

# Lope de Vega's *La hermosa Ester*: a heroine on the Dutch stage

Frans Blom, Olga van Marion

## 1. Introduction

After eighty years of war with Spain (1568-1648), dozens of Spanish theater plays entered the Dutch realm, gloriously conquering the people's taste in the Netherlands. Even before the Peace Treaty was signed in 1648, the Dutch audience started to fall in love with Spanish comedias, when by 1645 the first adaptations were staged in the Amsterdam Grand Theater. Along with the works of some of his fellow playwrights like Calderón, Mira de Amescua, Rojas Zorrilla and Ruiz de Alarcón, Lope de Vega's plays caused a new vogue in the city. Within two decades, twenty comedias were taken from his oeuvre alone, and produced for Amsterdam eyes and ears. Lope de Vega was so much embraced by the theater and its audience, that many of these works were to stay and dominate the repertoire for over a century<sup>1</sup>.

One of Lope's most successful plays was *La hermosa Ester*, rhymed in Dutch as *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden* ("Hester, or the Salvation of the Jews")<sup>2</sup>. It premiered on the Amsterdam stage in 1659<sup>3</sup>. As a part of the city theater's rep-

<sup>1</sup> Recently published on this topic: Blom (2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2023), Blom and van Marion (2017, 2021); Vergeer (2026); Wouters and Bloemendal (2025).

<sup>2</sup> Serwouters (1659).

<sup>3</sup> Performances and revenues in ONSTAGE, Online Datasystem of Theatre in Amsterdam from the Golden Age to the present, available at <https://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/onstage/plays/139>.

ertoire this *comedia* was strikingly often programmed during the days of Purim, highlighting the persecution of the Jews and their salvation by the biblical heroine Esther. According to the title page of the play text, it is credited to Johannes Serwouters, one of the theater's directors, who had already gained experience with *Comedia Nueva* for his local audience. The play brings to life the famous episode when Esther, after the fall of Jerusalem, lives in exile with her people. From her humble position, she is unexpectedly elevated to become the new wife of the almighty Persian king Ahasuerus, which enables her to avert the impending total destruction of the Jewish people. The story centers around the female protagonist, who experiences major twists and turns and changes in status. Thanks to the heroine's wisdom and courage, the deepest misery of her people transforms into triumph and happiness, while, at the same time, Haman, the cruelest of persecutors, is brought down. It is not surprising that the Dutch audience, who had liberated themselves from oppression in eighty years of war, took the theme of liberation and salvation in this *comedia* to their hearts. But how did the Amsterdam theater director know about Lope's play? How did he understand the Spanish original and what changes were made to the Spanish-Dutch adaptation? And, most importantly, what changes did the arrival of the stage heroine Esther bring about in Dutch theater history?

## 2. Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam

In the increasingly prosperous seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, migrants, refugees and fortune seekers from all corners of Europe would find work and start a new life. Population increases were so strong that cities grew considerably in size and changed in composition. As the liberal and commercial capital of the Dutch Republic, Amsterdam was the magnet of Europe, growing from fifty thousand inhabitants at the beginning of the seventeenth century to a metropolis with a population of over two hundred thousand around 1650. A notable community of newcomers was formed by the Sephardic Jews. Numerically, they may have been a minor group, but economically they were relatively powerful, socially they formed an organized community, and culturally they had a strong identity. Their presence in the city gave a boost to the theater.

The influx of Sephardic Jews into Amsterdam started around 1600. By the middle of the seventeenth century, they formed a community of around two thousand people. By the end of the century, their numbers had grown to four thousand, after which they remained stable for a long time. Persecuted for their faith in catholic Spain, many Spanish Jews sought refuge in Portugal first, and from there left the Iberian Peninsula. In Amsterdam, the 'Portuguese Jews', as they were called, were welcome under conditions. They were allowed to purchase citizenship, but that was limited to one generation and not transferable onto offspring. Interconnections with Christians, by means of sex or marriage, were not allowed. Within the community, they were free to openly practice their religion and preserve a Jewish identity. A festival such as Purim was celebrated publicly and with great ceremony in the city. A notable feature, still present to-

day, was the establishment of the Portuguese Synagogue, an impressive place of worship that arose on the outskirts of the city and, when it opened in 1675, constituted the largest Jewish sanctuary in the world.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam cherished both their Jewish and Spanish identities. On the banks of the Amstel River, they maintained a distinctive Iberian lifestyle, which was reflected in names such as De Pinto, De Andrade, and Pimentel, as well as in their appearance, clothing, values, and customs. Sephardic appearances have been captured in drawings, prints, and paintings by Amsterdam artists like Rembrandt, whose studio was in the Jewish area.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam would also be recognized by their language. Using Dutch only when necessary, they mainly spoke Spanish or Portuguese. They kept their community's accounts and other administration in their mother tongue, and their book collections were predominantly in Spanish.

Another cultural tradition cherished from their country of origin was theater. Although much less institutionalized than in the *corrales* of their homeland, the migrants would regularly have shows in the spacious living rooms of the more affluent or in warehouse attics that could be converted into theater halls for the occasion. The performances were in Spanish, and the plays on stage were *comedias* from the Spanish tradition. The book collections of many Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam included anthologies of leading playwrights such as Lope de Vega.

While the Amsterdam city government closely monitored the monopoly of its Grand Theater, there were initially no objections to theatrical activities in the Jewish community. It was a separate circuit, whose language of performance naturally selected its own audience. Only later in the seventeenth century, with the influx of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, theater was no longer exclusively Spanish-speaking in the migrant community, but also included performances in German or Yiddish, much closer to the Dutch language. The city mayors started to protect the Grand Theater when Dutch audiences began to switch from the Grand Theater to the Jewish performances. But as long as it was an entertainment venue for and by the Sephardic community, the theater in and around the Jewish area of Vlooienburg was not a rival, but rather a source of inspiration to the Grand Theater of Amsterdam.

### 3. Jacob Barocas as co-producer

Spanish *comedias* form an important part of the city theater's repertoire. They came to Amsterdam in various ways of transfer. At least eight major successes originate from the city's Sephardic community. More specifically, the Dutch versions were made possible thanks to the translation work of one individual Sephardic newcomer to Amsterdam. His name was Jacob Barocas, a great lover of theater. As a native Spanish speaker who also knew Dutch, Barocas was an intermediary. As a cultural bridge between the two theater traditions, Barocas embodied what cultural historian Peter Burke (2007) describes as a «career out of displacement», a career that is the result of expulsion.

Jacob Barocas had mastered the Dutch language to such an extent that he was able to not only suggest but also translate *comedias* for the Grand Theater. His translations of Lope and others were not ready-made plays, but rather semi-finished works in prose, good enough to serve as a starting point for Dutch theater makers. In their hands, Barocas' translations transformed the Spanish *jornadas* and complex rhyming schemes into five-act theater plays, composed in the metrical and rhyming verses of Alexandrines, as the local tradition wanted and audience was accustomed to. The Spanish plays that enriched the Grand Theater's repertoire from the Sephardic community were co-productions.

How the Jewish immigrant came to collaborate with the Grand Theater can be reconstructed to a certain extent. It probably happened around the time of the production of Lope's *Laura perseguida*, which appeared in Dutch as *Vervolgde Laura*. Adapted by the city theater's prime actor Adam Karelsz van Germez, it was first performed on stage in 1645. The print text book, for sale at the entrance of the theatre, introduced the name of the Spanish playwright as «Loopes de Vego». Not bad for a first time. And because that name was missing in the French source *Laure Persecutée*, from which it was translated, the author information must have been added in Amsterdam, which suggests some local knowledge of the Spanish theater tradition. Barocas may have been involved, recognizing the plot or the translated title. What is certain anyway, is that contact was established from then on: the first authorized co-production between the Amsterdam city theater and Barocas followed a year later.

The native Amsterdammer with whom Barocas started his collaboration project, was the theater actor Isaak Vos. In return for the help in creating *Gedwongen Vrient* (1646, adaptation of *El amigo por fuerza*), Vos thankfully praised Barocas in the printed play text edition. The actor acknowledged that he had no knowledge of Lope de Vega or his plays until the Madrid playwright and his work appeared, as he pompously proclaimed, «floating on Dutch wings, revived and recreated by the art-loving and zealous Mr. Iacobus Baroces»<sup>4</sup>. The public reverence served as a kind of peer selection; it caused Jacob Barocas' to become an expert and translator of Spanish plays for the city theater.

In the years that followed, Vos' fellow actors at the Grand Theater as well as playwrights in the city gratefully highlighted his assistance in the production of *comedias* time and again, so that Barocas' name was present in the prefaces of eight different play texts. In the preface to the Dutch version of Diego Jiménez de Enciso's *Los Médicos de Florencia*, theater actor Joan Dullaart wrote that «the linguistic virtuoso Barokus» translated the Spanish play for him «both artfully and appropriately»<sup>5</sup>. In addition, the Amsterdam playwright Dirk Pietersz Heynck also owed a great deal to the Jewish migrant for his *Veranderlyk geval, of Stantvastige liefde* (1663), based on Barocas' translation of *Mudanzas de la Fortuna y firmezas*

<sup>4</sup> «zwevend op Nederduytsche wicken, opgewekt en herschapen door den kunst-lievenden en yverigen Heer Iacobus Baroces» (Vos 1646. fol. A2r).

<sup>5</sup> «de taalwijze Barokus», «zoo kunstig als gelukkig» (Dullaart 1653, fol. A3r).

*del amor* by Christóbal de Monroy y Silva. This acquisition from Spain's *Siglo de Oro* tradition was perhaps the greatest foreign success in the history of the Grand Theater. From its premiere, *Veranderlyk geval* remained in the repertoire for more than 120 years, enjoying great successes until 1788. Without the suggestions and translations of Sephardic immigrant Jacob Barocas, Amsterdam's Grand Theater would not have had such an extensive and popular repertoire, and Spanish *comedia* might not have become such a craze among Dutch-speaking audiences.

#### 4. *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden*

The 1659 play text of Amsterdam's *Hester* does not reveal the extent to which Jacob Barocas contributed to the Dutch version of Lope's *La hermosa Ester*, but it is very likely that he was involved in proposing this beloved play to the Grand Theater management and translating it in prose. As a Jewish immigrant and celebrant of the Purim festival, he must have been familiar with this phenomenon of Jewish identity. Esther's story had a powerful and contemporary meaning for Jews in the world of the seventeenth century. The conversos in the Spanish empire, who concealed their identity, recognized the oppression and found comfort in the triumph of the chosen people. The heroine, who, when invited to appear before the king, could not reveal her Jewish identity and had to pass as a non-Jew at the Persian court, reflected the fate of the crypto-Jews in Spain. As an «othered citizen», she was part of society, and at the same time, she was not<sup>6</sup>.

But it was not only to exiled Jews from the Spanish empire that the story of Esther was relevant and recognizable. In Eastern and Central Europe, anti-Semitism in the seventeenth century drove many Ashkenazi or High German Jews from their homes. They moved to safer places and sought refuge in cities such as Amsterdam, where they reflected on how Esther, as queen, saved the people from impending doom. During the Purim celebrations, on the 14th and 15th days of the Jewish month of Adar in March, enactments of the story played an important role, and contemporary sources reveal that it was customary to perform «a show in the form of a comedy about Queen Esther and other stories in the High German Jewish or Sephardic language in an attic»<sup>7</sup>. These performances were accompanied by loud booing or rattling whenever the name of the anti-Semite in the play, Haman, was mentioned or when the actor spoke his lines. The key scene, in which Esther no longer hides her identity at court and reveals to the Persian king that she is Jewish, «I am of that race»<sup>8</sup>, was of great significance to the Jewish audience. The reactions were sometimes so exuberant and loud that local residents even complained about the noise.

<sup>6</sup> «Men and women, who passed as members of the majority while also living as othered citizens in Inquisitorial Spain» (Colbert Cairns 2013).

<sup>7</sup> «een vertooningh by forme van Comedie vande Coninginne Hester ende andere Historien in de Hoogduytsche jootse of Smouse tael op een solder te speelen», in a letter from Salomon Elias, Marcus Moses, and Salomon Isaacsen to the mayors of Amsterdam, dated February 25, 1707, quoted from Burgemeestersarchief, fol. 402.

<sup>8</sup> «ik ben van dat geslacht» (Serwouters 1659, 49).



Figure 1 – Frontispiece of Johannes Serwouters, *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden* (Amsterdam: Jacob Lescailje, 1659). Three tableaux vivants scenes from the play are depicted: in the foreground, Esther before Ahasuerus; in the background, the triumph of Esther’s uncle and viceroy Mordecai, and thirdly, the hanging of Haman.

On June 9, 1659, the Dutch adaptation *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden* premiered as the third play added to the repertory by theater director Johannes Serwouters. The differences with Lope’s original play, *La hermosa Ester*, appear to be subtle but significant. For example, the biblical decree allowing the Jews to strike down and kill their persecutors and plunder their possessions (Book of Esther 8:11) was not present in Lope de Vega’s dramatization. The legitimation of a Jewish revenge was not good news for the Catholic rulers in Spain and could clash with the Inquisition and cause friction in the Spanish social context. How different this was in Amsterdam, where Serwouters ‘corrected’ the ending of the play by adding the crucial element of victory. While he generally followed Lope de Vega closely (with the help of Barocas), he made his Dutch-language versification end with a reference to the decree. In the lines that the Amsterdam playwright himself added to the play, the mighty monarch Ahasuerus concludes:

The Hebrews are permitted to avenge their suffering, most fiercely,  
 Upon all those who, out of hatred, sought to destroy them.  
 Thus vengeance heals the wounds of so many misfortunes. [...]  
 Now deliver my command, and send the messengers away,  
 Those who thought to destroy you, prepare their own graves<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> «D’Hebreen zijn toegestaan hun leedt, op ’t felst, te wreeken, / Aan alle, die uit haat hun dongen na den hals. / Zo heelt de wraak de wond van zoo veels ongevals. / [...] / Bezorgt nu mijn gebod, en zeind’ de booden af, / Wie u te delgen dacht, bereit zich zelf een graf» (Serwouters 1659, 54).

In a city that publicly stated not to persecute anyone for their faith and allowed Jews to be Jewish, the words that Serwouters restored from the Bible story and inserted in the play's final, could only contribute to a happy ending that celebrates the joy and triumph of a free people.

Common Christian aspects that differ from the Book of Esther can also be observed. In both the Spanish original and the Dutch adaptation, Esther is more than the human heroine of the biblical book; the stage heroine is an instrument in God's greater plan, acting under the guidance of higher powers. This mediating position between God and the chosen people provided powerful drama and emotional scenes, such as at the end of Esther's prayer, where her plea has the power of a *De profundis* addressing God in despair to save her people:

When will You take pity on their lamentations?  
 They now raise their hands together, with arms reaching out  
 Towards heaven. They pray that their voices  
 May praise Your majesty in beautiful Jerusalem.  
 Have mercy on Your congregation, I pray.  
 My heart flies heavenward. My eyes are filled with tears!  
 Please have mercy<sup>10</sup>.

¿Cuándo os habéis de doler  
 de aquellos mismos que amastes,  
 pues a todos obligastes  
 a sufrir y a padecer?  
 ¿Cuándo volverá, señor,  
 vuestro pueblo a libertad?  
 ¿Cuándo a la sancta ciudad  
 a vuestra gloria y honor?  
 ¿Cuándo a vuestro sacro templo  
 y al alcázar de Sión?  
 Doleos, señor<sup>11</sup>.

The fact that both stage versions emphasize the hand of God in the story has more than just a dramatic effect. It is also related to the Christian context in which the theater makers operate. Because of this, the story of Esther tells more than just Jewish history. It is a story of faith and salvation by God, the God of both Jews and Christians. With the people being saved as «his people», multiple audiences could identify with the story. In Amsterdam, too, the audience

<sup>10</sup> «Wanneer zult ghy u doch door haare klacht erbarmen / Die nu hun handen t'zaam, met uytgestrekte armen, / Opheffen hemelwaard, en bidden, dat hun stem, / Uw hoogheid looven mag, in 't schoon Ierusalem; / Hebt doch met uw gemeent, dat bid ik, mededoogen. / Mijn hart vliegt hemelwaarts. Mijn traanen zijn in d'oogen! / Wilt u erbarmen» (Serwouters 1659, 15).

<sup>11</sup> Lope de Vega, *La hermosa Ester*, acto 1, v. 559-69.

in the Grand Theater saw not only the biblical salvation of the Jews, but the triumph of their own Dutch Republic as a God-given destiny.

### 5. Theater for the eye

Dramatic and meaningful, the play *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden* also owed much of its success to visual appeals. It was a particularly attractive spectacle. The feast for the eyes began right at the opening scene. There, the audience was beholding the exuberant Persian court in Susa, with the supreme ruler Ahasuerus seated at a beautifully decorated palace table surrounded by his many courtiers. The scene offered «a beautiful sight» according to people in the audience, who would watch the scene as a *tableau vivant* or living painting for some moments before the play would come to life. The device of a *tableau vivant* also depicted Esther's coronation in the third act. The palace scene, referred to in the text book as «the *tableau vivant* in which Esther was crowned»<sup>12</sup>, was stunning in grandeur, while Esther's change of status from slavery to royal splendor made a powerful emotional impact on the audience.



Figure 2 – Rembrandt van Rijn, *Mordechai's Triumph*, c. 1640. Print. Coll. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

The opening of the final fifth act showed another living painting on stage. The play book indicated the scene as Mordechai «sitting on horseback, dressed in royal attire, and carried through the city of Zusa by Haman, to the cheers of all the people»<sup>13</sup>. And no less impressive, albeit less inviting, was the play's final scene. After

<sup>12</sup> «vertooning, in welke Hester gekroont werdt»; this *tableau vivant* can be found in the second edition of *Hester* (Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaijje, 1667, 28).

<sup>13</sup> «koningklijk gekleed te paard zit, en door Haman in de stadt Zusa omgevoert wert, met toejuichen van al het volk» (Serwouters 1659, 44).

the proclamation of the royal decree, the audience witnessed in a fourth and final tableau vivant how Haman, the antisemite who had plotted to hang Esther's uncle Mordechai, has fallen victim to his own pride and met his death: «In the end, Haman was seen hanging from a gallows, and so this play came to an end» (Maas 1774).

As an exciting element in the story line, Esther is the only woman capable of charming Persian king Ahasuerus. Since the autocrat banished his former wife Vasti, the royal councillor observed, his mood is gloomy and his eyes «crave for a beautiful woman». The fellow councillor agrees: «It is true, beauty pleases our eyes»<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the council unanimously decides another beautiful woman should be siding the monarch on his throne. And so, the search for the most beautiful female creature in the kingdom has begun:

Whoever catches his eye will be crowned Queen.  
Happy will she be who possesses beauty<sup>15</sup>.

The wise deliberations among the councillors create high expectations of Esther's appearance at court, and her presentation adds to that. Other candidates first appear before the king and the public, but every candidate is found wanting, until it is Esther's turn. Although the Bible text does not say so, Lope has made the councilor introducing the last candidate a painter. The dramatic effect is striking when the man takes the floor and says that it is simply impossible to put into words the beauty of the girl who is next to come. Any attempt would fail, just as an attempt to paint the sun would result in an image that does not shine:

The young woman I shall now show you at this time,  
Has such a beauty that the sun envies her bright radiance.  
And anyone trying to describe her gifts in words  
Would only paint the sun with dark rays<sup>16</sup>.

The Dutch version, quoted here, is the hyperbolic rendering of how the councilor-painter speaks in Lope's Spanish original: «I do not want to paint her beautiful face for you, because my brushes are too coarse»<sup>17</sup>. Both versions, however, create high expectations, indeed. And when Esther appears on stage, the audience will have agreed with the king, who can only stammer that his eyes have never seen such beauty.

<sup>14</sup> «graag bij een schoone vrouw», «'tIs waar, de schoonheit strekt het oogwit van ons ooggen» (Serwouters 1659, 13); Lope de Vega, *La hermosa Ester*, acto I, v. 496-97: «Eso es verdad, porque los ojos tienen / siempre un objeto, una hermosura misma».

<sup>15</sup> «Wie dat zijn oog gevalt, wert tot Vorstin gekroont. / Gelukkig zal zij zijn bij wie de schoonheit woont» (Serwouters 1659, 14); Lope de Vega, *La hermosa Ester*, acto I, v. 526-28: «La que entrare de noche, salga al alba, / Y la que le agradare, o por dichosa / o por bella, que reine».

<sup>16</sup> «De maaght, die ik u nu vertoonen zal dees tijdt, / Zoo schoon is, dat de Zon haar heldre glans benijdt. / En die haar gaven, door de woorden, af wou maalen; / Was maar de zon ver-toont met naar' en donkre straa-len». (Serwouters 1659, 20).

<sup>17</sup> «No te quiero pintar su rostro hermoso, / porque son muy groseros mis pinceles.» (Lope de Vega, *La hermosa Ester*, acto I, v. 862-63). Also see Sánchez Jiménez (2011).



Figure 3– Jan Steen, *Esther and the Wrath of Ahasuerus against Haman*, c. 1660. Oil on canvas. Collection Bredius Museum, The Hague.

#### 6. The actress Susanna van Lee

The way in which the painter on stage – and several contemporary Dutch artists such as Rembrandt van Rijn and Jan Steen - attempted to portray Esther's inner and outer beauty ultimately leads us to the question of how the Grand Theater itself was able to give shape to the main character. The company of players, which started off as a male exclusive group in 1638, was not capable of staging major female roles until women were allowed to be out on the city theatre's stage. That major change only took place in 1655, when, for the first time in Dutch history, three married women were hired on a seasonal contract as actresses. The emancipation was a necessity in performing the new influx of *comedias* with female protagonists from the Spanish tradition of mixed theater companies.

As the city theater's *Parsonaageboek* (The Casting Book) tells, the oldest of the three actresses, named Ariana van den Bergh, impersonated Queen Vashti, who as the first wife of Ahasuerus got sent away from court. Ariana's younger colleague Susanna van Lee was suited to the role of Esther<sup>18</sup>. In the 1659 season of the *Hester* premiere, Susanna played 'tender' female roles in more than fifty plays and starring as a chambermaid, shepherdess, (lost) daughter, lady-in-waiting, princess, mistress, servant-girl, young neighbor, page (in drag), singer, and

<sup>18</sup> About the life and work of this actress see van Marion (2021).

dancer. A young woman, talented and attractive Susanna van Lee was therefore the star who made Esther shine for the audience.

As the antagonist of the almighty autocrat Ahasuerus (whom Lope invariably refers to as «el poderoso Assuero») and of the haughty viceroy Haman, who considers himself untouchable and shows no mercy to those who do not show respect to him, thirty-year-old Susanna van Lee played the part of the young heroine who, under God's guidance, stands up for her oppressed people. Beauty, charm, intelligence, and courage are her weapons as she outwits those in power and achieves her goal of saving her people.

The fact that Esther is a female hero who stands up against injustice in a life-threatening environment was perhaps the new acquisition's greatest asset. The play had more than religious or political significance in both Spain and Amsterdam. The woman was center stage here. For Lope de Vega, the character from the Bible story was a gift that allowed him to further explore the relationship between men and women, as a key element in his oeuvre<sup>19</sup>. As a key example, the Spanish playwright placed her in a catalogue of 'illustrious women' in biblical history, from Sarah to Judith. The Amsterdam theater director Serwouters adopted her place in the catalogue:

May a woman now bring salvation to so many souls!  
 My cousin! A Sarah shows you the path of virtue.  
 A Rachel captivates a man's heart with her beauty.  
 The sister of the Monarch, that great Moses, brought  
 Joy with her song. Abigail inspired  
 Mercy for the Monarch with her honorable modesty.  
 And Judith, who dared to seize the terror of the earth<sup>20</sup>.

The Grand Theater, which only three seasons earlier had taken the emancipatory step of allowing the first actresses on stage, retained Lope's emphasis. Also, the text edition highlighted the theme of female heroism in its dedication. Serwouters dedicated the play to the Amsterdam mayor's daughter Eleonora Huydekoper, highlighting the special role of the «tender woman with a man's heart and wise counsel», and underlining it in the summary of the play: «Thus a woman prevents the death of men, women, and children»<sup>21</sup>.

The main character of this Spanish *comedia* is therefore a very important part of the explanation for the popularity of the play in the Netherlands. As a woman, Esther takes a stand against men in power, not by behaving like a *mu-*

<sup>19</sup> Canning (2024, 38).

<sup>20</sup> «Mocht nu een vrouw het heil van zoo veel zielen strekken! / Mijn nicht! Een Sara wijst u 't spoor van deugden aan. / Een Rachel door het schoon een mannenhart bevaân. / De zuster van den Vorst, dien grooten Moises, strekte / Een vreugde door haar zang. Abigail verwekte / Door haar eerbare schaamte genaade voor den Vorst. / En Judith, die de schrik der aard aangrijpen dorst». (Serwouters 1659, 63).

<sup>21</sup> «teedre vrouw met een mannenhart en wijs beleid», «Zoo stuit een vrouw de doodt van mannen, vrouwen, kindren» (Serwouters 1659, fol. A2r).

*jer varonil*, or masculine woman, but precisely by being a woman. For sure, the Jewish heroine attracted a lot of attention from the king, his councilors and any other men, but as a migrant from the Spanish tradition she was also a new role model for female audience in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

## Bibliography

- Blom, Frans R.E. 2020. "Enemy Treasures: The Making and Marketing of Spanish *Comedia* in the Amsterdam *Schouwburg*". In *Literary Hispanophilia and Hispanophobia in Britain and the Low Countries (1550-1850)*, ed. Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, 115-44. Amsterdam: AUP.
- Blom, Frans R.E. 2021a. "Theatre on Tour: Amsterdam's *Schouwburg* as a European Hub". In *The International World of Dutch Literature*, eds. Jan Bloemendal, James Parente and Nigel Smith (special issue of *Renaissance Studies. Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies*), 136-58.
- Blom, Frans R.E. 2021b. *Podium van Europa. Creativiteit en ondernemen in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg van de zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Querido.
- Blom, Frans R.E. 2023. "The Pearl from Spain: Calderón's *La vida es sueño* in the Dutch-Speaking Territories". In *Literatures without Frontiers: Transnational Perspectives on Premodern Literature in the Low Countries, 1200-1800*, eds. Cornelis van der Haven, Yuri Desplenter, James A. Parente and Jan Bloemendal, 238-70. Leiden: Brill.
- Blom, Frans R.E. and Olga van Marion. 2017. "Lope de Vega and the Conquest of Spanish Theater in the Netherlands". *Anuario Lope de Vega*, 23: 155-77.
- Blom, Frans R.E. and Olga van Marion. 2021. *Spaans toneel voor Nederlands publiek*. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Burke, Peter. 2007. "Lost (and Found) in Translation: A Cultural History of Translators and Translating in Early Modern Europe". *European Review*, 15: 83-94.
- Canning, Elaine M. 2004. *Lope de Vega's Comedias de tema religioso. Re-creations and re-presentations*, 38. London: Tâmesis.
- Colbert Cairns, Emily. 2013. "Esther among Crypto-Jews and Christians: Queen Esther and the Inquisition manuscripts of Isabel de Carvajal and Lope de Vega's *La hermosa Esther*". *Chasqui. Revista de literatura latinoamericana*, 42.2: 98-109.
- Dullaart, Joan (Diego Jiménez de Enciso). 1653. *Alexander de Medicis, of 't bedrooge betrouwen. Treurspel*. Amsterdam: Gerrit van Goedesberg.
- Heynck, Dirk Pietersz. 1663. *Veranderlyk geval, of Stantvastige liefde. Bly-spel*. Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaille.
- Maas, Abraham. 1774. *Compleete verzameling van vyftig brieven, van een Rotterdamsch heer; over het spleen van de aldaar zynde acteurs en actrices, 1773-1774*. n.n.: L. Schmidt.
- Sánchez Jiménez, Antonio. 2011. *El pincel y el Fénix: pintura y literatura en la obra de Lope de Vega Carpio*. Madrid / Frankfurt: Iberoamericana / Vervuert.
- Serwouters, Johannes. 1659. *Hester, oft Verlossing der Jooden*. Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaille.
- van Marion, Olga. 2021. *Gouden diva's. De eerste Nederlandse actrices en hun sporen in de literatuur*. Leiden: Primavera Pers.
- Vergeer, Tim. 2026. *Spanish Drama on the Dutch Stage. Transgressive Emotions in the Seventeenth Century*. Leiden: Brill.
- Vos, Isaak (Lope de Vega Carpio). 1646. *Gedwongen Vrient*. Amsterdam: Jan van Hilten.
- Wouters, Dinah and Jan Bloemendal, eds. 2025. *Transnational Encounters in Early Modern Drama, 1450-1750*. Leiden: Brill.