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Memory wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700

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CHAPTER 2

TWO HISTORICAL CANONS

In *The Freedom of the Netherlands and the Churches: on Spain and Rome's Tyranny* [*Der Neerder-Landen ende kerken vriheid: van Spanjens ende Roomens hoogher tirannij-heidt*] (1610), published in The Hague in the Dutch Republic, the anonymous author dealt with the Revolt from 1566 to 1609. In just six pages, he strung together a very limited number of episodes, starting with the persecution of heretics in the Low Countries in the 1550s and '60s. The author pointed to the nobility's 1566 petition to Margaret of Parma asking for moderation of the religious persecutions as the beginning of the Revolt. Subsequently, he covered the Iconoclastic Furies (1566-1567), the execution of the counts of Egmont and Horne (1568), and the duke of Alba's governorship (1567-1573). After these initial episodes, the author continued with the atrocities committed by Spanish soldiers in many Netherlandish cities from 1572 onwards.¹ The choice of episodes in this simplified historical narrative was far from unique. Similar sequences of episodes recurred in various Dutch media in the first decades of the seventeenth century (see Figure 6).²

¹ Anonymous, *Der Neerder-Landen ende kerken vriheid: van Spanjens ende Roomens hoogher tirannij-heidt* (The Hague: Johannes Plaat, 1610).

² Jasper van der Steen, 'Goed en fout in de Nederlandse Opstand', *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift* 43:2 (2011), pp. 82-87; see also: Daniel Horst, *De opstand in zwart-wit. Propagandaprenten uit de Nederlandse opstand (1566-1584)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), pp. 27-36.



Figure 6. Display of the War of Nassau (1625), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-81.112A.³

As we have seen, Romein and Schama have noted that political propagandists used a fixed ‘parade of readily recognizable events’ in a variety of media and for a gamut of reasons to remind Netherlanders that their fight for independence from Spain had been a great challenge.⁴ However, writing before memory studies had made its way in the field of early modern history, Romein and Schama did not ask how that parade had come about and why this limited selection of episodes continued to circulate in so many different media. The implicit explanation is rather straightforward; important events were remembered, less important ones forgotten. Still, as this chapter will show, this does not tell the whole story. Historians who attribute the persistence of widely known historical events to their historical significance commit the fallacy of circular reasoning. We need to ask why some episodes were considered historically significant and when and why this happened. For this purpose, the comparison between North and South is particularly important. Alexander Farnese’s

³ The print *Display of the War of Nassau* illustrates the episodic narrative about the Revolt (Figure 6). The first scene in the top left corner depicts the duke of Alba with his Council of Troubles. In the background, an executioner decapitates the counts of Egmont and Horne. The next medallion features the leader of the Revolt, William of Orange, sitting proudly with his staff of office. Subsequently, the Lords States General are represented on a hill, behind which an illegal hedge preaching is going on. Mid-level, William of Orange lies in state; his two sons, Maurice and Frederick Henry, are presented in the middle of the picture. The final scene on this level is a congregation of the Republic’s enemies, a varied group of princes including Philip II of Spain’s successors Albert and Isabella and army commander Alexander Farnese, together with high clerics: cardinals, bishops and Jesuits. The lower level is dedicated to the death of Prince Maurice. He also lies in state, people from the East and West Indies pay homage, and the States General welcome Maurice’s successor, Frederick Henry.

⁴ Romein, ‘Spiegel Historiae’, pp. 11-13; Schama, *The Embarrassment*, p. 86. The citation is from Schama.

capture of rebel cities, notably in Flanders and Brabant, during the first half of the 1580s separated the Northern and Southern Netherlands. As the South reconciled with Philip II, and the North continued to rebel, public memories of the Revolt diverged. The rebellion against their overlord was not simply remembered differently: in the Habsburg Netherlands it became difficult to remember at all. The divergence of Northern and Southern practices of memory reveals that there was no timeless quality that rendered some episodes important and others not.

Aleida Assmann has convincingly argued that deliberate efforts are required for communities to keep alive the memory of a particular episode from the past. She writes that ‘if we concede that forgetting is the normality of personal and cultural life, then remembering is the exception, which – especially in the cultural sphere – requires special and costly precautions.’⁵ In 1616, clergyman Willem Baudartius (1565-1640), a Calvinist minister and exiled Southerner, made a similar observation and also acknowledged the necessity of precautions against forgetting. He noted that to prevent heroes from becoming the victims of the ‘immortal and all-devouring sharp teeth of time and spite’, they must be eternalized in writing.⁶ To argue his case, he mentioned the ancient pyramids in Egypt. Although a pyramid was an impressive edifice, for the casual viewer it no longer called to mind specific Egyptian pharaohs. The same could be said about the ancient statues of Greek and Roman army commanders and senators, Baudartius explained. The monuments might still have been standing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but no one knew to whose memory they were once erected, just as the names of the months July and August told us nothing about the persons of Julius Caesar and Augustus. The lesson, according to Baudartius, was that only by writing their own memoirs or having someone else consecrate ‘their names and deeds in the temple of the goddess of memory’ could people prevent their fall into oblivion.⁷ Here, Baudartius attributed a central role to written sources, notably historiography, for the preservation of memory. Yet, preserving memories of the past was more complicated than Baudartius made it seem. Writing a learned history about an event did not ensure that it would be remembered fifty years later; nor was historiography the only way of engaging with the past. For cultural memories to survive they had to be

⁵ Assmann, ‘Canon and Archive’, p. 98.

⁶ Willem Baudartius, *Afbeeldinghe, ende beschrijvinghe van alle de veld-slagen, belegeringen, ende and're notable geschiedenissen, ghefallen in de Nederlanden, geduerende d'oorloghe teghens den coningh van Spaengien or De Nassausche oorloghen* (Amsterdam: Michiel Colijn, 1616), preface: ‘de onsterfflijcke ende des al verslindenden tijts ende nijts scherpe tanden’.

⁷ *Ibid.*, preface: ‘die hare namen ende daden in den Tempel van de Godinne Memorie hebben gheconsacreert’.

circulated regularly by individuals. Otherwise they could well meet the same fate as the forgotten Egyptian pharaohs or the Roman senators. ‘Without such actualizations’, argues Astrid Erll, in line with Assmann’s point cited above, ‘monuments, rituals, and books are nothing but dead material, failing to have any impact in societies.’⁸

Building on the work of Schama, Assmann, and Erll, this chapter will explain how the political rift between the North and South was followed by at least two diametrically opposed readings of the past that acquired canonical status. It explores how these narratives diverged and what processes can account for this development. First, I will look at popular perceptions of the Revolt in the Dutch Republic, where the rebellion against the dynastic overlord was continued successfully. Secondly, I will compare Northern public memories of the Revolt to the situation in the Southern Netherlands, which had gradually returned under the authority of the Habsburg dynasty. Finally, I will show how Southerners perceived the Northern ‘celebration’ of the past and argue that disagreements about what had caused the rebellion in turn contributed to a cultural rift between the two polities.

A history craze in the North

When Simon Schama noted that a sequence of canonical episodes about the Revolt developed in the Dutch Republic, he assumed this to be a self-explanatory and fairly uncomplicated phenomenon in a state born out of rebellion. Yet, there is little that is self-evident about the way that the rebels used the past in support of their political agenda. Chapter 1 has shown that, in accounting for the rupture that was the Revolt, rebels could not simply adopt traditional dynastic or religious narratives. They claimed to fight for the preservation of old privileges, but these were by definition local and varied by region. Nor was religion such a useful frame of reference because the inhabitants of the Republic were deeply divided over religion. Finally, the federal character of the Union was a complicating factor. Unlike in the Habsburg Netherlands, there was no national government in the Republic that actively tried to manipulate public memories of the past. As we have already seen, the States General did very little for about three decades: they rarely commissioned monuments or sponsored historiography.

⁸ Erll, ‘Cultural Memory Studies’, p. 5.



Figure 7. Allegory of the Deceptive Peace Proposals in 1598 (1598), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-80.731.

Despite the absence of a central government bureaucracy, princely court or official state church⁹, a popular ‘national’ canon did emerge in the United Provinces. Rather than being propagated by church and government authorities, it was the result of a public debate about war and peace. In 1609, Spain and the Dutch Republic signed a Twelve Years’ Truce. The States General proclaimed a day of thanksgiving, to be held on 6 May, to celebrate this ceasefire ‘after such a long, incessant and bloody civil war of forty years’.¹⁰ A clergyman of the Dom in Utrecht, Henricus Caesarius, answered the States General’s call and preached in celebration of the Truce, starting off with some verses of psalm 147:

Praise the Lord, O Ierusalem: praise thy God, O Zion. For hee hath strengthened the barres of thy gates: hee hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the finest of the wheate.¹¹

⁹ The Reformed Church had the status of public church.

¹⁰ N.C. Kist, ed., *Neêrland’s bededagen en biddagsbrieven. Eenige bijdrage ter opbouwning der geschiedenis van staat en kerk in Nederland II* (Leiden: S. and J. Luchtmans, 1849), p. 101: ‘naer eene so langduerige gestadige bloedighe Inlandsche oirloghe van Veertich jaeren’.

¹¹ Henricus Caesarius, *Danck sermoon, Over het teghenwoordighe gemaecte bestant van twaelf Jaeren / wt de handelighen der Apostelen / Cap. 9. Vers. 31. tot Godts lof ende eere / Mitsgaeders Tot stichtinghe van allen staten der menschen int gemeyn, ende int bysonder van allen Herders, Opsinders der Kercke, Overheyden, hooch ende leech, oock mede d’Onderdanen van dien: hoe zy allen geduerende den tijt van dit bestand, ende altijd, een yegelijck int sijne respectivelijck hen stichtelijck behoort te dragen* (Utrecht: Jan à Melissoon, 1609), f. a1r: ‘Pryst Jerusalem den Heere: Looft Zion uwen Godt. Want hy maket vaste de grendelen uwer poorten, ende segent uwe kinderen daer binnen: Hy schaffet uwen lantpalen vrede, ende versadicht met der bester tarwen’; see for the English translation: *The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New: Newly Translated out of the Originall Tongues: and with the former Translations diligently compared and reuised, by his Maiesties speciall Commandement* (London: Robert Barker, 1611), 147:12-14.

Caesarius thanked God ‘that he has brought us so wonderfully out of such a long, bloody, and civil war and battle and into the current truce, against all people’s hopes and expectations, hoping thus to reach a godly, honest and sure peace.’¹² When he published his sermon that same year, in the introduction, which he dedicated to his native city of Zaltbommel, Caesarius looked back on forty years of war and notably to the troubles that had pestered the town: ‘What trouble, destruction, siege and bloodshed [...] your city of Zaltbommel has suffered from the beginning, first anno 1574, during which siege that same year my only brother and other brave burghers valiantly lost their lives for the city.’¹³ Caesarius briefly summarised the history of the Revolt and interspersed it with his own personal history both to remind people how the war had begun and to magnify the joys of peace. He combined a brief account of the remonstrance to Margaret of Parma in 1566, the government of the duke of Alba and the capture of Brill in 1572 with his own enthusiasm for the preachings held by the Reformed clergyman Johannes Ceperinus [Jan van Venray], which had led him to abandon his Catholic faith.¹⁴ Caesarius’ published sermon beautifully exemplifies how one person could combine personal, local and national memories about the Revolt as foundation narrative for the new Republic.

In 1609, some people felt as celebratory as Caesarius. Bonfires, government proclamations of thanksgiving, bell-ringing, blazing tar barrels, celebratory sermons, commemorative prints and medals demonstrated public relief about the laying down of arms in many cities in the Low Countries.¹⁵ But these spectacles could not disguise the fact that many in the Dutch Republic distrusted the Spanish motives for agreeing to a ceasefire or opposed for other reasons efforts to forge a lasting peace. Opponents of peace argued that Spanish rulers were unreliable, and they appealed to the public memory of the Revolt

¹² Ibid., p. 34: ‘dat hy ons wt so eene langduerige / bloedige / ende inlandsche crijch ende oorloch tot dit tegenwoordich bestant / tegens alle menschen hope ende verwachtinge soo wonderlijck gebracht heeft / op hope van te geraken hier door / tot eene godlijcke / eerlijcke / ende versekerde vrede.’

¹³ Ibid., f. *2r: ‘Wat overlant / verwoesting / belegering / ende bloetstorting [...] uwe Stadt van Zalt-bommel van beghinsel aen heeft gheleden / eerstelijck Anno 1574. In wiens belech in t’selve Jaer mijnen eenigen Broeder met meer andere vrome borgers zijn bloet ende leven voor de stadt valiantlijck gelaten heeft’.

¹⁴ Ibid., ff. *3r-v.

¹⁵ See for more celebratory practices: anonymous, *Verconding van het Bestant / tusschen Sijne Majesteyt / ende hunne Doorluchtichste Hoocheden ter eenre / ende de Staten Generael vande Vereenichde Nederlanden ter andere zijden. Ghedaen voor den stadt-huyse der Stadt van Antwerpen, den 4 April, Anno 1609* (Antwerp: Abraham Verhoeven, 1609); Adriaan van Nierop, *Christelicke gedichten ghemaect tot lof van t’bestandt ende vrede. Mitsgaders een echo ofte weder-galm / op ’t bestandt ende vrede* (1609), Knuttel 1620; Anonymous, *Een cort verhael ende afbeelding van de heerlicke triumphende viering die tot Antwerpen geschiet is over het afleggen vanden Treves* (1609); George Sanders, *Het present van staat. De gouden ketens, kettingen en medailles verleend door de Staten-Generaal, 1588-1795* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), pp. 338-339.

to strengthen their message.¹⁶ In 1598, the governor of the Netherlands, Archduke Albert, – who would a short while later become sovereign of the Low Countries – made propositions for peace to the States General of the Dutch Republic. One opponent of peace produced a propagandistic print (Figure 7), depicting a Spanish Jesuit holding out an olive branch to a ‘Hollander’, who utters: ‘’Tis all deceit’.¹⁷ The artist increased the persuasiveness of his argument with stories that reminded the audience of Spanish deception and cruelty. On the left hand we see Anneke Uytenhove, an Anabaptist buried alive in Brussels, just a year earlier. Although hers was effectively the last such religious execution in the South, far into the seventeenth century Northern pamphleteers still exploited this event to demonstrate the continued Habsburg persecution of Protestants.¹⁸ The top left corner emblematises the duke of Alba’s tyranny and the top right hand corner depicts the Spanish peace offers in 1588 to Elizabeth I with the caption: ‘While they offered her majesty peace, the Armada came’, referring to the bad-faith propositions and the attempted invasion of England by the Spanish Armada.¹⁹ The maker of this print deployed references from the recent past to demonstrate that the Spanish should not be trusted in the peace negotiations.

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) explained in his history of the Revolt, which was published after his death in 1657 but written in the first half of the seventeenth century, that during the negotiations in 1606, ‘in the United Provinces, few durst hope for peace but rather most fear’d it, being so instructed from their parents, that all treaties with a deceitful enemy were to be shunned.’²⁰ Grotius continued to describe the opposition of particular groups in society. A ‘great number of men’, he wrote, ‘souldiers as the rest of the common people, were advantaged by arms, engines, armies, and fleets’.²¹ This included Stadholder

¹⁶ Judith Pollmann, ‘“Brabanters do Fairly Resemble Spaniards after all”. Memory, Propaganda and Identity in the Twelve Years’ Truce’, in: Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 218-225.

¹⁷ Anonymous, *Allegorie op de bedrieglijke vredesvoorstellen in 1598* (1598), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-80.731: ‘T’his doch al bedroch’; this print was used as the frontispiece for the pamphlet: anonymous, *Copie van seker referenyn by de overheerde Nederlantsche Provintien aen Hollant gheschreven, beroerende den vrede* (Amsterdam: Laurens Jacobsz, 1598).

¹⁸ See for example: anonymous, *De Spaensche tiranye gheschiet in Nederlant* (Amsterdam: Jacob Pietersz Wachter, 1641), pp. 91-92.

¹⁹ Anonymous, *Allegorie op de bedrieglijke vredesvoorstellen in 1598* (1598), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-80.731: ‘Doenmen hare Mⁱ paijs aenboot quam de Spaensche vloot’.

²⁰ Hugo Grotius, *Annales et Historiae de Rebus Belgicis* (Amsterdam: Joannis Blaeu, 1657), p. 501: ‘at Foederatas apud gentes pauci sperare otium audebant, metuebant quin idipsum plerique, ita a parentibus eruditus, repudianda infido cum hoste colloquia’; the English translations are from the English edition: Hugo Grotius, *De Rebus Belgicis: Or, the Annals, and history of the Low-Country-Wars* (London: Henry Twyford and Robert Paulet, 1665).

²¹ Grotius, *Annales et Historiae*, p. 501: ‘magnae hominum multitudini haud militum modo, sed & reliquae plebis, arma, machinae, exercitus, classes quaestui erant.’

Maurice whose income and prestige derived from the war. ‘Nor was it feared by a few’, Grotius continued, that ‘now at the restoring of peace, Antwerp should be chosen as the most commodious seat for merchandise and traffick’.²² Ever since the fall of Antwerp in 1585, skilled South Netherlandish labourers and merchants had settled in North Netherlandish cities, so contributing to the economic boom in the Dutch Republic, notably Amsterdam.²³ Finally, Grotius (probably with some benefit of hindsight) argued that ‘when all fear of the enemy should be taken away, the dissentions of cities, and other disturbances of the commonwealth were dreaded’.²⁴ In addition to the opposition groups Grotius listed, there were those with vested interests in the Dutch West India Company (WIC), the proposed establishment of which Spain opposed. The anti-peace faction also included exiles from the Southern Netherlands, who argued that continuing the war against Spain was the only viable way to protect the Republic’s hard-won independence, the freedom of conscience and the privileged position of the Reformed Church.²⁵ Many of these exiles still hoped that the rebels would ultimately conquer their native land and enable them to return. The efforts of this varied assortment of interest groups would find little support if people trusted the Spaniards to uphold the articles of a potential peace. The stock phrase was, therefore, that the Spanish had a track record of not keeping their word and that they could not be trusted.²⁶

During the Truce anti-peace propagandists continued their opposition. More than before 1609, Northern authors used political appeals to the past to lend weight to their arguments. In 1610, Willem Baudartius, mentioned briefly at the beginning of this chapter, wrote an influential anti-peace tract entitled the *Wake-up Call [Morghen-wecker]* that he

²² Ibid., p. 501: ‘nec paucis formidatum [...] nunc reddita pace, Antverpiae commodissimam sedem mercatura deligeret’.

²³ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 308-311.

²⁴ Grotius, *Annales et Historiae*, p. 501: ‘amoto ab hoste metu, civitatum dissidia ac turbamente reipublicae timebantur’.

²⁵ Johannes Müller, ‘Exile memories and the reinvention of the Netherlands’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leiden University).

²⁶ Jacobus Viverius, *Den spiegel van de Spaensche tyrannie: waer by ghevoeght is eene vreughdighe vieringhe over het veroveren van de stede Rijn-berck* (Amsterdam: Herman de Buck, 1601); anonymous, *Toetsteen, waer aen men waerlick beproeuen mach, hoe valsche ende ongefondeert, dat zijn de leugenachtighe calunnieuse libellen [...] die door eenige Spaensche oft Iesuits gesinde, in Brabant, Vlaenderen oft elders versiert, ende alhier in onse landen gestroyt, ende in druck ouer ghesonden werden* (1603); [Willem Verheiden], *Oratie, of vvtspreecke van het recht der Nederlandsche oorloge tegen Philippum coning van Spaengien* (Amsterdam: Michiel Colijn, 1608); Justus Lipsius, *Ivsti Lipsii sent-brief, in welcke hy antwoorde gheeft aen een seker groot heer, op de vraghe, welck van dryen den coning van Hispaengien best gheraden ware, oorloghe oft peys, oft liever bestant met den Fransman, Engelsche ende Hollander* (Dusseldorp: Wenar vander Horst, 1608); see also: Ronnie Kaper, *Pamfletten over oorlog of vrede: reakties van tijdgenoten op de vredesonderhandelingen van 1607-1609* (Amsterdam: Historisch Seminarium, 1980), pp. 20-25.

addressed to the States General, the Council of State and to the population of the Dutch Republic in general. He remarked that despite the great cruelties committed by the Spanish enemy, ‘one sees and observes that many people in the passage of time, yes every day more and more, seem to be falling in a deep sleep of forgetfulness: some no longer know much about what has passed in these Netherlands for the last forty years’.²⁷ To remedy this collective amnesia Baudartius wrote a popular history in the form of a dialogue between a ‘Free Netherlander’ and a ‘Hispanicised Netherlander’. The Free Netherlander argued that

never Phalaris, Nero, Herod, Pharaoh, Diocletian, Julian the Apostate or any other cruel tyrant has more disgracefully sought or tried to subvert his subjects, exterminate them and wipe them out, as the king of Spain and his deputies have done now for many years, inspired and incited by the accursed papal inquisition-chamber, in which already from the time of Emperor Charles V numerous placards have been crafted due to which in the reign of this emperor fifty thousand people were beheaded, drowned, hung, buried alive, burnt and killed in other ways.²⁸

Baudartius subsequently enumerated in grim detail the misdeeds and dishonourable acts that Spanish soldiers and their rulers had committed during the first decades of the Revolt. The Free Netherlander described, for example, how during Alba’s governorship, Spanish soldiers had killed 130 innocent citizens in Brussels, ‘only out of malice’.²⁹ In Tournai, during a fight between the garrisons of the town and the castle, Spanish soldiers had shouted ‘Spania, Spania’ and killed many harmless burghers. The Hispanicised Netherlander responded with shock to these horror stories: ‘These are truly very horrible

²⁷ Willem Baudartius, *Morghen-wecker der vrye Nederlantsche Provintien. Ofte / een cort verhael van de bloedighe vervolginghen ende wreetheden door de Spaenjaerden ende hare Adherenten inde Nederlanden / gheduerende dese veertich-jarighe Troublen ende Oorloghen begaen aen vele Steden / ende ettelijcke duysent particuliere Personen* (Danswick: Crijn Vermeulen de Jonge, 1610), f. 2r: ‘soo siet ende bevindtmen, dat veele Menschen met der tijdt, jae alle daghe meer ende meer als in eenen diepen slaep der verghetenheydt zijn vallende: eenighe en weten niet veel meer van alles datter dese naeste 40. Jaren hier in Nederland gepasseert is’.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. a1r-v: ‘noyt Phalaris, Nero, Herodes, Pharao, Diocletianus, Iulianus, Apostata, of eenigen anderen wreeden Tyran schandelicker heeft ghesocht ofte ghetracht zyne onder-saten te verdrucken, te verdelghen, ende uyt te roeden, als de Coninck van Hispanien ende zyne Stad-houders nu etlijcke Jaren lanck gedaen hebben, door ingeven ende aenporren der vervloecte Pauselijcke Inquisiti-Camer, in dewelcke, al ten tyde des Keyzers Caroli V. vele bloedighe Placcaerten ghesmeet zijn, uyt cracht van de welcke ten tyde dese Keyzers boven de vijftich duysent menschen sijn onthafft, verdroncken, gehanghen, levendich in d’aerde gedolven, verbrant, ende met andere manieren van het leven berooft’.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. c3v: ‘uyt enckel moet-wille’

and ugly pieces of work; when I hear of them my blood runs cold'.³⁰ Despite the fact that he was a Reformed clergyman, Baudartius time and again emphasised the contrast between evil Spanish and good Netherlandish values rather than offering a religious justification for the rebellion.

A few years after publication of Baudartius' history, a revised edition came on the market as a children's book, the *Mirror of Youth* [*Spiegel der ievght*], which remained popular throughout the Low Countries far into the eighteenth century. The editor of this work addressed it to 'the schoolmasters of these Free Netherlands', and Reformed schoolmasters indeed seem to have read it and used it at school.³¹ In 1630, schoolmaster Johannes de Swaef wrote enthusiastically about the *Mirror of Youth* and there is quite some evidence that the *Mirror* was used at schools for teaching purposes, replacing or complementing the excerpts from the *Divisiechroniek* (1517) that schoolmasters also used to impart some historical awareness to their pupils.³² The *Mirror* also provided amusing reading material that complemented the alphabet books that generally included only texts such as the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Confession.³³ The only detailed study of Dutch regional school curricula has shown that the 1650 book list appended to the city of Utrecht's school order of 1631 prescribed the *Mirror* as educational reading material.³⁴ In 1655, the classis of Utrecht proposed to the synod that the *Mirror* should be used at schools.³⁵ Elsewhere, too, we have signs that the text was prescribed reading material. In the city of Culemborg, schoolmasters were instructed in a placard of 9 August 1663 to use a selection of books in their lessons, including the *Mirror*.³⁶ David Beck, a

³⁰ Ibid., f. c4r: 'Dit zijn voorwaer seer grouwelijcke ende leelijcke stucken, het bloedt verandert my dat ickse hoore vertellen.'

³¹ [J. Bouillet], *Spiegel der ievght ofte Korte kronijck der Nederlantsche geschiedenissen, ... gheduerende dese veertigh-jarighe oorloge* (Amsterdam 1614), f. a1v; Willem Baudartius wrote in his autobiography that his *Morghen-wecker* had been edited 'and entitled: Mirror of youth, reprinted several times; also translated into French and printed with the title Miroir de la jeunesse' ('genoemt geworden: Spiegel der jeucht, meermaels herdrukt; oock int Frans getranslateert ende gedrukt met den titel van Miroir de la jeunesse'), in: P.C. Molhuysen, ed., 'Leven van Willem Baudaert door hem zelve beschreven', *Kronijk van het Historisch Genoetschap* 5 (1849), p. 247; see also: Wolfgang Cilleßen, 'Der Spiegel der jeugd. Ein Kinderbuch als Medium der Geschichtserinnerung in den Niederlanden (1614-1813)', in: H. Peterse, ed., *Süß scheint der krieg den Unerfahrenen. Das Bild vom Krieg und die Utopie des Friedens in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2004), pp. 51-53.

³² E.P. de Booy, *De weldaet der scholen. Het plattelandsonderwijs in de provincie Utrecht van 1580 tot het begin der negentiende eeuw* (Utrecht, 1977), p. 60.

³³ Simon Groenveld, J.J.H. Dekker and Th.R.M. Willemsse, *Wezen en boefjes. Zes eeuwen zorg in wees- en kinderhuizen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), p. 195.

³⁴ De Booy, *De weldaet der scholen*, p. 269.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 270.

³⁶ A.W.K. Voet van Oudheusden, *Historische beschryvinge van Culemborg. Behelzende een naemlyst der heeren van Bosichem, benevens der heeren en graeven van Culemborg ... derzelver huwelyken, nakoomelingen ...*

schoolmaster in The Hague, wrote in his diary in 1624 that he also read the original edition of the *Wake-up Call*.³⁷

After the publication of Baudartius' *Wake-up Call* and its adaptation designed for children, these simplified historical narratives became rather popular. In the 1610s more historians began publishing popular histories of the Revolt. A historiographer employed by the States of Holland and the States of Utrecht, Pieter Bor, reworked his history *The Origins, Beginning and Commencement of the Netherlandish Wars* [*Oorspronck, begin ende aenvang der Nederlantscher oorlogen*], at this time still a work in progress, into a much abridged edition to entertain his readers and refresh their memory of the Revolt.³⁸ The target audience were women and children who, according to Bor, were 'generally unwilling to torment themselves by too much reading, but who still enjoy possessing knowledge of all sorts of things.'³⁹ Similarly, Johannes Gysius – just like Baudartius an exiled clergyman from the Southern Netherlands – observed in 1616 that 'there are still numerous old people who have witnessed these miseries, who have all seen this malice and inhuman cruelty, and some of whom even experienced it for themselves'.⁴⁰ He continued that

since these old people are dying on a daily basis, and that it is nevertheless useful that these miseries and Spanish cruelties remain fresh in the memory of us Netherlanders [...] I have considered it expedient [...] to compile a small sample of these Spanish tyrannies, committed in the Netherlands.⁴¹

Mitsgaders een beschryvinge van de stad Culemborg, derzelver regeeringwyze, gebouwen ... handvesten, privilegien en voorrechten, enz. (Utrecht: J.H. Vonk van Lynden, 1753), p. 302.

³⁷ David Beck, *Spiegel van mijn leven. Een Haags dagboek uit 1624*, edited by S.E. Veldhuijzen, (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993), p. 176.

³⁸ Pieter Christiaensz Bor, *Den oorspronck, begin ende aenvanck der Nederlantscher oorlogen, geduyrende de regeringe van de Hertoginne van Parma, de Hertoge van Alba, ende eensdeels vanden groot Commandeur / beschreven door Pieter Bor Chistiaenszoon, ende nu deur denselven in liedekens vervaet* (Leiden: Govert Basson, 1616), f. 4r.

³⁹ Bor, *Den oorspronck*, f. 3v: 'dewelcke meestendeels het hoofd ende sinnen ongeerne met veel lesens quellen, ende nochtans wel geerne van alles wetenschap souden begeeren te hebben'.

⁴⁰ Gysius, *De Oorsprong en Voortgang*, f. *4r: 'Daer zijn noch verscheydene oude luyden / die alle dese ellendicheden beleeft hebben / die alle dese moet-wille ende onmenschelicke wreedtheydt ghesien ende sommige oock ten deele beproeft hebben'.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, f *4r: 'Dan overmidt dese oude luyden daghelijcx versterven / ende het nochtans seer dienstich is / dat dese ellendicheden ende Spaensche wreedtheden by ons Netherlanders altijd in verscher ghedachtenisse moghen blijven [...] soo hebbe ick tot dien eynde raedsaem geacht [...] een cleyn proeff-stuck van dese Spaenschen tyrannien ende wreedheden / inde Nederlanden bedreven / t'samen te stellen'.

Drawing on more comprehensive histories such as Van Meteren's, which was often cited specifically among their sources, the initial purpose of the authors of these popularisations of history was to convince the general public that the calm and peace of the Twelve Years' Truce were deceptive. They deployed the history of the Revolt to persuade people that Spaniards would eventually start to bring the Netherlands once again under their tyrannical rule.⁴² In the *Mirror of Youth*, a father tells his son of the cruelties committed by the enemy. As in the *Wake-up Call*, this classical format of the dialogue enabled the author to create the appearance of an open-ended and frank exchange of thoughts and ideas while in fact, the outcome of the discussion was already decided. One of the two conversation partners – in this case the son – acted as a straw man.⁴³ Before beginning his history lesson the father emphasised that:

Unworthy is he to be born and called a Netherlander, who writes these histories into the book of oblivion. Unworthy is he of being called a true patriot, who does not impress these things upon the minds of his children, yes just as faithful as the children of Israel were compelled by God's command, in Deuteronomy 6, to reveal to their children the miraculous redemption from Egypt.⁴⁴

Here, the father used the history of the Revolt as a form of patriotic scripture, to borrow Schama's term. This narrative fostered new feelings of a Dutch identity, but it drew on existing stories. The Old Testament served as a useful example for people in the Northern Netherlands: the idea of being, like Israel, a chosen people mobilised Dutch people against Philip II, just as the Jews joined forces in their flight from the tyranny of the Pharaoh.⁴⁵ Non-biblical narratives also informed Northern portrayals of the Revolt. K.W. Swart, Judith Pollmann and Benjamin Schmidt have shown that the Black Legend, a story about the cruelty inherent to the Spanish people, 'premediated' the portrayal of Spanish

⁴² Mieke Smits-Veldt, "Het vaderland" bij Hollandse rederijders, circa 1580-1625. Grondgebied en identiteit', in: Niek van Sas, ed., *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis vanaf de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999); Pollmann, *Het oorlogsverleden*.

⁴³ Clazina Dingemanse, *Rap van tong, scherp van pen. Literaire discussiecultuur in Nederlandse praatjespamfletten (circa 1600-1750)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), pp. 27-34.

⁴⁴ [Bouillet], *Spiegel der ievght*, f. a3r: 'Ontweerdigh is hy een Nederlander gheboren te zijn ende ghenoeemt te worden / die dese gheschiedenissen in 't vergeet-boeck stelt. Onweerdigh is hy een ghetrouwe Vader ghenoeemt te worden / die dese dinghen sijn kinderen niet in en prent / ja immers so getrouwelijck / als de kinderen Israels schuldigh waren / na Godts bevel Deut.6. Haren kinderen voor ooghen te stellen die wonderbaarlijke verlossinghe uyt Egypten-Lant.'

⁴⁵ Cornelis Huisman, *Neerlands Israël. Het natiebesef der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht: J.P. van den Tol, 1983), pp. 54-56.

cruelties in the Netherlands.⁴⁶ Although these scholars did not use the term ‘premediation’, it is a useful one to describe the influence of established narratives on the way people told the story of the Revolt. Adopting Erll’s definition, premediation occurs when ‘existent media which circulate in a given society provide schemata for new experience and its representation’.⁴⁷ Stories about the Spanish presence in the Americas gained a particularly strong political connotation when authors writing about the Revolt against Philip II began to use, manipulate and forge stories about Spanish cruelties in Europe and the Americas to increase popular aversion to the Habsburg regime.⁴⁸

In the *Mirror*, when the son asked why only the Netherlands had problems with Spanish rule, the father therefore also introduced the ‘innocent Indians, Americans, Brazilians [and] Peruvians’ who had also experienced the Spanish tyranny, thereby both rejecting the idea that the Netherlandish people were at fault and emphasising their innocence.⁴⁹ The *Mirror* was not the only popular history of the Revolt to include references to Spanish misdeeds in other parts of the world. Reformed minister Johannes Gysius referred to the Spanish cruelties of ‘these last hundred years’ in his concise history of the Revolt and particularly mentioned the brutal maltreatment of the Indians by Spaniards.⁵⁰ In another popular historical narrative the author posed the rhetorical question: ‘Is there anyone unaware of the fact that Spaniards have, in the same way, plagued, oppressed and troubled many other lands and people and continue, sanctimoniously, to use religion to justify her conquests and hide away her tyranny?’⁵¹ Baudartius, Gysius and Bor discussed the massacres of Rotterdam, Mechelen, and Naarden in 1572, and the sieges of Haarlem (1573), Alkmaar (1573) and Leiden (1573-74) in rapid succession, detailing the

⁴⁶ Swart, ‘The Black Legend’; Pollmann, ‘Eine natürliche Feindschaft’; Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, p. 111.

⁴⁷ Astrid Erll, ‘Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the “Indian Mutiny”’, in: Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, eds., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), p. 111; Erll adopted the terminology of premediation and remediation from Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999) and Richard Grusin, ‘Premediation’, *Criticism* 46:1 (2004), pp. 17-39.

⁴⁸ Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, pp. 40-42; Marijke Meijer Drees, ‘De beeldvorming Nederland-Spanje voor en na de Vrede van Munster’, in: Hugo de Schepper, ed., *1648. De Vrede van Münster* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), p. 166.

⁴⁹ *Spiegel der Ievght*, f. a3v: ‘onnosele Indianen / Americanen / Brezilianen / Peruvianen’; see also: Baudartius, *Morghen-wecker*, f. 2r; Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, pp. 232-233.

⁵⁰ Gysius, *Oorsprong en voortgang*, f. 2r.

⁵¹ François Vranck, *Wederlegghinghe, van een seker boecxken, uyt ghegheven by Franchois Verhaer, ghenaeft Onpartijdighe verclaringhe der oorsaken vande Nederlantsche oorloghe* (Breda: S. Wylicx, 1618), f. a6v, see also f. e2v: ‘Wie en weet niet dat de Spaignaerts op ghelijcken voet veel andere Volckeren ende Landen geplaecht verdruct ende ontrust gemaect hebben / ende noch ten huylighen daghe niet en zijn aflatende onder t’schijnheyligh deksel vande Religie hare conquesten te voorderen ende hare Tyrannije te bedecken?’.

horrors Spanish soldiers inflicted on the local population.⁵² In between his coverage of the massacres in 1572 and the siege of Leiden, Willem Baudartius included a short anecdote which the author had probably drawn, directly or indirectly, from the *Brevíssima Relación* of Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Catholic bishop of Chiapas, who strongly condemned Spanish cruelties in the Americas. The Dutch translation of this publication was particularly popular at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁵³ When a local Indian chief by the name of Hatuey from the island of Hispaniola tried to organise resistance against the Spanish invaders on Cuba, Spanish conquistadores captured him. Tied to a stake, Hatuey was about to be burnt alive when a Franciscan monk ‘began to talk to him of God and of the articles of our faith, telling him, that the small respite which the executioner gave him was sufficient for him to make sure his salvation if he believed.’⁵⁴ Hatuey then asked the Franciscan if heaven was open to Spaniards and on the monk’s assent declared: ‘Let me go to hell that I may not come where they are.’⁵⁵ Baudartius retold this story to render more convincing his account of Netherlanders who – rather than surrendering to the Spanish soldiers – kept on fighting.⁵⁶ Accounts of Spanish atrocities in the Americas probably also inspired Bor in his description of the sack of Naarden in 1572 in the children’s edition of his work (although in later accounts he would be much subtler). ‘Vandalising and murdering’, he wrote, ‘of such a great murder, has never been heard, neither in the South nor in the North.’⁵⁷ Bor drew on themes such as the slaughter of women and Spanish soldiers cutting open pregnant women to remove their foetuses, acts of cruelty that he seems to have copied from other sources, probably from the prints by Frans Hogenberg as well as the work of Las Casas.⁵⁸

We have seen that authors like Baudartius, Gysius and even Bor developed reduced and simplified narratives about the Revolt that shared some important characteristics. The origin of these stories was war propaganda, they focused not mainly on

⁵² *Spiegel der Ievght*, ff. d1v-d3r; Gysius, *Oorsprong en voortgang*, pp. 294-340; Bor, *Den Oorspronck*, pp. 35-77.

⁵³ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Brevíssima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Seville, 1552); see the Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands (www.stcn.nl) for the Dutch editions of De Las Casas’ work.

⁵⁴ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Tears of the Indians: being an Historical and true Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of above Twenty Millions of innocent People; committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As also, in the Continent of Mexico, Peru, & other Places of the West-Indies, to the total destruction of those Countries* (London: Nath. Brook, 1656), p. 23.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Baudartius, *Morghen-wecker*, f. c4v; *Spiegel der Ievght*, f. d2r.

⁵⁷ Bor, *Den oorspronck*, p. 44: ‘Vernielen en vermoorden, Van Sulcke groote moort, En is noyt veel gehoort, In zuyden noch in noorden.’

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Erika Kuijpers, ‘The Creation and Development of Social Memories of Traumatic Events. The Oudewater Massacre of 1575’, in: Michael Linden and Krzysztof Rutkowski, eds., *Hurting Memories: Remembering as a Pathogenic Process in Individuals and Societies* (London: Elsevier, 2013), pp. 194-195.

religion and they contained similar sequences of horrific episodes that drew from established narratives such as the Old Testament and the Black Legend. These ‘secular’ horror stories about the Revolt were popular in the fledgling Dutch state, where religious plurality and administrative decentralisation obstructed the development of a coherent religious and dynastic reading of the past. The United Provinces were a federal republic, where each province was sovereign and where every enfranchised city could prevent resolutions from being adopted by the States and the States General. There was no real national centre. The Hague was the place where the States General convened, where the States of Holland assembled and where the stadholder often resided, but political power was devolved, and it ultimately resided with the cities and the nobility in the provinces. The traditional early modern European proponents of national unity such as the ruler and the church, being virtually non-existent on a national level in the Dutch Republic, could not accommodate the great variety of political interests and religious beliefs. This was a problem because matters of war and peace *were* decided on the national level. In order to mobilise as many inhabitants as possible against peace, authors thus needed to devise an alternative strategy.

It was not useful to antagonise groups of people when it was also possible to accommodate, at least to some extent, their preferences and convictions in a more inclusive narrative frame. This insight was not original at the beginning of the seventeenth century. After all, William of Orange and his supporters had already been aware that their Revolt needed popular support in order to be successful. Anti-peace propagandists understood this, too, and they ‘picked up’ the inclusive and non-confessional propaganda of William of Orange and his adherents. Indeed, it is telling that the historical works of Baudartius and Gysius – both hardline Calvinists who had fled the Southern Netherlands for the sake of their Reformed faith – did not rely much on Calvinist doctrine; instead they focused on the sufferings of all the population. For a narrative to ‘catch on’ throughout the Republic, it could not afford to be too radical, and it had to offer not only a simplified narrative but also a relatively inclusive history. This explains the rise of a story about the good, innocent Netherlander against the perverted Spanish enemy.⁵⁹ Stories about the recent past as a series of different episodes suited the North Netherlandish situation very well. The

⁵⁹ The political value of an inclusive history and the difficulty of defining the true Netherlander in religious terms also explains why it took until 1671 for a comprehensive history of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands to be published: Geeraert Brandt, *Historie der Reformatie, en andre kerkeleyke geschiedenissen, in en ontrent de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz, Hendrik en Dirk Boom, 1671-1704).

sequence allowed different cities and regions in the new federal Republic to be included in narratives about the past.

These authors of politicized history were not the only people who used historical narratives about the Revolt in support of an anti-peace political agenda. Others picked up their narrative. Visual sources such as prints confirm that there was a lively memory culture about the Revolt during and after the Truce. In 1569 during the governorship of the duke of Alba opponents of his policies spread a propagandistic print entitled *Alba's Throne*.⁶⁰ The print featured an allegory that was essentially a reduced history of the Revolt with a slant that could hardly be misunderstood. Alba tramples on portrayals of justice and privileges. Seventeen virgins in chains symbolise the troubled Netherlands. In the background, Egmont and Horne are being executed and one of Alba's helpers, presumably the Cardinal de Granvelle, fishes money and property from a pond of blood. After 1620, as Andrew Sawyer has shown, the theme of Alba's tyranny became popular once again, presumably because the war was resumed in 1621 and because it did not go very well for the Republic in the early 1620s.⁶¹ Printmaker Jan Pietersz van de Venne modified and reproduced the old print, and about twenty paintings of the scene survive.⁶² Unfortunately, little is known about who commissioned these works. On the basis of their large sizes, the accompanying explanatory texts, and the variation in the use of heraldic signs, however, Sawyer has concluded that the paintings probably served a public function.⁶³

Like *Alba's Throne*, the Hogenberg prints discussed in the previous chapter spread an image of the Revolt as a series of Spanish cruelties. Although originally intended to convey news, they continued to provide illustration material for historians and interested individuals for over a century. An example of this latter category is the 'Mirror or Image of Netherlandish Histories' [*Spiegel ofte Af-beeldinge der Nederlandsche geschiedenissen*], a folio of coloured Hogenberg prints, among other prints, assembled in 1613 by Willem Luytisz van Kittensteyn from Delft.⁶⁴ Van Kittensteyn relied on Van

⁶⁰ Van Nierop, 'De troon van Alva'.

⁶¹ Andrew Sawyer, 'The Tyranny of Alva: The Creation and Development of a Dutch Patriotic Image', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 19 (2003), p. 185. This article contains a more elaborate description of the prints.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁴ Willem Luytisz van Kittensteyn, 'Spiegel ofte Af-beeldinge der Nederlandsche geschiedenissen, Mitsgaders van Vrancryck. Enghelandt. Duytslandt. en[de] eenige andere Landen: Waer in v[er]toont worden de beginselen der Nederlandsche en[de] Franche troublen Inneminge[n] ende belegeringe[n] van Steden en[de] Fortressen Aflesinge van Pardoene[n] Velt-slagen en[de] Scharmutsingen en[de] Oorlogen ter Zee, &c, tot het beslyuten van het Bestant Daer bij sijn gevoegt de ware afbeeldinge van alle Coningen Princen, Gouverneurs, generale en[de]

Meteren's work in his ordering of the prints. He also evaluated the historical accuracy of the scenes depicted. For instance, when he included a print of the assassination of William of Orange in 1584, he added some alternative drawings to correct Hogenberg's mistaken staging of the prince's murder in a hall rather than in the historically more accurate staircase.⁶⁵

In the previous chapter, we have already seen that songs, like prints, were important carriers of news, but they too survived their 'mere' newsworthiness by becoming historical. Beggar songs, for instance, were initially sung in support of the rebels. Already in 1574, the first compilation of Beggar songs was published in a format that publishers reused throughout the seventeenth century.⁶⁶ These books were simplified and politicised narratives about the Revolt, and they helped Beggar songs not only to survive but also to remain politically useful.⁶⁷ In 1626, the poet Adriaen Valerius published the *Netherlandish Memory-Tune* [*Nederlandsche gedenck-clanck*], a collection of songs he had written himself and in which the history of the Revolt was embedded.⁶⁸ He explained his motivation for bringing this work on the market as follows: 'just like the mirrors are useful to adorn the body, in such a way the examples taken from history are very useful to fashion life'.⁶⁹ More specifically, Valerius elaborated on what drove him to publish his work:

While we are still threatened with several worrisome troubles and terrible attacks by the enemies; all brave supporters and good patriots are incited [...] to heed, in all affairs, the [...] cruel [...] nature of our enemy.⁷⁰

particuliere velt-overste[n] en[de] geleerde[n], met alle penningen, geslagen bij de E.M. Heeren Staten van verscheijden provintien, duijddende den staet van het Landt, Vergadert ende t'samen gevoeght door, Willem Luytzen van Kittensteyn Anno Domini. M.Vlc.XIII' (1613), Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam, inv. 50442.

⁶⁵ J.C. Nix, 'De Atlas Van Stolk: Een verzameling historieprenten over de vaderlandse geschiedenis', *Ons Erfdeel* 39 (1996), p. 236; see also Van Kittensteyn, 'Spiegel', Atlas van Stolk, inv. 50442 – 258.

⁶⁶ Louis Peter Grijp, 'Van geuzenlied tot Gedenck-clanck. Eerste deel: Het geuzenliedboek in de Gouden Eeuw', *Zeventiende Eeuw* 10 (1994), p. 118.

⁶⁷ The fact that the South lacked compilations like those in the North may very well explain why fewer songs have survived: Martine de Bruin, 'Geuzen en anti-Geuzenliederen' in: Louis Peter Grijp, ed., *Een muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), pp. 177-178.

⁶⁸ Adriaen Valerius, *Nederlandsche gedenck-clanck*, edited by P.J. Meertens, N.B. Tenhaeff en A. Komter-Kuipers (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1942, first published in 1626).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5: 'Gelyck de spiegelen bequaem gevonden zijn om het lichaem ter degen op te schicken, also syn d'exempelen, uyt de Historien genomen, seer bequaem om het leven te fatsonneren'.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7: dewyle wy noch gedreygt worden met verscheyden kommerlycke swarigheden, ende vreeselijcke aenstooten der vyanden; so worden alle vrome voorstanders ende goede Patriotten opgescherpt [...] om in alle voorvallende gelegentheden wel indachtig te wesen den [...] wreeden, [...] aerd onses vyands'.

Just like the 1620s paintings on the theme of Alba's Throne, the war inspired Valerius to commemorate the past cruelties of the Spanish. His way of doing so was to write new songs about the conflict.

Oblivion in practice

The historian B.A. Vermaseren has noted that while government authorities in the Habsburg Netherlands did make attempts to commission an official Netherlandish history of the Low Countries that would reflect the pro-Spanish and Catholic view of the Revolt, such a book was never published. Humanist scholar Justus Lipsius received an assignment from the States of Brabant to write a history of the Low Countries conflict, but he died in 1606 before he could start work on the project.⁷¹ In 1606, the archdukes appointed Jean-Baptiste Gramaye as court historiographer. Gramaye published a great number of local histories and chorographies in Latin but never a more general history in Dutch or French.⁷² In 1612, Petrus Peckius, a member of the Great Council of Mechelen who was later to become chancellor of Brabant, wrote to Erycius Puteanus, a colleague of Lipsius, about the desirability of publishing a chronological history of the Netherlands. He specifically stated that Archduke Albert would appreciate such an endeavour as he was keen on reigning over his Low Countries with old as well as new examples as his guide.⁷³ A year later, on 6 November 1613, Puteanus communicated to his friend Maximilien Pluierius what he imagined a history book should look like. It should be similar to the abridged Roman history by Lucius Annaeus Florus: 'and how useful can this [Puteanus'] work in such a way then be to teach the pupils at school!'⁷⁴ He also seems to have thought that he might erase some of the painful historical episodes from the record. A few days later he wrote again with an update on his progress. He communicated that he had begun a general history of the

⁷¹ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, pp. 208-209.

⁷² Take for example the following works by Jean-Baptiste Gramaye: *Gallo-Brabantia* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1606); *Arscotvm dvcatvs cvm svsv baronatibvs* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1606); *Historia Brabantica* (Louvain: Joannes Masius, 1606); *Antiquitates comitatus Namurcensis libris 7 compræhensæ, pro ratione totidem præfecturarum in eo* (Louvain: Joannes Masius, 1607); *Antiquitates illvstrissimv dvcatvs Brabantiv* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1610); *Antverpiæ antiquitates* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1610); *Ambacta, ad ornatissimos opidorvm et terræ senatoris* (1611); *Brvgæ Flandrorvm, sive Primitivæ antiquitatvm Brvgensivm* (Louvain: Philippus van Dormael, 1611); *Castellania Cortracensis* (1611); *Aldenarda* (1612). For his work on Courtrai, the Archdukes awarded him 600 livres, see: Jules Finot, 'Les subventions accordées aux Litterateurs, au Savants et aux Artistes par les Gouverneurs des Pays-Bas au XVIIe siècle, relevées dans les comptes de la recette générale des finances', *Annales du Comité Flamand de France* 19 (1891), p. 177.

⁷³ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 209; the Archduke, for instance, read with much interest the manuscript chronicle of Renon de France: 'Histoire des troubles des Pays-Bas'.

⁷⁴ Erycius Puteanus to Maximilien Pluierius, 6 November 1613, in: Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 210: 'et quam utiliter huiusmodi opus etiam iuventuti in Scholis proponatur!'.

Low Countries and that he was planning on covering the Revolt in a single page, so as not to cause ‘ill-will or offence’.⁷⁵ Puteanus – who just like Gramaye published local histories and chorographies – did not publish his intended concise national history.⁷⁶ He probably never finished his work because, as he remarked, the rebellion against Philip II was a controversial topic and difficult to discuss in public without offending someone. The Habsburg regime spread a religious and dynastic reading of the past, and local authorities did not hesitate to prohibit books that were critical of the government.⁷⁷ Authors also seem to have practiced self-censorship. The Benedictine monk and historian Jacobus Lummenaeus à Marca wrote in 1626 to the papal nuncio in Brussels, Jean-François Guidi di Bagno, that during his lifetime Albert had ordered him to write a history of the Revolt. But rather than complying he told the archduke that the subject was too delicate and that he preferred to devote his studies to the Holy Virgin, which indeed he did.⁷⁸

The most important difference between perceptions about the Revolt in the North and in the South is that whereas Northern authors and artists celebrated the conflict, many of their colleagues in the Southern Netherlands emphasised dynastic continuity and the triumph of Catholicism over heresy. They considered the Revolt only as a brief spell of troubles. The rebellion against Philip II in the Southern Netherlands ended in defeat when army commander Alexander Farnese, prince of Parma, captured Antwerp in 1585. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Farnese consistently pursued a policy of oblivion so that fights about the past would not be able to jeopardise the fragile restoration of order. He served as governor until 1592, after which three successive governors briefly ran the country. Philip II then resolved on setting up a more permanent government that could deal effectively and in more durable terms with the Netherlandish troubles. He decided to give the Low Countries as a dowry to his daughter Isabella, whom he married off to her cousin Albert of Austria, the newly appointed governor of the Netherlands. At the end of 1597, the king communicated to all provinces his intention of giving the Low Countries to his daughter. The responses he received illustrate the implementation of the Southern policies

⁷⁵ Puteanus to Pluverius, 9 November 1613, in: *ibid.*: ‘ad nupera bella: quae una deinde pagina concludere poterunt, sine invidia aut offense.’

⁷⁶ See Erycius Puteanus, *Bruxella, incomparabili exemplo septenaria, gripho palladio descripta* (Brussels: Jan Mommaert, 1646); Erycius Puteanus, *Historiae Belgicae liber singularis, de obsidione Lovaniensi anni M.DC.XXXV* (Antwerp: Jan Cnobbaert, 1636); Puteanus, *Miracles derniers*.

⁷⁷ Jerome Machiels, *Privilegie, censuur en indexen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tot aan het begin van de 18e eeuw* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1997), pp. 113-121.

⁷⁸ Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, p. 214; see: Jacobus Cornelius Lummenaeus à Marca, *Corona Virginiae, sive Stellae dvodecim id est, Dvodecim homiliae sacrae* (Ghent: Cornelium Marium, 1618).

of oblivion. The States of Brabant replied on 5 December of that year and assured the king that they would keep to ‘the same fidelity and devotion that we have at *all* [my italics] times shown just like to his predecessors our natural princes and sovereign lords’.⁷⁹ On 23 January 1598, the States of Flanders also declared to do ‘all that loyal and obedient subjects owe to their princes and lords, the same love, honour and obedience of our ancestors, and we have *always* [my italics] served your majesty and his very noble predecessor counts and countesses of Flanders.’⁸⁰ Here, two of the provinces where fifteen years earlier Calvinism had reigned supreme and where cities had been infested with heresy and treason simply chose not to remember and pretended to have a clean slate.

This manipulation of history was possible because both secular and religious authorities could fall back on memory cultures existing long before the Revolt broke out.⁸¹ Soon after 1585, the religious orders, notably the Jesuits, made efforts to revive and reform Catholicism in the Southern Netherlands by setting up sodalities and confraternities that stimulated lay commitment to the Church of Rome.⁸² Old Catholic rituals such as processions and *ommegangen*, which had been banned in the Calvinist republics in the South Netherlandish cities, were revived.⁸³ Programmes of reconstruction restored and enhanced the Catholic landscape in the Southern Netherlands. Luc Duerloo has shown convincingly how the Habsburg dynasty carried out a religious transformation of the Southern Netherlands with particular attention for local tradition by promoting old cults of local saints, by collecting local relics and by restoring damaged church property.⁸⁴

The devotion of the Sacrament of Miracle in Brussels exemplifies how people in the Southern Netherlands were able to reinstate old modes of commemoration. According to the legend, in May 1370 six Jews stole sacred hosts from the St Gudula Cathedral and

⁷⁹ *Collection de documents inédits concernant l'histoire de la Belgique* I, edited by L.-P. Gachard (Brussels: A. van Dale, 1833), p. 394: ‘la mesme fidelité et devotion qu’avons de tout temps monsté par effect à ses devanciers noz princes naturelz et souverains seigneurs.’

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 397: ‘tout ce que fidelz et obeissans subjectz sont redevables à leur princes et seigneurs, du mesme amour, honneur et obeissance que noz ancestres et nous avons tousjours servy vostre Ma^{te} et ses tres nobles predecesseurs contes et contesses de Flandres.’

⁸¹ See for example: H.J. Elias. *Kerk en Staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder de regeering der aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella (1598-1621)* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1931), pp. 47-48. Elias demonstrates that the archdukes tried to restore order by reviving old practices of devotion and religious memory, such as Archduke Albert’s project of retrieving the remains of St Albert of Leuven who had died in the year 1192, and having them transported to Brussels.

⁸² Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, pp. 137-153.

⁸³ Calvinist republics were cities in the southern part of the Low Countries where Calvinists had taken over power. Calvinist republics included Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and Bruges in the period (c. 1577-1585).

⁸⁴ Luc Duerloo, ‘Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag’, *BMGN* 112 (1997), pp. 1-18; chapter 3 of this dissertation will explore this topic further.

stabbed them with knives. Miraculously, the hosts began to bleed. The Jews were captured and executed, and the host became one of the most important relics of the Southern Netherlands. In his study of the devotion of the Sacrament of Miracle, Luc Dequeker has demonstrated that memories of this particular event placed the troubled past of the Revolt in a long tradition of Catholicism under threat and served to mobilise Catholic inhabitants against the heretical enemy.⁸⁵ The Iconoclastic Furies of 1566 had damaged the relic, and in the period 1579-1585, during which Brussels had been a Calvinist republic, all celebrations of the miracle were forbidden. Soon after the city's reconciliation with Farnese, the new archbishop of Malines Jean Hauchin, who had been a fierce critic of the Calvinist regime, in a solemn procession returned the relic to the St Gudula Cathedral.⁸⁶

A canon of the St Gudula Cathedral, Etienne Ydens, in his seventeenth-century history of the veneration of the Sacrament of Miracle addressed the Infanta Isabella: 'it seems to me not only expedient and profitable, but also very necessary, to commit to writing this so illustrious and admirable work of God, that he has done in your noble town of Brussels, now two hundred and thirty five years ago'.⁸⁷ Ydens began his work with some exhortations to Jews and heretics to convert to Catholicism: 'O abominable heretic, and you poor miserable Jew, being in the darkness, quit the vain error that you have plunged into, in the muddy waters of falsehood, and embrace the truth'.⁸⁸ After his anti-Semitic account of the miracle of bleeding hosts and the development of its devotional culture, Ydens argued that the continuation of the devotion and the material conservation of the hosts can explain the preservation of Brussels:

for good reason can one attribute to the Holy Sacrament that during the great troubles of these Low Countries, this town has always been preserved. Despite the very evident perils, in which she has been found many times, the pillages and

⁸⁵ Luc Dequeker, *Het Sacrament van Mirakel. Jodenhaat in de Middeleeuwen* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2000), pp. 51-60.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60; see also: Henri Griffet, *Histoire des hosties miraculeuses, qu'on nomme le tres-saint Sacrament de Miracle, qui se conserve à Bruxelles depuis l'an 1370, et don't on célèbrera le Dimanche 16 Juillet 1820, l'année du Jubilé de cinquante ans, dans l'Eglise paroissiale des SS. Michele et Gudule* (Brussels: B. Le Francq, 1820), p. 124.

⁸⁷ Estienne Ydens, *Histoire dv S. sacrement de miracle* (Brussels: Rutgeert Velpius, 1605), f. *3v: 'il m'a semble non seulement expedient & prouffitable, mais aussi du tout necessaire, de mettre amplement par escrit ceste tant illustre & admirable oeuvre de Dieu, qu'il a fait en vostre noble ville de Bruxelles, il y a passé maintenant deux cents & trente cinq ans'.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, f. **2r: 'O hereticque abominable / Et toy pauvre luif miserable / Errans parmy l'obscurité / Quittez l'erreur vain qui vous plonge / Es eaux bourbeuses du mensonge / Et embrassez la verité.'

sacks by men of war, of which virtually all the other neighbouring towns have suffered.⁸⁹

Here, too, an inhabitant of the Southern Netherlands considered it best to stress that everyone had suffered, and in doing so conveniently forgot that many of his fellow citizens had been heretics. Ydens ignored the fact that the Calvinist republic of Brussels had had the support of local inhabitants and only mentioned the troubled period of the Revolt to underline both the malice of heretics and the careful safekeeping of the relic as well as the population's enthusiastic restoration of the devotion in 1585. This approach, which exonerated the inhabitants of their participation in the rebellion, did not meet with much resistance. Albert and Isabella, for instance, awarded Ydens 400 *livres* for his work, and 850 copies were printed.⁹⁰ The archdukes embraced the cult and under their rule the procession of the Sacrament of Miracle became the most important ritual in the Brussels calendar.⁹¹

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, authorities in the formerly rebellious South had laid the foundation for a successful restoration of Catholicism, and although H.J. Elias has shown that heresy was still an important issue in the border regions, it no longer posed as dangerous a threat to internal stability as it had before 1585.⁹² The successful attempts of re-Catholicisation by secular priests, religious orders, local authorities and the Habsburg dynasty, however, could not completely camouflage the fact that things had gone seriously wrong in the past. Despite public policies of oblivion, everyone knew what had happened. The war required an ongoing levying of taxes, which had to be justified – if only by reminding people of the horrors of heresy. Furthermore, despite the unwillingness of government authorities and the population alike to dwell on the troubled period of 1566-1585, people could hardly deny that the restoration of church and dynasty had been preceded by violation and destruction. Churches and convents still carried the scars of heretical violence.⁹³ Nor was oblivion always desirable. Just as religious converts in their

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68: 'a bonne raison peult on attribuer a ce saint Sacrement, que durant ces grandes troubles de ce pays bas, ceste ville a tousjours esté preservée, nonobstant les tres-evidentz perilz, esquelles elle s'est par tant des fois trouvée, des pilleries, & saccagementz des gens de guerre, que quasi toutes les aultres villes voisinnes ont souffert.'

⁹⁰ Finot, 'Les subventions', p. 179.

⁹¹ Thøfner, *A Common Art*, p. 255.

⁹² Elias, *Kerk en staat*, pp 11-23.; Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, p. 159.

⁹³ Andrew Spicer has recently argued that not only the Archdukes Albert and Isabella should be credited for the reconstructions of the religious landscape. He has demonstrated that these also took place on the initiative of local

conversion narratives needed to acknowledge that they had strayed from the right path to emphasise that they had mended their ways, on a collective level Southern rulers, political propagandists and artists liked to compare the Catholicity of their present society to the past evils of heresy.⁹⁴

How did inhabitants of the Habsburg Netherlands solve these tensions between the desire to forget and the apparent urge to remember? One way to deal with the troubled past was to focus attention on the things Southern people could be proud of in the period 1566-1585 or on which a positive spin could at least be put. These did not necessarily have to be events in the Netherlands. On 7 October 1571 the Battle of Lepanto took place, far away from the unrest in the Low Countries. That year people celebrated this Habsburg victory over the Ottoman infidels; the victory contributed to the Habsburg dynasty's reputation as protector of the faith. Soon after the battle, Pope Pius V, who had organised the Christian mobilisation against the Turks in 1571, proclaimed that from then on 7 October was to be celebrated as the feast of Our Lady of Victory, directly linking the victory at Lepanto to the intercessions of the Holy Virgin. On 1 April 1573 Pope Gregory XIII issued the Papal bull *Monet apostolus*, which officially instituted the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, also to be celebrated in Catholic churches on 7 October.⁹⁵ Although this was, of course, not an exclusively Netherlandish feast, the Counter-Reformation and the burgeoning Marian devotion in the Southern Netherlands did render it particularly popular there.⁹⁶ After news of Don John of Austria's victory at Lepanto had reached Antwerp, local Dominicans founded the Confraternity of the Rosary to honour and commemorate with an annual procession the Dominican priests who participated in the battle with only their rosaries and prayers as weapons against the enemy. Around 1615, the confraternity ordered a series of fifteen paintings by eleven Antwerp painters that depicted the mysteries of the rosary.⁹⁷ Pope Pius V's beatification in 1671 and the celebration of the first centenary of Lepanto in

government and church authorities soon after the Iconoclastic Furies of 1566 and after the period of Calvinist republics in the early 1580s: Andrew Spicer, 'After Iconoclasm: Reconciliation and Resacralization in the Southern Netherlands, ca. 1566-1585', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44:2 (2013), p. 433.

⁹⁴ Peter Mazur and Abigail Shinn, 'Introduction: Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World', *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (2013), p. 428.

⁹⁵ Iris Constant, *Kruisbeeld tegen kromzwaard. De neerslag van de zeeslag van Lepanto in de Italiaanse kunst ten tijde van de Contrareformatie* (Rotterdam: s.n., 2005), pp. 22, 179

⁹⁶ Annick Delfosse, *La "Protectrice du Pays-Bas". Stratégies politiques et figures de la Vierge dans les Pays-Bas espagnols* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 228-229.

⁹⁷ Raymond Sirjacobs and Guido Coolens, *Antwerpen Sint Pauluskerk. De Vijftien Mysteries van de Rozenkrans* (Antwerp: Sint-Paulusvrienden, 1993), pp. 4-8.

1671 both demonstrate the durability of this memory culture.⁹⁸ On the occasion of the centenary, members of the Antwerp Confraternity of the Rosary commissioned a series of paintings commemorating the miracle of Lepanto, which was to be placed in the Dominican St Paul's Church's northern transept close to the altar of the Holy Virgin. The battle had been far away from the Netherlands, but the painter gave the series a distinctly Netherlandish character. The first painting of the cycle depicted the preparations for the battle and also featured a Dominican nun praying for victory (Figure 8). In the background we see the city of Lepanto. The buildings, however, do not resemble the local architecture. The houses have crow-stepped gables, which at the time were characteristic of Netherlandish buildings. The skyline even resembles that of Antwerp. One scholar has argued that this 'mistake' betrays the painter's inability to detach himself from his home town.⁹⁹ A more likely explanation, however, is that the painter knew full well that Lepanto did not look like Antwerp and the similarity was intentional. The deliberate obfuscation of the topography enabled the cycle to send multiple messages. The paintings celebrated the Catholic victory at Lepanto, but they also visualised the struggle against heresy in the Southern Netherlands and the war against the Dutch Republic. This idea is corroborated by the observation that the enemy ships on the painting wave not only the red flag with a crescent moon but also North Netherlandish flags, including – clearly visible – that of Zeeland with the demi-lion emerging out of the water.

⁹⁸ Constant, *Kruisbeeld tegen kromzwaard*, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Raymond Sirjacobs, *Sint Pauluskerk Antwerpen. Historische gids* (Antwerp: Sint-Paulusvrienden, 2001), p. 80.



Figure 8. Jan Peeters, preparations for the Battle of Lepanto (1671), Sint Pauluskerk, Antwerp.

However problematic it was to talk or write about the period of 1566-1585, the period after 1585 was far less controversial, and authors enthusiastically exhibited Habsburg successes. Two victories against the rebels around 1600 exemplify the existence in the South of a more positive memory culture about the Revolt: the fall of Hulst (1596) and of Ostend (1604). In 1596, Albert captured the Flemish city of Hulst, and that same year a pamphlet appeared in Antwerp in which the author remarked that the triumphant Habsburg troops had negotiated a traditional treaty of reconciliation ‘with remission, abolition and eternal forgetting of the occurrences up until now’.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the victory was to be remembered. Although quite a dry factual account, its author reflected on some more general implications of the victory that would later in the seventeenth century be picked up and elaborated on. ‘God Almighty alone must be praised for this victory’, according to the author, ‘because it is difficult to capture this city through violence’.¹⁰¹ He finished by encouraging his readers to pray to God ‘so that his omnipotence may direct the hand of his

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous, *Warachtich verhael vant overleveren der stadt van Hulst in Vlaenderen, aen ... Albertus van Oostenrijcke, Gouverneur generael vande Nederlanden. Gheschiet den XX. dach augusti. 1596* (Antwerp: Ian van Ghelen, 1596), ff. a3v-a4r: ‘met Remissie abolitie ende eeuwich vergheten van t’ghene tot noch toe is ghebeurt’; a commemorative medal was struck on the occasion: anonymous, *Inname van Hulst (1596)*, medal, University Library Ghent, BRKZ.NUM.008034.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, f. a4r: ‘Godt Almachtich moet van dese Victorie sonderlinghe gheloofz zijn / want het is een plaetse qualijc winbaer met ghewelt’.

highness, for the flourishing of the Catholic religion and the prosperity of these Netherlands.¹⁰² Numerous people ascribed the victory to Archduke Albert. In a eulogy published after Albert's death in 1621, historian Aubert Miraeus mentioned the victory multiple times, and Albert's biographer Jean Bruslé de Montpleinchamp saw Hulst as one of the most important victories.¹⁰³ The memory of victories like Hulst supported the idea that loyalty to Habsburg ultimately paid off. In their turn, Albert and Isabella and their supporters exploited the triumphs and embedded them in a Catholic-Habsburg-Netherlandish memory culture which portrayed the Habsburgs as the best protection from heresy.¹⁰⁴

Albert and Isabella positively believed that piety could win the war, and they personally set the example. The archducal enthusiasm for the Holy Virgin of Scherpenheuvel and the siege of Ostend may illustrate this point.¹⁰⁵ The cult of Scherpenheuvel existed before the archdukes commenced their reign, though in a quite primitive form. Town secretary of Brussels Philips Numan recorded the legend of the Virgin of Scherpenheuvel in his 1604 tract about the cult, which he wrote on the orders of Bishop Johannes Miraeus of Antwerp. After interviewing some old people in the region around Scherpenheuvel, he concluded that it was in the public 'memory' of the community that

more than a hundred years ago there had been a shepherd who, while leading his sheep in a meadow besides the hill and finding the aforementioned statuette, took it along with him and carried it home, but that the statuette had miraculously become so heavy that it could not be carried.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid., f. a4v: 'op dat s'sijne almoghentheyte de handt van zijne hoocheyt wilde dirigeren tot voideringhe vanden Catholijcke Religie ende prosperiteyt van dese Nederlanden.'

¹⁰³ Aubert Miraeus, 'La vie, mort & enterrement de Albert le Pie, Archiduc d'Austrice, duc de Bourgoigne, Brabant &c', in: Adrian de Meerbeeck, ed., *Theatre finebre ou sont representées les funerailles de plusieurs princes et la vie, trespas, & magnifiques obseques de Albert le pie de treshaulte memoire archiduc d'Avstrice [...]. Faicts a Bruxelles le 12. de mars, 1622* (Brussels: Ferdinand de Hoy-maecker, 1622), pp. 216-221; Jean Chysostome Bruslé de Montpleinchamp, *L'Histoire de l'Archiduc Albert gouverneur general et puis Prince Souverain de la Belgique* (Cologne: heritiers Corneille Egmond, 1693), p. 377.

¹⁰⁴ See for instance: Cornelis Martin, Pieter de Costere and Joannes Baptista Vrients, *Les genealogies et anciennes descentes des forestiers et comtes de Flandre, avec briefves descriptions de levrs vies et gestes le tovt recueilly des plvs veritables, approuves et anciennes croniques et annales qui se trovvent* (Antwerp: Jean Baptist Vrients, 1608), p. 120.

¹⁰⁵ For a general study of Scherpenheuvel, see: Luc Duerloo and Marc Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel: het Jeruzalem van de Lage Landen* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Philips Numan, *Historie vande Mirakelen die onlanxcs in grooten ghetale ghebeurt zyn / door die intercessie ende voor-bidden van die H. Maegt Maria op een plaetse genoemt Scherpen-heuvel by die Stadt van Sichen in Brabant* (Brussels: Rugeert Velpius, 1606), pp. 28-29: 'daer es een fame ende ghedenckenisse by allen den genen

The shepherd's master saw him standing there, unable to move, and without any difficulty placed the statuette back in the oak tree. During the Revolt, raging iconoclasts stole the statuette, but soon after the reconciliation in the 1580s it was replaced.

Scherpenheuvel became especially popular after the Habsburg victory at Ostend. In 1604, the city of Ostend fell after a long Habsburg siege. The Infanta Isabella attributed the ultimate Habsburg victory against the rebel occupiers of the city to the divine intervention of the Holy Virgin of Scherpenheuvel, thereby linking that pilgrimage site to the celebration of the victory at Ostend. Scherpenheuvel, for instance, received the same town privileges as Ostend.¹⁰⁷ Histories about the siege invariably framed the Habsburg triumph as providential and connected it to the archdukes' extraordinary devotion.¹⁰⁸ As such, Scherpenheuvel became the archdukes' most important site of pilgrimage.¹⁰⁹

A second way of dealing with the troubled history of the rebellion was to make it pale into insignificance compared to the longstanding traditions of Catholicism in the Low Countries. The period around 1600 saw a surge of writings and publications on church history and religious orders, which emphasised the antiquity – and, therefore, the verity – of Catholicism.¹¹⁰ Authors of these texts used this longevity to argue that the 'true' faith should not be abandoned for newfangled denominations such as Calvinism. The Jesuit Franciscus Costerus, for instance, published in 1595 his *Proof of the Old Catholic Teachings [Bewijs der ovder catholiicker leeringhe]*. In this text he observed that 'it is the manner of all heretics, to introduce some novelty in the world, never heard of or known by

die int selve quartier woonen / dat over hondert ende meer jaeren sekere Schaeps-herdere is geweest / de welcke leydende zyn schapen / weyden neffens den zelven berch / ende vindende t'voorschreven Beeldeken / dat met hem heeft meynen / ende t'huys te dragen / maer dat het beeldeken miraculeuselyck soo swaer is geworden dat het niet om verdragen en was'.

¹⁰⁷ Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety*, pp. 139-142.

¹⁰⁸ Christophe de Bonours, *Le memorable siege d'Ostende, decrit, et divisé en douze livres* (Brussels: Jean de Meerbeeck, 1628); Isabella's chaplain Philippe Chifflet thought that 'the author lacked judgement' ['l'authheur manque de jugement'] and that while the book was sold for 3 florins 'I would not even want it for 5 sou' ['je n'en voudrois point pour cinc solz'], in: 'Texte intégral des lettres', edited by De Meester de Ravestein, KBR, MS II 7277, f. 225; see also the following commemorative medals: anonymous, *De aartshertogen voorspellen de uiteindelijke overgave van Oostende* (1604), University Library Ghent, BRKZ.NUM.008080; anonymous, *Antwerpen eert Spinola om de verovering van Oostende* (1605), University Library Ghent, BRKZ.NUM.008086.

¹⁰⁹ Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius Among his Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 93-108.

¹¹⁰ See for example: Maximilian de Wignacourt, *Discovrs svr l'estat des Pays Bas. Auquel sont deduits les causes de ses troubles, & calamitez, & leurs remedes* (Arras: Guillaume de Riviere, 1593), p. 67.

their parents'.¹¹¹ In 1619-20, Jean Cousin, canon of the cathedral of Tournai in Hainault, published his multi-volume *History of Tournai* [*Histoire de Tournay*], and out of more than thirteen hundred pages devoted only thirteen to the Revolt.¹¹² Citing Florentius van der Haer, Aubert Miraeus and other respectable Catholic historians, Cousin wrote that that conflict was still in 'our memory' and that the heretics had not been respectable citizens of Tournai but 'foreigners and louts'.¹¹³ Calvinist tyranny in Tournai ended when Philip of Saint-Aldegonde, lord of Noircarmes chased away the heretics.¹¹⁴ Cousin finished his discussion with a conclusion in Latin: 'the land of Flanders is the sure grave of heresy'.¹¹⁵ According to Cousin, the Revolt was just a tiny blotch on Tournai's long record of Catholicism.

Southern Catholics, like Cousin, did not enquire into the past passivity of the population against heretical violence but rather focused on the sheer deviousness and deception of the heretical rebels. The misdeeds of Protestant fanatics were popular themes among Southern propagandists. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Richard Verstegan published in 1587 *Theatre of Cruelties of Heretics in Our Time*.¹¹⁶ Verstegan's *Theatre* was a compendium of heretical savagery. A medallion in the frontispiece of this publication shows the biblical scene of Christ Carrying the Cross. The book itself contains a print cycle focusing on the sufferings of the universal Catholic Church and on the notorious cruelty of heretics, with ample attention to the Low Countries. With letter marks, Verstegan linked his descriptions to the persons depicted by the corresponding print. The first martyrs he included for the Low Countries were those of Gorcum, a group of priests murdered by Beggars in 1572. After a brief description of the martyrs' sufferings, he added that in Gorcum's church the Beggars took down an image of Jesus Christ and hanged it on the gallows (Figure 9). Apparently, this was some sort of established heretical practice because 'they also took the sacred host from the hands of a priest in the church of Gouda in Holland,

¹¹¹ Franciscus Costerus, *Bewijs der ovder catholiicker leeringhe, met antwoorde op sommige teghenstellinghen* (Antwerp: Ioachim Trognæsius, 1595), f. *3r: 'Het is alle Heretijcken maniere, eenighe nieuwicheyt inder vverelt te bringhen, noyt van heur ouders ghehoort oft bekent'.

¹¹² Cousin, *Histoire de Tournay ou le quatrieme livre des chroniques annales*, pp. 305-317. With thanks to Erika Kuijpers, who gave me this reference.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 305: 'nostre memoire'; 'estrangers, & manans'.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 317: 'haereticis certum est Flandrorum terra sepulchrum'.

¹¹⁶ Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis*. The following citations are from the simultaneous French translation.

and attached it with nails on the gallows.’¹¹⁷ Paul Arblaster has suggested that the *Theatre* was an ‘unofficial work of government propaganda’ on the basis of Verstegan’s status as a royal pensioner, the assistance he received from Johannes Bochijs – the town secretary of Antwerp – and the fact that the work was physically printed by the Typographer Royal, Christopher Plantin.¹¹⁸ Verstegan was definitely not the only author who wrote about heretical violence in the Low Countries during the Revolt. In 1604 a Catholic theologian and native of Gorcum, Willem Estius, published his popular history of the Martyrs of Gorcum.¹¹⁹ Willem Spoelbergh translated it into Dutch and addressed it to the bishop of Antwerp Johannes Miraeus.¹²⁰ In his dedication he explained that the memory of the martyrs might be spread even more effectively with this Dutch edition because it could also be read by those who had not mastered Latin.¹²¹ In the history, Estius emphasised the endurance and piety of the martyred priests, and he described at length the gruesome death of the main perpetrator, William II van der Marck, lord of Lumey, to demonstrate how God punishes heretics.¹²² Similar instances of Protestant violence against Catholic priests occurred in Oudenaarde and Roermond. In these cases, too, martyrologies of the victim priests appeared in print.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Richard Verstegan, *Theatre des Cruautez des Heretiques de nostre temps* (Antwerp: Adrien Hubert, 1588), p. 58: ‘Ils arracherent aussy la saincte hostie des mains d’un prêtre en l’église de Goude en Hollande, & l’attachèrent avec des cloux au gibet.’

¹¹⁸ Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), p. 41.

¹¹⁹ Willem Estius, *Historiae martyrum Gorcomiensium, maiori numero fratrum minorum; qui pro fide Catholica à preduellibus interfecti sunt anno Domini M.D.LXXII, libri quator* (Douai: Baltazaris Belleri, 1603).

¹²⁰ Willem Estius, *Waerachtighe historie van de martelaers van Gorcom, meesten-deel al Minder-broeders, die veur het Catholijck ghelouoe van de kettters ghedoodt zijn inden iaere onses Heeren, MDLXXII* (Antwerp: Plantijn, 1604), p. 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp 3-4.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 373-376.

¹²³ Arnold Havens, *Historica relatio XII martyrum Cartusianorum qui Ruraemundae in ducatu Geldriae anno MDLXXII agonem suum feliciter compleverunt.*, [Editio repetita saec. XVIII]. (sl: sn, 1608); Victor, de Buck, ‘Les Martyrs d’ Audenaerde. Documents officiels publiés par V.D.B.’, in *Analectes pour servir à l’histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique* (Peeters, 1870), pp. 49–117; Jules Ketele (ed.), *Klagt Schrift van J.D. Waelckens, Pastor van Edelaere; of Audenaerde, Door de Geusen Ingenomen*, (Audenaerde: Ronsse, 1836); Jac Yetzweirtius, *Aldenardies Sive de Subdola Ac Futiva ...* (Ghandavi: apud Ioannem Lapidandum, 1573). With thanks to Erika Kuijpers for these references.



Figure 9. An image of Jesus Christ on the gallows at Brill.

But there were more positive ways to look at the Revolt. Miracles, especially, demonstrated that Catholicism was the true faith and the house of Habsburg its best protector. For that reason, they featured in numerous narratives about the conflict. We have already discussed Scherpenheuvel, but other pilgrimage sites also showed how God had favoured the Habsburg Netherlands. Humanist scholar Justus Lipsius published an account in Latin about the veneration of the statue of the Holy Virgin in Halle.¹²⁴ The book was promptly translated by the secretary of the city of Brussels, Philip Numan.¹²⁵ Numan took up the translation of Lipsius, he claimed, because another translation had appeared in Delft in the Dutch Republic, belittling the Catholic veneration of the Holy Virgin and ridiculing Her divine intercessions.¹²⁶ In his work, Lipsius intertwined stories about local miracles and political and military history. In 1580, for instance, Brussels ‘was then also on the side of

¹²⁴ Justus Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis* (Antwerp: ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum, 1604).

¹²⁵ Justus Lipsius, *Die heylighe maghet van Halle, door Ivstvs Lipsivs. Hare weldaden ende mirakelen oordentlick ende ghetrouwelijck beschreven. Ende nu onlanx ut den latyne int nederlandsche overghesedt door Philippus Numan* (Brussels: Rutger Velpius, 1607).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, voor-reden; the satirical edition in question is: Justus Lipsius, *Heylighe maghet van Halle. Hare weldaden ende miraculen ghetrouwelijck ende ordentlick wtgheschreven*, edited by Aelbrecht van Oosterwijk (Delft: Bruyn Harmansz Schinckel, 1605).

the rebels of the prince [William of Orange], not having been conquered, but deceived.¹²⁷ Every day, the governor Olivier van den Tempel looked at neighbouring Halle, which had reconciled with the Spanish king, to see how he could capture the city. During an attack on the city, one of Van den Tempel's soldiers bragged 'that with his own hand [...] he would break the nose of that little woman of Halle.'¹²⁸ The Holy Virgin heard the soldier's intention and decided what should happen. In accordance with the biblical proverb 'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein', the people of Halle shot the soldier in the nose.¹²⁹ For modern readers it is interesting that Lipsius, although a royal historiographer, never wrote a national history of the Low Countries but did find time for miracles. The same could be said of Erycius Puteanus, a successor royal historiographer. He also published a popular account of miracles in French and Latin, in this case miracles attributed to the Holy Virgin of Scherpenheuvel.¹³⁰ The author of a handwritten chronicle finished in the second half of the seventeenth century provided an explanation for the interest in miracles: 'the heresy of our time cannot be vanquished but by miracles because one does not dispute with words but with actions and only with actions can the impudent lies of heresy be repudiated.'¹³¹ Miracles, in short, proved that Catholics were right.

Despite the attempts to circumvent the embarrassing fact that the Southern Netherlands had once been a cradle of heresy, there were still episodes that apparently needed to be explained away. People in government were keenly interested in the history of the rebellion because such historical knowledge might help to prevent reoccurrence. The Walloon poet and courtier Maximilian de Wignacourt, who had been in the service of the Spanish ambassador in England and who subsequently moved in Madrid court circles, is a case in point. In 1593 he published in Arras his *Discourse on the State of the Low Countries from which are Deduced the Causes of these Troubles, and Calamities, and their Remedies* [*Discovrs svr l'estat des Pays Bas. Auquel sont deduicts les causes de ses troubles, &*

¹²⁷ Lipsius, *Die heylighe maghet*, p. 37: 'doen tertijt oock op de zyde der Rebellen vanden Prince was / niet verwonnen maer bedrogen zynde.'

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38: 'Dat hy met zyn eygen hant dat vrouwen van Halle [...] den neuse soude af snyden.'; also cited in Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, p. 167.

¹²⁹ Lipsius, *Die heylighe maghet*, p. 38.

¹³⁰ Erycius Puteanus, *Miracles derniers de Nostre Dame de Montaigv* (Louvain: Hendrik van Hastens and Petrus II Zangrius, 1622).

¹³¹ Anonymous, 'Chronycke der Nederlanden, 1500-1693', KBR Ms 21769, p. 103: 'want de ketterye van onsen tijdt en kan noijt verwonnen worden, dan met mirakelen daermen niet met woorden, maer met daden disputeert ende de onbeschaemden leugenaers der ketterijen wederlegghen en kan.'

calamitez, & leurs remedes].¹³² Addressing himself to Philip II, De Wignacourt remarked that

Just as the state is in the church, the church is in the state; they are joined by the ordination of God in an indissoluble bond, to maintain the unity of human society and to guide it to its happiness: it is impossible to see the one prosper, while the other is in disorder.¹³³

Wignacourt explained that the nobility had disturbed this balance between religion and state by their heretical inclinations and their desire for novelties. Making much use of the pronoun ‘they’, he did not name many rebels except the most important leaders, including Henry van Brederode and Prince William.¹³⁴ The solution De Wignacourt proposed for ending the troubles was ‘to double the zeal in the faith and affection in serving God’.¹³⁵

An irreconcilable past

The previous two sections have shown that, around 1600, inhabitants of the Northern and Southern Netherlands came to remember the Revolt very differently. In the Republic, people celebrated the successful struggle against the Spanish king. More specifically, they commemorated Spanish iniquities in support of the argument that the enemy needed to be crushed before a peace could be negotiated. The resulting canonical narrative consisted of a sequence of heroic episodes, whereas in the South the number of episodes that people remembered was small. When Southerners dealt with particular events that had occurred during the rebellion, they ascribed excesses to the heretics and emphasised the providential support for the Habsburg cause. Despite these striking differences, we must not consider these two narratives in isolation for they interacted with and mutually influenced one another, especially during the Twelve Years’ Truce. During the Truce, Northerners and Southerners realised that they had grown apart, but many of them held on to the ideal of Netherlandish unity. Southerners and Northerners hence took a keen interest in one

¹³² Wignacourt, *Discovrs svr l'estat des Pays Bas*.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, f. a2r: ‘D’autant que l’Estat est en l’Eglise, & l’Eglise en l’Estat; estans les ioincts par la disposition de Dieu, d’une liaison indissoluble, pour maintenir en union la societ  humaine, & la conduire   sa felicit : il est impossible de voir l’un prosperer, l’autre estant en desordre’.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 16-29.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88: ‘il nous faut doubler le zele en la foy, et affection de servir   Dieu [...]’.

another's interpretations of the past.¹³⁶ Research has shown, for instance, that elite libraries throughout the South held works of history, including histories of the Revolt published in the Dutch Republic.¹³⁷ Many handwritten chronicles of the history of the Low Countries survive in Belgian libraries. They contain chronological accounts of the history of the Revolt and pay attention to the secular aspects of the conflict.¹³⁸ This observation seems to confirm that, indeed, political historiography was such a taboo that in order to evade the stringent censorship it could safely be spread only in handwritten accounts. Since these handwritten accounts were, nonetheless, often copied and further distributed, it appears that in the Habsburg Netherlands there was definitely a popular interest in a more secular version of the history of the Revolt.

Discussions about the past between Northern and Southern authors during the Truce often brought to light fierce disagreements. In 1620, Catholic historian Adrianus van Meerbeeck reflected on these discussions in his *Chronicle of the Entire World, and Especially the Seventeen Netherlands* [*Chroniicke vande gantsche vverelt, ende sonderlinghe vande seventhien Nederlanden*]: 'since one will find as many opinions as there are heads, it is difficult to find two people who agree about everything'.¹³⁹ Van Meerbeeck continued with a question: 'what writings are more subject to the judgement of people than history?' and he explained that interpretations of history frequently relied on one's own 'inclinations'.¹⁴⁰

The Jesuit Thomas Saily entered into a discussion with a Northern writer of history. Saily wrote a Counter-Reformation tract about the Revolt in which he clearly relied on his 'inclinations'. In 1612, he observed that authors and publishers in the United Provinces had, 'more than ever,' begun to squander 'many thousands of guilders so that the tars of their abusive and impertinent books [...] could crawl among the general population.'¹⁴¹ Not much is known about the circulation of these booklets in the South, but

¹³⁶ Pollmann, 'No Man's Land', pp. 245-260.

¹³⁷ Scheelings, 'De geschiedschrijving', p. 175.

¹³⁸ See for instance: anonymous, 'Histoire des Pays-Bas, 651-1646', KBR, MS 7440; Joachim Hoppers, 'Recueil des troubles des Pays-Bas', KBR, MS 10429-30; anonymous, 'Guerre civile du XVIe siècle', KBR, MS 13408-9; anonymous 'Pasquilles de l'an 1566. Lettres d'octroi aux gueux donnés par le maitre Satanique', KBR, MS 15895.

¹³⁹ Adrianus van Meerbeeck, *Chroniicke vande gantsche vverelt, ende sonderlinghe vande seventhien Nederlanden* (Antwerp: Hieronymus Verdussen, 1620), f. *2r: 'alsoomen soo veel meyningen vindt, als daer bycans hoofden zijn; alsoo en vindt men qualijck twee menschen, die van eene sake over al een ghevoelen hebben.'

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, f. *2r: 'wat is daer het vonnisse der menschen meer onderworpen dan de historie?'; 'genegheden'.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Saily, *Den nievwen morghen-vvecker, wijsende de natuere [...] der ketterije* (Louvain: Joannes Christophorus Flavius, 1612), ff. 2v-3r: 'meer als oyt'; 'hoe menigheduysent guldens sy verquisten, op dat d'oncruydt haerder schimpighe ende impertinente boeckkens [...] onder den ghemeynen man soude moghen cruypen'.

Sailly clearly believed in their destructive potential. He wrote his text in reaction to Willem Baudartius' *Wake-up Call* (1610), the booklet discussed above in which the exiled Calvinist clergyman Baudartius narrated the history of the Revolt as a story of Spanish atrocities. Whereas Baudartius narrated the history of the Revolt to point out that Spaniards were not to be trusted and that the recently promulgated Twelve Years' Truce should, therefore, be rescinded as soon as possible, Sailly denounced this violation of article 4 of the Truce in which the Northern and Southern Netherlands had, after all, agreed

that the subjects and inhabitants [...] shall have and use all maner of good correspondence, and amitie [...] without calling to mind, or remembering any of the offences, hurts and dammages [sic], that they or any of them have received, had, and endured in the forepassed warres, and troublesome times.¹⁴²

'Put into simple Dutch', Sailly accused Baudartius of sowing 'discord, quarrels, strife, war and, as a result, destruction, adversity and ruin of these lands'.¹⁴³ As we have seen, in the South, where Habsburg authority and Catholicism were restored, there was no equivalent for this Northern memory practice. When Sailly responded to Baudartius for instance he did not go about refuting all his arguments with alternative historical evidence. He undermined Baudartius by taking a fundamentally different perspective in which the root cause of all troubles was the heresy of Calvinists and the envy of over-ambitious nobles. For Sailly that was the material point, and there was no need to enter at length into a futile discussion of what had happened subsequently.

Sailly used proverbial wisdom to make his point that heretics in the North had caused all troubles by their heresy and warmongering. 'Just as one who is good does not lightly suspect someone to be evil', Sailly cited church father John Chrysostom, 'someone who is evil himself does not lightly expect good of another.'¹⁴⁴ To make matters worse, heretics not only tried to win people over to their sects and persuade them not to fear God, they also positively encouraged them to evil.¹⁴⁵ He explained how the first Protestants

¹⁴² *Articles, of a treatie of truce. Made and concluded in the towne and cite of Antwerp, the 9. of April 1609* (1609), ff. b1v-b2r; Sailly, *Den nievwen morghen-vvecker*, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Sailly, *Den nievwen morghen-vvecker*, p. 5: 'In platten Nederlants gheseydt', 'twist / tweedracht / onvrede / oorlooghe / ende desvolghens verwoestinghe / qualijckvaert / ende verderffenisse der landen'.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16: 'Ghelijck hy niet licht van yemanden quaet en vermoedt, die selve goet is; alsoo die selve quaet is, en vermoedt niet licht yet goedts van een ander.'

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

entered the country. Through ‘convenient lies [...] collected from forged histories’, they oppressed good Catholics.¹⁴⁶ By ‘convenient lies’, Saily clearly referred to the use, or rather abuse, of history by Northern authors who blamed Philip II for all the troubles and who argued that the Spanish king had loved his Spanish people more than he did the inhabitants of the Low Countries. These inhabitants, Saily claimed,

were accustomed to be mollycoddled by his father the Roman Emperor Charles: who, as they said, knew how to live with all sorts of people, being with the Germans as a good German, with the Brabanters, Hollanders, Zeelanders, with the Walloons or French, and more such people, as if he was born among them a Brabanter, Hollander, Spaniard or Italian.¹⁴⁷

But Saily disagreed. He thought that this difference between Philip II and his father Charles V could not explain the origins of the Revolt and said that ‘of such great misery (in which the country has fallen after the departure of the king) so small a matter cannot have been the cause’.¹⁴⁸ Southern authors invariably claimed that the Reformed religion caused the rebellion. Saily for example observed that its adherents came into contact with Calvinism and Lutheranism ‘during the time of the previous wars in foreign lands’.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, after the departure of Philip II they began to hold grudges against anyone who stood in the way of their selfish ambitions, such as the highest representatives of the Habsburg overlord, the governor Margaret of Parma and her advisor Cardinal de Granvelle.¹⁵⁰ In 1566, ‘when people did all to extinguish this first flame of the imminent fire’, heretics presented a petition on 6 April – according to Saily the first public sign of discontent among the population.¹⁵¹

Clearly, Southern authors frowned upon the Northern craze for the recent past. In his *The Mirror of Netherlandish Miseries* [*De spiegel der Nederlandsche elenden*] (1621),

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 121: ‘treffelijcke leughenen [...] wt vervalste Historien’.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 66: ‘Daer sy ghewoon waeren / al anders van sijnen Vader Carolus / den Roomsche Keyser ghecaresseert te wesen: die / soos y spraecken / wiste met alle soorte van Volcke te leven / wesende met die Duytschen als eenen vromen Duytsch / met de Brabanders / Hollanders / Seelanders / met Waelen oft Franchoisen / ende dergelijcke menschen / al ofte hy onder henlieden eenen gheborenen Brabander / Hollander / Spaniaert / oft Italiaen hadde gheweest’.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.: ‘van soo grooten Ellende (waer inne corts naer des Conincks vertreck het gheheele Landt ghevallen is) en const soo cleynen saecke / gheen oorsaecke ghewesen’.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 67: ‘die sy ten tijden des voorgaenden krijchs in vreemde Landen hadden beghonst te suyghen’.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 69: ‘Ter wijlen / datmen alle neersticheyde dede / om dit eerste Vonxken des toecomende Viers wt te blusschen...’.

Richard Verstegan emphasised the Habsburg defence of the Catholic religion and skipped much of what had happened during the Revolt. Paul Arblaster has demonstrated that Verstegan's works in Dutch were distributed in the North as well as the South and that he also had a Northern readership of Catholics and moderates in mind.¹⁵² Verstegan considered the war to have been inevitable due to the rise of heretical sects, which he felt to have caused the conflict in which 'province has risen against province, city against city, Netherlanders against Netherlanders in hostility.'¹⁵³ He abhorred the ingratitude of the 'Hollanders' in the North. 'Regardless of their previous rebellious crimes', Verstegan wrote, Southern people have 'treated them as if such crimes had never occurred'.¹⁵⁴ Still, 'those of Holland have tried to make their evil case good with countless slanderous books', which led Verstegan to publish his interpretation of what the Revolt had been all about.¹⁵⁵

Some episodes of the Revolt were discussed by Northerners and Southerners alike: the petition of the indigenous nobles to Margaret of Parma in Brussels and the Iconoclastic Furies in 1566, the governorship of the duke of Alba (1567-1573), and the rebel capture of Brill in 1572. Verstegan, for instance, argued that religious conflicts had divided the people, which had resulted in political conflict. He characterised as 'forced' the unpopular measures taken by Alba and Philip II, thereby exonerating them from any charges of callousness.¹⁵⁶ What was considered cruel by Northern heretics Southern authors believed to be a necessary defence of the Catholic religion. Just like De Wignacourt, cited above, Verstegan argued that by protecting Catholicism, the natural overlords of the house of Habsburg had prevented society from falling into discord. For that reason, Northerners who rebelled against their overlord Philip II could not be considered lovers of the patria.¹⁵⁷

Although Northerners and Southerners attached much importance to the events of 1566, they interpreted them in radically different ways. Southern authors asserted that the Habsburg authorities could not see the petition coming.¹⁵⁸ Saily had been born around

¹⁵² Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World*, p. 119.

¹⁵³ Richard Verstegan, *De spiegel der Nederlandsche elenden* (Mechelen: Hendrick Jaye, 1621), p. 5: 'provincie tegen provincie, Stadt tegen Stadt, Netherlanders tegen Netherlanders syn in hostiliteyt opgestaen'.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4: 'niet tegenstaende al hunne voorgaende rebellighe misdaeden, maer ter contrarie hunlieden getraecteert heeft aleueleens pft alsucke misdaeden noyt en waeren geschiet'.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8: 'Die van Hollandt hebben met ontallijcke lasterlijcke boeckskens gesocht hunnen quaede saeck goet te maecken'.

¹⁵⁶ See: *ibid.*, pp. 34, 44, 61: 'gedwongen'.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-131.

¹⁵⁸ Saily, *Den niewwen morghen-vvecker*, p. 69; Verstegan, *De spiegel der Nederlandsche elenden*, p. 33.

1553 and claimed to hold ‘good memory’ of the event.¹⁵⁹ He argued that the nobles came together only ‘to demand new things, such as freedom of conscience, moderation of the imperial placards against the obstinate, impudent, and malicious heretics’.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Haraeus wrote that the petition was ‘without a doubt the first public sign [...] of these troubles.’¹⁶¹ Unlike Southern authors, Northern authors argued that the petition in 1566 was the culmination of longer existing discontent among the nobles, referring to the fact that the matter had already been raised by several delegations to Spain by Lamoral, count of Egmont (1565), Floris de Montmorency, baron of Montigny (1566), and Jan IV de Glymes, marquess of Bergen op Zoom (1567), the last two of whom died in Spain.¹⁶²

Besides the petition, the capture of Brill on 1 April 1572 was part of both Northern and Southern historical texts. Again, interpretations of this event differed greatly. Although Southerners considered Brill a noteworthy stage in the conflict, they did not engage in any in-depth discussion. Verstegan, for instance, used it in his chapter on why Elizabeth I of England had shown ingratitude to Philip II. He had helped her in the turbulent first years of her reign, and she ‘thanked’ him by siding with the rebels. The author referred to the Brill episode to contend that its capture prompted England to promise financial assistance.¹⁶³ Haraeus labelled 1572 as ‘the second insurgence’ and devoted no more attention to it.¹⁶⁴ Willem Estius, in his martyrology of the Gorcum monks who were murdered by the rebels, said that as soon as the rebels took over they began killing Catholics for their faith.¹⁶⁵

For rebel authors, the capture of Brill carried more significance, and it was generally presented as a key stage of the rebellion. A member of the High Council of Holland, Zeeland and West Friesland, François Vranck, considered 1572 as the year during which Holland and Zeeland had risen against Spain, effectively marking the beginning of the Revolt.¹⁶⁶ Bor saw it as Alba’s personal loss. With a pun on the word Brill, which can

¹⁵⁹ Saily, *Den nieuwen morgen-vecker*, p. 69: ‘daer ick noch goede memorie affdraeghe’. Saily must have been around 13 years old at the time.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69: ‘om sommighe nieuwe dinghen te heyschen / als vryheyt van conscientie / maetinghe vande Keyzersche Placaten teghen de hertneckighe / onbeschaemde / ende quaet-willighe kettters’.

¹⁶¹ Franciscus Haraeus, *Onpartijdighe verclaringhe der oorsaken des Nederlantsche oorloghs sedert t’iaer 1566. tot 1608* (Antwerp: G. Ianssens, 1612), p. 13: ‘ongetwijfeld het eerste openbaer beginsel [...] van dese troubelen.’

¹⁶² *Spiegel der Ievght*, ff. av3 r-v; Gysius, *Oorsprong en voortgang*, p. 112; Bor, *Den oorspronck, begin ende aenvanck*, p. 7; Vranck, *Weerlegginghe*, f. c6r.

¹⁶³ Verstegan, *De spiegel der Nederlandsche elenden*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶⁴ Haraeus, *Onpartijdighe verclaringhe*, p. 19: ‘de tweede oproerte’.

¹⁶⁵ Estius, *Waerachtighe historie*, pp. 8-13.

¹⁶⁶ Vranck, *Wederlegginghe*, f. d8v.

also mean ‘spectacles’ in Dutch, he spread the popular rhyme: ‘on the first of April, Duc d’Alb lost his Brill’.¹⁶⁷

After the discussion of the capture of Brill, the chronology of Northern and Southern historical narratives diverged more spectacularly. In his popular history of the Revolt Richard Verstegan, like other South Netherlandish authors, skipped substantial parts of the history after 1572. He omitted the violent sacks of Naarden, Oudewater, and other cities and jumped to the murder of the leader of the Revolt William of Orange in 1584, a murder that left Hollanders ‘as a body without a head.’¹⁶⁸ Carolus Scribani, a Jesuit writer of history, also rushed through the history of the Revolt by briefly eulogising the governors Don Louis de Requesens, John of Austria, the duke of Parma and Archduke Albert. He praised the controversial army commander Alba for being one of the best army generals the world had ever known.¹⁶⁹ Other than that, Scribani looked only at the present and the future, deliberating on how the North could be reconquered.¹⁷⁰

The influential Southern historian Franciscus Haraeus, a Catholic priest who left the North in 1609, explained in his *Impartial Declaration About the Causes of the Netherlandish War* [*Onpartijdighe verclaringhe der oorsaken des Nederlantsche oorloghs sedert t’iaer 1566. tot 1608*] (1612) what he believed was the origin of the Revolt and in doing so divided the rebellion into three neat chunks: the unrest in 1566, the Calvinist take-over of cities in Holland and Zeeland in 1572, and the power vacuum after the death of Governor Louis de Requesens in 1576. He traced the diverging interpretations of the past back to the tensions between Philip II and William of Orange. The prince of Orange had declared that the Spanish rulers disrespected local privileges. Haraeus rejected this accusation. Citing Hugo Grotius, who claimed in his *Antiquitate Reipublicae Batavae* that Holland had always been governed by the States, Haraeus asserted that Grotius, like other rebel propagandists such as the high government official François Vranck, did not have any substantial evidence to support such a statement.¹⁷¹ Haraeus instead contended that the

¹⁶⁷ Bor, *Den oorspronck, begin ende aenvanck*, p. 34: ‘Den eersten van April, Verloor Duc d’Alb zijn Brill’ was a pun Bor used in his works. ‘Brill’ is pronounced identically to ‘bril,’ which is the Dutch word for spectacles. See also: P. Leendertz, ‘Alva’s bril’, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 17 (1897), pp. 70-71.

¹⁶⁸ Verstegan, *De spiegel der Nederlandsche elenden*, pp. 57-58: ‘alsoo dat de Hollanders ghelaeten waeren als een lichaam zonder hoofd’.

¹⁶⁹ Scribani, *Den Neder-landschen vvaer-segger*, pp. 11-24.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-98.

¹⁷¹ Haraeus, *Onpartijdighe verclaringhe*, p. 4; in the *Corte Verthooining van het Recht by den Ridderschap, Edelen, ende Steden van Hollandt ende Westvrieslant van allen ouden tyden in den voorschreven Lande gebruyckt* (Rotterdam: Matthijs Bastiaensz, 1587), François Vranck argued that the United Provinces were entitled to rebel in protection of their privileges.

‘Hollanders’ had protested against the ‘violation’ of non-existent privileges, without giving any hint of their dissatisfaction before making their grievances known and before committing the iniquitous crime of the Iconoclasm.¹⁷² Haraeus explained that the rebels had requested that the religious persecutions be tempered, ‘as if the people could be left like a horse without a bridle, or small children without the rod’.¹⁷³ Similarly, in his explanation for Alba’s harsh campaign of retribution around 1572, Haraeus drew a comparison to a schoolmaster and his pupils: ‘it is a common command in all well-regulated schools on pain of the rod, that no schoolchildren in winter walk on the ice, nor in the summer that they bathe in deep water, because of the risk of drowning’.¹⁷⁴ If the children disobeyed, should the master be blamed for punishing them? Haraeus let his readers decide and proposed that they should apply their answer to the Low Countries conflict.

We have already seen that at the beginning of the seventeenth century many authors considered the ‘right’ interpretation of the past as a prerequisite for being a patriot. To illustrate this point further, François Vranck wrote in 1618 about his surprise that Haraeus, who was a ‘Netherlander born in Utrecht has not spared himself from being the first among our nation who has so shamefully rejected the virtue and loyalty he owes to his fatherland.’¹⁷⁵ He considered Haraeus to be a ‘renegade’ bent on damaging his ‘fatherland’. Taking a legal approach to the subject matter, Vranck rejected Haraeus’ claim that the strict implementation of the placards against heresy was in line with tradition. He argued that if the natural lord broke the customary contract with his subjects, he would forfeit his right to rule. And this, Vranck clarified, was exactly what Philip II had done when he flouted local privileges. The right to rebel was an important topic on which Northern and Southern authors could not agree. Southerners stressed the legitimacy of the reign of the Habsburgs to justify their own position as subjects of the archdukes, whilst Northerners claimed the right to abjure their sovereign lord: otherwise their acts of rebellion would have been unwarranted. Thus Thomas Saily emphasised several times Archduke Albert’s status as the ‘*natural* [italics inserted] and supreme prince and lord of the Netherlands,’ whereas the

¹⁷² Haraeus, *Onpartijdighe verclaringhe*, pp. 18-20.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 14: ‘als ofmen daer en tusschen de Gemeinte soude gelaten hebben als een peerd sonder tome / ofte cleyne kinderen sonder roede’.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21: ‘Het is een general Verbodt in alle geregeleerde kinderscholen op de pene vande roede / dat geen Schoolkinders in den Winter mogen op het ys loopen / noch somers in diepe wateren bayen / te weten om de periculen van verdrincken’.

¹⁷⁵ Vranck, *Wederlegghinghe*, f. b1v: ende is te verwonderen dat desen Nederlander van Uytrecht gheboren / hem niet ontsien en heeft / d’eerste onder onse Natie te wese die de eerbaerheyt ende trouwe die hy sijn Vaderlant schuldich is / soo onbeschaemdelijck heeft verworpen’.

Mirror of Youth underlined that the prince was there to serve his people, and not the other way round. When the prince violated his duty, he could be considered a tyrant and be deposed.¹⁷⁶ And this position can be observed in other texts as well. Johannes Gysius felt the Spanish government caused the troubles by ignoring local privileges and, especially, by introducing the Spanish inquisition to the Low Countries.¹⁷⁷ Pieter Bor added that the blood shed for the sake of religion had only aggravated the problem.¹⁷⁸

Conclusion

In spite of the mutual denunciation, authors continued to strive for reunification. In the South authors expressed the intention of trying to win over the Northerners to their cause. This desire seems incompatible with their condemnation of all ‘Hollanders’. Vincent van Zuilen has demonstrated that the ‘paradox in Habsburg policy to unify the Netherlands by emphasising the moral differences – through the systematic denunciation of the rebels in official state publications – was clearly unintended.’¹⁷⁹ Although Southern propagandists theoretically distinguished between evil Hollanders and good Netherlanders under the heretical yoke of the Northern States, North and South became gradually more clueless as to how to appeal to each other’s populations.

Authors in the South emphasised continuity, for instance by pretending that the succession of Albert and Isabella was a normal dynastic transition or by framing heretics as evil outsiders and the Southern population as good Catholics who were briefly deceived but who were ‘now’ once again back on the right track. When the Revolt could not be ignored it was framed as a triumph of the Catholic faith over heretics, who were characterised as ‘Hollanders’ even though they were often born-and-bred Flemings or Walloons and despite the fact that many Southern cities had once been cradles of heresy. Tales about ‘political’ miracles and other signs of sacred support for the Catholic-Habsburg cause were often disguised references to the troubled past.¹⁸⁰

Northern anti-peace propagandists successfully framed the conflict not as a rebellion against their rightful overlord but as a war against Spain and a foreign and

¹⁷⁶ Saily, *Den Nievwen Morghen-VVecker*, pp. 80, 121; *Spiegel der Ievght*, ff. g7r-v.

¹⁷⁷ Gysius, *De Oorsprong en Voortgang*, ff. 3r-v, pp. 3-9.

¹⁷⁸ Bor, *Den Oorspronck*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁹ Vincent van Zuilen, ‘The Politics of Dividing the Nation? News Pamphlets as a Vehicle of Ideology and National Consciousness in the Habsburg Netherlands (1585-1609),’ in: J.W. Koopmans, ed., *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), p. 67.

¹⁸⁰ J. Andriessen, *De Jezuiten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585-1648* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1957), pp. 163-165; Pollmann, ‘Brabanters’, pp. 224-227.

tyrannical king who, they argued, had violated their privileges and had allowed or even ordered his soldiers to commit terrible crimes. Authors presented commemoration as a condition to be a true Netherlander, a sense of identity that authors claimed was being threatened by the Spanish enemy. Gysius argued that Philip II had ordered the execution of major nobles, such as Egmont and Horne, ‘so that the Netherlanders would no longer have anyone, who could speak or plead on their behalf’.¹⁸¹ For those who sought to mobilise inhabitants of the Republic for a particular political aim, such as the continuation of the war against the Spanish king, appealing to public memories of the Revolt was a good way to reach out to the population of the entire Union. In this regard it is striking that although the observations about the South in this chapter might lead us to expect that a counter-canon should have developed in the North in which all things Catholic were demonised and that government and church authorities were to play a central role in communicating a flattering interpretation of the past, this is not what happened. The state was not the most prolific agent of memories about the origins of the conflict. Furthermore, to mobilise as many potential supporters of the Revolt as possible, even orthodox-Calvinist ministers such as Baudartius did not in the first place resort to anti-Catholic propaganda.

This chapter ends with two different canonical narratives about the history of the Revolt of the Netherlands. A coherent story did not arise organically in the passing of time, and its development was far from self-explanatory. Not all ‘important’ events made it into the canonical narratives: only those things that people considered important or, to be more precise, useful for their contemporary political contexts entered the commonplace stories about the Revolt. At first, the canons seemed to be self-supporting. Southerners discussed the past, or at least so they claimed, to respond to Northern slander,¹⁸² whereas Northerners often declared their accounts to be inspired by the falsehoods spread on behalf of the Southern pro-Habsburg lobby.¹⁸³ Yet, in the following chapter we will see that these historical narratives ultimately survived because people found them useful in serving new political functions.

¹⁸¹ Gysius, *De Oorsprong en Voortgang*, f. *3v: ‘op dat de Netherlanders niemant meer en souden moghen hebben / die voor haer soude moghen spreekken / ofte suppliceren.’

¹⁸² See, for example, Saily, *Den Nievwen Morghen-VVecker*, f. 2v: the Hollanders stir trouble ‘by evil and useless booklets, spread from all sides’ [‘quade ende onnuttighe boecken, die t’allen canten vworden ghesaeydt’], aimed at destroying the Catholic Church.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Vranck, *Wederlegghinghe*, f. b2r: Vranck rejected Haraeus as the ‘most partial, unfaithful and fiercest enemy of the truth as ever there was’ [‘alder partijdichsten / ongetrousten ende meesten vyant vande waerheit die oyt was’].

