



# Compassion and the Creation of an Affective Community in the Theatre

Vondel's *Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty* (1646)

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Joost van den Vondel's tragedy *Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty* (1646), written after the playwright's conversion to Catholicism, has been read as a provocative glorification of a Catholic martyr. Kristine Steenbergh argues that the play's emotional poetics aim at the creation of an affective community of Protestants and Catholics in the theatre. Through the contagious bodily experience of fear and compassion with the Queen of Scots, Vondel intended to school the audience's emotions and foster religious tolerance in the context of the peace negotiations that would eventually lead to the end of the Eighty Years' War.

*Compassie en de vorming van een affectieve gemeenschap in het theater. Vondels Maria Stuart of gemartelde majesteit (1646)*

Vondel's tragedie *Maria Stuart of gemartelde majesteit* (1646) wordt vaak gelezen als een provocatieve verheerlijking van een katholieke martelares. Kristine Steenbergh laat zien dat de emotionele poëtica van het stuk erop gericht was om binnen de schouwburg een affectieve gemeenschap van protestanten en katholieken te vormen. Door de lichamelijke werking van angst en compassie wilde Vondel de emoties van het publiek trainen om op die manier religieuze tolerantie te bevorderen in de context van de vredesbesprekingen die uiteindelijk zouden leiden tot het einde van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog.

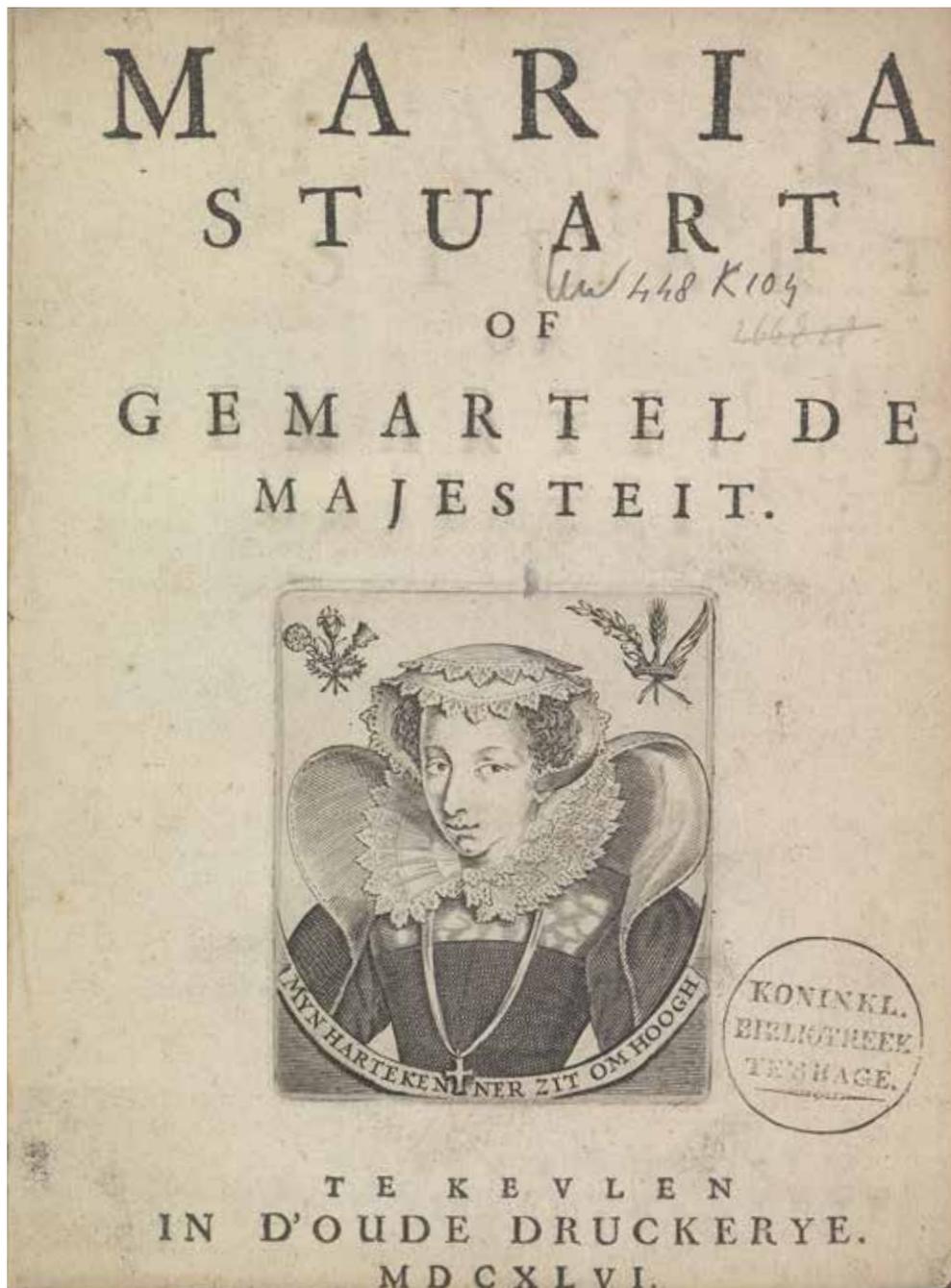
After Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in February 1587, a little dog was found hiding under her clothes.<sup>1</sup> It had to be forcefully pulled out of its hiding place and was so reluctant to leave its dead mistress that it lay down between her severed head and shoulders. Covered in her blood, it was carried away and washed. The care with which all souvenirs of Mary's final moments were removed from the scene signals the size of the problem that her contested claim to the English crown posed to the Protestant English Queen Elizabeth I. When Mary sought refuge in England after a Scottish uprising nineteen years earlier, Elizabeth kept her under strong guard, fearing a Catholic plot to put the Queen of Scots on the English throne. Members of Parliament urged Elizabeth to eliminate her cousin because of this threat, but she refrained from taking action for a long time: Mary, after all, was her cousin and a monarch. After nineteen years in custody and several plots to free her, Mary was finally condemned for treason and beheaded after the discovery of the Babington plot. Her personal belongings were cleaned or thrown on a fire to prevent a cult of martyrdom.<sup>2</sup> From the moment of her death the importance of controlling reports and interpretations of the execution was clear. Nevertheless, the final moments of the life of Mary Stuart were retold in myriad ways in the immediate aftermath of her death as well as in later years, in the British Isles as well as in the rest of Europe. Especially in times of political and religious conflict, writers turned to the tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots to comment on current events, to shape an emotional response and to move their audiences to action.<sup>3</sup>

In 1646, the Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) published his *Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty*, a tragedy that focuses on the final day of Mary Stuart's life. In the dedication, Vondel can immediately be seen to undermine the English executioners' attempts to wash away the royal blood. He writes that he had always wanted to bring Mary Stuart to the Dutch stage because he 'thought it too unfair if the Dutch were in this matter not at least equal to other nations, whose theatres have already shown the purple

1 The research for this article is a spin-off from my NWO VENI project on the role of theatrical passions in the early modern English public sphere. I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the editors and guest editors of *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* for their constructive comments on an earlier version of this text. Helmer Helmers, Inger Leemans and Johan Koppenol kindly helped me with queries on the Dutch politico-religious context of Vondel's play. Any errors in the text are of course mine.

2 Report by Robert Wyngfield to Lord Burghley on 11 February 1587, quoted in John D. Staines, *The Tragic Histories of Mary Queen of Scots, 1560-1690* (Farnham 2009) 93-94.

3 On the emotional politics of early modern tragedies of Mary Stuart, see Staines, *Tragic Histories*.



▲  
Title page of Vondel's *Mary Stuart, or Martyred Majesty* (1646).  
National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague.

of Stuart's blood'.<sup>4</sup> *Mary Stuart* is a provocative play: the title's martyrification of Mary Stuart alone would have been quite controversial, and the play also engages with many other politically sensitive issues. Vondel therefore had the tragedy printed anonymously, but was quickly recognised as its author when his publisher decided to include two more texts known to be by Vondel in the final pages of the first edition – a complaint about the civil wars in England and an epitaph on Mary Stuart. We may glean an impression of the emotions raised by the play text from a report by Vondel's contemporary biographer, Geerard Brandt. He wrote:

The leading character, Mary Stuart, was here depicted as wholly innocent and unblemished. [...] Also, Elizabeth, Queen of England, was portrayed with foul paint as a stiffener of heresy, who drank Mary's blood, and like Herodias, while she pretended to grieve, cooled her temper. Some people were offended by this, so that a few of them kept visiting the Bailiff and Aldermen, and made the case look so heavy that the Poet was finally brought before court and fined one hundred and eighty guilders. This appeared strange to many, knowing what freedom of writing was allowed during this time, and that Poets were traditionally allowed to do more than others.<sup>5</sup>

Apparently, the subject matter was considered so controversial that the traditional freedom allowed to poets was breached on this occasion, due to pressure from the city officials. Vondel was fined 180 guilders, a fine paid by his publisher because the printed text sold well – five editions appeared in 1646-

4 Joost van den Vondel, *Mary Stuart, or Tortured Majesty*, trans. Kristiaan P. Aercke (Ottawa [1646] 1996) 40. I translate the title as 'Martyred Majesty,' since Vondel places his tragedy in a tradition of text that presents the queen as a martyr.

5 My translation; the Dutch reads: 'De lydende personaadje, Maria Stuart, zagh men hier afgebeeldt als t'eenemaal onnoozel, en zonder vlek. [...] Ook werdt 'er Elizabeth, Koningin van Engelandt, met vuile verwen afgemaalt, als een styfster van 't ketterdom, die Mariaas bloedt dronk, en als een Herodias, al hieldt ze zich bedroeft, haaren moedt koelde. Dit naamen

zommigen euvel op, zoodat eenigen den Schout en Scheepenen zoo lang aanliepen, en de zaak zoo zwaar voorstelden, dat men eindelyk den Dichter voor 't recht betrok, en verwees in de boete van hondert en tachtig guldens. 'T welk veelen vremdt voortquam; weetende wat vryheit van schryven te dezer tydt wierdt gedoocht, en dat men den Poëten van oudts noch meer toeliet dan anderen'. Geeraardt Brandt, *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel*, P. Leendertz Jr. (ed.) (The Hague 1932) 42, as quoted in W.A.P. Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*. Vol. I: *Het Pascha - Leeuwendalers* (Zwolle 1956) 414.

1647 alone. That the play was widely read is also apparent from the variety of poems and plays written in reaction to it by various Protestant authors.<sup>6</sup>

Critics are divided over the effect the play was intended to have in its contemporary context. Since Vondel wrote *Mary Stuart* after his conversion to Catholicism it has been argued that his primary purpose with the play was the glorification of Mary Stuart as a saint and martyr, while denouncing Protestant ideology and politics.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Vondel was known to foster a warm interest in the irenic views of Hugo Grotius [Hugo de Groot] (1583-1645) and his controversial tragedy has been viewed as an attempt to bring together Catholics and Protestants under the aegis of an idealised vision of an irenic, universal Roman Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> In a recent contribution to this discussion, Helmer Helmers places the play in a broader discursive sphere that includes the Netherlands, England and Scotland. Viewed from this perspective, the play can be seen as a warning against the threat of strict Calvinism, both in England and the Netherlands: ‘Vondel’s Britain could both be a foreign scene causing horror of foreign actions, or a mirror in which the Dutch might see themselves’.<sup>9</sup>

I take a fresh look at the question of the play’s intended effect on its audience from the perspective of the relation between the play’s emotional poetics and the politico-religious context of the seventeenth-century. I read the text of the play as not only representing emotions in its dramatic narrative, but also as evoking emotions in the audience, and shaping their emotion scripts. A number of recent studies of the role of the passions in early modern English theatre stress the political role of the emotional effect of dramatic texts: the affects moved by a tragedy could stir an audience to seek revenge, to oppose a

6 For an overview of written reactions to the play, see Jan Bloemendal, ‘Bibliography of Vondel’s Dramas’, in: Jan Bloemendal and Frans-Willem Korsten (eds.), *Joost van den Vondel: Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age (1587-1679)* (Leiden, Boston 2012) 570. See also Karel Porteman and Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1560-1700* (Amsterdam 2009) 386.

7 Vondel, *Mary Stuart*, 14.

8 James A. Parente and Jan Bloemendal, ‘The Humanist Tradition – *Maria Stuart*’, in: Bloemendal and Korsten (eds.), *Vondel*, 343. Freya Sierhuis has read the poetics of Vondel’s Joseph plays in the context of his striving for religious peace in ‘Controversy and Reconciliation: Grotius, Vondel and the Debate on Religious Peace in the Dutch Republic’, in: Isabel Karreman, Cornel Zwierlein and Inga Mai Groote (eds.), *Forgetting Faith?: Negotiating Confessional Conflict in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin, Boston 2012) 139-162.

9 Helmer Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere (1639-1660)* (unpublished PhD dissertation; Leiden University 2011) 102. A monograph based on this thesis is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press.

tyrant, or it could temper existing passions in the public sphere.<sup>10</sup> For Vondel too, the emotions generated by the performance of a tragedy had a bodily effect on the audience in the theatre, an effect that could impact on the spectators' emotional economy and affect their behaviour in the public sphere.<sup>11</sup>

The politico-religious context that Vondel sought to affect with his tragedy on Mary Stuart was quite volatile. In 1646 peace negotiations that would lead to the end of the Eighty Years' War in 1648 had just started in Münster. In the spring of 1646, the parties gathered had almost reached an agreement. One of the issues that obstructed this first attempt at peace was that of religious tolerance. The fault line ran between strict Calvinists on the one hand, and Remonstrants and Catholics on the other. Those who preferred a more tolerant settlement, such as the regents of Amsterdam, were characterised by strict Calvinists as 'Arminians' or 'crypto-Catholics'.<sup>12</sup> Vondel's sympathies lay firmly on the side of tolerance. He longed for certainty and stability in matters pertaining to faith, had a strong dislike of enforced religious uniformity and religious persecution and vigorously opposed the Reformed take on double predestination. Extremely interested in Hugo Grotius's irenic project to reunify the Christian churches, he might have converted to Catholicism driven by a desire to reach consensus about a core of essential beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Published in the winter of 1646, *Mary Stuart* can be seen to react to the developments in the peace negotiations in its depiction of English Puritans and Dutch Contra-Remonstrants as a threat to stability

10 See, for example, Tanya Pollard on Hecuba as a powerful female figure whose grief induces anger toward rulers' wrongs in 'What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?', *Renaissance Quarterly* 65:4 (2012) 1060-1093; Katherine Rowe on the ways in which Shakespearean tragedy seeks to convert and redirect passions in virtuous and politically effectual ways in 'Minds in Company: Shakespearean Tragic Emotions', in: Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (eds.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Vol. I: The Tragedies* (Oxford 2003) 47-72; Staines, *Tragic Histories*; Doris Kolesch, *Theater der Emotionen. Aesthetik und Politik zur Zeit Ludwigs XIV* (Frankfurt 2006); and two key collections on the subject: Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd-Wilson (eds.), *Reading the Early Modern Passions*

(Philadelphia 2004); Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard (eds.), *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge 2013).

11 Although it was never performed during his lifetime, Vondel in his dedication of the play to Mary Stuart's Catholic great-grandson envisages the play in performance on the Dutch stage. I will follow his lead in reading the text primarily as a play script intended for performance in the theatre.

12 Laura Manzano Baena, 'Negotiating Sovereignty: The Peace Treaty of Münster, 1648', *History of Political Thought* 28:4 (2007) 617-641, 629.

13 This overview is based on Judith Pollmann, 'Vondel's Religion', in: Bloemendal and Korsten (eds.), *Vondel*, 85-100.

and peace.<sup>14</sup> Through the experience of fear and compassion in the theatre, audience members of various denominations would feel acutely the dangers of what Vondel viewed as their common enemy, the cruelty and aggression of strict (Puritan and Contra-Remonstrant) Calvinism. At the same time, their shared experience of compassion with the fate of Mary Stuart would bring together more moderate Protestants and Catholics in a temporary emotional community.<sup>15</sup> In Aristotelian poetics Vondel found an emotional technique to achieve such consensus between different religious denominations in the affective space of the theatre.

### Aristotelian poetics: passions in the public sphere

The poetics of Vondel's tragedy work towards a release of emotions in order to achieve a balanced economy of the passions. In his seminal work on the emotions in seventeenth-century Dutch drama, Jan Konst describes how after his earlier Senecan works Vondel begins to base his plays on the Aristotelian model in 1640.<sup>16</sup> Influenced by the work on Aristotle's poetics of Daniël Heinsius and his friend Gerardus Vossius, Vondel began to write plays in which the plot works towards an extreme emotional experience of fear and compassion, which is then released through *catharsis*. Whereas his earlier Senecan plays were aimed at conveying ideas to the audience, his Aristotelian plays are geared towards effecting a change of heart in the audience by means of the play's emotional poetics. The actions performed on stage had a linguistic and bodily effect on the audience, penetrating their bodies and triggering a material process that changes their emotions. As Bettina Noak describes it:

An interplay of words and actions developed in the theatre, and those watching were touched by it. The process of conveying knowledge became a sensory affair and its recipients were given something that changed them more profoundly than any preacher's rhetoric.<sup>17</sup>

14 For the date of the first edition, see J.F.M. Sterck et al. (eds.), *De werken van Vondel*. Vol. V: 1645-1656 (Amsterdam 1931) 934. On Vondel and the Peace of Münster, see also Henk Duits, 'Vondel en de Vrede van Münster: ambivalente gevoelens', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 13 (1997) 183-190.

15 The term 'emotional community' was coined by the medieval historian Barbara Rosenwein, who views it as a group 'tied together by fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression'. A theatre

audience is an ephemeral community, but Vondel thought it possible to shape their emotions in the theatre. See Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, London 2007) 24.

16 Jan Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid en vruchteloze weelachten. De hartstochten in de Nederlandse tragedie van de zeventiende eeuw* (Assen, Maastricht 1993) 194.

17 Bettina Noak, 'Vondel as a Dramatist: The Representation of Language and Body', in: Bloemendal and Korsten, *Vondel*, 120.

The Aristotelian concept of catharsis is often interpreted as a purging of the emotions, but in the Dutch context it refers rather to a tempering of passions. Following Heinsius' description of the theatre as the 'school of our emotions' which 'regulate[s] and again tranquillise[s] our emotions', Vondel aims to reduce the emotions of fear and compassion to acceptable proportions, to manner them.<sup>18</sup> Audiences are trained to experience the disasters of life with more emotional balance through regular attendance of Aristotelian plays.<sup>19</sup> It was with this goal of leading his audience to mildness and equanimity that Vondel wanted to resurrect Mary Queen of Scots on the Amsterdam stage. As he announces in the final line of the dedication, he lets Mary appear once more on the stage 'to inspire the audience with fear, and, at the same time, to wrench tears of compassion from their eyes'.<sup>20</sup> Vondel's term *medoogen* is best translated into modern English as 'compassion' rather than 'pity', since it implies a sense of shared suffering. For Vondel, this emotional effect was not restricted to the individual, but had a function in the public sphere of the commonweal. The purpose of playing, as he put it, is to

[...] moderate and temper both these passions in the feelings of the people, to purge members of the audience of shortcomings, and to teach them to endure the disasters of the world more mildly and equably.<sup>21</sup>

### Fear of Puritan aggression

Although the figure of Mary Stuart was a controversial choice of protagonist, Vondel plays on the workings of fear and compassion to invite his audience to participate in a shared emotional experience. In Heinsius' rendition of Aristotelian poetics the audience experiences the emotion of fear mostly in reference to their own situation.<sup>22</sup> Vondel therefore connects the tragedy of

18 Edward George Baumgartner, *A Translation into English of the De Tragoediae Constitutione of Daniel Heinsius* (unpublished BA thesis; University of Detroit 1944) 17-18.

19 Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 193-202.

20 Vondel, *Mary Stuart*, 41; the Dutch reads: 'terwijl ick het gewijde tooneel openzet, daer uwe / Grootmoeder weder te voorschijn komende, den aenschouweren te gelijk / schrick aenjaeght, en tranen van medoogen ten oogten uitperst', Joost van den Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, in: Sterck et al. (eds.), *De werken van Vondel*, 162-241, lines (ll.) 66-68.

21 Vondel, *Jeptha*, in: Sterck et al. (eds.), *Werken van Vondel*, 777. In Dutch: 'medoogen en schrick uit te wercken op dat het treurspel zijn einde en ooghermerck moght treffen, het welck is deze beide hartstoghten in het gemoedt der menschen maetigen, en manieren, d'aenschouwers van gebreken zuiveren, en leeren de rampen der weerelt zachtzinniger en gelijkmoediger verduuren'.

22 Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 189.

Mary to a range of tragic stories from biblical, English and Dutch (recent) history to allow Catholic as well as moderate Protestants to experience fear and compassion. Conceiving of the past as a hall of mirrors, Vondel sees cyclical repetitions of events in the past, present and future. This view of history as prefigurative is rooted in Vondel's belief in an unchanging politico-religious order in which human history is a reflection, a repetition of sacred history.<sup>23</sup> Therefore 'events do not occur in isolation but in a sequence of narratives that rewrite one another, pregnant commentaries on older texts that in turn give birth to new tragedies'.<sup>24</sup> A re-telling of an historical event can thus serve as a warning in a present context, especially if the narrative manages to elicit emotions of fear in the audience. This function of historical narratives is highlighted by Mary's views on the uses of the past in the present. When the Chorus tells Mary that it is best to 'Forsake what's past. / From good things, from sad things, nothing at all remains. / The present bodes enough to keep us occupied'<sup>25</sup>, Mary's answer provides insight into the play's reasons for making her bleed afresh on the Dutch stage. For Mary the emotions elicited by remembrance of the past are essential for deciding our actions in the present. She counters the Chorus's advice to let the past rest with an emotional re-telling of a past event: she tells the Chorus that she will always weep when she remembers the day when Bishop Hamilton, with tears in his eyes, showed her Scottish chronicles that foretold the treachery of the English she was later to experience.

In *Mary Stuart*, the two queens Mary and Elizabeth are paralleled to their biblical namesakes, and Mary is set in parallel to Christ several times in the play.<sup>26</sup> Apart from biblical figures, she is also likened to monarchs in English history. Vondel saw Mary's tragedy as an echo of the fate of Catherine of Aragon, who was beheaded by Henry VIII – Elizabeth's father – and as a foreboding of the parliamentary uprising against her grandson Charles I in the Civil War (who would be beheaded in 1649).<sup>27</sup> A fear of Mary's Puritan executioners (as they are portrayed in the play) thus resonates with a fear of the dangers that contemporary strict Calvinism presents to the audience in the theatre.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the play does not restrict itself to parallels from

23 On this prefigurative use of history, see Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 99-104.

24 Staines, *Tragic Histories*, 194-195.

25 Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 315-318. 'Wat denckt ghy aen 't voorleden! / 'T zy weelde, 't zy verdriet, dat is voorby gegleden: / Het tegenwoordigh geeft ons zwaarigheits genoegh'.

26 For example in lines 253-264, 1139-1143, and 1425-1427. For similarities between Mary and Christ

in the play, see also W.A.P. Smit, *Van Pascha*, 439 and Ritchie Robertson, 'From Martyr to Vampire: The Figure of Mary Stuart in Drama from Vondel to Swinburne', in: Jeffrey L. High, Nicholas Martin and Norbert Oellers (eds.), *Who Is This Schiller Now: Essays on His Reception and Significance* (New York 2011) 322.

27 Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1852.

28 This is also Helmers' argument in *Royalist Republic*, 102-104.

the English context, but also compares Mary to Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), the political leader of the Remonstrants who was involved in a conflict between two parties within the Calvinist church, the official church of the Dutch Republic. The dissension arose out of a schism within the Dutch Reformed Church over the doctrine of predestination and developed into a political conflict when Maurice of Orange chose the side of the Counter-Remonstrants. All Remonstrant theologians were expelled from the public church and Van Oldenbarnevelt was executed. The play even goes so far as to hint at the possibility of a threat posed by strict Calvinists to the Dutch Stadtholder, Frederick Henry. In a passage that describes the Puritan threat to Divine Right Vondel refers to the Earl of Strafford as a Stadtholder.<sup>29</sup> Strafford was a prominent Royalist figure in the period leading up to the Civil War. He was condemned by Parliament and executed in 1641. By calling him a Stadtholder, Vondel connects him to the political leader of the United Provinces.<sup>30</sup> Unlike his brother Maurice, Stadtholder Frederick Henry didn't support the Contra-Remonstrants in the political and religious conflicts in the Republic. Rather he was considered to sympathise with the Remonstrants and was known as a proponent of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience. By aligning Mary Stuart with moderate Protestants from the past and the present, the play invites all members of the audience to engage affectively with the plot and suggests that Catholics as well as Protestants had reason to fear strict Calvinism.

### Shared compassion in the theatre

In Aristotelian poetics, catharsis is achieved through the workings of pity and fear. Even if Contra-Remonstrants as a rule did not attend public theatres, it may still seem unlikely for more moderate Protestants to experience compassion with a character presented as a Catholic martyr. Vondel counted on the uncontrollable operations of affect in the theatre.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the view of emotions shaped in the Romantic period, the experience of the passions in the Early Modern Period is not an individual, inward process. In the humoural model, passions circulate both within and between bodies. In the theatre, the

29 The term used in the play is 'Stedeholder', Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1149.

30 See also Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 102.

31 Since Dutch Contra-Remonstrants did not commonly attend public theatres they were in principle excluded from the community shaped by the play's emotional poetics. See Karel Porteman and Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, *Een*

*nieuw vaderland voor de muzen. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1560-1700* (Amsterdam 2008) 377. On anti-theatricality among Dutch Protestants, see J. Wille, 'De gereformeerden en het toneel omstreeks 1620', in: idem, *Literair-historische opstellen* (Zwolle 1963) 59-142, especially 99-142.

emotion of the actor was carried across to the bodies of the spectators in a quite material view of the operations of affect, based on agreement of the spirits and humours of actor and audience. As Katherine Rowe describes:

These sympathies occurred between bodies as well as within them. Thus a playgoing audience that recognized the topos of ‘weeping queens’ would have understood conformation of their own humors as the logical extension of the emotion script. The active spirits in a player’s body were understood to move an auditor’s mind by a kind of classical energeia, passing through the eyes and ears to excite similar physical motions.<sup>32</sup>

The effect of acted emotions on an audience could work in such a way as to change their manner of thinking and perceiving the world through this physical process of the movement of spirits and humours. In his preface to *Lucifer* (1654), Vondel describes how intelligent members of the audience who cannot be persuaded by an argument in a rational way sometimes experience a change of heart in the theatre:

It sometimes happens that the exceptionally gifted, who can neither be pressed nor swayed by the usual means are touched by quirks and majestic theatricality, and are drawn in without realising it.<sup>33</sup>

Heinsius highlights the involuntary aspect of theatre’s moving scenes when he describes how ‘in the story of Joseph, the recognition stirs my pity so deeply that I have wept despite myself’.<sup>34</sup> Following Aristotle, he thinks that if the poet is able to assume a character’s dispositions and feelings, ‘the spectators will recognize themselves in the poet’s characters, whether they be luxury lovers, lustful or wrathful; old men, lads in their prime; women or slaves’.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Protestant spectators could even be swayed to feel with a Catholic queen, for Vondel views the operations of theatrical affect as an instrument to make the audience change their minds without their being aware that they are being persuaded. The process bypasses the rational part of the mind – it works on the emotions through the body. He uses the image of a musical instrument to explain the process:

32 Rowe, ‘Company of Minds’, 58.

33 Translation of: Vondel, *Lucifer* in: Sterck et al. (eds.), *Werken van Vondel*. Vol. V, 613: ‘ja het gebeurt by wylen dat overvliegende vernuften, by geene gemeine middelen te buigen, noch

te verzetten, door spitsvondigheden en hooghdravenden tooneelstyl geraeckt, en, buiten hun eigen vermoeden, getrocken worden’.

34 Baumgartner, ‘Translation’, 51.

35 *Ibid.*, 81.

Just as a noble lute string produces a sound and answers when its equal of the same nature and character and with the same tone, although stretched on a different lute, is plucked by a skilful hand, which, as it plays, can drive the evil temper out of a possessed and unrelenting Saul.<sup>36</sup>

The resonance of the audience's humours and spirits with the affective operations of the play can purge them of their *tuimelgeest*, a word referring to madness as well as a desire for rebellion.

This material, emotional effect of a performance on the audience was strengthened by the presence of the crowd. In English texts for example, performed emotion is said to be so forceful in the theatre because it works on the audience as a group. Francis Bacon for example, wrote that

[...] many wise men and great philosophers have thought [the action of the theatre] to the mind as the bow to the fiddle; and certain it is, though a great secret in nature, that the minds of men in company are more open to affections and impressions than when alone.<sup>37</sup>

For Bacon as for Vondel, the audience is like a musical instrument played by the performance of the actors on stage. The passions of the play work on the affect of the audience not as individuals, but as a group, an emotional community shaped by the space of the theatre.

Matthew Steggle has recently argued for a perspective on audience weeping that extends this emotional community even further than the walls of the theatre. He discusses an oft-quoted passage from *Pierce Penniless* (1592), in which Thomas Nashe describes the emotional effect of the performance of Shakespeare's history plays. The performance of an actor makes the audience imagine that they see the historical character Talbot alive before them, bleeding from his battle wounds:

How it would have joy'd brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeare in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the stage, and have his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who, in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.<sup>38</sup>

36 Translation of: Vondel, *Lucifer*, *Werken van Vondel*. Vol. V, 613: 'Gelyck een edele luitsnaer geluit geeft, en antwoord, zoo dra heur weërgade, van de zelve nature en aert, en op eenen gelycken toon, en andere luit gespannen, getokkelt wort van een geestige hant, die, al spelende, den tuimelgeest uit eenen bezeten en verstockten Saul dryven

kan'. Translation adapted from Noak, 'Vondel as a Dramatist', 122-123.

37 Bacon, *De Augmentis*, as quoted in Rowe, 'Minds in Company', 47.

38 Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless*, as quoted in Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot 2007) 86.

### Steggle writes that in this passage

[...] the tears act as a chain, making the spectators into a collective: a collective which does not merely include all the audience members present at one performance, all of whom are in tears, but all the audience members at a series of performances. Weeping is thus a communal act of remembrance connecting spectators both with the actor and through him with the historical original, Talbot.<sup>39</sup>

When Vondel writes that he brings Mary Stuart ‘to the Dutch stage’ because it seemed unfair to him that the Dutch should not, ‘like other people and tongues, purple their stages with her costly blood’, he evokes a similar image of shaping a community through the emotional effect of the revival of a historical person on the stage, with a similar emphasis on their bleeding afresh.<sup>40</sup> In Vondel’s case this community extends even beyond the audiences of the performances he envisages to encompass an entire people: ‘de Nederduitschen’ – the Dutch. Interestingly however, Vondel forms his emotional community of spectators not around the death of a patriotic war hero such as Talbot, but around the execution of a foreign Catholic monarch.

### Catharsis and emotional community

The emotional community that Vondel seeks to shape in the theatre is prefigured in the play itself. The scene in which Mary’s doctor describes the events of her execution models an audience response that brings together spectators of all denominations in their compassion with the queen. In an echo of Aristotelian poetics, the doctor describes the room as ‘amazed and sorrowful’.<sup>41</sup> The wonder and grief evoked by Mary’s execution unites the different groups in the audience. Not only Mary’s Catholic ladies-in-waiting wept in compassion with her fate, no one present at the execution could restrain their tears. The doctor says that when Mary turned her face to the crowd, all three hundred people present were ‘shaken by her suffering’.<sup>42</sup> Every single member of the crowd is so touched by the execution that they weep ‘from grief and heartache, which cut through many a heart more sharply than the axe’.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Protestants and Catholics are united in compassion when they watch this theatrical scene:

39 *Ibid.*

40 Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 3 and 40-42. Steggle notes a correspondence between stage bleeding and audience weeping: *Laughing*, 133.

41 Translation of: Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1482: ‘Verwondert en bedroeft’.

42 *Ibid.*, ll. 1575: ‘verlegen met heur lijden’.

43 *Ibid.*, ll. 1650-1651: ‘Terwijl een jeder weent van rouw en hartewee, / Dat scherper dan de bijl zoo menigh hart doorsnee’.

And then, tears began to flow from six hundred eyes:  
 Among that crowd who cursed and hated our Stuart,  
 There was hardly one so vicious that he did not weep.  
 They knelt, and both groups broke out in fervent prayer.<sup>44</sup>

The experience of fear and compassion leads to catharsis and the audience's emotions are released from their bodies through tears. Distinctions between religious groups are temporarily suspended as the text condenses them into six hundred tearful eyes. As Tanya Pollard describes, 'the cleansing associated with successful tragedy was overwhelmingly understood as involving a forceful purgation of the emotions, embodied in tears'.<sup>45</sup> When these emotions are released both groups launch into prayer and an impromptu community is shaped by the emotional experience. Vondel saw this purgative effect of Aristotelian catharsis as sympathetic to Catholic ideas of purgation and absolution, a connection not uncommon in early modern thought.<sup>46</sup>

The reconciliatory effect of Vondel's rendition of the execution is thrown into relief by a propagandistic Catholic version of the event created by Richard Verstegan (c. 1548-?1636), a Catholic Englishman with Dutch roots. Verstegan emigrated to Antwerp where he contributed to the Catholic martyr narratives printed on the mainland. Like Vondel, Verstegan viewed Calvinism as a threat to the established political order: to him, Calvinists 'mix gunpowder in their reformation' and were 'the perturbors of the peace of the whole world'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, for Verstegan, cruelty was the hallmark of Calvinism, both doctrinal cruelty in the sense of double predestination and its teaching that babies who died would go to hell, and the cruelty inflicted on Catholics in countries where they gained political power.<sup>48</sup> One of his most influential works is the *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum Nostri Temporis* (1587), a book that shows the cruelties of Protestant heretics, published shortly after Mary's execution. The book continued to be printed in the seventeenth century and was of considerable iconographic importance.<sup>49</sup> The final and climactic

44 *Ibid.*, ll. 1597-1600: 'Men zagh hier op terstont zeshondert oogen schreien, / En onder al dien hoop, die Stuart vloect, en haet, / Is naulijcks een zoo boos, die niet zijn tranen laet. / Nu knielenze, en men stort gebeên van wederzijden'. I changed Aercke's translation of 'boos' with 'bad' to 'vicious'.

45 Tanya Pollard, 'Conceiving Tragedy', in: Craik and Pollard (eds.), *Shakespearean Sensations*, 88.

46 See Kristine Steenbergh, 'Gender Studies – Emotions in *Jeptha* (1659)', in: Bloemendal and Korsten (eds.), *Vondel*, 421-423. See also Thomas Rist, 'Catharsis as "Purgation" in Shakespearean Drama', in: Craik and Pollard (eds.), *Shakespearean Sensations*, 153.

47 Verstegan as quoted in Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Leuven 2004) 198.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*, 42.

Persecutiones aduersus Catholicos à Prote-  
stantibus Calvinistis excitæ in Anglia.



*Post varias clades miserorum, & cadis acervos  
Insontum, comes exornat spectacula mater  
Supplicio, & regum soror & fidiſſima coniux.  
Illa Caledonijs diademate claruit oris,  
Sed micat in cælo fulgentior, inde corona  
Sanguinis, infandæq; manet vindicta securis.*

L 3

NOMI-

▲  
The beheading of Mary Queen of Scots.  
Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum Crudelitatum  
Haereticorum Nostri Temporis* (Antwerp 1587).  
Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

engraving in this work represents Mary's beheading. In Verstegan's portrayal, the Protestant Englishmen watching the execution are depicted as cool, calculating men of politics, incapable of responding with passion to a scene of suffering.<sup>50</sup>

Verstegan accompanies his engraving with a call to the Catholic princes of Europe to avenge what he considers a Calvinist regicide.<sup>51</sup> Other renditions of Mary's tragedy similarly aimed to induce a desire for revenge.<sup>52</sup> Blackwood's *Martyre de la Royne d'Escosse* (1587) for example, was intended to have such an effect on its readers: 'the horror of the scaffold, the pity and the fear Blackwood's readers feel for it and the tears they shed in response, all urge on the passion of revenge'.<sup>53</sup> In Vondel's play, the idea that compassion with Mary's fate could incite a desire for revenge is not entirely absent. Members of Mary's entourage do indeed call for vengeance, but these calls for revenge are suppressed by Mary, or simply do not lead to vindictive action. When the Chorus of ladies-in-waiting calls out 'Oh God, you suffer this? What pain! What woe! Revenge!'<sup>54</sup> Mary bids them peace and urges them leave vengeance to God. And when Mary's priest threatens that her ghost will haunt Elizabeth in her sleep, reeling and whirling around the halls like a Fury, this prediction does not come true as it would have in a Senecan tragedy.<sup>55</sup> Rather, Mary tells the English that 'Esther's sweet distinction, with her friendly pleas, / Inspired her more by far than Judith's bloody sword'.<sup>56</sup>

### Cool, calm and collected?

Vondel's adherence to Aristotelian poetics also appears from the portrayal of emotional styles within the play. If this special issue of the *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* on the Dutch and their emotions asks whether the Dutch were 'cool, calm, and collected', then in the view of this Golden Age playwright a stoic control of the emotions is characteristic only of the Contra-Remonstrant

50 See also Staines, *Tragic Histories*, 186.

51 Arblaster, *Antwerp*, 41.

52 Staines, *Tragic Histories*, 91.

53 *Ibid.*, 98. Similarly, Helmer Helmers writes that 'the image of the passive martyr had the potential to arouse the passions of the viewer or reader, of "imprinting" a physical effect in them, which easily translated into political action'. Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 177.

54 Translation of: Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 749: 'O Godt, verdraeght ghy dit? O wee! O wraeck! O smert!'

55 *Ibid.*, ll. 1667-1671: 'Zy zal by naere nacht verbaest, met kreet op kreet / Verschricken hofgezin en hof en kamenieren, / En, als een Razerny, door zael en kamer zwieren; / Tot dat haer struick verdorre, en elck Maries zoon, / Geheel Britanje door, geluck wensche op den troon'.

56 *Ibid.*, ll. 594-598: 'En diende zich veel eer van Hesters zoeten aert, / En lieflijck smeecken, dan van Judiths bloedigh zwaert'.

Dutch. Vondel associates a cool temper with a forced and deceitful control of the passions, which in turn he views as characteristic of strict Calvinism. I have argued elsewhere that in his *Jeptha* (1659), a play that comments on the Contra-Remonstrant adherence to the idea of double predestination, Vondel associates a stoic control of the emotions with a strict Calvinist outlook on the relation between humans and God. Jeptha's suppression of his emotions in keeping with his vow to God is represented as a wrong choice. Instead, the play advocates a controlled release of emotions in a safe environment resembling a theatre. This release of the passions leads to emotional balance and opens the possibility of divine absolution. Vondel's use of Aristotelian poetics is thus intricately interwoven with Catholic notions of the physical effect of the word and concepts of purgation and absolution.<sup>57</sup>

In *Mary Stuart*, Vondel similarly contrasts Calvinist Stoicism with a Catholic release of the emotions. In his representation of Mary he deviates from contemporary representations of the monarch's emotional style across Europe. Protestant renditions of Mary Stuart tend to depict her as a woman of unbridled passion who cannot fulfil the demands of a *rex stoicus*. Catholic tragedies, on the other hand, focus on the final scenes of Mary's life, portraying her as a constant martyr and evoking tragic pathos with her fate.<sup>58</sup> Vondel's play does not adhere to these patterns: Mary grieves over her own incarceration and impending death, and expresses compassion with the people who suffer with her. Parente and Bloemendal argue that Vondel rendered Mary Stuart as a rounded character with Christ-like as well as sinful aspects.<sup>59</sup> In their view, her expression of her emotions is one of these sinful aspects since Seneca advocates an absolute control of the passions, especially in a ruler. When they write that Mary is not represented as a true Jesuit martyr, 'but attests to the proud attitude of a dishonoured queen. [...] Indeed, she cannot keep her stoic calm', Parente and Bloemendal assume that Vondel still adhered to Stoic ideals concerning the expression of emotions even though at this time he was more interested in Aristotelian poetics.<sup>60</sup>

Mary's emotional development in the play follows an Aristotelian pattern of catharsis and moderation. Her doctor reports that Mary's enduring grief caused her body to develop a grave illness. A slow fever engendered a case of dropsy, and although she is now recovering from the disease, she is still swollen and pale. The doctor emphasises that the disease is caused by 'pressing

57 Steenbergh, 'Gender', 407-426.

58 Staines, *Tragic Histories*, 43 and 89. Parente and Bloemendal discuss an earlier humanist rendition which in its pro-Catholic version represents Mary as expressing an 'acquiescent, Stoic-Christian worldview': Parente and Bloemendal, 'Humanist Tradition', 350.

59 Parente and Bloemendal, 'Humanist Tradition', 357.

60 *Ibid.*, 355.

grief' and 'sorrows' strain'.<sup>61</sup> Her priest considers such an emotional reaction to her situation only human, and adds that women are particularly likely to express their emotions: their 'pent-up suffering cannot remain suppressed'.<sup>62</sup> When Mary Stuart makes her first appearance, in the second act of the play, the Chorus asks her to stop crying, or she might weep herself to illness again: 'Dear Mistress, leave off this mournful lamentation: / You'll weep yourself into the sick-bed or the grave. / 'T was not long ago that you collapsed from anguish'.<sup>63</sup> The doctor aids Mary's recovery with herbal treatments and when the English Earls enter with her death sentence, Mary acquiesces in her fate. She tells them that she knows Elizabeth needs to eliminate her to avoid further threats to the stability of the country and that she will submit to her wish.<sup>64</sup> Having expressed her grief, Mary is then able to consider her impending death with moderated emotions. At her final meal she is serene and resigned to her death. Such acceptance and resignation can only occur after first experiencing the emotions in all their intensity. As the Chorus of the ladies-in-waiting says after Mary's death: 'To weep and to lament / Relieves oppressive grief. With each tear the heart is lighter'.<sup>65</sup> Even after this acceptance of her fate however, Mary is not a stoic monarch. She worries about her ladies-in-waiting and often consoles them in their grief, with motherly words like 'now, hush, my children, hush', telling them that they will suffocate in tears if they persist in their laments.<sup>66</sup> In another echo of Christ she comforts her Steward Melville who cries as he takes her to her execution, only to break down herself with care for her subjects: 'I'm deeply moved: can I suppress, without a tear, / The pain I feel for my best subjects?'<sup>67</sup>

Mary's grief and compassion are contrasted to the vindictiveness and cold-heartedness of Elizabeth. Although Elizabeth I was Anglican, Vondel in *Mary Stuart* represents her as a Puritan to make his case against strict Calvinism in England as well as the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup> She is portrayed as 'eager for revenge', and the English in general are 'ashen-pale with spite's fatigue, / Ungluttet

61 Translation of: Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 220-222: 'Des kerckers eeuwigheit, en 't nypende verdriet, / Verdruckten de natuur, die al te noode aen 't wijcken, / Ten leste eens onder 't pack der rampen most bezwijcken'.

62 *Ibid.*, ll. 231-233: 'Het kan al d'ingekropte ellende niet verduwen'.

63 *Ibid.*, ll. 309-311: 'Mevrouw, ick bidde u, breeck dit treurigh steenen af: / Ghy steent u weder kranck, en voor den tijd in't graf. / Ghy storte korts van rouw en hartewee te bedde'.

64 *Ibid.*, ll. 505-507: 'Edoch behaeght het haer te zoenen dit geschil / Met storten van mijn bloet; ick stem in haren wil, En ga die schoone doot gemoeten met verlangen'.

65 *Ibid.*, ll. 1773-1775: 'Het schreien, het gezucht / Verlicht het knijpen van de smerte. / Het schreien zet den druck van 't harte'.

66 *Ibid.*, ll. 1316: 'Nu sus, mijn kinders, sus'.

67 *Ibid.*, ll. 1366-1367: 'Mijn moedt loopt over: kan ick, zonder traen te laten, / Verkroppen al 't verdriet'.

68 See Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 102.

with revenge'.<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth does not figure as a character in the play, and her absence enforces the sense of coldness and stoic calm that Mary ascribes to her. 'Alas! My sister's own heart changed to diamond, / Which neither pleas nor tears can melt'.<sup>70</sup> The Chorus views the English as barbarians and savages for their lack of kindness and compassion. Whereas Mary's ladies-in-waiting share in her grief, pity her and mourn for her death, Elizabeth's court is characterised by a lack of fellow-feeling. Elizabeth's earls, for example, listen to Melville's pleas 'about as much as does a rock to the roaring seas'.<sup>71</sup> Tellingly, the traditional image of stoic steadfastness is used here to describe a lack of compassion among the English Puritans. This contrast between feeling Catholics and more stoic Puritans also figures in the play's representation of practices of mourning and remembering.

### Affective ties to the dead in the theatre

With his desire to let Mary's blood flow on the Dutch stage, Vondel draws attention to the way the theatre wakes the dead to rehearse their tragedies for the living. The Reformation's abolition of Purgatory radically altered the role of the dead, since there was no longer any way in which people could make their deceased relatives' experience of the afterlife more comfortable. As Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall write

it would be difficult to overstate the importance, in terms of formal theology, liturgy, ecclesiastical structures and ritual practice of the abrogation of purgatory and the repudiation of any form of intercession for the dead.<sup>72</sup>

Several literary critics have explored the role of the theatre in shaping the affective relations to the dead after the Reformation. Stephen Greenblatt has argued that the theatre appropriated pre-Reformation rituals of interceding for the dead. He argues that the genre of revenge tragedy so popular in the decades after the abolition of Purgatory offered new ways of shaping the

69 Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 271: 'ELIZABETH, tot wraeck genegen' (see also l. 1037); ll. 1127-1228, 'Hoe hier de vyanden, geknaeght en bleeck van 't wroegen, / En onverzaet van wraeck'.

70 *Ibid.*, ll. 362-363: 'Maer och! haer eigen hart verkeert in diamant, / Vermorwt door de noch klaght'.

71 *Ibid.*, ll. 1104: 'Gelijck een harde rots naer 't ruischen van de zee'.

72 Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, 'Introduction', in: Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 2000) 10. See also Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke 2000).

duties of the living to their deceased relatives and friends.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Steven Mullaney writes that the Reformation damaged the affective ties that bound communities of the living to their ancestors, a historical trauma that is explored in the commercial theatres.<sup>74</sup> Vondel's *Mary Stuart* deals explicitly with different religious cultures of mourning and remembrance. The play suggests that the revival of the dead in the theatre, as well as the audience's emotional response to their suffering, aligns theatrical practice with Catholic rituals of relating to the dead. Indeed, Vondel feels that the communal space for affective remembrance offered by the theatre has the potential to create new connections between spectators.

English Puritans in the play are portrayed as denominationally incapable of maintaining an affective relation to the dead. When Mary's ladies-in-waiting and her Jesuit priest have come to mourn over her 'warm corpse,' as they put it, the English earls happen upon this scene of mourning.<sup>75</sup> Having just ordered all remaining property belonging to Mary, as well as the block and axe, cushion and scaffold, to be thrown on the fire, the earls foster forgetfulness rather than emotional remembrance and are unwilling to accommodate Catholic rituals of mourning.

EARLS

Now what's this? Who still weeps and moans about our ears?  
Your snivelling is now beside the point, you waste your breath,  
So cease that whining! Your Mistress's out of pain, and  
She's stone-deaf to your mewling. Her soul, long since sped away,  
Finds profit nor repose in Babel's requiem.

PRIEST

Lords, may I beg you to somewhat restrain your wrath?  
Recall that in this Faith we were conceived and born!  
It nourished us together with our mother's milk.  
These ladies, dead themselves with sorrow for their Queen,  
Discharge their hearts, they owe her such a proper wake.

73 Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton 2002).

74 Steven Mullaney, 'Affective Technologies: Toward an Emotional Logic of the Elizabethan Stage', in: Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan (eds.), *Environment and Embodiment* (Basingstoke 2007) 77.

75 Vondel, *Maria Stuart*, ll. 1461.

EARLS

She has paid her debt! Why do you insist on raving  
And troubling our peace? All this grieving comes too late.<sup>76</sup>

It is not only their political opposition to Mary that makes the earls unwilling to accept the women's practices of mourning. The discussion in this passage centres on a denominational difference in thinking about the relation between the living and the dead. The Puritan earls view the women's tears as useless, since Mary is dead and therefore deaf to their cries. They are convinced her soul will not profit from the prayers over her corpse. Mary's confessor defends the ladies-in-waiting, stressing that, like him, they were raised in the Catholic faith, which sets great store by waking for the dead. He stresses that this emotional practice allows the mourners to relieve their hearts of heavy passions, and it also confirms the bond between the living and the dead. Mary's Catholic entourage feel they owe it to their Queen's *zielrecht* – the deceased's right to the prayers of those who remain – to mourn her. The emotional style that allows for expression of the passions is associated with the feminine sphere in this passage in which the earls confront the ladies-in-waiting who mourn their Queen, and where the image of mother's milk describes the way they were imbued with the rituals of Catholicism.

The way in which Vondel's play brings Mary Stuart to life and invites the audience to feel a sympathetic connection to her resembles the portrayal of the affective ties with the dead prevalent in Mary's Catholic community. The play similarly revives the past to allow for the expression of grief and compassion and to bring the past to life in the present. Vondel thus intuits a connection between Catholic affective rituals and his own dramatic practice. In contrast, strict Calvinist views discouraged such emotional connections with the dead. Luther for example, viewed practices in which the living maintained a relation with the dead 'like a man taking advice from a block of wood' and encouraged believers to connect with God rather than with the dead.<sup>77</sup> In Reformed doctrine, 'survivors were encouraged to contemplate the deceased as exemplifications of virtue and achievement, rather than as persons with whom any kind of relationship could be maintained'.<sup>78</sup>

76 *Ibid.*, ll. 1820-1832, 'GRAVEN: Hoe nu, wie breeckt ons 't hoeft met huilen en gezucht? / Dit jancken is onnut, dit ydele gerucht: / Men staecke al dit gesteen: Mevrouw verlost van pijn / Is doof voor uw gekerm. Men schuive de gordijne, / En drijfze van het lijck. De ziel vooruitgetreên, / Bevint geen baet of troost by Babels lijckgebeên. BIECHTVADER: Ghy Heeren, matight toch en toomt wat uwen toren: / Wy zijn in dat geloof gewonnen

en geboren, / En droncken 't met de melk van moeders borsten in. / De Joffers, doot van rouw, om haere Koningin, / Ontlasten het gemoedt, en zijnze 't zielrecht schuldigh. GRAVEN: Zy heeft haer schult betaelt: wat raest ghy ongeduldigh / En steurt de rust van 't huis! Dit kermen komt te spa'.

77 Koslofsky, *Reformation*, 35.

78 Gordon and Marshall, 'Introduction', 10.

These denominative differences in relations to the community of the dead also appear from reactions to Vondel's tragedy. Contra-Remonstrant criticisms of the play reproduce the English Earls' response to the grief and rituals of remembrance carried out by Mary's Catholic ladies-in-waiting.<sup>79</sup> Specifically, two poems urge Vondel to leave the past behind. Lambert van den Bosch in his 'Spirit of Queen Elizabeth, raised from the grave by the magic verses of her slandering poet' (1647) accuses Vondel of defiling the sacred rights of the dead by disturbing Queen Elizabeth's ashes. Similarly, Goudina van Weert in a poem with the intriguingly Catholic title 'Purgatory for Joost van Vondelen' tells the playwright that he strays from the path of reason if he does not let royal bones rest in the grave.<sup>80</sup> A later poem written in defence of Vondel by his fellow playwright Jan Vos echoes the play's poetics in urging its readers to unite in tears of mourning. Vos compares the anger of the poets who attacked Vondel's *Mary Stuart* to the Puritan anger that caused Mary Stuart and Charles I's deaths. He reminds Vondel's attackers of the recent death of Stadtholder Frederick Henry and his efforts to achieve the Peace of Münster, and urges them rather to dip their pens in tears: 'Exchange your feather of gall / And plunge it into salty streams'.<sup>81</sup> Like Vondel, Vos here proposes a shared response of grief and mourning as an opportunity to resolve politico-religious conflict.

### Schooling everyday emotions

Historians agree that Dutch society was characterised by religious tolerance. They are less certain, however, about the way in which this ideal was achieved in everyday life: did believers of various religions and denominations live in their own self-contained communities, or did practices of exchange between the communities exist?<sup>82</sup> In the words of Po-Chia Hsia:

79 On reactions to the play, see also Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 102-104.

80 Lambert van den Bosch, 'Geeste vande Coninghin Elisabeth, uyt den Grave opgeweckt, door Tooverveersen van haren Laster-Dichter' (Amsterdam 1647); Goudina van Weert, 'Vagevier voor Joost van Vondelen', in: *Bloemkrans van verscheiden gedichten* (Amsterdam [1647] 1659), sigs. N4v and N6v.

81 The Dutch reads: 'Verwisselt uw vergalde veêr / En dompeltz' in de zoute beeken'. Jan Vos, 'Aan d'algemeene Rymers of galbrakers, toen J. v. Vondel het treurspel van Maria Stuart, &c', *Alle de gedichten van den Poëet Jan Vos* (Amsterdam 1662) 285-286.

82 See Judith Pollmann, 'The Bond of Christian Piety: The Individual Practice of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Dutch Republic', in: Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge 2010) 55.

Did Catholics, Calvinists, and Mennonites go to the same schools? Attend each other's weddings and funerals? Read the same books? Play the same music? Did they employ, do business with, give charity to one another? How did confessional co-existence work in practice?<sup>83</sup>

Building on the hypothesis that certain spaces accommodated the expression of confessional sentiments whereas others did not, Pollmann recently suggested that Dutch society was Janus-faced and had two religious modes: in private contacts people adhered to an a-confessional Christianity, but in a social and Church context they adhered to a confessional worldview.<sup>84</sup>

Vondel's *Mary Stuart* sought to transform the theatre into a shared public space where Catholic and moderate Protestant audience members came together in an emotional community of compassion for Mary Queen of Scots. This community of spectators may be ephemeral, since the audience would have parted company after a performance. Through the use of Aristotelian catharsis, Vondel seeks to school the emotions of the audience so that the effect of this emotional community will last longer than the duration of the performance. If Protestant audience members wept for Mary Stuart, then more moderate forms of sympathy between Protestants and Catholics could last outside of the playhouse. For, as Heinsius puts it,

[...] tragedy produces this kind of habit. Just as any skill reaches a suitable point of perfection in the hands of the one who has acquired a habit in its sphere by constantly exercising that skill, so, too, Aristotle maintains, habit produces a moderate response to those objects which generally stir the soul to emotion.<sup>85</sup>

Vondel considered such training of the emotions within the theatre's emotional community as conducive to religious tolerance and peaceful cohabitation of Protestants and Catholics. ◀

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83 Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, 'Introduction', in: Hsia and Van Nierop (eds.), *Calvinism*, 26.

84 Pollmann, 'Bond', 70.

85 Baumgartner, 'Translation', 71.