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4. Enemy Treasures: The Making and Marketing of Spanish *Comedia* in the Amsterdam Schouwburg

Frans Blom

Abstract

The establishment in 1638 of Amsterdam's first public theatre venue, the Schouwburg, caused a major enhancement and upgrading of local stock repertory. Spanish *comedia* was the new fuel. With Lope's drama first, Spanish plays and playwrights were brought to the Schouwburg stage in a serial production. Crowds gathered for anything Spanish, and Spain's victory over Dutch theatre life was complete even before the war was over in 1648. The paradox of Spain's triumph in the heart of Dutch culture is centre stage in this contribution, exploring both the transfer route through Amsterdam's Sephardic community, which facilitated so much successful import of enemy treasures, and analysing the public presentations that framed the Spanishness of the plays and playwrights as a new trademark for the Amsterdam crowds.

Keywords: Amsterdam Schouwburg, Spanish *comedia*, branding, Lope de Vega, Pérez de Montalbán, Calderón

A Spanish play in Haarlem (1656)

In July 1656, when the Amsterdam Schouwburg was closed for the summer break, the company of actors left the municipal home theatre to go on a tour in the region. On their visit to the nearby city of Haarlem, word spread that they were bringing the very best from Amsterdam.¹ Printed in folders and

¹ The Amsterdam company's posters and leaflets in Haarlem and Heemstede are kept in the Noord Hollands Archief, coll. Heerlijkheid Heemstede, inv. nr. 144. Quote from Haarlem flyer: 'de peirel aller Comedien, 'tis die, die in Hispagnien de prijs ghestreken heeft van de seven Comedien

flyers, their menu, indeed, reflected what was in vogue in the Schouwburg: an attractive play list that included some canonical titles of Dutch theatre history, and partly also boasted plays that may come as unexpected surprises to us now. For amusement and laughter, as they announced, they brought P.C. Hooft's classic comedy *Warenar* and also Bredero's *Moortje*. Those who loved horror and cruel revenge were invited to see *Aran en Titus*, in the unabbreviated version, as the posters stressed, featuring the shocking final scenes of eating cooked human body parts and the onstage burning of the Moorish general Aran. The Dutch adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* was one of the home theatre's super hits, maintaining, after a grandiose premiere of fourteen subsequent performances in 1641, an extremely high performance rate of five shows per year.² For local taste, on the other hand, the company brought *Gerard van Velsen*. Featuring North Holland medieval history, P.C. Hooft's theatre play was especially recommended 'to give the people of Harlem contentment for its regional taste'. This part of the menu listed titles by prominent Amsterdam-based playwrights, which had a good performance record in the Schouwburg and, for that matter, still pop up in surveys of Dutch theatre history and in literary handbooks. However, that is not the case for the greatest treasure the Amsterdam actors brought to Haarlem in 1656. On Friday 9 July, they programmed, as they said, the pearl of all theatre plays. People were called to gather in great numbers and see the best of all Spanish comedies and the most brilliant of jewels. This referred to the play about Sigismundus, the Polish prince, entitled *Het Leven is maer Droom* (Life is only a dream):

the Pearl of all Comedies. The very one that in Spain has taken the prize of the Best of the Seven Comedies. In which Juan Pérez de Montalbán shows that all that happens in the world is just a dream. Hence the name of this extraordinary gem. Come and join to see our great Polish Sigismundus, or *Het Leven is maer Droom*. And extract, like noble bees, useful wisdoms from its profound lessons.

de beste te zijn, waar in Juan Pere de Montalvan betoont heeft, dat alles wat in de wereld gheschiedt, maer een droom is, waer naer deze uytstekende Diamant zijn naem heeft. Komt dan onze grooten Poolschen SIGISMUNDUS, OF HET LEVEN IS MAER DROOM vergezelschappen, en treckt als edele Bijen, eenige nuttigheydt uyt zijn gegronde lessen.' See also the chapter 'Heemsteeds Intermezzo – Optredens van ambulante tonelisten in de Haarlemmerhout in de periode 1655-1660' in Koster, *Van schavot tot schouwburg*, 99-107 (available online in the weblog *Librarians* (27 June 2017), <https://librarians.wordpress.com/2017/06/23/heemsteeds-intermezzo-optredens-van-ambulante-tonelisten-in-de-haarlemmerhout-in-de-periode-1655-1660/>).

2 ONSTAGE s.v. *Aran en Titus*.

For all the grotesque presentation and circus-like selling points, the Haarlem posters are a vivid testimony to theatre life on tour, demonstrating that the world of stage performance was a life of illusion and exaggerations meant to catch and keep the people's attention. It also shows that cultural entrepreneurship was required to find a good match between art and audience: whether they were in the Schouwburg or on tour in the region, the Amsterdam actors did their very best to meet the people's taste and expectations by offering popular repertory. Part of their business secret was their reliance on domestic plays, created by local celebrities such as the Amsterdam-born playwrights Bredero, Hooft, Jan Vos and Joost van den Vondel. But these were not the only ones. As successes in the Schouwburg, plays derived from the great European theatre traditions in Spain, England and France went on tour, too – hence the company's choice to bring this particular play to Haarlem, proudly presented as the best of the seven best *comedias* in Spain. It was the Dutch version of *La vida es sueño* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca.³ On the Schouwburg stage of Amsterdam it had premiered only two years before, in May 1654, when Spain and Spanish import plays were enjoying tremendous success there.

Both in Amsterdam and in the region, large parts of the seventeenth- (and even eighteenth-) century audiences must have been thrilled by the new Spanish material. That is what the performance numbers for these plays tell us, and what the revenues indicate as well.⁴ This is additionally confirmed by the litany of printed play texts in several editions over time. Moreover, some voices from seventeenth-century Amsterdam even reveal a popular preference for Spanish drama over domestic productions. Young authors, for example, at the beginning of their career were advised to put their efforts in practicing the Spanish *comedia*, as these plays were 'most popular among the people'.⁵ Even the city's leading poet, Joost van den Vondel, according to

3 *ONSTAGE*, s.v. *Sigismundus, prince van Polen, of't Leven is een droom. Bly-eyndigh treur-spel*.

4 Performance dates and revenues of Amsterdam's entire Schouwburg repertory are digitally available through *ONSTAGE*.

5 Quote in English translation by the author: 'Neem liever een Spaans spel' / 'Die woelen uit de natuur, en gevallen het volk wel', from Act 3 in the drama play *Gelukte list of bedroogde mof* by the classicist and anti-Spanish vogue playwright Andries Pels (printed in 1689 in Amsterdam, but of earlier composition). His play advocated French-classicist theatre, putting the quoted lines in the mouth of a young and unskilled poet. The introductory preface also signals (in remorse) the popularity of Spanish plays, 'those wild and badly arranged plays, that nonetheless attract more people' ('die wilde en wanschikkelyke Spaansche stukken, niettegenstaande die meer volk trekken'). See Holzhey, *Als gy maar schérp wordt*. Andries Pels's famous theoretical work on theatre, *Gebruik en Misbruik des tooneels* (Amsterdam, 1681) also comments on the Spanish vogue. The examples of Spanish top hits in the Schouwburg he mentions by name are

Figure 4.1 Poster announcement for *Sigismundus*, the Dutch performance of Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, by the Schouwburg actors on tour in Haarlem, 1656



Courtesy the Noord Hollands Archief, coll. Heerlijkheid Heemstede, inv. nr. 144

his contemporary biographer, suffered seriously since ‘foreign plays, mostly translated from Spanish, introduced a kind of drama that was so eventful and full of alterations, that, even though they were lacking in artistry, they captured the crowds.’⁶ Quotes like these leave little doubt that just as much as the *comedias* had conquered the Spanish world, the adaptations in Dutch made them, indeed, the people’s plays in Amsterdam, too.

The Spanish plays that were brought on stage in Amsterdam’s Schouwburg would catch people’s eyes by featuring majestically dressed-up characters in

Het verwerde hof, Dolheyt om d’eer and *Don Louis de Vargas en Veranderlik geval*. Even though they fall short in arrangement, in his view, the whole world loves them (‘maar all’ de waereld pryst de stóf, vss. 1066-69).

6 Quote from Vondel’s biography by his contemporary and friend Gerard Brandt (Vondel, *Poëzy*, Amsterdam, 1682, p. 68): ‘[dat] men met der tijdt andere speelen, meest uit het Spaensch vertaelt, invoerde, die door ’t gewoel en veelerley verandering, hoewel ’er somtydts weinigh kunst en orde in was, den grooten hoop (zich aan ’t ydel gezwets en den poppentoestel vergaapende) zoo behaagden, dat men koper boven goudt schatte, en Vondels treurspeelen achter de bank wierp.’

foreign courts. Kings, princes and princesses, and other aristocratic figures like counts and dukes crowd the scenes, making a most unfamiliar setting for Dutch *burghers* in a civic society. Women, both the attractive and heroic types and the dangerous divas, play a prominent part. Acting and speaking in sublime registers, they make a tremendous contrast to some farcical characters with both physical and mental deformations and low pleasures (the typical *graciosos*). They speak in the words of ordinary people and act on the basis of ignoble motivations, such as lust, hunger or fear. As most of them are court plays, the central element of many successful Spanish *comedias* in Amsterdam is the throne and the question of its legitimate heir. Ambitious and self-declared crown princes tend to fall, while the changes of fortune make honest or ignoble people come out of the shadow of simple rural life and rise to power. The Spanish cornucopian plots are famous for their *mudanzas* or, in Dutch, *veranderinge van staet*, packed with dramatic changes and sustaining the people's attention through a cascade of events rather than requiring the utmost concentration. Particularly popular for this high degree of action and alteration (which the Dutch audience combined in the word 'woelingen', which may be translated as 'changes'), they shift scenes from one place to another and leap in time like modern movies can do. Moreover, Spanish theatre is the theatre of the passions par excellence. Protagonists fail to control themselves and fall victim to various kinds of emotions, resulting in outrageous tempers, erroneous observations, and false judgements. In most of the plots, it is the emotions caused by love or the ambition to power that bring characters to the summits of Fortune only to fall steeply down, or vice versa. A key instrument of the basic principle of misjudgement by blurred and failing senses is the motive of concealing and revealing, of betrayal and fraud. Perception is hard to rely on, whilst things are not what they seem to be. Thus, disguise is a frequent device, sublimated in the character of the *mujer varonil* or the heroic girl dressed up in male clothing and duelling 'as a man' against a male adversary. While chaos and disorder rule the plot, the Spanish plays of Amsterdam in general end happily with the exposure of evil and good, and the king's ultimate restoration of order, mostly crowned by sacred bonds of matrimony and cheerful celebrations. And so, with Spanish drama on the stage, people in the audience experienced a hurricane of events and emotions, with the promise of reaching a cheerful safe harbour in the end.

As soon as they were brought to the Dutch public in Amsterdam's Schouwburg, Spanish plays gained great popularity, becoming as successful there as they were in other parts of Europe. In a wide geographical range, the *comedias* of the Siglo de Oro were by no means limited to the Spanish-speaking world. Studies on transnational theatrical transmission

have recently challenged traditional, nation-biased histories on theatre, and brought Spanish drama in various modes of translation and adaptation centre stage in their respective national narratives. Moreover, they also demonstrate that the distribution and appreciation of *comedias* throughout Europe were not confined to regions and countries dominated by the Spanish Empire.⁷ Even political antagonists would turn to Spain and delve the cultural resources of the enemy. Through various kinds of transmission mechanisms, theatre makers in France and England, for example, were well connected to the Iberian *Fundgrube* and eager to integrate Spanish material into local productions. They were creating foreign, if not to say enemy, art works for local consumers. In doing so, they devised metaphors of capture and warlike framing to negotiate their literary art in the home market. Imagery of loot and piracy, as Barbara Fuchs demonstrates in *The Poetics of Piracy*, is a frequent motif for creative writers working in the paradox of martial opposition and cultural fascination.⁸

If anywhere, military aggression and political opposition determined the Spanish connection in the Northern Netherlands. Eighty years of revolutionary warfare (1568-1648) kept both parties opposed in bitter struggle and fighting, both in the Low Countries and in the maritime territories of the West Indies. The revolt aimed at just one thing: independence from the empire and the expulsion of what the Dutch people called the Spanish tyranny. When the arch-enemies were brought to peace at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the southern provinces remained a part of the Spanish Empire, while the northern parts achieved their independence and gained autonomy as the Republic of the United Provinces.

Most strikingly, however, Spain was at that time gaining tremendous momentum in Dutch theatre. The Spanish drama tradition of the Siglo de Oro was becoming so popular that it proved a kind of Hollywood to Amsterdam's Schouwburg even before war had come to an end. It is worth questioning how Spanish *comedia* became the new vogue and how, particularly in the Northern Netherlands, people dealt with the Spanish origins of the novelty. After all, when Lope de Vega started garnering a popular reputation in the Netherlands with new productions on the Schouwburg stage in 1645, Spain still was the United Provinces' arch-enemy. This chapter will therefore explore how the Amsterdam Schouwburg bridged the gap with the

7 See Fuchs, 'Introduction', and *The Poetics of Piracy*; Samson, 'A Fine Romance' and 'Epilogue Exchange'.

8 'Pirates and piracy are everywhere in the corpus I present here' (Fuchs, *The Poetics of Piracy*, p. 7).

expelled opponent and re-established the connection. What was the lure of enemy products in staging the new drama? What kind of framing did the Schouwburg productions use to present and negotiate a 'hostile' culture, and to reconcile the Dutch military and political triumph of independence with the contemporary cultural victory of Lope, in the first place, and other playwrights from Spain, such as Pérez de Montalbán and Calderón? For Amsterdam, the city's community of Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula provided a unique and crucial Hispano-Dutch connection.

The popularity of Spanish plays

As far as we have been able to identify the international plays shown at the Schouwburg, the Spanish theatre tradition of the Siglo de Oro is strongly present in Amsterdam's repertoire of the seventeenth century, with a total of 60 *comedias*.⁹ Of these, 20 plays are by Lope de Vega. They rank among the most popular Spanish adaptations as well as the earliest ones. The transfer history indicates that Lope's success in the Netherlands was just waiting there to cross borders as soon as military confrontations stopped. Significantly, the first transmission took place during the temporary ceasefire of the Twelve Years' Truce of 1609-1621. This time frame, indeed, offered a chance for cultural transfer when the Amsterdam diplomat Theodore Rodenburgh – who, as a poet and playwright, was also a pivotal figure in the city's cultural life – travelled the Iberian Peninsula for business purposes in 1611-1613. He must have witnessed the popularity of the *comedia* performances on the spot. Upon his return to Amsterdam, seismic events were taking place in the city's theatre life. Economic prosperity in the rapidly expanding merchants' town allowed for the rise of middle-class entertainment. As a consequence, the art of theatre was becoming a profitable enterprise. Small-scale cultural institutions would develop into professional public theatre. In these years, the private chambers of rhetoric, where theatre was traditionally performed among friends and peers, started to open their doors to the general public. The quest for audiences caused a major rupture in the artistic direction of the city's dominant chamber, called the Eglentine. On the one hand, key figures in the Eglentine's art of drama, including P.C. Hooft, Samuel Coster and G.A. Bredero, decided to leave the chamber and establish the new cultural institution, the

9 For a list of Spanish plays in the Schouwburg, see Jautze, Álvarez Francés and Blom, 'Spaans theater'; see also Van Praag, *La comedia espagnole*, and Te Winkel, 'De invloed der Spaansche letterkunde'.

Nederduytsche Academy. This was Amsterdam's first public theatre venue, advocating for classically oriented drama based on ancient plots in a new local Dutch context, and programming classicist art, supplemented by some of the pieces they had delivered previously in the chamber. Theodore Rodenburgh, on the other hand, put his faith in the Eglentine and responded to the critical setback in the chamber's repertory by introducing an alternative course there, too. In contrast to the Academy's classicist programme, the traveller and diplomat opted for an international orientation towards major drama successes from the contemporary European stages. Thus, Rodenburgh was the first Dutch playwright to rework Lope de Vega material in Amsterdam, adapting four of his plays to suit the Dutch stage practice.¹⁰

Despite Rodenburgh's innovative activities and their public presentations in print, Spain itself, however, did not actually take centre stage; the playwright published the new productions as works of his own. Without a single reference to the Spanish author or to Spain, the paratextual introductions to the play texts concealed any foreign import. The war, which was resumed in 1621, does not seem to have affected any performances of the Spanish adaptations by Rodenburgh: Lope's *El Perseguido*, for example, which Rodenburgh dissimulatingly produced as his own *Casandra en Karel Baldeus* during the truce, was reprinted during the war in 1632. Produced to bring in larger crowds, Rodenburgh's adaptations, and Spain itself, remained pretty much in the shade for the subsequent three decades. But that all changed dramatically when in, in 1638, the commercial initiatives of the past decades merged into one theatre company based in the city's new permanent public venue of the Schouwburg. From then on, the art of theatre was a most vital part of the city's public entertainment industry, as it today. In starting up, the Schouwburg's weekly scheduled shows on Monday and Thursday demanded that the domestic repertory, which mostly derived from the chambers and the academy, to be strongly enhanced in quantity, diversity and quality. Translating and producing popular drama from Spain now was a necessity to the theatre's entrepreneurship. In the 1640s, Spain climbed up in the repertory ranks and started to take centre stage in the Schouwburg. Within a decade the theatre's season was fertilized and packed with Spanish material. By 1655 nearly 50 per cent of Schouwburg shows were Spanish import plays, remaining the theatre's main attraction for three decades.

10 For Theodore Rodenburgh's adaptations of Lope de Vega plays, see Vergeer and Van Marion, 'Spain's Dramatic Conquest of the Dutch Republic'. For Lope de Vega in the Amsterdam Schouwburg, see Blom and Van Marion, 'Lope de Vega'; Sánchez Jiménez, 'Acotaciones en las adaptaciones neerlandesas'.

Spanishness in the Southern Netherlands

Compared to Theodore Rodenburgh's 'silent' introduction of Spanish theatre in the previous period, the new productions in the Schouwburg publicly marketed Spain and everything Spanish, stressing the provenance so much and so positively that it didn't take long for Spain to become a unique selling point in theatre business. In this respect, it is significant that the Haarlem poster, despite announcing *La vida es sueño* with Juan Pérez de Montalbán as the author, used the notion of Spanishness to say that it was the summit of drama: the best of the seven best *comedias* of Spain. No one, it seems, could care less about the name of the playwright. In the city that had perhaps most traumatically suffered from Spain's military aggression, the Spanish provenance of the theatre play was the relevant point for the popular announcement. How could this all have happened? In order to answer that question, it might be helpful to have a comparative perspective and first assess the presence of Spanish drama in the Southern or Spanish Netherlands.

With Spain omnipresent in the Southern Netherlands both physically and by means of frequent political, economic and cultural contacts, the *comedia* was as present there as it was all over the empire. On a regular basis, Spanish theatre companies visited the Brussels court and the merchant cities of the South.¹¹ Play texts were largely available in print, with several collections or *partes* by Calderón and Lope de Vega and other playwrights. Moreover, Spanish theatre was also alive through adaptations and imitations in the local Dutch or Brabant language.¹² Spain's dominant status as a theatre powerhouse was evident in the way local Brabant playwrights adopted Spanish nicknames. They would present themselves in a kind of Spanish-Dutch blend, and preferred quasi-Spanish names such as, for example, Frederico Antonio de Conincq, Petro Antonio Kimpe and Antonio Francisco Wouters. So typical of the Southern Netherlandish-Spanish contact zone, a trend like Hispanizing one's playwright name up North, in the revolting part of the Low Countries, was totally inconceivable. With Spain's ubiquitous presence, the local attitude towards Spain, the open contacts with the Iberian Peninsula, and the cultural dominance of Spanish drama, theatre transfers were relatively easy in the South. Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, for

11 Worp, *Geschiedenis van het drama*, vol. 2, pp. 109-110; Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland*, p. 452.

12 Sanz Ayán, 'Echoes of Comedy'; Sullivan, *Calderón in the German Lands*, pp. 32-46; Van Emeren and Meeus, *Genres in het ernstige renaissancetoneel*.

example, arrived in Brussels soon after its Madrid premiere of 1635. Within a decade, by 1645, it was also known to Brussels audiences. The local version in Brabant dialect was produced by the theatre company of *Vrije Liefhebbers der Rijmer-konste*, a non-professional group of local theatre lovers highly engaged with Spain.¹³ Spanishness was an artistic device among the *Vrije Liefhebbers*, too. As one of the most prominent members, for example, Willem van der Borch chose the translated name of Guillermo a Castro, strikingly close to the well-known Spanish playwright Guillén de Castro

As so many people involved in theatre in the South, the *Vrije Liefhebbers* were well-educated persons with knowledge of the Spanish language. In theatre making, they worked with Spanish originals just as much as they used French intermediaries. At the same time, however, they strongly advocated the use of the Brabant mother tongue, especially for staging. In this way, Southern Netherlandish theatre groups and companies like the Brussels *Vrije Liefhebbers* were perfect conduits for Calderón and Lope de Vega to enter into the Dutch-speaking realm. With conditions favouring Spanish plays to naturally blend in, it is understandable that it took just a single decade for a top hit like Calderón's *La vida es sueño* to be staged in Brussels and to be published in the local Dutch version as *Het leven is maer Droom* (Brussels: Mommaert, 1647)

Little Spain in Amsterdam

Compared to the 'loyal' South, the revolting United Provinces in the North, which had expelled the Spanish presence, provided circumstances and facilities that made it less evident for *comedias* to enter into local culture. Especially when it came to the transfer, theatre employees and producers for the Schouwburg did not speak a word of Spanish. Theodore Rodenburgh, who as an exception had been able to adapt Lope from the Spanish source, died in 1644. Some people on the theatre's board knew French, but among the Amsterdam actors' company (most of them of rather humble descent) the only language they mastered was the mother tongue.

The first new Spanish production to enter the stage in 1645 is revealing for the difficulties the Schouwburg had to overcome to connect to Spain. It was Lope's *Laura Perseguida*, in the Dutch version of *Vervolgde Laura*. Although the title similarity suggested a direct transfer, it had been a long and winding

13 Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland*, pp. 447-448; Langvik-Johannessen and Porteman, '1700. Inauguratie van de Muntchouwburg te Brussel', pp. 284-289.

road for the play to end up in the Schouwburg, changing from the Spanish original first into the French version of *Laura Persecutée* by Jean Rotrou, then into a Dutch prose text by the professional Amsterdam translator Jan Hendrik Glazenmaker, and from there, finally, into the metrical and rhyming verses of iambic hexameters or alexandrines, so typical for Dutch theatre texts at the time, by the Schouwburg's favourite actor Adam Karelsz van Germez. Along the transfer way, the name of the Spanish author had virtually disappeared. The Schouwburg print edition did not display Lope on the title page, nor did it refer to any Spanish source at all. In fact, the work as it was presented appeared to be a creation by the Schouwburg actor, with the name of Adam Karels displayed capitalized above the title. When people complained about the error, Adam Karels was happy to admit that his Laura 'was born in Spain and, thus, a child of our arch-enemy'. His faux pas, however, was precisely that he had not mentioned the Spanish author. This he blamed on the intermediaries: 'The arrogance of putting my name alone on this work, I have learnt from my example Rotrou, when he made this play in French out of the Spanish original by Loopes de Veego [sic].'¹⁴

French playwrights working in the Spanish tradition, as the case of *Laura* demonstrates, were instrumental to the Schouwburg producers in closing the gap with far away Spain. From 1645 onwards, however, the Spanish tradition truly came into focus when the Iberian migrant community of Sephardic Jews entered into the theatre's network and facilitated a direct exchange. When the Schouwburg started operating, the city of Amsterdam harboured a considerable population of about 2000 souls from Spain and Portugal.¹⁵ Living in and around the eastern city area of Vlooienburg, they were a conspicuous group in society, as evident, for example, in Rembrandt's paintings, etchings and drawings of local Jews.¹⁶ Because they mostly spoke Portuguese, the native Amsterdammers would refer to them as the *Portugese joden*, and to their magnificent temple, built in 1675 and still standing and functioning today, as the Portuguese synagogue. Contrary to the stereotypical image of refugees, the Sephardim in Amsterdam were mostly well-to-do people,

14 Quoted, in English translation by the author, from the introduction to *Vervolgde Laura* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jacot, 1645, fol. *7r.): 'De hoovaardy evenwel van mynen naam hier alleinig boven te zetten, heb ik geleerd van mynen Meester Rotrou, die 't zelfde in Frans uit het Spaens van Loopes de Veego [sic] gedaen heft.'

15 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*; Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*; Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*; Israel, 'Spain and the Dutch Sephardim'; Vlaardingerbroek, *The Portuguese Synagogue*; Teensma, 'De Portugese joden in Amsterdam'; Blom et al., *Geschiedenis van de joden in Nederland*.

16 Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*.

thriving in profitable international business networks and keen on high education. Self-confident and proud of their origin, they tended to keep Iberian names and dressed in a Spanish way. Displaying Spanish manners and cultural practices, and with Southern facial features, they were definitely a colourful and distinct group in the city. In writing, literature and the arts, Spanish culture was their point of reference. They possessed Spanish books and libraries. And given their place of origin, they were also great lovers of theatre. Many book collections of Sephardim in Amsterdam included copies of Spanish drama works, particularly by Lope de Vega.¹⁷

The connection to contemporary Spanish theatre is obvious, for example, from the wedding celebrations of Isaac de Pinto and Rachel de Pinto Rodriguez in July 1648. As wealthy migrants, their marriage was an impressive display of Iberian aristocratic life, and concluded with a special drama performance. Celebrated ‘com muita festa e muita gente de Amsterdam’, as Pinto wrote in his memoirs, everyone was invited on the last day for the performance of a *comedia*, ‘bem representada’.¹⁸ The play performed at the wedding was one of Spain’s current top hits in theatre, Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*. Perhaps the first staging ever in the Northern Netherlands, contemporary to the Brussels premiere – but six years earlier than the 1654 premiere in the Amsterdam Schouwburg, the Pinto performance of *La vida es sueño* testifies to the direct link the Sephardim in diaspora kept with theatre life in Spain. Therefore, if anywhere in the Northern Netherlands, Spanish drama in those years was certainly to be found among the *Portugese joden* in Amsterdam. Even though expelled from their place of birth, the migrant community was well connected to the Iberian Peninsula. Not unlike the Italian community in nineteenth-century New York, the Sephardim lived in a kind of Little Spain in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, holding the one and only place in the Northern Netherlands with Spanish presence and thus creating a unique contact zone there.

After Van Germez’s play *Vervolgde Laura*, which was based on the French intermediary of Rotrou, the introduction of Spanish drama in the

17 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, p. 67. Also Den Boer, ‘Wat ik zie, bekeer ik’, pp. 27-36; Fuks-Mansfeld, *De Sefardim in Amsterdam tot 1795*, p. 104; Nadler, *Rembrandts Jews*, pp. 100-101; Berg and Lewis, ‘Jiddisch theater in Amsterdam’.

18 ‘D[it]o meu despozerio se celebrou con muita festa e m[ui]ta gente de amigos que veo de Amsterdam, e m[ui]ta da cidade, a qual toda se alborotou con as festas que ouue. Ao 20 dia ouue comedia, La Vida es Suenho, bem representada.’ The attestation of the *La vida es sueño* performance at De Pinto’s house in Rotterdam dates from 1671, in the De Pinto family book; quote taken from Salomon, ‘The “De Pinto” Manuscript’, p. 60. See also Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, p. 93.

Schouwburg owed much to one individual person in Amsterdam's Sephardic community: Jacobus Barocas.¹⁹ Like quite a number of Iberian Jews, he migrated to France first, and from Rouen went on to Amsterdam. There, he arrived in 1640, only two years after the opening of the Schouwburg. Living in the Korte Houtstraat on Vlooienburg, Barocas had mastered the Dutch language and, as a connoisseur and great lover of drama, he uniquely reached out to the newly opened public theatre in the city. At least eight play texts that were added to the Schouwburg repertory in these years pay tribute to his transmission work in the paratextual introductions. Some of these, quoted at length in the following paragraphs, indicate that it was Barocas who suggested plays from Lope's oeuvre to the employees of the Schouwburg. Moreover, as a talented polyglot, he provided prose translations of the Spanish sources, which the Schouwburg actors adapted into a five-act structure in the Dutch theatre language of verses and rhyme to suit the local staging tradition.

Making Lope's *comedia famosa* famous in the Netherlands

The first Sephardic-Schouwburg co-production in Amsterdam was Lope de Vega's *El amigo por fuerza*. With the Dutch title of *Gedwongen Vrient*, it premiered on the Schouwburg stage in the 1645-1646 season, on 3 May, with five shows, and it maintained its status as a popular repertory piece with four shows in the subsequent season. From Spain, through the Sephardic network, *Gedwongen Vrient* had come to stay in Amsterdam, not leaving the Schouwburg stage until a century later. The play's successes definitely contributed to Lope's reputation as the people's playwright in the Dutch Republic, and also to Barocas's qualities as his local agent. Innovative as it was, the print edition of *Gedwongen Vrient* displayed the name of the Spanish playwright on the title page where Lope de Vega Carpio starred in the header above the play's title, only followed by the name of Isaac Vos, the local actor-playwright, in smaller font underneath. None of the previous Lope drama plays produced by Rodenburgh had boasted the name of its Spanish author on the front cover, nor had the *Vervolgde Laura*, which Van

19 Contemporary documents have various name spellings: 'Barocas' in documents of the Sephardic community, 'Barokes', 'Barocus' and 'Baroces' in prefaces to play texts, 'Barokes' in the matrimonial act of the Amsterdam City Archives. See also the chapter 'De gelukszoeker. De vermommingen van Esther. Portugal, Amsterdam, Stockholm 1653' in Deen, *Over oude wegen*, pp. 205-275.

Figure 4.2 Lope de Vega Carpio, the first international playwright ever to star on the title page of a Schouwburg edition, as the author of *Gedwongen Vrient* (Amsterdam: Jan van Hilten, 1646)



Courtesy University Library, University of Amsterdam

Germez had brought to the Schouwburg the previous year on the basis of a French intermediary. Therefore, the public presentation of *Gedwongen Vrient* cannot be overestimated: with the prominent mention of Lope de Vega Carpio, for the first time in history, a contemporary non-domestic author's name appeared on a Schouwburg play text.

Just like Lope's name on the front page, the introductory section of the booklet also explicitly aimed at presenting the new author and the new drama vogue from Spain. The preface to the play text credited the creative genius of the *Gedwongen Vrient* as 'Madrid's Apollo' and as 'the great Spanish playwright'. Furthermore, the transfer process was highlighted, referring to Jacobus Barocas as the cultural messenger. It was only due to his personal initiative to come up with *El amigo por fuerza* in a Dutch prose translation that the Dutch Schouwburg actor had been able to appreciate the special qualities of Lope's play and to rework the Spanish source into a new production for the Schouwburg:

My [i.e. Isaac Vos's] eyes met with the spirit of the deceased but ever to be remembered Apollo of Madrid, the great Spanish poet Lope de Vega Carpio. Resurrected and brought to life by the art-loving and hard-working

sir Mr. Jacobus Baroces and while gliding on Dutch wings he appeared and stirred up and forced his friend of the same tongue to hand over the Dutch translation to me, in order to bring it to life in Dutch verses for the Amsterdam Schouwburg.²⁰

With *Gedwongen Vrient*, the Amsterdam Schouwburg produced the first Spanish *comedia* directly adapted from the source and introduced as a product from Spain to the local audience. The paratextual ornaments marked this epic moment. In the next Lope play a similar Spanish branding was devised. As the Sephardic-Schouwburg co-production had proved successful, the import experiment continued with the Dutch premiere of *El palacio confuso* just one year later. Under its Dutch title of *Verwarde Hof*, it premiered in 1647 with nine performances and subsequently built up a respectable performance track record of over 110 years. *Verwarde Hof* followed the same import route and featured the same public presentation strategy as the previous Spanish production. With Lope as its generally accepted author at the time, a Spanish name, again, dominated the front cover, giving only a secondary position to the Dutch author adapting the play. The preface to *Verwarde Hof* hailed Lope even more emphatically, as ‘the great Spanish poet’ and the ‘God of Poets’ who won the applause of ‘the highest monarch in Europe’, referring, of course, to his position as the Spanish king’s favourite playwright.²¹ And just as the previous co-production had, this one, too, mentioned the intermediary work of Jacobus Barocas as the indispensable go-between who, through his translation, brought the exotic cornucopia of Spanish drama to the Netherlands:

I offer the noblest fruits from the genius of the great Spanish poet Lope de Vega Carpio. They won the applause of Europe’s highest monarch who cherished them so much, that they became well known all over the civilized world. And when, still inexperienced thereof, I heard them, they moved me and touched me so much, that I took the courage to follow the

20 Quote (in English translation by the author) from the dedication of Isaac Vos’s *Gedwongen Vrient* (Amsterdam: Jan van Hilten, 1646): ‘my [is] de Geest van den verstorven doch eeuwigh in heughnis levenden Madritsche Apoll, en grooten Spaensen Poëet Lope de Vega Carpio, opgewekt en herschapen door den kunst-lievenden en yverigen Heer Iacobus Baroces zwevende op Nederduytze wieken, voor mijne oogen verschenen, en al prikkelende zijn taalgenoot, en rust-besnijdende vriend, gedwongen, deeze zijne *Gedwongen vrient* mij over te dragen, om op onze Amsteldamsche Schouburgh in Neder-duytse Vaarzen te doen herleeven.’ I owe this observation to my former student, Leonor Álvarez Francés, in her University of Amsterdam MA thesis, *The Phoenix Glides on Dutch Wings*.

21 Wright, *Pilgrimage to Patronage*.

footprints of that God of Poets, as to practice myself in the qualities of his genius. Mr Barocas then helped me on the way and brought me so far that I could restyle and render him into Dutch verses, so that art lovers here may taste and enjoy, and now garner what other regions have yet been garnering.²²

After *Gedwongen Vrient* and *Verwarde Hof*, it took one year, again, for the Amsterdam theatre to introduce and add another specimen to the Spanish import series: *La Fuerza Lastimosa*. Although Lope's name was not mentioned, the play text book of the *Beklaaglyke Dwang* (1648) stressed the Spanish provenance as before, mentioning Barocas for his intermediary prose translation. At the same time, the third play in the series also testified to the growing confidence in producing Spanish successes on stage in the Schouwburg:

You will see a play here, that, if I am not wrong, will please you, all the more because the creator has kept an eye on the times of his life, rather than on the ancient rules of theatre. In my opinion, when writing drama plays for our own times, it does not make sense to stick to times foregone, now that the eyes want their share of what is on show, just as much as the ears. This play was translated from Spanish by Mister Barocas, and composed by me in Dutch rhyming verses.²³

Even if Lope was not credited as the author, the confident and provocative Dutch voice echoed Lope's revolutionary ideas on new theatre, as stated in the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*. Rejecting the ancients, readers and

22 Quote (in English translation by the author) from the preface by Leon de Fuyter to *Verwerde Hof* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jacot, 1647, fol *1v): 'de eelste vruchten der harssenen van den grooten Spaenschen Poëet *Lope de Vega Carpio*, diese in geen kleyn aansien hebben ghebracht by den grootsten Staf-drager van Europa, die de selve zoo gekoestert heeft, datse bekent en geroemt zijn in al de redelijckste deelen der werelt, daarse my noch onkundigh zijnde, door het gehoor zoo vervoert, en doorgriefft hebben, dat ik my heb derven verstouten, dien Godt der Poëten op de hielen te volgen, om my te oeffenen in de eygenschappen sijner wijsheden, ende eyndelijcke door den Heere *Barokus* soo veel te wege gebracht, dat hy de selve heeft hervormt, en gestelt in Nederduytsche vaarzen; op datse onse konstlievende (doch voornamelijck U E.) mochten smaaken en behagen; op dat wy hier door moogen plucken, het geene andere ghepluckt hebben.'

23 Cited (in translation by the author) from the introduction to the play text of *Beklaaglyke Dwang* by Vos (Amsterdam: Saeghman, 1648, fol. A2v): 'U sult hier een spel sien, en, soo ick my niet bedriege, sal het u behagen, te meer, also de maker meer gesien heeft na de tijd daar in hy leefde, als wel op de oude Toneel-wetten; en het dunckt my ook ongerijmt, in het rijmen van Toneel-speelen, voor de tegenwoordige tijd, te letten op de voorledenen; nu het oog neffens de oren wil aandeel hebben in hetgeen haar vertoond werd. 't Is uyt het Spaans overgeset door den Heer Barokes, en van my op Neerduyts Rijm gebracht.'

attendees were invited to come and, assuredly, enjoy this play as a spectacular treat for both the ears and the eyes. Posing the rhetorical question of why one should hold on to classical principles or ancient rules when modern audiences wanted modern drama, the preface challenged every classicist theatre maker in the Netherlands, in favour of the new popular drama from Spain.

The arch-enemy's treasures

With three Spanish productions supplementing the Schouwburg repertory in three subsequent theatre seasons, Lope de Vega and his drama were firmly stepping into the light of Amsterdam's stage. And performance frequencies kept up with the pace of the productions and public branding. To quantify the impact of the new Lope de Vega-vogue, a simple calculation for the year 1648 says it all. Lope's *Beklaaglyke Dwang* scored nine premiere performances in the Schouwburg, the *Verwerde Hof* had seven shows and *Gedwongen Vrient* four, adding up to a total of 20 shows of that year's 120 total shows. On average, once every three weeks a Lope play was on show that had been imported directly from Spain and labelled as such. The year 1648, therefore, may be considered as the historic year in Hispano-Dutch relations, not only for the peace treaty that formally ended Spain's territorial claims in the United Provinces, but also for the glorious victory of Lope de Vega on the Schouwburg stage. This leads to the pressing question: apart from the artistic (and financial) successes, was there any reflection on the paradox of the arch-enemy's triumph in the heart of Dutch cultural life? Preliminary poems in the series' first two flagships do, indeed, reveal a hostile framing for the imported material.

As demonstrated, Isaac Vos's *Gedwongen Vrient* edition of 1646 was the first Schouwburg text book ever to display a foreign, Spanish author's name on the front cover, stressing his Spanishness in hailing qualifications of Lope as the 'Apollo of Madrid' and the 'Great Spanish author'. The preliminary poem to the edition, composed by the Schouwburg actor Leon de Fuyter, equally professed admiration. Entitled 'Roemvaarzen op de Gedwongen Vrient van Isaak Vos', the laudatory poem's opening scene pictured Spain in a state of mourning, not for the losses of war, but for the untimely death of its greatest author, whose pen contributed so much to 'Madrid's fame and to that Royal Throne of the West' ('om dat Atrops u ontydig heeft ont draagen Dien VEGA die Madril, en d'Avondt-Vorst zyn stoel Vereerden door zyn Pen, zo hebt gy recht te klagen'). After this opening view of Spain, however, the

point of focus turned towards the Dutch playwright. Isaac Vos's first point of praise was that, by rhyming the play in Dutch metrical verses, and thus presenting the Spanish original in a local fashion, he ensured that Lope was not dead but coming to life in Amsterdam²⁴:

Time is here that from his ashes is reborn
 A Sun, as radiantly shining as the first one,
 And bravely following in his heavenly course
 To honour Vega, whom no time will ever darken.

Hailing the author and referring to Spain in every positive way, the laudatory poem so far is in line with the general agenda of the play text booklet: Vos's *Gedwongen Vrient* reflected Lope's radiance, fulfilling the poem's pun on Lope's nickname of the Phoenix and Sun of Madrid, of Spain's Apollo. The suggested equilibrium is twisted, however, in the poem's final part, where Vos is credited for his appropriation of Lope²⁵:

Even Oblivion passes on to his [Vos's] lips
 The almost forgotten name of his leader.
 Will any time in the future not revere this reborn Raider
 Or garland his head with well deserved laurel?

The poem's image of the Dutch author as a predator capturing prey ('Rover') was inspired by the author's name Vos, since 'vos' means 'fox' in Dutch. However, framing the Lope appropriation in terms of a laudable act of stealing, deservedly crowned with honour and laurel, may have activated the image of a victorious plundering among contemporary Dutch readers, alluding to a common phenomenon of Spanish-Dutch warfare. Cunningly stealing and looting, after all, were regularly praised Dutch strategies for weakening the formidable opponent's resources just as much as in strengthening one's own position.²⁶ Spot-on topical puns and metaphors hailed the Dutch playwright

24 Quoted in English translation by the author, from Leon de Fuyter's 'Roemvaarzen' in *Gedwongen Vrient* (Amsterdam: Jan van Hilten, 1646) fol. A2v: 'De tydt genaakt dat uit zyn asse wordt herbooren / Een Zon, die in de glans van d'eerste ziels verlust: En zoekt dat zelve spoor, kloekmoedig na te spooren / Tot eer van Vega, die geen eeuw zyn glory blust.'

25 Quoted from Leon de Fuyter's 'Roemvaarzen' in *Gedwongen Vrient* (Amsterdam: Jan van Hilten, 1646) fol. A2v: 'Zelfs de vergeetelheid geeft aan zyn lippen over / Den schier verwelkte naam van zynen voedster-heer. / Wat eeuw verpligt zich niet aan dees herbooren Rover, / Of vlegt geen kranssen voor zyn welverdiende eer?'

26 On Anglo-Spanish adaptations as piracy, see Fuchs, *The Poetics of Piracy*.

who 'stole' and produced his Spanish play for the Schouwburg, and similar inventions were echoed in the introductory poem for the Spanish production of *Verwerde Hof* in following year's theatre season (1647). The name of the Dutch playwright, Leon de Fuyter, provoked an even more explicit use of the war-metaphors. Just as Vos had an association with the cunning fox, Leon invited a connection to the animal renowned for its bravery, the lion²⁷:

And so this young Lion
 In our times of confusion
 Ripped off from the Spanish laurel crown
 The very best of its leaves,
 The most precious treasure
 Ever in possession of Madrid.
 He is bringing it as if in triumph to display
 Attaching it to his crown of honour.

Bravery and well-deserved honour were the key elements in this laudatory poem, which for its victorious voice was explicitly entitled 'Triumphal Song' ('Triumphlied'). Surpassing even Vos's bravery in the previous poem, the young Lion, at the age of 25, had deprived Madrid of its glorious treasure by taking Lope's play as a war loot and triumphantly presenting him on stage to the people in Amsterdam. To contemporary readers in the United Provinces, the metaphor of the brave young lion also alluded to the *Leo Belgicus* and the Dutch Lion's triumph in the revolt against Spain. And so, in the year before the completion of the Peace and Spain's recognition of the independent United Provinces, the 'Triumphal Song' introducing the Spanish play *Verwerde Hof* reached a climax in the rejoicing voice of the ultimate victory, bringing Lope de Vega from Spain in Leon de Fuyter's captivity²⁸:

You, Lope, be happy
 To follow in swift pace
 Your conqueror, who with you

27 Laudatory poem by Isaac Vos in Leonard de Fuyter's *Verwerde Hof* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jacot, 1647, fol. *2v and *3r): 'Soo oock dees jonge Leeuw / In dees verwarde eeuw, / Ruckt van het Spaanse lauwer lof / Het beste van sijn loov'ren of, / De alderwaarste schat / Die oyt Madril besat. / Brenght hy, als in Triumph ten toon, / En hechtse aen sijn eeren kroon.'

28 Final part of the laudatory poem by Isaac Vos in Leonard de Fuyter's *Verwerde Hof* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jacot, 1647, fol. *2v and *3r): 'Nu Lopes zijt te vreen, / En volghet met fluxe schreen / Uw' winnaar, die met uw' het lof / Sal deelen, van 't verwarde Hof. / O! vega uw' verblijft, / Die sijn gevanghen zijt.'

Will share the praise of Court in Confusion;
 O Vega, rejoice
 To be his prisoner.

With the *Verwerde Hof* text book published in 1647, the introduction of Spanish theatre reached its zenith in terms of topical allusions to the war. After the Peace of Westphalia was concluded, presentations of Spanish drama for the Schouwburg immediately dropped the aspect of Spain as the arch-enemy. From then on, the focus was on Spain's great drama tradition only, as the Lope production of *Beklaaglyke Dwang* in 1648 stressed the provenance in the preface, just as it amplified some of Lope's artistic ideas on modern theatre. The tone of the next Spanish play to appear on the Schouwburg stage, *Vorsichtige Dolheit* (Prudent insanity, 1649) by Joris de Wijse, was explicitly peaceful. Based on Lope's *El cuerdo loco*, this piece about a king who faked insanity in order to save his kingdom, was playfully introduced as a Spanish insanity (*Spaanse dolheit*). War was definitely over, and with it the triumphant tone of appropriation in the presentation of a Lope production: rather than plundered booty from Madrid, it was 'borrowed from Spain' as it said in the preface, 'in times of peace'.

More Spanish authors entering the Schouwburg

With the Spanish vogue firmly grounded, the Schouwburg widened the window on Spain and added a second Spanish playwright to the repertory. Surprisingly, the new author to be imported and marketed was not Calderón, but Juan Pérez de Montalbán, who, at the time, held a reputation in the Netherlands for his translated novels.²⁹ Produced for the Schouwburg in 1651, Montalbán's play *La más constante mujer* premiered in February 1652 under its Dutchified title *Stantvastige Isabella* (The constancy of Isabella). Another product of the successful Sephardic-Schouwburg co-operation, it shared the same provenance, derived from Spanish through the prose intermediary of Barocas into Dutch rhyming verses by the actor Leon de Fuyter.

For the new Spanish playwright, however, the play text booklet showed renewed efforts at product placement. The public presentation of *Stantvastige Isabella* featured a visual innovation. As the very first Dutch visualization of import drama from Spain, the frontispiece illustration of *Stantvastige Isabella* showed the play's heroine fighting as a virtuous and brave Pallas Athena to

29 Rodríguez Pérez, 'The Adventures of an Amsterdam Spaniard'.

rescue her lover Carel, unjustly sentenced to death.³⁰ Moreover, the preface to the work connected her brave and radiant appearance to the people's appreciation in Spain: 'her virtuous bravery was admired throughout all Spain' ('wiens stantvastige fierheit gantsch Spanjen kost verwonderen').³¹ Consistent with the earlier Spanish import series, *Stantvastige Isabella* also publicly described the transfer route: for its captivating plot and brilliant changes, the preface said, the Spanish play had been a favourite of the renowned Amsterdam patron and theatre lover (and Schouwburg director) Marten Kretzer, who facilitated the transfer by commissioning Barocas to make a prose translation.³² *Isabella* thus proved to be a direct Spanish import product.

I have fought like a Pallas, and with boldness
 I saved my Carel's blood by shedding my own.
 That's how I attacked his murderers. Are you surprised
 That in a woman you see such bravery? (*Stantvastige Isabella* (1651),
 frontispiece and quote from Act 5. Courtesy University Library, University
 of Amsterdam)

In addition to the Spanishness of the source, the play text book made the most of presenting the new author. Montalbán's name appeared prominently on the front page, with the Dutch playwright Leon de Fuyter clearly in second position. Just as the Lope editions had done before, *Stantvastige Isabella* hailed the playwright in the preface as 'that great Spanish author' ('dien grooten Spaenschen Poëet') and as 'the praiseworthy Juan Pérez de Montalván, who gave Isabella her immortal name' ('den roem-waarden Ian Pérez de Montelvan, diese een onsterfelijke Naam heeft doen bekomen'). Ultimately, two laudatory poems worked to promote the new author. One was in praise of Leon de Fuyter, addressing him as the adaptor of the play and predicting he would be honoured

30 The play's lines related to illustration, read: 'Ick heb als een Pallas my gedragen; en met moet / Verdedigt Carels bloet; door 't storten van mijn bloet. / Ick vloog hun in [...] En ghy verwondert niet / Datge hier in een vrouw zoo'n grooten kloekheyt siet' (*Stantvastige Isabella*, Act 5). Illustrated play text books in the Schouwburg were available since the groundbreaking edition of Jan Vos's *Aran en Titus* in 1641. Van Germez's *Vervolgde Laura* (1645), based on Jean Rotrou's translation of Lope, included one.

31 Leonard de Fuyter, *Stantvastige Isabella* (Amsterdam: Lodowijk Spillebout, 1651), fol *3r.

32 Paraphrase of Leonard de Fuyter's preface to *Stantvastige Isabella* (Amsterdam: Lodewijk Spillebout, 1651, fol *3r): 'Deze *Isabella* neemt haren oorspronk van den roem-waarden *Ian Perez de Montelvan*, diese een onsterfelijke Naam heeft doen bekomen. Deze comédie scheen geduurigh te speelen op de tongh van den seer konst-lievenden *Marten Kretzer*, zoo door de onvergelykelijke reden, als uytsteekende veranderingh, die eyndelik zoo veel te weege heeft gebracht, datze door den Heere Barocus is over-gezet, en door My in duytzte Vaarzen gerijmt.'

Figure 4.3 *Stantvastige Isabella* (1651), frontispiece



Courtesy University Library, University of Amsterdam

for his Dutch-speaking *Isabella* just as much as ‘the wise Montalván’ was celebrated for the play in ‘Mighty Spain’.³³ In contrast, the other poem addressed the deceased Spanish playwright directly (‘Aen Juan Peres de Montalvan’), predicting the fame of the ‘illustrious Montalbán’ (‘Doorluchte Montalban’) to reach even further, as stressed by the image in the final stanza of a Spanish Phoenix coming to life again on the Amsterdam stage³⁴:

To Juan Peres de Montalvan
on his *Stantvastige Isabel*

33 ‘Aan Leon de Fuyter, op de vertaalde Isabella’ by Gillis van Staveren in *Stantvastige Isabella* (Amsterdam: Lodowijk Spillebout, 1651, fol. *4r): ‘De eer die Isabel den wijsen Montalvan In’t machtig Spanje gaf.’

34 ‘Aen Juan Peres de Montalvan’ by D. Lange in *Stantvastige Isabella* (Amsterdam: Lodowijk Spillebout, 1651, fol. *3v): ‘Aen Juan Peres de Montalvan / Op zijn *Stantvastige Isabel* / Gerijmt door Leon de Fuyter. / Zoo ziet men noch u roem uyt d’overleven assen / Ô Spaansche Fenix hier ten hoogen hemel wassen / En gy verdient by ons, als Spanje om dees stof / Geen minder dichters roem, maar vry veel meerder lof.’

as rhymed by Leon de Fuyter

And now you may witness your fame rising from remainders and ashes
 O Spanish Phoenix, as high as the skies above
 And here with us, you garner as you did in Spain
 Not less, but rather even much more glory

The extraordinary case of Calderón

In contrast to the loud and overwhelming presentations of Lope and Pérez de Montalbán, the Schouwburg audience had a relatively late and modest way of getting to know Pedro Calderón de la Barca. As an exceptional case in the general transmission and marketing scheme of Spanish drama, Calderón's appearance in Amsterdam will be the final part of this analysis. Almost ten years after the Schouwburg's publicity campaign for Spanish plays started off with Lope, Calderón made his first appearance in Amsterdam's theatre in 1654. For this production, it was Schouwburg actor Leon de Fuyter, once more, who made the adaptation. However, compared to the Spanish series that he had been producing until then with his fellow actor Isaac Vos and in cooperation with Jacobus Barocas, this was a distinct case. On the one hand, the preface recommended the *Don Jan de Tessandier* by 'the great Calduron' in the usual Schouwburg marketing terms, as a play which had 'so much pleased the great scepter-holder of Spain that he had honored the theatre by his presence and royal tapestries'. On the other hand, however, the title page did not bring up the name of the Spanish author, nor did the name of the polyglot Barocas occur anywhere in the preface. In that sense, the *Don Jan de Tessandier* did not really follow the vogue, and until this day scholars have not been able to solve the mystery of identifying any Calderón play as its the source.³⁵ Moreover, the plot of this play was not what audiences expected from Spain. Far from being a happy-ending *comedia*, the *Don Jan* was an utterly cruel story of revenge, its horrors, according to the single preliminary poem, even more terrible than those of Medea, cruelty's paradigm. And so they were: revengeful love, in this play, led to a patricide first, and to suicide in the end.

Calderón's *Don Jan* was a *Fremdkörper* in the Schouwburg. This Spanish play, typified as a tragedy (*treur-spel*) on the title page, did not win the hearts of the Amsterdam crowds nearly as much as the Spanish plays

35 Sullivan, *Calderón in the German Lands*, p. 448, n. 18 and 19.

already in the repertory. The problem was not the utter cruelty; crowds in the Schouwburg loved such plots in plays derived from the English tradition. After all, one of the crowd's favourites was *Aran en Titus* (Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*), which featured rape, mutilation, cannibalism, burning and a dozen killings in a row. Spanish theatre, in contrast, had built up a different image and reputation by then, and *Don Jan* did not meet those expectations. With only one-third of the theatre occupied on average, the new production had the poorest premiere ever for a Spanish play. The play was discordant for the Schouwburg. Calderón deserved a better start.

A second chance was given with his masterpiece *La vida es sueño* which premiered in the Schouwburg during that same theatre season of 1654. Undoubtedly, this was a production in line with what people in Amsterdam regarded as Spanish theatre. In fact, it was the most Spanish of all Spanish plays ever produced for the Schouwburg in terms of Spanish ingredients. The Dutch version even maintained the typical Spanish division into three *jornadas*, not adapting it to the Netherlandish theatre structure of a five-act play.³⁶ This Calderón play, indeed, enjoyed booming success in the Schouwburg. One of the top hits in the repertory, *Sigismundus, Prince van Poolen of 't Leven is een droom*, kept two-thirds of the theatre's places occupied on average, with two or three shows per year during a performance history of over 130 years.

But the sad thing was that no one in Amsterdam, or in the Low Countries, knew that *Sigismundus, Prince van Poolen of 't Leven is een droom*, was a play by Calderón. The Schouwburg text book was a skinny edition, lacking any information about the Dutch adaptor or the Spanish source. No preface, no laudatory poems, nothing but the summary of the plot and the Dutch verse translation appeared. That the latest treasure from Spain was introduced so differently from the ones produced in the Sephardic-Schouwburg co-operation, reveals another transmission for this play. *La vida es sueño* had entered the Dutch-speaking realm in the Brussels Hispano-Dutch contact zone. The Brabant dialect version, by an unknown member of the Vrije Liefhebbers, arrived in Amsterdam as a fine Spanish play text, but without any reference to the original author. In the first Schouwburg production nothing was altered or added, except for some minor replacements of dialect Brabantisms. For the Haarlem tour of 1656, the Amsterdam company fixed the lacuna by falsely inserting the name of Montalbán, just to make the announcement for 'the best of all

36 For details on the adaptation, see Sullivan, *Calderón in the German Lands*, pp. 39-40.

Spanish comedies' sound even more Spanish by using a playwright who had recently (and rightly) been praised in the new Schouwburg production of *Stantvastige Isabella*. In later times, the popular *Sigismundus, Prince van Poolen of 't Leven is een droom*, was reissued in at least fifteen more editions, but the link between the masterpiece and Calderón, missing since Brussels, was never restored.

Only by 1668 did the name of Calderón emerge successfully in Amsterdam's theatre life, due to a pair of plays that had been produced through the Sephardic-Schouwburg collaboration. One was done by the Amsterdam peripheral poet Dirck Heynck, a fervent fan of Spanish theatre.³⁷ He introduced his play *Don Louis de Vargas* as a play 'once brought to the Spanish stage in two parts by Don Pedro de Calderón' ('eertijts in twee delen, door Don Pedro de Calderon, ten Spaensen Toneeele gevoert'). A play of passion, abuse of power, intrigue and justice restored, also including actresses in male costume and duelling scenes, *Don Louis* was as Spanish as the people craved in Amsterdam – and performance statistics only underline its lasting Schouwburg popularity until the nineteenth century.³⁸ The source, however, was *El tejedor de Sevilla*, a Spanish *comedia* by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza. We can only guess why the Dutch adaptor wanted the audience to believe it was Calderón's; at the very least, it surely mattered that Alarcón had never been introduced as a playwright in the Schouwburg at all.

The other new play in 1668 mentioning Calderón as its source was done by the Schouwburg actor Adriaan Bastiaensz de Leeuw, in an alleged collaboration with Jacobus Barocas. Based on *El mayor encanto amor*, the Dutch version of *Toveres Circe* (1670) featured the classic love story of Ulysses and the witch Circe in a Spanish intrigue of emotions and bravery, passion and deceit, happily ending with the final victory of good over evil, including many alterations and changing fortunes.³⁹ For all the *mudanzas* or changes or *veranderinge van staet*, the Schouwburg production of *Toveres Circe* went even one bold step further: it featured live metamorphosis on stage. Ulysses's men, transformed into weeping trees and howling animals in the enchanted

37 In 1663, Dirck Heynck also produced the Spanish super hit *Veranderlyk geval* for the Schouwburg, based on *Las Mudanzas de la Fortuna* by Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva.

38 See *ONSTAGE* s.v. *Don Louis de Vargas*.

39 Calderón's *El mayor encanto amor* has a unique double Hispano-Dutch transfer record. Almost simultaneously with the Schouwburg production, it was also produced in another adaptation by Claude de Grieck, member of the Vrije Liefhebbers and published there in 1668. Just like the version of Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, the Brussels translation of *El mayor encanto amor* was published anonymously and without reference to any Spanish source.

woods, were turned back into the beloved flesh-and-blood comrades in the play's final act. With Circe's witchcraft unbound in the performance, even the typical *gracioso* made a metamorphosis by changing, before the audience's eyes, into a ridiculous monkey.

Toveres Circe was recommended in the preface as a play 'made by the famous Spanish playwright Don Pedro Calderón, and translated into Dutch by the polyglot J. Barocas' ('gemaect door den beroemden Spaenschen poet Don Pedro Calderon, en vertaelt in Nederduytsch door den taalkundigen I. Barokes'), indicating once more the direct and high-quality transfer route that had brought so many theatre hits to Amsterdam's crowds. *Toveres Circe* was, however, the final co-production of Amsterdam's theatre with the Sephardic connoisseur of Spanish drama, Jacobus Barocas, who died one year later, in 1671. Bold as it was, the Schouwburg version of *El mayor encanto amor* finally introduced Calderón by name to the Amsterdam audiences and credited him as a great playwright from Spain's endless drama resources.

End

By the time *Toveres Circe* was brought to stage, Amsterdam's ever-changing theatre life was changing, yet again. The French-classicist vogue was entering now, to take over the course and programme in the Schouwburg. Artistically, the Spanish plays were under attack, exactly for the multiple changes in the overabundant plots and for the variety of characters, features with which Lope, and his local evangelists in the frontline, had deliberately challenged classical principles and rules. But intellectual opposition was not fierce enough to break a strong and popular tradition, and amidst the new élan for Corneille, Racine and Molière, many Spanish *comedias* remained on the stage, especially during peak moments such as the Amsterdam Fair (*Kermisweek*) in September, when the Schouwburg was open every day of the week and people would gather in masses. During the first three decades of the Schouwburg's operations and even before the war with the arch-enemy had ended, Spanish treasures had come to stay and to become the backbone of Amsterdam's popular repertory. Due to connoisseur selections, quality productions, and effective public marketing, the Spanish plays – plundered and stolen as war loot or borrowed in times of peace – dominated the theatre's programming lists and emerged as the people's plays in Amsterdam.

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