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Material Memories of the Dutch Revolt

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Title: Material memories of the Dutch Revolt : the urban memory landscape in the Low Countries, 1566 – 1700

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Chapter 2 – Relics of War

The Reformation and Revolt made significant changes to urban memory landscapes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there were many ways to reflect upon memories of the war at street level. In addition to new infrastructure, street names, and inscriptions the symbolic reuse of objects such as statues and weapons has already been touched upon briefly. These objects, like the places of memory, became important markers in urban memory cultures of the Revolt. Moreover, they had the potential to become relics of war.

The veneration of saints and relics had always been an important part of Catholic culture. Pieces of the bodies of saints, their clothing and anything they had touched during their lives were found in abundance in medieval churches. Relics were considered powerful tools in the practice of religion. The objects channeled the power of the saint to whom they had belonged and therefore played a role in curing the sick and protecting believers from harm. Relics acted as a bridge between the supernatural and the human worlds. Furthermore, even if the actual bodily connection to the saint was missing, his or her image was an equally strong mediator between the faithful and God. The image was therefore often deemed as worthy of worship as relics.¹

When iconoclasm hit cities as a result of the Reformation and the wars of religion, Calvinists sought to destroy this part of Catholic religious culture.² Relics, images of saints and all other sacred objects were usually the first targets for iconoclasts. From a Reformed point of view relics were not sacred objects at all.³ Instead of considering the relic a 'miraculous divine entity' the objects were seen as 'symbolic mementoes' of the past.⁴ According to historian Alexandra Walsham, Protestants did have their own martyrs and were known to keep locks of hair and pieces of their bodies. But the material and sacred meaning was left out. Generally, these relics served a didactic purpose, in order not to forget what happened. Protestants seem to have credited power only to prayer books and the Bible.⁵

The differences in the interpretation of relics between Catholics and Protestants illustrate how the objects were in essence a cultural invention. The potential of any relic thus lay in the

¹ Alexandra Walsham, 'Introduction. Relics and Remains', *Past & Present* 206 (2010) 9–36, there 11–16; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality. An essay on religion in late medieval Europe* (New York 2011) 125–131.

² See for example in France during the wars of religion Andrew Spicer, '(Re)building the sacred landscape. Orleans, 1560–1610', *French History* 21 (2007) 247–268, there 259–260; Eric Nelson, *The legacy of iconoclasm. Religious war and the relic landscape of Tours, Blois and Vendôme, 1550 – 1750* (St Andrews 2013); and for the English Reformation Alexandra Walsham, 'Skeletons in the cupboard. Relics after the English Reformation', *Past & Present* 206 (2010) 121–143.

³ Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (eds.), 'Defining the Holy. The Delineation of Sacred Space', in: Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (eds.), *Defining the holy. Sacred space in medieval and early modern Europe* (Aldershot 2005) 1–23, there 8–9, 19–21.

⁴ Walsham, 'Introduction', 22–23.

⁵ Walsham, 'Skeletons in the cupboard', 131–138.

hands of the community which was supposed to cherish it. If the belief system changed, as was the case in the Low Countries during the Reformation and the Revolt, the unattractive nature and lack of intrinsic value of relics could be exposed.⁶ Yet, iconoclasm had a far from simple effect on relics. Indeed, many were destroyed, but in response to this act of heresy Catholics organized ways to hide and protect their relics which created an inventive new subculture. During the sixteenth century many people had lost interest in relics, miracles and processions, but the Revolt kindled a new commitment to these practices.⁷ In fact, in Catholic circles saints and relics regained much of their power during the years of warfare that hit the Low Countries. Saints were 'seen' defending cities, protecting churches and relics and inspiring heretics to reconvert to Catholicism.

Despite the differences in interpretation, both Catholics and Protestants did in fact cherish relics. If we define a relic as a 'material manifestation of the act of remembrance' as Walsham has done, we can see that in the Low Countries not only the Reformation but also the Revolt served as a catalyst for the emergence of new relics.⁸ As this chapter will demonstrate, these relics could take many shapes and sizes, but they all had in common that their meaning changed due to the Revolt. From traditional relics to any ordinary object associated with a particular episode, they shared their status as material memories.

Within their new context these bones, clothes, rudders or cannonballs were usually charged with a 'religious' connotation. For instance, in both the Catholic and Protestant parts of the Low Countries people attributed significance to being saved from cannonball fire; the cannonballs might then become 'relics' of their escape. Subsequently, the objects were often put on display in churches, private homes and town halls. The relics, however, could not survive outside their Revolt context. Moreover, the object could not command veneration on its own but had to be accompanied by a convincing story that could serve as a valid claim of authenticity. While traditional relics could receive a document of authenticity from the Pope or one of his representatives, other relics relied on their story. Authors that recounted tales of the Revolt therefore usually included many details about names, places, and exact data to ensure that their stories would be believed. This 'air of historical realism' was much needed to provide authenticity not only for the stories themselves but also for the relics they described.⁹ The objects, their stories, and the change in meaning that occurred during the Revolt are the subject of this chapter.

⁶ Walsham, 'Introduction', 14–15.

⁷ Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635* (Oxford 2011) 5.

⁸ Walsham, 'Introduction', 13.

⁹ Erika Kuijpers, 'Between storytelling and patriotic scripture. The memory brokers of the Dutch Revolt', in: Erika Kuijpers et al. (eds.), *Memory before modernity. The practices of memory in early modern Europe* (Leiden 2013) 183–202, there 184–185.

Traditional relics and saints in wartime

Relics and images of saints had become prime targets during iconoclasm. In the Catholic memory cultures that emerged after the Revolt the destruction and relocation of relics therefore had an important place. Once Catholics realized the danger facing their symbols, it did not take long before they became very creative in hiding their precious relics and religious objects from rebels and heretics. For instance, the monastery in Thesyinga near Groningen hid its seal in a molehill in 1581 to save it from the approaching rebels. Unfortunately, they hid it so well that they were unable to find it themselves after the attack.¹⁰

The majority of hidden relics, however, were saved by individuals who took them home, despite the decree issued by the Council of Trent stating that relics should be kept in houses of worship.¹¹ In Bruges in Flanders the Holy Blood relic was kept safe by church warden Jan Perez, while another church warden, Lieven de Vogelaere, safeguarded the relics of the Holy Cross.¹² The Holy Blood relic from Alkmaar in Holland was kept by a clergyman after the city turned Protestant in 1572. In the seventeenth century it showed up in one of the clandestine Catholic churches in the city, where miracles still occurred.¹³ Equally in need of hiding were statues and other images of saints. In Antwerp the statue of the Virgin from the cathedral of Our Lady was saved by a baker who kept it in his basement, allegedly with a candle constantly burning in front of it.¹⁴ Rescued relics were also kept in families for generations. In Lexmond in Holland, for instance, the canons of St Jan divided all the treasures that had been spared in the iconoclasm of 1580. While most of these canons had already converted to Protestantism, one of them, Arnold van Esch, had not. He bought from some of his colleagues their shares of these treasures, including important relics. After Van Esch died in 1610 the relics passed to his cousin Dirk, who transferred the treasure to Castle Kersbergen near Lexmond which was owned by his sister Maria. When Dirk subsequently converted to Protestantism, he decided to give the box with relics to his cousin Gerrit van den Steen, the last Catholic canon of Utrecht, and so to keep the objects of veneration in the Catholic community. In turn Gerrit decided in 1622 that it was safe enough to take the relics from their hiding place and spread them among the clandestine churches in Utrecht.¹⁵ The relics, which had passed between several owners for over forty years, once again became public property.

¹⁰ Groninger Archieven, Statenarchief, inv nr 2770, 16 November 1594.

¹¹ Walsham, 'Skeletons in the cupboard', 126–127.

¹² Jens Ranson, 'Brugge na de reconciliatie met Filips II. De rol van het stadsbestuur in de constructie van de katholieke stadsgemeenschap (1584-1598)' (Thesis Ghent University 2010) 126.

¹³ Peter Jan Margry and Charles Caspers, *101 bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2008) 64.

¹⁴ FAA, Ancien Régime archief van de stad Antwerpen, Beschrijving van kerken, kloosters en andere bezienswaardigheden, inv nr PK197, 29.

¹⁵ Walter Zijdeveld, *Van rooms naar protestant in Lexmond. Wel en wee van de Lexmondse kerk in de periode 1500-1815* (Lexmond 2009) 87–88.

The downside of hiding relics in private homes was that it was difficult to trace them (and their authenticity) after they resurfaced. The relics of St Rombout in Mechelen in Brabant, for example, were scattered across the cathedral during the 'English fury' of 1580. Individuals such as shippers, dyers, orphans, and clergymen subsequently gathered many of the pieces. Five years later, when the Calvinist regime finally left Mechelen, the relics were reunited but canon Mathias Hovius found himself obliged to check their authenticity. For this he usually used documents, but these had been torn or burned during the iconoclasm in 1580. Therefore he used his own common sense, the reputation of the owner, and his sense of smell since a genuine relic had a pleasant odor.¹⁶ One way to prevent sacred objects from circulating amongst the population was their temporary relocation to a nearby city or another Catholic area such as Emmerich, where the Jesuit college has been described as a museum of Dutch relics and images, but also to Brabant and the Habsburg Netherlands.¹⁷ The retable of the sacrament of Niervaart in Brabant, for example, was hidden in Breda in a room of one of the city's militia headquarters. In 1625 Archduchess Isabella visited this room after the Habsburg army recaptured the city.¹⁸

The interest of Archdukes Albert and Isabella in relics from the Northern Netherlands encouraged the transfer of relics to the Habsburg Netherlands. Probably inspired by the efforts King Philip II had undertaken to bring relics from Protestant areas to safety in his palace Escorial near Madrid between 1564 and his death in 1598, the Archdukes carried out similar practices in the Netherlands during their reign.¹⁹ Many of these relics were either moved or smuggled to new homes in churches or monasteries across the border. Some of them had gone to the Rhineland, but the archdukes were keen to return them to the Low Countries. Therefore they appointed historiographer Joan Baptist Gramaye to locate relics and negotiate their voyage to Brussels. For instance, the relic of the Holy Cross from the abbey of Egmond, a small village in Holland, was moved via the German town of Mönchengladbach to Brussels.²⁰ The relics of St Liduina were left in her grave in Schiedam in Holland until 1615 when they were transferred to different churches in the Southern

¹⁶ Craig E. Harline and Eddy Put, *A bishop's tale. Mathias Hovius among his flock in seventeenth-century Flanders* (London 2000) 206–211.

¹⁷ Willem Frijhoff, 'The function of a miracle in a Catholic minority. The United Provinces in the seventeenth century', in: *Embodied belief. Ten essays on religious culture in Dutch history* (Hilversum 2002) 111–136, there 114; Eddy Put, 'Het elan van de katholieke hervorming (1596-1648) Nieuwe structuren, nieuwe standaarden', in: Patricia Quaghebeur and Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld (eds.), *Het aartsbisdom Mechelen-Brussel. 450 jaar geschiedenis* (Antwerp 2009) 98–143, there 129.

¹⁸ F.A. Brekelmans, 'Aanzien en luister van de stad Breda van de 16de tot de 18de eeuw', *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 68 (1985) 157–172, there 167; Thomas Ernst van Goor, *Beschryving der stad en lande van Breda. Behelzende de oudheid van het graafschap stryen, deszelfs eerste bewoonderen, en oude gestalte, met een historisch verhael van het leven der graven van Stryen, en daar op gevolgde heeren van Breda* (Breda 1744) 172.

¹⁹ W.H. Vroom, *In tumultu gosico. Over relieken en geuzen in woelige tijden* (Amsterdam 1992) 16–21.

²⁰ Luc Duerloo, *Dynasty and piety. Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg political culture in an age of religious wars* (Farnham 2012) 285.

Netherlands before being reunited in the Carmelite convent in Brussels in 1626.²¹ The statue of Our Lady of 's-Hertogenbosch was smuggled to Brussels by Anna van Hambroeck after the city was captured by the Dutch in 1629. In Brussels it was first placed in the St Jabobschurch on the Koudenberg before it was transferred by four Capuchin monks from 's-Hertogenbosch to the St Gorikschurch where people started to venerate the miraculous statue again. In 1641 the statue returned to the St Jacobschurch because that church was closer to court, emphasizing the importance of the statue for Brussels and for Cardinal-infant Ferdinand, governor of the Habsburg Netherlands.²²

Hiding relics became common practice during the Revolt, but saints could also contribute to the local fight against heresy and keeping out the enemy.²³ In addition to their ability to protect against diseases and to cure the sick, saints interceded in difficult and dangerous situations during the Revolt as well. Indeed, some saints had already become known for their sympathy for local affairs during earlier conflicts. Our Lady of Halle, for example, had protected her city near Brussels from the invasion of Philip of Cleves in 1489. This intervention gave the population of Halle confidence that she would come to their aid again during the Revolt. And she did so in 1580 when the city was under attack by the rebel army (fig.18).²⁴



Fig.18 Collection of cannonballs from 1489 and 1580 in Halle (Church of Our Lady Halle).

Cleves in 1489. This intervention gave the population of Halle confidence that she would come to their aid again during the Revolt. And she did so in 1580 when the city was under attack by the rebel army (fig.18).²⁴

When miracles took place, heretics were punished, the faithful were protected and comforted and hesitant believers were converted instantly. Many instance of punishment for the violation of sacred objects, such as images or relics of saints, were recorded during the troubles.²⁵ In Mechelen the statue of the apostle Paul had been miraculously saved during the English Fury in 1580. Three Beggars holding the statue wanted to throw it from the roof

²¹ Margry and Caspers, *101 bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, 412–413.

²² Peter Nissen, 'Zoete Lieve Moeder 's-Hertogenbosch', databank bedevaarten, Meertens Instituut, via <http://www.meertens.knaw.nl>, consulted 19 November 2013.

²³ And as Lex van Tilborg informed me, these stories also circulated in France where the Virgin caught cannonballs in her lap during the siege of Chartres by the Huguenots in 1568. Henry Lehr, *La Réforme et les Églises Réformées dans le Département actuel d'Eure-et-Loir (1523-1911)* (Paris 1912) 68–70.

²⁴ Remy Janssens, *Halle 700 jaar Mariastad* (Halle 1964) 123.

²⁵ Frijhoff, 'The function of a miracle', 118–122.

of the church of the Poor Clares but had fallen down and died.²⁶ Sometimes the intervention of saints also ensured that little damage was done to their images. In Roermond in Gelre iconoclasts knocked over the altar but were unable to find the relics that were kept inside it.²⁷ In Antwerp the statue of St Willibrord had been rescued from a fire during the iconoclasm in 1566, without being damaged. During the Twelve Years' Truce the statue returned to the church of Our Lady, and miracles occurred almost immediately.²⁸

Some statues of the Virgin became particularly famous during the Revolt. One example is Our Lady of Consolation from a Carmelite convent just outside Vilvoorde in Brabant. The Virgin saved the nuns in the convent on separate occasions. In 1578 and in 1587 she appeared on the walls of the convent dressed in snow white to protect the nuns. In 1578 she prevented the Beggars from plundering the convent by sapping their courage and causing them to fall from the convent's walls. Subsequently the nuns took the statue of the Virgin and fled to Vilvoorde. In 1587, after the nuns had returned to their convent, rebels arrived again. This time the statue of the Virgin became too heavy for the rebels to carry, and when they tried to burn it, it did not catch fire. Moreover, the Virgin was said to have saved the city's bailiff. To commemorate these occasions two paintings were made for the convent's church, one portraying how the Virgin made the Beggars fall from the convent's walls and the other commemorating in a Latin text her role in the bailiff's 1587 deliverance.²⁹

In the meantime the statue had become famous in Mechelen, Brussels and Antwerp as well. In 1579, as Vilvoorde was threatened by Calvinists, one of the lay sisters of the convent, Katharina Vayers, dressed as a poor beggar woman, rolled the statue in a bundle of straw and walked to Mechelen. There she brought it to the house of one of the captains in the king's army who allowed the nuns to furnish one of the rooms in his house as a chapel for their statue. When the 'English fury' hit Mechelen in 1580 the statue of Our Lady was spared since the soldiers that entered the captain's house were so taken by the sight of praying nuns that they left without doing them any harm.³⁰ In 1621 and 1635 the nuns were forced to leave their convent once again. The first time they took their statue by carriage to Brussels where Archduchess Isabella ordered that it should be placed in the city's beguinage. The second time the nuns took it to Antwerp where pilgrims were able to find their way to Our

²⁶ Jozef Cuypers van Alsinghen, *Provincie, stad, ende district van Mechelen. Opgeheldert in haere kercken, kloosters, kapellen, gods-huysen, gelden, publieke plaetsen* II (Brussels 1770) 195.

²⁷ Frijhoff, 'The function of a miracle', 121.

²⁸ Marie Juliette Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen (1585-1676). Kerkelijk leven in een grootstad* (Brussels 1995) 251.

²⁹ Z.E.P. van der Speeten, *O.L.V.-ten-troost te Vilvoorden of, korte geschiedenis van het klooster en van het beeld onder dien naam bekend* (Grimberghen 1909) 44–50.

³⁰ Ibidem, 44–50.

Lady of Consolation as well. Indeed, she became so famous that upon the nuns' return to Vilvoorde the abbess decided that it was necessary to build a new convent in her honor.³¹

Relics of the Revolt

While the status of traditional relics could increase due to their involvement in the war, the Revolt also created a substantial number of new relics. The presence of all sorts of Revolt-related objects such as armor, clothing, cannonballs, pigeons, rudders, smashed glass and broken statues evoked stories about the war. More importantly, what set these relics apart from objects that were specially commissioned to commemorate the Revolt is that they had served other functions before the war but that their meaning had changed due to the war. This category of relics can therefore not be separated from the time and place that transformed their significance. Before they became relics, these ordinary objects had served a practical, religious or decorative purpose, but after the Revolt they were cherished as material memories. Moreover, the ordinary nature of the original object ensured that its cultural value increased dramatically as a relic. To retain its power, however, it was essential to maintain the relationship between the object itself, the story and claim of authenticity that connected it to the war. Without this story the object either returned to its former function or lost its value altogether.

For example, in the town hall in Leiden two stuffed pigeons were placed on display. These were the pigeons that had collected letters from the prince of Orange in Delft in Holland during the siege of Leiden in 1574, which had given the population hope of relief. After their death the pigeons' owner offered them to the magistrate, which decided to put the stuffed animals on display.³² In the castle of Breda a wooden rudder could be seen. The rudder was the only surviving part of the peat barge that had successfully attacked the city in 1590. The cunning way in which soldiers hid inside the barge before overpowering the castle's garrison was the main theme in Breda's memory culture of the Revolt. From 1590 until 1625 the barge had been on display on the market square until it had been burnt by the Habsburg army in 1625. Yet, the rudder resurfaced in 1637 after the Dutch reconquered Breda. The long history of this piece of wood during the Revolt made it an important relic for

³¹ Ibidem, 41–83; Guido Marnef, 'Een maat voor niets? (1559-1596) De episcopaten van Granvelle en Hauchin', in: Patricia Quaghebeur and Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld (eds.), *Het aartsbisdom Mechelen-Brussel. 450 jaar geschiedenis* (Antwerp 2009) 62–97, there 88; Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed Vlaanderen, De Inventaris van het Bouwkundig Erfgoed, Kapelletje van Stee(n)voort, ID: 70599, <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/dibe/relict/70599>, consulted 4 July 2013.

³² Jori Zijlmans, *Leidens Ontzet. Vrijheidssrijd & volksfeest. De 3-oktobercollectie in Museum De Lakenhal* (Leiden 2011) 68; Emanuel van Meteren, *Historie van de oorlogen en geschiedenissen der Nederlanden, en der zelve naburen. Beginnende met den jare 1315, en eindigende met den jare 1611* (Breda 1749) 278; Ingrid W.L. Moerman and R.C.J. van Maanen (eds.), *Leiden. Eeuwig feest* (Leiden 1986) 20.

the city to cherish.³³ In the Koudenberg palace in Brussels the horse that saved Archduke Albert's life during the siege of Ostend was stuffed and put on display for centuries.³⁴

Not only governments, however, kept relics of sieges and other episodes during the Revolt. Individuals such as Captain Falaiseau kept items like the damaged cuirass he had worn at the siege of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629.³⁵ In Bergen op Zoom in Brabant a person (and his descendants) cherished at home for centuries a fork and spoon that used to be the property of a local Catholic clergyman.³⁶ These objects were even recognizable as relics since they were decorated with an inscription that stated their provenance and therefore guaranteed their authenticity. These claims were as important for traditional as well as for new relics because the objects relied on their authenticity for their status. While traditional relics were subject to investigation by the bishop who could guarantee them a certain degree of authenticity, new (non-religious) relics of the Revolt had to rely on their story for authenticity. Forgeries thus could easily find their way into the commemoration of particular episodes.³⁷ Nevertheless, whether an object was genuinely connected to an episode or not, as long as people believed it had been present during a siege or attack, it could serve as a material memory of the Revolt. For instance, emergency money of the siege of Leiden was forged immediately after 1574 and could be bought as a memento.³⁸ Since it was presented as actual emergency money, people believed they were receiving or buying relics of the Revolt and cherished them accordingly. The presence of forgeries therefore is a sign of the status of relics within the local community.

The examples above show that any object had the potential to become a relic of the Revolt, but there are several groups of relics we can distinguish in particular. Collecting trophies of war was a common phenomenon in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.³⁹ Whether the story attached to the objects was individual, local or national they were usually put on display and served as (public) reminders of war. These relics could reflect the desire

³³ Marianne Eekhout, 'Celebrating a Trojan horse. Memories of the Dutch Revolt in Breda, 1590-1650', in: Erika Kuijpers et al. (eds.) *Memory before Modernity. The practices of memory in early modern Europe* (Leiden 2013), 129-147, passim.

³⁴ Antoine Creel, 'Recit jubilé Anvers', 1685, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussels (KBB), Ms. 18991-92, f. 67v; see also Francis van Noten, 'The horses of Albert and Isabella. Historical background', in: Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (eds.) *Albert and Isabella 1598-1621. Essays* (Leuven 1998) 343-345.

³⁵ Anonymous, Kuras ritmeester Falaiseau, before 1629, brass, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam inv nr NG-NM-9310-100.

³⁶ Adriaan Pit, *Catalogus van goud en zilverwerken benevens zilveren, loden en bronzen plaquetten* (Amsterdam 1952) 127.

³⁷ See for example the relics of local hero Pieter Adriaansz van der Werf from Leiden Zijlmans, *Leidens Ontzet*, 77-79; Marianne Eekhout, 'Herinnering in beeld. Relieken van Leidens ontzet', *Leids jaarboekje* 103 (2011) 33-47, there 42.

³⁸ Arent Pol, *Het noodgeld van Leiden. Waarheid en verbeelding* (The Hague 2007) 15-21.

³⁹ See for example Jeremy Black, *War in the early modern world* (London 1999) 163; Kenneth Meyer Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia 1991) 440; Fred Sandstedt, *In hoc signo vinces. A presentation of the Swedish state trophy collection* (Stockholm 2006).

to point to the enemy who had been defeated and therefore be displayed as trophies of war, but they could also be connected to what the population had gone through.

During wars trophies that were captured from the enemy were often put on display.⁴⁰ Anything could become a trophy, such as the bridge used by the enemy to storm the walls of Alkmaar in Holland in 1573. This particular bridge was put on display in the local church but also resurfaced in several paintings of the siege of Alkmaar.⁴¹ Banners were of interest because they not only served as identification of a certain regiment or ship in a battle but were also representations of authority. Indeed, defending this symbol was important during war and thus capturing and putting a banner on display was an important statement.⁴² In the Koudenberg palace in Brussels, for example, one of the rooms was filled with banners the Habsburgs had taken from their enemies.⁴³ In the Dutch Republic the largest collection of banners earned in sieges and battles on land and sea could be found in the great assembly hall of the States General in The Hague in Holland. In 1607, for example, the States General had received three flags and a silk banner from the admiralty of Amsterdam that they had conquered during the battle of Gibraltar.⁴⁴ In 1651 all these banners were depicted in a painting in which they can be seen hung from the assembly hall's ceiling.⁴⁵ In an urban setting banners were also an important statement. In Holland Leiden's Pieterschurch held a banner of the San Matteo, a ship captured from the Spanish Armada in 1588 by several Dutch ships.⁴⁶ In Hoorn in the north of Holland a banner from an enemy ship conquered during the battle at the Zuiderzee was the most important local relic of the Revolt. Significantly, the banner was connected to a heroic story of how one of Hoorn's inhabitants had managed to capture the relic. In October 1573 Jan Haring had climbed the mast of the flagship of the Spanish commander, Admiral Maximilien de Hénin-Lietard, count of Bossu, and had taken down the banner of the admiral's ship; soon Bossu was forced to surrender.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ This practice was a European phenomenon, see for example Francis W. Carter, *Trade and urban development in Poland. An economic geography of Cracow, from its origins to 1795* (Cambridge 1994) 364; Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and crusade in medieval Spain* (Philadelphia 2003) 191.

⁴¹ Anonymous, 'Aantekeningen gemaakt by een ooggetuige ten tyde van 't Beleg van Alkmaar' Regionaal Archief Alkmaar (RAA), via <http://www.regionaalarchiefalkmaar.nl/>, consulted 25 November 2013, f.114; See for example Pieter Adriaensz Cluyt, *De belegering van Alkmaar door de Spanjaarden, gezien vanuit het noorden*, 1580, oil on panel, Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar, inv nr 020856.

⁴² See for the importance of the banner in battles Klaus Bussmann and Heinz Schilling (eds.), *1648. War and peace in Europe* (Munich 1998) 89; Christon Archer, *World History of Warfare* (Lincoln 2002) 311.

⁴³ Creel, 'Recit jubilé Anvers', f. 66v–67r.

⁴⁴ *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal Oude en Nieuwe Reeks 1576-1625 XIV* (The Hague 1970) 36, via <http://www.historici.nl>, consulted 25 November 2013.

⁴⁵ Bartholomeus van Bassen, Anthonie Palamedesz (formerly attributed to Dirck van Delen), *De Ridderzaal op het Binnenhof tijdens de Grote Vergadering van 1651*, ca. 1651, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv nr SK-C-1350.

⁴⁶ Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek, VI, Pieter van der Does, 435, via <http://www.historici.nl/retroboeken/nbnbw/> consulted 4 July 2011.

⁴⁷ Theodorus Velius, *Chronijck vande Stadt van Hoorn* (Hoorn 1604) 188.

Subsequently, the banner was taken to shore and put on display in Hoorn's main church 'for perpetual remembrance'.⁴⁸

These banners were taken to the local church to be put on display instead of to the town hall or another secular institution. In the Dutch Republic the church was the location to put (local) trophies of war on show.⁴⁹ While Protestant communities may not have cherished traditional relics, they did keep new relics such as banners and swords in a religious setting, thus increasing the status of the objects, although rarely to the point of veneration.⁵⁰ While traditional relics were considered a bridge between the believer and the saint they represented, new relics invoked only the commemoration of a certain event. They functioned as pieces of history which could be beheld in the local church. In Catholic communities this additional layer of memory was attached to the traditional relics as well. Moreover, traditional relics and those commemorating secular events could function side by side in Catholic churches.

Another category of relics that emerged after iconoclasm in the Northern Netherlands was that of smashed statues. While the banners are more difficult to match with their place in the local church, the statues were sometimes left with their heads cut off in the church in which they originated. This type of commemoration highlighted iconoclasm and what Protestants had done to the traditional church interior. In Utrecht's Domchurch, for example, the St Anna retable lost the heads of the portrayed saints during the 1580 iconoclasm but still remained in place.⁵¹ A similar destruction of heads could be seen in Brabant. In Breda's Great Church the depiction of Our Lady of Sorrows was partially ruined.⁵² A description by English traveler William Lord Fitzwilliam in April 1663 illustrates that the damaged statues remained on show for the congregation to behold and reflect upon. He visited the Janschurch in 's-Hertogenbosch where he saw

several tombs, the chiefest is a bishop's of this place, all cut out in stone, on his knees and formerly he had a mitre on his head and his hands crossed together. But

⁴⁸ 'Die van Hoorn hingen oock de vlagge van t'Admijraelschip in haer groote kerck tot een eeuwig gedachtenisse' Velius, *Chronijck Vande Stadt Van Hoorn*, 190.

⁴⁹ Carol Janson, 'Public places, private lives. The impact of the Dutch Revolt on the Reformed churches in Holland', in: Arthur K. Wheelock (ed.), *The public and private in Dutch culture of the Golden Age* (London 2000) 181–190, there 203.

⁵⁰ Johannes Samuel Swaan, 'Iets, over het zwaard van Bossu', *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (1818) 233–236; Johannes Samuel Swaan, 'Nog iets over het zwaard van Bossu te Enkhuizen', *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (1818) 514–518; for the sword of Willem Blois van Treslong in the church in Wieringen see http://www.michaelskerk.org/zwaard_bloys_van_treslong.htm, consulted on 11 November 2013.

⁵¹ Domkerk Utrecht, Zandstenen retabel St Anna te Drieën; J.B.A. Terlingen and G.M.J. Engelbrecht, *De Dom van Utrecht. Symboliek in steen* (Utrecht 2004) 47.

⁵² De Grote Kerk in Breda, visited 5 July 2011, information available at the church.

at the taking of this town [1629], some over-zealous soldier did cut off his mitre and arms.⁵³

Leaving these damaged statues on view was a visible reminder of what had happened during the Revolt and what Protestants thought about saints and their images. Yet, as we have seen in chapter one, other reminders of iconoclasm were scarce. Some prints were published, but paintings of the subject did not appear until well into the seventeenth century. Therefore this obvious act of commemoration of iconoclasm in local churches stands out. Why did the church wardens leave these statues in place, especially in a community's main church? Were they so practical that they thought removing these big statues, retables and monuments would leave major gaps to be filled, or was there a purposeful decision to leave them in place? Did they hesitate to remove them for fear of offending certain families in the community? The answers to these questions may never be known, but the Revolt would forever be visible in the mutilated images of these saints.

Cannonballs

The relic that predominated in both the Northern and Southern Netherlands was the cannonball. This object epitomized the war as it represented the attacks on cities during the Revolt. When Dutch or Habsburg troops besieged or attacked a city, they usually used artillery fire to force the population to surrender. And, in the urban memory landscape, the cannonballs represented how the enemy had attacked the city from the outside and thus distracted attention from the civic struggles taking place within the city walls. Cannonballs symbolized a common enemy whose deadly weapons could hurt anyone in the community, and they became part of urban memory cultures across the Low Countries. From the early stages of the Revolt diligent citizens started to count every cannonball that hit their city during a siege.

In Leuven in Brabant, for instance, on some days the number of cannonballs was so high that it was entered in the history of the siege.⁵⁴ In Holland some people in Haarlem even kept lists on which they recorded the number of cannonballs per day (fig.19).⁵⁵ In Alkmaar

⁵³ Cornelis van Strien, *Touring the Low Countries. Accounts of British travellers, 1660-1720* (Amsterdam 1998) 208.

⁵⁴ Erycius Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven door Frederik Hendrik* (Laren 2007) 38, Dutch translation of Erycius Puteanus, *Eryci Puteani Historiae Belgiae liber singlularis, de obsidione Lovaniensi anni M.DC.XXXV Novi sub Ferdinando Principe belli auspicio* (Antwerp 1636).

⁵⁵ Samuel Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof der stad Haerlem in Holland* (Reprint 1628; Amsterdam 1974) 188-189; NoordHollands Archief (NHA), Nicolaas van Rooswijk, 'Notitie met aantekeningen betreffende bijzondere gebeurtenissen, alsmede het aantal per maand afgeschoten kanonskogels, tijdens het beleg van Haarlem door N. van Rooswijk', depot 44-001402 M.

the number of cannonballs that hit the city was even included in a painting of the siege of 1573.⁵⁶

The image shows two pages from a historical manuscript, likely a ledger or account book, detailing the number of cannonballs that hit Haarlem daily during the siege in 1572. The pages are handwritten in Dutch and feature columns for dates, locations, and counts of cannonballs. The left page is headed 'Dagboek' and the right page is headed 'Dagboek'. Both pages have columns for 'Dag' (Day), 'Plaats' (Place), and 'Aantal' (Number). The entries are organized by date, with the left page covering the period from January 1st to January 31st, and the right page covering the period from February 1st to February 28th. The manuscript is written in a cursive script typical of the 17th century.

Fig.19 List of cannonballs that hit Haarlem daily during the siege in 1572 (Noordhollands Archief Haarlem).

The integration of cannonballs into urban memory cultures was enabled both by the surviving tales about these flying objects and by the preservation of the actual balls themselves. Together these two elements made cannonballs the predominant local relic in Protestant and Catholic areas of the Low Countries during the Revolt. Of course, cities in which cannonballs and their tales figured in local memory cultures had to have been besieged or attacked by artillery fire, but the long war and the many sieges ensured that many cities had suffered from enemy bombardments. Furthermore, cherishing cannonballs as such is not unique to the Low Countries. In England there are several examples of cannonballs that hit buildings during the Civil War and stayed in place as relics, and in Spain there is at least one cannonball that was kept after the war of succession in 1709 in a church in Alicante.⁵⁷ Yet, the many stories that persist in the Low Countries, even when the objects

⁵⁶ Pieter Adriaensz Cluit, *De belegering van Alkmaar door de Spanjaarden, gezien vanuit het noorden*, 1580, oil on panel, Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar, inv nr 020856.

⁵⁷ In England two cannonballs of the Civil War have been enshrined as relics. The first hit a home in Weymouth in 1645, <http://www.weymouth-dorset.co.uk/town.html>, consulted 29 July 2013, the second hit the library of St John's College at Oxford in 1644, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/campus-curiosities/197751.article>, consulted 29 July 2013. In Spain: Bala de canon (1709), iron, Museo Naval Madrid, inv nr 208.

themselves have become lost, make cannonballs stand out in the memory culture of the Revolt.

Before turning to the actual objects and how they were kept and cherished it is important to understand which stories were connected to them. As stated above, the majority of the stories fitted into an urban memory culture about fighting a common enemy. While the records of men and women who were killed by cannonballs should not be forgotten, the most interesting tales often feature people who were hit by the cannonball but remained unharmed. The people who died on the spot were usually contributors to the defense of the city such as soldiers, messengers, or negotiators but seldom innocent bystanders.⁵⁸ By contrast, the people who were saved, generally had something special going for them. Depending on the area in the Low Countries they inhabited, these persons were protected by either divine intervention or a miracle.

The most likely people to survive being hit by a cannonball were devout men and dutiful women. In Haarlem in 1573

a citizen named Jacob [...] one day sat on a bench inside his house reading a Bible and there came a cannonball through the wall between his legs and [...] the bench was shattered but the man unharmed.⁵⁹

This citizen remained unharmed by the cannonball that flew through his wall because he was reading the Bible, or at least that is what the account by the Protestant author suggested. A similar incident also occurred in the Catholic city of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629

On the 10th [of June] the Beggars shot through the St Janschurch, hurting a man on his leg, who sat and made his confession.⁶⁰

In this case, the man was injured, but he did survive. The element of the confession therefore seems a significant reason to explain his survival.

⁵⁸ For example *lovrnael oft dach-register van alle het memorabelste datter binnen de stadt 'Shertoghen-Bosch (sints datse belegert worde tot den dagh van't overgeven) voorgevallen is*, (Amsterdam 1629) e.g. 4 June, 29 June, 4 July; Joannes Arcerius, *Historie ende een waerachtich Verhael van al die dinghen die gheschiet zijn, van dach tot dach* (Knuttel 201; Delft 1573), 12 January; NHA, Afschrift door NN van een beschrijving van het beleg van Haarlem door Gerard Stuver, depot 44-001558M, f. 9; Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven*, 39.

⁵⁹ 'een borger genaempt Jacob [...] saet op een tyt binnen zyn huysse aen een banck Lesende in een Bybel ende daer quam een cloot deur den muur tusschen syn beenen duer ende [...] den banck aen stucken den man ongequest zyn'. Nicolaas van Rooswijk, 'Notitie', without page numbers.

⁶⁰ 'Op den 10. dito schoten de Geusen door S. Jans kerck, een man aen zijn been quetsende, die hem sat en biechte'. *lovrnael oft dach-register*, 10 June.

In addition to devout men, dutiful women might be rescued, especially if they were performing their daily work such as cooking, cleaning, or mending clothes on the actual moment of impact. In 's-Hertogenbosch

The apron of a woman drawing a tankard of beer was shot in her belly by a cannonball, and the tankard broke to pieces, without her being hurt anywhere else.⁶¹

The very same thing happened to Maritge Jansdochter in Haarlem in 1573 who was carrying a jug of milk.⁶² An even more spectacular story was recorded in Alkmaar in 1573 when

A cannonball of 40 pounds in weight entered a house, and broke a washtub, where a woman was washing, and a spinning wheel and chair on which a girl spun, without harming anyone, however, even though there were seven people in the house.⁶³

The ordinary household activities these women were engaged in, such as spinning and washing, seem to have saved them from harm (fig. 20). Even if women did not survive it was not the cannonball itself that killed them. In 's-Hertogenbosch the steward's wife sat on a stool when a cannonball hit her. She died three days later because she had fallen from her chair and sustained serious injuries.⁶⁴ In Alkmaar a woman was



Fig.20 The cannonball attached to this house in the Appelsteeg in Alkmaar is presumed to be the one that only just missed the seven women during the siege of Alkmaar in 1573.

⁶¹ 'worde een vrou, die een kanne bier tapte, met een canonkogel de voorschoot vande buyck gheschoten en. de kan voor "t vat in stucken, sonder anders beschadicht te zijn'. *Iovrnael oft dach-register*.

⁶² Simon Groenveld, *T'is ghenoegh, oorloghs mannen. De Vrede van Munster, de afsluiting van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog* (The Hague 1997) 43.

⁶³ 'een kogel in een huis gekoomen zyn van 40 pond gewigts, welke een waschtobbe, waer aen een Vrouw stond the wasschen, en een Spinnewiel en Stoel waerop een meisje spon verbrak, zonder egter iemand te quetsen, schoon zeven menschen in huis waeren'. S. Eikelenberg, *Alkmaar en zyne geschiedenissen* (Rotterdam 1747) 255; See also RAA, 'Aantekeningen gemaakt by een ooggetuige', f. 96.

⁶⁴ C.R. Hermans, *Verzameling van zeldzame oorkonden betreffende het beleg van 's Hertogenbosch in den jare 1629* ('s-Hertogenbosch 1850) 52.

standing at the counter cutting food for her children when a cannonball hit the kitchen. The woman died not from the impact but from fear.⁶⁵ While the occasional death of an ordinary woman thus definitely occurred, authors preferred to focus on those instances where women (and even children) were spared, or they elaborated on the fact that it was not the cannonball itself that killed her.⁶⁶

What sets the tales about pious men and dutiful women apart from ordinary stories about people dying from cannonballs is the amount of detail included.⁶⁷ It seems that when the memories of those experiences considered special were recorded, the author was inclined to authenticate his story with as much evidence as he could provide. Moreover, the author sometimes even remarked on the miraculous nature of what he had seen in his city. Author Johannes Arcerius, for instance, not only emphasized the fact that he had seen with his own eyes how a young girl was hit but not hurt during the siege of Haarlem, but also what he thought had happened to the cannonball.

These things happened during the whole time of the siege, so that may be a matter of public record that [the enemy's] fierce and horrid cannonballs that were sufficient to destroy all, [have been] made powerless by the Lord or by his command have been shot in the wind to no avail or have not done too much damage.⁶⁸

It had thus been the power of God and his divine intervention that saved many from a certain death by a cannonball. Yet, in Protestant cities dutiful women not only sat at home, but they also helped the men in their work on defending the city. In Haarlem one of the burgomasters of the city recalled

I have seen the clothes of a young maid who carried earth this day on the town wall shot from her naked body with a large cannonball of 46 pounds in such a way that people had to cover her with a cloak and her body was totally unharmed.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ RAA, 'Aantekeningen gemaakt by een ooggetuige', f. 116v.

⁶⁶ In Haarlem children were saved as well. Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof*, 191.

⁶⁷ Compare, for example, *Iovrnael oft dach-register*, 5 June; Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof*, 191; RAA, Pieter Visser, 'Cort verhael van die ghesciedenis ende belegeringhe der stat Alcmaer anno 1573', via <http://www.regionaalarchiefalkmaar.nl/>, consulted 25 November 2013, f. 116v; Arcerius, *Historie ende een waerachtich Verhael*, 12, 26 and 28 January.

⁶⁸ 'Dierghelijcke dinghen zijnder ditmael ghebeurt die gantsche tijt des belegerings tot de welcke openbaer verstaen mach werden dat haer felle en grijselicke clooten die ghenoechsaem waren om al te vernielen vanden Heer oft crachteloos gemaect oft door zijn ghebode te vergeefs in die wint gheschoten zijn of alzoos niet veel schades hebben ghedaen', Arcerius, *Historie ende een waerachtich verhael*, 28 January.

⁶⁹ 'Ick heb gesien op desen dagh boven op de wal een jonge maeght was die aerde gingh dragen haer kleederen van haer maeckte lichaem geschooten worden met Een grote Cloot van 46 pondt In sulcken voegen dat mense em der Eeran willen met een mantel moesten bedecken en was nogtans aen haer Lichaem gans niet beschadigt', Stuver, *Beleg van Haarlem*, NHA.

Fortunately this young woman who carried earth to the city wall survived, but in Alkmaar one of the girls helping out during the siege was not so lucky.

Around midday a cannonball was shot from the flourmill, outside the Vriesegate, about 15 pounds heavy, through a wall in the Franciscan church, more than 2 feet thick around six feet high [...] And the top of the head of the young daughter of the brushmaker on the Nieuwe Sloot, who was standing in the middle of the church, was struck by aforementioned cannonball, so that the brain clung to the walls and [she] died instantly, many were astonished because the cannonball entered the church so high and the daughter fell dead so mysteriously, it was the first time this girl was carrying [earth].⁷⁰

What stands out here is the fact that the young girl was not only killed, but bystanders were astonished at how this happened. It seems that she was carrying earth to the wall near the Franciscan church and was hit while she was still inside the building. Apparently the author found it hard to believe that she could be killed at all. Whether this was because she was serving the good cause, she was still so young, or she was only a girl is unclear but the event is described as an anomaly. Yet, again the amount of detail given indicates that the author wanted to authenticate his story, especially in this case, when it was an example of a young girl dying from a cannonball.

While women in Protestant stories could join in the defense of their city, Catholic authors felt that women were not supposed to help in these matters. During the siege of Maastricht in 1579 therefore the Catholic author remarked upon a curious incident near the city's walls.

Two women carried a bucket of earth to a breach, the one was a follower of Luther and the other Catholic. The latter was forced to do this work; secretly she was praying and used a rope with knots as rosary because she had no other. So she prayed to God to protect His Church, and her companion blamed her for this and mocked her.

⁷⁰ 'omtrent die middach werde een clood gescooten van de Meelmoelen, buyten de Vriesepoort, swaer omtrent 15. pont, door een muer, ruym 2 voeten dick in de Minnebroeders kerck, hooch omtrent ses voeten uiter aerden ende belienende aen(-)de suytwest sijde van der kerck. Ende een jonghe dochter van de Berstelmaker op die Nieuwe Sloot staende midden in de kercke, werde met die voerseide clood die pan van haer hooft gescooten, dattet breyn aen(-)de mueren spranck ende was terstont doot, daer veel volcx af verwondert was, daer die clood so hooch in de kerck quam ende die dogter so miraculoos doot bleef, het was die dochter haer eerste reyse dat sij dragen soude.' Visser, *cort verhael*, f. 116r. Although 'jonghe dochter' can mean maid / woman as well I have chosen to interpret it as daughter in this context.

At that moment a bullet struck her [the Lutheran woman] in her chest so she fell dead on the spot. The Catholic woman survived.⁷¹

While these two women carried earth to help in the defense, there is a strict distinction in who is hurt and who is not. The Lutheran woman is killed almost immediately for mocking the Catholic woman and participating in the defense. The Catholic woman, however, is different in two respects: she does not participate voluntarily, and she is such a devout Catholic that she used a rope as rosary. In fact, she put her faith in God to protect the church and He did.

In addition to putting their trust in God, as Protestants did as well during the sieges, Catholics had another weapon: their reliance on (patron) saints, and especially the Virgin, to come to their rescue. As we have already seen, miracles occurred regularly during the troubles, but during sieges the protection was even more spectacular. For example in Venlo in Limburg in 1632 the population was convinced that the Virgin had protected the city because her statue had remained intact.⁷² In 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629 the Virgin was specifically called upon to rescue the population.⁷³ In Halle near Brussels the Virgin offered her protection to the city in 1580 as she had done during an attack in 1489 as well. As scholar Justus Lipsius recorded in his history of the Virgin's miracles

The danger, the roaring, and the dismay were great everywhere, but the citizens have been steadfast in invoking the Holy Virgin devoutly [...] around the evening the enemy was beaten off with great losses amongst them, and they [the enemy] said themselves that the Holy Virgin had been against them.⁷⁴

⁷¹ 'Twee vrouwen droegen een korf aarde naar de bres, de eene was een volgeling van Luther en de andere was katholiek. Deze laatste was gedwongen dit werk te doen; heimelijk liep zij te bidden en zij gebruikte een touw met knopen als rozenkrans, want een andere had zij niet. Zoo bad zij God dat Hij Zijn kerk zou beschutten, en haar gezellin verweet haar dit en bespote haar. Op dat oogenblik trof haar een kogel in de borst zoodat zij op de plaats dood bleef. De katholieke vrouw bleef behouden.' J. Brouwer, *Kronieken van Spaansche soldaten. Uit het begin den tachtigjarigen oorlog* (Zutphen 1933) 290.

⁷² Margry and Caspers, *101 bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, 492.

⁷³ 'Journael off dach-register van 't gene binnen de stadt 's Hertogenbosch sinds de belegeringe voorgevallen is', in: C.R. Hermans (ed.), *Verzameling van kronyken, charters en oorkonden betrekkelyk de stad en Meijerij van 's-Hertogenbosch* ('s Hertogenbosch 1847) 65–90, there 84.

⁷⁴ 'Het peryckel, 't ghetier, ende die verslaghentheyte was over al seer groot, maer die Borghers zyn daer inne stantvastigh gheweest, dat sy die Heylighe Maghet vierighlyck hebben gheweest aenroepen [...] omtrent den avondt worde die vyandt afgheslaghen met groot verlies van den synen: ende beleedt selve dat die Heylighe Maghet hem was teghen gheweest.' Justus Lipsius and Philippus Numan, *Die heylighe maghet van Halle, door Ivstvs Lipsivs. Hare weldaden ende mirakelen oordententlijck ende ghetrouwelijck beschreven* (Brussels 1643) 33.

Moreover, it was said that the Virgin appeared on the city's walls catching cannonballs in her lap before returning to the main altar of her church, covered with soot from all the gun smoke.⁷⁵

The Virgin also lent a hand to individuals who needed her help defending the city. In 's-Hertogenbosch Alderman Robbert van Voorne wrote

One of the trouser-legs from a soldier has been shot off by a canon of 15 or 16 pounds, and kept hanging in the other trouser-leg, without harming the soldier, who himself described it as a miracle of the Holy Mother of God.⁷⁶

The soldier himself attributed the miracle to the Virgin without any doubt. Not only was she the patron saint of 's-Hertogenbosch, but who else would help a soldier in need? Maybe he even knew the story of a previous siege in 1603 when the Virgin had helped out another soldier. That soldier watched a cannonball come straight at him, but it dropped dead in front of his feet because of the Virgin's intervention.⁷⁷ Moreover, the Virgin also used gunshot herself to stop heretics from mocking her. After one soldier told his comrades that he would 'cut off the nose' of her statue in 's-Hertogenbosch, she interfered and with 'one shot of a gun [...] has shot the nose right off this fellow'.⁷⁸ And when a soldier outside Halle proclaimed that he would take the Virgin's statue with him to Brussels to burn it publicly, God struck this blasphemer's mouth and chin by cannon shot to punish him.⁷⁹ By offering her protection against foreign troops and heretics the Virgin thus became the symbol of fighting against a common enemy. The Catholics' resilience was demonstrated by their trust in the saint but also by telling tales about cannonballs to remember the (victorious) struggle against the enemy.

⁷⁵ Luc Duerloo and Marc Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel. Het Jeruzalem van de Lage Landen* (Leuven 2002) 34; Janssens, *Halle 700 jaar Mariastad*, 125.

⁷⁶ 'Een soldaet is met een canon van 15 oft 16 ponden gescoten de een pyp van syn broeck aff, ende is inde andere pype vande broecke blyven hangen, sonder den soldaet te quetsen, die t'selve als een miraeckel toeschryft de heylige moeder Godts.' Hermans, *Verzameling van zeldzame oorkonden* I, 40.

⁷⁷ H. Hens et al., *Mirakelen van Onze Lieve Vrouw te 's-Hertogenbosch, 1381-1603* (Tilburg 1978) 673–674; Marc Wingens, *Over de grens. De bedevaart van katholieke Nederlanders in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Nijmegen 1994) 40.

⁷⁸ 'Die H. Maghet hadde dit voornemen ghehoort ende beschickt dat desen soldaet soude betaelt worden met sulckx als hy hadde meynen te doen [...] eenen scheut van eender busse [...] die desen quant recht synen neuse heeft af-geschoten'. Lipsius and Numan, *Die heylighe maghet van Halle*, 37.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

From flying enemy to relic

Once the cannonballs had hit the city, and their tales had been recorded, the objects were integrated into urban memory cultures. The stories were spectacular, but in order to become a relic the original object needed to remain closely connected to the tale. Only the relationship between cannonball and story would ensure its status as relic and prove its authenticity in the future. This quest for authenticity and evidence made this relic much like its traditional counterpart. Fortunately, many of the cannonballs were still available after the siege and when the fighting stopped citizens and town officials went out to collect them from the streets. After the Spanish left Wesel in 1586 cannonballs were collected and hung from the windows of the town hall facing the market place.⁸⁰ In 1635 Professor Erycius Puteanus also remarked on the number of cannonballs that he found in the city of Leuven after the siege, like those

collected and kept in the citadel and around the citadel by my son and my servants and elsewhere by others.⁸¹

Whether on private or government initiative, cannonballs were thus gathered after sieges and not only to be reused as weaponry. Some of them ended up in town halls, churches or on display in private homes.

The combination of the tales with the original cannonball made the objects even more meaningful relics in urban memory cultures. Yet, the location where they were displayed also said much about the importance of the cannonball in the story of the siege or attack. As we have seen already, new relics often turned up in churches, and this is exactly what happened to the cannonballs as well. Church wardens wanted to remember the impact of cannonballs in their churches or chapels by replacing or keeping them in the exact location they had entered the church during a siege. In Halle, more than one hundred cannonballs from the sieges of 1489 and 1580 were on display in a separate, barred room with an explanatory plaque attached to the wall.⁸² In Haarlem the commander of the Jansheren commissioned a

⁸⁰ Jesse Spohnholz, *The tactics of toleration. A refugee community in the age of religious wars* (Newark 2011) 233–234; archeological evidence in the city of Breda shows how the chains have been connected to cannonballs in order to use them as decoration, with thanks to Hans de Kievith and Erik Peters of the Archeological Depot in Breda.

⁸¹ ‘Sed operaepretium sit, monstra haec glandium, non glandium, verbis repraesentare, quemadmodum in Arce, & circa Arcem a filiis domesticisque meis, alibi ab aliis, collectae sunt, & fervantur’. Erycius Puteanus, *Eryci Pvteani Historiae*, 106; see also Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven door Frederik Hendrik*, 41.

⁸² Janssens, *Halle 700 jaar Mariastad*, 125–126.

master mason to replace 'three iron balls [...] that were also shot inside in the same place'.⁸³ These cannonballs remained in the Heemstederkapel for centuries.⁸⁴

In 1577 the church wardens of St Bavo in Haarlem also allowed a cannonball to be placed in the interior of the church as a symbol of Calvinist resilience during the siege. According to legend, it entered the church while the minister Simon Simonszoon was preaching. The cannonball just missed him but hit the inner wall near the Heilige Geestkapel, where it still sits today (fig. 21).⁸⁵ To remind the public of the event, the year 1573 was painted underneath and an inscription was placed above it. By preserving the cannonball and the inscription the church wardens kept the memory of the siege alive. Not only did this act of preservation emphasize the way God had saved the minister but also the way the city had eventually been saved. Although the siege of 1573 had been lost and the city suffered under a Habsburg regime for four years, God had shown them mercy after 1577. This act of shared suffering at the hands of a common enemy should not be forgotten.



Fig.21 Cannonball in the wall of the Heilige Geestkapel in St Bavo church in Haarlem with explanatory date signed underneath.

In 1574 Zaltbommel in Gelre had a similar incident with a cannonball. A priest who served the Spanish army wrote in his journal about the rescue of a preacher and his flock during the siege of 1574.

The 29th of August, which was a Sunday, the Spaniards shot from Tuyl into the church of Bommel during the sermon. The ball landed first in front of the pulpit, but lifted itself up again and fell in the St Antonius building. No one was hurt, but the

⁸³ 'na heemsteder capelle daer dye drij iseren klotten in gemesselt binne dye oock in dye selfte plaetzen gescoten binnen'. NHA, Stadsarchief Haarlem, Jansklooster, 'Ontfange ende uijtgeve anno 1575', VIII-300, Loketkast 32-132-10-11.

⁸⁴ Wim Cerutti and Florence Kroon, *Van Commanderie van Sint-Jan tot Noord-Hollands Archiefgeschiedenis van het klooster en de kerk van de Ridderlijke Orde van het Hospitaal van Sint-Jan van Jeruzalem in Haarlem* (Haarlem 2007) 157–159.

⁸⁵ The provenance of this story is not entirely clear. It dates back to J. Wolff, *Beschrijving van de Groote of St. Bavo-kerk te Haarlem* (Haarlem 1845) 189-190. It is clear, however, that cannonballs were on display in St Bavo in the seventeenth century, see W. Mountague, *The delights of Holland* (London 1696) 109.

people listening to the sermon were very surprised, walked directly with their preacher from the church to the Regulars, and there they finished the sermon.⁸⁶

The cannonball that flew through the church left the congregation unharmed, but it did not leave the building. The church wardens left the cannonball in the exact place where it hit the wall. And apparently the story was told to anyone who visited the church. In 1611 English tourist Thomas Coryate described it in his travel journal

This Bommel is the farthest frontier towne westward of Gelderland, and memorable for one thing. For I saw a great bullet sticke in the Tower of their Church, even about the toppe which was shot by the enemy in the yeare 1574 which figures (1574) are subscribed in such great characters under the bullet, that a man may very plainly discerne them afarre off.⁸⁷

Coryate's account describes the cannonball in a different location than the priest which could mean that the cannonball had been moved, or that there may even have been more than one cannonball exhibited at the site. Yet, what Coryate's description also shows is that new relics became tourist attractions. In this, they can be compared to the traditional relics which attracted pilgrims. Moreover, the relic in Zaltbommel also demonstrates that it was the combination of the story, the object and the painting on the wall that made it successful.

The church's role as the place to keep and display relics, a function which it had exercised since the Middle Ages, thus continued during the seventeenth century. In the Habsburg Netherlands the traditional relics returned and were supplemented with new relics of the Revolt. In the Dutch Republic the new relics were integrated into the church interior, but not in the same way as the traditional Catholic relics had been. As we have already seen, the cannonballs were on display on walls, and flags hung from the ceiling of the church. Unlike the traditional relics that were on display in shrines and only came out several times a year, the new relics were constantly visible in the church interior.

⁸⁶ 'Den 29 Augusti, ende was een Sondach, schoeten die Spaeniers van Tuyl onder het sermoen in die kerrick van Bommel. Die cloet viel voir den preeckstoel neer, mer gaff sich weder op ende viel in St. Antoniuspant. Der worden nyemants gequest, mer 't volck in "t sermoen was seer verbaest, lyepen gelickhant mit haren predikant uut die kerck na den Regulieren, alwaer het sermoen voirt voleyndt worden'. Gasparus L'Agarge, *De blokkade van Zalt-Bommel. Dagverhaal van Gasparus de L'Agarge, geestelijke, behoorende tot het gevolg van Gillis de Berlaimont, heer van Hierges; hierin vindt men bijzonderheden wegens het voorgevallene voor Zalt-Bommel en omstreken, ook wegens den slag op de Mokerheide, 1574* (Arnhem 1925) 70.

⁸⁷ Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities. Hastily gobled up in five moneths travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands* (London 1611) 638.

Depictions of the Pieterschurch in Utrecht, for instance, show the cannonball that had destroyed the organ in 1577. After it hit the organ it was connected to the west end arch by a chain to commemorate the destruction. Once the organ was restored, an inscription was added to the cannonball to explain the events of 1577. In 1636 the cannonball appeared above the organ in a drawing by artist Pieter Saenredam. (fig.22). Yet, in the painting of the same church in 1644, he left it out. It has been suggested that this may have been because his private interest in history did not match the wishes of his patron.⁸⁸ Still, the focus of the painting also slightly differs from the drawing. Instead of the organ itself, the gallery and the open door on the right side of the painting form the centerpiece of this depiction of the Pieterschurch. Depicting the cannonball on the right would have taken attention away from the gallery and the door. One explanation that can certainly be ruled out, however, is that the cannonball was taken down between 1636 and 1644. Herman Saftleven portrayed the cannonball and inscription in their original place in 1674, after a terrific storm destroyed Utrecht. His drawing of the Pieterschurch clearly shows the cannonball in the top of an otherwise destroyed church (fig. 23).⁸⁹ Even the sign, which already shows in Saenredam's drawing still remained in situ.

⁸⁸ Janson, 'Public places, private lives', 203.

⁸⁹ Herman Saftleven, *Interieur van de Pieterskerk te Utrecht*, 1674, drawing, HUA, inv nr 28643.



Fig.22 Pieter Saenredam, interior of the Pieterskerk in Utrecht displaying the cannonball that hit the church in 1577 above the organ, 1636 (Het Utrechts Archief).



Fig.23 Herman Saftleven, Interior of the Pieterskerk in Utrecht displaying the cannonball after the storm of 1674, 1674 (Het Utrechts Archief).

Cannonballs were on display not only inside the church but could also be seen on the streets. We have already noted their display in town halls and churches, but they also appeared in houses. In 1635, Erycius Puteanus recorded how the population of Leuven in the Southern Netherlands incorporated cannonballs into the public display of local memories.

This [cannonball] hit the house on the market [...] in such a strange way, that it appeared to be put there by hand and places as a work of art. A beautiful birthmark in the fair face of the façade.⁹⁰

Puteanus appreciated the aesthetic value of cannonballs, but he also commemorated the importance of cannonballs for the urban community (fig. 24). The magistrate of Leuven similarly recognized the importance of cannonballs in the civic memory culture that developed after the siege of 1635. A poem by Puteanus was painted on a wall in the city stating

Which cannonball? From the enemy. Did it hurt? It only played with lightning while the French and the Dutch made their guns thunder. An omen lies in the projectile, the wall is decorated by the wound: the cannonball itself warns that the Grudii [people from Flanders, i.e. Leuven] could not be conquered.⁹¹



Fig.24 Erycius Puteanus, Depiction of the cannonballs Puteanus and his son found on the streets of Leuven after the siege of 1635 (University Library Leiden).

Cannonballs served as a warning to the enemy that Leuven could not be conquered; they were a symbol of glory. As Puteanus put it

⁹⁰ 'Hunc domus in foro publica [...] tam insolenti casu excepit; ut manu latus, & arte collocatus videatur. In pulchra aedificii facie pulcher naevus'. Puteanus, *Eryci Puteani Historiae*, 99; Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven door Frederik Hendrik*, 38.

⁹¹ 'Quis globus? hostilis. Laesitne? at fulmine lusit, galli tormentis dum batavique tonant. Omen inest telo, decoratur vulnere murus: non vinci grudios, admonet ipse globus'. Puteanus, *Eryci Puteani Historiae*, 100; Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven*, 38–39. The term Grudii (or grudios) is used for one of the tribes in Gallia Belgica during the time of Julius Caesar which is now the area of Flanders. Eckart Olshausen, 'Grudii', in: Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.) *Brill's New Pauly*, via <http://brillonline.nl/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/grudii-e12222320>, consulted 26 February 2014.

Besides that this is already an indication and mark of honor for the besieged, defended, and liberated city, others will, not without admiration, call it a sign of glory and a monument.⁹²

In places such as Leuven where the citizens had successfully defended their city, cannonballs became trophies of war: reminders of the fruitless attack by the enemy. The same went for the cannonballs attached to houses that became known as the 'house with the cannonball' in Northern cities such as Leiden and Alkmaar in Holland.⁹³ For Leiden the reference to the cannonball seems rather strange since during the siege of 1574, there had been almost no bombing. Instead of surrounding the city and attacking it with artillery fire every so often, the Spanish sealed Leiden off from supplies in order to starve the population. This cannonball was claimed to have been found in one of the sconces outside the city, and therefore does not have a story of divine intervention connected to it. Instead it became a relic of the relief of Leiden.

Cannonballs attached to houses were as much a statement about the importance of relics as those on display at public places such as town halls and churches. Indeed, some of the most famous cannonballs were cherished in private. As we have seen already, several ingredients were necessary for a relic to become famous: it needed to be in its original location, on display and attached to a spectacular story. A local hit in Haarlem seemed to have been the story of Magdalena van Schoten.

Also [...] a cannonball was fired in the Soemelkenwittebrood alley into the iron grille of the house of Lord Schoten, which flew through the room and played around the bed in which Miss Magdalena van Schoten lay, without harming or pushing her from the bed. Its course was broken in the same room in which the ball hung for many years in the said grille on an iron chain as a memorial and is still kept for the same reason by her son, the honorable Willem Vader.⁹⁴

⁹² 'nisi index potius titulusque obsessae, defensae, ac liberatae urbis, non sine admiratione spectabilis. Signum gloriae ac monumentum alii appellabunt'. Puteanus, *Eryci Puteani Historiae*, 99; Puteanus, *Het beleg van Leuven*, 38.

⁹³ C. Seyn, *Catalogus van oudheden en bijzonderheden, betreffende het beleg en ontzet der stad Leyden* (Leiden 1824) 36; Eikelenberg, *Alkmaar en zyne geschiedenissen*, 255; similar stories are linked to houses with cannonballs in Haarlem (Spekstraat) and Den Bosch (Kruisbroederstraatje), indeed there are cannonballs bricked into the facades, but it remains unclear whether these are connected to the sieges of 1573 or 1629 respectively.

⁹⁴ 'Ook werde [...] een Canons-kogel geschoten inde Soemelkenwitte broods steeg inde yserre tralie van het huys van den Here van Schoten de welke van daer volords inde sale vloog ende speelde rondom boven het bedde alwaer Joffrou Magdalena van Schoten lag sonder haer te beschadigen ende vande bedstede afvallen. De sijnen loop gebroken sijnde smoorde inde selve kamer: welke kogel veel jaeren inde gemelde tralie aen eenen yseren keten ter geheugenisse heeft gehangen ende

Magdalena was a noblewoman from Haarlem who married a German officer who served in the city's militia in 1574.⁹⁵ Whereas many of the cannonball tales were anonymous stories, this one was so detailed that the first author who mentioned it, Minister Samuel Ampzing, must have known Magdalena's family personally.⁹⁶ The relic was kept in Magdalena's home by her son, who hung it from the window. The presence of the cannonball in the window immediately connected the family to the Revolt, and the family was apparently proud to possess and display the relic. Even when it was pulled down eventually, Willem Vader kept it in his home for a smaller audience to view it. And the story did not disappear because town chronicler Theodorus Schrevelius included it in his history of Haarlem in 1648 as well.⁹⁷

The most famous cannonball tale, and one which rose from local to national significance, however, was the story about Kornelissen Koltermans from Haarlem.

10 April a woman named Kornelissen Koltermans was hit when she came down the stairs of the attic at her sisters' [house] on the corner of the Oostelleboge of the Kroft directly opposite the church of the Orphanage, by a large iron cannonball between her legs that tore apart her clothes without touching her, which bullet and skirt are still kept in the present by her son Jakob de Graef to remember such a history.⁹⁸

In this story not only the cannonball but also the skirt Kornelissen wore became relics. In 1628 they were still kept by the woman's son in commemoration of the events of 1573. Like Magdalena's family, Jakob was very proud of his mother's survival. It seems that in Haarlem cannonballs, their tales and displaying the actual relics were a way to keep connecting oneself to the Revolt.⁹⁹ The most important reason to do so seems to have been showing a certain pride or maybe emphasizing the position of a family member within the community.

Kornelissen's story, however, was published before Magdalena's in the national history of the Revolt written by Pieter Bor in 1621.¹⁰⁰ Whether this inspired Magdalena's son to tell

word ook noch ten selven eynde van haeren sone Jonker Willem Vader bewaerd'. Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof*, 191.

⁹⁵ NHA, Notarieel Archief, toegang 1617, nr 2 1573-1579, f4v-6; Theodorus Schrevelius, *Harlemias, ofte de eerste stichtinghe der stadt Haerlem, haer toenemen en vergrootinge* (Haarlem 1648) 147.

⁹⁶ Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof*, 191.

⁹⁷ Schrevelius, *Harlemias*, 147.

⁹⁸ '10. April werde eene vrouwe Kornelissen Koltermans tot haer susters op den hoek vande Oostelleboge van de Kroft recht tegen over de Kerke van het Weeshuys vande solder de trappen afkomende met eenen grooten yseren kogel tuschen haere beenen deurgeschoten de klederen aen stucken sonder haer te raken welke kloot ende rock van haeren sone Jakob de Graef tot eene gedachtenisse sulker geschiedenis tegenwoordig noch bewaer worden'. Ampzing, *Beschrijvinge ende lof*, 191.

⁹⁹ Using clothing as a connection to the Revolt was also not uncommon.

¹⁰⁰ 'Daer wert oock eene Vrouwe ghenamt Cornelisgen Coltermans wesende tot haer suster aen die krocht op de solder met een groote yseren Cloot tusschen haer beenen deur geschoten die cleederen

her story to Ampzing for his publication in 1628 remains unclear, but the two stories do share similarities. Bor also made the cannonball tales a unique feature of the siege of Haarlem by referring to them because of their rarity. Moreover, by leaving the cannonball tales out of his account of other sieges, he made them specific to the urban memory culture of Haarlem. In other cities, for instance, he did mention the numbers of cannonballs that hit the city but left out any survivors' tales.¹⁰¹ The fame of Kornelissen's story spread across the Low Countries through Bor but also caused confusion. Especially in the eighteenth century, individuals started to mix up cannonball tales. Alkmaar's town Chronicler Simon Eikelenberg warns his reader about this practice in 1747

Yet reader be careful, that not stories from other cities are offered as Alkmaar's histories, similar to the case of Kolterman's daughter, who did not live in Alkmaar but in Haarlem, these are nice histories for the common folk (that even listens to them with open mouths on the day of relief) yet sensible people laugh at this idle talk.¹⁰²

According to Eikelenberg, authors used stories from other cities to impress their audience. The public apparently did not care whether the stories really happened in Alkmaar as long as they were spectacular. Sensible people, however, did not believe such idle talk. Yet, he also notes the practice of telling and retelling these stories during the annual celebratory day of relief in Alkmaar, on 8 October. The stories thus continued to appeal to people in the eighteenth century, particularly on the annual celebration of the relief of the city.

Relics of war claimed their place in urban memory landscapes from the beginning of the Revolt in 1566. Smashed statues continued to be displayed, while miracles occurred regularly, and new relics were created during the many encounters with war. Sieges, attacks and massacres were all occasions during which traditional relics and ordinary objects such as cooking pots and clothes could gain new meaning. While some of these objects survived in a secular setting, such as the pigeons in the town hall in Leiden, the banners in the Habsburg palace, and the clothes in individual homes, others were preserved in a religious environment. These material memories of the Revolt were displayed in churches and either replaced traditional relics or occupied a place next to them. The integration in the church

ontstucken sonder haer te raecken'. Pieter Christiaensz. Bor, *Nederlantsche oorloghen, beroerten, ende borgerlijcke oneenicheyden* (Leiden 1621) f.325v.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem; see for Alkmaar f. 333v.

¹⁰² 'doch de Leezer zy voorzichtig, dat geen vertelsels uit andere Steeden als Alkmaersche Geschiedenissen hem in de hand worden gestopt, gelyk dus het geval van Coltermans dogter, die niet in Alkmaer maer in Haerlem woonden, 't zyn echter mooije historien voor "t gemeen (dat zulx met opgesparden monde zelfs op den ontzetdag aenhoort) doch menschen van verstand belagchen beuzeltael'. Eikelenberg, *Alkmaar en zyne geschiedenissen*, 255–256.

interior not only emphasized their status as memory markers of the Revolt but also provided the objects with an aura of authenticity. Their place in the church indicated that the church wardens, and sometimes the local government, endorsed the relics as genuine representations of a specific episode during the Revolt.

One type of relic was particularly popular in both Catholic and Protestant cities: the cannonball. Bombardments had been a common part of sieges, attacks and battles in the Low Countries, and the Dutch or Habsburg forces had fired thousands of cannonballs on the enemy's cities. Written accounts of many sieges included stories about men, women, and soldiers who had been saved from artillery fire by divine intervention or miracles. The omnipresence of cannonballs in communities in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic demonstrates the popularity in the Low Countries of the practice of keeping and collecting relics of war. Of course, the objects themselves did not mean anything without their story, their original context, and at least a hint of authenticity. As historian Judith Pollmann has recently argued, myths and legends had to be framed historically as well and, if possible, should be connected to material evidence in order to survive.¹⁰³ It was therefore the combination of the story and the object that mattered because each relied on the other for recognition in the local community. Yet, for objects the instant change of meaning due to the Revolt could also mean that they became items of display rather than disposables, making relics significantly different from any other objects later produced to commemorate the Revolt, as we shall see in the following chapter. After all, relics had the authority of having personally witnessed an episode, and this characteristic ensured that they were cherished within urban memory cultures.

¹⁰³ Judith Pollmann, 'Of living legends and authentic tales. How to get remembered in early modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 23 (2013) 103-125, there 106-107.