CHAPTER SIX

ALL ABOUT EVE: GENESIS AND GENDER IN A FIREWORKS DISPLAY IN THE ANTWERP ENTRY OF CHARLES V AND HIS SON PHILIP*

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Introduction

In September 1549, Charles V and Philip entered Antwerp. On this occasion the Habsburg emperor introduced his son as his future successor. The young prince had to swear the oaths of the Blijde Incompst (‘Joyous Entry’) to respect the privileges of Brabant and more specifically of Antwerp. The leading trade centre, in exchange, expressed her fidelity towards Philip: explicitly by means of the oaths of the municipality and implicitly by all the glitter and glamour alongside the entry route, which ran through the city centre. Temporary Renaissance triumphal arches, tableaux vivants (Fig. 1) and an ephemeral city hall were erected for the occasion.1 All these marvels were recorded in two accounts: an official account in Dutch, French and Latin by the organizer-in-chief, the well-known Antwerp humanist and town clerk Cornelius Grapheus,2 and a Spanish account by Calvete de Estrella, a courtier and travel companion of Philip.

Both accounts conclude with a description of a remarkable firework display, the so-called wonderlijck nachtspectakel (wonderful night spectacle). The two men report that the emperor, the prince and their retinue turned their attentions to the Grand Place after the banquet and the ball. There, they and hundreds of bystanders could see statues of Eve and Adam

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2 This article is based on the Dutch version: Cornelius Grapheus, De seer wonderlijke schoone Triumphelijcke Incompst, van den hooghmogenden Prince Philips, Prince van Spaignen.
Fig. 1: Antverpia kneels for her future sovereign Philip in a *tableau vivant* alongside the Antwerp entry route. Grapheus, *De seer wonderlijcke schoone Triumpfelsijcke Incompst*, Antwerp, fol. M r.