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CHAPTER 1

MEMORY IN THE MAKING: THE FIRST DECADES

From the very beginning of the Revolt of the Netherlands the management of memory was a central concern for government authorities and interest groups. On 29 March 1568, the duke of Alba, governor of the Low Countries, gave orders to demolish the Culemborg palace on the Sablon in Brussels where in 1566 the meetings of the Compromise of Nobles had been held.¹ He wanted to obliterate this physical reminder of the place where the first rebels had hatched their plans.² The French Calvinist minister Franciscus Junius, who had helped prepare the meetings of the Compromise and who had opened the first meeting with a prayer, wrote in his *Vita*, which was published in 1595, that ‘the entire palace was levelled to the ground and the place was sprinkled with salt and awful curses in accordance with the duke of Alba’s command’.³ The demolition took place on 28 May 1568 and left a deep impression on contemporary authors. Around the time of the demolition Antoine II de Lalaing, count of Hoogstraten – a supporter of Prince William of Orange – wrote a report to inform the prince and the other nobles who had fled the persecutions of the duke of Alba.⁴ He added that ‘the house of the count of Culemborg is condemned to be demolished for its having been the palace of the Beggars, and a column will be erected in the middle of the spot with a notorious *dictum* beneath’.⁵ The *dictum*, which in keeping with Alba’s orders

¹ ‘Suite du rapport rédigé par un secrétaire du Conseil des Troubles, de l’activité de ce dernier organisme pendant la période du 13 janvier 1568 au 6 avril 1568’, in: *Le Conseil des Troubles. Liste des condamnés (1567-1573)*, edited by A.L.E. Verheyden (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1961), p. 528.

² The Culemborg site of memory has been studied extensively in: H. Schuermans, ‘La colonne de Culembourg à Bruxelles’, *Bulletin des commissions royales d’art et d’archéologie* (1870). For other examples of demolition as a form of public humiliation in the Low Countries, see: P. de Win, *De schandstraffen in het wereldlijk strafrecht in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden van de middeleeuwen tot de Franse Tijd in Europees perspectief* (Brussels: Paleis der academiën, 1991), pp. 220-221; this practice had a long tradition from antiquity, see: Matthew B. Roller, ‘Demolished Houses, Monumentality, and Memory in Roman Culture’, *Classical Antiquity* 29:1 (2010), pp. 117-180; conversely, keeping houses intact while destroying the surrounding buildings was a memory practice of Alexander the Great during his destruction of Thebes in 335 BC; see: Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, edited by E.J. Chinock (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), pp. 33-34: ‘It is said that Alexander preserved the house and the descendants of Pindar the poet, out of respect for his memory.’ Other instances of demolition in the Low Countries include the house of a Lutheran preacher in Tournai, which was demolished in 1561 because Lutheran services had been held there: Jean Cousin, *Histoire de Tournay ou le quatrième livre des chroniques annales, ou démonstrations du Christianisme de l’évesche de Tournay* (Douai: Marc Wyon, 1620), pp. 305.

³ Franciscus Junius, *Vita nobilis & eruditii viri Francisci Ivnii*, edited by Paullus Merula (Leiden: ex off. Plantiniana apud F. Raphelengium, 1595), p. 72: ‘tota domus aquata solo, & area eius sale cum diris exsecrationibus conspersa ad Ducis Albani imperium’.

⁴ Louis Hymans, *Bruxelles à travers les âges I* (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe, 1882), p. 316.

⁵ Antoine II de Lalaing, count of Hoogstraten, ‘Nouvelles des Pays-Bas’, 5 June 1568, in: *Archives ou correspondance inédite de la maison d’Orange-Nassau (première série). Tome III 1567-1572*, edited by G. Groen

explained ‘the cause of said ruin’, stated in four languages – Latin, French, Dutch and Spanish – that the column had been placed there ‘in memory of the execrable conspiracy made here against the religion of the Catholic and Roman church, against the king and against his lands.’⁶

What the regime did here was a clear, if also quite paradoxical, act of memory. While demolishing the palace removed a physical reminder of the first cause of the rebellion, the subsequent placement of a column (Figure 4) drew attention to the ‘execrable’ past. Although intended as an eternal *damnatio memoriae*, the column did not serve its purpose for long.⁷ Article 13 of the Pacification of Ghent (1576) ordered that all ‘the pillars, trophies, inscriptions and effigies erected by the duke of Alba to the shame and disgrace of the afore-said and all others, shall be destroyed and demolished’.⁸ The Brussels column was probably demolished soon afterwards. Decades after the event the Reformed clergyman Johannes Gysius wrote in his popular history of the Revolt in 1616 that ‘just like all human designs are uncertain and impermanent, so after some years [after 1566] it was knocked to pieces by the citizens, yes in such a manner that each sought a piece thereof to show that they had helped to destroy such a work.’⁹

van Prinsterer (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1836), p. 242: ‘La maison du Conte de Culembourgh est condampnée d'estre rasée pour avoir esté le palais des jeux, et y plantra-t-on ung peron au mytan avecq ung fameux *dictum* dessus.’

⁶ ‘Suite du rapport’, p. 528: ‘en signe et mémoire y seroit érigé une colonne ou pillier avecq ung tableau contenant la cause de ladicte ruïne’; Schuermans, ‘La colonne de Culembourg’, p. 20: ‘en memoire de l’Execrable conspiration faicte en icelle contre la Religion de l’Eglise Catholique et Romaine, contre le Roy et contre ces Païs’; Franciscus Sweertius, *Monvmenta Sepvlchralia et Inscriptiones Pvblicae Privataeq. Dvcatus Brabantiae* (Antwerp: Gaspar Bellerus, 1613), p. 308.

⁷ This term was coined in the Roman Empire, where the senate could issue a ‘damnatio memoriae’, or a ‘memoria damnata’, to damn the public memory of persons who were condemned for committing crimes against the state. See: Friedrich Vittinghoff, *Der Staatsfeind in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Untersuchungen zur “damnatio memoriae”* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1936), pp. 64-74.

⁸ E.H. Kossmann and A.F. Mellink, eds., *Texts Concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 130.

⁹ Johannes Gysius, *Oorsprong en voortgang der Neder-landtscher beroerten ende ellendigheden* (Leiden: Henrick Lodewijcxsoon Haestens, 1616), p. 272: ‘ghelijck aller menschen voornemen onbestendich ende ongeduyrich is, soo is na eenighe jaren de selve vanden Borgheren weder ontstucken geslaghen, jae in sulcker manieren, dat elck socht een stuck daer van te hebben, omme te moghen betoonen datse sulcken werck hadden helpen vernielen.’

Rather than cursing the place's polluted past or giving way to the demands of the Culemborg family, the archducal couple re-appropriated the site and invited the Discalced Carmelite Friars to settle on the location where the duke of Alba had once erected his column.¹⁰ The new Discalced Carmelites, founded in 1593, were a mendicant order from Spain. They attempted to bring back the observance of the primitive Rule of Carmel with the intention of fostering religious zeal to contribute more effectively to the Counter-Reformation struggle against heresy.¹¹ On 8 September 1611, the Archdukes laid the first stone of their new church and convent.¹² Significantly, they required that the exact place where the nobles had assembled be left vacant.¹³ Albert and Isabella apparently wanted to keep alive the memory of how things had gone very wrong in the sixteenth century but also to show by antithesis what the outcome had been: a successful religious restoration.¹⁴ A place initially known for heresy and insurgence thus became a symbol for the successful Habsburg Counter-Reformation.¹⁵ Indeed, the exact location of the nobility's gathering in 1566 remained recognizable as such for a long period of time. When the Catholic Northerner Gerard van Loon toured the Southern Netherlands more than a century later in 1720, he visited the convent. He wrote that 'in the courtyard of this convent has been shown to me by the priest a square place dug out with care, where the room is supposed to have been in which the confederated nobles formerly held their assemblies.'¹⁶ The fact that the priest knew this and shared the information with visiting strangers suggests that in the

¹⁰ Théodore Juste, *Les Pays-Bas sous Philippe II. Histoire de la Revolution du XVII^e siècle. Tome second (1565-1572)* (Brussels: Méline, Cans et Compagnie, 1855), p. 504.

¹¹ Helena Bussers, 'La famille de Bournonville et l'église des carmes déchaussés à Bruxelles', *Bulletin: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 43-44 (1994-1995), p. 121; Sabine van Sprang, 'Rubens en Brussel, een meer dan hoffelijke relatie', in: Joost Vander Auwera et al., eds., *Rubens: een genie aan het werk* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2007), p. 15.

¹² Cornelis van Gestel, *Historia sacra et profana archiepiscopatus Mechliniensis; Sive descriptio archi-diocesis illius; Item urbium, oppidorum, pagorum, dominiorum, monasteriorum, castellarumque sub eâ, in XI. decanatus divisa. Cum Toparcharum Inscriptionibus Sepulchralibus [...] Tomus Secundus* (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1725), p. 38; Antonius Sanderus, *Le grand theatre sacré du duché de Brabant [...] Tome Premier. Seconde Partie VI* (The Hague: Chrétien van Lom, 1629), p. 273; Eusebius, *Enchyridion chronologicum Carmelitarum Discalceatorum Congregationis Italiae, sub titulo S.P. Eliae Prophetae digestum A P. Eusebio ab omnibus sanctis Definitore Provinciali Provinciae Romanae, ac ejusdem Congregationis Historico generali...* (Rome: Rochi Bernabò, 1737), pp. 43-44.

¹³ Schuermans, 'La colonne de Culembourg', p. 101.

¹⁴ Frédéric Gautier, *Le Nouveau Conducteur dans Bruxelles et ses Environs* (Brussels: C.J. de Mat and H. Remy, 1827), p. 54; Schuermans, 'La colonne de Culembourg', p. 101.

¹⁵ Roel Jacobs, *Een kleine geschiedenis van Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2006), p. 150.

¹⁶ Gerard van Loon, *Beschryving der Nederlandsche historipenningen: of beknopt verhaal van 't gene sedert de overdracht der heerschappye van keyzer Karel den Vyfdten op koning Philips zynen zoon, tot het sluyten van den Uytrechtschen vrede, in de zeventien Nederlandsche gewesten is voorgevallen* (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, Isaac Vaillant, Pieter Gosse, Rutgert Alberts, and Pieter de Hondt, 1723-1731), vol 1, p. 115: 'in den hof van dit klooster is my in den jaare zeventienhonderdentwintig in Brabant zynde, door deszelfs Geestlyken eene diepe vierkante en met voordacht uytgegraaue plaats aangewezen, daar de kamer zoude gestaan hebben, in welke eertyds de verbondene Edellieden hunne byeenkomsten gehouden hebben.'

eighteenth century the Discalced Friars in Brussels still cherished the symbolism of their convent's location.

The Culemborg case is a first indication that both authorities and individuals in the early modern Low Countries were keen managers of memory: the duke of Alba, the burghers of Brussels, the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, the order of the Discalced Carmelites and – as we will see in chapter five – the Culemborg family, all kept alive their interpretation of this particular episode. Memories of the past hence survived for a long period, but at different times could serve different functions. Alba wanted to show his muscle by damning the memory of the rebels. The drafters of the Pacification of Ghent wanted to forget the episode altogether in order to restore peace and stability. Local inhabitants held on to pieces of the stone column as souvenirs. The Archdukes, together with the Discalced Friars, framed the place's history as a triumph of both the true faith and the house of Habsburg over heretics and rebels.

An important reason why sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans were so concerned with the 'right' reading of the past was that they founded political claims and legal arguments in the present on old customs and privileges. A civil war such as the Revolt of the Netherlands, however, complicated this practice. Where rebels were successful in their resistance against the Habsburg overlord, at the same time they created a memory vacuum. By severing past and present, it became increasingly difficult to vindicate contemporary political arguments with references to the past, which made rebels vulnerable to accusations of novelty. In three parts, this chapter explores how this was a problem for people in the first stages of the conflict and how they dealt with it by actively cultivating a memory of recent events. Firstly, I will examine the usage of memory in political circles. Then, the focus will be broadened to include the propagandistic use of the past by rebels and loyalists. Finally, this chapter will discuss the influence of the first important histories of the Revolt on public memories about the conflict.

Political memory on the eve of the Revolt

Netherlanders in the sixteenth century could draw on an established repertoire of arguments to make a political stand. Supporters of the hereditary authority of any ruling dynasty frequently used references to the dynasty's line of succession in support of its dynastic legitimacy. Opponents stressed the absence of such legitimacy by raising doubt about rightful succession in the past. Furthermore, in Reformation and Counter-Reformation

Europe religion served as an important frame of reference and source of authority. Then, there was history which, as Cicero had explained in *De Oratore*, served as ‘a storehouse of examples and precedents’, an idea taken up by many Renaissance scholars and politicians.¹⁷ The aggregate of local customs and privileges acquired in the past could also support claims in the present. A good example of the political usage of legal precedents is the States of Brabant’s opposition to an important reorganisation of the Netherlandish dioceses that Pope Paul IV had promulgated by his bull *Super Universas* in 1559. The States appealed to the past in a petition to Philip II in 1562 in which they expressed their opposition to the incorporation of some rich abbeys in the new bishoprics in Brabant, a scheme intended to provide the new prelates with an income but which also encroached on the autonomous position of the abbeys. The abbots had a seat in the States. Thus, by influencing the creation of new bishops, the Habsburg overlord increased his power in the States of Brabant, a body that sought to counterbalance Habsburg centralism.¹⁸ In a letter to Philip II, the States of Brabant reminded the king that

your duchy has always (and such a long time that there is neither a memory to the contrary nor of its commencement) been regulated and run by three estates, who have always invested your predecessors with the authority over these lands under the hereditary and reciprocal obligations.¹⁹

Part of these obligations, the States of Brabant reminded Philip II, was that

the king Philip, your grandfather [...] promised at his Joyous Entry that he would not permit or consent directly or indirectly that any of the mentioned prelaties or abbeys would be alienated, occupied, or their command ceded, and that the clerics could freely hold their election according to the ancient customs and practices.²⁰

¹⁷ Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, edited by James M. May and Jakob Wise (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), book 1, section 18.

¹⁸ M. Dierickx, *De oprichting der nieuwe bisdommen*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁹ *Documents inédits sur l’Erection des nouveaux Diocèses aux Pays-Bas (1521-1570). Tome second. De la promulgation des bulles de circonscription et de dotation à la désincorporation des abbayes brabançonnes (août 1561 – juillet 1564)*, edited by M. Dierickx (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1961), p. 172: ‘votredit duché ayt toujours esté (et de si long tems qu’il n’y a memoire ny du contraire, ny du commencement) reglee et conduite par trois Estats, qui ont toujours faict l’investiture du pays à vos predecesseurs soubz les obligations hereditaires et reciproques’.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175: ‘le Roy Philippes, Vostre Grand-père [...] promet en sa Joyeuse Entrée qu’il ne permetteroit ou consenteroit directement ou par indirect qu’aucunes desdictes prelatures ou abbayes fussent alienees, occupées ou

The States appealed to a pledge made by Philip I ‘the Fair’ of Burgundy (1478-1506) to increase the validity of their argument, and this required an explanation, however brief, of what he had promised.

The ‘Joyous Entry’ was an even more important legal point of reference in the Low Countries, particularly in Brabant. It was an agreement that the States of Brabant had negotiated with Joanna of Brabant and her husband Wenceslas of Luxembourg in 1356.²¹ Exploiting the extinction of the house of Brabant after the death of Joanna’s father John III of Brabant in 1355, the States had presented their new rulers with a list of privileges they should swear to uphold.²² Failure to satisfy the conditions allowed the subjects to (temporarily) disobey their natural lord.²³ From then on whenever a new prince became duke of Brabant, he or she needed to tour its cities not only to witness the local government pledging its loyalty but also to reconfirm and reenact the contract of 1356. These visits became the occasion for spectacular displays and processions. Margit Thøfner has explained that each entry ‘was a mechanism for transforming the mere history of the granting of the Joyous Entry charter into living memory’.²⁴ At a later point in this study we will see that by the seventeenth century the spectacles during these ceremonies often referred to the Revolt as an example of how things had gone wrong in the past. For now it suffices to say that this constitutional document played a central role in rebel propaganda because it could be used to support the argument that lordship over Brabant was conditional on the ruler guaranteeing the duchy’s privileges. The rebels claimed that Philip II had not done so. On 3 April 1566, citizens of the Brabant city of Antwerp for instance spread a pamphlet against the religious persecutions, in which they argued that these were ‘beyond all justice and equity and against all privileges [...] in the first, second, third, fourth and the last article of the Joyous Entry’.²⁵ The Antwerp supplicants probably felt that a reference to the Joyous Entry supported the argument that the persecution of heretics and the regime’s

delaissees en commandes, ains que les religieux jouiroient librement de leur election, selon les anciennes coutumes et usances’.

²¹ Margit Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Revolt* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), p. 52.

²² Ria van Bragt, *De Blijde Inkomst van de hertogen van Brabant Johanna en Wenceslas (3 januari)*. *Een inleidende studie en tekstuitgave* (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1956), p. 7.

²³ See for a text edition of the Joyous Entry: *ibid.*, pp. 95-107; for the section that rebels claimed legitimized resistance, see pp. 105-106.

²⁴ Thøfner, *A Common Art*, p. 56.

²⁵ Godevaert van Haecht, *De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht over de troebelen van 1565 tot 1574 te Antwerpen en elders I*, edited by Rob van Roosbroeck (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1929), pp. 27-28: ‘buyten alle justicie en billicheyte en teghens alle privilegien [...] in 't 1,2,3, 4 artycule en in't leste van der blyder incompste.’

related interferences with local practices of administering justice violated their privileges. Significantly, the Joyous Entry remained an important constitutional document that limited the power base of Habsburg lords in Brabant until the French occupiers at the end of the eighteenth century introduced a new legal system.²⁶

These two examples of appeals to the past in political arguments demonstrate the importance of history as a legal precedent. Along the same line, memories of the past, including the recent past, served an exemplary function not only on which to base rights but also as an analogy between past and present that could inspire and persuade people in a variety of contexts. Before the Compromise of the Nobility presented its petition against the religious persecutions to Margaret of Parma, Prince William of Orange – who was then the provincial governor, or ‘stadholder’, of Holland – wrote a worried letter to Margaret on 24 January 1566. In reaction to the king’s command that prosecutors of heresy be given all possible assistance by local authorities, he invoked the past to voice his dissatisfaction:

Your highness should recall the complaints, opposition and difficulties which arose everywhere in these lands on the occasion of the establishment of the bishops. This was for no other reason than out of fear that it served as a pretext for an attempt to introduce some form of inquisition, not only the practice of which but also the name is odious and disagreeable.²⁷

Prince William related fears in 1566 about the religious persecutions to the opposition against the reorganisation of bishoprics. He recalled the reorganisation not only to reiterate his concern for the maintenance of local privileges but also to inform Margaret of the fear among the population that the introduction of the new bishoprics was a veiled attempt to bring the Spanish inquisition into these lands. Some of the newly appointed bishops, such as Franciscus Sonnius of Den Bosch, had once even served as inquisitors. The prince reminded the governor that both Charles V and her own predecessor, Governor Mary of Hungary, had promised ‘by word of mouth as well as in writing’, that they would not

²⁶ Van Bragt, *De Blijde Inkomst*, pp. 6-7.

²⁷ William of Orange to Margaret of Parma, 24 January 1566, in: *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d’Orange, Publiée pour la première fois* II, edited by M. Gachard (Brussels: C. Muquardt, 1850), pp. 107-108: ‘Vostre Altesse peult avoir souvenance de ce que les plaintes, oppositions et difficultés esmeves par tout le pais de par deça à l’endroit de l’establissement des évesques, n’ont esté pour aultre regart que de peur que soubz prétexte l’on taschat introduire quelque forme d’inquisition tant est non seulement l’exécution, mais aussi le nom odieux et désagréable’.

introduce any form of inquisition.²⁸ Furthermore, they had assured the inhabitants of the Low Countries to govern in accordance with ‘all previous antiquity’.²⁹ Just as the States of Brabant had done in 1562, Prince William appealed to pledges made by Philip II’s dynastic predecessors to enhance the validity of his argument.

The examples above illustrate the existence of a political memory in government circles. William of Orange recalled the past to make a point, and he expected his references to be known to his correspondent. There is more evidence of the existence of such a memory culture among government officials, especially after the outbreak of the Revolt in 1566. Take for example the well-connected provost of Aire, Maximilien Morillon, who wrote on 30 May 1567 to Antoine Perrenot, Cardinal de Granvelle, that the rebellious city of Antwerp, which was stubbornly refusing to implement the king’s placards, should be treated in the same way that Charles V had punished the Flemish city of Ghent after a rebellion in 1539-40, namely by taking away all of its privileges.³⁰ A few days before, Granvelle had already given similar advice to Philip II:

[...] as I have written recently, I believe that God has permitted that these troubles have befallen us so that your majesty can reestablish the necessary order. Never, by the way, neither the predecessors of the emperor of glorious memory, nor his imperial majesty himself, have been able to master Ghent until the uprising of 1539 provided his imperial majesty with the opportunity to administer justice to that city, as he did, building the citadel [...]³¹

Drawing lessons from the past, Granvelle concluded that only by repression of the rebels could the king get his way. Antwerp’s disobedience even provided Philip II with an excuse to increase his authority. The cardinal took the historical analogies further than Morillon by also involving the kingdoms and principalities of the Iberian peninsula in the comparison.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 108: ‘tant de bouche que par escript’.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 108: ‘de toute ancienneté auparavant’.

³⁰ Peter Armade, ‘The City Defeated and Defended: Civism as Political Identity in the Habsburg-Burgundian Netherlands’, in: Robert Stein and Judith Pollmann, eds., *Networks Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 215.

³¹ Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle to Philip II, 26 May 1567, in: *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle, 1565-1586 II*, edited by Edmond Poulet (Brussels: Commission Royale d’Histoire, 1877), p. 461: ‘como ya antes he escripto, creo que Dios havrá permitido que sa haya caido en estos desórdenes paa que V. Magd pueda poner la órden necesseria, y jamas pudieron ser señores de Gante ni los predecessores del Emperador de gloriosa memoria, ni S. Magd Impl misma, hasta tanto que, por io que intentó aquella tierra el año 39, tuvo ocasion de darle la ley tal cual convenia, hacienda el Castillo’.

He could thus show that although the troubles in the Low Countries were worrying, the house of Habsburg had been in similarly tight spots in the past. Especially Charles V:

[who] was not master of Spain – being considered in these kingdoms like a foreigner, which they appear to want to imitate in Flanders with regard to your majesty – until the uprising of the comuneros of which he was king and master. All this is not so long ago that the memory is lost, of the affairs of the comuneros and of Ghent.³²

Granvelle compared Charles V's handling of the Revolt of the Comuneros in 1520s Castile to the situation in the Low Countries, also a collection of independent territories that were each ruled by the king of Spain under different titles: duke of Brabant, duke of Guelders, count of Flanders, etc. The examples of William of Orange, Morillon and Granvelle demonstrate that at the very beginning of the Revolt, government officials appealed to the past in support of conflicting political agendas. William of Orange wanted to prove that moderation of the religious persecutions was the best course of action while the two Habsburg bureaucrats Morillon and Granvelle used the past to argue just the opposite: that harsh action was necessary for the Habsburg overlord to realize his objectives.

The political potency of memory

We have seen that a variety of Netherlandish actors considered memories of the past as usable precedents – religious, legal and political – to determine the 'right' course of action or, more generally, to evaluate and place in perspective the political troubles of the 1560s. The past was useful not only for individuals to make sense of the present. It was also used in the public sphere to convince people of a particular interpretation and explanation of events. Since the Revolt signified a radical break with the past, however, such memory-making could be complicated. The popular awareness of rupture is reflected by numerous diary entries of people who wrote down what happened in the troublesome year 1566. The growing presence of hedge preachings by Protestant ministers – a form of *Auslauf* which

³² Ibid., p. 461: 'ni fue señor de España S Magd Cesa, lo cual en aquellos regnos tenian por estrangero, como puresce que en Flándes quieren tener á V. Magn hasta tanto que succediéron las comunidades, las cuales le hicieron Rey y Señor, y no ha tanto tiempo que sea del todo perdida la memoria, de lo que al tiempo de las dichas comunidades, y en lo de Gante de se hizo'.

became especially common in the summer of 1566 – made a deep impression as it showed how heresy damaged the fabric of society.³³ Cloth merchant Cornelis van Campene from Ghent condemned these alternative services held outside the city walls. He wrote on 1 September 1566 how ‘the present-day cancer and fire, which now, God help us, rule the world, that is: heresy, corrupts body and soul’.³⁴ The Brussels merchant Jan de Pottre listed the most important events of his life. The first thing he noted for 1566 was that ‘around sint Jansmisse new sects began to preach outside the gates of Antwerp, where many people attended preachings.’³⁵ In the introduction to his diary Marcus van Vaernewijck from Ghent lamented that people are always ‘much inclined to new things and to change’.³⁶ He continued ominously that people’s longing for novelty often leads to ‘great damage and sorrow, as will become clear in what will follow.’ An anonymous author published that same year a booklet recording the most notable outbreaks of iconoclasm, which served ‘as an eternal and perpetual memory’. ‘Watch here, reader’, the author urged, ‘the year, month and day that one saw the religion obstructed which was sad to see: oh woe oh calamity’.³⁷

Although the rebels challenged the existing order to reach their political objectives, in doing so they created an important communication problem. Operating in a society where historical precedent legitimized the status quo, challengers to the existing order could not simply fall back on traditional public communication strategies. As we have seen, it was possible on the local level to refer to local customs and privileges and argue that the Habsburg overlord violated these in his repression of heretics and dissidents. But the federal nature of these legal systems meant that such references could not support the shared agenda of all Netherlandish rebels. This was a problem because loyalists, unlike rebels, were able to argue that all insurgents were lovers of novelty and troublemakers, both

³³ Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 68-71.

³⁴ Cornelis van Campene, ‘epistele’, in: *Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene behelzende het verhaal der merkwaardigste gebeurtenissen, voorgevallen te Gent sedert het begin der Godsdienstberoerten tot den 5en april 1571*, edited by Frans de Potter (Gent: C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1870), p. 1: ‘dezen jeghenwordeghen canckere ende tvier, twelck nu, God betert, in de werrelt regueert, te weten heresie, bederft zielle ende lichame.’

³⁵ Jan de Pottre, *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre, 1549-1602*, edited by Jules L.D. de Saint-Genois (Gent: C. Annoot-Braeckman), p. 21: ‘ontrent sint Jansmisse, doe begost men tot Antwerpen buten de porte te preken van desen nuwer secten, daer seer groot volck ghinck hooren preken’.

³⁶ Marcus van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelick in Ghendt 1566-1568 I*, edited by Ferdinand Vanderhaeghen (Gent: C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1872), p. 1: ‘tot veranderinghe ende nieuwe dijnghen altijts gheneghen’.

³⁷ Anonymous, *Corte verhalinge vande Beeldtstormerije . geschiet binnen dese Nederlanden, als Brabant, Vlaenderen, Hollant, ende Zeeland, ende int lant van Luydick, tot een eeuwige ende perpetuelle memorie der nacominghen* (Antwerp: Gheraert Speckmans, 1566): ‘Aensiet hier Leser d’iaer / maent / en dach datmen sach die Religie staken / Twelck was deerlick om sien o wee o wach’.

serious accusations in the sixteenth century. This position was reinforced by a repertoire of proclamations, edicts, ceremonies, sermons, pamphlets, and visual media.³⁸ Alba, for instance, not only demolished the Culemborg palace, as recounted in the beginning of this chapter, but he also ordered the destruction of the public coats of arms of rebels and heretics throughout the Low Countries to cleanse the landscape of signs of heresy and political dissidence.³⁹ Monica Stensland has pointed out that the Habsburg rulers opted for negative repression of opposition in the form of persecution and censorship rather than for the proliferation of positive royalist thought. Only in edicts, she argues, did the regime spread a more positive image of itself, such as the pardoning of former rebels. Stensland builds on the work of Paul Kléber Monod, who has shown that ruling princes were hesitant to make political arguments in pamphlets and prints because they felt that they ruled by the grace of God and consequently did not need to negotiate their legitimacy.⁴⁰ Similarly, Stensland has shown that the Habsburg authorities did not make much effort to persuade Netherlanders of Philip II's right to rule.⁴¹ The duke of Alba famously wrote to Philip II from Nijmegen on 16 April 1573, advising his master against responding to the slanderous accusations spread by rebel authors since 'to a reply to one [pamphlet] they respond with another six hundred, with one hundred thousand insults'.⁴²

Leaving aside whether Alba had served his master well with this advice, the duke was right that rebels were prolific publicists. In their publications they attempted to create a version of events in which disobedience to the natural lord was acceptable under the circumstances. A good example of the way in which the first rebels voiced their grievances was their appropriation of 'Beggar' imagery and iconography. The nobles who presented their petition to Margaret of Parma sought a topsy-turvy alternative for the dominant historical arguments, and they successfully developed recognizable imagery of their opposition movement by adopting the name of 'Beggars', which became synonymous for rebels. Contemporary diarist Godevaert van Haecht provided a popular explanation for the origins of this term. The nobles, he explained, wore grey clothing which led 'a courtier and friend of the regent called Charles de Berlaymont, seeing all these nobles come to court, to

³⁸ Monica Stensland, *Habsburg Communication in the Dutch Revolt* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 18-24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Paul Kléber Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589-1715* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 26.

⁴¹ Stensland, *Habsburg Communication*, p. 36.

⁴² *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas II*, edited by L.-P. Gachard (Brussels: C. Muquardt, 1848), p. 349: 'A uno que se responde replicarán con otros setecientos, con cien mil desvergüenzas'.

say to their disgrace: “what will these Beggars want to do,” giving them this name Beggar’.⁴³ A complementary explanation for the use of the term is that in Habsburg accounts of the nobility’s protests the nobles were represented as over-ambitious and greedy persons who had squandered their fortunes and were now seeking ways to improve their lot.⁴⁴ Although the term was probably meant as an insult, the nobles appropriated it, shouting ‘Long live the Beggars!’ in the streets. Following the work of Natalie Zemon Davis, Henk van Nierop considers this positive spin on an insult as a ‘symbolic conversion’ or ‘inversion of roles’, a kind of irony which could be used to voice discontent about politically sensitive issues.⁴⁵ This inversion technique appealed to other groups: whereas initially the Beggars were only a group of discontented nobles, the term soon became an umbrella for several protest movements. Diarist Van Haecht, for instance, explained that ‘all those who opposed the Roman church became known as beggars, such as in France they were called Huguenots’.⁴⁶

⁴³ Van Haecht, *De kroniek I*, p. 30: ‘een hovelinck en vrint van de regente geheeten Berlaymont, siende dese edelen al te hove comen, seyde tot haerder scanden: ‘Wat sullen dese Guesen al bedryven,’ haer gevende desen naem Gues’.

⁴⁴ See for instance: Margaret of Parma to Philip II, s.d. 1562, in: *Correspondance de Marguerite d’Autriche, Duchesse de Parme avec Philippe II*, edited by F.A.F.T. baron de Reiffenberg (Brussels: Delevingne et Callewaert, 1842), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵ Henk van Nierop, ‘Edelman, bedelman. De verkeerde wereld van het Compromis der Edelen’, *BMGN* 107:1 (1992), p. 9; Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The reasons of misrule’, in: Natalie Zemon Davis, ed., *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 97-123

⁴⁶ Van Haecht, *De kroniek I*, p. 30: ‘al wat hierna in Nederlant hem verhief tegen de roomsche kercke kregen den naem guesen, gelyck in Vranckeryck huygenoosen’.



Figure 5. Frans Hogenberg, The nobles offer their petition to Margaret of Parma (1566), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-78.623-2.

Figure 5 is an iconic illustration of the episode that gave the first rebels their sobriquet ‘beggars’. In great numbers, the confederated nobles enter the palace of Governor Margaret of Parma to voice their grievances about the severe religious persecutions. Above the second gate, through the window on the right we can see a few nobles presenting their petition. Standing on Margaret’s right is probably Berlaymont, who allegedly coined the term Beggar.⁴⁷ A caption describes the scene in verse. Frans Hogenberg, the maker of this print and many others, influenced the way people came to look back on the Revolt by presenting the conflict as a sequence of well-defined episodes.⁴⁸ As a Protestant exile Hogenberg resided in European news-hub Cologne, which had been developing as a marketplace for information and news in the second half of the sixteenth century. He began making his prints shortly after the Iconoclastic Furies of 1566 and retrospectively covered

⁴⁷ Van Nierop, ‘Edelman, bedelman’, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Philip Benedict, Lawrence M. Bryant and Kristen B. Neuschel, ‘Graphic History: What Readers Knew and Were Taught in the Quarante Tableaux of Perrisin and Tortorel’, *French Historical Studies* 2 (2005), p. 177.

events such as the abdication of Charles V (1555), the petition of nobles to Margaret of Parma (April 1566) and the hedge preachings held by Protestants (Summer 1566). From 1566 onwards, he produced prints to report on current events and could have a print finished within six days after hearing of the event.⁴⁹ Hogenberg accompanied his prints with informative verses, creating a popular news medium in which he combined figurative depictions with textual explanations.⁵⁰ He sold his prints in series as well as separately.⁵¹

In the context of sixteenth-century France Philip Benedict has shown that newsprints recounting recent and profane history developed as a relatively new genre from the fourteenth century onwards and that the religious troubles in Reformation Europe particularly boosted the genre.⁵² Hogenberg's French contemporaries Jean Perrissin and Jacques Tortorel created the *Quarante tableaux ou histoires diverses qui sont memorables touchant les Guerres, Massacres et troubles advenus en France en ces dernieres annees* (1569-70), a series of prints that narrated the history of the French Wars of Religion.⁵³ Not only could sequences of historical episodes be communicated easily by the print medium, but also the medium itself seems to have contributed to the popularity of representing the past as a sequence of well-defined episodes. A print generally depicted and described only one event. Yet, a series of prints such as Perrissin and Tortorel's and Hogenberg's, as an 'ensemble of narratives', could tell the story of an entire conflict.⁵⁴ The chronological order implied a certain causality and interpretation of the conflict. Just as Perrissin and Tortorel left their mark on French historiography of the sixteenth-century troubles by 'making certain events famous or "historical"', Hogenberg's two hundred prints on the Revolt influenced the way people in the Republic came into contact with the history of the conflict.⁵⁵ Although he initially meant them to convey news and did not create an entire series at once, historians began to use successive Hogenberg prints to compose their

⁴⁹ Karel Kinds, *Kroniek van de opstand in de Lage Landen, 1555-1609: actuele oorlogsverslaggeving uit de zestiende eeuw met 228 gravures van Frans Hogenberg I* (Rekem: ALNU, 1999), p. 11; Philip Benedict, *Graphic History: the Wars, Massacres and Troubles of Tortorel and Perrissin* (Genève: Droz, 2007), p. 190.

⁵⁰ Olaf Mörke, 'The Content, Form and Function of Swiss and Dutch Images of History', in: André Holenstein, Thomas Maissen and Maarten Prak, eds., *The Republican Alternative: the Netherlands and Switzerland Compared* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), p. 171

⁵¹ Ramon Voges, 'Macht, Massaker und Repräsentationen: Darstellungen asymmetrischer Gewalt in der Bildpublizistik Franz Hogenbergs', in: Jörg Baberowski and Gabriele Metzler, eds., *Gewalträume. Soziale Ordnungen im Ausnahmezustand* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), pp. 59-60.

⁵² Benedict, *Graphic History*, p. 76.

⁵³ Ibid, pp. 201-203; Ursula Mielke and Ger Luijten, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700* (Oudekerk aan den IJssel: Sound & Vision, 2009), p. vii.

⁵⁴ Mörke, 'The Content', p. 171

⁵⁵ Benedict, Bryant and Neuschel, 'Graphic History', p. 177.

histories. One of the first national histories of the Revolt, *De Leone Belgico* published in 1583 by Austrian historian Michael Aitsinger, was effectively a compilation of Hogenberg prints accompanied by more elaborate explanatory texts.⁵⁶

Prince William of Orange, who fled the Low Countries in 1568, and his adherents were the most important rebel propagandists of the Revolt. From his ancestral home Dillenburg in Germany, Prince William organized an invasion of the Low Countries. As compensation for his relatively weak military position, he devised a propaganda campaign and spread leaflets justifying his own conduct and blackening that of his opponent, the duke of Alba. The prince cleverly circumvented the problem of making a political point without the past to back it up. Claiming that the primary cause of discontent was the introduction of the Inquisition, William of Orange argued that opponents to the religious persecutions had ‘begged obediently and friendly’ for moderation but that ‘nevertheless, it [the Inquisition] was introduced’ and proceeded against ‘poor innocent Christians’.⁵⁷ Although his opposition to the Inquisition was not so extraordinary, remarkably Prince William abstained from engaging in the kind of religious polemic some other rebels cultivated. His propaganda campaign was relatively inclusive, as a response to other rebels who were driven by anti-Catholic sympathies and who resorted to religious violence, notably the Beggars under the leadership of the ‘Great Beggar’ Henry van Brederode.⁵⁸ As we saw in Godevaert van Haecht’s chronicle, the Beggars quickly became known as opponents of Catholicism, and less militant people held them responsible for the Iconoclastic Furies and other anti-Catholic violence. The prince of Orange’s pamphlets, conversely, avoided

⁵⁶ Michael Aitsinger, *De leone Belgico, eiusque topographica atque historica descriptione liber ... Rerumque in Belgio maxime gestarum, inde ab anno Christi MDLIX usque ad annum MDLXXXIII perpetua narratione continuatus* (Cologne: Impensis Francisci Hogenbergii, 1583); Benedict, Bryant and Neuschel, ‘Graphic history’, pp. 171-172; The depictions also featured in the most popular histories such as those by Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Christiaensz Bor, Willem Baudartius, and Pieter Cornelisz Hooft. A selection of Hogenberg’s prints was included in each of these works, not merely as illustration but also as important source of inspiration: Kinds, *Kroniek van de opstand in de Lage Landen I*, pp. 241-251 and II, pp. 226-235; Kinds included the following histories: Willem Baudartius, *Afbeeldinghe, ende beschrijvinghe van alle de veld-slagen, [...] ghevalen in de Nederlanden, geduerende d'oorloghe teghens den coningh van Spaengien* (Amsterdam: Michiel Colijn, 1615); Pieter Christiaensz Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen [...] beginnende met d'opdracht [...] aen [...] Philippus van Spanjen, en eindigende met het einde van't jaer MDC [...] in XXXVII boeken en IV stukken verdeelt* (Amsterdam: Joannes van Someren (wed.), 1679); Pieter Cornelisz Hooft, *Nederlandsche historien* (Amsterdam: Henricus Wetstein, 1703); Emanuel van Meteren, *Historie der Nederlandscher ende haerder na-buren oorlogen ende geschiedenissen* (The Hague: Hillebrant Jacobsz van Wouw (wed.), 1635).

⁵⁷ William of Orange, *Verklaringe ende wtschrift des ... heer Willem, prince van Oranien ec., ende zijner excellentien nootsakelicken defensie teghen den duca de Alba, ende zijne grouwelijcke tyrannye* (1568), f. 1v: ‘onderdanichlick ende vriendelick ghebeden / nochtans is de selve in die Nederlanden voorledener tijt inghebracht [...] teghen die aerne onschuldighe Christenen’.

⁵⁸ Duke, ‘In Defence of the Common Fatherland’, pp. 232-233.

religious controversy and were full of references to a communal ‘Netherlandish’ feeling and xenophobia towards Spanish people. They targeted the ‘tyrannical nature’ of the Spanish rulers and soldiers but did not blacken Catholicism. The prince’s 1568 invasion failed miserably, yet his propaganda was rather successful, setting the tone for decades to come.⁵⁹ Following William of Orange’s example, rebels began to define ‘the Netherlander’ in negative terms as someone against Habsburg centralism and against Alba but also in positive terms as a champion of freedom from foreign oppression.⁶⁰

Rebel propaganda reached out not only to local elites but also appealed to the population in general through the wide variety of media rebels used to spread their interpretation of the conflict. Prints, songs and news pamphlets enabled news of the Revolt to reach the population quickly.⁶¹ Political songs played a central role in the dissemination of rebel thought, and as multiple scholars have pointed out, they constituted an accessible medium.⁶² Louis Grijp has shown in his study of these songs that they were of topical interest. They stemmed from the period of the covered event, and many dozens of songs were published in the 1560s, ’70s and ’80s: the most turbulent period of the Revolt.⁶³ Rebel songs primarily served propagandistic purposes and as carriers of news. Halfway through the 1570s printers began compiling these songs into so-called Beggar (i.e. rebel) songbooks, which narrated ‘all occurrences in the Netherlandish histories’.⁶⁴ These books became very popular and remained so in the seventeenth century. Whereas authors of political songs mainly intended them to convince the audience of a certain political view

⁵⁹ Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 11, 151, 287; K.W. Swart, *Willem van Oranje en de Nederlandse Opstand, 1572-1584*, edited by Raymond Fagel, M.E.H.N. Mout and Henk van Nierop (The Hague: SDU, 1994), pp. 194-199; the prince also tried to dissociate himself from some beggars, who had acquired a reputation in the Southern Netherlands of being as ruthless as Spanish soldiers: Alastair Duke, ‘Loyalty and Treason in the Revolt of the Netherlands’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 32 (1982), pp. 128-129; Duke, ‘In Defence of the Common Fatherland’, p. 233.

⁶⁰ M.E.H.N. Mout, ‘Van arm vaderland tot eendrachtige republiek: De rol van politieke theorieën in de Nederlandse Opstand’, *BMGN* 101 (1986), pp. 345-355.

⁶¹ Henk van Nierop has noted the relatively high degree of popular participation in political debates in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic: Henk van Nierop, ‘Popular Participation in Politics in the Dutch Republic’, in: Peter Blickle, ed., *Resistance, Representation and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 272-281; see for the political character of news reporting in the Low Countries: Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 44.

⁶² Judith Pollmann, ‘Hey ho, let the cup go round!’ Singing for Reformation in the Sixteenth Century’, *Religion and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 294-298.

⁶³ Louis Grijp, ‘Van geuzenlied tot Gedenck-clanck: eerste deel: het geuzenliedboek in de Gouden Eeuw’, *Zeventiende Eeuw* 10:1 (1994), pp. 121-122; Martine de Bruin, ‘Bevroren boekjes: een Geuzenliedboek van 1577-1578 en andere vondsten’, in: Frank Willaert, ed., *Veelderhande liedekens. Studies over het Nederlandse lied tot 1600* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), p. 84.

⁶⁴ See for instance: Anonymous, *Een nieu Geusen Lieden-Boecxken, waarine begrepen is den gantschen handel der Nederlantscher gheschiedenissen* (s.l.: s.n., 1581).

and to communicate news, Beggar songbooks also began to serve as histories of the Revolt. Take for example *A New Song narrating briefly the occurrences in the Netherlands* [*Een Nieu Liedeken / verhalende int cort den handel der Nederlanden*], which was published in a 1588 edition of the songbook. The song effectively summarized the history of the Revolt, from 1566 to the year 1584, and begins as follows: ‘As has been written, in the year fifteen-hundred and sixty-six, the assembled nobility of the land (because so many feared for their lives) demanded to be freed of the strict placard’.⁶⁵ In the margins, the respective dates were placed side-by-side with the narrated history. Songs like these no longer served merely to inform inhabitants of news that was happening around them but also to create a historical chronology of what had happened.

In 1580, Philip II set a price on the prince of Orange’s head and promised any assassin who would kill the prince 25,000 golden crowns and ennoblement.⁶⁶ To justify this move against the prince, in his proclamation the Spanish king gave a rare official account of what had caused the Revolt and, especially, of William’s part in the conflict. He began by mentioning the favours which his late father Charles V had bestowed on Prince William, for example by allowing his protégé to inherit the principality of Orange and by promoting him at court, ‘although hee [the prince] was a stranger’.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Philip II himself had made William of Orange a knight of the Golden Fleece, appointed him stadholder of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht, and introduced the prince as a member of the Council of State. Despite all these favours, Philip stated,

Every one knoweth, that we were not so soone departed, out of those our low Countreyes, but that the sayd William of Nassau, made prince of Orange by the meanes above mentioned, did by his sinister practices, devises and craftes assaie [...] to get the good willes of those whome he knew to be discontent, greatly

⁶⁵ *Een nieu Geusen Lieden-Boecxken waerinne begrepen is den gantschen Handel der Nederlandtscher geschiedenissen, dees voorleden Jaeren tot noch toe geschiedt eensdeels onderwijlen in Druck utghegaen, eendeels nu nieu byghevoecht. Nu nieulick vermeerdert ende verbeteret. Vive Dieu, La Santé du Roy, & la Prospérité des Geus* (1588), f. 79r: ‘Alsmen een duysent vijfhondert Jaer / En sessentstich heeft gheschreven, [1566. 5. April] / Versocht sLandts Adel alle gaer / (Om datmer veel brocht om tleven) / Vant straffe ghebodt utghegheven / Binnen Bruyssel te zijn bevrijt’.

⁶⁶ Philip II, *Ban ende edict by forme van proscriptie, vvtghegaen ende gedecreteert by [...] de coninck, tegens Wilhelm van Nassau, prince van Orangien* (Den Bosch: Ian Schoeffer, 1580), f. b3r; the English translation was taken from an appendix to William of Orange’s *Apology: The apologie or defence, of [...] prince William [...] prince of Orange [...] against the proclamation [...] by the king of Spaine* (Delft, 1581), f. r1r.

⁶⁷ Philip II, *Ban ende edict*, f. a2e; William of Orange, *The apologie*, f. p3r.

endebedted, haters of iustice, studious of novelties, and speciallie such as were suspected to be of the religion.⁶⁸

Holding him responsible for the nobility's petition in 1566, the Habsburg overlord especially abhorred Prince William's pretensions of acting in his royal name while, in actual fact, he was undermining royal authority as the foremost agitator of the rebellion and as protector of the Reformed.

Philip II's references to and interpretation of the recent past provoked heated reactions, not least from Prince William himself. In his famous *Apology*, published in 1581, the prince responded to each of Philip II's accusations and tried to convince his readers, in Dutch, French, English and Latin, of his interpretation of events.⁶⁹ First he dealt with the king's allegation of ingratitude. The prince agreed that 'nothing is so much to be condemned in this world, as a man defiled with these two spottes and staines, to wit, of unthankfulness and unfaithfulness', but he denied that he had acted ungratefully.⁷⁰ About Charles V's supposed generosity in allowing William to succeed his uncle René of Châlon as prince of Orange, Prince William wondered what was so generous about this gesture. He argued that 'there was never any lorde as yet founde so evil advised, that would pretend right against me for succession', and he posed the rhetorical question: 'in so much that the emperour hath not hindered me in that, what hath he done for me, that a iudge, the greatest enemie I could have, would not have done likewise?'⁷¹ William explained, for instance, that his succession to the Nassau-Breda territories was in line with tradition, Breda being 'the principall place of my lordshippes, and where I and my predecessours had helde our chambers of accountes, counsel, and principall instructions pertaining to us and ours'. He continued with a brief but rather intricate summary of the line of succession in acknowledgement of his father who had relinquished his claim to the princely title in favour of his son William:

⁶⁸ Philip II, *Ban ende edict*, f. a2r; William of Orange, *The apology*, f. p3v.

⁶⁹ William of Orange, *Apologie, ofte verantwoordinghe des doerluchtighen ende hooghgeborenen vorsts ende heeren, heeren Wilhelms [...] teghen den ban [...] ghepubliceert by den coningh van Spaegnen* (Leiden: Charles Silvius, 1581); see also: William of Orange, *Apologie ov defense de tresillustre prince Guillaume [...] contre le ban & edict publié par le roi d'Espagne* (Leiden: Charles Silvius, 1581); William of Orange, *The apology*; William of Orange, *Apologia illvstrissimi principis Willelmi [...] ad proscscriptionem ab Hispaniarum rege in eum promulgatam* (Leiden: Charles Silvius 1581); the English edition will be cited.

⁷⁰ William of Orange, *The Apologie*, f. c1v.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f. c2r.

who was he [Charles V] that might molest me in that, unlesse it were my lorde my father, who was the uncle, and I the cousin germain, of my lord the prince Rene, the onely sonne of my lord Henrie, countie of Nassau, my uncle, and the brother of my lorde my father?⁷²

In reaction to Philip's reference to William's appointment to the Council of State the prince argued that 'the cardinall [i.e. Antoine Perrenot, cardinal of Granvelle] and others practiced this matter, that I might be called thereto, thinking thereby to cloake and cover themselves, onely with my authoritie before the people'.⁷³ As for Philip II's dismissal of William as a 'stranger' or foreigner, the prince repudiated the charges again by pointing to his possessions in the Low Countries, notably in Breda, held by his family for many generations. He added that Philip acted 'as if the prince of Parma [i.e. governor-general Alexander Farnese], were a great country man, who was not borne in this country, nor hath not a farthing worth of goods here, nor any title'.⁷⁴ Apart from his defence the prince also went on the offensive. Philip had accused the prince of unlawfully marrying Charlotte de Bourbon because William's second wife Anne of Saxony was still alive at the time of the wedding. William replied in kind and accused Philip of being an 'incestuous king [...] yet they dare reproch me, with a holy, an honest, and a lawfull maruage [sic]'.⁷⁵ This charge of incest was founded on Philip's marriage to Anne of Austria, who, as the daughter of his sister Infanta Mary, was his niece. William continued his muckraking by arguing that in order to marry Anne King Philip had had his wife Elisabeth of Valois killed:

he I say, dare upbraied me with my mariage, who (to the end he might obtaine such a mariage) hath cruelly murdered his owne wife, the daughter and sister of the kings of Fraunce (as I understande they have in Fraunce, informations and instructions concerning that matter).⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid., ff. c2r-v

⁷³ Ibid., f. e1v.

⁷⁴ Ibid., f. e4r.

⁷⁵ Ibid., f. e2r.

⁷⁶ Ibid..

And it did not end here. Prince William accused Philip of murdering his own mentally unstable son Don Carlos and of other iniquitous crimes. The prince attacked the moral standing of Philip II to affect the credibility of the Spanish king's allegations against him.

Despite William's *Apology* and after a failed assassination attempt by Jean Jaureguy in 1582, Balthasar Gérard – a Catholic zealot from the Franche-Comté – murdered the prince in 1584. It was not going well with the Revolt at the time of the prince's death. Already in 1581, the States General had decided to abjure the Spanish king, and together with Prince William they had appointed the brother of the French king Henry III, Francois of Anjou, as their new sovereign. This experiment failed as the new sovereign felt his powers were curbed too much by Prince William and the States. On 17 January 1583 Duke Francis, frustrated, tried to seize the city of Antwerp where the Spanish Fury of 1576 was still fresh in the public memory.⁷⁷ The duke was unsuccessful, lost all goodwill and left the country. While the duke of Anjou's rebel government was turning out a wretched failure, Habsburg army commander Alexander Farnese was busy reconquering the rebel territories. In March 1585 he took Brussels, and a few months later, on 17 August, he captured the city of Antwerp. Farnese pardoned the population in the territories he had conquered in the 1580s, but he did so on the condition that they would peacefully return under Philip II's authority. He offered remaining heretics who persisted in their religious deviancy a relatively generous opportunity of liquidizing their assets and emigrating.⁷⁸

Many inhabitants chose exile over conforming to the new order. Historians estimate that about one hundred thousand people fled the Southern Netherlands after the Revolt broke out, and this outpouring resulted in a period of diminished literary production.⁷⁹ 'Those who stay do not write', argues F.G. Scheelings, because they conformed to the restored Habsburg and Catholic order.⁸⁰ Indeed, during the period of Farnese's governorship (1578-1592) and the subsequent years no substantial work of national history by an indigenous author appeared in the vernacular languages in the

⁷⁷ See, for instance: *Corte verclaringe [...] nopende den aenslach teghen de selue stad aengericht den XVII. deser maent ianuarij. M.D.LXXXIII. stylo nouo* (Antwerp: Christoffel Plantijn, 1583), f. a3r.

⁷⁸ Violet Soen, 'Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592)', *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012), pp. 10-11.

⁷⁹ J. Briels, *De Zuid-Nederlandse immigratie, 1572-1630* (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1978), pp. 11-12; Gustaaf Asaert, *1585: De val van Antwerpen en de uittocht van Vlamingen en Brabanders* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2004), pp. 33-47; W.J.C. Buitendijk, *Het calvinisme in de spiegel van de Zuidnederlandse literatuur der Contra-Reformatie* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1942), p. 16.

⁸⁰ Scheelings, 'De geschiedschrijving', pp. 151-180.

Habsburg Netherlands.⁸¹ Scheelings rightly argues that inhabitants of the reconciled Habsburg Netherlands simply had to acknowledge the failure of the rebellion and live with the newly restored regime. In this setting it was not expedient to remember past quarrels.⁸² Publicly remembering the Revolt was not even allowed. To alleviate the popular fear of persecution and prevent litigation about what had happened during the tumultuous years of the Revolt the restored Habsburg authorities forbade public commemorations of the conflict in their reconciliation treaties with the rebellious cities, a practice that was also common in French reconciliation treaties during the Wars of Religion.⁸³ Article 2 of the reconciliation treaty for Antwerp decreed, for instance, that ‘to remove and bar all cause for distrust and dissidence’ the memory of the city’s Calvinist past would be ‘erased and undone like matters that have never happened, without them ever being allowed to be researched, inquired or reproached [...] on pain of being convicted as disturber and agitator of the communal peace.’⁸⁴ And this article pertained not only to the living but also to the dead, whose memory was not allowed to be meddled with by public or private persons.⁸⁵ Similar *oubliés du passé* were issued in other reconciled cities such as Ghent, Brussels, and Nijmegen, placing the Revolt between brackets as an undesirable interruption of dynastic and religious continuity.⁸⁶ The cities in the Northern part of the Low Countries that Parma failed to capture, however, did not need to negotiate capitulation treaties with oblivion clauses and therefore did not institute any formal requirement to forget the Revolt.⁸⁷

⁸¹ One of the first general South Netherlandish histories of the Revolt was Florentius van der Haer, *De initiis tumultuum belgicorum ad Serenissimum D.D. Alexandrum Farnesium Parmae et Placentiae Ducem Libri Duo* (Douai: Johannes Bogardus, 1587); Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 144.

⁸² Scheelings, ‘De geschiedschrijving’, p. 167.

⁸³ Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, p. 170.

⁸⁴ *Articvlen jende conditien vanden tractate, aengegaen ende ghesloten tusschen de [...] prince van Parma [...] ende de stadt van Antwerpen [...] den XVII. augusti, M.D. LXXXV* (Antwerp: Daniel Vervliet, 1585), article 2: ‘om wech te nemen ende weeren alle oorsaken van mistrouwcheyt en diffidentie’, ‘waer van de gedenckenisse wt ende te niete gedaen sal blijven/ als van saken die noyt geschiet en zijn / sonder dat sy deshalve oyt ondersocht / geinquiteert oft gereproceert sullen mogen worden [...] Op pene dat de overtreders ghestrafft sullen worden als verstoorders ende veroerders van de gemene ruste’.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, article 2.

⁸⁶ *Articles et conditions, de par Monseigneur le Prince de Parme & Plaisance, &c. [...] accordez a la Ville de Gand, & inhabitants d’icelle le xvii^{me} de Septembre. M.D.LXXXVIII* (Ghent: Corneille de Rekenare and Gaultier Manilius, 1584), article 1; *Articulen ende Conditien vanden Tractate aengegaen ende gesloten tusschen die [...] prince van Parma [...] ende de Stadt van Bruesele [...] den x. Meerte xv^e. LXXXV* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1585), article 1; *Tractaet gemaect tusschen den prince van Parma [...] ende die stadt van Nymeghen [...] den xv. Aprilis.* (Rees: Derick Wylicks van Santen, 1585), article 1.

⁸⁷ For oblivion policies in other parts of early modern Europe, see: R. Marcowitz and W. Paravicini, eds., *Vergeben und Vergessen? Vergangenheitsdiskurse nach Besatzung, Bürgerkrieg und Revolution / Pardonner et oublier? Les discours sur le passé après l’occupation, la guerre civile et la révolution* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009), also online accessible on http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/phs/marcowitz-paravicini_vergeben (accessed 2 November 2013).

Despite these policies of oblivion, Stensland has shown that loyalist authors were quite consistent in their explanations of the origins of the conflict. She exemplifies this coherence by pointing to the public – loyalist – image of William of Orange. Almost without exception loyalists considered him as a rebel troublemaker. We do not yet see any such coherence in the rebel camp where, at least during the first decades of the Revolt, Orange is seen as both an inadequate leader and a heroic saviour of the country.⁸⁸ Even in the Northern Netherlands, where in the seventeenth century people began to remember Prince William as a national hero, this reputation was not there from the start. Judith Pollmann has pointed out that by the time of his death the rebellion was perilously close to collapse. At the time, Orange's propaganda, although very influential, had not been able to create a lasting hegemonic memory of events. Pollmann rightly notes that only in the 1610s did the States General commission a monumental tomb for William of Orange. Before that, he had been buried in an unremarkable grave.⁸⁹ Although, as we will see in the next chapter, popular historical narratives about the Revolt started to appear at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the Northern Netherlands, the hotchpotch of politicized and conflicting information spread by William of Orange, Hogenberg and the Beggars did not offer a coherent story of the past. Such a story would emerge only later.

Memory and historiography

During the first decades of the Revolt some people saw in wondrous events such as comets and lunar eclipses signs of God's imminent intervention in the troubles of the land.⁹⁰ In 1578, for example, Nicolaes Bazilius – a town physician from Bergues Saint-Winoc – suggested that 'the great miseries, fears, anxieties, and calamities drawing nigh to people of all states, conditions, and convictions during this troublesome and seditious year' could be explained by the 'terrible and long lasting occultation, or eclipse of the moon' that occurred in 1577.⁹¹ Bazilius probably referred to 1578 as a 'troublesome and seditious year' because

⁸⁸ Stensland, *Habsburg Communication*, pp. 105-107.

⁸⁹ Pollmann, *Het oorlogsverleden*, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 59.

⁹¹ M. Nicolaes Bazilius, *Een nieuwe prognosticatie vanden wonderlijcken ende ellendighen Jare ons Heeren 1578* (Antwerp: Hendrick Heyndricksen, 1578), f. a3v: 'de groote ellenden / ancxten / benautheden, ende rampsalicheden die alle menschen van wat state, conditie / ende ghesintheyt hy zy alle desen beroerlicken ende seditieusen Jare nakende zijn', 'den verschrickelycken ende seer langhe gheduerende verduysternisse / ofte Eclips vander Mane'; see also: Tabitta van Nouhoys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus: The Comets of 1577 and 1618 and the Decline of the Aristotelian World View in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 200; C. Doris Hellman, *The Comet of 1577: Its Place in the History of Astronomy* (New York: AMS Press, 1971), pp. 243-247.

of the rebel and Calvinist take-over of many cities and the radicalization of the Revolt.⁹² He named more examples in support of his argument. In 1565 there was a lunar eclipse, ‘which operation had, to our great sorrow, made its effects public on the year 1566’, the year that the Iconoclastic Furies broke out.⁹³

Astrology was one way of explaining the troubles in the Low Countries; historiography was another and an increasingly popular one. It is important to note that history-writing was not the preserve of central government authorities. In fact, the rebel States General appear to have felt reluctant to take the initiative. In the first decades of the Revolt they did virtually nothing to have their interpretation of the past recognized by others or even to develop such an image. Cities and provinces were much more active as memory-makers.⁹⁴ The province of Zeeland, for instance, commissioned from 1593 onwards a monumental series of tapestries commemorating the Zeeland war effort.⁹⁵ The States of Holland employed historiographers such as Hadrianus Junius and Janus Dousa and gave them access to government papers.⁹⁶ On the local level historians published rebel histories soon after the actual events. After the 1572 massacre of Naarden an anonymous author published a book about the event that same year.⁹⁷ After the siege of Leiden in 1573-74, chronicler Jan Fruytiers published a history of the siege in 1574.⁹⁸ Local historians were keen to preserve for the future the memory of noteworthy events, but a tradition of narrating the history of the Revolt as a ‘Netherlandish’ conflict developed quite slowly. Mainly foreigners, such as the Italian historian Ludovico Guicciardini, benefitting from an outsider perspective, wrote histories and chorographies about the Low Countries in the

⁹² H.A. Enno van Gelder, *Revolutionnaire Reformatie. De vestiging van de Gereformeerde Kerk in de Nederlandse gewesten, gedurende de eerste jaren van de Opstand tegen Filips II, 1575-1585* (Amsterdam: P.N. van Kampen, 1943), pp. 45-79.

⁹³ Bazelius, *Een nieuwe prognosticatie*, f. a4v: ‘welcker operatie opt Jaer 1566, heeft zyn effecten ghenoech tot onsen alder grooten verdriete openbaer ghemaect’.

⁹⁴ Eekhout, ‘Material Memories’.

⁹⁵ Katie Heyning and Valentijn Byvanck, *De tapijten van Zeeland* (Middelburg: Zeeuws Museum, 2007).

⁹⁶ Chris L. Heesakkers and Wilma M.S. Reinders, *Genoeglijk bovenal zijn mij de Muzen. De Leidse neolatijnse dichter Janus Dousa (1545-1604)* (Leiden: Dimensie, 1993), p. 66; Coen Maas, ‘The Lure of the Dark Ages: Writing the Middle Ages and Political Rhetoric in Humanist Historiography from the Low Countries’, unpublished PhD dissertation (Leiden, 2012), pp. 261-265.

⁹⁷ Anonymous, *Moort-dadich verhael vande gheschiedenissen, moort ende destructie vande stede van Naerden, behoorende onder't Graefschap van Hollandt, ghelegghen in Naerdingerlandt, (eertijts also genaemt) ende nu Goylant, ghedaen by den Spagniaerden onder den Velt-Oversten Don Frederico, sone van den Hertoghe van Alva, gouverneur generael vande Nederlanden, op ten i. Decembris ende andere daer aen volghende daghen* (1572).

⁹⁸ Jan Fruytiers, *Corte beschryvinghe vande strenghe belegheringhe ende wonderbaerlicke verlossinghe der stad Leyden* (Delft: Aelbrecht Hendricksz, 1574).

1560s and early 1570s, mostly in Latin, French, German and Italian.⁹⁹ Natives were more concerned with regional and local perspectives on the past.¹⁰⁰ A Netherlandish outlook existed primarily in William of Orange's propaganda.

On the Catholic and loyalist side, the first general histories of the conflict in Latin emerged in print in the late 1580s. In 1587, Richard Verstegan, a Catholic polemicist and historian, published the first edition of his *Theatre of Cruelties of Heretics in Our Time* [*Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis*] although this work dealt with the sufferings of the universal Catholic Church rather than just the Low Countries conflict.¹⁰¹ That same year Florentius van der Haer's *De initiis tumultuum belgicorum* appeared in Douai.¹⁰² Historians have pointed out that the work of Van der Haer was the first coherent sequential and Netherlandish history of the Revolt of the Netherlands written by a native inhabitant.¹⁰³ Van der Haer wrote it in honour of Alexander Farnese, who had reconquered large territories for the Habsburg cause, and also in gratitude for Farnese's conferral of a prebendary in the chapter of Saint Waltrude in Mons.¹⁰⁴ It was a very influential work, cited frequently by South Netherlandish Catholic historians and North Netherlandish Reformed authors alike.¹⁰⁵ Although the work appeared in 1587 and honoured Farnese, it covered the origins of the Revolt only up to the arrival of the duke of Alba in 1567. The fact that Van der Haer did not discuss the violent 1570s and 1580s may explain why his history could become so well respected in the South. By limiting the number of episodes Van der Haer could focus on the fundamental errors of the rebels. Indeed, the main achievement of Van der Haer was to provide an influential historical basis for the idea that the Revolt had been caused by three factors: over-ambitious nobles such as William of Orange, opposition to the reorganisation of the bishoprics and, most importantly, heresy.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ See, for example, Lodovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania Inferiore ou Basse Allemaigne* (Antwerp, 1567); Judith Pollmann, 'Internationalisering en de Nederlandse Opstand', *BMGN* 124:4 (2009), pp. 515-516.

¹⁰⁰ Steven Gunn, David Grummitt and Hans Cools, *War, State and Society in England and the Netherlands, 144-1559* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 321-322.

¹⁰¹ Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp: Adriaen Huybrechts, 1587).

¹⁰² Florentius van der Haer, *De initiis tmvltvum Belgicorum [...] libri dvo* (Douai: Ioannis Bogardi, 1587).

¹⁰³ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 144; Romein, 'Spiegel Historiae', p. 30.

¹⁰⁴ 'Van der Haer ou Haraeus, Florent', in: *Messenger des sciences historiques ou archives des arts et de la bibliographie* 31 (1863), p. 457.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel de Wind, *Bibliotheek der Nederlandsche Geschiedschrijvers* (Middelburg: Gebroeders Abrahams, 1835), pp. 209-213.

¹⁰⁶ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 147

Not all history went on the market quite so smoothly. When, a few decades later, Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio wrote a history of the Low Countries conflict, it took some time to have it legally published. Bentivoglio had been the Papal Nuncio in the period 1607-1615. When his work was ready for publication in 1629, the attorney-general of Brabant intervened. According to Infanta Isabella's physician and antiquarian Jean-Jacques Chifflet, well-informed in matters of historiography, the attorney-general 'found some passages to the detriment of the prince and to the advantage of the states and their privileges, which he will correct accordingly.'¹⁰⁷ As we will see in chapter 4, 1629 was a turbulent year for the Habsburg regime, which explains why the government of Brabant thought it too risky to let historical justifications of local privileges be published.

In the North, history could be equally controversial. It took more than ten years after the publication of Van der Haer's 1587 history before the first Netherlandish history was published in the Dutch Republic. Its author, Emanuel van Meteren, presented it to the States of Holland on 6 January 1599.¹⁰⁸ He actively approached national, provincial and local government authorities with copies of the book in the hope they would support him financially for his efforts and because he believed they should take notice of the history of the Republic.¹⁰⁹ In Enkhuizen, for instance, the city, four burgomasters and the admiralty each received a copy. Brummel also found copies with dedications to Zeeland and to Friesland.¹¹⁰ On 5 January, the day before the official presentation, Van Meteren wrote a letter to Daniel van der Meulen, asking him to 'present my published memories in my name to the city of Leiden, with such recommendations as you see fit'.¹¹¹ Van Meteren explained that he was 'advised to present each of the important cities of Holland with a [copy]' and with a handwritten dedication, not in print so as to keep up his public appearance of

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Jacques Chifflet to Jean-François Guidi di Bagno, 23 November 1629, in: 'Texte intégral des lettres de Philippe et de Jean-Jacques Chifflet sur les affaires des Pays-Bas (1627-1639) publiées sous forme d'analyses dans les in-80 de la Commission Royale d'Histoire par Bertrand de Meester de Ravestein', edited by Bernard de Meester de Ravestein (1943), KBR, MS II 7277, f. 286: 'on trouve à dire à quelques passages au desavantage du Prince et à l'avantage des Estatz et de leurs privilèges, qu'il conviendra réformer.'

¹⁰⁸ A.E.M. Jansen, 'A 'Trias Historica' on the Revolt of the Netherlands: Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Bor and Everhard van Reyd as Exponents of Contemporary Historiography', in: A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse, eds., *Clio's Mirror. Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1985), p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ L. Brummel, *Twee ballingen 's lands tijdens onze opstand tegen Spanje. Hugo Blotius (1534-1608) en Emanuel van Meteren (1535-1612)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), p. 100.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹¹¹ Emanuel van Meteren to Daniel van der Meulen, 5 January 1599, in: Z.W. Sneller, 'Brieven van Emanuel van Meteren en van Pieter Bor', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 56 (1935), p. 277: 'desen mijn gedruckte Memorien in mijnen name te presenteren aen de stadt van Leijden, met alsulcken reccommandatien, als U.L. best sullen goetduncken'.

impartiality.¹¹² In print he addressed himself more generally ‘to the States, cities and inhabitants of the Low Countries’ and expressed his wonder ‘that a general history of the events in the Netherlands of our day has been lacking so far’.¹¹³ Citing Cicero, Van Meteren argued that from ‘a history of this kind’, Netherlanders ‘might draw [...] very useful lessons, in order to regulate henceforth their government, actions and profession’.¹¹⁴

Although the function of history as a Ciceronian storeroom of examples was a commonplace, a recurrent difficulty of history-writing was the risk of offending people personally or insulting groups of people.¹¹⁵ The reception of Emanuel van Meteren’s history exemplifies the complexity of publishing a general history of a divisive conflict. Van Meteren tried to avoid suspicions of partisanship, but the appearance of his first edition was a bit of a fiasco.¹¹⁶ Shortly after publication, the States of Holland, in a meeting of the States General on 8 January 1599, ‘declared to find that in matters of state the book was remiss and that therefore they could not honour the author for his efforts as long as nothing was altered’.¹¹⁷ The delegates from Utrecht had also found fault with Van Meteren’s account. Perhaps it was Van Meteren’s self-declared pursuit of impartiality that made things worse. In a subsequent meeting of the States General, on 31 January, a letter from Count Philip of Hohenlohe was read in the assembly. Hohenlohe, lieutenant-general of Holland and Zeeland, wrote ‘that one person named Van Meteren, had asserted in his history some matters which damaged his grace, and that hurt his person and honour.’¹¹⁸ Van Meteren was therefore summoned to the assembly to explain himself and reveal his sources. The author ‘who, having been heard, could give no other source than hearsay’ failed to satisfy his questioners. They therefore ordered ‘that he would distribute none of

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278: ‘ben geraden de hoofsteden van Hollant elck eenen te presenteren’

¹¹³ Emanuel van Meteren, *Belgische ofte Nederlantsche historie, van onsen tijden* (Delft: J.C. Vennecool, 1599), f. *2r: ‘aen de Staten / Steden ende Inghesetenen vande Nederlanden’; ‘dat de generale Historie der Nederlantsche gheschiedenissen van onsen tijde / tot noch toe is achtergehouden’. Further English translations are from Jansen, ‘A Trias Historica’, p. 16.

¹¹⁴ Van Meteren, *Belgische ofte Nederlantsche historie*, f. *2r: ‘daer wt connen trecken seer profijtlijcke leeringen / om hare regiringe / handelinghe ende professie daer naer voortaan te reguleren’.

¹¹⁵ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 297.

¹¹⁶ Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, pp. 121-122; ‘Emanuel van Meteren’, in: E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier en G.A.C. van der Lem, eds., *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland 1500-1800* (The Hague: Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 1990), pp. 284-287.

¹¹⁷ ‘Verbael van’t ghene ter vergaderinghe der Heeren Staten Generael is ghepasseert van 1594 tot 1599’, in: J.J. Dodt van Flensburg, ‘Iets over het geschiedkundig werk van Emanuel van Meteren’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis, Oudheden en Statistiek van Utrecht* 8 (1842), p. 203: ‘verclaerden te bevinden, dat daerinne in materie vanden Staet soude wesen gefailgieert, ende dat sy daeromme den autheur emmers voor als noch nyet en conden vereeren, soe es hetselve daerby blyven staen’.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*: ‘dat eenen, ghenaept van Meteren, in zyne historie enighe saken soude hebben aenghetoghen, daerby syn ghenade hem houdt grotelyck vercourt, ende dat deselve zyne persoon ende eer nadeelich soude wesen’.

the mentioned books, and that the other copies would be collected from the bookseller and brought to the Lords States General'.¹¹⁹

Hohenlohe was not the only critic of Van Meteren's work. Reformed clergymen criticized the author for confessional inaccuracies although the sources do not reveal their precise objections. At the synod of South Holland in the Holland town of Woerden in August 1604, for example, representatives complained that Van Meteren's 'many falsehoods [...] bring damage and trouble to the Reformed churches'.¹²⁰ The synod proposed to draw the author's attention to 'several errors' and to 'request that he improve them in his chronicle'.¹²¹ Should Van Meteren refuse to cooperate, 'the deputies will issue a warning against his mentioned chronicle'.¹²² Furthermore, the synod instructed each South Holland classis 'that from their midst they will choose someone who will keep an eye on all matters of church'. All observations from the different classes would then be combined and sent to the historiographer of the States General and professor of history at Leiden University, Paulus Merula, who was working on an official national history. These activities continued for quite some years. In 1605, the South Holland synod assembled in Rotterdam and ordered the classes to 'note all historical memoirs with regard to the churches in these lands, to send these to Paulus Merula, so that having an accurate account of affairs, he may subsequently draft a better version of his Netherlandish histories which he is writing on the order of the States General'.¹²³ In 1606, the synod was held in Gorinchem, and similar orders were distributed.¹²⁴ Merula's history never appeared. By the time the synod assembled in Delft on 14 August 1607, Merula had died before he could finish his work. Still, the representatives ordered all classes to continue collecting and inspecting Van Meteren's edition.¹²⁵

The controversy surrounding the publication of Van Meteren's book demonstrates that authorities attached importance to the history of their brand new state but that they also found it threatening. There was no officially prescribed way of recounting the tale of the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 204: 'dat hy eghene vande voorsz. boecken vorder en soude distribueren, ende dat men van den boeovercoper de resterende exemplaren soude doen halen ende brenghen onder de Heeren Staten Generael'.

¹²⁰ *Acta der provinciale en particuliere synoden, gehouden in de Noordelijke Nederlanden gedurende de jaren 1572-1620* III, edited by J. Reitsma and S.D. van Veen (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1894), p. 223: 'veele onwaerheden [...] die grootelick tot nadeel ende beswaringhe der Gereformeerde Kercken strecken'.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 223: 'verscheyden fouten aenwijzen ende versoecken zal, dat hij die in syne Chronijcke selve betere'.

¹²² Ibid., p. 223: 'soo sal door de ghedeputeerde een sekere waerschouwinghe teghen zijne voorsz. Chronijcke'.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 233: 'om aen te teyckenen alle historische memorien belangende de saken der kercken in dese landen, om deselve over te senden aen D.D. Paulum Merulam, opdat hij, een warachtigh bericht der saken hebbende, daerna sich beter moge regulieren in syne Neerlantsche historien welcke hy schrijft wt last der Staten-Generael'.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 245.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 266.

Revolt. Confrontations, arising when the story was not accepted by authorities, powerful individuals or interest groups (such as the Reformed Church), exposed the rules of the game. In 1614, a new edition appeared after Van Meteren's death and only after careful review by a committee appointed by the States General for the express purpose of revising the text.¹²⁶ The 1614 edition was even offered to all delegates in the assembly 'at the cost of the Generality.'¹²⁷ Van Meteren's revised history now enjoyed official endorsement and was apparently so appreciated by the government that the authorities encouraged delegates from all provinces of the United Provinces to take notice of its contents.

Conclusion

It is ironic that while Habsburg attempts at centralisation led to the break-up of the Low Countries, popular opposition to increasing centralisation resulted in the invention of a new sense of Netherlandish identity. When William of Orange and his adherents propagated resistance to 'Spanish' rule they explicitly implored all Netherlanders to combine forces, devising an elastic rhetorical strategy in which several, often overlapping, resistance movements could be accommodated. These movements included the opposition to Habsburg centralisation, Protestant resistance against Catholicism, and campaigns against religious persecution.¹²⁸ During the first decades of the Revolt propagandists invited Netherlanders to look at their patria not only as a local or provincial fact but also as a supraregional or *national* phenomenon. No longer were they bound together in a merely personal union, that is, by a shared overlord; they were bound together by a shared and subversive political agenda. This shared political agenda, however, could not easily draw on historical arguments. Since the Revolt broke out for the preservation of local privileges, supralocal history was not the most useful frame of reference.

In the Southern Netherlands, the regime ordered inhabitants to forget the Revolt. There it became highly problematic to refer to the past challenges to Habsburg authority. Still, the result of these policies of oblivion was that the Habsburg regime and its subjects could develop quite a coherent and fundamental vision of what had caused the conflict. An over-ambitious as well as greedy nobility along with (foreign) heretics were blamed for the

¹²⁶ L. Brummel, 'Emanuel van Meteren als historicus', in: P.A.M. Geurts and A.E.M. Janssen, eds., *Geschiedschrijving in Nederland. Studies over de historiografie van de Nieuwe Tijd. Deel 1: Geschiedschrijvers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 15-18.

¹²⁷ *Archief voor kerkelijke en wereldsche geschiedenissen, inzonderheid van Utrecht VI*, edited by J.J. Dodt van Flensburg (Utrecht 1846), p. 360.

¹²⁸ Van der Essen, 'De historische gebondenheid', p. 169.

unrest. The advantage of this approach was that it absolved all the other subjects and enabled them to reconcile with the regime.

National histories like those published by Florentius van der Haer in the South and Emanuel van Meteren in the North cannot, however, sufficiently explain the rise of two distinctive popular interpretations of the Revolt. These two historians, like other contemporary colleagues, tried to provide an exhaustive and relatively impartial coverage of the rebellion against Philip II. They aimed too directly at an elite audience to make a deep impact on the ways in which the Revolt came to be popularly remembered.¹²⁹ Although these general histories could be very different in terms of structure and coverage, they were too comprehensive to serve as the primary engines behind historical canon formation. Many authors from North and South used history books like those of Van Meteren and Van der Haer as important works of reference but mainly because, as rich supplies of historical information, the publications could bolster a great variety of different political arguments.¹³⁰ In trying to account for the emergence of two relatively coherent popular narratives about the Revolt in the Northern and Southern Netherlands, it is thus necessary to examine a wider selection of textual and material evidence.

¹²⁹ They were part of regent book collections, see for example the library of Zeeland regent D. Guilielmi, who owned copies of the histories of Bor, Van Meteren, Grotius and Hooft: Schama, *The Embarrassment*, p. 618; Scholar Nicolaas Heinsius owned copies of Bor and Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn among other historical works: *Bibliotheca Heinsiana sive Catalogvs librorum, quos [...] collegit [...] Nicolaus Heinsius, Dan. fil.* (Leiden: Johannes du Vivé, 1682), pp. 248-259; for the Southern Netherlands, see: Scheelings, 'De geschiedschrijving', pp. 170-171.

¹³⁰ Verschaffel, *De hoed en de hond*, pp. 131-132.