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### An eloquent enigma: the dramas of Jacobus Cornelius Lummenaeus à Marca (c. 1580 - c. 1628) and their contexts

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**CHAPTER THREE**  
‘DUX IGNARO CATUS IN POPULO’:  
TOPICALITY AND *CARCER BABYLONIUS* (1610)<sup>1</sup>

*Early modern Latin drama and the public domain*

Whether written by schoolmasters, ecclesiastics or university professors, transferring values was one of the most important aspects of early modern Latin drama. These values covered virtually every area for which education or moral reminders were deemed appropriate or necessary by the author. Every aspect of life, be it moral, political, economic, social, legal, ideological or communicative, was touched upon in these *specula vitae quotidianae*, mirrors of everyday life. But once the plays had been released by their authors, in performance or in print, the portrayal of those dramatic values unquestionably engaged the audience in a stimulating debate, inspiring, confronting or soothing it. The author himself was forced to step back and watch his drama play its part within the public domain.

For us, the modern readers or audience, these mirrors of everyday life are not always as clear as they *might* have been in early modern times.<sup>2</sup> A play written in, for example, 1600, could even have been viewed from a totally different perspective only a decade later, if circumstances and audiences would have changed. But what is more important: there was – and still is – no such thing as *the* (reading) audience or the audiences, even though I too use the word at my convenience: an audience or reading audience consisted of different people, each with his (or her) own religious or political stance, age, or social and economic position.<sup>3</sup> As such, the perception of values would have changed accordingly. In the introduction to this thesis I have concisely mapped out an approach that may throw some light on an audience’s perception of a play’s values and, consequently, the possibilities for a contextualized interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a reworked version of my paper to be published in the acts of the International Conference ‘Drama, Performance and Debate: the Role of Theatre and Theatricality in Public Opinion in the Early Modern Period’, held in Amsterdam (2008).

<sup>2</sup> I call this a ‘dual-layered subjectivity’. Cf. the conclusion to this thesis, pp. 213-214.

<sup>3</sup> As has been noted by Korsten, *Vondel belicht*, 21.

*From text to context: a case-study*

In the following, I will begin with a case study on Lummenaeus' *Carcer Babylonius* (1610), which provides an exceptional challenge: this Biblical Latin drama lacks virtually every context with regard to its genesis, function and reception, except for what can be indirectly deduced from the printed text itself. The edition contains a dedicatory poem to Archduke Albert of Austria (1559-1621), and other preliminary poems,<sup>4</sup> which are superb examples of humanist politeness. Many questions arise: was the play performed, and by whom? For what audience, other than Lummenaeus' fellow-humanists, was it written? What inspired the author to write tragedies in the first place? Did he intend to comment through drama on topical circumstances? Where did he position himself in the literary tradition? The absence of any context means that answers, if any, can apparently only be found in the text itself. Starting virtually from scratch, we must work through the text, and into a context.

In this case-study, I will try to answer the following question: is it possible to convincingly (re)construct the interaction between text and context from implicit 'evidence' alone? As such, this study will and can not do what has been voiced as a literary historian's main task in Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen's discussion of Frans-Willem Korsten's book on Vondel. She suggested that a literary historian should focus on retrieving an author's intentions, in order to be able to contrast these intentions with what can actually be found in the text.<sup>5</sup> In case of Lummenaeus' oeuvre, all we in fact have is *what can actually be found in the text*. Thus, there is no opportunity for such contrasting. If, then, I would like to deduce Lummenaeus' intentions, the text is what I would have to work with. But this study's goal is not to retrieve an intention (which, as I stated in the introduction to this thesis, would in any case be a hazardous undertaking<sup>6</sup>); rather, it uses the text's analysis as a mere point of departure for exploring the possibilities of a contextual orientation.

In order to determine the interaction between text and context, I will first establish as accurately as possible both the values brought forward within a play, as well as the ways in which they were communicated. This should be attempted not only by gaining an insight into statements of single

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<sup>4</sup> By Godefriedus Lemmens, abbot of Vlierbeek (cf. above, p. 40); Benedictus Sossagus, from Milan (cf. above, p. 29nt67); George Chamberlayn, canon of Ghent's St. Bavo and future Bishop of Ypres (1627-1634) (cf. an epigram from his hand in Lummenaeus' *Stemmata et flores*, f. Q3<sup>vo</sup>); the Ghent priest Simon van Kerckhove (cf. also above, p. 21nt34); and Maxaemilianus Vrientius (cf. above, for instance p. 22).

<sup>5</sup> Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 'Vondel geïnterpreteerd', 140. Korsten focuses on the relevance of Vondel's plays that stretches beyond the seventeenth century as well (*Sovereignty as Inviolability*, 21).

<sup>6</sup> See the introduction, p. 4.

*personae*<sup>7</sup> or the chorus, but also by weighing those statements within and between scenes and acts, and within the play as a whole, as an audience would have perceived them.<sup>8</sup> The prevailing view(s) – as I described them in the introduction – can then be combined with a contextual analysis to provide an insight into the workings of theatre in the public domain, or even in a public debate. The analysis of values can thus serve as an instrument for enabling a contextual interpretation. This contextual approach, however, might encompass virtually any area even remotely related to the play's contents, be it political, social, confessional etc., and should therefore continually be defined as precisely as possible, to avoid confusion.

In 1989 James A. Parente jr., who has so far been the only one to initiate a systematic – albeit preliminary – investigation of Lummenaeus' tragic oeuvre, had already tried his hand at a contextualized interpretation of this tragedy. He stated that the rebellious Jews of the *Carcer Babylonius* 'were doubtlessly intended as dramatic parallels to the Protestants who had broken with both Rome and, as the Jews had done with Nebuchadnezzar, their rightful ruler in Spain' [my italics, RG].<sup>9</sup> However, Parente apparently made this contextual claim without a thorough analysis of the play as a whole and/or its context(s). I would like to argue that in constructing a parallel of this kind, or any other kind for that matter, there is much to be gained by carefully considering the different valuations in a contextual analysis. This approach focuses primarily on a possible reader-response reaction, and only partly on the author – who of course, as stated above, would have lost control over the play once it was released, but who in any case would have attempted to influence the reader's response through literary techniques. How far can we venture when reconstructing this reaction solely by combining the analysis of the values advocated in a play with an analysis of historic-contextual information?

To retain our grasp on the material and not to lose ourselves in an endless elaboration of contexts and *personae*, the discussion will be limited to certain aspects of the *Carcer Babylonius*. First of all, as the analysis of the play

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<sup>7</sup> For a thorough consideration of dialogue/stichomythia as conveying the main perspectives of values, see Meier, 'Wertkonflikt als Wortstreit'. One should, however, not lose sight of a dialogue's as well as a character's functionality within a play as a whole. Singling out *sententiae* was very popular in early modern times, especially with regard to works from classical antiquity. Cf. e.g. Erasmus' famous collection of *Adagia*. Thus, *sententiae* could still be set to good (i.e. Christian) use, even while their original setting (for instance the pagan classics) would otherwise have complicated such use.

<sup>8</sup> Authors sometimes did not take into consideration the connection between moral *sententiae* and the characters that expressed them. Thus, even morally bad characters could communicate valuable moral lessons. Cf. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, '[Review of] S. Coster, *Polyxena*', 316-317; Smits-Veldt, *Samuel Coster*, 56-58. Such a paradoxical characteristic has also been noted with regard to other Dutch vernacular plays of the seventeenth century. Cf. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 'Moraal en karakter'.

<sup>9</sup> Parente, 'The Paganization of Biblical Tragedy', 223.

will make clear, the most dominant contextual aspects concern (the history of) politics and its relation to religious matters and for that reason the contextual analysis will focus mainly on those areas. Secondly, in view of the play's characteristics, the analysis will focus for a large part on the chorus groups (and their status); these groups have by far the largest number of lines within the play. Thirdly, I will in this chapter only touch lightly upon Lummenaeus' place in the literary and thematic tradition. Regarding the literary aspects of *Carcer Babylonius* as well as its Biblical theme, the most noteworthy literary predecessor, as my extensive discussion in chapter two has made clear, was the Frenchman Robert Garnier (*Les Juifves* (1583)). His work has been investigated in-depth as a response to the world in which he lived,<sup>10</sup> but a discussion of those results lies in some ways beyond the scope of this chapter, which will specifically attempt to construct a contextualization of *Carcer Babylonius* in its own time and place. A broader study would ideally consider the results of these studies on Garnier's work – if only to enable a comparison between the topical use of literary themes<sup>11</sup> –, as well as other contexts, such as the confessional-religious context.<sup>12</sup>

With the parameters thus set, I will first try to assess which values the play, and the chorus in particular, present, and by which means this is done. I will then try to combine those results with an analysis of certain aspects of the political and religious context, to see in which way(s) the play might possibly have progressed into the public domain.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Most notably by Jondorf, *Robert Garnier*. Cf. also chapter two.

<sup>11</sup> I will briefly address the relevance of topicality in Garnier's work in the conclusion to this thesis, cf. pp. 212-213.

<sup>12</sup> Lummenaeus knew Garnier's tragedy, for it is mentioned in his poem honouring the now lost *Sedecias tragoedia* by Hermann à Burgundia (de Bourgogne), a nobleman writing poetry in Latin as well as French. The poem is printed in two slightly different versions in *Opera omnia*, 231-232, and Puteanus, *Epistolarum reliquiae*, 98. Cf. above, p. 92(nt12).

<sup>13</sup> With linking the transfer of value to the public domain and the complicated process of public opinion around 1600, this case study progresses from Christel Meier-Staubach's excellent article 'Humanist values in the early modern drama'. Meier-Staubach treats six chief points of *humanist* values and programmatic aims in early modern drama (up to ca. 1545): language/*Latinitas*; Elegance of speech/Rhetoric; Rules of conduct (*mores*)/Choice of the way of life; Academic subjects/Contest of scientific disciplines; Status of poetry; and Political ethics (p. 154). I think this categorical division is only partially applicable to the type of (religious) drama that develops around 1600. As she notes, from 1500 onwards drama develops into a means of cultural policy, as adopted by the Jesuits (p. 165). Our case study of historical-political and religious aspects in early modern drama to a certain extent reveals similarities to the values treated in Meier-Staubach's categories of *Rules of Conduct* (specifically regarding Christian doctrine) or *Political Ethics*. However, the categorizations can not be made to satisfactorily suit this case study and I will therefore not address her study in further detail.

*Lummenaeus à Marca and Carcer Babylonius (1610)*

As the bibliographical chapter has made clear, the Biblical tragedies of the Ghent Benedictine Jacobus Cornelius Lummenaeus à Marca, and also the author *himself*, occupy an interesting position in literary history, not least because of their sudden appearance on the world stage. For not only does the first extant publication of Lummenaeus – the tragedy *Iephthe* – appear virtually out of nowhere (at least from our present-day perspective!) in 1608,<sup>14</sup> archival research has as yet unveiled only a bare minimum of verifiable information on Lummenaeus' pre-1608 period; the only fact known is that he entered St Peter's Abbey in Ghent in 1600.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen in the biographical chapter, only from 1608 onwards are we able to gradually gain a certain insight into Lummenaeus' biography, literary activities, and the construction of a humanist network around the Louvain professor Erycius Puteanus (Erijck de Put; 1574-1646).<sup>16</sup> For example, letters from around 1608-1610 (from), who was professor at the university of Louvain and at the *Bibliotheca Ambrosiana* in Milan, reveal that Lummenaeus' literary production was sent from one prominent figure to another, even across Europe. Lummenaeus' literary production was sent from one prominent figure to another, even across Europe, and contemporary humanists, like the Ghent secretary and *poeta laureatus* Maxaemilianus Vrientius (De Vriendt; 1559-1614), incessantly praised Lummenaeus, not only for his tragedies,<sup>17</sup> but also for his Latin historiography and sermons.<sup>18</sup> Apparently, his poetic talent had been recognized and Lummenaeus even had the opportunity to have his tragedies printed, whilst many others did not. Nonetheless, one cannot help but wonder why Lummenaeus started writing and publishing those tragedies, and why he did so in this particular way.

It seems that Lummenaeus was, as a playwright, not directly connected to any Latin school, Jesuit college, or university, where most Latin plays originated, and were staged, in the early seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. pp. 26ff.

<sup>15</sup> The Ghent State Archives hold a handwritten inaugural note by *frater* Cornelius de Marcke, dated November 11, 1600 (RAG, SP 34 II 104). Cf. the biographical chapter, p. 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. for more details the biographical chapter of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance *Iephthe*, f. B4<sup>ro</sup>; *Carcer Babylonius*, f. A4<sup>vo</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> In 1613 Lummenaeus published an *Opera Omnia*, which included not only slightly reworked editions of *Iephthe* and *Carcer Babylonius*, but also a third tragedy (*Dives Epulo*), *Lessus* (lamentations), Latin sermons, miscellaneous poetry and a history of the Dukes of Burgundy. Despite the elusive title (*Opera omnia*, the complete works) many more publications, among which tragedies, sermons and speeches, were still to follow until his death in c. 1628. Cf. the bibliography, appendix one.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. e.g. Bloemendal, *Spiegel van het dagelijks leven?*, passim; id., 'Receptions and Impact', 8-13.

What is more, no poetical statements by Lummenaeus have yet been found. The dedicatory letters and numerous poems provide hardly any clues, and references to actual performances are dubious. As I stated in the introduction to this thesis,<sup>20</sup> even though knowledge of the intended effect and even of the intended audience might be of some value in this investigation, we will first of all focus on the dramatic text on its own terms. For in any case, regardless of his own intentions – if we can ever construe them –, the author would have had no further control over its reception, once he had released a play into the public domain.

Lummenaeus' sudden public emergence and obscure position as a dramatist are not the only reasons for his noteworthiness: the developing stages of his tragic oeuvre show that he seemed to be trying his hand at a rather ambitious and innovative dramatic model for Neo-Latin drama. While in *Iephte* (1608) he had employed a more traditional dramatic model, observing a certain equilibrium between monologue, dialogue and choral odes, in *Carcer Babylonius* he achieved something completely different.<sup>21</sup> Dealing with the Old Testament story of the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, the subsequent blinding of the Jewish king Zedekiah and the killing of his sons,<sup>22</sup> this tragedy impressively outperforms the tragedy *Iephte*, with a significant 813.5 chorus lines out of a total of 1170 verses, over three quarters of the entire play. The few remaining lines of *Carcer Babylonius* are reserved for five extensive monologues, whilst there are only two dialogical passages.<sup>23</sup>

In the following, I will provide an analysis of the contents and structure of *Carcer Babylonius*, as well as attempt to establish the perspectives of value offered throughout the play.

### *Two perspectives of Carcer Babylonius: the Babylonian cause*

The first act of the *Carcer Babylonius* is a cohesive entity, consisting merely of an opening monologue by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, and a choral ode by the Chaldaeans (Babylonians). The king's opening words leave no doubt about cause or guilt, when he addresses in a Senecan manner both

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. above, pp. 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> First published in 1610, it was reprinted three years later, slightly reworked, in *Opera omnia* and – revised, abridged and renamed as *Sedecias* – in the 1628 *Musae lacrymantes*, ff. Cc4<sup>ro</sup>-Gg4<sup>ro</sup>. To avoid any confusion caused by drawing different versions into the analysis, this chapter will focus for the most part on the original 1610 edition and its contexts. Cf. also the bibliography in appendix one, and the synopsis in appendix two.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Kings 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52. Cf. also Lamentations 1-5.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter two is devoted to exploring the poetics that formed the basis of Lummenaeus' remarkable tragic model. Here, I will focus on the influence exerted on the interpretational possibilities by this model.

Jerusalem and Zedekiah: ‘Always treacherous Jerusalem! Never just once rebellious, you enemy! Ungrateful man, oh Zedekiah!’ (ll. 1-3).<sup>24</sup> And further on: ‘Flee you rebels, flee’ (l. 20);<sup>25</sup> ‘I will force the defendants to wear the just mark of shameful obedience’ (ll. 32-33).<sup>26</sup> He then concludes: ‘I call upon the Gods and all that is sacred: before the horned Goddess [i.e. the moon] will have shown her full appearance four times, you will crumble, Jerusalem; so I have sworn to the Gods’ (ll. 47-49).<sup>27</sup> With this speech, Lummenaeus vividly dramatizes the Bible, which merely summarizes that Zedekiah had done something that was evil in the eyes of Jehova, who therefore made him rebel against the king of Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 24:19-20).

Thus the scene is set, the audience knows what to expect, and, following this monologue, the chorus of Babylonian men (ll. 50-135) would be expected to continue in the same vein as the king. However, when hearing and seeing the armies of Babylon march past, the chorus immediately assumes a role quite unlike that of its king, predicting the misery and misfortune awaiting Jerusalem when delivered at the hands of this ruthless band of arms. A lengthy emotional outcry recalls the joys, the pleasures Jerusalem’s citizens will never more enjoy; it predicts the mournful cries, the mercilessness of fire and destruction, the horror of buried youths – boys and girls alike. It recounts Jewish traditions and delights – celebrating Easter, remembering Jephthah’s daughter, the peaceful shores of the river Jordan – which the Jews will soon lose forever. It concludes: ‘Before white Diana’s horns will have touched four times, you Jerusalem, poor Jerusalem, will be lying in your grave’ (ll. 132-135).<sup>28</sup> Even though Nebuchadnezzar’s words (cf. above) find a clear echo in the final words of this choral ode, the chorus’ tone is softer, creating a counterweight against the furious tirade of the king and thus creates a balanced unity. This entirely Babylonian act clearly focuses on the disobedience of Jerusalem, and of Zedekiah in particular.<sup>29</sup>

The second act provides a parallel follow-up: Nebuchadnezzar’s captain of the guard, Nabuzardan, delivers a monologue of about the same length as that of the king, moving from Nebuchadnezzar’s general war-mongering towards specific military tactics for the final blow to be dealt to

<sup>24</sup> *Infida semper Solyma! non vnquam semel / periura, perduellis! ingratum caput / o Sedecia!* The words *ingratum caput* echo Seneca (*Medea*, l. 465), thus presenting the play as a symbiosis of the Bible and the classics right from the start.

<sup>25</sup> *Fugite, rebelles, fugite.*

<sup>26</sup> (...) *cogam reos / et luere iustam turpis obsequii notam.*

<sup>27</sup> *Testor Deos et sacra, non unquam quater / cornuta plenam Diva formabit facem / et tu peribis, Solyma; iuravi Deos.*

<sup>28</sup> *Candida nunquam / Diana quater cornua iunget / et tu Solyme, Solyme infoelix / et tu Solyme sparsa iacebis.*

<sup>29</sup> Underlined most comprehensively by the first choral ode, ll. 114-5: *Quicquid fatui ludunt reges / luit immerito funere vulgus*, ‘For all the games that foolish kings play, with undeserved death their subjects pay.’ Cf. also below, pp. 163ff.



the city of Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> Three moons have already passed and the end is drawing near. Impatiently Nabuzardan awaits the right moment, when under cover of the night his soldiers will storm the city,<sup>31</sup> and – recalling the Senecan words of his king – disloyal Jerusalem will finally find itself in ruins.<sup>32</sup> This monologue too is then followed by the chorus of Babylonian men, who now, instead of renewing their emotional outcries, seize the opportunity to illustrate with numerous examples from classical mythology, the fate of those who have violated the laws of God and nature (ll. 171-226): Prometheus, stealing the heavenly fire; Icarus, challenging gravity; the Argo, defying the power of the seas; the fate of the ship's unfortunate crew: Hylas, Jason, Orpheus, Hercules. The chorus then continues to elaborate on the objectionable nature of weapons and war in general (ll. 226-246),<sup>33</sup> seamlessly switching back to the siege of Jerusalem, and the city's misery and helplessness in the face of such a formidable adversary. The choral ode, again clearly not as rash and aggressive as the previous monologue, leaves hardly any room for discussion: Jerusalem, once mighty and powerful, has challenged a higher power and by doing so, now has to face punishment.<sup>34</sup>

As we have seen, the chorus of Babylonians, elaborating on the previous monologues with drawn out, more delicate lyric phrasing, refers only marginally to the Jewish rebellion against God. Merely touching upon religious themes (such as Jewish rites and mythological illustrations like that of Prometheus), the chorus places more emphasis on rebelling against a higher power in general. The representation makes clear that the Babylonians do not really care whether or not the Jews had angered their own God: the use they make of mythological instead of Biblical examples, as well as the repeated Jewish references (from the third act onwards) to the Babylonians and their king as 'barbarians',<sup>35</sup> is a clear marker. But by illustrating Jewish defiance by means of various mythological examples, the

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<sup>30</sup> Lines 136-170.

<sup>31</sup> The Bible does not mention the time of the attack. The more detailed story of Zedekiah by Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 10.136), which Lummenaeus had probably consulted (cf. below, nt54), mentions in addition that 'the city was taken about midnight' (tr. Marcus, *Josephus*).

<sup>32</sup> *Solyma, perfidiae caput / Solyma, videbis sanguinem et stupra et faces* (ll. 169-170).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Tibullus *Elegies* 1.10.1ff. ('Who was he, who first brought forth the horrendous swords...'), an elegy dedicated to the goddess of peace (*Pax alma*, 1.10.67). This echo confirms the peaceful mode of speech of the Chaldaeans. The same elegy is alluded to by the chorus of Jewish women, cf. below, nt43.

<sup>34</sup> In fact: quite similar to Jerusalem's fate will eventually be that of Nebuchadnezzar himself; God will make him pay for his pride and he will temporarily become insane (Daniel 4:25-30). In contrast to Robert Garnier's *Les Juives* (1583), Lummenaeus makes no reference to this future event, thus banning this somewhat comforting perspective from his tragedy.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. e.g. l. 602 (*barbarus hostis*); 877 (*Barbarum*); 943 (*raptor Barbarus*).

Babylonian chorus nonetheless transmits a clear signal: disobeying a higher power will at all times result in punishment.

*Two perspectives of Carcer Babylonius: the Jewish cause*

After the second act, the Babylonian men do not reappear. Instead, the chorus group of the last three acts consists of Jewish women, *de facto* subordinate to the Babylonian men in a double sense, both as women to men, and as the soon-to-be conquered party. The third act opens with a monologue by the prophet Jeremiah (ll. 333-409), who proclaims to have been ignored or even laughed at when, earlier on, he had communicated God's warning to the Jews. Apparently, he addresses the group of Jewish women, whose song follows Jeremiah's monologue, and who, like the prophet before them, now duly recognize their mistakes: 'Ever since we worship this witch Astarte just like the Phoenicians (...) punishment is following this foreign lust of ours' (ll. 415-420);<sup>36</sup> 'Unwillingly, but deservedly we now shed our blood; for what barbaric lightness of mind caused us to implore harmful Gods?' (ll. 424-426).<sup>37</sup>

From this point onward, almost the entire choral ode of the third act is dedicated to illustrating man's rebellion against Jehovah (ll. 427-590). Contrary to the Babylonians, who copiously employed classical mythology, the Jews provide numerous examples from Biblical history to demonstrate man's inclination to sin, as well as the subsequent punishment: the first man, Adam; Noah and the Flood; Moses and the Golden Calf.<sup>38</sup> And even though the Jews acknowledge their own guilt, they distinguish nonetheless between the sins of the rather pitiable masses and the irrational inclination of tyrants towards sinning (as the Babylonians had done in their first ode)<sup>39</sup> – be it without explicitly referring to the current situation and their own king, Zedekiah.

<sup>36</sup> *Ex quo Sidonio more veneficam / Astarten colimus (...) externam sequitur poena libidem.*

<sup>37</sup> *Inviti merito sanguine spargimus; / nam quaenam est levitas barbara noxios / implorare Deos?*

<sup>38</sup> Adam, who was removed from the Garden of Eden because he had eaten the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3); Noah, who was ordered by God to build an ark to escape divine retribution (Genesis 6-9); Moses, who destroyed the Golden Calf, which the Israelites had been worshipping in his absence, causing God to consider their elimination (Exodus 32).

<sup>39</sup> *Sed fuit illud vulgare scelus, / non nisi fragilis noxa popelli / et momentum flebilis horae; / qui sceptrata tenent maiora queunt, / maiora patrant, quos ut rectae / rationis egens prava voluntas / caeco impulerit turbine raptos, / quicquid placuit licuisse volunt / legemque putant si quid cupido / plauserit animo,* 'Such [i.e. the examples of Adam etc.] was merely the people's crime, nothing but the guilt of a fragile people and a mere pitiable moment. But those that are in power are capable of crimes many times worse, whose evil desire, deprived of every rationality, has dragged them along in blind fury, and who consider permitted, and hold as law, all that which pleases their greedy minds' (ll. 543-52).

The closing of the third ode (ll. 591-603) brings us abruptly back to dramatic reality, when the distant sound of trumpets announces the capture of Jerusalem. From the choral digression on relevant thematic matters we are instantly transferred back into the zone of war, when Nebuchadnezzar's opening monologue of the fourth act considers the possibilities of punishment for the captured king Zedekiah. His thoughts are interrupted by a servant, and the monologue turns into a dialogue of almost fifty verses (ll. 621-668; the most extensive of the two dialogues contained in the play), echoing Seneca's *Thyestes* 244-280, where Atreus and a servant discuss a wide variety of punishments to be inflicted upon his brother Thyestes, who had committed adultery with Atreus' wife.<sup>40</sup>

Following this dialogue, the lengthy choral ode of the fourth act (ll. 669-811; merely interrupted by a summoning messenger, ll. 804-5) sets the Jewish women a descriptive task: 'Jerusalem has been destroyed; throughout Bethel of old the fires raged' (ll. 669-670).<sup>41</sup> The Jewish women describe the thorough destruction of the city (ll. 670-700),<sup>42</sup> before emotionally relating the capture of Zedekiah and the royal family; the heartbreaking story of the queen, Zedekiah's wife, overcome by sorrow; of his young children, hiding their faces in the robes of their parents, gnawing in vain on the ropes with which they had been bound, as if any attempt to overthrow their oppressors would be anything less than futile (ll. 700-727). What is described here is not the fate of people who have deserved what is coming to them, that much is made clear. It is a personal and emotive account of the tragic events by the – somewhat biased, it is true – chorus of Jewish women.

When the end of the fourth ode is drawing near (ll. 750ff.), self-pity increases: how can there be anyone so angry, so of rigid iron or rock, who would not shed tears, whose rage would not pass, when faced with so much death and destruction?<sup>43</sup> Tension, too, increases, for the awful image of a forced exile in Babylon is getting clearer and the moment of bidding Jerusalem farewell is nigh. But remembering their forefathers' words, there suddenly appears a trace of hope. For had they not predicted, long ago, that one day a glorious sprout from the noble tree of Jesse would rise, a *Messiah*,

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<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy that Robert Garnier employed a similar scene in *Les Juifves* (1583); James Parente even states that Lummenaeus most likely derived this scene from Garnier (Parente, 'The Paganization of Biblical Tragedy', 217). But in view of the verbal reminiscences, Lummenaeus actually employed Seneca as his primary model.

<sup>41</sup> *Vastata Solyme est, undique in flammis stetit / antiqua Bethel.*

<sup>42</sup> Although in the Bible the destruction of Jerusalem is set some time *after* the capture of Zedekiah. Cf. 2 Kings 25:7-9.

<sup>43</sup> *Quis tam rigidi ferreus animi / quamvis scopulos pectore gestet, / qui nostra videns funera siccos / duret ocellos, et non lacrymis / temperet iram?* (ll. 750-4). Cf. Tibullus *Elegies* 1.10.1-2: 'Who was he, who first brought forth the horrendous swords, / how beastly and truly of iron he was!', a poem dedicated to the goddess of peace, which had been alluded to by the Chaldaeans as well. See above, nt33.

who would restore and protect the ancient might of Judah?<sup>44</sup> ‘That only he may come...! What is that? Did thunder just bark from the clouds, are the temples of heaven opening wide?’ (ll. 799-801).<sup>45</sup> Indeed, *someone* is coming: a messenger, alas, summoning them to nearby Riblah,<sup>46</sup> where Nebuchadnezzar is residing. Clearly, repentance will *eventually*, but indeed not *instantly* lead to salvation.

Emotions are rife, tension grows: something is going to happen, and it is going to happen in the next, the fifth, act. There, at last, Zedekiah appears, declaring himself a prime example of bad kingship: ‘Whoever trusts in his scepter and, stricken by its vain glitter, craves for this brittle possession: on me let him look and on thee, o Jerusalem. Never has God, when insulted, punished crimes with desolation more severe’ (ll. 812-815).<sup>47</sup> Like the Sodomites,<sup>48</sup> like the worshippers of the Golden Calf,<sup>49</sup> Zedekiah has sinned (ll. 816-828), and he claims full responsibility for it: ‘I myself have caused this destruction’ (l. 832);<sup>50</sup> ‘My Jerusalem has been destroyed, and it is my fault: for the crime she committed, she committed following the

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<sup>44</sup> *Et dixerunt affore tempus / quando ruderibus surget ab istis / stirpis Iesse nobile germen / Virginis alvi florida proles, / dux ignaro catus in populo / qui nos solida cum pace tuens / sceptrum antiqui firmet Iudae* (ll. 780-6), with lines 781-3 alluding to Isaiah 11:1, *et egredietur virga de radice Iesse et flos de radice eius ascendet*, ‘and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots’ (KJV), generally perceived as prefiguring Christ.

<sup>45</sup> *Oh si veniat! Fallor? An acri / concussa sono nubila strident / et caelorum templa debiscunt?*, echoing Ovidius’ *Amores* I.6.49-51: *fallimur, an verso sonuerunt cardine postes*, etc. ‘Am I mistaken, or did the doorposts just creak?’ No: it is merely the wind that makes them creak. The lover is thus deceived in this *paraklausithyron*. Cf. also Horace, *Od.*, 3.10.5-6.

<sup>46</sup> In present-day Syria.

<sup>47</sup> *Quicumque sceptro fidit, et vano nimis / fulgore captus fragile suspirat bonum, / me videat et te, Solyma, non unquam excitus / graviore damno scelera punivit Deus*. Here, Lummenaeus connects with Seneca’s *Troades* 1-6, where the Trojan queen Hecuba similarly bewails the fallen city of Troy: *quicumque regno fidit et magna potens / dominatur aula nec leves metuit deos / animumque rebus credulum laetis dedit, / me videat et te, Troia. Non umquam tulit / documenta fors maiora, quam fragili loco / starent superbi*, ‘Whoever trusts in sovereignty and strongly lords it in his princely hall, who fears not the fickle gods and has given up his trustful soul to joy, on me let him look and on thee, O Troy. Never did fortune give larger proof on how frail ground stand the proud.’ (tr. Miller, *Seneca Tragedies*). The dramatic situations are quite similar: both Hecuba and Zedekiah face a city that has been, or will be destroyed. Not surprisingly, Seneca’s Hecuba focuses on Fate, Lummenaeus’ Zedekiah on God’s punishment. Lummenaeus’ subtle dealings with the Stoic notion of fate I have addressed in my paper at the congress of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies in Uppsala (2009), cf. above, p. 2nt4. The Hecuba-passage has also been used by Dutch tragedians PC Hooft and Samuel Coster, though both authors had set it to mutually different use. Cf. Jansen, *Imitatio*, 39-40.

<sup>48</sup> The city of Sodom, notorious for the grievous sins of its inhabitants, was destroyed by God (Genesis 19).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. above, nt38.

<sup>50</sup> *Ipse ego stragem hanc dedi*.

example of her unfair lord' (ll. 834-836);<sup>51</sup> 'you followed me blindly, Jerusalem' (l. 843),<sup>52</sup> etc. Zedekiah thus shows repentance and acknowledges his failure as a king.

But not only is Zedekiah represented as a king: like Seneca's Thyestes, Zedekiah the *father* is even more troubled by worries. Although he does not yet know what fate awaits him and his family, his words will come awfully close to what is about to happen, and of which the audience is aware: 'If there is anything that causes a proud king more misery than these things [i.e. being deposed as a king], than it is you, my dear children, who are cause of dread to me. My blooming, beautiful children, to whom my wife, the queen, has given birth: how I fear that the madness of this king will harm *you*, that he will play his games on your little heads and drive his sword deep into your tiny bodies.'<sup>53</sup> The words are very personal, forceful, and emotive, just like the choral account of the previous act. Again, we are looking at a man who knows what he has done wrong, who already repents his deeds. Nonetheless, punishment *will* follow. The consequences are unforgiving, ruthless, harsh.

Following such emotional hardships, the final, but short, dialogue between Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar,<sup>54</sup> and the actual climax – before the concluding chorus takes over – does therefore not need to be drawn out: rather, it derives its effectiveness from its brevity and density. It takes just about 40 verses to bring the captives before the king, to behead the children, blind Zedekiah, throw out the children's bodies for the birds to feast on, and carry off the raging father.<sup>55</sup> The poetical tactic employed here might popularly be called 'shock and awe', short but decisive, and leaving a lasting impression. Who could forget these final words of blind Zedekiah, this image not of a king, but of a father in utter despair, who cares less for his

<sup>51</sup> *Solyma prostrata est mea / et crimine meo, nempe quod fecit male / exemplo iniqui principis struxit scelus.*

<sup>52</sup> *Post me ruebas, Solyma.*

<sup>53</sup> *Aut si quid his deterius inveniat dolor / regis superbi, vos mihi facitis metum / foecunda pueri turba, quos peperit mihi / regina coniunx floridos, pulchros nimis, / quam metuo ne vos principis violet furor, ne forte teneris ludat in cervicibus / et parva fodicet latera* (ll. 869-75). Cf. the verbal echo of Seneca *Thyestes*, ll. 485-6: *pro me nihil iam metuo; vos facitis mihi / Atrea timendum*, 'for myself I have now no fear; 'tis you, my sons, who make Atreus cause of dread to me' (tr. Miller, *Seneca Tragedies*).

<sup>54</sup> The word used here by Nebuchadnezzar to address Zedekiah, *faedifrage*, violator of treaties (l. 891), appears to have been taken from Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, 10.138, where Josephus has Nebuchadnezzar address Zedekiah for his oath-breaking and ingratitude, which we do not find in the Bible. The Greek word used by Josephus is *παράσπονδος*, breaker of treaties. Nebuchadnezzar's speech in the *Antiquities* also clearly recalls his opening monologue in the first act (e.g. ll. 1-3, cf. above, p. 143), which strengthens the impression that Lummenaeus based the representation of Nebuchadnezzar's *persona* on this passage of Josephus. For a detailed analysis of Josephus' portrayal of Zedekiah, see Begg, 'Josephus' Zedekiah'.

<sup>55</sup> Lines 891-934.

own well-being than for the earthly remains of his dead sons? '[To throw out] my sons, for the birds to feast on? Poor me! Those children of royal blood? I'll put a stop to this: who will guide me, who will hand me a weapon and aim my blind attack?' (ll. 929-932).<sup>56</sup>

The final – and longest – chorus of Jewish women then takes over (ll. 935-1167). Opening with a variation on Psalm 137 (Vulgate: 136), the chorus makes clear that the scene has shifted to Babylonia and that some time has passed, when it bewails its fate by the rivers of Babylon: 'Far from us, you (i.e. Jerusalem) lie deserted and naked; we utter a sad lamentation on foreign shores, and lying in the shade of damp willow trees we exhale a weakened song' (ll. 938-942).<sup>57</sup> The chorus grieves over its, now lost, freedom and joys (ll. 943-970), but then continues to bewail Zedekiah. Most attention, however, is given to the death of his sons (ll. 980-990), on which the chorus then emphatically elaborates. Using the Biblical examples of Adam, Cham and David (ll. 996-1063), it is illustrated how *crimine patris plectitur infans*, how a child is punished for the crimes of his father (l. 994).<sup>58</sup>

The final lament (l. 1064 ff.) first carries the women off in a dream – as they did when Jerusalem was still under siege –, in which they recall their joyous life along the peaceful shores of the river Jordan, the pleasant songs, green grass and beautiful passerines.<sup>59</sup> But their present surroundings do not allow any daydreaming, so they soon return to harsh reality: 'What am I saying? Where am I?' (l. 1103).<sup>60</sup> They are in Babylon, and what a contrast it is: the owl brings forth its ominous cries, the land is covered with foul tar and the Euphrates dangerously runs its course (ll. 1108-22). It all becomes too much for the chorus-leader, and she collapses. Revived by the other women, she – on her own, it appears – brings the ode to an end (ll. 1127-1167). Instead of happy songs, there will be sorrowful laments; handcuffs instead of colorful wreaths; and the rotten smell of dungeons instead of scented saffron. 'To live is death, to die is life' (ll. 1164-1165).<sup>61</sup> She cannot even finish her lament, for her voice fails. The prophet then makes his final appearance and sums it all up: 'Oh how it must be feared to lead one's life, hated by God; how it must be feared to try the rich hand of His ominous

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<sup>56</sup> *Meos / alitibus? Heu me! Regia stirpe editos? / Prohibebo fieri, quis mihi signet viam, / dextramque obarmans libret incertum impetum?*

<sup>57</sup> *Deserta procul / et nuda iaces, nos externo / litore lessum plangimus aegrum / subterque udas iactae salices / suspiramus debile carmen.*

<sup>58</sup> In accordance with Exodus 20:5: 'for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me' (KJV).

<sup>59</sup> A bird related to the sparrow.

<sup>60</sup> *Quid loquor? Ubi sum?*, echoing Dido in Vergilius' *Aeneis* 4.595.

<sup>61</sup> *Vivere mors est / et vita mori.*

majesty! Oh holy Jehovah! Your rage is just' (ll. 1168-1170).<sup>62</sup> This is a clear illustration of what happens to those who resort to religious rebellion.

*Values: means and functions*

Let us now take a closer look at some of the perspectives of value offered in the play and the means involved in their transfer.

The first two acts, as a whole, provide primarily a Babylonian focus on the Jews' *political* (e.g. by referring to Egypt) rebellion, without, however, any significant references to their religious rebellion. A more detailed analysis reveals the paradoxical confrontation between the monologues on the one hand, and the lengthy choral odes on the other: together, however, they form a close-knit and well-balanced unity. The furious Babylonian king and his army commander, Nabuzardan, on the one hand, leave no questions about the Jews' guilt, and are regarded, from the Jewish perspective, as representing mainly the irrational instruments through which God gains His revenge.<sup>63</sup> The common people, i.e. the otherwise unspecified Babylonian men, on the other hand, provide a more balanced outlook on matters, and stress the suffering caused by war, the violent nature of war itself, the ruthlessness of tyrants and the relative innocence of the common people. However, they do *not* attempt to diminish the element of guilt which is allotted to their king. Still, the lengthiness of the choral odes in comparison to the monologues, the numerous mythological examples used in the emotional outcries, and the balance thus created, all ensure that the dramatic effect evokes compassion, rather than intense hatred, not just for the Jews, but for the suffering of fellow man in particular.

That is the situation when the audience arrives at the first of the remaining three acts. Here, it is the Jewish chorus providing its outlook on affairs. The focus, as we have seen, clearly shifts from a more general or semi-political to an apparent *religious* rebellion. The Jews show no awareness of – or at least do not seem to care about – the political element, for they possess a clear understanding of the causes of their hardships. It is God, not the Babylonian king, whom they have insulted and who now, indeed through the Babylonians, inflicts punishment. But while continuing to stand

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<sup>62</sup> *Heu quam timendum est degere invisum Deo, / tentare foetam numinis diri manum! / O sancte I'hova! Iustus est furor tuus.*

<sup>63</sup> This is not explicitly presented as such in 2 Kings, though more so in 2 Chronicles 36:16-17: 'But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand' (KJV).

by their own king, Zedekiah, as well as acknowledging their own guilt, the Jews too distinguish between the inclination of tyrants towards sinning and the sins of the helpless masses. Drawing towards the end, the Jewish choral odes increase in length, and provide even more Biblical metaphors for their own suffering, a memorably emotive narration of their king's sad ending, and an elaboration upon the responsibility of a father for his children, as well as a king for his subjects.

Through these perspectives of value, several moral reminders come forward. Most importantly, defying God or, to a lesser extent, the rightful ruler, will cause the sinner, as well as his loved ones for many generations to come, to be punished. Should he nonetheless have sinned, then he should repent, and redemption will *eventually* follow. Furthermore, privileges should not be abused, especially those concerning royal or any other administrative power.

The perspectives of value are primarily underlined by the choral odes. In general, the chorus of early modern drama was employed in a much freer manner than in classical drama.<sup>64</sup> Often, it kept a certain distance from the dramatic action and, progressively, was no longer seen as a dramatic *persona* but as providing a normative standard in the here and now of the audience.<sup>65</sup> According to a study by Volker Janning, the chorus of Neo-Latin drama was extremely suitable for guiding the viewers' mind into a certain direction, and it had three ways of doing so. First of all, the chorus can emotionally react to the action on stage and thereby provide a reaction the viewer could possibly mirror. Secondly, the chorus can praise or criticize (the actions of) individual *personae* on stage and thereby hand to the audience some criteria for the evaluation of these *personae*. And thirdly, the chorus can issue direct instructions or warnings, or appeal to the audience or specific groups of people.<sup>66</sup> Often, the chorus refers briefly to the dramatic action, before connecting this action with a presentation of Christian standards.<sup>67</sup> In early modern times, scholars like J.C. Scaliger drew attention to the dramatic functioning of choral odes. Basing himself mainly on Greek tragedy, and to a lesser extent on Seneca, Scaliger concluded that the odes should not be too long and should connect with the dramatic action. Their task lies mainly in providing ethical standards and expressing emotions, while *sententiae* form a central part of the choral presence, mostly of a moral-didactic nature.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> I provide here only a short overview of the functioning of the chorus in early modern drama, not the formal stylistics of classical and early modern tragedy.

<sup>65</sup> 'Een normerende instantie in het heden van het publiek', Van Gemert, *Tussen de bedrijven door?*, 31-32; 34.

<sup>66</sup> Janning, *Der Chor im neulateinischen Drama*, 82.

<sup>67</sup> Van Gemert, *Tussen de bedrijven door?*, 34.

<sup>68</sup> Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, 145-147, quoted by Van Gemert, *Tussen de bedrijven door?*, 40-41.



The choruses of *Carcer Babylonius* unmistakably carry the dramatic action: without them, there would literally not be much ‘drama’ left. Inevitably, the role of the chorus can not be characterized as a merely supportive one. Here, its overwhelming presence signals an unprecedented emphasis on choral functionality. This, however, is not to be found in *sententiae* à la Seneca: rather, the choruses prefer a longer, more elaborate and descriptive approach of getting a perspective across. Nor does their power lie in providing ethical standards through criticizing other *personae*: on the contrary, the Jewish chorus members mostly criticize (i.e. blame) *themselves*. The means by which this criticism attempts to leave a lasting impression upon the audience include describing the events as emotionally as possible, not shying away from self-pity, vivid illustrations, metaphors, and most of all: enabling, to a certain degree, the identification with the audience.

It is because of this identification, that, in my view, both chorus groups not only distinguish between tyrants and the ordinary people, but are also remarkably lengthy, contrary to Scaliger’s prescription of *brevitas*, and why the play, in contrast to the Senecan tradition, even *ends* with an extensive choral ode of some 230 lines.<sup>69</sup> Pushing dramatic boundaries, Lummenaeus displays a fascination not with plot,<sup>70</sup> but with the rhetoric showcasing of emotions through long, stylistic lamentations and monologues.<sup>71</sup> The choral weight, both of Babylonians and Jews, signals the play’s tragic emphasis, which lies, as opposed to dramatic prescriptions,<sup>72</sup> not solely in the demise of mighty kings and princes, but in the fate of ordinary people, men and women, children and even soldiers. The Babylonians bewail the horrors of war, the fate of an urban community, stressing the misery of those who have suffered at the hands of a tyrant; the Jews bewail the fate of the innocent offspring of those who have sinned, for generations to come, and the innocent subjects of guilty kings. The tragedy, therefore, represents a lament *by* the people, *for* the people. And it is exactly that which is emphasized by the overwhelming choral presence, the play’s overall structural focus and non-conventional ending. That way, it is not the fate of the mighty that leaves a lasting impression – even though that has of

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<sup>69</sup> Only the (pseudo-)Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus* and *Octavia* end with rather brief chorus songs, fourteen and eleven verses respectively.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Concern for plot was much subordinated to interest in rhetorical display’, as has been observed regarding early modern French tragedy, cf. Stone, *French Humanist Tragedy*, 84-97. I have argued that Lummenaeus has to a large extent been influenced by French theater, perhaps most of all by Garnier. Cf. chapter two.

<sup>71</sup> As such, some parts of the choral odes throughout the play actually remind the reader of the emotional laments bewailing the loss and destruction of Jerusalem, contained in the book of Lamentations. It appears Lummenaeus may have employed the chorus for capturing and recreating the depressive moods as found in those Lamentations and the Psalms (e.g. 137).

<sup>72</sup> Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, 11: *In Tragoedia Reges, Principes, ex urbibus, arcibus, castris*, ‘In tragedy, there are kings and princes, from cities, fortresses and camps.’

course been noted! – but rather the tragic fall of ordinary men, of the man in the street, perhaps even: of the *audience*.<sup>73</sup>

*From text to context*

In the first part of this chapter, I have attempted to create a solid base for contextual research by establishing as accurately as possible some of the valuations offered in the play, while taking into account the potential effectiveness of the methods. In the second part, I will attempt to carry this case study one step further, to see if anything can be gained by combining the results with a contextual approach. Keeping James Parente jr.'s suggestion in mind, which claimed a Protestant parallel within the plot of *Carcer Babylonius*,<sup>74</sup> let us first take a closer look at the political as well as the religious context of the Southern Netherlands – the city of Ghent in particular – around 1600.

*The political and religious context*

Even though in 1576 the Pacification of Ghent ('Pacificatie van Gent') had been signed as an attempt to secure an agreement between the Northern and Southern Netherlands to drive away the Spanish troops (which *de facto* also led the South, alongside with the North, into the war with Spain), the treaty failed in terms of religious unity.<sup>75</sup> The South had kept the option of reconciliation with Spain open and the States-General, seated in Brussels, forced the governor Don Juan to sign the Perpetual Edict ('Eeuwig Edict') of 1577. But since no guarantees were given for the Protestant religion, Holland and Zeeland did not recognize the Edict. Don Juan, politically weakened, retreated from Brussels to Namur, and William of Orange triumphantly returned to Brussels. However, the polarisation between the southern elite and the Protestant cause of Holland increased. In 1578, Calvinistic factions gained control of several Southern cities, most notably Ghent, from which Protestant influence expanded towards e.g. the townships of Oudenaerde, Courtrai, Ypres and Bruges, where monasteries and churches were thoroughly cleared and the Catholic clergy removed. While Orange was still propagating religious peace ('religievrede'), Calvinistic

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<sup>73</sup> Enabling the identification with the audience is one of the functions that have been assigned by Jondorf to the chorus of French Renaissance tragedy (*French Renaissance Tragedy*, 69): 'It is harder to achieve this public dimension without a Chorus', in effect for the same reasons as I have discussed above.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. p. 139.

<sup>75</sup> For the historical context I will base myself mainly, unless otherwise noted, on Jonathan Israel's *The Dutch Republic*, 179ff.

citizens gained influence in Antwerp as well. It became more and more difficult for Orange to maintain the delicate balance between the opposing parties *within* the Revolt. For Ghent, Bruges, Brussels and other radical Calvinistic cities, their cause turned out to be not just religion: contrary to the cities in Holland, those in the South fought passionately to regain their power and autonomy of old, their municipal sovereignty ('stedelijke soevereiniteit'), as opposed to the Northern pursuit of provincial government.

The 1578 Calvinistic coup that took place in Ghent was thus not merely instigated by religious causes, but by latent political and socio-economic causes as well. Many supporters of its cause, mostly the working man, were as such not essentially Calvinistic, but rather seized the opportunity to regain economic stimulus and momentum. To what degree the rebellious inhabitants of Ghent were fanatic Calvinists remains a guess.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, the religious disruption left a large rift in the community. The Ghent-regime executed several Catholic monastics,<sup>77</sup> thoroughly cleared the city of Catholic teachers and magistrates, and assigned former Catholic monasteries and churches to other uses. St. Peter's Abbey on the *Mons Blandinius*, which Lummenaeus would enter in 1600, was, together with many other churches, monasteries and convents, thoroughly looted, damaged and desecrated throughout the entire period, but most violently in 1578 and 1579. Its church was almost entirely destroyed, the library collection carried off and the remaining buildings sold by auction to pay for the fortifications to be built elsewhere in Ghent.<sup>78</sup> It was not the first time either: during the fast-spreading Iconoclasms of 1566, Ghent and St Peter's had suffered greatly as well. One can easily imagine the utter dismay of the Benedictines at their return in 1584 and 1585.<sup>79</sup>

Many Catholics had indeed taken refuge elsewhere, among them the A Marca family, even though we can not tell for sure in which year they departed and whether or not young Cornelius – if he had already been born anyway –, went with them: the 1662 death notice and eulogy for Cornelius' brother, the high-ranking Jesuit Ludovicus [Caroli] a Marca, mentions that the latter had been born in 1584 in Courtrai, not Ghent, since his parents

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<sup>76</sup> Decavele, *Gent. Apologie van een rebelse stad*, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Decavele, *De eerste protestanten in de Lage Landen*, 241-264.

<sup>78</sup> Viele, 'De zestiende eeuw', 83; Lievois, 'De Sint-Pietersabdij van 1584 tot haar opheffing', 86; Brouwers, *De jezuiteten te Gent*, 24, 59; Despretz, *De instauratie der Gentse Calvinistische republiek*, 53-65; see also the comprehensive collection of essays on the Ghent Calvinistic regime, edited by J. Decavele, *Het eind van een rebelse droom*, passim; and Nève de Mévergnies, *Gand en république*. A discussion of the Ghent Calvinistic Republic by means of several 'memorieboeken' from this period can be found in Van Bruaene, *De Gentse memorieboeken*, 259-267. For a brief account of the rhetoricians' chambers and cultural life in Ghent during the Calvinistic régime, cf. Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 167ff.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. with regard to Lummenaeus, the destruction of the Blandinian abbey and the personal situation of its abbot, Vrancx, pp. 161-162.

had escaped the social and religious turmoil caused by the Calvinistic regime.<sup>80</sup>

From 1578 to 1584, the permanent threat of armed conflict between the Protestant armies of Ghent and the armies of the Spaniards and the *Malcontents* – Southern noblemen, who had for the most part remained loyal to the Church and were discontented with the orthodox regimes of Flanders – plagued the citizens, while the rural areas suffered significantly as well.<sup>81</sup> Socially and religiously, Calvinistic intolerance had gained full control over Ghent daily life.

In the middle of 1584, the city was besieged by the armies of Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma (1545-1592). The violence against Catholics escalated, the population had to endure famine and daily life virtually came to a halt. In September of that year, Ghent surrendered to the besieging army.<sup>82</sup> Farnese soon recognized that the tyrannical regime had for the most part been the work of a small group of fanatics, and exercised moderation in delivering punishment upon the city. He ordered Protestant sympathizers to leave the city or to convert to Catholicism, but either way within two years.<sup>83</sup> Naturally, city magistrates were immediately replaced by ardent Catholics, and in March 1585 the Council of Flanders returned to Ghent from Douai, as did many Catholics.<sup>84</sup> The religious Orders flocked back into the Flemish urban communities. The Calvinistic educational institutes were closed, and education was entrusted to the Jesuits, who were the first of the religious Orders to return to the city of Ghent,<sup>85</sup> followed shortly thereafter by the Capuchins.<sup>86</sup> Both Orders played a major part in the post-1584 Counter-Reformist offensive – not only in Ghent, but throughout the Southern Netherlands – contributing to the religious restoration of the city and the conversion of many Protestants to Catholicism.<sup>87</sup>

Nonetheless, for roughly the next three or four years, the situation in Ghent remained precarious: many inhabitants were stricken by disease or poverty, houses were demolished in order to obtain firewood, and the costs

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. appendix three. For a discussion of Cornelius' year of birth, cf. the chapter one, esp. pp. 21ff.

<sup>81</sup> Frédéricq, 'L'enseignement public', 69-70.

<sup>82</sup> Frédéricq, 'L'enseignement public', 93-94.

<sup>83</sup> Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, 224-225; Decavele, *Gent. Apologie van een rebelse stad*, 126.

<sup>84</sup> Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, 225.

<sup>85</sup> The Jesuits initially resided with the Benedictines in Saint Peter's Abbey; also thereafter the abbots of St. Peter's would be very benevolent and beneficial towards the Society. Cf. Brouwers, *De jezuiten te Gent*, 33-35.

<sup>86</sup> Frédéricq, 'L'enseignement public', 99.

<sup>87</sup> Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen*, 155-175; Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, 227. Lummenaeus had supposedly been a Capuchin before he joined the Benedictines in 1600. Cf. chapter one, pp. 23-24.

of living went sky high. Cattle roamed the once prosperous streets.<sup>88</sup> From February 1585 onwards a vast exodus began: it is estimated that about 10.000-15.000 people, many of them merchants, industrials, intellectuals and artists, departed for Holland and Zeeland.<sup>89</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century the city was left with a population of about 30.000, compared with 60.000 during its prime in the fourteenth century.

With the reign of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, from 1598 onwards, a new period began for the Southern Netherlands. While military manoeuvres continuously threatened the Ghent area up until 1607 – when negotiations (initially for peace, later for a 12-year Truce, signed April 9, 1609) were underway with the Republic – the Archdukes initiated a period of a Catholic *reveille*, of renewed economic activity and artistic prosperity. Even though it turned out that the South had forever lost its momentum to the northern provinces, the early seventeenth century was not as culturally and economically backwards as some historians made it out to be.<sup>90</sup> For example in Ghent, from the 1590's through to 1665, there was growth and prosperity, mainly thanks to the linen industry, while the population grew once more to about 50.000, despite regular occurrences of severe plague epidemics.<sup>91</sup> In the field of literary production, the post-1585 cultural blossoming would be dominated by humanists and Counter-Reformist Catholics, especially clergymen, stimulated by the Archdukes.<sup>92</sup>

After the conquest of the South by Farnese, Protestant activity had been systematically eradicated – at least superficially. In general, however, even though this was against the explicit will of the Archdukes, there was a high degree of tolerance throughout the South. This tolerance originated partially from the results of the Spanish negotiations with the Republic. The

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<sup>88</sup> Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, 225-226.

<sup>89</sup> Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, 226; Decavele, *Gent. Apologie van een rebelse stad*, 127-128. In a more recent article, Decavele gives the higher estimate of about 15.000. Cf. Decavele, 'Het Calvinistisch Gent', 48. Most of the information given by other researchers is based on this 1992 publication (e.g. Marinus, 'Het verdwijnen van het protestantisme', 263). Estimates are apparently based on a contemporary source, stating that 9.000 passports had been issued to Ghent inhabitants. Cf. Briels, 'De emigratie uit de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', 187. The most recent analysis can be found in Dambruyne, *Mensen en centen*, 87-90. Dambruyne also accepts the number of 15.000 emigrants, and argues that there was a decline in population of about 35% in the period 1584-1590, based mainly on the index of rented houses, beer consumption and a comparison with Antwerp. The influence exerted by the Southern immigrants in the North has been extensively been treated as early as 1855 by Gaillard, *De l'influence exercée par la Belgique*.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. for example Fris, *L'histoire de Gand*, who chose telling titles for the chapters concerning the decades around 1600: *La décadence; la dépopulation de la cité; la chute et le sommeil; la ruine de la ville*.

<sup>91</sup> Decavele, *Gent. Apologie van een rebelse stad*, 128-129; Cloet, '[Introduction to] De zelfverzekerde en succesrijke contrareformatie', 55-57.

<sup>92</sup> Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 130-132; Cloet, 'De gevolgen van de scheiding der Nederlanden', *passim*.

peace negotiations between the Spanish crown and the Republic had been aborted, since Spain initially did not want to recognize the Republic's sovereignty, nor did the Republic want to grant freedom of religion to its Catholic inhabitants. A Truce turned out to be the best result possible. For Spain, a continuation of the war would have placed an impossible burden on its resources, as the Archdukes themselves very well realised. Therefore, awaiting the Spanish king's approval of the Truce after the negotiations had been resumed in early 1607, Albert initiated an armistice.<sup>93</sup> With the Truce of 1609, Spain *de facto* recognised the Republic's sovereignty, while the Republic had not been forced to make any real concessions. Therefore the Southern government, fearing countermeasures against Northern Catholics, more or less abandoned the active prosecution of Protestants. While, through placards and edicts, it was in theory virtually impossible to be an active Protestant and to live outside the Church, in practice, if one lived quietly outside the spotlight (one could not benefit from privileges or public education, or obtain a magistracy), this was perfectly possible. A true reform movement, however, was no longer to be feared.<sup>94</sup>

With the Archdukes, a close relationship developed between secular government and church authorities.<sup>95</sup> They employed legislation whenever possible, and spent enormous sums of money to stimulate the Catholic restoration. Both church and state kept a strict eye on religious orthodoxy, not the least through firm censorship on books and theatrical activities.<sup>96</sup> In a placard of 1601, the Archdukes strictly forbade any theatrical performances that touched upon the Catholic religion, unless with prior approval from local officials.<sup>97</sup> Aimed primarily at preventing disturbances supposedly caused by the influential activities of the chambers of rhetoric, the placard caused drama to be placed almost entirely in the hands of the clergy, most notably the Jesuits, where it could blossom freely and luxuriously, be it in a very narrow form.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Surprisingly, the initial armistice of 1607 was not welcomed enthusiastically by the ecclesiastical authorities in Brussels and Madrid. The Archduke, however, was a warm supporter of the armistice, realistically considering the possible consequences of prolonged military conflict. Cf. Elias, *Kerk en staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 81.

<sup>94</sup> Elias, *Kerk en staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 12-35.

<sup>95</sup> Decavele, *Gent. Apologie van een rebelse stad*, 129.

<sup>96</sup> Elias, *Kerk en staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 48-57; Pasture, *La restauration religieuse*, passim. According to Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 271, the work of *monastics* was to be censored by both the state censor and their own superior.

<sup>97</sup> 'Interdiccerende alle spelen ende dichten rakende de Catholycke Religie, ende dat degene gepermitteert, gevisceert moeten worden door den Pastor, principaelen officier ende wet van de plaetse', quoted by d'Hondt, *Geschiedenis van het tooneel te Aalst*, 62. Cf. also Brants, *Liste chronologique des édits et ordonnances*, 20 (placard of May 15, 1601).

<sup>98</sup> D'Hondt, *Geschiedenis van het tooneel te Aalst*, 67. For a balanced judgement of the position of the Chambers of Rhetoric in Ghent about 1600, see Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 174-180.

*The Protestant-parallel revisited*

Such was the situation when Lummenaeus, a clergyman, started writing and publishing his Biblical dramas. Following a period of intense misery, the city of Ghent had managed to get back on its feet by the end of the sixteenth century, and its recovery culminated in the armistice of 1607 and the Truce of 1609. Thanks to the effort of the Archdukes, as many saw it, the Southern Netherlands were again on the way up, not only politically, but also economically and religiously.

How would a play like *Carcer Babylonius* have been perceived, either by the author or the audience, in view of the turbulent times and the subsequent transition of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century?<sup>99</sup> In this particular case, Parente's useful observation regarding the political-religious context seems to provide us only with a starting point. We have seen that the Babylonian chorus addresses the just punishments that follow *political* or *non-religious* rebellion in general; the Jewish chorus outlines those that follow *religious* rebellion. Up to this point, the basic parallel with the Dutch Protestants would seem clear enough, since they had rebelled against papal Rome *and* their rightful ruler, the Spanish king.

At the same time, there appears to be a certain imbalance between the two choruses. Indeed, one addresses general (political) rebellion, the other religious rebellion. Both address the problems presented by (royal) tyranny for the ordinary people. But the main emphasis is nonetheless placed on the Jewish chorus. First of all, it sings the three final odes, significantly more verses than the two Babylonian odes. Then there is the matter of the classical-mythological metaphors employed by the Babylonians, but Biblical metaphors by the Jews; this presents the Babylonians, as they are indeed commonly referred to by the Jews, as 'barbarians'. And finally: even in the Bible it is said that Zedekiah angered Jehovah, and that, though it remains to a certain degree implicit, He made Zedekiah rebel against the king of Babylon.<sup>100</sup> This means that the religious rebellion undeniably receives the greatest attention. Indeed, let us not forget the concluding remark of the prophet, with which the audience was sent home: 'Oh how it must be feared to lead one's life, hated by God; how it must be feared to try the rich hand of His ominous majesty! Oh holy Jehovah! Your rage is just' (ll. 1168-70).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The usefulness of such an approach has received more attention in recent studies. Cf. e.g. Jondorf, *French Renaissance Tragedy*, 131: 'We can never entirely shed our own assumptions and preconceptions, and we can never know how close we are getting to those of an earlier age; yet to be aware, as we read, of the response which a contemporary reader might have had to the text is likely to increase our own responsiveness, and this awareness itself can be a source of pleasure.'

<sup>100</sup> See p. 143.

<sup>101</sup> See p. 149. It is noteworthy that the slightly altered edition of *Carcer Babylonius* in the 1613 *Opera omnia* omits these last lines, thus to a certain degree diminishing the

But in spite of these words: when considering the dramatic presentation of the values discussed above, the Protestant parallel is perhaps in need of refining.

In my view, the dramatic presentation of this Biblical story does *not* primarily serve to illustrate this topical parallel. If limited to this parallel, a systematic interpretation would be virtually impossible. First of all, matters would certainly become increasingly complicated, if, for example, by viewing the Jews as metaphorically representing the rebellious Protestants of the Republic, one would then by association have to regard the Babylonian ‘aggressors’ as the Spaniards or the Southern Catholics; Nebuchadnezzar (whose pride, as said, would eventually cause him to be humbled by God) as Philip II or Archduke Albert; Nabuzardan as Alva, Spinola or Parma. This surely would have been out of the question, not the least because the Babylonians are often referred to and represented most clearly as barbarians, as mere instruments in the hands of God. Also, why would there be such a stringent division between, on the one hand, a general condemnation by the Babylonians, and, on the other hand, only a *religious* condemnation by the Jews themselves? Surely the Revolt was, in the eyes of the Spanish king, to a large degree connected to religious secession. Indeed, politics and religion were inseparably connected in those days, but as the case of Ghent clearly illustrates, some rebels – especially in the early days of the Revolt – fought for religious freedom, without specific political demands, while others rebelled for political, economic or social freedom, without any specific religious demands.

However, did these interpretational complications really matter? For all we know, the audience may not have cared about the discrepancies which a historical or topical parallel of the likes would evoke; perhaps it did not care whether or not the Biblical narrative would metaphorically be fully consistent with contemporary politics. The audience might just as well, without any reservations, have been cheering at the demise of the insidious Jews, celebrating the downfall of those that violated the laws of God, while giving it no extra thought. Indeed, the play might have given assurance and comfort, while at the same time it warned its audience by means of the dramatic representation of sin and punishment, since in particular the religious rebellion and the subsequent punishment are illustrated in the greatest detail and emphasized distinctly. The play would most likely have warned and educated the audience to refrain from rebellion and, above all, to remain pious. What else could have been more topical in the early seventeenth-century Southern Netherlands?<sup>102</sup>

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straightforward, moral lesson, and actually favouring my theory that there is more to the play than just this blunt warning and basic parallel.

<sup>102</sup> Alphonse Hernot, in his unpublished Louvain dissertation of 1943 on the Jesuit Carolus Malapertius’ contemporary Latin tragedy *Sedevias* (1615), attempted to construct a similar historical parallel. Drawing merely upon the Biblical theme and the historical



However, we know virtually nothing about the audience or readership of Lummenaeus' plays, other than the humanist circle in which he introduced his Latin writings. But why would *they* be in need of moral instruction of the kind? The loyalty of those humanists in particular, e.g. the royal historiographer Erycius Puteanus, the humanist priest Antonius Sanderus or the Ghent secretary and *poeta laureatus* Maxaemilianus Vrientius certainly does not need any confirmation. What, then, might *these* men have read in Lummenaeus' tragedy, other than stylistic virtuosity and a supreme mastery of poetic Latin? An attempt to extend our interpretation beyond a mere superficial parallel perhaps does better justice to the ingenuously crafted Latin masterpiece and the educated mind of Lummenaeus' distinguished audience.

This is, then, where the analysis of the values comes in. For when combining the results of the more detailed analysis with the historical-contextual circumstances, the values seem to draw attention to the topical parallel on another level. In my view, the analysis makes clear that there is more to the play than a mere lesson of loyal piety, or a mere black-and-white comparison of good and bad, of Catholics versus Protestants or loyalists versus rebels. Still, different levels of interpretation do not necessarily imply the supremacy of one over the other, and might just as well have existed simultaneously or consecutively.

As shown, the presentation of these values not so much signifies a case *against* the Jews or *in favour* of the Jews' punishment, and as such, by analogy, not against the Protestants. Instead, the drama seems to warn and educate the audience in more general terms to refrain from rebellion and to remain loyal and pious towards God and the rightful ruler, as emphasized by Jeremiah's concluding lines. Eventually this devoted piety, or, if need be, repentance after sinning, will lead to salvation. As such, the dramatic presentation – other than possibly enabling a topical parallel – does not explicitly adopt a polemical tone. However, it should be noted that the Northern Protestants regularly identified themselves with the ancient Hebrews, i.e. God's chosen people, and employed Biblical analogies to typify *and* justify their hardships and struggle against Spain as a part of God's

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context, Hernot states that the political events of Malapertius' time doubtlessly formed the main source for his *Sedecias*, and that the tragedy thus represented the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain. In his view, the rebellious Sedecias, or for that matter any rebel brought on stage in that time, undoubtedly must have been seen as representing William of Orange. Cf. Hernot, *Malapert*, 24-29. But is the parallel that Hernot (and *not* Malapertius himself) draws between Sedecias and William of Orange not hindered by logical association as well? Cf. for instance Nabuchodonosor, who, in Malapertius' *Sedecias*, openly defies God. The conclusions reached with respect to the contextualization of Lummenaeus' *Carcer Babylonius* (see below), may *mutatis mutandis* also hold true for Malapertius' *Sedecias*.

plan.<sup>103</sup> In this view, the Jews of the *Carcer Babylonius*, recognizing their sins and converting back to their true faith, might have constituted a poignant reference to the rebellious Protestants, but, in view of the interpretational consequences, perhaps not more than just that.<sup>104</sup>

This general analogy does not prevent the activation of other levels of interpretation, of which, in my view, there are at least two. First, there appears to be a strong emphasis on social disruption; second, some issues regarding sovereignty and kingship are touched upon throughout the play.

### *Social distortion*

An underlying, but strong emphasis on social aspects in Lummenaeus' *Carcer Babylonius* brings to light the suffering and misery of the man in the street, as opposed to despots and kings, caused by war and tyranny – indeed a result of God's punishment, but nonetheless indiscriminately affecting *all* the parties involved, including the Chaldaean aggressors. Is it possible to connect this emphasis on social distortion satisfactorily to the historical context?

Particularly in Ghent, the effects of the social disruption caused by war and (religious) revolution were enormous, and, if not still actually felt and experienced, they were at least still vividly remembered by those who had lived through the Calvinistic regime and its long-lasting aftermath. To what extent Lummenaeus had suffered the effects of the upheaval himself, is uncertain, but he certainly kept in close contact with those who had lived through these times of trouble.<sup>105</sup> In an *oratio* delivered in 1610, the same

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<sup>103</sup> Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 114-115; 150; 231; Den Haan, 'Argumentele waarde', 447-448. See also Spies, 'Verbeeldingen van vrijheid', 141-146, discussing Old Testament narrative receiving a political connotation in Protestant literature. Regrettably, the theme of *Carcer Babylonius* is not among the subjects discussed.

<sup>104</sup> Some Biblical metaphors, like the worshipping of the Golden Calf (cf. above, *Carcer Babylonius*, act three), had also been adopted in local anti-Calvinistic polemics, e.g. in Cornelius Columbanus Vrancx' *'s Duvels kermisse* (the Devil's fair). Cf. Buitendijk, *Het Calvinisme*, 121-122; Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 81. For Vrancx, the abbot of St Peter's, see also below, nt105. This type of Biblical narrative would have been well known, and could have been used by Lummenaeus as mere illustration. It might, or might not, have rung a polemic bell with Lummenaeus' audience. In addition, I would also like to point out that after the Iconoclasm of 1566 an anonymous ballad appeared, currently preserved in the library of Ghent University (ms 1682), entitled 'Lamentacie van Gent' (Ghent's Lamentation). In it, a former Protestant bids farewell to his old institutions, discusses his errors and returns to the bosom of the mother church. It seems to constitute a striking parallel to the similarly repentant Jews of the *Carcer Babylonius*. Cf. the edition and introduction in Braekman, 'Anonieme "Lamentacie van Gent"'. Cf. also Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 162-167.

<sup>105</sup> E.g. the Abbot of St Peter's Abbey, Cornelius Columbanus Vrancx (c. 1530-1615), to whom Lummenaeus dedicated his first tragedy in print, *Iephthe tragoedia sacra* (1608/9), and

year that saw the publication of the *Carcer Babylonius*, in the church of St Peter's abbey, celebrating both the *jubilaeum* of the abbot Vrancx and the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abbey, Lummenaeus reminds his audience several times of the pernicious times of some twenty five years earlier: 'And all those [images of previous abbots], contained in our most noble collection of sacred possessions, or hanging behind the main altar, which the infamous villainy of some criminals has destroyed and ripped to pieces in those dreadful times – of which I can hardly speak without tears springing to my eyes!'<sup>106</sup>; and, attending to Vrancx' personal experience: 'This community was destroyed and the Ghent church was plagued by the desecrating madness of the Iconoclasts, when the shameful disruption of heretic rebelliousness forced you [i.e. Vrancx] onto the stage of public scorn, (...) not unlike Christ our Saviour, in a white garment once openly ridiculed by Herod in the presence of his guards. (...) But you managed to sail through this disgraceful storm.'<sup>107</sup>

But more importantly, from the downfall of the Calvinistic regime in 1584 to the armistice of 1607 and the subsequent Truce of 1609, Ghent, owing to its geographic position, had constantly been under threat of renewed armed conflict, despite its growing economic prosperity. A slight distortion of the military balance between North and South, as the battle at Nieuwpoort made clear in 1600, could easily have lead to a new and perhaps even worse period of political, social and religious disruption, just when the

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who had been one of Ghent's most active writers of the Counter-Reformation during and after the Calvinistic period. His books and religious statues were burnt on the 'Vrijdagmarkt' in Ghent, on May 4, 1579. Cf. Decavele, 'Het Calvinistisch Gent', 44; Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 81. For an insight in Vrancx' relatively unknown efforts in Counter-Reformist Ghent, see Andriessen, 'Een weinig bekend boekje', passim. Worth mentioning as well are Lummenaeus' own parents, who had sought refuge in Courtrai (see chapter one), and his close friend, the *poeta laureatus* Maxaemilianus Vrientius, who was appointed secretary to the city of Ghent following the Calvinistic regime. Lummenaeus' friend, the influential Erycius Puteanus, weary of war and misery, had also written an essay on the long-awaited Truce of 1609, though it was published only as late as 1617, entitled *De Induciis Belgicis dissertatio politica*. Cf. Roegiers, 'De universiteiten in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', 226. There must Doubtlessly have been many others who had been gravely embittered by the disrupting events and the ongoing war.

<sup>106</sup> *Opera omnia*, 311: *quos omnes nobilissimis hierothecis inclusos, & post aram Principem suspensos aliquot sicariorum insignis improbitas per haec funesta tempora (quod sine lacrymis vix dico) dissipavit & sparsit.*

<sup>107</sup> *Id.*, 306-307: *Vastabatur haec civitas & sacrilega Iconoclastarum rabie Ecclesia Gandensis exercebatur, cum te in scenam publici ludibrij haereticae perduellionis foeda colluvies abstraxit (...) not aliter quam olim Herodes coram satellitio suo in veste alba Christum Servatorem; (...) Enavigasti itaque foedam hanc tempestatem.* For Vrancx, cf. above, nt105. Lummenaeus' good friend, Antonius Sanderus (1586-1664), also did not fail to mention the destructive force exerted by the Calvinists and their greed in robbing the abbey of its precious relics in 1578. Cf. e.g. Sanderus, *Gandavum sive Gandavensium*, 222; 304; 332-333. The severe Iconoclasm of 1566 Sanderus appropriately labels *lugubris tragoedia* (332).

city had started to recover. The major proponent of the peace and truce negotiations, as we have seen, was Archduke Albert, to whom Lummenaeus dedicated his *Carcer Babylonius*,<sup>108</sup> which was, as it happened, also prepared for publication in 1609 (the year the Truce had been signed).<sup>109</sup> The dedication was thus not merely done ‘to confirm the Prince’s authority’, as Parente states,<sup>110</sup> or perhaps to realize financial or symbolic gain,<sup>111</sup> but rather to acknowledge the Prince’s role in providing a (temporary) relief from military threats, and renewed chances for social stability and religious tranquillity, as well as economic and cultural growth.<sup>112</sup> With regard to this universal element of human suffering and yearning for peace, even the boundaries between dramatic opponents apparently faded, as is profoundly illustrated by the, indeed historically curious, but nevertheless ‘Christian’ compassion for the Hebrews by the Babylonians, and even by the latter’s emotional rejection of weapons and war.<sup>113</sup>

### *Issues of sovereignty and kingship*

The second element, in my view, concerns issues of sovereignty and kingship. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the dramatic oeuvre of Seneca *tragicus* had found a new and receptive audience in the Netherlands. Scholars published commentaries, and Seneca’s tragedies were staged at schools and universities. In the troubled times of the Revolt, the valuable lessons offered by the Roman’s model regarding virtuous behaviour in the face of mental and physical hardships, found a wide appeal throughout the Netherlands. From the horrific examples shown on stage, one learned to keep a check on extreme emotions. From the downfall of kings and tyrants, lessons of the vicissitudes of human life, as well as of good or bad governance could be extracted. Through the Senecan model

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<sup>108</sup> *Carcer Babylonius*, Aii<sup>ro</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> *Carcer Babylonius*, 40 / F4<sup>vo</sup>, where the *approbatio* reads December 17, 1609. The censor, Laurentius Beyerlinck, notes that this tragedy ‘reminds the reader of the vicissitude and fragility of human affairs’ (*vicissitudinis et fragilitatis humanarum rerum Lectorem admoneat*), which can actually be said to be a characteristic of the tragic genre in general, but not so much a very specific interpretation of the *Carcer Babylonius*. The title page is dated 1610. I have found no indication of the actual time of composition.

<sup>110</sup> Parente, ‘The Paganization of Biblical Tragedy’, 223.

<sup>111</sup> The Archdukes were well known for their generosity towards the religious orders and their (financial) aid to Counter-Reformist initiatives.

<sup>112</sup> Perhaps Lummenaeus’ initial activities in the cultural domain, starting around 1608, could have been instigated by the relative stability in Ghent. The Twelve Years’ Truce itself, signed in 1609, triggered large-scale cultural reactions. Cf. Długańczyk, *Der Waffenstillstand (1609-1621) als Medienergebnis*, 180-257.

<sup>113</sup> A similar emphasis on the people’s suffering in Vondel’s *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1638) has been identified by Marco Prandoni (*Een mozaïek van stemmen*, 177-178).

and its commentators, these elements found their way into early modern drama as well.

While Seneca's tragedies were based mainly on Greek mythology, early modern drama not infrequently found its source material in Biblical history. A theme such as *Carcer Babylonius*' would be well suited to illustrate an author's views on kingship and sovereignty, by for example highlighting certain actions or characteristics of *personae* of power, like Nebukadnezzar and Zedekiah, or having other characters comment upon their actions, thus providing the audience with (negative) examples.

In *Carcer Babylonius*, both the characters of Nebukadnezzar and Zedekiah are, in this respect, negatively portrayed.<sup>114</sup> The first is presented as a warmonger, as an impatient, vengeful ruler, which is most clearly illustrated through the discussion of the punishment to be inflicted on the rebellious king, unmistakably echoing Seneca.<sup>115</sup> His cruelty defies every imagination. The second, Zedekiah, has led his people into disloyalty, both with respect to their rightful ruler, as to God. As we have seen, Zedekiah is represented not only as a king, but also as a father for his children, and by analogy as a father to his people. Because of his failure in this respect, he has caused both his actual children as well as his metaphorical offspring, the Hebrews, to be punished severely.

Through the values brought forward in the play, both rulers thus are given negative connotations. The emotive illustration of the suffering caused by Zedekiah's failure as a king is a good example in itself, which he himself duly acknowledges. Another is the rejection of war and weapons by the Babylonian chorus, thus indirectly accusing also their *own* king of causing misery, for armed conflict generally affects *all* the parties involved. But the prime example is to be found in lines 112-121, spoken by the Babylonian chorus:

|     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 115 | <i>Solye, Solye, Solye infoelix</i><br><i>Nunquam proprio damnata malo!</i><br><i>Quicquid fatui ludunt Reges</i><br><i>Luit immerito funere vulgus:</i><br><i>Foelix animi, qui sollicitos</i><br><i>Vitat strepitus, turbaque procul</i><br><i>Ania solus rura frequentat,</i><br><i>Qui nec Regum crimina nouit,</i> | Jerusalem, Jerusalem, poor Jerusalem,<br>Never convicted for your own crimes!<br>For all the games kings foolishly play,<br>With death undeserved the people pay.<br>Fortunate are those, who manage to avoid<br>Distress, who frequent all alone, far<br>From the crowd, the quiet countryside,<br>And who have no knowledge of kingly |
|-----|---|---|

<sup>114</sup> However, Lummenaeus left little room for developing the characters' *personae* in-depth. As such, he may have been progressing from the French dramatists' tendency to stress emotion rather than a character's ever-unfolding personality. See Stone, *French Humanist Tragedy*, 100, as well as chapter two of this dissertation.

<sup>115</sup> *Carcer Babylonius*, ll. 621-668, echoing a similar discussion in Seneca's *Thyestes* (see above, p. 146), and literally copying lines from e.g. Seneca's *Troades*: *Est Regis alti spiritum Regi dare*, 'It suits a noble king to grant a king life.' Suggested by Nebukadnezzar's servant, it is boldly refused by the Babylonian king. Cf. *Troades* l. 327.

120 *Nec regalis funera noxae* Crimes, nor have felt God's avenging hand  
*Properata Deo vindice sensit.* Through deaths caused by royal guilt.  
 (*Carcer Babylonius* (1610), I, 112-121)

Even though the chorus is here commenting on Jerusalem and her king, from lines 116 onwards the words actually contain a very general evaluation of royal responsibility. Lines 116-117 furthermore contain one of the few *sententiae* in the play. And it is precisely these verses that present a thematic aphorism that was to become a popular common-place in dramatic literature in the early seventeenth century, both in the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Almost the exact same words are to be found in a wide variety of plays post-dating the *Carcer Babylonius*. In 1613, we find in Pieter Cornelisz Hooft's famous drama *Geeraerd van Velsen*: 'O Godt wat d'overheydt verbeurt / d'Onnoosele al te dier bekoopen' (ll. 335-336); in 1626, in Guillaume van Nieuwelandt's *Sophonisba*: 'Weet ghy niet als den Vorst is dwaeselijck beraden / Dat sijn Gemeent dan oock moet boeten zyn misdaden?' (ll. 1281-2), as well as in his 1628 *Salomon*: 'De misdaet van den voorst moet sijn ghemeynt' betaelen' (l. 313); and, in 1637, in the most famous of Dutch tragedies, Joost van den Vondel's *Gysbreght van Aemstel*: 'Most niet onschuldig volk de schult der heeren boeten?' (l. 1004).<sup>116</sup>

The source of this thematic aphorism is most likely *not* Lummenaeus' beautiful, but perhaps not very widely read *Carcer Babylonius*. He himself, as well as the other authors mentioned above, had perhaps lifted the words from the immensely popular emblem book by Otho Vaenius (Otto van Veen, 1557-1629), the *Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata*, published only three years earlier, in 1607, by the Antwerp printer Hieronymus Verdussen, who would also publish Lummenaeus' first tragedy, *Iephthe*, the following year.<sup>117</sup> This beautiful emblem book, later simply referred to as the *Emblemata Horatiana*, provides 101 copper-cut images illustrating *sententiae* lifted from Horace, which are accompanied by texts taken from other classical authors like Seneca, Ovid and Cicero, as well as from contemporary authors like Justus Lipsius. The two aphorisms treated on pages 178 (*Neglectae religionis poena multiplex*, 'The punishments following neglected piety are many') and 182 (*Principum delicta plebs luit*, 'For the crimes of princes the people pay') together

<sup>116</sup> Interestingly, Korsten (*Sovereignty as Inviolability*) does not discuss this Vondel-passage. It could, however, be of interest for his discussion of sovereignty in Vondel's work – especially in the light of the connection to Vaenius (which is 'a moral instruction for the nobility', cf. below).

<sup>117</sup> The *Emblemata* was reprinted more than twenty times in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, often as multi-lingual editions. Even in its first year, 1607, a Dutch version would be published. Cf. the brief introduction accompanying the facsimile of the 1607 edition by Dmitrij Tschizewskij (*Otto van Veen*, introduction), which I have used here. Interestingly, Lummenaeus' good friend, Maxaemilianus Vrientius, wrote a poem for Vaenius' *Amorum Emblemata* (1608). Did Vaenius and Lummenaeus know each other as well? Cf. Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 274.

sum up the central themes of *Carcer Babylonius*: punishment, neglected piety, innocent subjects and royal sinfulness. The accompanying texts explicate these themes even further, starting off, on page 178, with Horace, *Carmina* 3.6.1 *Delicta maiorum immeritus lues*, ‘Undeservingly you will pay for the crimes of your ancestors’; and on page 182 again with Horace, *Epistulae* 1.2.14 *Quidquid delirant Reges, plectuntur Achivi*, ‘Let kings go mad and blunder as they may, the people in the end are sure to pay’.<sup>118</sup> The thematic and verbal similarities between the content of these pages of Vaenius’ *Emblemata* and Lummenaeus’ *Quicquid fatui ludunt Reges / luit immerito funere vulgus*, are striking.<sup>119</sup>

Interestingly, like *Carcer Babylonius*, Vaenius’ *Emblemata* is dedicated to Archduke Albert, as *aeternum debiti cultus atque obsequii monumentum*, an eternal monument for Vaenius’ due devotion and obedience. It seems that Lummenaeus’ inclusion of such an obvious reference to Vaenius can only be seen in the same light. The establishment of the archducal regime had finally brought relief, stability and prosperity. No longer were the people to pay for the warmongering of kings, for the crimes their earthly princes committed: with Albert and Isabella, these times had passed. Like the social disruption, the random suffering of ordinary man had finally come to an end. This, then, suggests that the *entire* tragedy should be seen as a negative example, because the Southern Netherlands under the archducal regime would become neither impious nor rebellious. *Carcer Babylonius* would thus have presented the audience with the all too familiar consequences of rebellion and war; it would have reminded the public, as well as the ruling class, of how quickly fortune can change;<sup>120</sup> and it would have stimulated them to cherish, maintain and further this newly found piety and prosperity, by avoiding the sins displayed.<sup>121</sup> The newly-found prosperity had come at a price, and it would be wise not to forget how high it had been.

In this view, both the social element and the question of sovereignty can be linked to the establishment of the archducal regime. Progressing from this line of interpretation, let us now return to a section of the choral song of the fourth act. As we may recall, the Jewish chorus emotionally foretells the coming of a Messiah, who might come just in time to save them. The words

<sup>118</sup> ‘(...) the Greeks are sure to pay’ (tr. Conington, *The Satires*).

<sup>119</sup> Justus Lipsius had also discussed the *translatio poenarum* (transfer of punishment) in *De Constantia* II.17 (Leiden, 1584), quoting Horace *Carmina* 3.6.1. Lipsius not only relates this *translatio* to rulers and subjects, but also to (the Biblical notion of) sons punished for the sins of their father. He acknowledges and explains God’s justice in these matters, which is also reiterated in *Carcer Babylonius*, as we have seen.

<sup>120</sup> As per the *approbatio* of Beyerlinck: the vicissitude and fragility of human affairs, cf. nt109.

<sup>121</sup> Porteman and Smits-Veldt (*Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 273) similarly qualify the *Emblemata Horatiana* as ‘a moral instruction in a Lipsian manner for the nobility and aristocracy’.

with which Lummenaeus' Hebrews allude to their Saviour are: *stirpis Iesse nobile germen / (...) / dux ignaro catus in populo, / qui nos solida cum pace tuens*, 'this noble branch from the tree of Iesse (...), a bright leader among his ignorant people, who will protect us with enduring peace'. As stated, these words allude to the Old Testament book of Isaiah, which was generally perceived as prefiguring Christ. But here they might as well be referring to Albert, who was, as an Archduke, of *noble* descent (the Latin word for duke is *dux*), who personally embodied the Truce and who was thus the bringer of a – at least temporarily – solid peace to the Southern Netherlands.<sup>122</sup> If so, these words would have granted him a divine status ('branch from the tree of Iesse', as alluding to Christ), which is, as it happens, exactly how he is addressed by the opening words of the elegiac dedicatory poem accompanying the 1610 tragedy: *Dive heros, cui nostri sudavere dolores*, 'Divine demigod, for whom we have endured our sufferings'...<sup>123</sup>

*Carcer Babylonius* illustrates the horrendous reality behind these words.

### *Concluding remarks*

Defining (the perception of) values in early modern Latin drama is in itself not unproblematic and can also be complicated by the interfering perception of values and moral standards of the modern researcher. Nonetheless, attempting an in-depth analysis of different perspectives of value within a play as a whole can provide a clearer insight in drama and its contextual role.

In this case study, I have tried to create a basis from which to initiate contextual research. In my view, analysing both the values and the means through which they are transferred, illuminates the position of *personae*, choruses, and their speeches. Such an analysis can certainly aid in positioning or interpreting a dramatic text within a given context.

Having worked our way through the play in this manner, it seems that *Carcer Babylonius* presents not merely a plain depiction of the Protestant struggle in general. We recall how political disobedience and heretical pride are merely *referred to*, and are not actually shown. As such, the emphasis is rather on the presentation of the unfortunate *results* of the rebellious deeds, that is to say the misery and suffering, not only personally (the blinding of Zedekiah and the killing of his sons) but also socially (the disruption of a community and the destruction of a town). As such, the tragedy presents not merely a plain depiction of the Protestant struggle in general. The

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<sup>122</sup> Such an image of the Archdukes, not only as bringers of peace and prosperity, but also as restorers of Catholic piety, is found consistently throughout the excellent collection of essays in Thomas and Duerloo, *Albert & Isabella*; and also in contemporary panegyrics from the Southern Netherlands, e.g. Woverius, *Panegyricus*.

<sup>123</sup> *Carcer Babylonius*, A2<sup>ro</sup>.



audience would surely have recognised the elements of rebellion, but even more so the urge to reject weapons and war, and the misery these caused.

At the basis of this, then, stands Lummenaeus' choice of dramatic technique, the object of which is to realise convincingly an *idealised* representation of (Christian) compassion and repentance, on which redemption will eventually follow. Lummenaeus makes ample use of the typically Senecan rhetoric of emotion, to soften up his audience and to make it perceptive to any message it might extract from the text, while at the same time guiding it into a certain direction. As such, Parente's suggestions that Lummenaeus focused almost exclusively on the punishment itself in an effort to terrorize his audience into recognizing the danger of revolution, and that he regarded tragedy as representing the sins man must avoid to gain eternal life,<sup>124</sup> can only partially be true.

As I have shown, *Carcer Babylonius* initially departs from two perspectives, in which the overwhelming choral presence as well as the means of presentation play a central part. Nonetheless, the perspectives gradually form a unity and eventually complement one another. A close analysis of the values and means involved in this process certainly allows a more refined judgement regarding the workings of this tragedy within the public domain. Even though a definitive answer can probably not be achieved, the analysis of the dramatic values has aided the contextual approach and has thus added an interpretational dimension to the *Carcer Babylonius* as a non-polemic, perhaps even socially involved text, not to be disconnected from the historical and religious context. As such, this cautious approach is apparently in accordance with the early seventeenth-century literary tendency in the Southern Netherlands not to employ drama in political polemics, as had been done in the North.<sup>125</sup>

In my view, surprising though it may be, the figure of Archduke Albert forms the interpretational key to this tragedy. He embodied both the admirable virtues of righteous leadership, as well as firm piety. As such, Albert presented the answer to both the question of sovereignty as well as religion. While initially alluding to the rebellious Protestants of the North and their pernicious cause, the lofty story of betrayal, blasphemy and misfortune gradually draws a background for the celebration of a new era, an era of hope and prosperity. On the threshold of this new era, Lummenaeus' audience would be reminded of the price it had paid, and urged to support actively the restored piety. As such, the *Carcer Babylonius* mirrors not merely an actual historical image; it reveals a dramatized, hopeful ideal, dedicated to the one man who had proved to be best equipped for making this dream come true.

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<sup>124</sup> Parente, 'The Paganization of Biblical Tragedy', 220-221.

<sup>125</sup> Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 278. Cf. also the conclusion to this thesis, pp. 215-216.

Has this case-study been able to reconstruct the interaction between text and context satisfactorily? In my view, the analysis of the play's values, with a focus on choral presence, has enabled an in-depth exploration of otherwise inaccessible elements contained within the play. Combined with the available contextual information, this somewhat limited approach has already revealed a broad spectrum of interpretational possibilities. Still, a definite answer can not readily be obtained.<sup>126</sup> We may even be quite wrong. To what extent the Ghent audience did indeed comprehend the elements of our analysis in the way I have argued, remains a guess. The same goes for the author: did he intend his audience to understand the topical allusions at all? Or do we have to surmise that both for author and audience this was a subconscious process? Maybe he even intentionally refrained from inserting any topical allusion into the play, as if 'any determinate location and time would invalidate its claim to eternal efficacy, as if any record of struggle and process and change would necessarily threaten its universal validity.'<sup>127</sup> Ironically, then, to us, the modern reader, those literary works that are rooted deeply in history, have turned out to be of most interest, works that provide an insight not just in literary history, but also in cultural, and/or social history.

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<sup>126</sup> A conclusion also reached by Stone with regard to French Humanist tragedy: 'By their own words, the dramatists sometimes chose themes with contemporary parallels. How much farther they went remains conjectural' (Stone, *French Humanist Tragedy*, 115-116).

<sup>127</sup> Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 80.