays, by contrast, were, but only into German, as highlighted by Diferee. The latter's stand should, however, be modified insofar as it would be better to characterize them as adaptations. Whereas the first translations into French did not appear any earlier

¹³ Diferee, *Vondel in den vreemde*, p. 5: 'Meer vernemen wij niet over vertalingen van Vondel's toneelwerken in de zeventiende eeuw; van fransche of engelsche vertalingen wordt nergens melding gemaakt, ofschoon als zeker mag worden aangenomen, dat zoowel de treurspelen als de gedichten van Vondel in de zeventiende eeuw in Engeland bekendheid verwierven en daar door literatuur- en historiekenners werden gelezen en soms bestudeerd. [...] Gedurende de achttiende eeuw verscheen in het buitenland geen enkele overzetting van Vondel's werken, althans voor zoover ons op grond van een uitvoerig onderzoek bekend werd, wellicht beter gezegd: onbekend bleef. Doch de negentiende eeuw, bij uitstek misschien de eeuw van de herlevende belangstelling in kunst en literatuur en hare geschiedenis, haalde de schade van haar voorganger, die onzen Vondel zoo goed als ten doode had opgeschreven, ruimschoots in.'

than 1822,¹⁴ and whereas it was almost at the same time (that is to say, in Bowring's *Batavian Anthology* from 1824) that English-speaking people were able to acquaint themselves with selected sections from Vondel's *Gysbrecht* (1637), *Lucifer* (1654), *Adam in ballingschap* (*Adam Exiled*, 1664), *Palamedes* (1625) and *Batavische gebroeders* (*Batavian Brothers*, 1663) in their vernacular,¹⁵ in the German Lands at least four plays were published as early as the second half of the 17th century, explicitly deriving their origin from Vondel. French as well as English references to Vondel, from the very beginning in the early 19th century, had a purely antiquarian focus. They were initiated at a time when the concept of 'world literature' was prevalent, and were therefore predetermined by comparative approaches. In the German Lands, on the contrary, Vondel the dramatist had already gained significant topicality during his lifetime, firstly because of the specific value appertaining to the respective translations or adaptations, and secondly on account of his cultural-strategical importance as a representative of Dutch literature. For in the German Lands Dutch literature as such has got an exemplary function because of its perceived unifying potency, that Vondel's colleague poet Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft already attributed to it. He, as is well known, considered literature to be the precursor of political unity,¹⁶ inasmuch as centralized unity came to fruition in the Dutch Republic with its pivotal principles of proportionate and localised sovereignty.

France and England in the 17th Century were more or less centralistic unitary states. The German Lands, by contrast, constituted a patchwork of hundreds of *de facto* autonomous and self-governing entities, mostly mini- or microstates. Nearly all of them strived for unity, with the political nation as its final objective, transcending the cultural nation as an intermediate step. On the pathway to this ideal the

¹⁴ *Chefs-d'oeuvre du théâtre hollandais*, 1 (1822), pp. 101–98 and 199–307 respectively.

¹⁵ Bowring and Van Dyk, *Batavian Anthology*, pp. 125–152.

¹⁶ Hooft, 'Over de Waardigheidt der Poëzy', p. 573: 'Om dit te bewaarheeden, daag ik het getuigenisse van U allen, die zelve beleeft hebt en ondervonden, welken dienst de Hollandtsche Poëzy, toen zy noch maar op 't ontknoopen van de tonge en in 't haaperen van haar kindtsheit was, deezen Vaderlande, in 't verstooten van de Tyranny en 't stichten der vryheit beweezen heeft' ('To underpin this, I call on all those as witnesses who experienced and sensed the favour Dutch poetry did our country when she was as yet untying her tongue in her earliest childhood, in expelling tyranny and in establishing freedom').

Netherlands was looked up to as a shining example, and literature was considered to be an excellent vehicle through which to create the desiderated cultural community. Martin Opitz's programmatic *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (*Book of German Poetry*) from 1624 and the poetic reform he initiated confirm this very convincingly. The initial spark might have provided the intense and vivid consciousness of close linguistic affinity of German and Dutch, still embedded in an overall pan-Germanic thinking.¹⁷ It was supplemented with strong admiration for the neighbouring country's continuous rise into the rank of global power, although formally it still was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Finally, the Dutch way of tackling the problem of sovereignty might, in times of increasing territorialism of an absolutist character, have appealed to Germans as a temporary compromise, until national unity was fully attained. In England and France, however, such cultural political aspects did not carry any weight in dealing with the Netherlands, and neither did any other similarities – in fact rivalry prevailed. This might have been the very reason why there, that is to say in England and France, was scant reception of contemporary Dutch literature, and hardly any discussion of Vondel's plays.

By contrast, Opitz and his poetizing contemporaries in the German Lands in the 1620s and the early 1630s assigned to Dutch programmatic anthologies like the *Zeeusche Nachtegael* (*The Nightingale from Zeeland*, 1623), the *Thronus Cupidinis* (*Cupid's Throne*, 1620) and the *Bloem-Hof van de Nederlantsche Ieught* (*Flower-Garden of Dutch Youngsters*, 1608) an almost exclusive exemplarity, particularly to a collection of Dutch poems from 1616 entitled *Nederduytsche Poemata* (*Dutch Poems*) and written by Daniel Heinsius, native of Ghent and a renowned professor of philology at Leiden University.¹⁸ A man of letters like Heinsius would normally have written only Latin verses, but using his mother tongue for poetic purposes, however, he enhanced the Dutch language, as he did the German language indirectly, because of its close relationship to the former. Purely because of this, Opitz was able to praise the 'Gentscher Schwan' (swan from Ghent) for ultimately having 'vnsre Muttersprach in jhren werth gebracht' ('elevated our [i.e. the German] mother tongue to its rightful standing').¹⁹ As a playwright Vondel was not involved in these very beginnings of German Baroque

¹⁷ See, for example, Bornemann, *Anlehnung und Abgrenzung*, pp.103–13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1–93; Van Gemert, *Niederländische Einflüsse*, pp. 9–83.

¹⁹ Opitz, *Teutsche Poemata*, p. 25.

literature. The early German Baroque poets already preferred lyrics, and, apart from that, up to the year 1635 Vondel did not publish any major theatre plays, except for *Het Pascha* (Passover, 1612), *Hierusalem verwoest* (Jerusalem Destroyed, 1620) and *Palamedes* (1625). Nevertheless, like Jacob Cats, whose works were translated into German up until the 1720s,²⁰ he has to be ranked among the few Dutch authors who were continuously received in the German Lands even during the second half of the 17th century, and among them he was probably the only dramatist.

The German interest in Vondel's plays can sometimes be explained by a personal and profound familiarity with his poetical works, as in the case of Andreas Gryphius, who translated the *Gebroeders* (Brothers, 1640) in 1641 or 1642, presumably during his stay in the Netherlands.²¹ Otherwise all Vondel's plays that were translated into German could be related to key German political issues, such as the legitimization and limits of princely power or the subjects' relation to absolutist sovereignty. Such themes gained increasing currency in the second half of the 17th century, when absolutist territorialism was becoming firmly established – in this context it should be remembered that the most relevant guide to territorial sovereignty, Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf's *Teutscher Fürstenstaat* (Princely Territorial State in Germany), appeared in 1665 – and the execution of Charles I Stuart caused a stir all over the German Lands. It is precisely this political mobilization that renders the German versions adaptations rather than translations in the proper sense of the word, this pertaining specifically to the three tragedies that were published in the 1660s and 1670s: firstly Elias Heidenreich's *Rache zu Gibeon* (Revenge on Gibeon, 1662), like Gryphius's *Sieben Brüder* (Seven Brothers) going back to Vondel's *Gebroeders*; secondly Christoph Kormart's *Maria Stuart oder Gemarterte Majestät* (Mary Stuart or Martyred Majesty, 1672), which has its origins in Vondel's *Maria Stuart of Gemartelde Majesteit* (1646) and finally Constantin Christian Dedekind's *Simson* from 1676, going back to Vondel's *Samson of Heilige wraeck* (Samson or Holy Vengeance, 1660). Apart from the political factor, German reception of Vondel in the 17th century might also have been facilitated by the rich tradition of biblical theatre plays in the

²⁰ Van Gemert, *Niederländische Einflüsse*, pp. 85–153.

²¹ Kiedroń, *Andreas Gryphius und die Niederlande*, p. 34; Gryphius, *Die Sieben Brüder*, p. x.

German Lands²² as well as by the steady establishment of martyr tragedy there from the 1650s onwards.

*Vondel's Gebroeders as an Apprentice Piece of Imitatio Cautiously
Reinterpreted by Young Gryphius*

Die Sieben Brüder Oder Die Gibeoniter (*Seven Brothers or the Gibeonites*) was the first dramatic work Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664)²³ wrote, being at the age of 25 and still a student at Leiden University.²⁴ During the following decades he was to develop into the most eminent playwright of German Baroque literature. His translation of Vondel's *Gebroeders*,²⁵ therefore, could be considered an apprentice piece, preparation for his own dramatic writing in the future, which was partly influenced by Vondel too.²⁶ Gryphius's German version enjoyed some popularity, since it was performed in Breslau in 1652 up to five times,²⁷ as is substantiated by historic evidence. In print, however, it did not appear earlier than in the 1698 posthumous edition of the complete works. It is versified and adhered closely to the original; Gryphius's main contribution was to add a large number of stage directions.²⁸ However, he was obliged to draw frequently on paraphrases and sometimes even on downright Batavisms.²⁹ He has no major problems translating Vondel's complicated idioms as well as his elaborate clauses, and his skill is undeniable. This is shown by his rendering of Michol's long monologue in Act III, in which she begs her former husband David to show mercy to her foster sons:

Mijn uitverkoren heer, of schoon Bathseba nu
Onze echte plaets verwarmt, en meer vermagh by u
Dan Michol; laet nochtans u niet zoo veer verrucken,

²² See Van Ingen, 'Übersetzung als Rezeptionsdokument', p. 152.

²³ For Gryphius see Flemming, *Andreas Gryphius*; Szyrocki, *Andreas Gryphius*; Wentzlaff-Eggebert, *Andreas Gryphius*; ADB, 10 (1879), pp. 73–81; NDB, 7 (1966), pp. 242–46.

²⁴ For the time the translation was written, see Plard, 'Sieben Brüder', pp. 305–06.

²⁵ Joost van den Vondel, *Gebroeders. Trevrspel*, WB, 3, pp. 797–878.

²⁶ A more recent outline of the debate on the Gryphius-Vondel relationship is to be found in Kiedroń, *Andreas Gryphius und die Niederlande*, pp. 59–87.

²⁷ Plard, 'Sieben Brüder', p. 317.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

²⁹ For Gryphius's way of translating and reinterpreting Vondel's *Gebroeders* cf. Plard, 'Sieben Brüder'; Van Ingen, 'Übersetzung als Rezeptionsdokument', pp. 147–53.

Dat heilooze Amoreen, door uw gezagh, verdrucken
 Dit bloed, waer over ick zelf moey ja moeder sta,
 In Zuster Merobs plaets; dit gaetme veel te na.
 'K heb Zuster, toen de dood haer bed begon te dreigen,
 Gezwooren, deze vijf te koestren, als mijn eigen,
 En houze oock voor de mijne, indien dit baeten kan;
 En zoo ick moeder ben, weest ghy 'er vader van.³⁰

In Gryphius's German translation 'Euch in dem Herzen spielt' largely complies (in terms of meaning) with 'Onze echte plaets verwarmt', as do 'nicht so sehr verlencken' with Vondels 'niet zoo veer verrucken' and 'O übergrimme Pein!' with 'dit gaetme veel te na'. In point of directness and perspicuity Gryphius almost surpasses the Dutch original; only 'Amor' as an occasional collective designation for the Amorites might easily lead to misunderstandings:

Mein auserkohnr Herr/ ob schon Bethsabes Bild
 Euch in dem Hertzen spielt/ und höher nunmehr gilt
 Als Michal/ laßt dennoch euch nicht so sehr verlencken/
 Das Amor auf eur Wort mög' unbarmherzig kräncken/
 Diß Blut/ worüber ich soll Muhm und Mutter seyn/
 An Schwester Merobs Platz. O übergrimme Pein!
 Ach Schwester/ als ich dich sah' mit dem Tode ringen/
 Schwur ich die fünff als mein' als eigen aufzubringen/
 Auch halt ich sie als mein/ und wo dis helffen kan/
 Und Michal Mutter ist; blickt sie als Vater an.³¹

In Vondel as well as in Gryphius David is the central figure who has to decide between reasons of state and humanity.³² Gryphius, however,

³⁰ Vondel, *Gebroeders*, ll. 811–820: 'My beloved Lord, although Bathseba now / is warming up our [former] marital bed, and has greater influence on you / than Michol; still do not let yourself get carried away so much, / that godless Amorites, by your authority, are allowed to erase / this kinship, whose aunt I am, still even better, for whom I act as a mother, / in my sister Merob's place; this affects me very deeply. / As death was impending and approached her bed, / I swore to my sister, I would foster these five, as if they were of my own blood / and actually regard them as mine, as far as it benefits them; / and because I am their mother you should be a father to them.'

³¹ Gryphius, 'Sieben Brüder', p. 101 (Act 3, ll. 222–231): 'My beloved Lord, although Bathseba's image / is juggling in your heart and ranks above Michal now, don't let yourself get carried away so much, / that Amor [i.e. the Amorites], by your word, is allowed to violate ruthlessly / this kinship, whose aunt and mother I am, / instead of my sister Merob. Oh cruel painful torture! / My dear sister, as I saw you lie dying, / I swore, I would foster these five, as if they were of my own / and even regard them as mine, as far as it benefits them; / and because Michal is their mother, look upon them as a father.'

³² For the political significance of Vondel's *Gebroeders* within the Dutch context cf. Korsten, *Vondel belicht*, pp. 93–112; *Sovereignty as Inviolability*, pp. 92–109. See also Langvik-Johannessen, *Zwischen Himmel und Erde*, pp. 114–32.

expanded the original by a longish prologue, in which Saul's ghost speaks from eternity, and as such this embedded the play more intensively in a metaphysical context. Here reference is made to the punishment heaven imposed on Saul's descendants, and here David is apostrophized as the righteous, who is endeavouring to expiate the blood guilt. Rather than mitigating the inevitability of his decision, this seems to intensify the pressure that weighs on him:

I already hear that Heaven speaks its sentence
and that the judge's trumpet of punishment is announcing nothing but
murder and woe.
Go on, Righteous! Go on!
And inveigh severely against this murder.³³

The epilogue, which is an expansion as well, is to serve as an undisguised warning to all those who misuse the divine right of kings:

Thus our house shall perish for the sake of David's throne!
Thus David's fame shall originate from my downfall!
Thus those are broken down
who are revolting against the King of Heaven!
Man! Look upon me as in a mirror;
What has beaten me is threatening you.³⁴

Thus, already in Gryphius's translation the factor of politicization can be found that in the later German occupations with Vondel was to become more and more important.

Heidenreich's Politicization of Gebroeders as a Warning to Unrighteous Rulers

Some twenty years after Gryphius was concerned with Vondel's *Gebroeders*, the play was once more submitted to a German-speaking audience, in 1662, by the lawyer David Elias Heidenreich (1638–1688),³⁵ who was promoted to be a councillor at Weißenfels court later.

³³ Gryphius, 'Sieben Brüder', p. 77 (Prologue, ll. 81–84): 'Ich höre schon den Himmel Urtheil sprechen/ Und des Richters Straff-Trompete lauter Mord und Weh ausblasen/ So fahre fort/ Gerechter! Fahre fort/ Und eifre scharff um diesen Mord.'

³⁴ Ibid., p. 129: 'Also muß unser Haus vor Davids-Thron vergehen! / Also muß Davids-Ruhm aus meinem Fall entstehen! Also werden die zerbrochen/ Die des Himmels-König pochen! / Mensch! O spiegel dich an mir/ Was mich schlug/ daß dreuet dir.'

³⁵ For more information about Heidenreich see: *ADB*, 11 (1880), p. 302; Krispyn, 'David Elias Heidenreich'; Killy, *Literatur Lexikon*, 5 (1990), pp. 117–18.

He decided in favour of a version in prose. The impact thereof can be observed in comparing his translation of Michol's beseeching pledge for mercy in Act III with that of Gryphius, already quoted:

Mein außerkohrner König; Wie wol der Bethsabe Schönheit in E.M. Hertzen nunmehr höher geachtet wird/ als die verlassene Michol/ so beliebe E.M. dennoch sich nicht so sehre verlencken zu lassen/ daß Sie auff der Amoriter Wort das Blut/ darüber ich Muhme und an Schwester Merobs Statt Mutter bin/ so grimmig halten wolte. Ich schwure meiner Schwester/ als sie mit dem Tode range/ die Printzen/ als Kinder auffzuziehen; E.M. sehe sie doch nun als Vater an [...].³⁶

From the wording it can be concluded that Heidenreich must have known Gryphius's translation,³⁷ which might surprise, inasmuch as the latter had not been published hitherto. All in all he deals quite freely with the original text, by expanding, shortening or reshuffling it, in order to suit the taste of the audience or to adapt it to the local, viz. specifically German, conditions.³⁸ He characterizes the outcome as reshaping according to rational criteria ('vernünftige Ausmusterung').³⁹ In general he effectuates a striking revitalization of dramatic action by distributing it across a greater number of characters, by intensified dialogizing and by inserting extensive, fairly vivid stage directions. He does not shy away from theatricality and sensationalism in the least, since he is staging the preparations for the execution⁴⁰ and the gallows, on which hang the seven princes.⁴¹ All this can easily turn into the grotesque, as is apparent from the scene in which the Gibeonites argue about the exact number of Saul's children, or from the end of Act IV, when all princes, already on their way to the gallows, cry with one voice: 'Now then, dearest mothers, farewell, we'll see you in eternity' ('Nun hertzgeliebten Mütter gute Nacht bis zu der Ewigkeit').⁴² On the other hand the deletion of all choruses ('Reyen') without any substitution

³⁶ Heidenreich, *Rache zu Gibeon*, pp. 51–52: 'My beloved King, although Bethsabe's beauty in Your Majesty's heart ranks above abandoned Michal now, Your Majesty may deign not let Thyself get carried away so much, that Thou on request of the Amorites would act so cruel against this kinship, whose aunt and mother I am, instead of my sister Merob. Oh cruel painful torture! I swore to my sister, as she lay dying, to bring up the princes as my children; Your Majesty may look upon them now as a father.'

³⁷ See: Krispyn, 'David Elias Heidenreich', p. 283.

³⁸ For Heidenreich's translation cf. Van Ingen, 'Übersetzung als Rezeptionsdokument', pp. 144–48; Krispyn, 'David Elias Heidenreich', pp. 283–86.

³⁹ Heidenreich, *Rache zu Gibeon*, p. 103.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

strongly reduces the emotional factor. In particular Heidenreich's modifications at the play's end are instructive. Here there is no effort towards reconciliation as in Vondel, where David concludes by providing his assurance that he will concede to Saul and his descendants dignified graves. By contrast, there is explicit focus on the inconsolably wailing widow Rispe, and in a specially attached epilogue Benajas emphasizes that the vengeance of heaven will be upon unrighteous rulers and their posterity:

Regard, curious eye, this mirror of the instability of human happiness! What a vile and shameful fall of an illustrious house this is! Oh slippery throne! Oh unstable scepter! [...] Pitiful, however, it is that children must recompense for their parents. [...] Look at it as in a mirror, you blood-thirsty rulers! Take it as a mirror, you tyrants! Let it be a mirror to all those who become arrogant! You, pale corpses, did not abet the murder at Gibeon at all, but nevertheless it has been bloodthirstily revenged on you. Really, with you boundless arrogance led into utter ruin. Although you were not, you could have got tyrants, because the apple does not fall far from the tree. Spilled and shed blood finally falls to earth, but it cries to heaven. Thinking of the righteous vengeance of heaven makes me shudder. For it does not spare the heirs, and their heritage only will be punishment. Since their property will be taken away from them, along with their honour. Cursed tyranny! Beware of tyranny, you mighty of the world. When the lightning that punishes this vice does not hit you, it will catch your offspring. For God is righteous and just. He humiliates and exalts. He shall make the house of David green and flourish forever!⁴³

In this way Heidenreich's adaptation amplifies the didactic charge in Vondel's *Gebroeders* and strengthens its actuality. The 'mirror' function of biblical and historical occurrences is expressly underlined and

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 102: 'Betrachte doch neugieriges Auge diesen Spiegel der Vnbeständigkeit Menschlichen Glückes! Welch ein schnöder und schmähhlicher Vntergang ist dieser eines so durchleuchtigsten Hauses! O schlüpferiger Thron! O unbeständiger Scepter! [...] Erbärmlich ist es gleichwol/ daß die Kinder die Eltern entgelten müssen. [...] Spiegelt euch ihr Blut-dürstigen! Spiegelt euch ihr Tyrannen! spiegelt euch/ die ihr anfanget groß zu werden! Ihr blassen Leichen habt den Mord zu Gibeon am wenigsten befördert/ noch dennoch traff euch die Rache des Blut-Dursts. Der unmäßige Gebrauch des Groß-werdens muste sich erst in euch vollends zu Grunde stürzten. Ihr kuntet nicht Tyrannen seyn/ doch aber etwan werden/ weil Stamm und Apfel sich auff einem Platz finden. Gestürzttes und vergoßnes Blut fällt ja wol endlich auff die Erde/ doch ruft es Himmel-an. Die Haut schauert mir/ wann ich die gerechte Rache des Himmels darüber erwege. Sie schonet keiner Erben/ deren Erbtheil nichts al Straffe. Denn das Gut sampt der Ehre wird ihnen genommen. Verfluchte Tyranny! hütet euch davor/ Ihr Grossen der Welt. Trifft euch nicht das Wetter/ das dieses Laster ahndet/ so wird es doch der nach Euch kömmt empfinden. Gott ist immittelst gerecht. Der erniedriget und erhöhet. Der lasse das Haus David ewig grünen und blühen!'

the political factor is additionally emphasized by positioning David's decision in the metaphysical context of the vanity of all earthly things. Since early modern absolutist sovereignty was also justified metaphysically, the warning must have been addressed to all 'modern' Machiavellian rulers too.

Kormart's Restyling of Vondel's Maria Stuart Into a Constitutional Discourse on the Interrelation of Rulers and Subjects

In his *Maria Stuart: Oder Gemarterte Majestät* from 1672,⁴⁴ the German adapter of Vondel's *Maria Stuart of Gemartelde Majesteit* (*Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty*, 1646),⁴⁵ the Dresden lawyer Christoph Kormart (1644–1701),⁴⁶ is operating in a somewhat similar way to his predecessor Heidenreich. He wrote his version, as is highlighted on the title page, to stimulate and to accommodate a Leipzig students' theatre company ('Auf Anleitung und Beschaffenheit der Schaubühne einer Studierenden Gesellschaft in Leipzig').⁴⁷ This seems to imply here as well as in Heidenreich the abandonment of alexandrine verses in favour of prose sentences, together with revitalization of action. The latter is mainly achieved by increasing the number of characters acting onstage, and by changing overly long monologues into dialogues.⁴⁸ Vondel's five acts are reduced to four and Kormart's extensive stage directions are crucial to understanding the piece. Mary's execution is shown onstage, but it is precisely here that the scene threatens to tip over into mere theatricality. Kormart deals very freely with Vondel's original play in order to achieve what he calls 'real performance' ('reiche Vorstellung'), setting it in opposition to the lack of dynamics with which he reproaches Vondel, although he appreciates him very much:

Frequent departure from the admirable Dutch poet's arrangements has been made, and his composition has only been followed in part, courting

⁴⁴ A first edition must have been published in 1672, as reveals the digital catalogue of German 17th Century imprints VD17 (www.vd17.de) (cf. VD17 7:710193N). It could not be consulted. Therefore, the edition here quoted from is the second one, from 1673.

⁴⁵ Joost van den Vondel, *Maria Stuart of Gemartelde majesteit*, WB, 5, pp. 163–240.

⁴⁶ Johannes, *Christophorus Kormart*; Killy, *Literatur Lexikon*, 6 (1990), pp. 498–99.

⁴⁷ Kormart, *Maria Stuart*, title page.

⁴⁸ For the way Kormart translated and adapted Vondel's play see Van Ingen, 'Übersetzung als Rezeptionsdokument', pp. 133–39; Van Gemert, *Niederländische Einflüsse*, pp. 67–74.

the affections of a different audience, who crave real performance and not simple appearance on stage.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, didacticism was Kormart's primary concern; compared to Vondel he reinforced didactic impact. At the same time he fundamentally changes the play's orientation, no longer focussing on Catholic Mary as a martyr for her faith's sake, but rather on her opponent Queen Elizabeth, who as an acting character is inserted by Kormart himself and who has to decide between ethico-moral principles and reasons of state. Vondel is convinced that Mary's Catholicism and the defence of her hereditary rights against the bastard Elizabeth led to her undoing:

For two reasons an axe was driven into her flesh,
because of her hereditary right to the Crown and her Catholic life.⁵⁰

Kormart toned down the references to Mary's martyrdom considerably and totally erased the fact of Elizabeth's illegitimacy. In reality both Dutch original and German adaptation are concerned with the limits of absolutist princely power.⁵¹ In Vondel this is directed towards the question of the extent to which the divine right of kings as a legitimization of absolutist sovereignty may protect against demands for accountability by subjects and ultimately against execution:

De hemel zalfde my, en riep door zijn genade
Marie tot dien troon, als met zijn eige stem.
'k Bezit rechtvaerdighlijck, en houde alleen van hem
Mijn' troon en kroon te leen, en wilze met mijn leven
En bloet oock hem alleen gehoorzaam wedergeven.
Hy heeft Elizabeth niet boven my gestelt.
Laet Parlement en Raet en Ketterdom gewelt
Te wercke stellen, als geweldenaers en stroopers,
Die in een moortspelonck, gesterckt met overloopers,
Den allervroomsten Vorst vast knevelen met kracht;
'k Gedooch het tegens recht: 't is buiten hunne macht,

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. A6^v–A7^r. Due to the pages not being numbered in the preface ('Vorred'), the citations have here been indicated by means of the signatures of the sheets: 'Von des vortreflichen Holländischen Poetens Vertheilungen ist man in vielen abgewichen/ und nur zum theil seinen Aufsatz nachgefolget/ indem man sich nach anderer Zuschauer Zuneigung richten müssen/ welche reiche Vorstellung und nicht blosse Aufftritte des Schau-platzes begehren.'

⁵⁰ Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, p. 168: 'Byschrift Op d'aſbeeldinge van Koningin Maria Stuart' ('Inscription on the portrait of Queen Mary Stuart'): 'Twee punten hebben haer de bijl door 't vleesch gedreven / Haer erfrecht tot de Kroon, en haer Katholisch leven.'

⁵¹ For the underlying political ideas in Vondel's tragedy cf. Noak, *Politische Auffasungen*, pp. 155–73. See also Kipka, *Maria Stuart im Drama der Weltliteratur*, esp. pp. 119–39.

Dat ick geen Koningin (zy doen hun beste) sterve;
 Hoewel mijn staet wat glimps in 't oogh der menschen derve.
 [...]
 Noch houdt het Koningsdom zijn' luister onbedorven.
 De Koningen des Rijcks zijn meer dan eens gestorven
 Een doot, zoo eereelijck voor 't Koningklijck geslacht,
 Als schandelijck voor 't volck, dat in die boosheit lacht:
 Wat wonder is het dan, zoo weder een verwoede
 't Getal der Koningen van Engelantschen bloede
 Vermeere met mijn lijck? 't is Engelants manier:
 Dat schatte noit het bloet der Koningen zoo dier,
 Of plengde 't milt, en maeide, als met een dolle zeissen,
 De telgen van den stam, die recht hadde iet te eischen,
 Te vorderen, uit kracht van tijtel, op dees kroon.⁵²

Kormart's rendering of these verses shows – as, incidentally, is further underlined by his explicit reference to Gryphius's tragedy *Carolus Stuardus* in his 'Preface to the Gentle Reader' ('Vorrede An Den Hoch-geneigten Leser')⁵³ – that in his eyes Mary is at best just a martyr for the ideal of absolutist monarchy. At the same time he reduces Vondel's poetic exuberance in favor of prosaic directness lacking any emotionality:

Wir wollen alles mit Gedult leiden. Der Himmel salbete uns zu dieser
 Crone/ und diesem wollen wir Gut/ Blut und Leben als ein Lehn willigst
 wieder überreichen. Es mag aller Ketzer Reich am heftigsten wüten und

⁵² Vondel, *Maria Stuart of Gemartelde majesteit*, ll. 668–80 and 683–93. Cf. Vondel, *Mary Stuart or Tortured Majesty*, pp. 63–64: 'For Heaven has anointed me, has called through grace / For Mary Stuart's rule, with God's own voice, it seemed. / So, I alone am justly chosen, and to Him / Alone I owe my crown and throne and will render / Them unto Him alone, together with my life. / He did not place Elizabeth above myself. / Let her Parliament, her lords, and her heretics / Resort to violent means; just so, cutthroats and / Bandits, with traitors gathered in their gruesome den, / Will fetter even the most devout of princes. / I'll suffer it! though it's unjust. But what's beyond / Their might, though they try, is that I die not a Queen, / Although my state lacks lustre in the eyes of some. / [...] / Yet the prestige itself of Monarchy survives! / This realm has witnessed more than once its monarchs die / In ways that brought much glory to the kingly race / And much disgrace to the rejoicing, guilty throng. / What wonder is it then, if yet another mob / Increases with my corpse the count of slaughtered Kings / Of English blood? Is't not the English custom / To hold the blood of Kings of very little worth? / They've spilt it lightly, and trimmed like crazy reapers / All branches from the trunk that were, because of birth, / Entitled to demand the right to rule this realm.'

⁵³ From Gryphius's play he is quoting here in his 'Preface to the Gentle Reader' (Kormart, *Maria Stuart*, fol. A6^r) the verses (1657 edition: Act I, ll. 181–88; 1663 edition: Act I, ll. 213–20), in which Mary's ghost appears to King Charles, who is already sentenced to death, and complains that in England princes are sentenced by their subjects, although they owe responsibility only to God. See Gryphius, 'Ermordete Majestät. Oder Carolus Stuardus', pp. 8 and 80.

toben/ so soll es nicht diesen himmlischen Glantz verdunckeln. [...] Und dennoch muß das Königliche Recht ungeschändet bleiben/ obgleich der eusserliche Schmuck hingerissen wird. Was kan eine unrechtmäßige Beschuldigung der Tugend schaden? Und so endlich viel Königliche Geschlechter in diesem Reiche also ihr Grab gefunden/ wie kan es uns wunder nehmen/ daß ihre Anzahl von grausamen Wüterichen durch unsern Tod vermehret wird? Es ist der Britten Frevel/ die Wurtzeln Königliches Stammes auszurotten.⁵⁴

Instead he explores what might be the prince's scope of action if he were compelled to act contrary to natural law and kinship obligations in order to protect the interests of state:

We abhor in general the violence of severe regimes, and in particular the fact that a new heresy may lead on to cruel persecution that sheds our poor subjects' blood. Nevertheless popish zeal is stirring sisterly blood and, in spite of our mansuetude, tries in blind malice to rise to the throne. We, however, are fully aware of the penalties the law imposes on such criminals, and she herself can read the compassionate admonition to desist from her wickedness, from the letter we sent to her. But we really are in doubt if we should leave the execution of the sentence to a court that, in common with us, seems to lay hands on kingly Majesty. Due to our princely dignity we are publically acting in front of all mankind, but we are mortal. We eschew shedding sisterly blood. We don't want our reputation with posterity to be damaged by the allegation as if we would have founded our throne upon her precious blood. Should not love defeat severity? Because we are used to deliberating extensively even on minor issues of governance, we do not wish to leave any salutary remedy untried, before we swing the deathsmen's sharp axe.⁵⁵

In general, however, Mary represents to Kormart the instability of all earthly things and especially of princely power which operates continuously between the poles of Fortune and Virtue, as is evident

⁵⁴ Kormart, *Maria Stuart*, p. 68: 'We will bear it all with patience. Heaven has anointed us to the crown and to Heaven we willingly will give back, as a fief, property, blood and life. The realm of all heretics may rant and rave, but it cannot darken the splendour of Heaven. [...] Nevertheless the kingly rights must remain inviolate, although their external attributes will be torn away. How could unjust accusation affect virtue? And finally, because so many royal houses found their graves here in this realm, it is not surprising that the number of cruel tyrants should increase owing to our death. To eradicate the roots of royal lineage is a perfidy of the Brits.'

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40: 'Wir hassen ja in allen Stücken die Gewalt scharffer Regierung/ absonderlich/ daß nicht durch neue Ketzerey eine abscheuliche Verfolgung mit unserer armen Unterthanen Blut erreget werde: Und gleichwol suchet der Päbstliche Eiffer in

from Mary's great monologue in Act IV, immediately prior to her execution:

All those who rely on the wheel of blind Fortune and beseech its glamour for godlike protection should come and see here that their place is unstable and that they must fall from the height of honour losing all glory of life. Should we, Kings, in such a state be called gods on earth and rulers of the world, when the power of the sceptre and the foundations of the throne so easily break down by a single strike? Everything in the world is subject to transience, therefore, even a crowned Majesty does not escape from human fortuities. Constant hatred has come into the world in conjunction with virtue and wickedness has darkened mankind's heart so much that it is willing to do anything wrong and that, in its blindness, it is itself the cause of death.⁵⁶

Because Fortune here, despite all efforts of *virtus*, leads into perdition, Mary, in the end, turns out to be an example of pernicious Machiavellianism.⁵⁷ On the whole, however, Kormart's play is overburdened with ideas and therefore appears to be inconsistent. All in all, it can only have functioned as a closet drama.

Schwesterlichen Blute zu toben/ und sich bey unserer Sanfftmuth in verblendeter Boßheit auff diesen Thron zu erheben. Wir erwegen zwar wohl/ was auff solche Verbrecher in unserm Gesetze für Straffe erfolget/ und sie selbst kan das mitleidende vermahnen von ihrer Boßheit aus unsern an sie gestelleten Schreiben abnehmen. Aber wir zweiffeln billig/ ob wir die vollziehung der Straffe einem Gerichte überlassen/ welches sich mit Uns an einer Majestät zu vergreifen scheint. Wir an Fürstlicher Hoheit sind in dieser Welt allzu offenbahr aller Menschen Augen vorgestellet/ und begehen. Wir scheuen uns Schwesterliches Blut zu vergiessen. Wir wollen nicht gerne den Ruhm bey der Nachwelt verliehren daß wir unsern Thron mit so theuren Blute gegründet. Solte denn nicht die Liebe der Schärffe obsiegen? Wir/ so allezeit gewohnet/ auch den geringsten Sachen des Regiments langsam Raths zu pflegen/ möchten hier auch wohl die Gelegenheit wünschen/ alle heilsame Mittel noch zuvor zu versuchen/ ehe wir das scharffe Richtbeil aufhieben.'

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–23: 'Wer nun auff des blinden Glückes Rad sich zu vertrauen gedencket/ und seinen Glantz für göttliche Beschirmung anbetet/ der komm und lerne allhier/ wie er so wanckend sitzen/ und von dessen Ehren-Gipffel mit Verlust aller Lebens-Pracht fallen muß. Wer wil uns Könige in solchen Stand auff dieser Erden Götter/ und dieser Welt Beherrscher nennen/ wann des Scepters Macht und des Thrones Grundfeste also zerbrochen durch einen Schlag dahin fällt? Wie alles in dieser Welt der Veränderung unterworfen/ also kan sich auch nicht eine gekrönte Majestät den Menschlichen Zufällen entziehen. Es ist der stete Has mit der Tugend auff diese Welt gekommen/ und eine Boßheit hat der Menschen Hertzen also verblindet/ daß es zu allen Unrecht fertig stehet/ und gantz blind ohne Liebe der Tugend ihm selbst eine Ursache des Todes ist.'

⁵⁷ For the interrelation of *virtus* and Fortune cf. for example: K.-H. Gerschmann, 'Machiavellismus' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 5 (1980), coll. 579–83.

*The Transformation of Vondel's Samson into a Politically Inspired
Musical Tragedy on the Perils That Threaten Absolutist Princes*

Similarly extensive, though less in content than in form, were the changes made by the Saxon poet and court musician Constantin Christian Dedekind⁵⁸ (1628–1715) in adapting Vondel's *Samson of Heilige Wraeck*⁵⁹ (*Samson or Holy Vengeance*, 1660) for a German audience; in his *Simson, ein Trauerspiel zur Music eingerichtet* (*Samson, a Tragedy Arranged for Music*) from 1676, he transformed the biblical tragedy into a musical one.⁶⁰ On the whole he follows Vondel's storyline, but due to the frequent changes of metre Dedekind's play must in formal terms be qualified as more vivacious. The lyrical momentum has been intensified by the fact that again and again arias have been inserted. Vondel's choruses, his 'Reyen', have been transformed into real choirs. Moreover his single chorus, that of the Jewish women, which ends every act, is split up into four different others, viz. that of the people of Gaza, that of the Ekron prophetesses, that of the people of the tribe of Dan ('Daniter' i.e. 'Danites') and that of the Dagon temple singers. The number of acting characters has thus increased. As it did by his introducing of allegorical characters such as Chesed (Piety), Tickveh (Hope), Mauz (Strength), Taef (Idolatry) and Aenemunah (Superstition); he really needed them, for his music drama lacks the very dynamics that enabled Vondel to highlight psychic processes by action or dialogues. And last but not least, he brings to the stage Simson's mistress Delila, who in Vondel was only mentioned in the summary, but did not really act. Here she mourns after him, who was, as she says, her most outstanding lover, and depicts herself as a victim of intrigues. Thus sexuality is openly exposed, though dressed in the image of the chivalrous game of jousting, and can the seduction of the ruler Simson more strongly be pronounced:

Es hat mich das Gerichte/
wie vohrmahls mein Verlangen/ nicht betrogen;

⁵⁸ For more information on Dedekind see *ADB*, 5 (1877), pp. 11–12; *NDB*, 3 (1957), pp. 550–51; Killy, *Literatur Lexikon*, 3 (1989), pp. 10–11.

⁵⁹ Joost van den Vondel, *Samson of Heilige Wraeck. Treurspel*, in *WB* 9, pp. 173–239.

⁶⁰ For Dedekind's adaptation of Vondel's *Samson* see: Van Ingen, 'Übersetzung als Rezeptionsdokument', pp. 139–43.

es hat/ vom Bache Sorek/
 mich heute herein gezogen/
 den Gazaritischen Triumph zu schauen/
 und Simson/ der durch mich kahn üms Gesichte/
 beim Sieges-Prachte ahnzusehen.
 Zwahr mihr ists leid daß ihm so weh geschehen;
 allein/ was kann man nicht mit Gelde erkauffen?
 Geld machet keinem Grauen;
 eine Hand voll Gold bezahlt wohl ein paar Augen/
 wänns einen andern schmerzet.
 Das Gold kann Augen bländen/
 wann die Gelegenheit man hat in Händen.
 Denn sie ist zuergreifen
 weil sie vohr Augen stehet/
 sie/ die nicht wiederkehret/
 wänn sie einmahl verschmäheth/ uns entgehet.

Aria.

Wie gabst du dich so blohs?
 du stärker Löwen-Zäumer!
 so bald in meiner Schohs
 du wardst ein Liebes-Träumer.
 So bald sich kühl't an mihr dein Bluht/
 so bald erlag dein Helden-Muht.

Wo ander' in Gefahr/
 daß sie die Krafft verführen/
 da hieltst du dich gahr
 daß kein' Unkrafft zuspühren.
 Hingegen wiche Stärck und Muht
 von dihr/ durchs Haar und nicht durchs Bluht.

Wänn ich in einer Nacht/
 Zwölfmahl rieff aufzusizzen;
 Zwölf-mahl Qwartal gemacht/
 und dich so oft ließ schwizzen:
 dennoch erhieltst du/ muntre Knecht/
 ein ungeschwächtes Reuter-Recht.

Dahrüm beklag ich dich/
 dem ich so wohl behaget/
 dem keinen Lanzen-Stich
 mein Ring iemahls versaget/
 daß du/ durch mich/ verlohrst die Krafft/
 und kahnst in Gefangenschafft.

Mich selber klag' ich an/
 daß ich so falsch gehandelt;
 Denn meine Renne-Bahn
 hat keiner so bewandelt.

Ich sage daß es keiner kann
du bist der bäste Ritters-Mann.⁶¹

This kind of commitment to sexuality does not really match to Vondel; it is quite obviously a remnant of an older tradition of German Samson plays, in which Delila necessarily has to be presented as a seductive harlot in order to reduce Samson's own culpability.

Altogether, a different perspective shines through: Simson's tragic situation as a ruler is lent considerably more emphasis. Above all, Vondel's Samson was, fairly traditionally, a refiguration of Christ.⁶² In the German Lands, however, his story must have been read quite differently. Simson here embodies the perils to which rulers and in particular absolutist monarchs are exposed, viz. the perils of being misled or even seduced by their confidants. At the same time, however, there is hope: as the Lord's Anointed the prince will, if he feels remorse and regret, regain divine assistance and defeat his people's enemies. Samson's fate by this means becomes a case study on the balancing act that absolutist Principality implies, as is indicated by the dialogue, in fact a meta-discourse, between the Prince and Princess of Gaza on the importance of the theatre for the princely self-reflection and (absolutist)

⁶¹ Dedekind, *Simson*, fol. A5^r–A5^v (due to the pages not being numbered, the citations have been indicated by the signatures of the sheets): 'Rumour did not mislead me, / as formerly did not lust; / It now brought me up to here, from the Brook of Sorek, / to view the Gazarites' Triumph / and to see too in the triumphal procession / Simson, who, because of me, lost his eyesight. / I do, admittedly, regret that so much grief befell him, / but is not everything to buy for money? / Nobody is horrified by money. / A handful of gold recompenses a pair of eyes, / especially when it hurts somebody else. / Gold can blind eyes, / when you have caught the opportunity. / You should catch it / when it is before your eyes, / since it does not arise again / and it disappears when it has been missed./ Aria. / How did you expose yourself, / You strong lion tamer? / As soon as you were in my lap / You became a love dreamer. / As soon as your blood cooled itself on me / As soon did your courage subside. / While others were in danger / Of losing their strength / You stayed completely so / That no weakness could be found./ But your strength and courage would leave you / Through your hair rather than blood. / When I in the course of one night / asked you to mount twelve times, / And go all the way twelve times / and let you sweat so often, / Even then, you cheerful Knight, / you kept up your unflagging Rider-right. / That's why I mourn for you / To whom I gave such pleasure / Whose fierceful lancet stab / Was never refused by my ring, / That you, through me, lost your strength / And came to be imprisoned. / I accuse myself / For being so false to you; / For no one ever ran / on my course like you did. / I would maintain that no one can: / You are the best rider-man.' For translation of the Aria I am greatly indebted to Dr. Rudolph Glitz (Amsterdam University, Department of English).

⁶² For Vondel's intent in *Samson* see Langvik-Johannessen, *Zwischen Himmel und Erde*, pp. 188–207.

governance as such, which features in Vondel at the very beginning of Act III and, as compared to Dedekind's version, reveals implicitly as well as explicitly many underlying principles of his way to adapt:

Tooneelspel heeft voorheene ons meer dan eens bedrogen
 Met schijn van waerheit, en niet ongeluckigh: want
 Zoo wort de deught met vreught den vorsten ingeplant,
 Al 't weereltlijck beloop naer 't leven afgeschildert,
 Door spreekende schildry. men ziet een hof verwildert,
 Verwart, en overendt, geverft met prinssenmoort.
 Daer wort van schennisse en wraeckgierigheit gehoort.
 Men ruckt gekroonden, en gezalfden, van hun stoelen.
 Hartstoghten, onderlinge aen 't barrenen, aen 't woelen,
 Ontvouwen zich, gelijk de verwen, met de naelt
 Of schietspoel net geleght, en daer geen meester dwaelt
 Van wel te schicken, zijn tapijtwerck geestigh teken,
 Dat wie 't bespiegelt dit een overeenkomst reket
 Van hemelsch ooghmuzijck. hier geeft de bloem van spreuck
 En hemelval een' geur, een' liefelijcken reuck,
 Die meer dan wieroockgeur, en schaelen, hun behaegen.
 Tooneelspel sticht een' staet, verschoont geen lastervleck,
 En smet in heiligh, noch onheiligh, elx gebreck
 Wort, zonder iemants naem te quetsen, aangewezen.
 Tooneelspel wort alleen van dommekracht misprezen,
 Die recht noch reden volghet. toneelspel leent een' schat
 Van wijsheit by de naelt van Menfis, Zonnestadt,
 De hooge rijxschool der befaemde Egyptenaeren,
 Die op de wolcken treên, en kost noch arbeit spaeren,
 Om vrou natuur, van lidt tot lidt, geheel t'ontleên.
 Zoo zamelden zy al wat kenbaer is by een,
 Een' schat van wijsheit, opgestapelt van veele eeuwen.
 Het snaterbecken van alle aexteren en spreeuwen
 Verbluft geen speeltooneel. is eenigh vorst belust
 Op spel; wie meer dan wy? dit's u, mevrou, bewust.⁶³

⁶³ Vondel, *Samson*, ll. 668–698. Joost van den Vondel, 'Samson, of Heilige Wraeck, Treurspel 1660: Samson, or Holy Revenge' in Kirkconnell, *Invincible Samson*, pp. 77–142. See pp. 102–103: 'The drama has beguiled us more than once / Ere this with masterly pretence of truth / And not unhappily: if inculcating / True virtue blent with pleasure for our lords / And painting, to the life, the way o' the world / Through speaking pictures. Men behold a court / Confused, upset, unruly, overthrown / By the sad death of princes. Then they hear / Of outrage and revengefulness. Men drag / Crowned and anointed monarchs from their thrones. / Passions that burn and move are blended there / Like colours which a needle on a loom / Quaintly portrays; a master dramatist / Can in imaginative tapestry / So well portray that he who contemplates it / Vows 'tis divine eye-music. Here the flower / Of apophthegm in heavenly valleys yields / A fragrance and a perfume past compare, / More pleasing to the gods than frankincense /

In Dedekind the verses are usually shortened, the heroic alexandrine is exchanged in favor of a richer variation of metric forms and the rhyme pattern, insofar as it can be determined at all, is much more complicated. On the other hand the imagery is systematically reduced. Moreover the princely characters have got names – they are called now Rodeam and Saradi; further the dialogue has shifted into the second scene of Act III and was formulated more concisely. More specifically, it focussed on the *Theatrum Vitae Humanae*-metaphor, which Simson seems to embody up to a high degree:

Die Schau-Spiele haben uns/ zu guhthem Glücke/
 vohrdessen/ unterm Scheine
 der Wahrheit/ oft betrogen;
 Wihr sind dahrüm den'nselben wohlgeuogen/
 denn sie sinds/ die den'n Fürsten/
 flugs von der zahrten Jugend/
 den Glanz und Schein der Tugend/
 mit Freude und Lust/ recht einzupflanzen wissen.
 Der ganze Wällt-Lauff wird/ wie nach dem Leben/
 dahrinnen abgerissen.
 Mann sieht den Hooff verwildert;
 mit Fürsten-Mord gefärbet;
 da wird von Rache und Gräuel-Taht gehöret;
 da wird ein Reich/ das andern ahngeerbet/
 durch Meuterei zerstöret.
 Man stürzt Gesalbte herab von ihren Troonen;
 beraubet sie der'r Kroonen/
 und jagt sie fort ins Elend;
 Man hört auf Laster schänden/
 und keines Männschens schohnen/
 wer der auch sei. Man sieht der Tugend lohnen.
 Schau-Spiele geben/ ohne iemand zunännen/
 uns männiglichs Gebrächen
 auf klährste zuerkennen.
 Sie werden nuhr vernichtet/

Upheaved to them in golden bowls and censers. / The drama edifies a state; it brooks /
 No stain of calumny or idle scorn / On holy or unholy. Each one's fault / Is marked
 without disclosing any name. / Drama is not despised but by the churl / Whose dull
 soul follows neither right nor reason. / Surely the drama grants a store of wisdom /
 Upon the stage of Heliopolis, / By the obelisk of Memphis, and the famed / Egyptians'
 national dramatic school / Who tread the clouds and spare not cost nor labour / To
 anatomize Dame Nature, limb by limb. / So have they gathered into one the sum / Of
 all things knowable, a treasury / Of wisdom garnered up by many ages. / The drama
 feels no mute embarrassment / If human starlings chatter in disfavour. / All princes
 take much pleasure in the stage. / Who more than we? 'Tis known to thee, milady.'

von denen die der Weisheit nicht verpflichtet.
 Sie borgen ihre Künste und Wissenschaften
 bei denen weisen Griechen/
 welche an der Klugheit haften/
 wie am Magnet ein Staal/ und nuzbahr fünden/
 in allem die Natur wohl zuergründen.
 Wo Fürsten ein belieben
 zu solcher Lehr-Ahrt tragen/
 so wird/ wie gnug bekannt/ uns nachgeschrieben/
 daß sie uns oft gereiche zum Behagen.⁶⁴

Even Simson's apotheosis, Dedekind has appended, confirms that the biblical hero's perennial exemplarity is to be found primarily in his political actions, including his victory over the Philistines after the humiliation they had caused him:

Now we take, just as he wished,
 his body to his father's bosom.
 Simson, who won high renown,
 can boast in his outstanding victory.
 Simson's fame will endure for all posterity
 until the end of the earth.⁶⁵

Contemporary German Vondel-Reception Apart from Translations and Adaptations: Travelling Theatres and the Gryphius-Vondel Relation

Already during his lifetime Vondel enjoyed some renown in the German Lands, and not only through translations and adaptations of his

⁶⁴ Dedekind, *Simson*, fol. C7^r–C7^v: 'Drama formerly has, for our benefit, / under the guise of truth / deceived us many times. / We therefore are heartily inclined to it / because it is able properly to implant in princes / straight from their earliest childhood / the glory and the splendour of virtue / in a pleasant and delightful mode. / The whole course of the world / is drawn into it from life. / There you can see the court being brutalized / and blood coloured by murder of princes. / There you can hear about revenge and cruelties. / There a kingdom that was bequeathed to others / is destroyed by mutiny. / The anointed are thrown down from their thrones, / bereaved from their crowns / and banished into exile. / You can hear there vices being blamed and nobody being spared, / whoever he may be. You see there virtue being remunerated. / Drama reveals, without naming somebody, / many men's deficiencies. / It is despised / only by those who do not rely on wisdom. / It obtains its skills and knowledge / from the wise Greeks / who stuck to philosophy / as iron does to the magnet, and considered it useful / to explore, in every respect, nature thoroughly. / When princes take pleasure / in this kind of didacticism, / it is, as is well known, written about us / that it often brings us intense joy.'

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. F8^v: 'Nuhn/ wihr bringen/ nach Verlangen/ diese Leich' ins Vaters Schooss. / Simson/ der sich machte grooss/ kann mit sondrem Siege prangen. / Simsons Nach-Ruhm soll bestehn / bis die Wäلت wird untergehn.'

plays; there were, aside from people's private reading, two other ways in which a German auditory, indirectly, could have taken note of (aspects of) Vondel's plays. Firstly Dutch travelling theatres crossing the northern parts of the German Lands might have acted as intermediary. Although they generally popularized and also mostly improvised, they could have transferred some Vondel topics into the German-speaking countries. Because texts of their performances are not extant, it cannot be determined if plays about Lucifer, about the destruction of Jerusalem or about the biblical Joseph, given in German cities like Hamburg in 1654, in 1666 and in 1678 respectively, ultimately trace back to Vondel.⁶⁶ Secondly in original works by German authors too there can occasionally be found some traces of a preoccupation with him. In particular the playwright Andreas Gryphius certainly knew more of Vondel's works than the tragedy *Gebroeders* that he translated and from which he borrowed a few short sections in his *Leo Armenius* (*Leo the Armenian*) and in *Catharina von Georgien*.⁶⁷ His *Carolus Stuartus* (*Charles Stuart*) could, to some extent, have been written as a counterpart to Vondel's *Maria Stuart*, although there is no evidence of any immediate influence. By contrast, modern scholarship is in full agreement on the fact that in his *Gelibte Dornrose* (*Beloved Sleeping Beauty*) – which, together with *Das Verliebte Gespenst* (*The Enamoured Phantom*), constitutes a 'Mischspiel' ('hybrid play') – there are unmistakable echoes of Vondel's *Leeuwendalers*.⁶⁸ A more far-reaching influence cannot be confirmed, even though Gryphius's supposed reliance on Vondel has been the subject of intensive discussion in recent decades: putative references are too vague to speak of any kind of influence.⁶⁹ In such cases Gryphius might at best have had recourse to collectanea, brought

⁶⁶ Junkers, *Niederländische Schauspieler*, pp. 159–61, 211, 226, 238, 245.

⁶⁷ Kiedroń, *Andreas Gryphius und die Niederlande*, pp. 69–72.

⁶⁸ See Kollewijn, 'Gryphius' "Dornrose" und Vondels "Leeuwendalers"; Krispyn, 'Vondel's "Leeuwendalers"'; Kiedroń, *Andreas Gryphius und die Niederlande*, pp. 81–84.

⁶⁹ The extent of Vondel's influence on Gryphius has been discussed in scholarship for over a century. See (for instance): Kollewijn, *Über den Einfluß des holländischen Dramas*; Kollewijn, 'Über die Quelle des Peter Squenz'; Flemming, 'Vondels Einfluß'; Haerten, *Vondel und der deutsche Barock*; Weevers, 'Vondel's Influence'; Hechtle, 'Joost van den Vondel'; Pott, 'Holland-German Literary Relations'; Rens, 'Over het probleem'; Verhofstadt, 'Vondel und Gryphius'. In 1993 Stefan Kiedroń, after a critical evaluation, concluded that only in a few cases could specific influence be confirmed and that Vondel mainly served for Gryphius as an intermediary of ideas of the philosopher Justus Lipsius, cf. Kiedroń, *Andreas Gryphius und die Niederlande*, pp. 59–87. See also Van Gemert, *Niederländische Einflüsse*, pp. 102–05.

together over time for later use, if required. Howsoever it may be perceived, all this was definitely not of any profound significance for his plays.

England, France and Latinity

The question of whether Vondel could have influenced contemporary England, and especially whether his *Lucifer* (1654) might have been of immediate significance to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, has been discussed in scholarship with an intensity similar to that found in the case of Gryphius. In spite of their large number, the relevant studies, published over more than one century,⁷⁰ did not succeed in finding any concrete relations; the overall similarity may be explained through the common use of the biblical creation story as the main source of inspiration. Thus, after more than a hundred years, there is still full consensus on the conclusion Moolhuizen drew in 1892 in his Utrecht thesis:

In generalities Milton and Vondel align with each other, in details they do not. Every matching that occurs is due to the fact that both poets draw on the same source: both of them follow the biblical story. None of them needs the other as an example. Their artistic autonomy and their high level allowed each of them to go his own way [...].⁷¹

To some extent Moolhuizen's statement could be criticized. By asserting that, on account of their extraordinary poetical abilities, Milton and Vondel would not have needed each other, he wrongly applies present standards of originality to early modern literature. Furthermore, he does not take account of the different religious backgrounds of both poets, which could have hampered reception. Neither does he consider the political impact of their works. His denial of an English reception of Vondel in early modern times, however, and more specifically of a Milton-Vondel relation, can be the subject of unquestioning consent.

⁷⁰ See, for example: Edmundson, *Milton and Vondel*; Müller, *Über Miltons Abhängigkeit von Vondel*; Moolhuizen, *Vondels Lucifer en Miltons Verloren Paradijs*; De Vries, *Holland's Influence*, esp. pp. 288–91 and 294–96; Mody, *Vondel and Milton*; Davies, *The 'Samson' Theme*, esp. pp. 177–204; see also Van Dijkhuizen and Helmers, Chapter 19, 'Religion and Politics', in this volume.

⁷¹ Moolhuizen, *Vondels Lucifer en Miltons Verloren Paradijs*, p. 121: 'In algemeenheden komen Milton en Vondel overeen; in bijzonderheden niet. Dat er overeenkomst is, komt hier vandaan, dat beide dichters uit eene en dezelfde bron putten: beide volgen den Bijbel. Zij behoeven elkanders voorbeeld niet. Zij waren zelfstandig genoeg en stonden hoog genoeg om elk zijn eigen weg te gaan [...].'

Almost as scant as the English contemporary concern with Vondel was the French, although here some more concrete indications can be found, since the Dunkirk poet Michael de Swaen (1654–1707)⁷² referred to Vondel several times by criticizing his highly artificial style and his intricate reasoning.⁷³ He, however, cannot be considered as an exponent of French Vondel reception: he was a Dutch-speaking poet of Flemish provenance, who became a French subject because his native city was annexed to France in 1662, but he himself nevertheless continued writing in Dutch.⁷⁴ His preoccupation with Vondel therefore remained without relevance for French culture.

It might surprise that as a playwright in the 17th century Vondel was not received in contemporary European Latin literature. To be sure, this is partly due to the fact that he himself did not write in Latin and therefore, especially abroad, must have been considered not to be a member of the *respublica litteraria* or a *poeta doctus*. This does not necessarily imply that he would not have participated in the intellectual climate of learned society. It is supposed that for his *Jeptha* (1659) – next to its immediate source, George Buchanan's *Jephtes, sive votum* (1554) – he could have had recourse to the Neo-Latin *Jephtias* of the German Jesuit Jacob Balde⁷⁵ (1604–1668), which was published some years earlier in 1654.⁷⁶ As yet it has not been possible to confirm this in detail. It is, however, obvious that the common biblical source could have led to similarities. Translations of works by Vondel into Latin seem not have appeared earlier than in the second half of the 18th century, but they then no longer functioned in a social setting and were primarily the intellectual gimmicks of schoolmen.⁷⁷

Conclusion

In his lifetime, Vondel's European reception as a playwright and as a poet in general was fairly limited. This may partly be explained by the

⁷² For his life see: Sabbe, *Leven en werken van Michael de Swaen*, esp. pp. 3–7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 69–71.

⁷⁴ See Thys, 'Vondel en Frankrijk', pp. 294–97; Thys, *Vondel et la France*, pp. 39–46.

⁷⁵ Westermayer, *Jacobus Balde* (1604–1668); *ADB*, 1 (1875), pp. 1–3; *NDB*, 1 (1953), p. 549.

⁷⁶ Führer, *Studien zu Jacob Baldes 'Jephtias'*, pp. 174–75.

⁷⁷ Cf. (for example) *Justi Vondelii Joannis metanoë-angeli sive Poenitentiae praeconis, libri sex versibus latinis redditi*. Auctore C.F. de Rees. Hagae Comitum: apud Eustachium de Haan, 1761. A second edition seems to have been appeared in 1766 in Amsterdam.

then relatively small spread of knowledge of Dutch outside its own language area, which might, apart from in the German Lands where a related language was spoken, have hampered reception everywhere. But also thematic and content-related aspects, as well as Vondel's reputation, might have counteracted a broader European noticing of his works. He just did not deal primarily with catchy issues of everyday life that were didactically exploitable, as Jacob Cats did. He did not acquire European prestige, as Hugo Grotius did. And he did not hold a scholarly rank such as that held by Daniel Heinsius. And finally, his Catholicism too – which he confesses, like many converts, openly and in a militant way – could have prevented his plays gaining wide appeal. In most instances of adaptation of Vondel outside the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, his plays are even more politicized than in their original form. In his highlighting the political factor, Vondel may have been a child of his time that vehemently discussed key political events all over Europe such as the execution of Charles I Stuart. However, his specific approach outside of the Dutch Republic somehow must have had added value for the respective domestic production of literature.

Conspicuously, contemporary Vondel reception outside the Dutch Republic was limited to the German Lands, where language affinity facilitated accessibility and where the Netherlands at that time functioned as a role model, especially in the field of cultural politics. It is conspicuous too that, apart from the Silesian Gryphius, who had lived in the Netherlands himself, reception was mainly in Saxonia. A similar climate of pragmatic interconfessional tolerance to that in the Dutch Republic may well have prevailed,⁷⁸ being an appropriate basis of reception. German Vondel reception during the 17th century was anything but comprehensive and did not really care about proximity to the Dutch original. As a specimen of the European impact of contemporary Dutch literature, however, it could be instructive.

During the 18th century there are no traces to be found of any more intensive concern with Vondel outside the Netherlands, and in the 19th century foreign interest in him is mostly antiquarian in focus; it mainly manifests itself within the context of the then new concept of world literature, which competes with the older, politically connoted one of national literature. Again, in Germany alone Vondel is now received in

⁷⁸ Böttiger, *Geschichte des Kurstaates und Königreiches Sachsen*, 2 (1831), pp. 159–220.

a different way: here he was contemporized during the so-called 'Kulturkampf' (cultural struggle) and its backwash, when in confrontation with the Bismarck regime he was positioned by German Catholics as an exemplar of an outstanding level of culture achieved by a Catholic.⁷⁹ A thorough monograph on his life and works, written by the Jesuit literary historian Alexander Baumgartner⁸⁰ (1841–1910), appeared⁸¹ and a complete edition in German translation even seems to have been planned.⁸² Now too the long-standing kinship between the Germans and the Dutch is emphasized, and the German Vondel lobby, personified by Lina Schneider⁸³ (1831–1909) as its figurehead, is strongly supported by Dutch kindred spirits such as Jozef Albert Alberdingk Thijm⁸⁴ (1820–1889). Once emancipation of the German Catholics was achieved, Vondel lost currency in Germany, as he did *mutatis mutandis* in the Netherlands. The German edition of his complete works never got beyond the beginnings. Although recently Vondel has increasingly been translated once more, especially into English, this does not imply renewed contemporization, but is merely due to comparative, philological or cultural interests. All in all, Vondel has since been enshrined, within the Netherlands and outside its borders, in the pantheon of classical authors, and he shares their fate fully; that is to say, he is revered in awe, but hardly ever read by the mainstream public.

⁷⁹ See Van Gemert, 'Germanje groet U', esp. pp. 68–69.

⁸⁰ On him see *NDB*, 1 (1953), p. 666.

⁸¹ Baumgartner, *Joost van den Vondel, sein Leben und seine Werke*; see also Van Gemert: 'Germanje groet U', pp. 82–84.

⁸² Diferee, 'Vondel in den vreemde', pp. 11–13; Van Gemert, 'Germanje groet U', pp. 76–82.

⁸³ De Beer, 'Levensbericht van Lina Schneider'; Van Gemert, 'Germanje groet U', pp. 84–91.

⁸⁴ Van der Plas, *Vader Thijm*.