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FREYA SIERHUIS

# The Passions in the Literature of the Dutch Golden Age

*Abstract* – This article reviews some of the current trends within the field of early modern emotion studies, surveying the literary and performative function of the representation of the emotions in devotional poetry, biblical drama and revenge tragedy. It argues that the representation of emotion, particularly vehement emotions such as spiritual sorrow, extreme grief and desire for revenge challenges us to reconsider our preconceptions about the way in which we assume people understood the opposition between body and soul, reason and passion. Complicating the idea of a direct relationship between the available medical or moral-philosophical discourses on the nature of the passions and their literary expression, the representation of extreme emotion calls for more open, flexible reading strategies that give more leeway to tension or contradiction between different emotional discourses, and that acknowledges that the subversive potential of emotional excess can be celebrated, or politically exploited, as well as suppressed or contained. In this way Tesselschade's poems on Mary Magdalen create a devotional subjectivity that transcends the dualistic opposition between body and soul that characterizes much of her other writing, spiritualizing the body and bestowing it with its own, wordless eloquence. Similarly, the grieving women of Vondel's biblical tragedies *Gebroeders* and *Jeptha*, whose presence evokes both the mourning women of Greek tragedy and the figure of the Virgin lamenting under the Cross, show the power of excessive grief, both as an inducement to compassionate fellow-mourning, and as an indictment of tyranny. The copious literature of elegies, pamphlets and plays generated by the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in 1619 and by that of Charles I Stuart exactly thirty years later, finally, demonstrates the powerful hold of the literary figure of the avenger over the political imaginary, and the manipulation of emotions such as compassion, anger and shame as a spur to political action.

## 1 The Passions in Dutch Golden Age Literature: Contexts and Approaches

Recent years have seen the flowering of the study of the passions in early modern literary studies, social, religious and intellectual history. This development was in itself indicative of a wider cultural shift in foregrounding the centrality of emotional experience and expression in philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, linguistics, political thought and critical theory. Following Richard Solomon's pioneering *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* of 1976, the nineteen-nineties witnessed the publication of a number of highly influential studies, including Richard Lazarus's *Emotion and Adaptation* (1991), Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error* (1994), Richard Wolheim's *On the Emotions* (1999) and Marta Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions* (2001). In early modern studies, the 'emotional turn' was reflected in an increasing interest in the representation and experience of emotion in literature, medicine and phi-

losophy, as well as in studies tracing the impact of historical events such as Reformation on the emotional experiences of individuals and communities.<sup>1</sup> In view of the centrality of emotion, affect and embodiment in current debates in embodied philosophy, cognitive linguistics, matter theory, as well as ecocriticism and animal studies, it seems likely that the interest in the early modern passions will stay with us for some time to come. At the same time, a new range of concerns is becoming discernible, moving the focus towards questions about sensation and sensory experience, embodiment, and the human-animal divide.<sup>2</sup> Now that the ‘first wave’ of emotion studies has perhaps reached its peak, it seems timely to take a moment to take stock of how the field has changed, and where, perhaps, work remains to be done.

One of the undeniable benefits that the historicizing of the emotion has brought is that it has demonstrated the inadequacy of our vocabulary of ‘emotion’ in analysing the complex of ideas covered under early modernity’s use of terms such as ‘passion’, ‘affect’ or *affectus*, ‘perturbation’, ‘commotion’, ‘sympathy’, or ‘fellow feeling’. Early modern thinking about the passions took place in variety of philosophical, theological, and medical discourses, social performances, liturgical, devotional and literary practices. Thus, the focus on early modern emotions works to throw into relief the period’s fault lines, its political and cultural anxieties, and inner contradictions. The early modern period was a time in which different, sometimes incompatible, paradigms coexisted in uneasy equilibrium. The bedrock of thinking about the passions in their relationship to the mind and the body was the Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis that drew on Aristotle’s *Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *Peri psychès* (*On the Soul*), which viewed the passions as natural impulses equipping us to pursue what is good, and shun what does us harm. As such they were viewed as morally neutral, although dangerous because of their close connection to the body, and their liability to excess.<sup>3</sup> This theory of embodiment was squared (not altogether without friction) with a humoral theory of the human constitution derived from Galenic medicine.<sup>4</sup> From the late decades of the sixteenth century onward this Aristotelian model experienced increasing competition from Neostoicism which advanced a unitary model of the mind, classifying the emotions as disturbances of its reasoning capacity and therefore as diseases of the soul. While Neostoicism with its philosophy of rational self-government gained considerable purchase among intellectuals and statesmen, it was faced with considerable opposition from those who criticized its theory of embodiment and who viewed its rejection of emotion and fellow feeling as incompatible with Christian ethics and theology.<sup>5</sup> Another tension can be registered when one

1 The following is a selection of influential works without pretence of inclusivity: James 1997; Dixon 2003; Glaukroger 1998; Paster 1993, 1994; Schoenfeldt 2000; Tilmouth 2008; Kahn, Saccamano & Coli 2004; Gowland 2006; Dawson 2008; Dijksterhuis & Enenkel 2009; Rosenwein 2015; Karant Nunn 2010; Mullaney 2015; Cummings & Sierhuis 2013a; Meek & Sullivan 2015a.

2 For instance Craik 2007; Craik & Pollard 2013; Hobgood 2014; Wilson 2007; Theis 2010; Boehrer 2010.

3 See for a lucid introduction to the Aristotelian-Thomistic model James 1997: ch. 1.

4 On Galen in the Renaissance, see Schmitt e.a. 1991; Struever & Pender 2012; Carrera 2013.

5 On Neostoicism, see Morford 1991; on the contemporary critique of Stoicism’s account of the emotions, see Barbour 1998. Indeed, the conflict between Stoicism and Augustinianism analysed by William Bouwsma as one of the fundamental dichotomies of Renaissance culture was, among other

juxtaposes the development of the idea of civility, with its emphasis on control over the emotions and on the mastery over one's behaviour, voice and gesture, with the increasing emphasis on the naturalness of the passions and the interest in emotional excess in the poetry and drama of the period.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Aristotelian philosophy offered different accounts of the passions in Aristotle's physics and metaphysics and in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. Whereas the former emphasized the passivity of the passions in the sense that they are responses to external stimuli, the latter foreground the element of cognition in passionate response, defining the emotions as 'all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements and are accompanied by pleasure or pain'.<sup>7</sup> It was this definition of emotion as pre-cognitive or pre-rational judgment, taken over and developed further in Cicero's works on rhetoric and in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, which decisively shaped the early modern rhetorical tradition, finding its way into manuals on rhetoric and preaching and from there, into treatises on poetry and painting.<sup>8</sup>

It is for this reason that the emphasis on Galenic humoralism in many of the studies of the passions in early modern literature has been somewhat of a mixed blessing. While the interest in Galenism has been beneficial in emphasising the fully embodied nature of early modern emotion, its interpretation as a form of materialism, a 'humoral determinism', found in the work of Gail Paster and others who have followed her lead has come at the expense of losing sight of the complex relationship between body and soul, passion and cognition and between physical, mental and rational phenomena, such as pneuma.<sup>9</sup> Seeing the fractured nature of early modern discourses on the passions and the availability of a variety of competing frameworks and models it is surely unhelpful, as Richard Strier has argued, to view Galenic medicine as a kind of 'master discourse' (Strier 2011: 17-18). A number of recent studies has therefore argued the need for an account of the early modern passions that includes a wider range of intellectual and artistic frameworks and which pays attention to social, cultural and religious forms and practices, rhetorical theory and literary imitation, as well as to religious models of selfhood and subjectivity (Cummings & Sierhuis 2013b; Meek & Sullivan 2015b). They call for an approach, rather perhaps than a method, that views emotional response as a question of rhetorical and poetical mediation, as well as physical-affective reaction, one that celebrates conflict, contradiction and complexity. It is, however, to the model of religious subjectivity, as one of the most formative models of the affective experiences of individuals and groups, that I will turn first.

things, a clash of emotional paradigms; see Bouwsma 1990: 19-73.

6 The triumph of the passions in seventeenth century literature has been compellingly argued in Tilmouth 2008. On emotional excess, see a.o. Escolme 2014. On civility, see Rodenburg 2004.

7 Aristotle 1994: 173 (ii.1, 1378a).

8 Thijs Weststeijn has shown how Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Inleydinghe tot de hooge schoole der schilderckunst* (1678) is derived from Franciscus Junius' *The Painting of the Ancients*, which is in turn derived, in places directly, from Quintilian. See Weststeijn 2010.

9 On this point, see Carrera 2013, and Gowland 2013.

## 2 Bodily passions and spiritual affections

For most seventeenth-century men and women the primary forms of passionate experience would be channelled through the communal experience of listening to sermons, psalm-singing, collective prayer, as well as through the private devotional practices of reading and writing. The efflorescence of Augustinian spirituality during the later Middle Ages and the shaping influence of Augustine's theology of grace on the thought of the reformers gave renewed emphasis to love and to the spiritual affections as the primary experience of Christian life. To Augustine the early modern period also owed the distinction between the common passions, regarded in the way that classical philosophy viewed them, that is as 'diseases' or 'perturbations', from right affect: those emotions and feelings that spring from love of the good and that assist the will to orient itself towards it (Augustine 1966: IX.14). It was this distinction between passion and affect properly understood which found its way to early modern treatises on the soul and which underlay the attempts to distinguish passions that were located in part in the body, partly in the mind, from spiritual affections located exclusively in the soul.<sup>10</sup>

For Reformers as otherwise different as Erasmus, Luther and Calvin, John 11.35, in which Jesus weeps for the death of Lazarus, became one of the central loci in redeeming the passions as integral to the life of all believers. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin asserted 'Our Lord and Master [...] groaned and wept over both his and others misfortunes. And he taught his disciples in the same way' (Calvin 1986: 3.8.10).<sup>11</sup> Faith, the reformers emphasized, was an affective and spiritual experience, rather than intellectual process. Thus, Calvin argued that 'the assent which we give to the divine word [...] is more of the heart than the brain, and more of the affections than the understanding [...] faith is absolutely inseparable from a devout affection' (Calvin 1986: 3.3.8). It is for this reason that Calvin in his writings so often returns to the 'sweetness' of God. The etymological origin of word *suavitas* is polysemic in the sense that it refers to both to sweetness and to persuasion, just as *sapio* means both to taste and to know (Ryrie 2013: 89). For Calvin tasting the sweetness of God was an embodied, affective as well as intellectual experience.

Indeed the spiritual song 'Omkeering Herts-bewegingen', ('Conversion of the Passions') by the Remonstrant preacher and poet Dirk Rafaelsz. Camphuysen discredits the idea that conversion would involve the extinguishing of the passions by putting it in the mouth of 'fleshy reason' that stands corrected through the intervention of spiritual reason, or grace: 'Grof, onredelijcke Reden, / Grof mist ghy. / Tochten en beroerlijckheden / Blijven by. / Geen begeert / Wordt gewert; / Geen ingeschapen lust / Blijft ongeblust. / Lieven, haten, hopen, vreezen / Staet hem vry: / Eer en schat-graegh magh hy wezen; / Droef en bly. / Toorn, en wraeck, / Lust, vermaeck, / Al goedt, als 't is gewendt/Na 't rechte endt' (Camphuysen 1624: 104-105).

<sup>10</sup> Dixon 2003. On the translation of Augustine's concept of 'rectus affectus' into early modern philosophy, see Leo 2013.

<sup>11</sup> See also Fedler 2001. On the role of the emotions in early modern religion and devotional experience, see also Strier 2004 and Ryrie 2013, especially chs. 1-5.

This reversal or redirecting of the passions is, initially at least, a painful process, in which the newly converted believer only gradually discovers the sweet joys of godliness.<sup>12</sup> Camphuysen seeks to assist the believer on this arduous path by composing his spiritual songs on the melody of well-known amorous tunes, transforming the mechanism of the *contrafact* into an instrument of spiritual regeneration, a method adopted in the *Achtliederbuch* of Luther and Paulus Speratus during the earliest years of the Reformation and followed by numerous poets and composers, including Jacobus Revius and Jodocus van Lodenstein.<sup>13</sup> Even among the Calvinists ministers, where the singing of spiritual songs other than psalms had been controversial, the spiritual songbook became, from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, a cherished means to provide instruction to the unlearned, to guide and enhance the congregation's affective experience of the faith, and to steer the youth away from the corrupting influence of amorous songbooks (Stronks 1994-1995).

Indeed, even among the puritan ministers and preachers often believed to be hostile to the emotions, we find the recognition that once the passions have found their true aim and purpose, they should be allowed their full scope. From such a perspective, even the commonplace Aristotelian ideal of moderate emotion, that defined virtue as the mean between lack and excess, could be viewed as problematic. William Fenner, an English Puritan much read by Dutch Contra-Remonstrants, argued for instance that 'if the affections [...] be fixed on their proper object, there is no danger in exesse; God cannot be loved, or feared, &c., overmuch'.<sup>14</sup>

It is in fact among the puritan writers that the most elaborate theorization of the passions and affections in is to be found (Op 't Hof 2016).<sup>15</sup> Connections between Dutch Contra-Remonstrantism and English Puritanism were, it has commonly been recognised, extremely close. The figureheads of the Further Reformation, such as Willem Teellinck, Jacobus Koeman and Gisbert Voetius, were all strongly influenced by puritanism, and over the course of the seventeenth century Dutch translations of Puritan works encompassed about four hundred separate works by 140 authors, comprising a wide variety of genres, ranging from the theological works of William Perkins; devotional treatises such as Lewis Bayley's *The practice of Pietie* (1612); mysticist works including William

12 'Dit om-keeren noemt Godts reden / Eenen Doodt / Van de lust en d'aerdsche leden: / Want zeer groot / Is 't geweldt / Dat de Heldt / Die zich hier toe wil spoën, / In 't eerst moet doen. / Io Eer gewoont en waen ter degen / Zijn uyt 't hert, / Schijnen hem de nieuwe wegen / Vol van smert: / Maer in 't gaen / Van Godts pa'en, / Vindt hy des Deuchdes loop / Zoet boven hoop' (Camphuysen 1624: 104).

13 On Lutheran contrafacts, see Pettegree 2005; on contrafacts in seventeenth century Dutch literature and poetry, see Grijp 1991.

14 William Fenner, *A treatise of the Affections; Or, The Soule's Pulse* (1642) sign A2v; quoted in Ryrie 2013: 19.

15 Some critics have been rather too quick to endorse the accusation, often made in Remonstrant polemics, that the Puritans and Contra-Remonstrants, like the Stoics, rejected emotion. In his commentary on Seneca's *De clementia*, Calvin indeed, explicitly criticized the Stoics for the rejection of emotions such as pity and compassion. See for this argument Steenbergh 2014, 2011. While there is some ground for this claim, to the extent that this was an accusation often levelled at them by their Arminian opponents and their allies, critics should be well warned to endorse polemical stereotype for historical truth.

Cowper's *A most comfortable and Christian Dialogue between the Lord and the Soule* (1610), Francis Rous' *The Mystical Marriage: or Experimental Discourses of the Heavenly Marriage between the Soule and Her Saviour* (1635); the letters of Richard Baxter; as well as the works of John Bunyan (Op 't Hof 2016: 220; more extensively Op 't Hof 1987). Discussions of the emotions in this corpus of texts centre on a number of issues, such as the relationship between faith and the emotions, their role in the process of conversion, the spiritual affliction of lack of feeling known as hardness of heart or 'dryness' and the experience of spiritual joy, glimpsed either as a fleeting foretaste of joys to come, or witnessed more fully in a mystical encounter with Christ (Op 't Hof 2016: 239). In the theological work of Perkins, of seminal importance for the development of the Further Reformation, the emotions are discussed in the context of the process of conversion. Perkins treats the progression of the godly emotions following the opposition between the law and the gospel. The law works to convict the conscience of its sins, working feelings of shame, fear and despair in the heart. Under the regenerative influence of the gospel, the believer will at last become receptive again to emotions such as joy and gratitude and experience the sweetness of grace (Op 't Hof 2016: 221-222). Most interesting in gauging Puritan thinking about the spiritual affections are perhaps the discussions of 'hardness of heart', a condition also described as 'coldness', heaviness, 'drowsiness' or 'deadness': a form of sadness or tedium that indicated an absence of grace which was as much feared as it was, apparently, widely shared.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to those phases in the believer's life in which the absence of God was felt urgently, painfully, producing an intense, burning desire, hardness of heart implied a stolid indifference, often combined with a false sense of security or ease. As the humoral meanings of cold- and dryness suggest, hardness of heart was associated with element of earth, sterile and lifeless without the fertilizing effect of sun and rain and with melancholy. Prayer manuals and devotional treatises tried to offer advice on how to overcome this stifling condition and countless diaries and spiritual autobiographies give vivid descriptions of the feelings of abandonment, of prayers unheard, or unheeded and the overwhelming sense of release and liberation, as here in Revius' poem 'Aenvechtinghe', when grace is once again recognized as already working on the heart.

Ick heb om u genaed' o grote God, gebeden,  
Maer och! ghy hebtse my in mijnen druck ontseyt.  
Ick heb geroepen om u milde goedicheyt,  
Maer hebse niet gevoelt in mijn ellendicheden.

Ick heb om uwe liefd' geworstelt en gestreden  
Maer hebbe te vergeefs daer lange na gebeyt.  
Ick hebbe dick gesocht u mede-dogenthey, t,  
Maer en verneemse niet tot op den dach van heden

Hoe licht cost u genae bekeren mijn gemoet.  
U liefd' en goedicheyt my trecken tot het goed'.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of hardness of heart, see Ryrie 2013: 20-26.



U mede-dogentheyt vant quade my bevrijden.  
 Eylaes! wat seg'ick Heer! dewijl mijn herte tracht  
 Na uwe soeticheyt, so heeft daer in gewracht  
 U goetheyt, u genaë, u liefd', u medelijden (Revius 1930-1935: II, 251).

Strengholt has interpreted 'Aenvechtinghe' as a poetic exploration of the practical syllogism, a technique devised in Reformed theology to enable the believer to examine the question of one's election by focusing on the signs of election.<sup>17</sup> Read thus, the volta of the poem, which centers on a passionate exclamation in the form of the rhetorical figure of *correctio* or self-correction, is seen as over-writing the despairing doubt of the first and second stanza, as God's grace, love and mercy are recognized as being the very cause of the believer's longing. Yet this, while not untrue, is perhaps too simple, or rather it ignores the complex temporality of the working of grace in the life of the believer. For the poem's grammar and syntax, with its abrupt jumps from past perfect to present tense complicate the effect of closure suggested by the syllogism and stanzaic form. The poem's use of past perfect in stanzas 1 and 2 evokes the sense of definitiveness, of a struggle unfolding seemingly fruitlessly in the past, heightening the dramatic tension between the past and the transformative 'now' of 'Eylaes, wat seg'ick, Heer!' And yet, the second stanza closes on the perturbing line 'Maer en verneemse niet tot op den dach van heden', where the sudden turn to present tense suggests an ongoing struggle, a continued absence of grace, that fights against the closure offered by the volta. Neither reading should necessarily be viewed as cancelling out the other: rather, they place the believer on the cusp of the experience of grace – almost but not yet within reach. The tension between the two temporalities of the poem forces home the realization that the conflict between the then and the now is experiential and reiterative, rather than historical. It also illustrates the highly paradoxical nature of a godly grief, which is infused with and can transform into, its polar opposites of spiritual joy and assurance (Sullivan 2016: 147-148).

### 2.1 *Devotional reading, writing and translating – the culture of the psalms*

On the painful path towards regeneration, in the preparation of the spirit for the effects of grace, in the fostering of beneficial emotions, and in the overcoming of spiritual hardness, reading, as much as praying or listening to sermons could be of great value. It is therefore not a coincidence that a considerable overlap exists between the poetics of devotional poetry and the rhetoric of the sermon, particularly that of so-called grand style, or *genus grande*, of Christian oratory, which emphasized the crucial importance of moving the affections through the use of rhetorical techniques of vivid description, dramatization, and personification.<sup>18</sup>

17 On the theology of the poem, see Strengholt 1959. The syllogism can be formulated as follows: 1. The elect must manifest sanctity during their lives (*propositio major*); 2. Thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit, I see something of sanctity realized in my life (*propositio minor*); 3. I am one of the elect (*conclusio*).

18 See on this topic Shuger 1988 and Konst 1990.

As Femke Molekamp has argued, ‘devotional meditative reading was to engage the affections through the mechanism of divine inspiration, while regulating the baser passions, which must be banished in order that a contemplative state of mind may be attained’ (Molekamp 2013: 120). The ultimate biblical model for the examination of the passions of the heart was offered by the psalms of David, recognized by theologians and exegetes both as an epitome of Scripture, or, in Luther’s words ‘a little Bible’, and as a study and anatomy of the human emotions, that encompassed all the movements of heart: sorrow, joy, contrition, fear, love and hope (Lewalski 1984 [1974]: 42-43). The idea that the book of psalms encompassed the true anatomy of the heart, first voiced by the Church father Athanasius, was taken up by reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Beza, as well as a host of poets including across the range of the religious spectrum, including Johan de Brune, Dirk Rafaelsz. Camphuysen, Jacob Cats, Constantijn Huygens, Jacobus Revius, P.C. Hooft, Joost van den Vondel, Jacob Westerbaan, Joachim Oudaen, and Anna Roemersdr. Visscher. For Luther, the psalms derived their particular emotional efficacy from the fact that the speaker’s emotions are articulated in a direct address to the Creator, lending them particular force and authenticity:

And so again, where the Psalms are speaking of hope and fear, they so describe those feelings in their true and native colours, that no Demosthenes or Cicero could ever equal them in liveliness or descriptiveness of expression. For, as I have before observed, the psalms have this quality of excellence above all other books of description [...] this that above all things gives a seriousness, and a reality to the feelings – it is this that affects, as it were, the very bones and the marrow, – when a creature feels itself speaking in the very sight and presence of its God! (Lewalski 1984 [1974]: 44)

The psalms shaped religious affect on every level of religious experience, from communal to domestic and individual, and the singing of psalms was fixed element of the liturgy of the Reformed churches. Collective psalm-singing had played a central role in wielding Reformed communities together during the difficult years of persecution and exile in the early days of the Revolt. The intense feelings of affection and belonging associated with the oldest Reformed psalm book, Dathenus’s *De Psalmen Davids* (1566), a popular and widely used adaptation of Beza and Marot, explains how it remained in use in most churches until well into the eighteenth century, in spite of the availability of translations that were both textually and musically superior.

Central to the collective identity and communal religious life of the congregation, the psalms, particularly the seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 142) similarly occupied a central role private devotional praxis where they became constitutive of a Protestant genre of private meditation in which prayer, reading, translation and meditation converged (Lewalski 1984 [1974]: 147-178; Hamlin 2013). Other poetical and musical adaptations mediated the gap between collective worship and private meditation, being intended for use in the domestic sphere of the household, or the intimate setting of a gathering of friends. Constantijn Huygens’s *Pathodia sacra ac profana* (1647), the title a neologism from the contraction of *pathos* (passion) and *ode* (song), was a songbook of thirty-nine compositions for voice and basso continuo, dedicated to his friend, the soprano

Utricia Ogle, which included twenty psalm adaptations based on the text of the Vulgate (Huygens 1976; Noske 1982).

Second most famous of the poetical books of the bible, after the book of psalms, the Song of Songs offered a poetic mould for affective spirituality. The Song of Songs had been interpreted by the Hebrew commentators as an allegory, a love song between Solomon and his bride, which described the dealings of Jahweh with his chosen people, an interpretation that was adapted by the Church fathers and by theologians such as Bernardus of Clairveaux, to stand typologically for the relationship between Christ, the groom, and his chosen bride, the Church, also identified as the soul of the believer. This is the allegorical reading followed in Revius' *Hoogelied Salomons* (1621) which expands the text of Canticles into a pastoral epithalamium in dramatic form spoken by three voices: the Bride, the Groom and the Virgins, the followers of the Bride, set to the melody of 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' (1599), a spiritual bridal song on the text of Psalm 45 by the Lutheran pastor, poet and composer Philip Nicolai (Revius 1930-1935: 1, 96-126; Strengholt 1976: 26-32). The argument with which Revius prefaces the eight 'cantos' that divides his reworking of Canticles explains the vicissitudes of the narrative of union as figuring the history of the Church, which, as Strengholt demonstrated, closely follows the exegesis of the Song of Songs by Godefridus Cornelisz. Udemans, a minister from Zierikzee and prominent proponent of early Dutch pietism.<sup>19</sup>

While the first canto speaks of the community's desire for Christ, and the second of the union of Bride and Groom and the advent of the spring time of the Reformation, the third canto figures the Bride's hesitancy as a slackening of her zeal and her temptation by false teachers. The following cantos recount the Bride's grief, and her wandering in search of her Groom, leading to their eventual reconciliation and everlasting union in the second coming of Christ. The division of the cantos between the speakers mirrors the story of closeness and separation, loss and reconciliation. In the two first cantos Bride and Groom sing to each other in alternating stanzas of equal length, the third and fifth cantos, recounting the cooling of the Bride's love and her wandering in search of the Groom, are divided between the Bride and her Virgins. Despite the occurrence of the occasional censored word ('milk fountains' for breasts) it is revealing to see how Revius's ecclesiological and Christological interpretation nevertheless figures the love between Christ and his True Church in terms of the rapturous description of fully embodied love.

The development of Dutch Reformed pietism during the Further Reformation, led, particularly among writers with strong leanings towards mysticism, such as Theodorus Gerardus à Brakel (1608-1669) and Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620-1677), to an even stronger focus on the Song of Solomon, as the interpretation of the song as a dialogue between Christ and the soul lent itself singularly well for

<sup>19</sup> *Corte Ende duydelyjcke Verclaringe over het Hooge-liedt Salomo. Midtsgaders de Aenwijshinghe van de Voor-naemste Leerstukken ende nuttigheden daer uyt vloeyende. Ghestelt tot vertroostinghe ende stichtinghe van alle kinderen Gods, die oprechtelijck verlangben naer de Bruyloft des Lams* (1616). For the close parallels between Revius' poem and Udemans' exegesis, see Strengholt 1957, who sees it as a proof for the compatibility of Reformed Calvinism and early (although not late) pietism. A more recent, biographical study of Revius' life and works is offered by De Bruijn 2012.

the expression of the mystical experience of union with God. As well as preaching the reformation of life and manners and the intensification and internalization of piety, the proponents of the Further Reformation emphasized the direct, transformative and affectively felt experience of grace, and, in the case of van Lodenstein, the necessity of a spiritual understanding of Scripture (Heppe 1997 [1879]: 96-111). Van Lodenstein appears to have been particularly interested in the Song of Solomon, a book on which he composed five extant sermons, and which he adapted in several poems of his *Uyt-spanningen behelsende eenige stigtelyke liederen*, a collection of spiritual songs and devotional poems (Van Lodenstein 2005).<sup>20</sup> ‘Dialogue between Christ and his Bride’ transforms the elaborate imagery and symbolism of the Song of Songs into a language of monosyllabic simplicity which rhythmically and semantically mimics the intimacy and immediacy of the soul’s direct encounter with Christ, and helped facilitate the singing of the lyrics:

I. Bruyt.

Mijn Jesu lief / mijn aldertrousten borg!  
 Wat ist dat dus mijn hert van d’ydle sorg  
 Geslingert dubt / wat nog het eynd met my Eens sy

II Jesus.

Loopt slegs / mijn kind / mijn lief / mijn lam / mijn lust /  
 Ick sta voor t eynd.

III Bruyt.

Mijn Roum / mijn Rots / mijn Rust /  
 Mijn Hert / mijn Hooft / mijn Hulp / mijn Heyl / mijn Hoop /  
 Ick loop.

IV Jes.

Gy segt / mijn Bruyd / dat ick uw Hert / uw Borg /  
 Uw Hooft / uw Heyl / uw Rust ben / seg / wat sorg  
 Quelt dan uw siel? of soud ick dit in schijn Maar sijn?

## 2.2 *Worldly grief and spiritual sorrow*

The passions are central in the turning of the soul away from the world and towards its Creator, and although they do not actively contribute to conversion, regeneration and spiritual renewal – which are the work of grace – they can nevertheless be seen as the outward manifestation of the working of grace on the soul. Their absence, similarly, Revius argues in his poem ‘Ongevoeligheid’ (‘Indifference’) is symptomatic of a state of spiritual lifelessness, and do at least suggest the strong likelihood of damnation (Revius 1930-1935: 1, 72). The religious poetry of the period shows the passions as signifiers of the believer’s spiritual state, place markers on the winding path towards salvation. Revius’ two poems on weeping mark the double nature of tears as markers both of sinfulness and salvation. The first poem, ‘Tranen’ (Tears) uses the violent metaphor of a house going up in flames to lik-

<sup>20</sup> On the melodies of Van Lodenstein’s songs, see Stronks 1994.

en the tears of contrition to water that extinguishes the fire of the Lord's anger; the second casts weeping as a natural, organic process of physical and spiritual renewal that clothes the soul of believer in the fresh green of a perpetual spring:

De sonne wt het velt het water opwaerts halet  
 En spreijdet door de locht, so dattet nederdalet  
 En, druppende weerom van boven op het lant,  
 Geeft bloesem ende vrucht aen tgeen daer is geplant:  
 O sonne van mijn siel, comt treckt wt mijne ogen  
 Het heete tranen-vocht, en laetse nimmer drogen,  
 Op dat ick int geloof werd' groener alle daech  
 En na u welgeval veel goede vruchten draeg.

The evaluation of the passions is thus dependant on their object, their regulation and use, calling for a careful examination of one's emotional disposition and spiritual orientation. Yet the naturalness of the passions, their close relationship to the body in which they in part reside and not in the last place our own capacity for self-deception, make them liable to misinterpretation.<sup>21</sup> The ambiguity and obstreperousness of the passions are nowhere more apparent than in early modern discussions of the nature of worldly grief. In 1624 the poet P.C. Hooft lost both his only remaining child, a son named Arnoud, and his wife, Christina van Erp, a double loss that left him disconsolate and on the brink of despair. Tesselschade, troubled to see her friend resist all attempts of consolation voiced her concerns in a letter, reminding him that friends and kin only held a temporary claim on Christina, who now has returned to her true home, continuing: 'Wel hoe mijne heere, ghy die zoveel voorraad van standvastige wijsheid hebt opgedaan, zoudt gij nog wel kunnen ellendig gemaakt worden door wereldlijke noodzakelijkheid?' (Hooft 1976: 492-493). Hooft's response opens with a rejection of the Stoic notion of love without attachment, insisting instead on the force of love, and the irrepressible nature of grief:

De wijzen gebieden verliesbaer goedt lohartigh te lieven ende 't verlooren zonder bedroeven over te setten. Tot houden van 't eerste gebod heb ick altoos zoo weenigh wils gehadt, dat het mij billijk aen maght mangelt, om het tweede te volghen. Die nojt anders dan spelden en spijkers opzocht om, 't geen hij beminde, naghelvest in zijn harte te maeken, hoe kan 't hem daer afgescheurt worden zonder ongeneeslijke reeten te laeten? (Hooft 1976: 494-495)

Seneca, who preached steadfastness in adversity lamented about his exile; even Montaigne, 'so firm in his judgement, so free from self-deception', believed that sun had no more risen for him since the death of La Boëtie. Over and against a Stoic dualism of reason against passion Hooft places love as embodied, and grief, being coterminous with memory, as constitutive of identity. Hooft's letter oscillates tellingly and movingly between mourning as commemoration, a duty of love, claiming rather to wish to suffer more, than not remember his wife, and mourning as passive and potentially sinful abandonment to grief – 'I do not seek sorrow, but it knows how to find me' (Hooft 1976: 494-495).

21 More extensively on the ambivalent nature of sadness, see Sullivan 2016: 40-41.

Nine years later Tesselschade lost, in one cruel stroke, her youngest daughter to the pox and her husband, grief-stricken by the girl's death, to an overdose of sedative (Smits-Veldt 1994: 63-66). To her friends she seemed to bear her loss with exemplary courage and constancy. 'Ghelijck als Onder't Juck van sinne slauernijen', a poem dated on Ascension Day 1635, commemorating the passing of two years since Allart's death, appears to mark the end of a long period of mourning, imagined here as a painful, protracted struggle between the body and the soul:

Ghelijck als onder't juck van sinne slauernijen  
 Doch ongheoorloft aen ghenoomen eyghen last,  
 Het gheen niet wel een blij hoop heemelhertie past  
 'Twelck van onhoulyck goet qualyck is te vryen,  
 tis onrecht seij de geest gheruste vreucht te myen,  
 Maer 't lichaem riep o neen, en doopten d'ouerlast  
 Met naem van suchte-plicht tot het in traenen plast  
 Soo most de vlughe geest van't logghe lichaem lijen.  
 van dagh een stercker geest dat van syn aerde licht  
 en over reed' het dus, en eysten ander plicht  
 Alst t vruchteloose wrangh van Alherts smack verjaeren,  
 dees deed' dat ick de sucht weerstribbich van my stiet  
 Gheluckich was hy diese teenemael verliet  
 En op soo helijgh'n dach mocht Salich HEEMELVAEREN (Sneller & Van Marion 1994: 26-29).

Confronted with the experience of the death of her loved ones, Tesselschade's struggle with loss, packed into taut, elliptically condensed lines, is different, but no less fierce than that of Hooft. Her poem fashions grief and tears simultaneously into an inescapable fact of embodied life, and as a form of self-imposed spiritual servitude, a paradox invited by the double dualism of soul versus body and spirit versus flesh that are only abolished through the casting off of earthly shackles. A strong dualism between body and soul is a recurrent element in the poetry of Tesselschade's, as is the identification of the pen, as a metonym for the poetic voice, as an instrument of agency, and as a weapon. In her poem on the death of Susanne van Baerle, the wife of Constantijn Huygens, she reminds the grieving widower of his own words, 'Want quelling op de maat en kan soo fel niet sijn' (Huygens's rendering of Donne's 'Griefe brought to numbers cannot be so fierce, / For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse') and argues from her own experience, where once writing offered the only remedy for despair: 'Pampier was 't waepentuijch waermee ick heb geweert / Te willen sterven, eer 't den Heemel had begeert, / Daer ooverwon ick mee, en deed mijn Vijand wycken' (Sneller & Van Marion 1994: 30-33).<sup>22</sup> It is fascinating, therefore, to read in Tesselschade's devotional poetry a radical reversal of these terms. In her two poems on Mary Magdalene, 'Ontoyt, of toyt ghy u Maria Magdalene?' and 'Als ghy Maria smelt in tranen', Tesselschade casts Mary Magdalen's penitence in a language of inwardness which surpasses the constraints of ordinary speech:

<sup>22</sup> For body-soul dualism, see 'Als het vernuft begreep het zang'righ hoogh geschal' (1642), on the pen as a weapon, see 'Noch heb ick hert, al is my 't harnas-tuyg ontdragen' (1639) (Sneller & Van Marion 1994: 38-41; 74-78).

Ontoyt, of toyt ghy u, Maria Magdalene?  
 Als gy uw hayr ontvlecht, verwerpt de luyster steenen,  
 Verbreeckt het Perlen-snoer, versmaet het schijnbaer goet,  
 En keurt voor vuyl en vals, al wat dat voordeel doet  
 Om deez' uw malsse jeucht het eeuwich te beletten?  
 En op een stronckel steen uw toeverlaet te setten?  
 Godtvruchte Vrouw ghy haectt vast nae een stalen muyr,  
 Die niet beswijcken kan, door tijt oft droevig uyr;  
 En van het laegh begint te slaen u krulde rancken,  
 Ront om een vaster voet, en wilt den Heylandt dancken  
 Die u heft uyt het slijck. Een innerlijck verstant  
 Verstaet, al spreeckt ghy niet als met het ingewant.  
 Die Paerlen van uw oogen ten toon op root Scharlaecken,  
 Die carmosijne smet der sonden suyver maecken;  
 Dies spiegelt u, mijn Ziel. veracht het vals cieraet:  
 Of hecht het aen een zuyl van Hemelrijke raedt,  
 Welck u altijds in 't oogh sal tot berouw verwecken;  
 Soo kan de ydelheyt u tot vergevingh strecken,  
 Van dat uw oyt behaecht heeft Weerelt, eer of staet,  
 Schept moedt, uyt deses schets beduydelijck gelaet  
 O Sonden wanhoop weerster!  
 Stilswijgends deugden eerster!  
 Stilswijgende verkrijgster!  
 Meer dan bespraecte swijgster.  
 Ghy toont bewijs, dat Godt belooft der sonden soen  
 Aen yder, die soo doet, maer niet die 't woude doen (Sneller & Van Marion 1994: 124)

The epigraph of the poem, 'Mary Magdalen at the feet of Christ', refers to the poem's likely source: Giovanni Battista Marino's madrigal-cycle *La Maddalena ai piedi Cristo* and places it in a tradition of devotional poems on penitential weeping, including Robert Southell's *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, George Herbert's 'Marie Magdalene', as well as Revius's 'Sinful woman'. The comparison with Revius's poem serves well to draw out Tesselschade's distinctive style. While Revius's closing stanza praises Mary Magdalen in the words of Luke: 'O vrouwe, ghy hebt sterck en vierichlijck beminnet / Veel sonden u de Heer op eenmael oock vergaf' (cf. Luke 7.47: 'Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little'), the poem nevertheless emphasizes the disparity between Mary Magdalene's acts of penitence, Christ's mercy: 'Den cus dien zy u gaf soo veel ick niet en achte / Als dien ghy haer int hert onsienlijck hebt gedruckt: / Haer balsen niet soo weert als daer ghy mee versachte / Haer wonden, wt den doot haer hebbende geruckt' (Revius 1930: 1, 208-209). Tesselschade's poem, by contrast, employs the paradox of silent speech, of wordless communion, ('Een innerlijck verstant / Verstaet, al spreeckt ghy niet als met het ingewant') to underline Mary Magdalen's special relationship with Christ, a suggestion emphasized by the metaphoric association of Mary Magdalen's curls with the tendrils of the vine, identified with Christ in John 15.1, and with perhaps a covert hint to the marriage imagery associated with the elm and the vine in mythology and emblem lit-



erature.<sup>23</sup> The second poem, ‘Als ghy Maria smelt in tranen’, further develops the paradox of representing wordless communication, setting up a tension between what can be represented emblematically and what should be grasped inwardly: between Mary Magdalen viewed as an emblem of penitent love (taking up, as Tesselschade’s editors have shown, the attributes of Love and Penitence from Ripa’s *Iconologia*), and Mary Magdalen’s tears as a text that can be read by Christ alone (‘Den Heilandt Jesus, op sijn voeten, / Leest, uyt uw letter traan crijstal’). Mary Magdalen, rather than Christ, stands at the emotional centre of these poems: her passionate sorrow offers a point of identification between the penitent sinner and reader, like her, a sinful soul longing to be redeemed by Christ. In these poems, Mary Magdalen stands as a model for an exemplary devotional subjectivity that subverts traditional gender hierarchies (Shuger 2000: 167–191). Through the Magdalen’s penitence a poet who struggled with the flesh-bound nature of the passions could articulate an embodied devotional spirituality that vindicated the passions, cleansing and spiritualizing the body through the working of divine love.

### 3 The Politics of Grief – Lamentation in Vondel’s *Gebroeders* and *Jeptha*

In what follows, I would like turn to the way in which the dramatic enactment of passions on stage sheds light unto the wider cultural work performed by the early modern theatre. More particularly, I will focus on the performance of grief and mourning by women in two biblical tragedies by Vondel: *Gebroeders* (1640) and *Jeptha* (1659), to argue how these plays elicit a powerful affective response that disrupts or challenges the attempt to dissolve tragic conflict into Christian providence, and works against viewing the play in straightforwardly moral terms.

The year 1640 constituted an important turning point in Vondel’s career as a playwright. While he had tried his hand at Biblical subject matter in his *Pascha* (1620) and his translation of Grotius’ *Sophompaneas*, (*Josef in ’t Hof*, 1635) and had recently written a martyr tragedy on the subject of St Ursula and her 10,000 virgins, *Maeghden* (1639), *Gebroeders* marked his first engagement with biblical tragedy modelled on Greek poetics. It was, moreover, also the year in which he had published a translation of Sophocles’ *Electra*. Accounts of the role of the passions in Dutch seventeenth century drama have tended to centre on the re-discovery Aristotle’s *Poetics* (first in the Neolatin dramatic and critical work of Grotius and Heinsius, and later vernacular tragedy), and the critical appropriation of his theory of *katharsis*, and the use of the tragic emotions, *phobos* and *eleimos*, fear and pity or compassion (Smits-Veldt 1991: 56–57, 97–98). I wish to focus here, however, on some of the difficulties that are seen to arise when trying to relate the performance of the passions to an Aristotelian conception of a tragic plot eliciting pity and fear, difficulties that may perhaps be said to find their ori-

23 On the elm and the vine, see the story of Vertumnus and Pomona in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Ovid 1919: xiv). See Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata Liber* (Augsburg, 1531) emblem 160, ‘Amicitia etiam post mortem durans’; and Daniel Heinsius, *Emblemata amatoria* (1608) emblem 17, ‘ni mes-me la mort’.



gin an unresolved tension within the *Poetics*. Both the dedication of *Gebroeders*, and the *Berecht* of Jephtha take pains to identify the male protagonist with Aristotle's flawed hero, neither purely virtuous nor wholly vicious, who commits an error (*hamartia*), suffers a reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*), and eventually gains insight into his fate (*anagnorisis/agnitio*). In *Jephtha*, based on the Biblical story of Judges 11.30–40, the protagonist chooses to kill his daughter to honour a vow made to God in the battle against the Ammonites, to sacrifice him the first creature that would come to meet him upon his return home. The daughter, given no name in Judges, but called Iphis in Vondel's play, and in that of its precursor, Buchanan's *Jephthes sive votum* (1554), is granted two months respite to go into the mountains with her companions to lament her virgin state. Vondel's play is set on the day of the daughter's return, shifting the focus away from Jephtha's vow, to its execution and the aftermath of the sacrifice. Unlike Buchanan, Vondel goes to great lengths to depict Jephtha as not merely misguided in his decision to fulfil his vow, but as similarly obstinate, wilful, and deaf to reason in its execution against the combined opposition of both the court priest and his counsellor (Buchanan 1983). To model this deliberate, consciously committed act unto an Aristotelian notion of *hamartia*, or 'involuntary error', such, in Aristotle's example, Oedipus' accidental killing of his father, can only be effected with a certain amount of friction. A similar problem arises in trying to apply Aristotelian categories to David's decision to deliver the descendants of Saul to the wrath of the Gabaoniten, the Gibeonites. As in *Jephtha* the *peripeteia* does not revolve around the fate of the protagonist, but of that of the victims whose lives the protagonist choses to sacrifice. What both these plays, for all their other differences (*Jephtha* stays closer to the Aristotelian model than *Gebroeders* by interpreting Jephtha's remorse as *anagnorisis*) indicate is a bifurcation between dramatic plot (that which Aristotle calls *muthos*) and the production of tragic emotions of pity and fear. In the *Poetics*, *phobos* and *eleinos* are said to derive from the dramatic plot, yet Aristotle can only uphold a direct, organic link between *muthos* and *pathos* by choosing the example of Sophocles' *Oedipus rex*, over that of other plays (Aristotle 1995). It is much more difficult to see, how such a connection between plot and tragic passions could be claimed for tragedies such as Aeschylus *Eumenides*, Euripides' *Troades*, or, for that matter, Sophocles' *Electra*. For while the *muthos* of that play revolves around the killing of Clytaimnestra and Aigisthus in revenge for the murder of Agamemnon, the play's emotional centre gravitates ineluctably around the grief of Electra, culminating in her emotive lament over Orestes's urn.

In *Gebroeders*, Vondel gives David two scenes in which he articulates his inner conflict and his divided loyalties, and one scene in which, after the execution of the brothers, he laments the fate of the descendants of Saul. Yet within the framework of the play, these scenes take up a fairly limited space and number of lines. The emotional centre of the play revolves around the role of Michol, Saul's daughter and David's wife, and Saul's widow, Risper, and their desperate attempts to save their sons' lives. They are given the most affectively charged, lyrical, lines, often breaking out in sung lamentations (Vondel 1929d: 4.ll. 1259–1280; 4.ll. 1457–1490).<sup>24</sup>

24 That Vondel placed the suffering of the women at the heart of the tragedy is suggested by a poem written for the performance of the play: 'Hef of, hef op met naar geschreeuw / aanschouwer treurt

There is something unusual about this. In early modern Europe, David's lamentation of Saul and Jonathan, and his grief for Absalom, were cited as proof that we have an obligation to mourn the dead and to honour them (Hodgson 2015: 8). Both as the voice of the Psalmist, and in his lamentations for Saul, Jonathan and Absalom, David offered a poetic model to explore the performance of mourning and subjective experience of grief. Vondel does indeed take recourse to this material with a poetic paraphrase of 2 Samuel 18-27 but places it *after* the end of the fifth act.<sup>25</sup> The repression of male grief is even more pronounced in *Jeptha*, where the protagonist disappears from stage after the fourth act, leaving the fifth act entirely to the dramatization of Filopaie's sorrow.

Yet where the tragedies foreground the women's suffering, they also emphasize their political marginalization. In *Gebroeders*, Michol and Rispe's effective agency is limited by their lack of power and status within the royal household: Rispe as an old woman and as a widow, Michol as a spurned wife who no longer holds her husband's affections. Their space of action is almost completely limited to the inner confines of the palace. In *Jeptha*, Filopaie's marginalization is dramatized by keeping her, through the deceptions of the male characters, away from the action. To Iphis' anger and dismay, she is not given the opportunity to say farewell to her mother (Vondel 1929d: 2.ll. 456-466). When Filopaie finally arrives on the scene, it is too late: the sacrifice has been made, Jeptha has left to seek atonement for his sins, and nothing remains for her but to lament over her daughter's urn.

This marginalization of the female characters that restricts their mode of operation to the aestheticized form of the lament might be construed as reflecting something of the period's cultural anxieties over the boundaries between moderate and excessive, sinful, grief, as well as its uneasy fascination with female mourning. Through the abolition of the doctrine of Purgatory, the Reformation had brought about a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between the living and the dead (Duffy 1992). In tandem with continued polemical attacks on Purgatory, and on residual practices that signified a lingering belief in intercession of the dead on behalf of the living, Protestant ministers and preachers attempted to reform the rituals of burial as well the expression of grief for the deceased. Where once the suffering of the Virgin Mary had occupied a central place in late medieval devotional culture, her tears offering the medium of devotional identification that allowed believers to participate in and sorrow for Christ's passion, vehement weeping increasingly came to be portrayed as evidence of an incomplete, lacking faith, and as a sign of popish or heathen superstition and 'womanish' emotional incontinence (Goodland 2005; Hodgson 2015: 4-7). Robert Burton, even while conceding the inescapable nature of grief, comments on the shameful nature of seeing men lament

met Sauls weeuw, / die hier al't koningklijck geslacht / soo deerlijck siet om hals gebracht, / maar denkt hoe 't moederlijck hart / ontstelt sij midden in dees smart / die sij om hare vruchten leit / geen mes nog vlim dat scherper snijt. / als dit haar gemoet doorvlimt, / de sond daalt neer, den avond klimt / en valt met druppelen en met douw. / maar niet een traan ontsijgt dees vrouw / de moeder lijdt de grootste straf / nu mach'er niet een traantjen af' (Vondel 1929d: 902). Note the Marian association of 'mes nog vlim', reminiscent of Simeon's words to Mary 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also', Luke 2: 35.

<sup>25</sup> Vondel's *Gebroeders* is markedly different in this respect, also, from his later play, *Koning David hersteld* (1660).

like ‘those Irish women, Greeks at their graves, [who] commit many undecent actions, & almost goe besides themselves’ (Hodgson 2015: 9). Of course, the opposition is not as clear-cut as this. People did not suddenly stop mourning lost loved ones, as is testified by the existence of a copious sermon literature on the topic of excessive weeping. Nor, even, can the medieval literary and devotional practices linked to the Compassion of Mary, or *Planctus Mariae*, Mary’s lamentation under the Cross, be taken as an unequivocal endorsement of the virtue inherent in female mourning. Rather, as Katharine Goodman has argued, nativity and passion plays of the period ‘acknowledge the resistant power of female grief, constructing it upon the underlying paradox that women’s tears are not only excessive and subversive but also necessary and efficacious’ (Goodland 2005: 22).

The early modern period intensified and galvanized these ambiguities through the admixture of religious division and doctrinal controversy. Whereas the theology of assurance may well have worked to allay anxieties produced by the liminal status of the recently dead, critics have noticed a parallel movement to invest these energies unto the figure of the mourner (Hodgson 2015: 5).<sup>26</sup> While grief, and female grief especially, was frequently figured as excessive, immoderate and impious, mourning could also be construed as a privileged site of subjectivity and self-scrutiny, ‘prized’, as Hodgson (2015: 7–8) writes, ‘as a sign of spiritual sensitivity, prophetic insight, and proper self-awareness’. Few characters embody these intransigent paradoxes better than *Gysbreght van Aemstel*’s Badeloch, whose passionate laments clash with early modern codes of wifely obedience, but whose resistance is vindicated through divine command, communicated through the voice of the archangel Gabriel (Vondel 1929c: 5.ll. 1823–1830).

In *Gebroeders* and *Jeptha*, the emphasis on the emotional power of the female mourning, reconfigures the female lament as a powerful indictment of injustice and tyranny.<sup>27</sup> Carrying residual traces of ancient funerary practices that linked mourning to the right to free speech, the Renaissance incarnation of the female mourner finds her antecedents in the lamenting women of Greek and Latin tragedy, from Sophocles’ *Antigone* and *Electra* to Euripides’ and Seneca’s *Trojan Women*, and in the rhetorical tradition of the Ovidian lament (Fox 2009). The Renaissance stage is full of women whose complaints articulate a voice of dissent and resistance, and whose curses carry an uncanny prophetic and performative power (Kaegi 2015). Despite their liminal status due to their proximity to the dead, their role as the custodians of memory gives them a vital place in the construction of community.<sup>28</sup> Vondel’s powerful rhetorical and dramatic concentration on scenes of lamentation throws this opposition between mourning and political power into stark relief. The first act of *Gebroeders* paints a vivid tableau of the drought

<sup>26</sup> Hudson Diehl and Michael Neill both see a connection between the suppression of Catholic funeral ritual and the development of Elizabethan revenge tragedy; see Diehl 1997 and Neill 1997.

<sup>27</sup> For a reading foregrounding the oppositional voices of the women in *Gebroeders* and *Jeptha*, see Korsten 2006, especially chs. 3 and 4. Korsten’s conclusions, although reached via a different route from mine, have much common ground with my own.

<sup>28</sup> As Helen Foley argues in her study of the role of the lament in Greek tragedy, ‘Lamentation, with its strong generation of emotion focusses the power and desire to carry the rough revenge in a communal setting that builds connections between past, present and future members of the group’ (Foley 2001: 33).

and famine afflicting Judea. The chorus of Levitical priests recounts how David departed for the temple and the divine portents that were heard and seen. They describe how the king, visibly perturbed, returned accompanied by Abatjar, who appeared to try to persuade him of something.

In the following scene the Gabaoniten confront David and make their demands known in no uncertain terms. David relays the oracle: God is angered by the descendants of Saul for the blood they have shed. David is conflicted. Abatjar, the priest and Benajas, David's general, now take it upon themselves to persuade the king. Benajas does so in term of political expediency. Using Machiavellian rhetoric, he argues that David's throne is not secure before the descendants of the previous dynasty have been dealt with (Vondel 1929d: 2.ll. 500-510). Abatjar employs the language of divine transcendence and religious zeal, casting the murder of the Gabaoniten as a pleasing sacrifice to God (2.ll. 512-516).

The third act opens with Michol and Risper, anxiously standing by while armed guards seize their children. With the appearance of the women, our perspective on what has just happened changes. Abatjar, Risper insists, is motivated by the desire to avenge himself on Saul and his descendants for the death of his father Abimelech (3.ll. 673-678). The neutrality of the chorus is likewise cast into doubt, as we are reminded of the Gabaoniten's earlier words about the bond between the Levite priests, and their servants, the Gabaoniten. Risper and Michol confront Benajas and a heated stichomythia ensues, that rapidly zooms in on the question whose purposes are really served by the sacrifice. Cornered, Benajas fumbles: 'De Koning heeft dien last van Abjathar ontfangen, / En Abjathar van God, of't goddelijck besluit.' Michol echoes, with blasphemous irony, 'Of't goddelijck besluit. of zoo 't de gunst beduid' (3.ll. 690-699). The women then turn to David in a passionate plea to persuade him to mercy. They urge him think of the past, and to remember the ties and bonds binding the houses of Saul and David together: the love of Michol, the friendship of Jonathan, the oaths sworn to Saul, the covenant with his son, and the many sufferings the women have born for David's sake. Michol reminds him that even though David no longer desires her, she still remains Jonathan's sister (3.ll. 839-859). She confronts David with the example of the Abigail, who saved her husband by appeasing the king's anger, and who later became his third wife. David, she claims, does know how to be merciful, if he so chooses, and if the reward pleases him (3.ll. 921-935). Both women reject the idea that the descendants of Benjamin will be sacrificed to appease non-Israelites, but they also challenge the assumptions about retributive justice that are used to justify the sacrifice. Here, it is particularly interesting to view the play in dialogue with Sophocles' *Electra*. Sophocles' play is a complex meditation on the relationship between justice and retribution. The murders of Clytemnestra and Aigisthus are indeed just according to the *talio*, and yet the *talio* is a dark, problematical form of justice. The stage-world of *Gebroeders* appears, on first sight, caught in the same logic of bloodshed and retribution. Michol reminds David that his sacrifice of the brothers will only perpetuate the cycle of violence:

Zoo klaegenwe met recht, en met die zelve reden  
Daer dit gebroed om klaeght; en ghy, die slaeven paeit,  
Word in meenedigheit gewickelt, en bedraeit;

Ja zult gehouden zijn, tot weerwraeck dezer zielen,  
 't Moordaedigh zaed van Cham te trapplen met ons hielen.  
 't En is geen heelzaam arts, noch die zijn kunst verstaet,  
 Die eene wonde heelt, en zeven andre slaet (3.ll. 858-864).

This is the moral law interrogated in the play, the idea that blood spilled can only be expiated by the spilling of more blood. The play's recurrent animal metaphors function to show how the *lex talionis* levels moral distinctions and blurs the boundaries of the human-animal divide. In Risper's dream, she tried to protect seven doves from a falcon (3.ll. 603-613). Yet for the Gabaoniten the murderous beast is Saul, who levelled their city and slaughtered their parents (4.ll. 1317-1319). In a world locked into the logic of revenge and retribution, lambs turn into murderous wolves and wolves become lambs led away to the slaughter (4.ll. 1265-1271; cf. 5.ll. 1563).<sup>29</sup>

While the play does invoke the idea that the brothers' sacrifice is divinely sanctioned, it also allows for the possibility that the plague of revenge and counter-revenge will continue to afflict the land. The last words of the brethren, spoken by Risper's son Armoni insist on their voluntary submission to fate and predict the fall of David's dynasty, the decline of Juda and the Babylonian captivity (5.ll. 1613-1652). David's reaction to the messenger's reported speech is to forgive his enemies for their blasphemy. We, the audience, however, are in the uncomfortable position of knowing that this prophecy will come true, and that David's dynasty will fall with Rehoboham.

Only in the women we find the articulation of a different outlook, a different morality. In their confrontation with David and the chorus of Levitical priests, Michol and Risper argue against the law of blood vengeance, and the idea that blood guilt is passed on across the generations:

Zijn anderen door 't bloed der slaeven meê besmet;  
 Wat raect dit Jonathans geslacht, Mephiboseth?  
 Een wees, een teeder kind, in 's voesters arm gedraegen,  
 En door de vlucht verleemt, toen Grootvaêr lagh verslagen,  
 En d'eigen Vader meê. van zijn onmondigh kind,  
 Van Micha rep ick niet. Hoe oordeelt men zoo blind  
 Van Gods orakel? neen, dit eischt meer licht en klaerheid,  
 Of laet de logentael meer gelden dan de waerheid (3.ll. 942-950).

When the women fail to persuade the chorus that their sons are innocent, Risper, in a move that should resonate with Christian audiences, appeals to mercy, rather than justice, as the crown of princely virtues (4.ll. 1208-1215). The women's desperate pleas for mercy culminate in their confrontation with the Gabaoniten at the dramatic climax of the play. The Gabaoniten taunt the women, mocking

<sup>29</sup> That this blurring of identities between victim and aggressor is Vondel's intended effect is shown by the metaphor employed by the chorus to describe the vengeance of the Gabaoniten: 'Als 't boschzwijn, tegens moede en afgejaeghde honden, / Wanneer 't schuimbeckende, om het smarten van zijn wonden, / Ten einde van geduld, kranckzinnigh gild, en balckt, / Een' muil vol kiezen en twee blicken openspalckt, / En zijn vervolgers vat; die, uit den aem gelooopen, / Hun heete zwyne-jaght nu met den hals bekoopen' (5.ll. 1557-1562).

their tears and ‘braying’, but are drawn into a battle of words that quickly exposes the weakness of their case. As the women insist that revenge is futile because it can neither bring back the dead, nor offer a lasting peace, the Gabaoniten are forced into admitting that they demand revenge because ‘it delights their hearts’ (‘t Magh wezen wat het wil, wanneer ’t ons hart verlicht’) (4.ll. 1344).

In *Jeptha*, Vondel similarly invokes and challenges audience expectations about the nature of grief. Like its predecessor, Buchanan’s *Jephtes*, Vondel’s play dramatizes the conflict between on the one hand human morality and natural law, and a theology that posits the radical alterity of God, and on the inscrutability of his will.<sup>30</sup> Yet what in Buchanan is an *aporia*, a tragic exploration of the incommensurability of human law and divine decree becomes, in Vondel, the opportunity for anti-Protestant polemics. In Buchanan’s *Jephtes*, ‘the Erasmian conflict’, in Shuger’s words, ‘between the maternal instinct of self-preservation and the sacrificial law of the father’ is dramatized through the confrontation between Jephthah and his wife Storge. Storge, whose name means parental love, challenges the sacrifice of Iphis as a violation of the law of nature, which will moreover, collapse the distinction between the Israelites and the idol-worshipping pagans (Shuger 2000: 142–143). She then vindicates her claim over her daughter as, by the law of nature, equally strong as that of the father. Vondel’s Philopaie speaks a similar language. Appearing on the scene as a raging Hecuba, ready to pluck out her husband’s eyes, she nevertheless articulates a powerful challenge to the logic of patriarchal power. Vondel however, turns what was originally a dialogue into a monologue and places it at the very end of the play, while giving Philopaie’s text to two male characters. Where Buchanan’s Vondel gives Jephthah two antagonists, Storge and the Priest, Vondel places him in opposition to the Wetgeleerde, the interpreter of the Law, and the Hofpriester, the court priest. The position of Jeptha’s Hofmeester is more complex: while he points out that the sacrifice is morally ambiguous, and will be praised by some and condemned by others, he is nevertheless instrumental to its execution. By substituting the wife with two male figures embodying the full force of law and religion, Vondel makes the conflict centre more strongly on the clash between the disruptive force of conscience and institutionalized religion embodied in tradition and priestly mediation. Jephtha’s irrational resolution to honour his vow in the face of all opposition is shaped by a polemical anti-Protestant attack on the notion of conscience as an individual’s direct relationship with God that rises above the claims of any human institutions (Cummings 2009). This opposition is shored up by the play’s affective economy, which, as Kristine Steenbergh has argued, far from condemning passion, presents the women’s emotional reactions as more natural and more salutary than Jephtha’s Stoic emphasis on self-control, which collapses as soon as he has realized the magnitude of his error (Steenbergh 2011).

Yet grief, in *Jeptha*, is not just gendered but also gendering. While Iphis accepts her death out of filial obedience, she evolves, in the course of the action, towards joyous acceptance of her martyrdom as an act first of patriotic self-sacrifice, and, ultimately, radical transcendence. When Jephtha, overcome with emotion, carries with the execution of the sacrifice, it is Iphis who urges him to stop his lamen-

30 On this conflict, see Shuger 2000: 138–140.



tations. Her act of voluntary submission is, paradoxically, what emancipates her from the *patria potestas*, allowing her, for the first time, to take charge of her own fate and dispose of her own body. It is at the moment of sacrifice that Iphis emerges in full glory as a beautiful, nubile young woman, and as a heroine of more than ordinary male courage. It is a highly charged moment, and not, as Deborah Shuger has noted, without its transgressive edges, as it ‘allows the daughter to displace her father as both tragic protagonist and Christic type, in turn feminizing the father who shrinks from the heroic choice with ‘Soft words’ (Shuger 2000: 150).

But Iphis’s transfiguration also puts a radically different perspective on the suffering of the mother. If Iphis emerges as a figure of Christ, Filopaie transforms into a figure of the Virgin lamenting under the Cross, making the fifth act into a *pietà* in which the daughter takes up the role of the Son. This spectral echo of an earlier mode of biblical drama channels and gives focus to the feelings of grief, and establishes sympathetic, therapeutic weeping as one of the main functions of tragedy. When preparations for the sacrifice have been completed, the Hofmeester describes the how the scene will be rehearsed many times after on stage:

Zo menigmaal de godvruchtige dichtvernuft  
de treurtoon, die all’and’re toon verbluft,  
op Jephtha zet, in tijd van pais en stilten  
Om ’t volk te zien in bloed aan tranen smilten  
de schouwburg rood geverfd in maagdenbloed  
want schreien is ook aangenaam en zoet,  
zet hartewee, lang aangegroeid bij droppen,  
met kracht van ’t hart na’t langzaam innekroppen (Vondel 1935: 3.ll. 1245-1252)

In the fifth act, the Hofmeester employs a similar idea of therapeutic, purgative weeping as he prepares for Filopaie’s arrival:

Mevrouw genaakt, helpt ins haar droefheid stieren.  
Intomen en bij wij de breidel vieren.  
Tis grote kunst een mateloze rouw  
te matigen. De stad, het hofgebouw  
en al de berg zal galmen op dat huilen  
uit hol gewelf, spelonk en nare kuilen (5.ll. 1811-1816)<sup>31</sup>

What is needed here is emphatically *not* Stoic self-mastery and suppression of emotion, but a measured, sympathetic response that makes unbearable grief supportable by yielding to it in a controlled way. The audience, then, are effectively invited to weep in sympathy not once but twice: once for the death of Iphis, and once with and for her grieving mother. Jephtha is effectively excluded from this affective community. While his suffering and remorse are intense, his guilt is manifest, and requires, according to what seems to be the Catholic theology of penance at work in the play, penitence before remorse and sorrow can become a focus for tragic identification.<sup>32</sup> That it is Filopaie’s, rather than Jephtha’s grief, that is validated in the play is perhaps also suggested by the fact that while Iphis appears be-

31 Compare also the Hofmeesters earlier advice to Jephtha in act five, ll. 1777-1790.

32 On this point see Steenbergh 2011: 422-423.

fore her father as a restless ghost, Filopaie is granted a consolatory, comforting vision of her dead daughter (5.ll. 1902-1906). It is also Philopaie who is given some of the most aesthetically compelling lines of the play: a lyric lamentation in iambic tetrameter, modelled on Electra's lament on Orestes' urn (5.ll. 1929-1947).<sup>33</sup> *Jeptha* thus invokes the growing strictures placed on female mourning in early modern culture and challenges them by foregrounding an affective and expressly theatricalized mode of grieving that bears subliminal resemblance to earlier, pre-Reformation habits of weeping modelled on the virgin Mary.

Yet there are ways in which this interpretation poses problems. Buchanan's *Jephtes* solves the theological crisis the play presents by animating the moment of sacrifice with divine *caritas*, which, in Shuger's words, 'transforms torture into theophany' (Shuger 2000: 149). Vondel's *Jeptha* to some extent seems to aim to similar effect in his eroticizing and aestheticizing stylization of the sacrifice. But the play has dwelled too extensively on the transgressive, abominable nature of Jephtha's sacrifice for this symbolic transfiguration to succeed without considerable friction. In the midst of their hymn on Iphis' self-sacrifice, the chorus is thus allowed a moment of fundamental doubt:

Och, dat nu een engel  
deze strik ontstengel  
God de wil neem' voor het werk (Vondel 1935: 4.ll. 1689-1690).

The chorus here seems to pre-empt the objection that an exemplary death does not in itself constitute martyrdom, if the cause for which one dies is wrong – *causa non poena facit martyrem*, as Augustine said. The play's prevarication about how we are to view Iphis' sacrifice hints at more diffuse anxiety about the nature of sacrifice, and its role in the economy of salvation. It would be possible to imagine an allegorical interpretation of Jephtha in which the father stands for the law, the mother for nature, and the ties of natural affection between parents and children, and Iphis for grace which abolishes the one, and transcends the other. The play, however, resists such an interpretation. For just as in *Gebroeders*, *Jeptha* employs animal imagery to question the terms human and animal. Filopaie in her excessive grief is compared to a raging tigress, fighting to protect her cub (1.ll. 1302-1319). Yet when Jephtha summons unto himself the heart of a tiger (4.ll. 1522), the two images get are juxtaposed in the mind, driving home the awareness that a 'butcherer of his daughter' ('dochterslachter', l. 1524) is creature more terrible and indeed more like a 'beast' than any tiger. In the confrontation between Jephtha, the priest and the scholar, the Wetgeleerde speaks of parental love as a law of nature carved by nature into the heart of every living creature:

Zij plantte z'ook in dieren  
die door de lucht op hare penne zwieren,  
Of zwemmen in de zee en watervloeden,  
of weiden in gebergt en klavergroen  
De pelikaan, bij mangel van de regen  
en water, laat de jongen niet verlegen,  
maar opent zelf all'aders in zijn borst

33 Compare *Electra* in Sophocles 1978: 1126-1170.



en tap't het bloed van 't hart om hunnen dorst  
 te lessen, hen te spijzen met zijn spieren  
 Gij hoort de leeuw en beer en tijger tieren  
 en brullen, zo de jager 't nest berooft (3.ll. 1023-1033).

The transition from the meek, self-sacrificing pelican and the roaring tiger, bear and lion is odd in more sense than one. It is a jarring image, deliberately so, in its mixing of naturalism and symbolism, and in its theologically problematic association of a symbol of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross with the instinctual love animals harbour for their young. Instead of placing nature and grace in opposition, and salvation outside history, Vondel places them in a continuum, imagining both as an expression of the same love, a love that is expressly figured as maternal and nourishing, rather than paternal and punitive.

Both *Jeptha* and *Gebroeders* are problematic plays: they raise questions about the nature of sacrifice and thereby about the atonement, the central doctrine of Christian soteriology. *Gebroeders* does so by showing the notion of vicarious punishment to be a product of the archaic, primitive *lex talionis*, surely a resonant idea at the time when the Calvinist interpretation of Christ's sacrifice as penal substitution was attracting increasing criticism. *Jeptha*, by contrast, dramatizes the clash between a sacrificial theology and the dictates of natural law and parental love.<sup>34</sup> In both plays, the role of lamenting women is crucial in bringing these conflicts to the fore. This is not necessarily to say that play vindicates the women's perspective over that of the other characters, but rather that these plays refuse to collapse and subsume their contradictions into a wider vision – providence or divine will. Vondel's women resist: they argue, fight, weep and lament, and through their lamentations perform the work of mourning that reinscribes the past into the present, activating its traumas in every performance. Their anguished cries are what makes the tragedy tragic.

#### 4 Political passions – revenge and the public sphere

In the last part of this argument I would like to give a final example of how the strategic use of the passions in early modern political discourse necessitates a revision of some of our assumptions about regiments of self-discipline and emotional self-control in early modern culture, through an examination of the role of revenge in the literature and pamphlet polemics of two moments political crisis: the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in 1619, and the death of King Charles I on the scaffold, exactly three decades later.

The figure of the revenger occupies a central place in the development of Dutch seventeenth century drama. P.C. Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velzen* (1613), a revenge tragedy about the murder of Count Floris V of Holland, was one of the earliest plays to break decisively with the conventions of rhetorician drama. Dutch adaptations and performances of English revenge tragedies such as Thomas Kyd's

<sup>34</sup> On the doctrine of the atonement in its historical contexts, see Vidu 2014. On the criticism of the idea of penal substitution, see Mortimer 2015.

*The Spanish Tragedy* and Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* were, as Ton Hoenselaars (1999) has argued, integral to the development of the professional theatre. Dutch tragedies featuring transgressive avengers ran the whole gamut of the tragic spectrum from the restrained classicism of Jan Six' *Medea* (1650) to the spectacular stagings of emotional excess in Vos's *Aran en Titus, ofte wraak ende wederwraak* (1641) and *Medea* (1660), to the providentialist musings of Vondel's *Samson of heilige wraak* (1669). Many of these plays contain a strong discursive element, dramatizing questions such as the legitimacy of tyrannicide and the role of dissimulation and deceit in political life (Sierhuis 2010; Noak 2002). In his *Veinzende Torquatius* Hooft's biographer, the Remonstrant church historian Geeraerdt Brandt, transposed the plot and characters of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* unto a Roman setting inspired by Tacitus' *Annals*, to give a reason of state analysis of the nature of political power, foregrounding, as Russ Leo (2016) has argued, feigning as a 'theatrical strategy required to survive political life'.<sup>35</sup>

These political revenge tragedies show a set of complex negotiations between plot, political theory and classical intertextuality revolving around the ambiguous figure of the revenger-tyrannicide. Hooft's Geeraerdt van Velzen imagines himself to be a latter day Brutus – with disastrous consequences (Sierhuis 2010: 123–125, 130, 132). While Renaissance audiences were familiar with the story of the assassination of Caesar through Cassius Dio's *Roman Histories*, the myth of Brutus draws on Cicero's *Letters* and *Brutus*, Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, and, to a lesser extent, Lucan's civil war epic *De bello civile*.<sup>36</sup> Especially Plutarch's portrait of the murderer of Caesar as a philosopher-statesman contributed to the charismatic aura of the tyrannicide, a republican heroic ethos whose lure proved seductive even to a man of cautious political temperament such as Montaigne (Montaigne 2003 [1983]: 829). The figure of Brutus thus emerges sporadically in the turbulent decades following the advent of civil war in France and the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century. Brutus crops up in the pamphlet literature of the Dutch Revolt, where William of Orange is often identified with Lucius Junius Brutus who chased the Tarquinius from Rome. The most influential work of Huguenot political theory, the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, a text known to Dutch audiences through the acts of Aggaeus of Albada of the peace talks at Cologne (1579) and through the partial translation of Frans Coornhert, town clerk of Amsterdam, was written by an author hiding under the pseudonym Stephanus Brutus the Celt.<sup>37</sup>

As the turbulent first decades of the Revolt receded into history, the pamphlet literature that helped propel it began to quieten down. During the final years of the Arminian controversy, however, fears among the Remonstrants and their political allies that the Stadhouder, Maurice of Orange, might use the conflict to stage a coup d'état, led to a brief re-efflorescence of this radical strand of political literature. In 1617 Hendrik Storm, a member of the Amsterdam Admiralty had published a partial translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The events of 1617–1619 appear to have spurred him to complete the work, which was published in 1620

35 I am thankful to Russ Leo for allowing me to use his article before publication.

36 On the myth of Brutus in the Renaissance, see Piccolomini 1991.

37 On the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* in the context of the Dutch Revolt, see Van Gelderen 1992: 154–155, 159–160, 210, 270–271, 272, 269–275.

by Michiel Coleyn and included extensive prolegomena, with poems by Vondel, P.C. Hooft, Samuel Coster, Nicolaes Voocht and Nicolaes van Wassenaer, that provided the text with a topical, anti-Orangist and republican framework.<sup>38</sup> After the arrest and trial of Oldenbarnevelt and his associates and the expulsion of the Remonstrant preachers after the conclusion of the Synod of Dort, Maurice's grip on the country's institutions seemed secure enough. Yet the printing press proved harder to control, and pamphlets printed clandestinely in the Southern Netherlands were smuggled back into the Republic and distributed throughout the country. This clandestine pamphlet literature ranges from elegies and epitaphs on the death of Oldenbarnevelt to satirical and libellous denunciations of his enemies. The channelling of compassion, pity and anger over the fate of Oldenbarnevelt thus served a directly political purpose: to contest the legitimacy of the trial, and to vindicate the Advocate's policies and political principles. While most of the pamphlets expressly trust vengeance to God, some of them seem to be steering towards a more direct form of political intervention. Indeed, according to one Contra-Remonstrant commentator, in the days following the execution pasquils were spread in The Hague, calling for a 'new Brutus' (Wille 1962: 171, fn 2).

One such pasquil, the poem 'Brutus to Holland', printed in a collection of lamentations, the *Songs of Sorrow*, takes the form of a dialogue between Brutus and Holland, in which Brutus vows to sacrifice 'goods, life and blood' to liberate the country from the oppressor, but asks the Batavians to erect a statue in honour of his memory.<sup>39</sup> The poem alludes directly to the third question of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, where the example of Brutus is discussed in the section that treats 'Those who are bound to coerce tyrants without title'.<sup>40</sup> The poem's author, the Remonstrant minister and polemicist Hendrik Slatius, would eventually step forward to claim the role of Brutus, the avenger of the liberty of the oppressed Netherlands, for himself. In three pamphlets published between 1619 and 1623, *The Cristal Mirror* (1619), *The Reveille-Matin* (1620) and the *Bright-shining Torch* (1623), Slatius attacked illegality of Maurice's political take-over and the proceedings against Oldenbarnevelt and his associates, garnering support for political action against the Prince.<sup>41</sup> While the first two of these

38 M. Annaeus Lucanus *van't borger oorlogh der Romeynen, tusschen C. Iulium Caesarem ende Gn. Pompeius Magnum, Overgheset in Nederlands rymdicht door Heyndrick Storm (t'Amsterdam, By Michiel Colym, Boeckvercooper op 't Water* (1620).

39 *Jammer-liedekens ende rijmen, voor desen in Holland gestroyt ende gesongen: doch nu ... by een ghestelt, etc* (1620), f A4v.

40 This kind of tyrant, the treatise argues can be resisted by any private person [*privatus quislibet*]. Thus the *Vindiciae* argues: 'the law on tyrannicide applies in this case. It honours the living with rewards and the dead with epitaphs and statues, as it honoured Harmodius and Aristogiton in Athens, and Brutus and Cassius in Greece, whom it rewarded with bronze statues by public decree; and also Aratus of Sicyon, because they had freed the country from the tyranny of Pisistratus, Caesar, and Nicocles respectively' (Languet 1994: 150-151).

41 Anon.[Hendrik Slatius] *Christalijnen spiegel, Waer in men naecktelijcken kan zien, Wie t'zedert eenighe Jaren herwaerts inde Provintie van Hollandt, de Hoogheydt, Rechten, Privilegien en vrijheden hebben geuioleert... Of wie de rechte Autheurs zyn van alle divisie Scheuringe, twist, tweedracht en andere ongevallen* (s.l., s.n., 1619); Anon. [Hendrik Slatius] *Morgen-wecker, aen de oude en ghetrouwwe Batavieren, met een remedie teghen haere slaep-sieckte* (s.l., s.n., 1620); Anon [Hendrik Slatius] *De klaer-lichtende fakkel, om de verduysterde ooghen der Batavieren ende ingesetenen deser Vereenighde Nederlanden zo toe te lichten, datse ter degen mogen zien het ghevaerlicke perijckel*

pamphlets give a defence of the Oldenbarnevelt's policies, and the constitutional and political principles on which these rested, as well as attacking his imprisonment and trial as a violation of Holland's constitution, the *Bright-shining Torch* moved towards an open denunciation of Maurice's tyranny. Classical political thought furnishes Slatius with the language that provides the legitimation for action against the tyrant. It is a neo-Roman concept of political liberty that emerges at the linchpin of Slatius defence of tyrannicide. To be free in these terms, is to be a political agent *sui iuris*.<sup>42</sup> Or, as *The Bright-Shining Torch* has it: 'Then alone are you truly free, when nobody is master over you, and you belong to yourself, and not to anyone else' (*De klaer-lichtende fakkel*, f DIR). Yet it is rhetoric that furnishes Slatius with the tools to sway his audience's emotions and spur them into taking action. The rhetorical force of these pamphlets derives from their manipulation of anger, honour and shame. They are suffused with a desire for republican heroics, advocating the necessity of tyrannicide even when it ends in failure or death. To kill a tyrant, or, by being killed by him, maintaining one's liberty intact, is the only honourable course of action of a free man, it is the ultimate test to prove him worthy of the liberty he possesses. Throughout his oration, Slatius uses the historical example of the struggle against Spanish tyranny as a rhetorical strategy of obloquy, aimed to shame the Dutch out of their dull-minded acquiescence in the loss of their liberty. Freedom won at such a high cost, he urges, cannot be squandered so cheaply. The Dutch must take up arms to re-conquer their liberty or accept the infamy of being called 'a nation born for slavery' (*De klaer-lichtende fakkel*, f AIR). The fact that our ancestors fought valorously for their liberty only doubles our shame, if we so carelessly lose it again. Thus, *The Bright-shining Torch* asks:

What then, do you think, loyal Batavians, of this man who aims for your sovereignty, and that by such dangerous, shameful and tyrannical means? Yes; he is the one who has now cast the yoke of slavery around your neck. Will you still suffer this man to play the count and to lord over you, where your ancestors would suffer less from their hereditary lord? It is, forsooth, no honour, but the gravest obloquy that you, having freed yourself from slavery, fall into another of a worse kind. A slave is not free because he has changed master (*De klaer-lichtende fakkel*, f C4v-DIR).

Vondel's drama *Palamedes* (1625), although it appeared several years after the execution of Oldenbarnevelt, is best understood against the polemical literature generated by his death. The play assimilates the resources of Senecan drama to fashion Oldenbarnevelt's fall as a tragedy of an innocent hero (Oldenbarnevelt/Palamedes) destroyed by the evil machinations of his enemies (Agamemnon/Maurits, and Ulysses/Van Aerssen). The play's proximity to the pamphlet literature is particularly apparent in Vondel's depiction of Agamemnon as a power-hungry despot and usurper. This was a particularly sensitive accusation, one that Grotius in his *Verantwoordingh van de wettelijke regering van Holland ende West-Vriesland* (1622) had prudently chosen to pass over.<sup>43</sup> Only in the clan-

*ende uystersten noot onses lieven vaderlands: ende daer beneffens de heylsame remedie daer toe nodigh* (s.l., s.n., 1623).

<sup>42</sup> On the Neo-roman concept of liberty, see Skinner 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Hugo de Groot, *Verantwoordingh van de wettelijke regering van Holland ende West-*

destine pamphlet literature, in tracts like the *Reveille-matin* and the *Bright-shining Torch*, do we find Maurits drawn 'in his real colours' as tyrant and subverter of the Republic's laws and liberties (Vondel 1707: 22). The play skirts a dangerously thin line between victim tragedy and blood libel in the way in which it invokes the providential justice that awaits Palamedes' murderers. While the appearance of the fury Megaera in the second act gives the dark fatality to the plot against the hero, the prophecy of Neptune at the end of the play, predicting the catastrophes that will befall the Greek princes, appeals to a providential justice that will not allow murder go unpunished. It is a highly ambivalent moment in the play: while it aestheticizes the desire for revenge felt by Oldenbarnevelt's supporters, it simultaneously alludes to the 'true stories' circulating in Remonstrant circles, according to which all of Oldenbarnevelt's judges had come to evil ends (Brandt 1707: 257-258). Throughout the play, *Palamedes* is styled as a self-sacrificing hero, a martyr to the state, who had nurtured the people of Greece on his bosom. But bloodlust has replaced gratitude: the pelican has nurtured a nest of crows and ravens. Palamedes' willingness to shed his blood thus also functions to draw our attention to the disparity between the death of Palamedes and the sacrifice of Christ. A citation from Theocritus, at the end of the sonnet at the preliminaries of the play, asks: 'Where can gratitude be found? / Raise dogs and wolves / that they will devour you ferociously' (Vondel 1929a: 618). In a similar vein, Vondel's poem on Oldenbarnevelt's judges, the 'Geuse-vesper of siecken-troost voor de vierentwintigh', had asked: 'Hadt hy Hollandt dan ghedragen, / Onder 't hart, / Tot sijn afgeleefde dagen, / Met veel smart, / Om 't meyneedigh swaert te laven, / Met sijn bloet, En te mesten kray en raven, / Op sijn goet?' (Vondel 1929b: 339-340) No crimes are expiated by Palamedes' death, no redeeming powers to be expected from his blood. Rather, Vondel uses blood metaphors as the elegies and lamentations had done, serving as a reminder that God never allows murder to go unpunished.

During the period of the English Civil war the fortunes of *Palamedes* took an interesting turn. While Dutch Contra-Remonstrants had supported Parliament against the King during the first Civil War, support for the Parliamentarians had dwindled away afterwards. It was the regicide that swung public opinion decisively away from the new regime, uniting Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants in their opposition to Cromwell's republic (Helmerts 2015: 101-104). This was the climate that as Helmer Helmerts has shown, fostered the emergence of the cult of king Charles the martyr in the Dutch Republic, propagated through translations of *Eikon Basilike*, as well as pamphlets, engravings and paintings, and the literary productions of poets such as Reyer Anslo, Jan Bara, Lambert van den Bosch, Joachim Dullaert, whose martyr drama *Karel Stuart of Rampzalige Majesteyt* (1649) can be seen as a dramatization of *Eikon Basilike*, Constantijn Huygens, Vondel and Joachim Westerbaan (Helmerts 2015: 115-148, 125).

While much of the existing historiography of royalist literature emphasises its passivity, Helmerts has quite rightly drawn attention to the centrality of revenge in royalist discourse, demonstrating how the image of Charles as patient suffering martyr could and was in fact operationalized to elicit the desire for ven-

*Vriesland, midtsgaders, eeniger nabuyrige provincien, sulcx die was voor de veranderingh, gevallen inden iare 1618* (s.l.[Paris], s.n., ca. 1622).

geance, drawing a rhetoric of revenge derived from revenge tragedy (Helmerts 2015: 175-178). In this context, *Palamedes*, too, was subjected to new readings. No less than four new editions of the play were published in the aftermath of the first Anglo-Dutch war of 1652. The vehement debate on the tragic fate of Charles I enabled a reading of the play that added another layer of allegorization to the interpretation of Palamedes as Oldenbarnevelt, creating an 'allegorical palimpsest', in which the protagonists alternately evoked the Remonstrant martyr, Oldenbarnevelt, and the royal martyr, Charles Stuart (Helmerts 2015: 109). There are recurring references to Palamedes in royalist poetry, and in the pamphlet literature. Joachim Dullaert's prefatory sonnet to his *Karel Stuart*, is a direct imitation of Vondel's prefatory sonnet to Palamedes (Helmerts 2015: 108, 178-180). For the Remonstrants who blamed the puritans for the outbreak of the war this allegorical equivalence was particularly poignant, as it suggested a causal link between the two tragedies: both, in their view, the direct result of puritan fanaticism and subversiveness. As John de Witt noted in 1663: 'The tragedy of Palamedes, King Stuart, the Lords of Loevestein: they are all one and the same' (Helmerts 2015: 109). Yet the direct corollary, in theatrical terms, of the stylization of Charles as a royal martyr was the investiture of his son with the role of the avenging son in a revenge tragedy: a habit adopted in royalist pamphlet literature, as well as in a number of the topical plays of the period, such as Lodewijk Meyer's *Verloofde Koningsbruidt* (1652) and Jan Bara's *Herstelde Vorst, ofte Geluckigh Ongeluck* (1650) (Helmerts 2015: 196).

## 5 Conclusion

The polemical literature generated by the fall of Oldenbarnevelt and the execution of Charles I shows the permeability of the boundaries between pamphlets, libel verse and plays, and the exchange of tropes, images and metaphors across textual and generic boundaries. If anything, it demonstrates the role of vehement emotion – compassion, anger, revenge, shame – in rousing audiences into action and mobilizing support for a political cause. Tragic emotions of fear, pity and admiration for the martyred king were evoked not to be purged, or moderated, but to be channelled into action against his murderers, either collectively (for instance in the poetry presenting the Dutch war effort during the Anglo-Dutch wars as punitive exercise against a godless regime of king-killers), or individually, with Charles II as the divinely appointed avenger of his father's death. And although the anti-Orangist pamphlets of Slatius, and the royalist literature that adopted the conventions of Senecan tragedy to call for vengeance on his murderers, occupied opposite ends of the political spectrum, functionally, they can be seen to perform very similar operations. Both employ the emotional and imaginary resources of the literary to override the perilous moral complexities of revenge: Slatius' pamphlets through their rhetoric of anger and shame, and his appeal to the glamour of the revenger-tyrannicide, the royalist literature of revenge by employing the figure of the son as an executor of divinely sanctioned vengeance. The passionate partisanship, and barely submerged undercurrent of violence in these texts, serves as a warning that although the notion of a public sphere has served historians in



broadening the understanding of premodern political culture, the early modern public sphere is, as John Staines has emphasized, radically different from Habermas' ideal type of a domain of rational, civil and disinterested debate.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout my argument, the use of powerful emotions, either in the affective community forged by the theatrical performance, or in a wider public sphere of polemics and debate, was disruptive of much of the period's moral orthodoxies. This holds true for the question of revenge, as well as for the performance of excessive grief which, while culturally stigmatized as effeminate and indicative of a lack of faith or constancy, is nevertheless shown in performance as both a locus of memory and subjectivity, as well as a powerful tool against tyranny and oppression. The availability of authoritative intertextual and cultural models of emotional expression, whether they be fashioned on the suffering of the Virgin under the Cross, or on the penitent sorrow of Mary Magdalene, allowed for a mediated expression of agency and subjectivity that stand in marked tension with the dominant culture's norms, or perhaps, register the divergent energies generated by the co-existence, within the literary work and within the culture at large, of contradictory impulses. It was this element of contradiction and ambivalence in early modern thinking about the passions that allowed for individuals to interpret their affective experiences against the grain and in ways that often ran counter to culturally scripted or gendered norms. Sometimes such renegotiations drew on exemplary forms of religious subjectivity, yet at other times they appear rather to rely on individual strategies of reading and interpreting affective experience. Thus, while Tesselschade chose to reject her 'excessive' sorrow for the death of her husband as an unholy imposition of the body, masquerading behind the idea of the duty to mourn, Hooft used the embodiedness of the emotions to explain the irreducible nature of his grief.

Studying the passions thus obliges the critic to acknowledge the complex, and often paradoxical way in which the early modern period experienced and represented passionate emotional states, and a willingness to practice a double-take, revising and adjusting one's own cherished assumptions. Literary texts such as the ones examined here seem perhaps more open to the very openness of emotions, and more aware of both the complexity of the cultural and textual discourses that shape them, and of the myriad ways in which their phenomenology remains elusive, improvisatory, and resistant to external control. They are prepared to take interpretative risks, in the same ways that emotions themselves perhaps demand of us.

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44 See Staines 2004; see also Sierhuis 2015: 259-264.

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Auteurs van artikelen ontvangen 10 gratis overdrukken van hun bijdrage. Auteurs van een boekbeoordeling of een signalement ontvangen een elektronische overdruk van hun bespreking.

[T]he representation of emotion, particularly vehement emotions such as spiritual sorrow, extreme grief and desire for revenge challenges us to reconsider our preconceptions about the way in which we assume people understood the opposition between body and soul, reason and passion. Complicating the idea of a direct relationship between the available medical or moral-philosophical discourses on the nature of the passions and their literary expression, the representation of extreme emotion calls for more open, flexible reading strategies that give more leeway to tension or contradiction between different emotional discourses, and that acknowledges that the subversive potential of emotional excess can be celebrated, or politically exploited, as well as suppressed or contained.



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