CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE HUMANIST TRADITION – MARIA STUART (1646)

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The Play, its Subject and its Sources

Maria Stuart of Gemartelde Majesteit (*Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty*) was published anonymously in 1646. According to the title page, it was printed ‘in Cologne, at the old printery’ (‘te Keulen, in d’oude druckerye’), which in fact was Vondel’s publisher Abraham de Wees. It was also this printer who paid the poet’s fine when he was condemned to pay one hundred and eighty guilders.¹ Through the Roman Catholic ‘crucified royal heroine’ and ‘crowned martyr’² Mary Stuart, who had died some sixty years earlier, Vondel indirectly but unmistakably honoured his contemporary King Charles I, and through the figure of the ambitious Elizabeth I, criticized Cromwell, the leader of Parliament and Charles’s rebellious opponent.³ For the Amsterdam Protestants and the administrators of the Amsterdam Schouwburg, this alignment with the Roman Catholic Queen of Scots was unacceptable. From their point of view, the play was polemical, blasphemous, and inflammatory, and they ensured that the court fined Vondel for his stance. The play was ostentatiously dedicated to Edward, Mary’s only great-grandson and Count Palatine of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, who, like Vondel, had recently converted to Catholicism.⁴ Vondel also

¹ The text is published in WB, 5, pp. 162–238. Kristiaan P. Aercke translated the play into English as *Mary Stuart, or Tortured Majesty*; the translations of *Maria Stuart* in this chapter are either taken from this translation or based on it.

² *Maria Stuart*, dedication to Eduard, WB, 5, p. 164, ll. 3–4: ‘Koningklijke Kruisheldin en gekroonde Martelares’.

³ See Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, p. 200; Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1, pp 416–17; Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, transl. Aercke, pp. 11–12. Aercke also points to Vondel’s simplification of the parallel opposition between Catholics and Protestants, and monarchists and republicans, *ibidem*, pp. 10–11.

⁴ See Vondel’s letter of dedication, WB 5, p. 166, ll. 51–54: ‘Ick nam de vrymoedigheid dit treurspel uwe Vorstelijcke Doorluchtigheit op te dragen, die d’eerste van uwe Grootmoeders nakomelingen haer heilige asschen en geest verquickt met den Katholijcken Roomschen Godtsdienst t’omhelzen, en haer godtvruchtige voetstappen na te

had a personal reason for this choice of subject: Mary was executed in the year of his birth, 1587. This symbolic connection between both events allowed him to celebrate his own conversion. More importantly, Mary Stuart's execution sixty years earlier offered Vondel a possibility of responding to the English political situation in his own times. Ironically, the poet himself never saw the play staged.⁵

In *Maria Stuart* Vondel chose a much-debated subject.⁶ The story was familiar enough: Mary I, Queen of Scots, or Mary Stuart (1542–1587) was six days old when her father King James V of Scotland died, and she inherited the throne. In 1558, she married Francis, Dauphin of France, who, however, after becoming King Francis II, died in 1560. She returned to Scotland, and five years later she married Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, who died in an explosion in 1567. She then married James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, who was considered Darnley's murderer. After an uprising against the couple, she was forced to abdicate the throne in favour of her one-year-old son James VI. She fled to England, seeking protection from her cousin Queen Elizabeth I. Elizabeth, however, immediately ordered her arrest: Mary presented a threat to Elizabeth's reign, since many English Roman Catholics considered her the legitimate sovereign of England. After twenty years in custody, Mary was sentenced to death for treason. On 8 February 1587, she was beheaded. Vondel's play begins on 7 February 1587, the day before the execution, and ends on Mary's final day.

Although the general subject was familiar, Vondel consulted several historical works on Mary's life in fashioning his play.⁷ Vondel acknowledged a major source on the colophon of his play: 'Testimony

volgen' ('I took the liberty to dedicate this tragedy to your Royal Highness, since you are the first of the grandchildren of your grandmother to invigorate her holy ashes and spirit by embracing Roman Catholic faith and by following in her pious footsteps.') On Vondel's conversion, see the chapter by Pollmann in this volume. As Kristiaan Aерcke put it (Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, transl. Aерcke, p. 8): '*Mary Stuart* was an act of faith on the part of its author: faith, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that the Queen of Scots was innocent; faith in the justice of the political and religious causes which the poet himself had come to embrace; and, last but not least, faith in his interpretation of the theory and practice of poetic drama.'

⁵ But it was printed. On Vondel's proofs of *Maria Stuart*, see Bloemendal, 'New Philology', elsewhere in this volume.

⁶ He may have had the wish to interfere in topical debate; on the relationship between literary culture and public opinion see Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn, 'Literary Cultures and Public Opinion'.

⁷ Since his sources are treated at length in the *Volledige Werken* (WB, 5, pp. 940–44, annotations made by C.G.N. de Vooys and C.C. van der Graft), we can be brief about them here. See also Van de Graft, 'De bronnen van Vondels treurspel *Maria Stuart*'.

from Camden, Elizabeth's historian, a Protestant' ('Getuigenis uit Kamdeen, Elisabeths historischrijver, een Protestant').⁸ This testimony is the translation of a passage from William Camden's *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabeth* (*Annals of English and Spanish History during the Reign of Elizabeth*).⁹ As always, one has to be cautious with the author's own statements, for more sources are traceable. These would later be printed in a compilation work by Samuel Jebb, *De vita et rebus gestis Mariae Scotorum reginae* (*The Life and Deeds of Mary, Queen of Scots*, 1725): a part of *L'Histoire de l'incomparable Reyne Marie Stuart* (*History of the Incomparable Queen Mary Stuart*) by the French Jesuit Nicolas Caussin,¹⁰ and Florimond Remond's *Opgang, Voortgang, en Nedergang der ketteryen dezer eeuwe* (*Rise, Advancement and Fall of the Heresies of this Age*).¹¹ Other sources for Vondel's play included in Jebb's compilation were Jacques-Auguste du Thou, *Historiae sui temporis* (*History of His Own Times*, 1604–1608) and Romoaldus Scotus, *Summarium de morte Mariae Stuartae* (*Short Report of the Death of Mary Stuart*, 1588). Except for Camden, all these authors were Roman Catholics. In these 'historical sources', Vondel – as an heir to the humanist tradition – went *ad fontes*.

Vondel's commingling of Catholic and Protestant sources did not mitigate his unabashed partisanship for the Catholic 'martyr' in the eyes of his contemporaries. But his historical ecumenicalism was intended not to inflame sectarian tensions but to bring together Catholics and Protestants under the aegis of an idealized vision of an irenic, universal Roman Catholic Church.

Vondel and the Humanist Tradition

By the time Vondel published *Maria Stuart* in 1646, tragedies in Dutch generally appeared in neo-classical form.¹² The neo-classical style originated in the humanist school plays of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that were written by the teachers of grammar and rhetoric in humanist (i.e. Latin) schools for the edification of their

⁸ WB, 5, p. 940.

⁹ The first part appeared in London, 1615. Editions of the entire work were printed Leiden 1625, London 1627, and Leiden 1639.

¹⁰ Jebb, *De vita et rebus gestis Mariae Scotorum reginae* (1725), vol. 2, pp. 53–104.

¹¹ Its subtitle runs: *Uit het Frans in 't Nederduyts vertaelt door v[ander] K[ruyssen] P Antwerpen, 1646.*

¹² See also Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, *passim*.

students in Latin style and elocution, and, most importantly, Christian ethics and the Christian (Catholic or Protestant) interpretation of historical or contemporary events. Latin school drama enjoyed an efflorescence in the Low Countries of the sixteenth century, and some of the acknowledged masters of the form, Gulielmus Gnapheus (1493–1567), Georgius Macropedius (1487–1558) and Cornelius Schonaeus (1540–1611), who honed their craft in schools in The Hague, 's-Hertogenbosch, Utrecht, and Gouda, published works that were disseminated across Northern Europe, chiefly in the lands of the Holy Roman Empire.¹³ In the sixteenth century, the comic language and form of the Roman dramatist Terence was especially popular, but as the century ended, the tragedies of Seneca were more widely imitated. In keeping with the late antique prescription that tragedy should illustrate the fall of kings or the tumultuous affairs of state, academic playwrights turned to historical events from antiquity through the early seventeenth century for their dramatic material. The rediscovery of Seneca as a stylistic model coincided with the outbreak of the Eighty Years' War, and humanist tragedians from the Catholic and Protestant camps turned the school stage into a forum for debating the politics of the day. Caspar Casparius (1569–c. 1642) and Daniel Heinsius (1580–1657) adapted Seneca for their historical tragedies on the heinous assassination of William of Orange.¹⁴ In the Catholic provinces, however, Panagius Salius (d. 1595) presented arguments against revolution, and the prolific Leuven playwright, Nicolaus Vernulaeus (1583–1649) encoded political messages of contemporary relevance about kingship, *prudentia*, and the primacy of the Roman Church over secular kings in his medieval and early modern historical dramas. Alongside these Latin-language works, Dutch-language playwrights such as Guiliam van Nieuwelandt (1584–1635) and Jacob Duym (1547–before 1624) adapted and even 'classicized' the traditional form of rhetoricians' plays to convey lessons in political deportment, and, as is well known, P. C. Hooft (1581–1647) was an early proponent of the tragic form as a vehicle for moral-philosophical and political instruction.¹⁵ At the turn

¹³ See, for instance, Bloemendal, *Spiegel van het dagelijks leven?* and Bloemendal and Norland, *Companion to Neo-Latin Drama*.

¹⁴ See Heinsius, *Auriacus*, ed. Bloemendal and Bloemendal, 'De dramatische moord op de Vader des Vaderlands'.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, pp. 278–83 on Van Nieuwelandt and pp. 215–28 on Hooft; Grootes and Schenkeveld, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Golden Age', pp. 197–98; 203–07.

of the seventeenth century, historical plays, be they in Dutch or Latin, reflected the passionate fervour of the Eighty Years' War, and the form was readily used to celebrate the heroic grandeur of the past – such as the revolt of the *Batavi*, or the defeat of the assassins of Count Floris V – in order to stoke the patriotic enthusiasm of the Dutch, and to contrast ancient and medieval moments of dire adversity with later seventeenth-century political and economic achievements.

By the late 1640s Latin historical tragedies were rapidly disappearing from the academic stage, displaced by Dutch-language translations, or even completely new historical works. Vondel's *Maria Stuart* is, to a certain extent, a conservative retreat into a once popular dramatic form. When viewed against the formal sophistication of *Gysbreght van Aemstel* and the complex characterizations of the Old Testament Joseph and his brothers in *Joseph in Dothan*, *Maria Stuart* seems unidimensional and uninteresting. Is *Maria Stuart* a step backward for Vondel? To what extent has he been able to incorporate his zeal for Catholicism into his dramatic work without sacrificing the complexities of his earlier plays? How does Vondel transform earlier humanist treatments of the subject into a worthy subject for neo-classical, Aristotelian drama? For most of the twentieth century, Vondel scholarship has betrayed a tendency to diminish the importance of works such as *Maeghden* (*Maidens*) and *Maria Stuart* in order to reclaim Vondel as a great *Dutch* (*lege*: Protestant) playwright. In the analysis that follows, we re-examine Vondel's work in light of earlier humanist dramatic treatments of Mary Stuart. Although it is unlikely that Vondel knew these works because of their limited circulation in print, the comparison will reveal the way in which Vondel transformed previous neo-Senecan explorations of the topic into a more Aristotelian tragedy of action.

Adrianus Roulerius's Stuarta Tragoedia (Stuart, a tragedy)

Stuarta tragoedia,¹⁶ written by the Catholic neo-Latin poet and priest Adrianus Roulerius or Adrien de Roulers (d. 1597) is one of the first tragedies on Mary Stuart's death ever written.¹⁷ This Roulerius was

¹⁶ Roulerius, *Stuarta tragoedia*, ed. Woerner; see also Woerner, 'Die älteste Maria Stuart-Tragödie'; Kipka, *Maria Stuart*, pp. 94–103; Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, pp. 193–95.

¹⁷ See Kipka, *Maria Stuart*, pp. 94–103 and Woerner's introduction. The very first play was the *Maria Stuarta tragoedia* by Jean de Bordes, printed in Milan, 1589, and

born in Lille, where he also died. He became a priest, who taught at the Benedictine Abbey of Marchienne at Douai and later became a vicar and the rector of the seminary in his native city.¹⁸ As a teacher of *poesis* at the Douai Abbey he wrote his Latin tragedy, which was performed by his pupils on 13 September 1593. The play, the full title of which runs *Stuarta tragoedia sive Caedes Mariae serenissimae Scot[orum] Reginae in Anglia perpetrata* (*Stuart, a Tragedy, or the Murder of Mary, the Most Illustrious Queen of Scots, Committed in England*), was thus performed and published only six years after the execution.

The play is well-documented and based on historical sources, even down to the smallest detail.¹⁹ Roulerius mentions them himself, but as Woerner, the editor of *Stuarta*, has shown, some sources were mere 'name-dropping', since they did not even treat the final events.²⁰ The humanist will have used the 'Brevis chronologia vitae et gloriosi per martyrium exitus Mariae Stuartae' ('Short Chronology of the Life and Glorious Martyr's Death of Mary Stuart'), which was a supplement to the first edition of Romoaldus Scotus's *Mariae Stuartae [...] supplicium et mors pro fide catholica constantissimae* (*The Punishment and Death for the Catholic Faith of the Most Constant Mary Stuart*) of 1587.²¹

twice produced before May 1590; see Phillips, 'Jean de Bordes' "Maria Stuarta tragoe-dia" and Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, pp. 189–93.

¹⁸ On him M.A. Nauwelaerts, *Moderne Encyclopedie van de Wereldliteratuur*, 8, p. 177; Roulerius, *Maria Stuarta*, ed. Woerner, pp. iii–xx; A. Roersch, *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, 20, coll. 219–21.

¹⁹ Woerner, in his edition of *Stuarta tragoedia*, pp. iii–iv: 'Er verwertet bis ins kleinste eine Flugschrift von Augenzeugen über die Enthauptung, ja er gewinnt die besten, fast realistisch anmutenden Dialogstellen seines Werkes, wie die Gespräche Marias mit Buckhurst, Beale und Paulet, durch sorgfältige Nachbildung des eigenen brieflichen Berichtes der Königin über die Vorgänge in Fotheringay an den Erzbischof von Glasgow.' ('Right down to the last detail, he uses a pamphlet about the beheading written by witnesses, and indeed he attains to the best, nigh on realistic-seeming dialogues of his oeuvre, such as Mary's discussions with Buckhurst, Beale and Paulet, through careful emulation of the queen's actual letter to the Archbishop of Glasgow on the events in Fotheringay.')

²⁰ Woerner in *Stuarta tragoedia*, p. viii: 'Die drei [John Lesly von Ross, *De origine, moribus et rebus gestis Scotorum* (Rome, 1578) Natalis Comes, *Universae historiae sui temporis libri XXX* (Venice, 1581) or Gilbertus Genebradsu, *Chronographiae libri IV* (Cologne, 1584)] also werden von dem Professor der Rhetorik lediglich aus Gelehrteneiligkeit vorgehoben. Und es fragt sich, ob er sie je geöffnet hat.' ('Thus the three are put forward by the Professor of Rhetoric merely for reasons of academic vanity. And it has to be asked whether he ever opened them.')

²¹ Romoaldus Scotus, *Mariae Stuartae Scotorum reginae, principis catholicae, nuper ab Elisabetha regina et ordinibus Angliae post novendecim annorum captivitatem in arce Fodringhay interfectae supplicium et mors pro fide catholica constantissimae. In Anglia*

Another of Roulerius's direct sources was some letters of Mary Stuart's, compiled by Adam Blackwood in 1587, *Martyre de la royne d'Escoce* (*Martyrdom of the Queen of Scotland*).²² As a humanist, Roulerius went *ad fontes*; as an apologist, however, he selected his sources carefully.²³

As a literary work the tragedy is modelled on the five-act scheme of Seneca's tragedies, and moulded into his lofty style as well. In the first act Roulerius makes the ghost of Henry VIII appear from hell. In the second scene he depicts Elizabeth as a monstrous *malefactor* in a dialogue with 'Dudelaeus' (Dudley, i.e. Leicester). This criminal creature is contrasted with the innocence of Mary in Act II, shown in a conversation with her doctor. Her only 'sin' is the Scots' Catholic faith.²⁴ She is told that the court is formed and will meet soon. The main scene of the third act is a discussion between Mary, Buckhurst, Beale, and Paulet. She ponders on the injustice that will be done to her, now 'impiety has triumphed over the good'.²⁵ Mary's innocent martyrdom is highlighted

vernacula lingua primum conscripta, [...] Additis succinctis quibusdam animadversionibus et notis, brevisque totius reginae eiusdem vitae Chronologia, ex optimis quibusque auctoribus collecta (Cologne: Godefridus Kempensis, 1587). A second edition, without the 'Brevis chronologia', was published in Ingolstadt (at Wolfgang Eder's printery), 1588.

²² The second edition has the title: *Martyre de la royne d'Escoce, douairiere de France, Contentant le vray discours des trahisons à elle faictes à la suscitation d'Elisabeth Angloise, par lequel les mensonges, calomnies et faulx accusations dressees contre ceste tres-vertueuse, tres-Catholique et tres-illustre Princesse sont esclarcies et son innocence averée. Avec son oraison funebre prononcée en l'Elgise nostre dame de Paris. Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum eius* (*Martyrdom of the Queen of Scotland, Dowager of France, containing the true story of the treason committed to her on the initiative of Elizabeth of England, in which the lies, calumnies and false accusations brought forward against this highly virtuous, highly Catholic and highly illustrious Princess are elucidated and her innocence is proved. With her funeral oration delivered in the Church Notre Dame of Paris. The death of his saints is dear to God*) (Edinburgh [= Paris], Jean Nafield, 1588). Mary Stuart was a patron for this Adam Blackwood (1539–1613); she enabled him to study at Paris and Toulouse. Blackwood taught philosophy at Paris. At the time of Mary's death, he was Judge at the Court of Poitiers on her behalf. Woerner, in his edition (pp. xii–xvii), shows exactly which source inspired each scene.

²³ As Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, pp. 194–95, states: '[he] relied heavily, if not exclusively, on the principal propaganda documents produced by Mary's supporters on the continent, and particularly on those written by Adam Blackwood'. These texts were particularly available in Douai, the centre of Counter-Reformation, because of the mercantile connections between Douai and England, and because in this city the first English seminary was established; see Kipka, *Maria Stuart im Drama der Weltliteratur*, p. 95.

²⁴ Roulerius, *Stuarta*, l. 449: 'fidei professus dogma Romanae Scotus' (the Scots believing in the dogma of Catholic faith). The quotations are from Woerner's edition; unless stated otherwise, the translations are my own.

²⁵ Roulerius, *Stuarta*, l. 770: 'Vicit impietas bonos'.

by a comparison to David: 'Thus Saul in madness wreaked havoc on Abraham's descendant David; but he was able to flee the threat of the ruler who chased him. For us in our captivity there is no window open, no Michol who can let us go.'²⁶ But she is prepared to die for 'ancient faith'.²⁷ In the fourth act she is told that Elizabeth actually wants her death. Her desperate position is underlined by Paulet's warnings not to try and flee. In the fifth act the scaffold is ready, even though it is not visible throughout the act. Two maidens relate the beheading itself, whereupon the executioner brings Mary's head in.

Just as in Seneca's *Thyestes*, Roulerius opens the play with the monologue of a ghost, and just as in Seneca's dramas, the first four acts are concluded with a chorus song. The style and metres of these songs, however, are derived from Virgil and Horace, while the other parts of the acts are written in the iambic trimeters of Seneca's plays. In line with his classical model, Roulerius viewed the protagonist more as a victim of fate and political machinations.²⁸ But he was also convinced that piety with regard to Mary Stuart involved assailing the Protestant heresy that had martyred her.²⁹ The action of *Stuarta* concentrates on the last few hours of Mary's life and on her friends' and foes' efforts to save her or to persuade Elizabeth to have Mary executed, and, finally, on Mary's fate – and the freedom of her soul to be a voluntary martyr:

Do you have the same power over my soul as you
Mistreat my body? And will you prohibit me to get
A foretaste of my heavenly Father's love, in sweet hope?
I only place my hope on that. The God who shed
His blood for me, will see from heaven my blood
Shed for Him, and for the sake of the ancient rites
Of the great Church.³⁰

²⁶ Roulerius, *Stuarta*, ll. 901–05: 'Sic in Abramiden Saul / Davida demens saeviit motu truci; / Sed ille tecto fugit instantis minas / Potentioris; nulla captivis patet / nobis fenestra, nulla qua emittat Michol.'

²⁷ Roulerius, *Stuarta*, ll. 906–13: 'Te, rex paterque caelitum, testem invoco, / quem praeterire consili nostri potest / Nihil: subire praesto, quodcumque imperi / Deiecta mulier culmine alienum ad iugum / Exsulque potis est, millies decies neci / Adsum parata, si tot animabus feras / Abolere pestes impiae haereseos genus / Atque revocare liceat antiquam fidem.' (You, King and Father in Heaven, whom none of our thoughts escapes, are my witness: I am ready to suffer whatever a woman who is cast down from the top of power under another's yoke and who is an exile, can suffer, and I am prepared to die hundreds of thousands of times, if it is possible to destroy impious heresy, that curse that assails so many souls, and to restore ancient faith.)

²⁸ Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, p. 200, n. 105.

²⁹ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, p. 193.

³⁰ Roulerius, *Stuarta*, ll. 808–14: 'An quam male exercetis in corpus, foris / Animae est potestas? Siccine erga me patris / Praecipere studium spe bona aetherie vetes? / Illa,

As such, the history of Mary Stuart illustrated for the students and their audience, and indirectly for the audience ‘out there’, the necessity to choose sides.

Jacobus Zevecotius, Maria Stuarta / Maria Graeca

Zevecotius's *Maria Stuarta* was never published as such. Before the publication its author, Jacobus Zevecotius or Jacob van Zevecote (1596–1642), removed any allusion to the history of the Queen of Scots.³¹ He made the protagonist a Byzantine princess, the wife of the Emperor Constantinus VII, and published the tragedy as *Maria Graeca* (*The Greek Mary*, 1623). This remake had to do with his conversion to Protestantism.³² He changed the play once more after his migration from Ghent in the southern Netherlands to the Dutch city of Leiden in 1624, where he lived under the protection of men such as his relative Daniel Heinsius. The revisions to the *Maria Graeca* stemming from this period were particularly extensive.

It is telling that the play could rather easily be changed from a Roman Catholic tragedy into a Protestant or even Reformed one. This has to do with his literary model, the tragedy in pure Senecan style *Auriacus, sive Libertas Saucia* (*Orange, or Liberty Wounded*, 1602) of his kinsman Daniel Heinsius. The question is whether Senecan literary imitation prevailed over topicality, even though the ‘Argumentum’ of the *Maria Stuarta* version is explicit:

Mary Stuart, once the wife of the King of France Francis II, ruler of Scotland, and true Queen of all Great Britain (declared to be illegitimate by her father Henry VIII because of Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn), having taken refuge in England after having suffered several

illa spero. Qui Deus pro me suum / Fudit cruorem, fundier pro se meum / Ecclesiaeque veteribus magnae sacris / Caelo videbit.’ The translations from Latin are made by Bloemendal.

³¹ On him W.J.C. Buitendijk in *Moderne Encyclopedie van de Wereldliteratuur*, 10, pp. 341–42; IJsewijn in his synoptic edition of the play in *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, pp. 258–64.

³² For instance, he changed the names: ‘Maria Stuarta’ into ‘Maria’, ‘Haeresis’ (‘Heresy’) into ‘Haeresis Iconoclastarum’ (‘Heresy of Iconoclasts’), and ‘Joanna’ into ‘Melicerta’, but also some allusions such as ‘Haeresis / Foecunda’ (‘widespread heresy’, ll. 11–12), which he turned into ‘omnium / Libido’ (‘lust of all’) and ‘nulla foedifragae fidem / Damnaret Anglae’ (‘no woman would condemn the faith of the treacherous Anglian Queen’, ll. 115–16) into ‘nulla damnaret sui / Fidem mariti’ (‘no woman would condemn the faith of her husband’).

tokens of injustice, having been held in custody for twenty years by order of the same Elizabeth in the castle of Fotheringay, is beheaded by the sword.³³

In contrast to Roulerius's play, in Zevecotius's *Maria Stuarta* the characters are abstracted from historical persons, bearing rather 'timeless' names, except for the protagonist 'Mary Stuart'. The others were called Heresy, Joanna, Old Man, Headman, Messenger, Faith and Chorus.³⁴ In the adaptation, the 'Chorus of fugitive English men and women' became a 'Chorus of Greek men and women who fled the tyranny of Constantinus and the heresy of Theodora'.³⁵

In the Mary Stuart version, Mary expresses an acquiescent, Stoic-Christian worldview. It is as if Vondel's irenic desire to have done with schism is given an equivalent here in the transhistorical desire not to take sides but to contemplate:

Father, will at last that day come that I
 Begged for so long in prayers, that last day
 Of my sorrow, on which You will give me
 For the lost Scottish crown an eternal one?
 Recede, false world, now I am bound to die,
 I have no debts to you anymore; everything the fatal day
 Will take from my remains, is stolen from me by life.
 And before death, my raging, perfidious cousin ordered that
 I should be bereft of the purple, the sceptre, and my belongings.³⁶

Being a creative imitation of its model, Heinsius's *Auriacus, sive Libertas saucia* (1602), the tragedy ends with a funeral lamentation. Whereas

³³ IJsewijn, 'Jacobus Zevecotius: *Maria Stuarta* / *Maria Graeca*', p. 275: 'Maria Stuarta, Francisci 2. Galliae regis olim coniunx, Scotici sceptri domina, ac totius maioris Britanniae (ob Elisabetham, Annae Bolaenae filiam, iussu patris Henrici viii. illegitimam declaratam) vera princeps, in Anglia profuga post varias perpressas iniurias et viginti annorum carceres iussu eiusdem Elisabethae in arce Fodringana securi percutitur.'

³⁴ IJsewijn, 'Jacobus Zevecotius: *Maria Stuarta* / *Maria Graeca*', p. 275: 'Maria Stuarta, Haeresis, Joanna, Senex, Comes Executor, Nuncius, Fides, Chorus.'

³⁵ IJsewijn, 'Jacobus Zevecotius: *Maria Stuarta* / *Maria Graeca*', p. 282: 'Chorus Anglorum et Anglarum fugientium', 'chorus Graecorum et Graecarum tyrannidem Constantini et Theodora haeresim fugientium'.

³⁶ Zevecotius, *Maria Stuarta*, ed. IJsewijn, ll. 1009–17: 'Ergone, Genitor, illa tam lentis diu / Petita votis imminet tandem dies / Mei laboris summa, qua pro perdita / Scotiae corona, non relinquendam dabis? / Abscede fallax Munde, nil ultra tibi / Moritura debeo, quidquid a liquis dies / Fatalis aufert, vita praeripuit mihi; / Et ante funus purpura, sceptro, bonis / Carere iussit neptis infidae furor.' In the *Maria Graeca* version the words 'Scotiae' and 'neptis infidae' are replaced by 'mundi' (world) and 'coniugis diri' (my awful husband) respectively.

Heinsius made the character of Liberty mourn William of Orange, Zevecotius has the lamentation performed by the Chorus and by Faith (Fides). The entire world and even the cosmos itself should mourn this deceased monarch. This too is a martyr drama, but its form is Senecan, and its scope is not so much pagan-fatalistic as Christian.

Humanist Poetics: Gerardus Joannes Vossius, Poeticae Institutiones

In 1647 the professor of history at the *Athenaeum illustre* in Amsterdam and a good friend of Vondel's, Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577–1649), published his *Poeticarum institutionum libri III* (*Institutes of Poetics, in Three Books*).³⁷ It offered no 'new' literary theory; rather it was a compilation of everything known about poetics from Antiquity and his own time. For instance, both the Horatian principles of *utile dulci* and probability, and the Aristotelian unities and the theory of *katharsis* are treated. Its major contribution to poetical theory is, then, the structuring and arrangement of known poetical ideas.

It is tempting to read Vondel's play alongside this manual, since he and Vossius were close friends and valued each other.³⁸ Vondel wrote poems of consolation for his friend at the death of his son Dionysius and his daughter Cornelia. They discussed matters of poetics, and the professor's rich library was always open to the studious Vondel. The poet dedicated his *Gebroeders* (*Brothers*, 1640) to the humanist professor, who in his turn highly praised this play and assured its author that he had written for eternity.³⁹

The *Poeticae institutiones* is divided into three parts. Part 1 treats poetic fiction and invention, character, meaning, order, style and metre. In this part, the classification of poetry according to the medium (language, harmony and rhythm), the object (good or bad people) and the mode of representation (narrative, dialogue or mixed) are treated, as well as the division of the genres. Genres are discussed in the second part, beginning with drama: tragedy, comedy and other

³⁷ On Vossius, see Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius* and *idem, Leven en werk van Gerardus Joannes Vossius*. See also Vossius, *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres / Institutes of Poetics in Three Books*, ed. Bloemendal.

³⁸ See Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius*, pp. 260–63; 305–06. It is somewhat remarkable that the Roman Catholic Vondel and the Protestant Vossius were close friends, but Vossius was quite moderate; they were also both born in the German Empire (Cologne and Heidelberg respectively).

³⁹ Brandt, *Leven van Vondel*, ed. Verwijs and Hoeksma, p. 187: 'scribis aeternitati'.

dramatic genres. The third part is devoted to epic and other genres. Since Vondel in his *Maria Stuart* renders the protagonist both a tragic and an epic heroine, we will concentrate on two issues: Vossius's discussion of tragedy and his treatment of the epic hero.⁴⁰

Vondel's Maria Stuart, The Humanist Tradition and Beyond

Vondel was part of the humanist tradition. As a beginning dramatist, he wrote plays imitating the style and structure of Senecan drama. In the mid 1640s, he became acquainted with Aristotelian poetics with their mixed characterization of the hero. For this reason, in the dedicatory preface to *Maria Stuart*, Vondel felt the need to defend the tragic heroine's status as neither virtuous nor evil. However, his attempt to disguise his enthusiasm for the martyred queen only cast her moral qualities in even greater relief.

Aristotle's laws of the theatre hardly allow a character who is so completely innocent, as perfect as she is, to serve as the protagonist of a tragedy [...]. My solution for this problem was to shroud Stuart's innocence and the justice of her cause with the fog of contemporary gossip, slander, and evil, so that her Christian and royal virtues that are obscured now and then would shine forth even brighter.⁴¹

This may have been intended to serve as an apologia for his non-Aristotelian approach to his protagonist, but given the unpopularity of Mary Stuart in the Protestant Netherlands Vondel's expectations may have been overly optimistic.

The hagiographical tone of the last hours of Mary Stuart recalled the panegyric representation of Mary's life and death by earlier humanist playwrights. In the plays by Roulerius and Zevecotius, Mary had been a heroine without fear or reproach. She is portrayed as a woman who

⁴⁰ In accordance with Aristotle, Vossius associates tragedy and epic in *Poeticae institutiones*, 3, 2, 4: 'Epic, too, only has to do with plot, characters, diction and thought, but tragedy observes both these four and moreover spectacle and melody. Hence Aristotle writes: "Anyone who knows about tragedy, good and bad, knows all about epic, too, since tragedy has all the elements of epic poetry, though the elements of tragedy are not all present in the epic."'

⁴¹ WB 5, p. 165, ll. 30–38: 'De tooneelwetten lijden by Aristoteles naulicks, datmen een personaedje, in alle deelen zoo onnozel, zoo volmaect, de treurrol laet spelen; [...] waarom wy, om dit mangel te boeten, Stuarts onnozelheit en de rechtvaerdigheit van haere zaeck met den mist der opspraecke en lasteringe en boosheit van dien tijdt benevelen, op dat haer Kristelijcke en Koninklijcke deugden, hier en daer wat verdonckert, te schooner moghten uitschijnen.'

shows a flawless perseverance in her final hours, aware that she will exchange a temporary crown for an eternal one. Both authors portrayed her as a moral example for their pupils, so that they might learn Latin and be imbued with pious zeal. Moreover, the history of Mary, Queen of Scots was dramatized to serve as Catholic propaganda in the battle against heresy. It was not accidental that Roulerius made the Chorus of captive boys and girls compare the evils in Scotland resulting from neglect of religion with the apostasy of the Jews.⁴²

As a result of the authors' overtly didactic and political purposes, their protagonist became a rather 'flat' character, who is unquestionably a blameless martyr. The humanist Mary Stuart plays could reflect the pamphlet literature disseminated by Mary's ardent supporters and especially by Blackwood.⁴³ Vondel, as a more Baroque author, can use Mary to symbolize his own conversion to Catholicism. Her mistreatment could at the same time evoke the turmoil of Cromwell's revolution, so that 'the fires of Vondel's heated defence of Mary Stuart were not so much stoked by her tragic death almost sixty years before [...] as by contemporary events in England'.⁴⁴ But what is more, in his preface Vondel constructed an elaborate parallel between Christ's Passion and Mary's final hours. Mary dies as a sacrificial lamb for her people, just as Jesus did. She celebrates a 'Last Supper' with her maidens, she forgives her enemies and she commends her soul to God.⁴⁵ As such, Maria's fate served as a post-figuration of the Passion. Moreover, she is an exemplary Queen, rendering *Maria Stuart* a '*Fürstenspiegel*' ('mirror of rulers') too: 'Sovereignly and patiently, she bent her shoulders under the cross, and served thus as an example to all Christian rulers'.⁴⁶ Vondel combines this exemplary function with her royal ancestors,

⁴² Cf. Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, p. 194. This is explicitly summarized in the 'Synopsis' that preceded the play; see Roulerius, *Stuarta*, ed. Woerner, p. 8: '[...] captivorum chors iuvenum et puellarum mala Scotiae religionibus neglectis comparet veteris Iudaeae malis.'

⁴³ Cf. Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, p. 191.

⁴⁴ Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, p. 200; Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1, pp. 416–17.

⁴⁵ WB, 5, p. 164, ll. 10–12: 'Weinigen streecken hier die kroon van (Gode en zijn eere ten dienst) een zichtbare kroon en dit leven te versmaden. In de heilige boecken wort Moses en Kristus alleen die lof toegeschreven.' (Not many people can boast that they have spurned on earth, for the sake of God and religion, a crown, or even life itself. As an example in the holy books, you will find only Moses and Christ who have thus distinguished themselves.)

⁴⁶ WB, 5, p. 165, ll. 24–26: 'Zy buight haer vrye schouders gewilligh, geduldigh onder het kruis, ten spiegel van alle Kriste Vorsten.'

thus stressing the righteousness of her claim to the throne and consequently her innocence of the charges of revolution brought against her by Elizabeth.

Vondel also equates Mary Stuart and Mary, the mother of Jesus. According to Vondel, it is 'perfectly just' that the martyred queen 'is seated at the feet of Mary. For Mary's name she bore very worthily, and she resembled her far more than any other queen; indeed, like Mary, she carried her cross no less than twenty years, and she, too, was pierced with the daggers of solemn vicissitude.'⁴⁷ In the play itself, the chorus of Mary's ladies-in-waiting add to this parallel by highlighting the resemblance of the New Testament Mary going to see her cousin Elizabeth, and Mary Stuart seeking refuge from her homonymous cousin.⁴⁸

As indicated above, Vondel was aware that the protagonist of his play was too innocent in the eyes of God and the Church to really be an Aristotelian tragic hero who was both virtuous and flawed. Therefore, in the letter of dedication to Edward of Bavaria he made a feeble attempt to weaken Mary's excellence. But he also added to her 'humanity' by having Mary ascribe her untimely end to her own sinfulness:

My own sins were to blame, they deserved such a penalty.
Most warnings go unheeded; he from whom God withdraws His
Protection does not see the trap that lies before his feet.
You become wise through disasters, and notice too late
That you are floating at your neighbour's mercy.⁴⁹

Later, however, she declares once more her own innocence ('I, devout and blameless'; 'ick, vroom en zonder smette'), which is perhaps a political, but certainly a moral and spiritual innocence. She avows her sins in Vondel's weak attempt to make her an Aristotelian character, but all in all, she is perfect. 'By likening his heroine to the Virgin Mary, Vondel had acquitted her of all evil, including the most grievous of all

⁴⁷ WB, 5, p. 165, ll. 27–28: 'aen de voeten van Maria, wiens naem zy zoo waerdigh gedragen heeft.'

⁴⁸ This choral ode is an imitation of poem 16 in Romoaldus Scotus's collection *Summarium de morte Mariae Stuartae* (Ingolstadt: Sartorius, 1588). The poem and the chorus hint at the same comparison of the two Marys by stating that both had sought comfort from their kinswoman Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:39–45), although with contrasting success.

⁴⁹ Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 336–40, WB, 5, p. 181: 'Mijn schulden hadden schult, die zuclc een straf verdienden. / Men waerschuwt al vergeefs: wien Godt zijn hoede ontzeit, / Bemerckt den valstrick niet, die voor zijn voeten leit: / Men wort door rampen wijs, en ondervint te spade, / Hoe los men henedrijve op 's nagebuurs genade.'

human afflictions: original sin.⁵⁰ But this portrayal of her innocence eventually serves a secular purpose. By these religious parallels, the injustice of Mary's foes and of her martyrdom is underscored, and her political goals – and indirectly that of Charles I against Cromwell's attacks – are justified.

Mary's martyrdom in *Maria Stuart* does not attain the complete otherworldliness of the Jesuit martyrs, but attests to the proud attitude of a dishonoured queen. Ultimately she never forgives her enemies; in fact, she is not able to relinquish the throne. Indeed, she cannot keep her stoic calm, nor the resignation of the world she expresses in the lines: 'What is the world, with all its vanities, but smoke? / An instant, a naught!'⁵¹ Although she even consoles the Chorus bemoaning her imminent death 'Entrust yourselves to God, for He'll make good the loss. The king of kings will protect and feed His children'⁵² later on in the play she will declare her sovereignty, without stoic calm, without Christian endurance, and without any sign of Christ's mercy, when she begs the earls to grant the presence of some confidants at her execution:

[...] I beg by the eternally living God,
Do not refuse the niece of Henry the Seventh,
Elizabeth's kinswoman for eternity,
Surviving heiress of all France and Valois,
Anointed Queen of Scotland, this simple request now,
A request made in distress, which no savage Turk, no Mongol
Has ever refused a Christian!⁵³

According to Vossius – in Aristotelian tradition – the tragic hero or heroine should occupy the middle ground between good and evil. Another requirement, one in line with tragedy, concerns the social

⁵⁰ Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, p. 202; he mentions as an example of a Christian author who considers Mary to be free from original sin Augustine's *De natura et gratia*, 36.42.

⁵¹ Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1242–43, WB, 5, p. 219: 'De weerelt is maer rook met al haer ydelheden, / Een oogenblick, een niet.'

⁵² Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1250–51, WB, 5, p. 219: 'Betrouwt op Godt, die kan uw schade licht vergoeden: / Die groote Koningk zal zijn kinders wel behoeden.'

⁵³ Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1402–08: 'Ick bezweer u by dien eeuwigh levenden, / Ontzeght toch nu de nicht van Henderick den Zevenden, / Elizabeths verwante en maeghschap voor altoos, / Een boedelhoudster van gansch Vranckrijck en Valois, En dit gezalfde hooft der Schotten niet een bede, / Een nootbe, van geen Turck, noch Tarter, woest van zede, / Oit Kristensch mensche ontzeit.' Cf. Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, p. 203.

status of epic characters: 'Persons should preferably be grand and illustrious, like heroes, kings and rulers.'⁵⁴ Both represent heroic, outstanding and weighty actions.⁵⁵ In an epic, the heroes are often virtuous, such as Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*. However, first and foremost an epic hero must be consistent.⁵⁶ Another marked difference between the two genres is that, while epic represents people through narrative, tragedy does so through action, although epic 'commonly refers to mixed poetry because the epic poet introduces persons who use direct speech.'⁵⁷ Due to historical circumstances, then, one could argue that Vondel has infused tragedy with epic.

Vondel did follow Aristotle's rule that a protagonist should be neither virtuous nor evil – as expressed in Vossius's *Poeticae institutiones* and probably discussed by the scholar and the poet – more than he had wished to. The presentation of the protagonist, however, went much further than school drama had done. Presentation became representation – of Mary, Queen of Scots murdered by Elizabeth, of Roman Catholicism challenged by Protestantism, of the rebellion of Cromwell against Charles; in sum, representations of several forms of legitimate and illegitimate sovereignty. Presentation became representation, which is characterized by likeness or resemblance between two phenomena; by genesis, the presentation of one phenomenon arousing the other; by identity or correspondence; or by embodiment.⁵⁸ In humanist Latin drama, the representing and represented subjects remained distinct, since plays were mainly part of a pedagogical programme that aimed at pupils learning Latin and being shaped morally. Its public was always relatively limited and part of the pedagogical project. In this situation Latin drama played a role in public debate, indirectly, behind and beyond its primary educational function. That is to say that the

⁵⁴ Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones*, 3, 1, 3: 'Personae potissimum sunt grandes et illustres, ut heroes, reges, duces.'

⁵⁵ Cf. Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones*, 3, 2, 1.

⁵⁶ Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones*, 3, 5, 5: 'But such a character has to be sustained to the end as it has been fashioned at the beginning. This is Horace's advice. [...] The poet [...] relates everything in such a way that there seems to be no inconsistency in a character.' (Talis vero ad extremum servanda est persona qualis ab initio fuerit constituta. Monet hoc Horatius [*Ars Poetica*, 126–27]. [...] Poeta [...] ita omnia exsequitur ut nihil pugnans in persona videatur.)

⁵⁷ Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones*, 3, 1, 9: '[...]epopoeiam vulgo ad mixtam referri poesin eo quod poeta epicus personas etiam directa oratione loquentes inducat.' Cf. *ibidem*, 3, 2, 3.

⁵⁸ On this see Korsten, 'Macropedius' experimental plays'.

dramatic situation, stressing the pre- or post-figuration of the protagonist, created a distance and distinction between object and image so that drama could work indirectly as a consequence. In Vondel's *Maria Stuart*, post- or pre-figuration and post- or pre-figured coincide to a far larger extent due to the more publicly direct operation of theatre, the sacrosanct character of Baroque theatre and its desired affective pull. It was this iconic aspect that turned Vondel's dramas into dangerous public vehicles. To be sure, *Maria Stuart* was not performed on stage. It was not made part of public opinion through direct staging, whereas many earlier humanist dramas were. But *Maria Stuart* was made public through the printing of the play and as such the work presented a character that was not to be explored pedagogically, but that embodied, artificially, a divine presence. Whether in the minds of audiences reading the printed version or on stage, the actor or actress playing Mary became identical to the Mother of Christ – and through that identification to Charles I and to Roman Catholicism. In this way, as Vossius observed, drama is potentially more immediate than other genres, for following the Greek philosopher, a poet represents actions rather than characters.⁵⁹

Aristotle also requires that tragedy arouse pity and fear to bring about a *katharsis* in the audience. The audience must be able to identify – again! – with the characters, especially with the protagonist. For this (rhetorical) reason, the protagonist should be neither entirely spotless nor extremely bad; he or she must exhibit the flaws inherent in all human beings. This is the main result of the turn from Senecan to Aristotelian drama. Neo-Senecan playwrights revelled in the rhetorical exploration of the emotions and placed their characters in a reactive mode; in Aristotelian neo-classical drama, action rather reaction or passivity is central to the representation. In the humanist Mary Stuart plays of Roulerius and Zevecotius, drama provides the occasion for stasis and reflection; in Vondel's martyr play, Maria re-enacts the *passio Christi* in thoughtful preparation for her death.

Vondel is clearly not writing for schoolboys, nor is his Mary Stuart a fearless or irreproachable heroine. She is simultaneously the embodiment of Christ and a flawed human being beset by sin – even if she is morally and religiously superior to others. Vondel wished to legitimize

⁵⁹ Vossius, *Poeticae institutiones*, 1, 2. Vossius deals with character – and the Aristotelian middle course – in 1, 5. There Vossius combines Aristotle's law with the rhetorical – Horatian – demand of appropriateness.

political action, or discussed questions of sovereignty,⁶⁰ so that Mary Stuart could become immortal, not by Christ's grace, but by her act of imitation of Christ, an imperfect but thereby all the more convincing imitation. This delineation of her character, and the more direct role ascribed to theatre in the seventeenth century as the locus for political debate and action, made *Maria Stuart* a dangerous drama, and its poet a potentially subversive force in Calvinist Amsterdam.

⁶⁰ See Korsten, *Vondel belicht* and *idem*, *Sovereignty as Inviolability*.