**Question**

*Gender: “The extent to which Vondel was appreciated by his readers has varied over time. Admiration for his compelling language skills, refined lyricism, deep piety and patriotism has never been lacking. Yet, Vondel has never been able to generate real warmth among the Dutch. Surely, one of the explanations would be […] his fairly consistent aversion to what he considers the essence of the fallen woman: the lust-seeking temptress” (Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, Vondel en ’t vrouwelijk dier, p.23). Describe the role played by women in Lucifer. To what extent, could you relate the statements on gender and the relation between men and women in the play to Schenkeveld-van der Dussen’s more general description of Vondel’s opinion of women?*

**Reading Notes**

* ACT ONE
  + **Apollion: “He rules, god-like, a subject universe.” (page 14)**
    - Men are “god-like,” but excludes Eve? As we will see, she seems to be considered lesser than Adam.
  + **Apollion: “The whole wide world with Men will soon be creeping, / Rich crops of souls from human seedlets reaping: / And that’s the reason God gave Man a Wife!” (Page 14)**
    - Here, women only find identity in their ability to produce offspring for men. Less of a “lust-seeking temptress” and more of an *object* for man to procreate.
  + **Apollion: “We’re poorly off, alone and celibate – / Denied the joys of sex, the married state; / Deprived of consort, starved of loving tryst: / Some heaven, this – where women don’t exist!” (Page 14)**
    - Are there female Angels? There certainly are male Angels and beautiful male Angels (with Lucifer being one of the most beautiful). Interesting that women become an object of desire for male creatures of a different being…
    - The entire play shows the anxiety of rebellious Angels falling from their hierarchical place in a chain of beings, yet they are jealous of men because they can have sex with women?
    - Emphasis on title *Sons* of Light
  + **Apollion: “Through love of beauty in Man’s mind created, / Profoundly etched on every sharpened sense. / The pair are bonded by a love intense – / Unfailingly renewed by shared desire – / Which, though it slakes, can never quench the fire!” (Page 14)**
    - Desire
  + **Apollion: “They’re a perfect pair, from head to toe! / If Adam wears the crown, its rightly so / For one selected to command Creation. / Noble of form and regal in his station. / And Eve is shaped all his desires to meet: / Tender of limb, soft hair, expression sweet, / Fair skin and eyes, alluring and profound. / Her lovely lips breath forth a charming sound; / Her breasts, twin towers of ivory! But stay! / No more, lest I lead anyone astray! / The most exquisite Angels, to my mind, / Are monsters in the dawn of Womankind!” (Page 15)**
    - Shows an unequal relationship between man and woman – men are portrayed as being “naturally” the ones who wear the crown; Eve is formed for Adam’s desire…
    - The imagery doesn’t really seem to portray Eve as a temptress here, in my mind; Apollion seems to emphasis a picture of Eve as innocent, almost fragile (possibly gullible?... see later).
    - Eve lesser than Adam here
  + **Beelzebub: “This female’s fired your passion with her ways!” (Page 15)**
    - This follows the temptress idea… before fallen, she is already “firing” up Apollion with “her ways”
  + **Apollion: “I soared reluctantly and looked back thrice, / For not a Seraph in all Paradise / Could match the glory of Eve’s golden hair, / In waves cascading from her visage fair / About her shoulders, and, when Eve advanced, / Her radiance the very day enhanced! / Pearls, mother-of-pearl, praise as you will – / But Eve, than any pearl, is lovelier still!” (Page 15)**
    - Male Gaze.
    - He is essentially spying on Eve without her knowing for his own pleasure.
    - Again, question about female Angels…
  + **Gabriel: “Therefore, serve faithfully *Man* and the Lord! / The Godhead’s love from Adam is so plain: / Who honours Man, the love of God shall gain.” (Page 17)**
    - We see a lot of lines about God’s love for either “Man” or “Adam”, but none specifically calling out God’s love for Eve. Note in the end, God cannot even address Eve, he speaks only to Adam.
* ACT TWO
  + **“Since God chose Adam for preferment, / His love for Man has caused a ferment.” (Page 31)**
    - Again, God choosing Adam… no explicit mention of Eve
* ACT THREE
  + **Rebel 2: “A bastard being, formed from clay and dust!” (Page 33)**
    - This doesn’t really apply to the question, but I think referring to Adam and Eve as “Bastard” is so interesting… Need to think on this
  + **Loyalist 2: “Service is what you’re bred for – not commanding!” (Page 34)**
    - Angels as being “bred”
  + **Rebel 2: “Shall Gabriel place / On Adam’s head, our Angel’s holy crown / And God’s first-born by Adam’s be thrust down?” (Page 38)**
    - Adam could potentially receive crown, but no mention of Eve. Again, Eve is portrayed as being lower than Adam; since she is not a man, they don’t even think about her when it comes to questions about power…
* ACT FOUR
  + **Lucifer: “The Angels shall stay free and Adam’s seed, / Reigning supreme in consort with his breed, / No slave-chains round your necks shall ever set, / Nor force you in Man’s interests to sweat, / Half-throttled by the captive’s yoke for ever!” (Page 51)**
    - Look back to Act One and the extreme emphasis and fear about Adam’s future children. Again, interesting that they regard Adam’s seed, but somewhat ignore Eve (she seems to be seen more of an incubation tank for Adam’s children than an autonomous woman herself)
    - There is however later a mention of Eve’s seed, in reference to the birth of Christ. That is the only time though, and it is an instant of non-consent really (Immaculate Conception)
  + **Lucifer: “Prince Adam” (Page 52)**
    - No Princess Eve listed
  + **Lucifer: “He turned on us. Had Adam’s progeny / Been granted status equal to our own – / *That*, we could bear.” (Page 54)**
    - Again, “Adam’s progeny”
* ACT FIVE
  + **“Adam has sinned! God’s Son! / The Founding Father of the human race – / Already fallen – and in deep disgrace! / Adam’s been conquered!” (Page 65)**
    - Interesting that they don’t immediately blame Eve. As shown, Eve seems to be considered as less valuable than Adam; therefore, her sin almost carries less weight at first (?). Gabriel is in shock that “Adam has sinned! God’s Son!”
  + **Gabriel (quoting Lucifer): “God’s chosen creature and the human clan / We’ll smother in the crib, before they can / Grown strong enough their birthright to enjoy: / My aim is – Adam and his offspring to destroy!”**
    - Lucifer specifically calling out Adam
  + **Gabriel: “Thus Lucifer spoke and sent Count Belial, / Without delay, to engineer Man’s Fall! / Evil itself he doomed, the guise of snake, / Subtlest of beasts. With honeyed words to make / The lure appeal to innocent Mankind, / His coils about the Tree of Knowledge twisted.” (Page 67)**
    - “innocent Mankind” … Seems to be a direct reference to Eve, as she is the one the snake talks to. This goes against the idea that Eve is a temptress. Portrayed more as being *susceptible*.
  + **Gabriel (quoting Belial (?)): “Did God on pain of death, free will deny? / Forbid you this - the sweetest fruit – to try? / No, surely, Eve – fair dove – you are confused! / I beg you, look upon this Apple, all suffused / With lustrous sheen of crimson and gold. / A feast awaits you! Daughter, come, be bold! No venom lurks in this Immortal Tree … / Exquisite fruit! Taste it! I guarantee / Knowledge and Light you’ll share. You shrink from sin? / Take it, if Glory and Wisdom you would win / To equal God’s omniscient Majesty! / He may resent it – but that’s how you’ll see / That all things differ – nature, type and form.” (Page 67)**
    - Labeled as “Fair dove” – she is just an innocent “dove” who is convinced by the snake that the fruit is good.
  + **Gabriel: “At this, the young bride’s heart began to warm / And she for this most previous fruit to yearn. / Her eyes were charmed, then lips and mouth in turn / Her trembling hand, commanded by desire, / Did pluck and eat, with Adam: trespass dire / For all their offspring! Both at once enlightened, / Perceived their nakedness, then shocked and frightened, / With fig-leaves, clothed the shame of that first Sin.” (Page 67)**
    - “Commanded by desire” – here she does not have self-control; eats fruit based on her desire for it… follows temptress label
    - Interesting that she eats with Adam though… Eve is often described as eating first then taking it to Adam after doing it. Here they seem to do it simultaneously.
  + **Gabriel: “’O Adam,’ thunders God, ‘What means this flight?’ / ‘Lord, I was naked, so I fled your sight!’ / ‘Who told you nakedness was shameful?’ God demands, / ‘You plucked forbidden fruit with sinful hands!’ / ‘Alas, the Woman tempted me to eat!’ / Said Eve: ‘ The serpent lured me by deceit!’ / Thus did they each attempt to shift the blame.” (Page 68)**
    - Note that God never speaks to Eve. He speaks to Adam.
  + **Gabriel: “Woman, who misled Man, by God’s decree, / Shall suffer birth-pangs and Man’s subject be” (Page 68)**
    - Here, woman misled Man… It was her fault
    - Interesting that its added, “Man’s subject be” … Trying to show that women are naturally inferior to men *based on the fall*; but also, we’ve seen (pre-fall) that she already seems to be man’s subject…

ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

In Vondel’s controversial play *Lucifer*, Rebellious Angels revolt against God and his alleged tyranny. The primary catalyst for this revolt comes when Gabriel passes along the message that God’s new creation, humans, are to be “Preferred to Angels” and eventually “shown / A path to splendour equalling God’s own” (Clark 16). Seeing themselves as the “Elder Children” of God, they are disheartened as well as existentially threatened. Visible within this narrative are a series of power-struggle for power; Lucifer wanting to be like God, Angels

In this essay, I examine Eve’s characterization as an (pre- and postlapsarian) inferior object made for Adam’s desire (to procreate and other).

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:

Before Eve and Adam eat the forbidden fruit, Eve is portrayed as a subservient being – the “missing piece” *of* the superiorAdam. In Act One, Apollion exclaims, They’re a perfect pair, from head to toe! / If Adam wears the crown, its rightly so / For one selected to command Creation. / […] And Eve is shaped all his desires to meet” (Clark 15).

Tender of limb, soft hair, expression sweet, / Fair skin and eyes, alluring and profound. / Her lovely lips breath forth a charming sound; / Her breasts, twin towers of ivory! But stay! / No more, lest I lead anyone astray! / The most exquisite Angels, to my mind, / Are monsters in the dawn of Womankind!” (Page 15)

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:

BODY PARAGRAPH 3:

BODY PARAGRAPH 4:

BODY PARAGRAPH 5:

While some have perceived Eve as a “lust-seeking temptress,” her essence – post- or prelapsarian – seems better described as inferior. In fact, even though Eve’s “eyes were charmed, then lips and mouth in turn” (67), and her “trembling hand, commanded by desire” (67), she eats *with* Adam.

It is the serpent who speaks with her, patronizingly gaslighting her (fair dove – you are confused!), but

BODY PARAGRAPH 6:

CONCLUSION

QUOTES:

“The text of Vondel’s tragedies shows that the female body can be regarded, among other things, as a ‘script’, in which actions undertaken by men are ‘inscribed’ (Noak 124).

Noak, Bettina. “The Representation of Language and Body.” *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age,* edited by Frans-Willem Korsten and Jan Bloemendal, Brill, 2012, pp. 115–138. J

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:

Eve is also an object of desire for the Angels. Apollion says, “

“We’re poorly off, alone and celibate – / Denied the joys of sex, the married state; / Deprived of consort, starved of loving tryst: / Some heaven, this – where women don’t exist!” (Page 14).

Eve’s lack of autonomy is present throughout the entirety of the play. Even when she eats the forbidden apple – a moment which could be perceived as a bold revolt against God and his tyranny - she is following the commands of Belial. Belial patronizes Eve and calls her “fair dove” while trying to convince her that she is simply “confused” (Page 67) by God’s rules. In addition, Belial is said to come specifically for the destruction of Adam and *his* offspring, without clearly identifying Eve. In pursuing Eve before Adam, Belial implicitly perceives her as more easily corruptible than Adam.

When Belial comes as a snake, he says to Eve, “Did God on pain of death, free will deny? / Forbid you this - the sweetest fruit – to try? / No, surely, Eve – fair dove – you are confused! (Page 67). Eve is an innocent, “fair dove” who is just “confused,” not a bold woman taking here fate into her hands. She is capricious, not thoughtful. In addition, Belial is said to come for Adam’s destruction and, in going to Eve, implicitly upholds that she is the easier one to break (possibly because she is perceived inferiorly).

Interestingly, Eve’s nature doesn’t change much after the Fall, and the consequences are not that significantly different as well. God – who addresses Adam but never Eve directly – says, “Woman, who misled Man, by God’s decree, / Shall suffer birth-pangs and Man’s subject be” (Page 68). As has been shown, Eve *already* is a subject to Man.

*BODY PARAGRAPH 5: Eve as temptress?*

CONCLUSION

As Bettina Noak states, “The text of Vondel’s tragedies shows that the female body can be regarded, among other things, as a ‘script’, in which actions undertaken by men are ‘inscribed’ (124).

Works Cited

Noak, Bettina. “The Representation of Language and Body.” *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age,* edited by Frans-Willem Korsten and Jan Bloemendal, Brill, 2012, pp. 115–138. J

* “eyes were charmed, then lips and mouth in turn” (67), and her “trembling hand, commanded by desire” (67), she eats *with* Adam.
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