CHAPTER FOURTEEN

INTERTEXTUALITY – GYSBREGHT VAN AEMSTEL (1637)

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Intertextuality

The term ‘intertextuality’ (*intertextualité*) emerged halfway through the 1960s, as a product of the so-called antihumanistic project of French-speaking (post)structuralism.¹ The scholar who coined it, Julia Kristeva, integrated the theories of the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin regarding the intrinsic ‘dialogism’ of every linguistic utterance and the ‘polyphony’ of every text – among literary texts, most particularly the novel – with Saussure’s structural semiotics. Every individual text is generated at the intersection of a potentially infinite number of previous texts and bears in it the echoes of a plurality of codes, systems, conventions – and not just linguistic ones. Every text, every act of writing or reading thus depends on prior codes. The shifting of the critical concern from an author-centred attitude was evident. With Roland Barthes, who together with Michel Foucault heralded in the same years the ‘death of the author’, this view was further developed: he stated that the meanings of a work do not reside in any unified authorial power, but in the mind of its readers. The readers connect every utterance in a work with what they have already read and in doing so they orchestrate their interpretations of it.²

Poststructural theories of intertextuality were mainly grounded on linguistic-semiotic notions which postulated an uncontrollable dissemination of the meaning of a work. Kristeva called each text a ‘mosaic of quotations’ and Barthes labelled it as a ‘tissue of quotations’.³ However, this made it difficult to use intertextuality as a practical tool

¹ For a first introduction to intertextuality, see Allen, *Intertextuality*, and Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*.

² Barthes, *The Death of the Author*; Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’.

³ Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’, p. 37; Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, p. 146.

for literary studies. This was why, somewhat later, two alternative routes were developed. As a cultural theorist, Maaïke Meijer wanted to develop a reading theory instead of a theory of texts. In that context she had to specify the ideological uses made of intertextuality. What she called 'cultuurtekst' ('culture text') concerned those forms of intertexts that by means of repetitions, or dominant usage, embodied the basic tenets of a culture. Others, such as the literary theorist Gérard Genette, wanted to limit intertextuality to the (semi-)autonomous and closed field of literature.⁴ He described a taxonomy of possible intertextual relations, mapping virtually 'all' possible forms of presence of a preexistent text in another text in the Western literature – 'literature on the second degree' – from Homer to Joyce: citations, serious imitations, transpositions, parodies, pastiches, plagiarism, etc.

Although Genette's perspective was all but author-centered in its consideration of literature as a synchronic field, this approach made intertextuality come closer to the old notion of the 'influence' of one author on another – or the 'reception' of an author by another one – key notions in literary studies, at least since Romanticism. With respect to this, intertextuality has often been used in an impoverished way, as a vogueish substitute for the traditional source-hunting, conceived to trace in a literary work the intentional authorial activation of preexistent models. Even more author-centred, but not at all interested in detecting such details as the exact sources of a work, was the theory put forward by the American Harold Bloom, who warned of the humanistic loss caused by (post)structuralism and conceived the history of literature as an oedipal struggle of sons, led by an 'anxiety of influence' toward their fathers.⁵ And despite all the criticism Bloom's proposal has encountered,⁶ it might still prove of some interest for the study of Vondel's attitude towards his adored model Virgil, especially in *Gysbreght van Amstel*. However, a more fruitful application of intertextuality seems to lie in a combination with hermeneutics and reader-response theories, keeping in mind that specific intertexts can also be specimens of recurring patterns. The focus remains, then, on the

⁴ Meijer, *In tekst gevat*; pp. 33–34; Genette, *Palimpsestes*.

⁵ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

⁶ Poststructuralist critics have judged this book conservative, imbued with patriarchal ideology, with a neo-romantic claim of the genius of the poet and with a universalistic theory of poetry.

readers/spectators as centres of production of meaning and on their reconstructed horizons of expectation.

In this respect, Bourdieu's critique to intertextual and reader-response approaches remains valid. In Bourdieu's eyes, this sort of analysis tends to construct a reader-spectator (like Iser's *implied reader*, Eco's model *lector/spectator*, Fish's *informed reader*, or Riffaterre's *archi-lecteur*) whose competence coincides with that of the interpreter himself.⁷ Keeping this in mind, one can nevertheless try to reconstruct 'intertextual' horizons of expectations that consist of implicit or explicit links to specific, clearly definable literary antecedents, which are framed by generic conventions and, more generally, by diffused sets of literary, social or, broadly speaking, 'cultural' codes (e.g. concerning gender representation). These codes shape the way in which readers/spectators act in a given historical time and particular sociocultural context.

In the case of *Gysbreght*, these readers/spectators make up the public of the Amsterdam Theatre or the readers of dramatic texts that were published halfway through the seventeenth century. In one sense they formed a rather homogeneous interpretive community since they were mainly middle-class bourgeois citizens (men and women) with good reading and writing skills. In general, the audience was well-accustomed to theatrical practice. It was an audience trained also to understand, judge and interpret a literary work. When I focus, now, on this community in terms of its reading strategies, I will bear in mind that any reconstructed horizon of expectation remains an abstraction. Such a horizon cannot fully take into account the situatedness of every peculiar reader/spectator, as poststructural studies have contended. Any member of an audience is determined by all sorts of differing factors concerning gender, provenance, social class, confession, political views, etc., which besides literacy and theatrical competence determine modes of reading and experience. If one sticks to individual members and to these alone, however, it becomes hard to define a text's broader cultural implications. To be sure, a culture consists of many strings and domains, but it can be defined as one culture nevertheless, even when that definition has to remain, in a sense, abstract.

⁷ Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art*, p. 415.

Gysbreght van Aemstel and History

With his *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, the fifty-year-old Joost van Vondel made his comeback to theatre after a long absence.⁸ With this play he rediscovered his *theatralische Sendung* (theatrical mission). In fact, the tragedy would consecrate him as an outstanding playwright in Amsterdam and therefore in the whole Republic, of which Amsterdam was the undisputed capital of theatre after 1637. The occasion for his grand return was the opening of the first stone theatre in the Republic.

The playwright sought inspiration in the mediaeval history of Amsterdam and of the County of Holland, specifically in the events following the death of Count Floris around 1300. Vondel's inaugural play met with the resistance of the Calvinist Church, but found the support of the liberal city council. It eventually debuted on 3 January 1638 and established a performance tradition that from 1641 would continue uninterrupted for centuries. It thus became a milestone in Dutch cultural history.

The play can be summarized as follows. In the prologue Gijsbreght van Aemstel, Lord of Amsterdam, explains the play's preliminary history: for one year, Amsterdam has had to withstand the besieging efforts of troops who want to avenge the capture and death of Count Floris V. Gijsbreght's relatives were responsible for this, since they wished to punish the misdeeds of the Counts who had repressed the nobility and raped a noble dame, Machtelt van Velsen. Gijsbreght was tricked into involvement in these plans and had to suffer the consequences: first exile, later the siege. But now the siege has suddenly ceased. During the celebrations stemming from this unexpected event (on Christmas night, in fact), Gijsbreght pardons a young boy, Vosmeer, an outcast belonging to the enemy. He allows him to help the population by bringing into the city a ship, the Sea Horse, which the fleeing enemy has left behind. But Vosmeer – a revealing name meaning the Fox, as with Jonson's Volpone – is a wily spy: hidden inside the horse are enemy soldiers, ready to infiltrate the city by surprise. Gijsbreght's wife, Badeloch, has a terrible dream vision which turns out to be true: while everybody was at Christmas Mass, the concealed soldiers came out of the ship and started burning the city. Despite heroic resistance

⁸ Joost van den Vondel, *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, ed. Smits-Veldt. The English translations are drawn from Joost van den Vondel, *Gijsbreght van Aemstel*, transl. Kristiaan P. Aercke.

on the part of Gijsbreght, his brother Arend and their valiant kinsfolk, Amsterdam gradually falls into the enemy's hands and collapses.

Gijsbreght's defence of the New Church and of the City Hall fails. He must also face the decision of his uncle, former Bishop of Utrecht, Gozewijn van Aemstel, and his niece, Abbess Klaeris van Velsen, not to flee and to await martyrdom in their convent. Gijsbreght is thus confronted with the impossibility of fulfilling his role as protector of his citizens and of all the people for whom he is responsible. He eventually retreats to his castle. Arend dies in a sortie and Gijsbreght refuses a capitulatory deal. He still intends to defend his castle to the last, preserving his military honour through a glorious death, but first he wishes to organize the embarkation of the refugees, including his wife and children. Although Badeloch passionately objects to leaving without him, eventually she is obliged to obey. At this point angel Raphael appears as a *deus ex machina* and orders Gijsbreght to listen to his wife and to abandon Amsterdam. Raphael's prophecies of Amsterdam's future splendour in the Golden Age – a connection to the present of the audience – and the happiness of his descendants console the pious hero. And thus the refugees flee to distant Prussian shores, where they will found the small city of New Holland.

This play is not just the dramatization of mediaeval events. It also offers a Christianized analogue of Virgil's widely known second book of the *Aeneid*, the burning Amsterdam and the exiled Gijsbreght being easily recognizable *figurae* of ancient Troy and of the fleeing Aeneas, albeit with significant new emphasis: Gijsbreght is the Lord of the city, unlike Aeneas, and is thus in charge of its defence. It is even more important that in the end he has no great mission to accomplish – the obscure New Holland in Prussia can hardly be compared with the destined city of Rome – and exits the Great History, towards a prospect of future personal happiness, unknown to the fatal hero Aeneas. By watching the staging of the destruction of the city and the banishment of its eponymous protagonist, the audience of fellow citizens is confronted with an anything but simplistic 'reading' of its history. This was not just mediaeval history, but it also mirrored the turmoil of the recent Dutch Revolt – when the Catholic and loyalist Amsterdam was besieged by the rebels, for instance. In other words, the play was far from a shallow, panegyric, patriotic work. It was full of problematic hints to open wounds in the recent past of the city and of the whole land.⁹

⁹ Cf. Parente, 'The Theatricality of History', and, with new emphasis, Prandoni, 'The Staging of History'. In this article I distance myself from those critics who contend that

The seventeenth-century spectator/reader sees the new drama take shape in the light of Virgil's *Aeneid* – very prominently, sometimes almost inescapably – and innumerable epic and tragic antecedents. *Gysbreght* uses a texture of interwoven references to other texts from classic contemporary works since, beside the *Aeneid*, many theatrical intertexts can be mobilized. In particular, the Senecan subgenre of history plays comes to mind, which was given a new impulse in the Republic after Heinsius's dramatization in Latin of William the Silent's death. Heinsius was quickly followed by many tragedies dealing with this and other national topics, such as Willem van Hogendorp's tragedy on Orange's murder, staged in Amsterdam in 1617.¹⁰ In this context, Hooff's *Geeraerdt van Velsen* (1613) also needs mentioning, a play that dealt with the mediaeval municipal history of the Republic's informal capital and by now growing international metropolis.¹¹

The audience in Amsterdam must have been familiar with the Senecan tradition and its recent revitalization. But even non-theatrical intertexts could be activated in the interpretation of *Gysbreght van Amstel*, this work serving as a good example of osmosis between the fields of theatre and literature in the Renaissance culture. As a result, the spectator/reader could recognize a rich interplay of multiple genres, one that need not lead to a coherent and consistent end result, however. The different textual traces and fragments continued to interact and often continued to clash with one another. The 'generic path' that the audience was induced to take (e.g. by blunt references to well-known models such as the *Aeneid*) could at times be rewarding, but more often it could be treacherous too. Dealing with *Gysbreght* implied a continuous activation and frustration of interpretive expectations, based on cultural conventions that were shaped by seemingly stable generic codes. Nevertheless, in some cases pretexts were so completely altered, reshaped or contaminated with other intertexts, that the interpretation of the new text could only rely on them with reservation, or could only take them as a first step toward a totally new and daring production of meaning.

the *Gysbreght van Aemstel* is an overtly pro or anti-Catholic work (Maljaars and De Waard: 'O christelijcken knoop!'; and Koppenol: 'Nodeloze onrust').

¹⁰ Daniel Heinsius, *Auriacus, sive Libertas Saucia*; Gijsbrecht van Hogendorp, *Truerspel van de moordt, begaen aen Wilhelm by der gratie Gods, prince van Oraengien*.

¹¹ Important contributions to the study of intertextuality in *Gysbreght* are Hermann, *Joost van den Vondels 'Gysbreght van Aemstel'*; Van der Paardt, 'Vondels *Gijsbreght* en de *Aeneis*'; Smits-Veldt, 'Vondels *Gysbreght van Aemstel* onder de loep'; and, recently, Prandoni, *Een mozaïek van stemmen*.

'A Hopeless Hope'? An Intertextual Analysis of the Female Protagonist

Modern critics have expressed totally different views on the character of Badeloch. She has been considered as an exemplary wife,¹² a hysterical woman and unnatural mother,¹³ to name only a few characterizations of her. Critics were mainly interested in the interpretation of the male protagonist and tended therefore to marginalize her role or to interpret her as a function of her husband's characterization.¹⁴ An intertextual analysis that focuses on her appears to be fruitful. It may help us to consider up to which point the audience's expectations were determined by 'generic paths' and prior conventions and how these determined what role the female protagonist could have in the play and what her ultimate fate would be. It may also help us to see with what subtlety and how surprisingly these expectations were ultimately thwarted, with the staging of an almost unprecedented model of feminine subjectivity.¹⁵

Badeloch's first appearance on stage is in the third act. She is panicking after an ominous dream. Her dead niece Machtelt van Velsen has warned her that the enemy has penetrated the city and that Amsterdam is collapsing. Gijsbreght has apparently little difficulty in dismissing the prophetic power of dreams and reassuring her (ll. 745–826). In Badeloch's dream narrative to Gijsbreght there resonates a web of famous literary dream narratives, like the passage from the *Aeneid* – the poem that is constantly evoked in *Gysbreght van Aemstel* – in which Aeneas describes a terrible dream vision (*Aeneid* 2, 270–97). But in the Renaissance the episode of the dialogue between a woman who reacts in panic to an ominous apparition and another character who tries to calm her by assuring her that dreams are delusions, constitutes a set ingredient of Senecan theatre, well-known to everyone with any acquaintance with classicist theatre. A good example is provided by the Dutch 'Orange plays' about William the Silent's murder, such as that of

¹² Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1, pp. 215–16.

¹³ Recently Maljaars, 'Niet min godvruchtelijs als dapper'.

¹⁴ Van Stipriaan, 'Gysbreght van Aemstel als tragische held' and Konst, *Fortuna, Fatum en Providentia Dei*, pp. 136–52, base their interpretation of the play mainly on the analysis of Gijsbreght's character.

¹⁵ The first modern critic to draw attention to Badeloch was Szarota, *Stärke, deine Name sei Weib!* Korsten, *Vondel belicht*, p. 184; *Sovereignty as Inviolability*, p. 165, underlines the subversive elements of this character who dares question God's plans, or rather the way her opponents onstage, Gijsbreght and Peter, use them rhetorically to persuade her.

Van Hogendorp. In the latter's play the ghost of Louise's father – Gaspard de Coligny, murdered on Bartholomew Night in 1576, together with Louise's first husband – appears to his daughter.¹⁶ This intertext is certainly not gender-neutral. It may almost be termed 'gendered genre' par excellence, with a set gender pattern. Women act highly emotionally, whilst it is the role of men to reassure. The spectator/reader who interprets this scene in the light of the intertext can be expected to have precise expectations about the development of the plot. Although the female character is the only one who perceives the seriousness of the situation, due to a 'tragic irony' she will not be believed by her male partner.¹⁷ The panic she now experiences is a precursor of the suffering that will probably befall her later, and which she will not be able to avert in any way whatsoever. With this scene the spectator/reader may therefore begin to align Badeloch with a particular tragic female character type. The type frames a woman impotently full of ominous premonitions, afraid of the future, powerless, not capable of influencing her own fate.

In terms of premonitions, it is remarkable that Badeloch's dream spoke the truth. The priest Peter runs into the castle to announce that Amsterdam is collapsing. Gijsbreght immediately climbs a tower to get an impression of the situation. In the meantime, Badeloch abandons herself to a lament. A frequent gender-related distinction occurs here between exterior-deed-activity (male) and interior-reflection-passivity (female). In these dialectics of inside and outside the woman is usually assigned an inward-looking place, that of someone offering a commentary on what takes place outside, over which she has no control whatsoever.¹⁸ We need only think of the 'matière de Troie' – the wide-ranging cycle on the fall of Troy which flourished again in Renaissance culture, and most particularly in epic poems and on the tragic stage – to realize to what extent the female character is stereotypically associated with plaintive outbursts.¹⁹ Victims of history, marginalized and excluded from the male realm where decisions are taken and actions performed,

¹⁶ Cf. Van Gemert, 'Hoe dreef ick in myn sweet', p. 173.

¹⁷ Strengholt, 'Dromen in Vondels drama's', p. 31.

¹⁸ In Hooft's *Geeraert van Velsen*, Machtelt is at a certain point victim of a pathological 'inwardness', as a consequence of sexual violence: when she knows that her rapist Count Floris has been captured, she refuses to look out of the window to see him (ll. 382–85).

¹⁹ Cf. Smits-Veldt, *Samuel Coster*, pp. 278–94.

there is often little else for female characters to do than to lament the fall of their city or the death of their loved ones. Homer's *Iliad* and Euripides' *Hecabe* and *Troades* (*The Trojan Women*), known in the seventeenth century especially through the theatrical adaptation of Seneca's *Troades* (which Vondel had translated for the public of Amsterdam in 1626), offer exemplary illustrations of women who abandon themselves to endless lamenting in a variety of ways and in differing degrees of intensity. Likewise, in the Dutch stage of the 'Orange dramas', Louise de Coligny amply fulfils the role expected of her, that of mourner. After William's death she can abandon herself openly to her grief. Her passionate mourning is no longer even viewed negatively: she just does 'what a woman should do'.²⁰

This type of female character often has to resign herself in advance to her role as mourner, even before the death of her loved ones, about which she has ominous premonitions.²¹ This may be a case of 'proleptic lament' (as Elaine Fantham calls it, on Andromache's premature mourning of her son Astyanax, who is still alive, in Seneca's *Trojan Women*).²² The epic archetype of this is Homer's Andromache, in her last conversation with Hector in *Iliad*, Book 6. In her opinion, he will almost certainly fall in battle and that she will become a widow. After he eventually leaves, Andromache returns weeping to the royal palace, surrounded by the laments of her female servants, who already regard him as dead. The audience of *Gysbreght van Amstel* may regard Badeloch's complaint as a proleptic lament for Gysbreght too.

Badeloch draws such conviction from her pragmatic assessment of the situation, but perhaps even more from her own life experience. Since her wedding day, life has brought her nothing but misery:

When I reflect on my entire life so far,
Beginning with my wedding, no, my betrothal,
For how many tempests have I not bowed my head?
Which tower is so high, from which I could see across
The endless stormy ocean of my crowded life?²³

²⁰ Daniel Heinsius, *Auriacus*, ed. Bloemendal, p. 110.

²¹ In the prologue of Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velsen*, Machtelt says that her husband has prohibited her from wearing the dress of a widow while he is still alive (ll. 95–98).

²² Fantham, Seneca's *Troades*, p. 315.

²³ 'Als ick den ganschen tijd mijns levens overreken, / Van mijne bruiloft af, van dat ick zat verlooft: / Wat stormen zijn my niet gewaet al over 't hoofd? / Wat toren is zoo hoogh, van waer ick deze baeren / En zee kan over zien van al mijn wedervaeren?' (ll. 866–70).

Badeloch looks back on her own life, which is a never-ending series of disasters as a result of which she now has every reason to fear that her husband will die. This painful act of remembrance emphatically helps the audience to place her within a specific female typology: that of women with broad experience of suffering, who are 'survivors' of sorts, and who are continually sounding the depths of their past losses and miseries, as a result of which they constantly have to fear the worst for the future. These are women like Hecuba and Andromache in the 'matière de Troie', as well as Louise in the 'Orange plays'.²⁴ The spectator/reader can therefore see the figures of Andromache and Louise de Coligny, and of so many other – classic and modern, epic and tragic – heroines, clearly profiled behind the figure of Badeloch. Updating these antecedents gives rise to ominous portents with respect to Gijsbreght's fate and that of Badeloch.

In this intertext the female protagonist, as the victim who is left behind, is assigned only the function of mourner honouring her deceased husband. And it is precisely the role Badeloch adopts, even before Gijsbreght's death. When Arend comes back to the castle, she assaults him, asking twice if Gijsbreght is dead (ll. 1074–75), as if she knew it already. After hearing Arend's tale of how the New Church was plundered, she gives up hope of seeing him again:

A hopeless hope! Oh Gijsbrecht, dearest lord!
I'm sure he's dead, and never will we meet again.²⁵

Then the fourth chorus compares her to a turtledove on a withered branch, a common emblematic representation of widowhood.²⁶ At this moment, Badeloch hears the voice of her beloved in the distance. Her joy can hardly be expressed in words but very soon turns to sorrow once more, since Gijsbreght wishes to stay in Amsterdam with his men to fight the enemy until the bitter end, whilst dispatching her, the children and the refugees. A conflict erupts within Badeloch because she absolutely refuses to board a ship without Gijsbreght. In this confrontation between husband and wife the spectator/reader can realize a broad and prismatic intertextual field or, rather, a combination of multiple and subtly interconnected intertexts.

²⁴ Louise recalls the 'tempests' that have raged in her life (l. 1276) – the same allegorical image as in Badeloch's lament.

²⁵ 'Een hoopelooze hoop. och Gijsbreght, lieve heer, / Ick reken hem als dood, en zie hem nimmer weer' (ll. 866–68).

²⁶ Scholz-Heerspink, 'Vondel's *Gysbreght van Aemstel*', p. 572.

The first that one would think of is probably the *Aeneid*, with Creusa asking her husband Aeneas to let her and their child share in his fate, if he wishes to remain in burning Troy, then falling to her knees to implore him (*Aeneid* 2, 675). But this intertextual activation appears to be quite deceptive as Creusa plays a very marginal and passive role in the second book of the *Aeneid*. In *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, on the other hand, two highly distinct personalities clash, placed in direct opposition to one another, like in the farewell scene of *Iliad*, Book 6 between Hector and Andromache. There too the focus is on the future fate of the family – of the child and the future widow, if the husband dies in battle. As we have seen, this ‘marital intertext’ often echoes in *Gysbreght van Aemstel*, in part with the mediation of the Renaissance history plays. One could think of the long dialogues between Louise and William, as well as the conversations, lasting no less than three scenes, between Machtelt and Geeraerd in Hooft’s well-known and frequently staged *Geeraerd van Velsen* (ll. 349–87; 805–32; 1214–39).

But besides these ‘marital’ intertexts – all governed by the subordination of the female character to her husband – there is yet another intertextual field that may be opened in this respect. The point is that Gijsbreght and his wife do not agree, but are quarrelling. In this context the fierce, hostile dispute in Seneca’s *Trojan Women* comes to mind between Andromache and Ulysses, demanding that the young Astyanax be handed over for sacrifice. The importance of this intertext lies in the fact that it places the woman in a spirited confrontation, but not with her husband and therefore outside the dimension of the family. The difference with *Gysbreght* is that, in classical drama, the conflict does not take place in the intimate sphere, and that it develops counter to the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife: Andromache is confronted with a deceitful and hated enemy. This makes it the more provocative that, again and again and sometimes literally, we hear echoes from Andromache’s resistance to Ulysses in Badeloch’s responses to Gijsbreght. The intertextual allusion contributes to the disruption in part of the idyllic framework of the marital relationship. Husband and wife become slowly but clearly estranged from one another. Badeloch’s militancy is embedded in an intertext that calls to mind the gentle Andromache who, despite her gentleness, is prepared to fight for what she loves: a loving mother who would nevertheless not flinch at sacrificing her only child, for the sake of her husband or even only his ashes, out of marital fidelity. Badeloch is in fact determined to risk everything to reach her goal, which is to save her husband and retain the unity of

her family. To achieve this she does not hesitate to defy the gender conventions. She refutes Gijsbreght's accusation that she is not a good mother since she had considered the extreme possibility of sacrificing her children for the sake of her husband, under the pressure of her interlocutors (ll. 1701–02). She responds by combining the physical implications of motherhood and of being married:

I bore this child under my heart, gave birth in pain.
My husband is my heart. Without him, there's no life.²⁷

The response testifies to the forces that have produced a radical change in Badeloch's attitude after Gijsbreght's unexpected return from battle. The desperate woman who had resigned herself to her tragic fate, who had even taken on mourning for Gijsbreght and was slowly sinking into widowhood, has now changed into a warrior who is prepared to do anything to keep her head, and the head of those she loves, above water. This constitutes a break with the generic gender-intertext.

With the exception of *Andromache*, the culture text here offers only female characters with no control whatsoever over the course of the events that affect them directly. In Dutch history the plaintive, anxious Louise and the traumatized *Machtelt* – the former on the verge of illness, the latter without doubt ill – are given large amounts of text, but without creating even the slightest impression that they are driving forces for the action. They act only as victims and must resign themselves to this role from the outset. In the case of Badeloch, the spectator/reader sees her slowly rise above the intertext to become a new character who interprets her role in her own way, with a striking self-possession and assertiveness.

Still, as it becomes clear to her that her arguments will not be heeded, Badeloch begins to lose control over her emotions. She even asks Gijsbreght whether he will kill her and the children. Gijsbreght assumes he has brought the discussion to a final close by calling on his confidants (l. 1769). He thus turns away from Badeloch and directs his words to his men. Badeloch has been sidelined and is panic-stricken by what she hears and sees. Terror and powerlessness force Badeloch into an extremely emotional state, which, as we have seen, was presented in seventeenth-century theatre as something typically feminine. In the end, therefore, Badeloch is not only forced into obedience, but also into

²⁷ 'Met smarte baerde ick 't kind, en droegh 't onder 'thart. / Mijn man is 't harte zelf. 'k Heb sonder hem geen leven' (ll. 1708–09).

a state of mind that belongs much more to a generally accepted feminine pattern of behavior than the militancy she exhibited previously. No wonder, then, that Gijsbreght deals with this emotional reaction with relative ease. He appears to have regained his male authority and authoritarian voice in the face of a weakened opponent. For her part, Badeloch is no longer capable of a real response. At the end of the confrontation, her surrender seems to be complete. She says she will obey her husband, ‘as is fitting for a Christian wife’ (‘gelijck een Christe vrouwe past’, l. 1781) and even calls Gijsbreght in her despair ‘father’ (‘vader’), adding ‘it’s all my fault – don’t be so irate’ (‘t is mijn schuld, en weest zoo niet verbolgen’). She sees in him now the gendered roles of father and husband, controlling a woman’s destiny respectively before and after marriage and punishing abuses and transgressions, all rolled into one.

There is then another twist. Before the final catastrophe takes place, a celestial wonder changes everything completely: the appearance of angel Raphael as *deus ex machina*. Not only does he order Gijsbreght to leave the city, he states also clearly that Gijsbreght must listen to his wife: “So resist your faithful wife no longer [...]” (l. 1827).²⁸ In the end Badeloch’s resistance to her husband is thus placed in a new light. Her actions towards her husband were not the improper response of an irresponsible woman, but a justified plea for the best way to tackle an emergency situation. The involvement of the supernatural, which bypasses the realm of human discourse, restores dignity to the woman’s voice, and grants her a divine seal of approval. The voice that had been marginalized is restored to its central place. The ‘divine approval’ has a liberating effect on Badeloch. As a result, the spectator/reader sees her finally break out of the frame of a powerful culture text, from which she had struggled so tirelessly to escape. At the end of the previous scene this seemed to have been in vain, when the ghosts of other epic and tragic female characters became visible again behind her, embodying sombre omens regarding her fate and that of her family. For in the *Iliad* Andromache loses Hector in battle; in the Orange plays Louise becomes a widow following the murder of William; in *Geeraerd van Velsen* Machtelt is left behind alone by Geeraerd, soon to be killed; in Seneca’s *Trojan Women* the Greeks throw young Astyanax from a tower; in *Aeneid* Creusa herself disappears without a trace before the departure

²⁸ ‘Dus wederstreef niet meer uw trouwe gemaelin’ (l. 1827).

of the exiles. Yet, unlike all these scattered and diffused intertexts, Badeloch's struggle for the preservation and unity of her family can triumph.

The audience is confronted and seduced, then, by the staging of a daring model of femininity. In the beginning, this model appears to be well-embedded in intertexts that propagate determining cultural conventions, but it eventually outgrows them or breaks through them. This brings the play dangerously close to the edge of gender transgression. The end must be experienced as rewarding to the audience in many different shades. For those who can hear it, a new sound emerges from a polyphony of intertexts.