CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

NEW PHILOLOGY – VARIANTS IN ADAM IN BALLINGSCHAP
(1664)

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Adam in Ballingschap, its Genesis and First Readers

When Vondel wrote his Adam in ballingschap (Adam Exiled) in 1664, its model had been published more than sixty years earlier and its author – who had been a good friend of Vondel’s – had been dead for almost twenty years. It was in 1601 when a young Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) wrote and published his Adamus exul (Adam Exiled), on the theme of the first and foremost human tragedy, the loss of paradise.¹ Or, as Grotius himself put it in the letter of dedication to Henry of Bourbon: ‘the fall of Man from his pure and felicitous state into his present misery.’²

The subject of both tragedies is what John Milton called ‘man’s first disobedience / And the fruit of that forbidden tree / Whose mortal taste brought death into the world / And all our woe, with loss of Eden’, told in Genesis 1–3 and by Flavius Josephus.³ And seemingly the object of both plays is ‘to justify the ways of God to men’, as Milton put it in his famous poem on the same subject, Paradise Lost (1667, 1, 26).⁴ Vondel openly acknowledges his debt to Grotius’s tragedy in the letter of dedication. He wrote a creative imitation, in which he made ample use of amplification. Whereas Grotius employed only one Sathan, for example, Vondel introduced three ‘hellish’ characters, and whereas Grotius presented only one angelus, Vondel replaced this angel with three of

¹ Grotius, Sacra in quibus Adamus exul tragoedia, The Hague (Albertus Henricus) 1601; Grotius, Adamus exul, ed. Meulenbroek.
³ Flavius Josephus, Antiquititates Judaicae (Jewish Antiquities) 1, 1, 4 [40–51].
⁴ Cf. Tate, Milton’s Paradise Lost and Vondel’s Adam in ballingschap; Nyquist, ‘Reading the Fall’.
them.\(^5\) He also changed the role of Eve, who in Grotius’s play had been the evildoer par excellence, even before the Fall. Vondel’s Eve is an ideal woman at the beginning, one that becomes a *malefactrix* only at the end.\(^6\) Furthermore, Vondel added a wedding party, which could have resulted from his wish to write a tragedy with a Sophoclean *peripeteia*, in contrast to his Senecan model.\(^7\)

During his lifetime, only two editions were published, both in 1664 at the same printer’s office. After Vondel’s death, other editions appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, separate ones in 1698 and 1736, and an edition as part of *Alle de treurspelen (All the Tragedies)* in 1720.\(^8\) Naturally it was included in all subsequent editions of the collected or complete works. It was not until 1910 that *Adam in ballingschap* was performed in Holland;\(^9\) Vondel himself never saw the play on stage.

Contrary to Grotius’s play, Vondel’s tragedy aroused some controversy. Three poems were promptly published in attack: one by Vondel’s enemy Jacob Steendam, probably in 1664; one by Jan Pietersz. Beelthouwer (a good friend of Spinoza) in 1664 and 1671; and one by the otherwise unknown Meynarda Verboom, also in 1664. The latter took up the defence of Eve and was a gender reader even before the term existed.\(^10\)

**Vondel and the Book**

In contrast to Shakespeare, who as a theatre professional was interested only in performances of his plays, Vondel engaged in the printing of his

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\(^9\) A free (and spectacular) adaptation by Jan Frans Cammaert was rather popular in Flanders between 1756 and 1796; see Langvik-Johannessen, ‘1746: In de Brusselse Muntschouwburg wordt Charles Simon Favart directeur: Jan Frans Cammaert brengt de spektakelrijke première van Vondels *Adam in ballingschap*.’
\(^10\) Unger, *Bibliographie*, nos. 878 (Steendam), 876 and 877 (Beelthouwer) and 879 (Verboom). The first two poems are published by Van Lenne and Unger, *De werken, 1664–1667*, pp. 323–25 and 327–38. Van Lenne (10, p. 458), gives an outline of the third. For the poem by Steendam, see also Vondelkronek, 1 (1930), p. 82. The poem by Verboom was edited by Riet Schenkeveld in her *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, pp. 304–12. See also her contribution in this volume, and Van Gemert, *Women’s Writing*, pp. 48–49.