

The Early Modern Stage Between Baroque and Enlightenment: Vondel's Century

Treehouse, Berrick Saul Building, University of York, 20-21 September

Friday 20 September

Registration 13.30-14.45

14.45 – 15.00 Welcome and introduction

Panel 1: 15.00-16.30 *Transnational mobilities, material culture and the poetics of empire* (chair: Lauren Working, University of York)

Henriette Rietveld (Yale University), 'The Empire's New Clothes: Colonial and Material Entanglements on Amsterdam's Stage'

Olga van Marion (University of Leiden), 'Dutch Actresses in a Globalizing World'

Tim Vergeer (University of Amsterdam), 'A Turkish Love Story: Between Repulsion and Compassion'

16.30-17.15 drinks

17.15 Keynote lecture

Tiffany Stern (University of Birmingham/The Shakespeare Institute), English Actors, Continental Puppets

Saturday 21 September

09.00- 10.30 Panel 2: *Poetry and the Arts: Vondel in Performance* (chair: Ollie Jones, University of York)

Imre Besanger (Theatre Group Kwast), 'Playing with Imagined Spaces: Vondel's Theatre Practice'

Juliana Beykirch (University of Newcastle), '“The Second Klaas van Kieten”: Daniel Cajanus' Poetic Performances of Self'

Frans Blom (University of Amsterdam), 'Visions of Joseph: Theatre Performance, Literature and the Art of Painting in Vondel's Amsterdam'

10.30-11.00 coffee/tea

11.00-12.30 Panel 3: *Philosophy and Religion: Vondel and his Interlocutors* (chair: Brian Cummings, University of York)

Sarah Mortimer (University of Oxford), 'Word, Ceremony, and Drama in Remonstrant Religion'

Russ Leo (Princeton University), 'Vondel's Early Readers: Amsterdam Collegiants, Rotterdam Collegiants, and Nil Volentibus Arduum'

Tycho Maas (University of Utrecht), 'A Divine Crisis of Staging the World: The Cape of Good Hope in Vondel's *Bespiegelingen* and in Jan de Marre's *Godsnysheid*'

12.30 -13.15 lunch (buffet)

13.15- 14.45 Panel 4: *Making Publics: History, Power and Authority* (chair: Russ Leo, Princeton University)

Esther van Raamsdonck (University of Utrecht), 'Divine and Political Authority in Vondel's *Koning David in Ballingschap* and *Koning David Hersteld*'

Marrigje Paijmans (University of Amsterdam), 'Vondel's "Conversion Play" *Peter and Paul* (1641)'

James Parente (University of Minnesota), 'Refashioning the Middle Ages in the Dramas of Theodoor Rodenburgh'

14.45-15.15 coffee/tea

15.15- 16.15 Panel 5: *Ecocriticism and Environmental History* (Chair Kevin Killeen)

~~Thomas Pritchard (University of Edinburgh), '“De storm drijft over, en d'ontstelde lucht bedaert”: The Presence of the Little Ice Age in Vondel's 1667 *Zungchin*~~

Freya Sierhuis (University of York), 'Animal Ethics in Vondel's *Noah*'

16.30 Keynote Lecture Nigel Smith (Princeton University), 'Plays, Poems, Politics and Protest: Why Joost van den Vondel Matters'

Abstracts

Friday 20 September

Panel 1 *Transnational mobilities, material culture and the poetics of empire*

Henriette Rietveld (Yale University), 'The Empire's New Clothes: Colonial and Material Entanglements on Amsterdam's Stage'

In Jan Vos's *Aran en Titus* (1641), Titus praises Thamera for her beauty in a Petrarchan tradition of ideal white femininity. He comments on her sugary sweetness, her nails like pearls, her white skin like alabaster, her ruby lips, her teeth like ivory, her hair like gold. All of the materials he refers to were colonial imports in Amsterdam's burgeoning empire. Like this queen, they were foreign and stunning and to be possessed. The Dutch colonial empire appeared on stage in words and imagery linked to wealth and ownership. And it didn't just come out of the actors' mouths, it also clothed them with silks and satins imported from Asia. This paper analyzes the operating model and materials detailed in the account books of the Amsterdam city theater, the Schouwburg, from its first ten years of operation, to consider the reach of empire's long arm on the Amsterdam stage.

Olga van Marion (University of Leiden), 'Dutch Actresses in a Globalizing World'

Abstract TBC

Tim Vergeer (University of Amsterdam), 'A Turkish Love Story: Between Repulsion and Compassion'

In 1657, the rather unknown author Henrick Lubaeus published his tragedy *Mahomet en Irena, of Liefde in wreetheydt*, an adaptation of the then-popular novella about the love between Ottoman sultan Mahomet and the beautiful Greek virgin Irena. Blinded by love, Mahomet loses sight of the affairs of state and he eventually feels himself forced to execute Irena to prove that he will always put his people first. With his play, Lubaeus responds to different theatrical traditions, including classical theories of tragedy, the popular love-honour themes of translated Spanish plays, and the political themes of the Dutch revenge tragedy. Yet, the playwright also notably deferred from these traditions by integrating, for instance, the popular genre of *praetjes* (pamphlets) in an intermezzo between a farmer and a citizen, who mirror the actions of the courtiers by their discussion of affairs of state. Lubaeus paints a love entanglement between two people from different worlds that encourages us to read the play through critical race studies and gender studies, and urges us to reflect on political concerns in the Dutch Republic in the 1650s. This play, then, offers an insight in how in the Dutch Republic various literary traditions and cultural products spoke to each other in a constant cultural exchange of aesthetic and political ideals. Through this, Lubaeus created a psychological tragedy in the spirit of Vondel, which instilled both repulsion and compassion in audiences for the actions of the main protagonist, thus both confirming and subverting Orientalist discourses of the Ottoman Empire

Keynote Lecture

Tiffany Stern (University of Birmingham/ The Shakespeare Institute), 'English Actors: Continental Puppets'

The first half of my talk will be on the early modern English actors who took *Doctor Faustus* and *Hamlet*, plays that were themselves adaptations from Continental sources, over Europe. The second half will be the Continental puppet-shows that subsumed those English plays. Considering the way that European books became English plays and thence European puppet-shows, it will ask whether our assumptions about dramatic mobility in a globalizing world have been limited by a focus on written, at the expense of puppet, sources.

Saturday 21 September

Panel 2: Poetry and the Arts: Vondel in Performance

Imre Besanger (Theatre Group Kwast) 'Playing with Imagined Spaces: Vondel's Theatre Practices'

When the renowned Dutch architect Jacob van Campen designed the first Amsterdam city theatre in 1637, it was everything an Amsterdam playwright could have dreamt of. It fitted the theatre practices of mid seventeenth century Dutch performers and playwrights, such as Joost van den Vondel, perfectly. However, when looked upon from a modern perspective this theatre certainly had its limitations, its biggest limitation being its static backdrop. It was this continual stage set that forced Vondel and his contemporaries to activate the imagination of the audience. A change of scenery or location had to be brought to life by sheer imagination. In the recent stagings of Vondel's plays by the Dutch theatre group 'Theater Kwast', the limits of activating the imagination of the audience and how seventeenth century Dutch theatre texts trigger this mechanism were explored. In my lecture, I will share the results of this exploration and try to give some insight how to look at seventeenth century Dutch theatre texts through the eyes of a director or actor.

"The second Klaas van Kieten": Daniel Cajanus' Poetic Performances of Self, Juliana Beykirch (University of Newcastle)

Daniel Cajanus, (1702/3-1749) was an extraordinarily tall Finn who earned his living by showing his body to paying spectators all over Europe. Towards the end of a decades-long performance career spent on European stages, Cajanus, now a resident of Haarlem, Netherlands, turned to writing. In his two Dutch-language poems, he not only commemorated political events of national importance but also playfully engaged with the complex public persona he had constructed during his performance career. This paper will focus on Cajanus' 1748 poem "Daniel Cajanus Gewenschte Lofbazuine" ("Daniel Cajanus Wishes Praise"). Drawing on Julia Fawcett's concept of 'over-expression,' I argue that in his poems, which I identify as 'performances of self,' Cajanus employs 'oscillating overexpression' as a performance strategy. This entails him simultaneously exaggerating both his physical otherness and his education, civility, and status as a Dutch patriot. Central to this are Cajanus' references to Joost van den Vondel's *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel* (1638), specifically van den Vondel's depiction of the giant Klaas van Kieten, with whom he compares himself. This paper will demonstrate that in his poetry, Cajanus used 'oscillating overexpression' and the resulting contradictory public persona both to negotiate his complex identity as an extraordinarily embodied celebrity and to assert his subject status. Cajanus' poetic 'performances of self' continually expose themselves as performances, through their exaggerated theatricality and through the contradiction of the persona they construct. By highlighting the performativity of his intervention, Cajanus asserts his status as a performing, creative subject.

Frans Blom (University of Amsterdam), 'Visions of Joseph: Theatre Performance, Literature and the Art of Painting in Vondel's Amsterdam'

Abstract TBC

Panel 3: *Philosophy and Religion: Vondel and his Interlocutors*

Sarah Mortimer (University of Oxford), 'Word, Ceremony, and Drama in Remonstrant Religion' Remonstrant Christianity was deeply textual, anchored in the Scriptures as the revealed Word of God. Yet Remonstrant theologians and writers were also interested in the way ceremony, ritual, and drama were part of humans' shared life and their religious practice in Churches. This paper will explore some of the features of the Remonstrant approach to literature, including drama and the writing of history, and consider how this might form part of the context for Vondel's own work.

Russ Leo (Princeton University), 'Vondel's Early Readers: Amsterdam Collegiants, Rotterdam Collegiants, and Nil Volentibus Arduum'

Abstract TBC

Tycho Maas (University of Utrecht), 'A divine crisis of staging the world: The Cape of Good Hope in Vondel's *Bespiegelingen* and in Jan de Marre's *Godswysheid*'

This paper focuses on the relationship between Vondel's *Bespiegelingen van Godt en Godtsdienst* (1662) and Jan de Marre's *Godswysheid in 't bestier der schepselen en Eerkroon voor de Caab de Goede Hoop* (1746). The didactic poem by VOC captain and Amsterdam theatre maker De Marre has been called a description of the Cape colony's land and people. Indeed, the second half *Eerkroon* is representative of a colonial discourse that represents the Cape as earthly paradise, inhabited by a positively primitivist indigenous people. The first half, *Godswysheid*, however, is a noetic treatise for which De Marre explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to Vondel. This paper analyses ways in which *Godswysheid* is able to draw on Vondel's great treatise almost a century after its publication. It becomes apparent how De Marre engages Vondel's contemporaries Spinoza and Descartes in arguing his case for understanding the world as a Deist theatre. This he exemplifies through the single most mapped place on earth in the 17th Dutch Republic, the Cape, amidst an 18th Enlightenment debate with the emerging natural sciences for the origin of the world. While Dutch literary history has tended to foreground the Aristotelian literary triptych of drama, epic, and lyric, decidedly less attention has been paid to particular genres that have not flourished in the Netherlands as they did elsewhere in Europe, such as Vondel and De Marre's didactic poetry – let alone those centred around non-European realms. De Marre stages Vondel around the single most paradisaical place in the European imagination of God's order on Earth – the Cape – to resolve a European crisis of knowing.

Panel 4: Making Publics: History, Power and Authority

Esther van Raamsdonck (University of Utrecht), 'Divine and political authority in Vondel's *Koning David in Ballingschap* and *Koning David Hersteld*'

The legitimisation and limitation of authority is a recurring concern in Vondel's works, though a coherent picture between works remains elusive. This paper discusses the comparatively understudied last two David plays in relation to the divine right of kings, and argues that while Vondel appears to present a kingship that is divinely granted and endorsed, the king is not infallible or above the law. These biblical plays are read here as retellings of Bible stories that were doubtlessly recognisably relevant for their contemporary context, but not reducible to commentary on it. The forms of authority that play out are particular and sacred, rather than disguised arguments for a defined ideology.

Marrigje Paijmans (University of Amsterdam), 'Vondel's "Conversion Play" *Peter and Paul* (1641)'

Joost van den Vondel's tragedy *Peter and Paul* (*Peter en Pauwels*, 1641), about the martyrdom of the two apostles, was received by contemporaries as a defense of Vondel's decision to become a member of the Catholic Church. Indeed, the play represents the Catholic Church as the ecumenical mother institution headed by the Pope as infallible arbiter. Peter's martyrdom forms the 'rock' on which the church is built and which will withstand any fissure – even the Reformation. However, a different reading is possible. This paper wagers a polyphonic analysis of Peter and Paul already evident in Vondel's attempt to make the Biblical narrative conform to the exigencies of the genre of classical tragedy. For, even if one were to argue that Peter and Paul are 'imperfect heroes,' their deaths can certainly not be considered the tragic outcome of a sudden reversal of fortune; they constitute rather a triumph achieved through persevering faith. This paper argues that Vondel's search for a tragic motive led him to question the pure principles of the apostles and to portray the institution of martyrdom as a perversion of the human drive for self-preservation. This polyphonic gesture enabled Vondel to encompass the Classical and the Christian, but also to tend to those Protestant voices in Vondel's direct environment, and his own past, which makes it difficult to read *Peter and Paul* as a conversion play.

James Parente (University of Minnesota), 'Refashioning the Middle Ages in the Dramas of Theodoor Rodenburgh'

There was an efflorescence of historical writing during the early 17th century in the new Dutch Republic as humanist scholars, poets and dramatists sought to establish the origins of their polity in the antique past. Representations of the revolt of the Batavi against imperial Rome, for example, served as an exemplum of the virtue and courage of the Dutch against a rapacious empire that anticipated the current military campaign against Spain. The Dutch Middle Ages, especially in the province of Holland, were equally celebrated as a precursor of events during the Eighty Years War. The civil war between the Hooks and the Cods and the 15th-century conflicts between Burgundy, Habsburg and the provinces of Brabant, Flanders and Holland were also invoked as key events that shaped 17th Dutch identity. My paper will explore the ways in which the dramas of Theodoor Rodenburgh (c.1578-1644) contributed to, and deviated from, such patriotic myth-making activities on the stage. Rodenburgh's plays, especially his later dramas on Dutch medieval topics, have generally been dismissed as forgettable imitations of foreign models or as unsophisticated representations of the past. In my presentation I will reassess Rodenburgh's approach to contemporary historical writing in both prose and drama and then demonstrate the ways in which his historical plays, especially those on the Hooks and the Cods and on Jacoba of Bavaria, occupy a unique place in the appropriation and popularization of the past.

Panel 5:

Thomas Pritchard, University of Edinburgh, ‘“De storm drijft over, en d’ontstelde lucht bedaert”:
The Presence of the Little Ice Age in Vondel's 1667 *Zungchin*’

Abstract TBC

Freya Sierhuis, University of York, ‘Animal Ethics in Vondel’s Noah (1667)’

Abstract TBC