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## Memory wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700

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### Citation

Steen, J. A. van der. (2014, June 24). *Memory wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700*. Brill.  
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**Title:** Memory wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700

**Issue Date:** 2014-06-24

## CHAPTER 6

### MEMORIES AFTER WESTPHALIA

On 28 August 1667, the Flemish city of Lille surrendered to Louis XIV after a siege of more than two weeks. Local weaver Pierre-Ignace Chavatte remarked on and criticised some important changes in his city. In his manuscript chronicle he identified the ‘first [French] gouvernor in the city of Lille, whom people call Marquess of Belfondre’, clearly noting that this was an important break with the past.<sup>1</sup> On 9 November he observed a young man being publicly humiliated on a raised platform. The reason for this punishment was that in a drunken brawl with some people from Switzerland, the foreigners had drunk to the health of the king of France, but the young man from Lille had drunk to the health of the king of Spain.<sup>2</sup> On 18 May 1670, Chavatte recorded that when Spanish emissaries passed through Lille, a young boy also shouted ‘Long live the king of Spain’.<sup>3</sup> In the new political context that was no longer done. Fortunately, not everything had changed. On the last day of May, Chavatte noted, people celebrated the procession of the Holy Sacrament, ‘in the same way as during the time of Spain’.<sup>4</sup> When the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1668 formally confirmed the French king’s annexation of Lille, Chavatte remarked that there was ‘not a single triumphal float. This was a peace without joy because people [now] belonged to the king of France’.<sup>5</sup> Memories of ‘natural’ Habsburg rule clearly prevented Lillois like Chavatte from accepting the authority of the French king.

This chapter will address the question why memories of the past could remain relevant even after the war had come to an end. In particular, it will examine the way in which new military and political crises affected practices of memory in the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Whereas the Revolt against the Habsburg overlord had divided North and South, France became a common enemy of both. How, if at all, did this change of alliances and international relations influence the way in which Netherlandish people framed their war experiences? First, I will look at the way memories of the Revolt survived

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre-Ignace Chavatte, ‘*Chronique mémorial des choses mémorables par moy Pierre-Ignace Chavatte*’ (1657-1693). *Le mémorial d’un humble tisserand lillois au Grand siècle*, edited by Alain Lottin (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 2010), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199: ‘Vive le roy d’Espagne’.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177: ‘à l’ordinaire que du temps d’Espagne’.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178: ‘nul char de triomphe. C’estoit une paix sans joi parce qu’on demeuroit au roy de France’.

in the Southern Netherlands. Secondly, I will examine the political exploitation of public memories of the Revolt in the Dutch Republic, especially by supporters and opponents of the house of Orange during the First Stadholderless Period (1650-1672).

### **The pretense of continuity in the South**

The Peace of Westphalia did not remove the feelings of hostility between the Southern Netherlands and Northern ‘Holland’ overnight. For instance, in terms of religion the peace made little change to the status quo. In 1650, Arnout van Geluwe published a conversion narrative that beautifully illustrates the continued antagonism between Northern Protestants and Southern Catholics. Van Geluwe had left his native Ardoorie in Flanders in 1626 to discover the Republic. During his eighteen-year stay he became Reformed, but in his 1650 account he claimed he had gradually become disillusioned with Calvinism. He therefore returned to the Southern Netherlands and became a fierce advocate of Catholicism. He condemned the hypocrisy of the Calvinist rejection of religious images, given the secular hero worship in the Republic. Van Geluwe argued that the heretics were not living up to their own standards and pointed to ‘all the idols in Holland, that one sees everywhere’.<sup>6</sup> He mentioned the Old Church in Delft, where lieutenant-admiral Piet Hein – who had captured the Spanish treasure fleet in 1628 – was buried in a monumental grave. One of the stained-glass windows in St. Peter’s Church in Leiden featured Pallas Athena, and in Rotterdam stood a statue of Erasmus. It made Van Geluwe wonder: ‘are those the saints of the beggar church [?], How cruel then must be their heathens’<sup>7</sup> A prime example was ‘the worst idol of Holland, [...] known very well by everyone, who lies pleasantly in Delft in the New Church. There everyone comes to do sacrifice’.<sup>8</sup> The ‘idol’ in question was, of course, William of Orange, whose lavish funerary monument attracted much popular interest.<sup>9</sup> Van Geluwe also gave other examples of princely hero worship. William of Orange was commemorated materially in various ways: ‘people can see him hanging among Germans and Walloons, in their best bedchambers’, which was meant as an insult because Germans

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<sup>6</sup> Arnout van Geluwe, *Kort verhael van een achthien-jarighe Hollandtsche reyse, ghewandelt van eenen Vlaemschen boer* (Antwerp: weduwe van Ian Cnobbaert, 1650), p. 72: ‘Al de af-goden in Hollant, / Die-men daer siet aen elcken kant’.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 73: ‘Zijn dat de heyligen vande geusen kerck, / Hoe wreedt moeten zijn hun god’loosen’.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: ‘Den meesten af-godt van Hollant, / Die ick u hier sal beschrijven, / Is, aen elck een seer wel bekant, / Tot Delft inde nieuw Kerck playlant? / Daer doet elck voor’ en offerhant’.

<sup>9</sup> This interest is well-evidenced. See for example a painting by Dirck van Delen in 1645: ‘Een familiegroep bij het praalgraf van prins Willem I in de Nieuwe Kerk te Delft’, Rijksmuseum SK-A-2352; see also: Pollmer, ‘Kirchenbilder’, p. 291.

and Walloons enjoyed a bad reputation as mercenary soldiers. The prince of Orange and his successors also featured on 'gold or silver medals, on tobacco boxes, on fire pans and fire poker.'<sup>10</sup> Throughout his book, Van Geluwe disapproved of the heretical use of the recent past. In his discussion of heretical cruelty in the past he mentioned few specific instances from the history of the Revolt: 'I do not want to narrate all their horrible and murderous tyranny, which they exercised in Brill and Gorcum, Utrecht and more places; because one could make a separate and sizeable book on this topic alone'.<sup>11</sup>

Such a remark hardly surprises anymore. We have seen that evasiveness also characterised the way in which earlier generations of Southerners looked back to the rebellion. A deliberate search for chronologies of the Revolt outside formal historiography, however, can still yield interesting results. Almanacs, as handy sources of historical information, illustrate how Southerners could access the history of the Revolt in everyday life. Jeroen Salman has shown that almanacs were a popular ephemeral medium used for practical purposes: as a calendar, as an overview of market days, as a timetable for transport by road or water, and also as a notebook and a diary.<sup>12</sup> From the end of the sixteenth century, publishers often added brief chronicles of historical events, starting with the origin of the world, the birth of Christ or beginning in later periods.<sup>13</sup> In the Dutch Republic these historical chronicles, insofar as they dealt with the history of the Revolt, had a clear anti-Spanish slant. The South Netherlandish chronicles, conversely, vilified heretical Northerners as can be exemplified by a chronology of the 'principal histories of the beginning of the world to the present year' attached to an almanac compiled by Johannes

<sup>10</sup> Van Geluwe, *Kort verhael*, p. 73: 'men siet hem by Duyts en Wals, / In hun beste slaep-kamer hanghen.', 'goude oft silvere penninghen / op toeback dooskens / op vyer-pannen ende heerd-ijsers.'

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 14: 'Ick en wil hier niet verhaelen al hun grouwelijcke ende moordaedighe tyrannie die sy in den Briel ende tot Gorkum / Uytrecht ende meer andere plaetsen bedreven hebben; want soude daer wel een groot particulier boeck af moeten maecken.'

<sup>12</sup> Jeroen Salman, *Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw. De almanak als lectuur en handelswaar* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1999), pp. 165-179.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 180-181; in almanacs published in the Southern Netherlands these historical chronicles could take several forms, see for instance: *Chroniexken ende cort verhael van de notabelste gheschiedenissen der Nederlanden zedert den Jaere 1500 tot desen teghenwoordighe Jaere toe* (Antwerp: Jacob Mesens, 1636), attached to: loos de Schepere, *Almanach van't schrickel-jaer [...] M.DC.XXXVI [...] gecalculeert op den meridiaen der vermaerde stadt van Gent* (Ghent: Gerlacus Graet, 1636); *Chronycke oft cort verhael vande principaelste gheschiedenissen die zedert Christi gheboorte Mahomet den IV (Ghent: hoirs van Jan vanden Kerchove, 1685), attached to: Theodor Caesmes, Almanach ofte oprechten Venetiaensche Hemel-meter* (Ghent: Hendrick Saetreuver, 1700). historical chronicles in Flemish almanacs also covered about non-Netherlandish topics such as the Ottoman Empire: *Chronycke historiael vervolghende de Tyrannien der Turksche keyzers, tot den teghenwoordigh Regerenden Mahomet den IV* (Ghent: hoirs van Jan vanden Kerchove, 1685), attached to: Julius de Beaupré, *Den onvervalschten Vlaemschen tydt-wyser, dat is een oprechte prognosticatie voor het jaer [...] M.DC.LXXXV. [...] ghecalculeert op den meridiaen van Ghendt* (Ghent: hoirs van Jan vanden Kerchove, 1685), f. e2r; more about the preserved almanacs in the University Library of Ghent, see: F. Vandenhoe, *Inventaris van almanakken en kalenders* (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1979).

Willemsens and published in Ghent in 1661.<sup>14</sup> Multiple editions of the Ghent almanac contained lists of episodes, sorted by year, that the compiler considered noteworthy enough to include.<sup>15</sup> In the 1661 almanac, the period 1500 to 1566 was covered by eleven pages. Three pages were reserved for the early stages of the Revolt, i.e. the period 1566-1585. We see such chronologies in earlier almanacs as well.<sup>16</sup> Looking at the selection of events included, we can construct an interesting picture of what the compiler in 1661 deemed to be essential knowledge about the history of the Revolt.

1566 [sic]. Duke of Alba came to Brussels.

1567. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. The counts of Egmont and Horne were imprisoned and brought to the Ghent citadel.

1586 [sic]. On the first of June, the duke of Alba had the barons of Batenborgh with another 15 nobles executed.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, the counts of Egmont and Horne were decapitated in front of the Maison du Roi.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, the lord Cornelis Janssens, first bishop of Ghent, made his entry.

1569. The 29<sup>th</sup> of August, Lady Anne of Austria, the emperor's daughter, was welcomed in Antwerp.

1570. The first of May, Lord Franciscus Zonnius, first bishop of Antwerp, made his entry.

1571. In England, the moneys the duke of Alba expected from Spain were intercepted

1572. In February the duke of Alba demanded the Tenth Penny.

1573. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, the Battle on the Mookerheide took place.

1574. The king sent as governor Louis de Requesens to replace the duke of Alba.

1575. The Castle of Ghent was besieged by the States of the Lands.

1576. The great commander of Castile [Requesens] died in Brussels.

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<sup>14</sup> Iohannes Willemsens, *Almanach ofte waer-zeggher, voor het Jaer ons Heeren Iesu Christi, M.DC..LXI*. (Ghent: Bauduijn Manilius, 1661), f. a1r: 'Chronycke ofte Cort verhael: van eenighe ghedenck-weerdighe gheschiedenissen van't beghinsel des wereldts, tot desen teghenwoordighen iaere toe'.

<sup>15</sup> Salman, *Populair drukwerk*, pp. 17, 194-195.

<sup>16</sup> Pieter Bleckemerie, *Almanach ende prognosticatie vanden schrickel-iaere M DC.XXIII* (Ghent: Jan vanden Steene, 1624).

1578. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, Archduke Matthias took the oath in Brussels as governor of these Netherlands.

1579. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, soldiers of the king took the city of Maastricht by force.

1580. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April there was a great earthquake throughout the land.

1583. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, the French took Antwerp through the Kipdorp gate, but they were chased away by the citizenry. 1500 died.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, the soldiers of the prince of Parma took Sas van Gent.

On the last day of November, Aelst surrendered to the prince of Parma.

1584. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September the city of Ghent reconciled with the prince of Parma.

1585 On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, an agreement was reached between the prince of Parma and the city of Brussels.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, an agreement was reached between the prince of Parma and the city of Antwerp.<sup>17</sup>

As we can see, the compiler did not include the Iconoclastic Furies of 1566, nor did he cover the Spanish Fury in Antwerp in 1576 during which more inhabitants died than during the French Fury in 1583, which *is* included. This account of the troubled period 1566-85

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<sup>17</sup> Willemsems, *Almanach*, s.p.: '1566. Quam Duc d'Alve tot Brussel. 1567. Den 9. September / werdt den Grave van Egmont ende van Hoorne gevanghen / ende naer Ghendt op het Casteel ghevoert. 1586 [sic]. Den eersten Junii / dede Duc d'Alve binnen Brussel onthalsen / de Barons van Batenborgh / met noch xv. Edelen tot hun. Op den v. Junii / zijn binnen Brussel / den Grave van Egmont ende van Horne / voor het Broodthuys onthalt. Den viii. Septemb. dede Heere Cornelis Janssens / eersten Bisschop van Ghendt zijn intrey. 1569. Den xxix. Augu. vrou Anna van Oostenrijck / Keyzers Dochter wordt t' Antwerpen inghehaelt. 1570. Den eersten Mey / dede Heer Franciscus Zonnus / eersten Bisschop van Antwerpen zijn intrey. 1571. Werden in Enghelant ghearresteert de Penninghen / die Duc d'Alve uyt Spaignien wachtende. 1572. In Februar. eyschten Duc d'Alve den Thienden Penninck. 1573. Opden xiii. April / was den slach op Mokerhey. 1574. Heeft den Coninck ghesonden tot Gouverneur inde plaetse van Duc d'Alve / Lodewijck de Requentse. 1575. Wert het Casteel van Ghendt vande Staten vande Landen belegert. 1576. Is den grooten Commandeur binnen Brussel ghestorven. 1578. Den xviii. Januarii / dede den Aerts-hertogh Matthias binnen Brussel den eedt / als Gouverneur van dese Nederlanden. 1579. Den xx: Julii hebben s'Coninckx volck de Stadt van Maestrich stormender hant ingenomen. 1580. Den vi. April / wast groote Aert-bevinge het geheel Lant deur. 1583. Den xvii. Januarii / namen de Francoysen t' Antwerpen de kipdorp-poorte in / maer werden vande Borghers uyt-geslaghen / daer bleven doot 1500. Den xiii. Octobr. namen de soldaten vanden Prince van Parma / t'Sas van Ghendt in. Den lesten Novem. is Aelst aenden Prince van Parma overghegheven. 1584. Opden xvii. Sept. is de stad van Ghendt met appointement veraccort met den Prince van Parma. 1585. Den i. Meert / werdt d'accort ghesloten tusschen den Prince van Parma / ende de Stadt van Brussel. Den xvii. Augu. / werdt d'accort ghesloten tusschen den Prince van Parma / ende de stad van Antwerpen.'

emphasises dynastic events, with a mention of the visit by Anne of Austria (daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I) to Antwerp in 1569 and the entry of Archduke Matthias of Austria in 1578. In the coverage of the reconquered cities of Brussels and Antwerp in 1585, the author's references were euphemistic, suggesting that these were not Habsburg 'conquests' but voluntary reconciliations. This perspective is similar to that of earlier chronologies such as the one by Pieter Bleckemerie published in Ghent in 1624.<sup>18</sup> Although this chronology did include the Spanish Fury in Antwerp, again the selection of events mainly revolved around princely successions and successive governors. For the duke of Alba's governorship, the compiler of the 1624 almanac ignored the widespread opposition to the duke's repressive policies, which had been an important reason why the opposition to the Philip II had grown into a full-scale revolt, and instead merely included the introduction of the Tenth Penny and the story of a woman in Antwerp with 'a goatee of two inches long'.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, having placed the Revolt in brackets, most compilers of almanac chronicles simply resumed the old practice of commemorating Habsburg victories; the author of the 1661 chronicle for instance mentioned Parma's conquests in the 1580s, but also episodes after 1585 such as the Habsburg triumph at the siege of Ostend in 1604.<sup>20</sup>

It is tempting to see the scarcity of references to the Revolt as proof that the conflict had disappeared from public memory, yet it may be more helpful to consider what parts of the rebellion did survive and why. Two examples can demonstrate that the history of the Revolt continued to be part of public discourse in the South about contemporary issues: the Joyous Entries of 1666 and the War of Devolution in 1667. I will pay particular attention to two possible explanations for the continued political relevance of the past rebellion: the absenteeism of Habsburg rulers and the French threats of Universal Monarchy.

### ***Habsburg absenteeism***

At the beginning of 1666, the provinces of the Southern Netherlands inaugurated the four-year-old Charles II of Spain as their new overlord. He himself was in Spain and absent from the civic ceremonies. He was represented by Francisco de Moura, marquess of Castel Rodrigo. In his manuscript chronicle, Joannes Jacquinet described the Brabant entry in

<sup>18</sup> Bleckemerie, *Almanach*.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 'Nieuwe chroniecke oft verhael van alle de gedenckweerdichste saken die geschiet zijn / t'sedert den Jare 1500. tot desen tegenwoordigen Jare 1624', s.p.: 'eenen kossen Baert wel ii. duymen lanck.'

<sup>20</sup> Willemsems, *Almanach*, ff. b1r-b3r.



Brussels on 24 February and observed a pageant of the former lords of the Netherlands, comparable to earlier joyous entries.<sup>21</sup> This ‘theatre’ was

very pretty and grand, several paintings on which showed the ancestors of the young king of Spain, such as the duke Philip of Burgundy and of Brabant; his son Charles the Bold; the emperor Maximilian with his consort Mary of Burgundy; the king Philip the first of that name, as duke of Brabant with his consort; and the emperor Charles the Fifth. After that, the king Philip the Second, who gave these lands in marriage to the archduke Albert and his daughter Isabella Clara Eugenia, and then to the late king Philip [IV] and his queen.<sup>22</sup>

In the name of the king, the marquess pledged to respect and guard the liberties and customs of Brabant. In article 46 he even promised not to accord any privileges to Flanders that might prejudice Brabant.<sup>23</sup> Yet, despite these emphases on dynastic respect for customs and traditions, in 1666 the new overlord of Brabant was not inaugurated in Leuven, the duchy’s capital, which according to Jacquinet ‘many burghers had preferred but did not happen’.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Charles II was inaugurated in the court capital Brussels.

Dislike of such breaches with tradition apparently motivated authorities to take the representative of their overlord by the hand to explain to him how things were done in the South. The States of Flanders inaugurated the new prince on 2 May on the Vrijdagmarkt in Ghent in a ceremony drenched in historical symbolism. In St Peter’s Abbey, the representative of Charles II pledged his first oath and before entering the church he walked past a triumphal arch that depicted a treaty between Louis I of Flanders and the abbot in 1332. With this treaty, Count Louis had pledged to uphold the privileges of the Abbey, and the reference in 1666 probably served to remind Charles that it would be in line with

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<sup>21</sup> Jacquinet, ‘Historie der Nederlanden’, KBR, MS 15938, f. 345r.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., f. 345v; ‘Desen theater [...] was seer schoon ende groot, alwaer op in diversche schilderyen verতোont wierden de voor auders van den iongen koninck van Spaegnien, als den hertogh Phillips van Bourgoendien ende van Brabant, synen sone Charles Audax, den keyser Maximilianus met syne gemaellinne Maria de Bourgoendien, den coninck Phillippus, den iersten van dien naem, als hertoge van Brabant met syne gemaellinne en den keyser Carel den vyfden. Daer naer den koninck Phillippus den tweeden, die de Nederlanden ten hauwelyck gaf aenden aerts hetoghe Albertus ende syne dochter Isabella Clara Eugenia, en daer naer den overleden koninck Phillippus met syne koninginne.’

<sup>23</sup> *Blyde incompste van syne majesteyt Carolus den II als Hertoch van Brabant* (Brussels, 1666), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Jacquinet, ‘Historie der Nederlanden’, KBR, MS 15938, f. 345r: ‘vele borghers hadden geirne gesien maer evenwel niet en is gebeurt’.

tradition to continue doing so.<sup>25</sup> Charles V was also given a central role in the proceedings. In a commemorative booklet published in the same year, the ‘clerics and the four members of the ancient country and widely known province of Flanders’ declared that the festivities during the entry showed that ‘with the death of the great and highly praiseworthy King Philip the Fourth, their loyalty and zeal for the house of Austria was not diminished, but that to the contrary continued’.<sup>26</sup> In their account of the entry in Ghent, which was also published in French, they explained why the city hosted the principal entry in Flanders. The primary reason was obvious: Ghent was the province’s capital. But the city was also a suitable place because it was

honoured by the birth of the great and invincible Charles, fifth of that name in the empire, first in the monarchy, and third in the county of Flanders [...] from whose august blood descends in the direct lineage our Charles II.<sup>27</sup>

The author enumerated the different titles of Emperor Charles in this manner to emphasise the fact that he had not ruled Flanders as an emperor or a king, but as a count, thereby stressing the autonomy of the province. Charles II was clearly expected to follow this example.

Just as in Brussels, one pageant in particular captured the attention of contemporaries in Ghent. It effectively told the story of how Flanders had come into the possession of the house of Habsburg and how, ever since, successive Habsburg princes had ruled over this province. The pageant was staged on the Vrijdagmarkt and had seven arcades. In the central part of the pageant, Charles V was depicted

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<sup>25</sup> Lodewijk De Rycker, ‘Eene Schilderij van ‘t Gentsch Museum’, *Jaarboek van het Willems-fonds voor 1871* (Ghent: W. Rogghé, 1871), p. 114.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, *Solemniteyten ende ceremonien, waer mede syne excellentie don Francisco de Movra y Cortereal [...] uyt den naem van [...] Carel den II. sal doen ende ontfanghen den ghewoonelijcken eedt vande provincie van Vlaenderen binnen de stede van Ghendt, op den 2. mey 1666* (Ghent: Maximiliaen Graet, 1666), f. a2r: ‘D’Heeren Gheestelijcke ende vier Leden van ’t out Graefschap ende wijt-beromde Provincie van Vlaenderen [...] bethoonen dat met het af-sterven van den Grooten ende Hoochloffelijcken Coninck Philips den IV. hunnen ghetrouwen yver tot het Huys van Oostenrijck niet af-ghestorven en was, maer ter contrarien dat den selven noch continueerden’.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, *Relation des ceremonies et solemnitez des serments, faits & prétez par son Ex(ce) le Marquis de Castel-Rodrigo Gouverneur General de ces provinces, aux Etats de celle de Flandre, et par lesdits Etats a Charles II, Roy d’Espagne et IV du nom comte Flandres* (Brussels: Guillaume Scheybels, 1666), p. 2: ‘honorée de la naissance du Grand & Invincible Charles V du nom en l’Empire I en la Monarchie, & 3. en ce Comté de Flandres [...] de l’Auguste Sang duquel descend en droite ligne, nôtre Charles II’.

with his motto *plus ultra*, pointing to the hope that people have, that our young monarch inherits not only his glorious name and states, but also his heroic virtues and that he shall augment the grandeur of the august house.<sup>28</sup>

The father of Charles V, Philip I, was depicted at the far right because he ‘joined this county and the other provinces of these Low Countries to the kingdom of Spain by his marriage to Jeanne, daughter and heiress of the Catholic kings Ferdinand and Isabella’.<sup>29</sup> On the left stood Philip II. In front of this pageant, the pensionary of the city pledged the fidelity and obedience of the people of Flanders. The governor, in turn, promised to uphold the local privileges. According to the account, the people were exuberant: ‘which evidently is testimony of the natural and ancient zeal and affection of the entire province, and of Ghent in particular’.<sup>30</sup> In his description of the bonfires the author wrote enthusiastically that the ardour and brightness of the fires in the city illustrated ‘the perpetual zeal and affection towards their august sovereigns’.<sup>31</sup> The heralds on the Vrijdagmarkt wore tabards with the coat of arms of the Spanish king.<sup>32</sup> In the middle of the square stood a column erected in 1600 at the occasion of Albert and Isabella’s Joyous Entry to honour the memory of Charles V. A large-scale painting of the scene by François Duchatel, finished in 1668, adorned the States Hall in Ghent’s town hall.<sup>33</sup>

It was not without reason that inhabitants of Flanders and Brabant invoked the idealised memory of a born-and-raised Netherlandish ruler who respected local privileges and who defended Christianity against infidels. The popularity of this nostalgic image in the second half of the seventeenth century betrays some of the concerns that local pro-Habsburg elites seem to have felt about the absence of their dynastic overlord. All the population’s expressions of devotion towards the natural ruler and the various reenactments of the past during the Joyous Entries of 1666 could not disguise the fact that the natural lord was not present himself and that his governor was not even a Habsburg prince. The last

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 7: ‘avec sa devise, PLVS VLTRA, signifiant l’espoir que l’on a, que nostre jeune Monarque, heritier, non seulement de son glorieux Nom & de ses Etats, mais encor de ses heroïques vertus, augmentera la grandeur de l’Auguste Maison’.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.: ‘qui joignit ce Comté & les autres Provinces de ces Païs-Bas au Royaume d’Espagne, par son mariage avec Ieanne, fille & heritiere des Roys Ferdinand & Isabelle’.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 8: qu’il témoignoit évidemment le zele & affection naturelle & ancienne de toute la Province, & particulièrement de la ville de Gand.’

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 9: ‘du zele & affection perpetuelle envers ses Augustes Souverains’.

<sup>32</sup> For the tabard, see: STAM Gent, inv. 904.

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, *Solemniteyten ende ceremonien*, f. a3v.

Habsburg governor had been John II of Austria, whom Philip IV had called away in 1659 to lead the Spanish army in Portugal. Political historians of the period after 1648 have focused on the decline of Spanish influence in the Low Countries due to the Spanish king's increased concern for other parts of the Spanish Empire. Indeed, for the rest of the century after John II's departure none of the governors in the Southern Netherlands were Habsburgs, and from the death of Archduke Albert in 1621 up to 1781, when Joseph II came to the Low Countries, none of the Habsburg overlords ever visited the Low Countries. Bearing in mind that one of the most important Habsburg reconciliation strategies after the Revolt had been to always have a 'natural' governor of the Habsburg dynasty, this tradition had clearly been abandoned by 1666.

Still, in a virtual reality people kept alive the idea of having a natural lord physically present as we can see in the popular stories about the old emperor Charles V. These were often curious combinations of history and myth, such as the legend of the emperor and the farmer who needed to pee. In 1540, on the day of Saint Matthew, Brussels celebrated the entry of the German king Ferdinand I. Emperor Charles V travelled from Ghent to Brussels to take part in the festivities in honour of his brother. In the evening, however, the imperial party was overtaken by the darkness and lost its way. Near the village of Berchem, Charles V asked a local farmer for directions. The farmer, oblivious of the emperor's identity, showed him the way. As the good man was a bit drunk and needed to urinate, he asked the emperor to hold his lantern. 'As he was leaking, he broke raging wind, on which the emperor, laughing, said that he farted, which the farmer did not deny, but said that such was his usual way, that together with peeing he also shat.'<sup>34</sup>

The story about the farmer is only one of many sometimes crude stories told about Charles V in the seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> The stories portrayed Charles as a common man, fond of laughter and close to his people. Unlike his son and successor Philip II, against whose Spanish government the Revolt had erupted, Emperor Charles had often resided in the Low Countries. With his peripatetic and 'Burgundian' lifestyle, and his reputation for exuberance and good humour, he combined many regal virtues. Charles V came to

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<sup>34</sup> J. de Grieck, *De heereycke ende vrolycke daeden van Keyser Karel den V.* (Brussels: Ludovicus de Wainne, 1674), pp. 81-82: 'ende nu besich met stroomen, ontvloogh hem eenen raesenden wind, waer op den Keijser, al lacchende seyde dat hy scheet, het geen den Boer niet ontkende, maer seyde sulcx zijn gewoonlycke manier van doen te wesen, dat met het pissen hy gemeenelyck kackten.'; see also Johan Verberckmoes, 'The Emperor and the Peasant. The Spanish Habsburgs in Low Countries' Jest', in: Werner Thomas and Bart de Groof, eds., *Rebelión y Resistencia en el Mundo Hispánico del Siglo XVII* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), pp. 67-78.

<sup>35</sup> For a modern compendium, see: Harlinda Lox, *Van stropdragers en de pot van Olen. Verhalen over Keizer Karel* (Leuven: Davidsfonds/Literair, 1999).

symbolize the long-term dynastic continuity to which war-weary Southerners from elite as well as non-elite social backgrounds aspired.<sup>36</sup> Brussels printer and bookseller Joan de Griecq thought he could profit from the popularity of short stories about Charles V and compiled and published dozens of them in 1674 in his *The Majestic and Happy Deeds of Emperor Charles V* [*De heerelycke ende vrolycke daeden van Keyser Karel den V*].<sup>37</sup> ‘Kind reader’, he addressed his audience, ‘Since numerous lovers of history have often asked me about the comical deeds of his imperial majesty Charles the V, for that purpose I found myself obliged to take up my pen, and collect all that I could retrieve of this Christian Achilles.’<sup>38</sup> This compilation consisted of stories that had already been circulating in a variety of media for over a century.<sup>39</sup>

However funny and entertaining for a seventeenth-century audience, some of these stories were also serious ways of communicating knowledge about the past and informing people about the dynasty. One such story featured the emperor and his councillor the duke of Alba. Again, the scene is Ghent, 1540: the emperor came to strike down a great uprising. When Alba proposed to destroy the city as punishment, Charles replied with disdain: ‘climb a high mountain, and look over Ghent, and then estimate, how many Spanish hands, [are necessary] for such a glove.’<sup>40</sup> The twist to this story was a pun: the French name for Ghent: *Gant*, is also French for glove. The story probably served in part as retrospective slander of the unloved Alba (who in 1540 was still relatively unknown in the Low Countries) and indeed ended: ‘Alba was silent and was ashamed.’<sup>41</sup>

The manner in which authorities and authors such as De Griecq tried to keep up the appearance of dynastic continuity in the second half of the seventeenth century does not seem to be related directly to the Revolt itself. Emphases on continuity rather served to camouflage a political reality in which Habsburg was an increasingly ineffective guarantor of the security of the Southern Netherlands vis-à-vis France. Were the representations of an

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Fagel, ‘A Broken Portrait of the Emperor: Charles V in Holland and Belgium 1558-2000’, in: C. Scott Dixon en Martina Fuchs, eds., *The Histories of Charles V. Nationale Perspektiven von Persönlichkeit und Herrschaft* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2005), pp. 67-68.

<sup>37</sup> P.P. Schmidt, *Zeventiende-eeuwse kluchtboeken uit de Nederlanden* (Utrecht: HES, 1986), p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> De Griecq, *De heerelycke ende vrolycke daeden*, f. a3r: ‘Goet-gunstigen Leser, Alsoo my verscheyde Lief-hebbers der Historien dickwils gevraeght hadden naer de Kluchtighe Daeden van Syne Keyserlycke Majesteit Carel den V. vondt ick my als ghedwonghen, tot dien eynde de Pen in d’handt te nemen, ende by een te versaemen alles wat ick van dien Christelycken Achilles kost achterhalen’.

<sup>39</sup> Verberckmoes, *Schertsen, schimpen en schateren*, pp. 137-143; see also: Lox, *Van stropdragers en de pot van Olen*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 101: ‘climt op een hoogen Bergh, en siet Ghendt eens over, maeckt dan overslagh, hoe veel Spaensche handen, tot soo een Handt-schoen wel soude moeten zyn.’

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 101: ‘Alba sweegh stil en was beschaemt.’

unbroken succession of Habsburg rulers and the reign of the old emperor Charles V not simply traditional ways of organising inaugurations and of remembering the Habsburg past? South Netherlandish elites seem to have preferred the relatively uninvolved attitude of their Habsburg overlord who respected the traditions of composite monarchy over a French king who would almost certainly violate their local privileges.<sup>42</sup> Absence of Habsburg rulers in the Low Countries was hence not such a bad thing. We do see that the cherished privileges motivated pro-Habsburg Southerners to recall the period before the Revolt and to ignore the rebellion. In this sense, the Revolt does not stand out as the topic of a lively memory culture. As a period when more than ever before local privileges were under threat, it stands out for not being mentioned at all.

### ***Habsburg rule versus French raison d'état***

Yet, despite the oblivion strategies to cover up concerns about local privileges, South Netherlandish memories about the Revolt could also serve more positive functions. Propagandists used them, for instance, to frame the continuing threats of the French king. In 1667, Louis XIV invaded large parts of the Walloon provinces and also managed to capture some Flemish cities. This act of aggression violated the Peace of the Pyrenees of 1659, which had ended the Franco-Spanish War (1635-1659). The French belligerence was worrying not only to Spain. In the Republic, too, there was concern for the fate of the Southern Netherlands and particularly for the French ambitions to universal monarchy. Especially in the course of the War of Devolution, as this war is known, several pamphleteers urged the Republic to aid the Southern neighbour.<sup>43</sup> The idea was that having an ailing Spain as one's neighbour was preferable to sharing a border with the powerful king of France.<sup>44</sup> Some authors encouraged the Holy Roman Emperor to help out because the Spanish Netherlands belonged to the Burgundian Circle of the Empire.<sup>45</sup> Another good

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<sup>42</sup> For the Habsburg tradition of composite monarchy during the reign of Charles II of Spain, see: Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', pp. 65-67.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, *Den Vlaamsen boer. Den Brugsen stedeling. En den Hollandschen vrager. Zijnde een t'zamenspraak tusschen drie personen* (Rotterdam: Joannes Naeranus, 1667; Anonymous, *T'samen-spraecck tusschen een Hollants-boer, een Brabants Kempens holblockdrager, een Franschman en een jesuwijt* (Bylevelt: Hans Mof (wed.), 1667); anonymous, *Conferentie tusschen een Brabander en Hollander, waer by ten lesten komt een Fransman over de constitutie van den tegenwoordigen tijdt* (1667).

<sup>44</sup> Robert Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1992), p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> See for example: anonymous, *Kort vertoogh van eenen vriendt aen den anderen, hoe dat niet alleen om de Nootsakelijckheit van Justitie maer oock om redenen van Staet, het Roomsche Rijk en de Geunieerde Provincien, schuldig en gehouden zijn, de Spaensche Nederlanden te hulpe te komen, en van de Fransche Invasie ende Wapenen te redden* (Rotterdam: Jacob Nederwaart, 1667).

example of Northern interest in the Southern Netherlands is a pamphlet published in 1667 in which a Hollander and a Brabanter discussed the contemporary war. The Brabanter made overtures to the Hollander with references to the old concord among the Seventeen Provinces: 'O Belgica! how you are torn and violated'.<sup>46</sup> And when the Hollander asked the Brabanter what the French invasion has to do with someone from Holland, the Brabanter replied:

if you were to hand over to the Frenchman all your towns in Brabant and in Flanders, then you would still find no peace and in due course you will be attacked. For Brabant is head and title bearer, and duke in the first degree above all other 16 Netherlandish Provinces.<sup>47</sup>

The Hollander was still not convinced that he should help, but he lamented the Southern misfortune by recalling his own war experiences:

it is not strange to me, I still remember in my fearful time and worrisome days how my heart trembled, and how I lost my appetite when I saw Haarlem thus treated, Naarden violated and abused so terribly, Leiden besieged, Amersfoort taken, and how many other deadly troubles pressed my heart.<sup>48</sup>

In the Habsburg Netherlands, however, signs of public unrest resulting from the invasion were fragmented and confined to local disturbances.<sup>49</sup> The few responses that do rise above local concerns were related to the French king's interpretation of the law of devolution. To legitimate his acts of aggression Louis XIV relied on the *Ius Devolutionis*,

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<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, *Conferentie tusschen een Brabander en Hollander waer by ten lesten komt een Fransman over de constitutie van den tegenwoordigen tijdt* (1667), Knuttel 9561, p. 13: 'Ô Belgica! hoe zijt ghy gescheurt / en gheschonden'.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 15: 'ghy moeste die goetheydt hebben / dat ghy alle uwe plaetsen in Brabant / en in Vlaenderen / aen den Fransman over deedt / en dan noch em soudt ghy geene ruste vinden / en d'een ofte d'ander tijdt aangegrepen worden. Want Brabandt ist hooft / en eerste titul-voerder / ende Hertogh inde eerste graet boven alle d'andere 16 Nederlandsche Provintien'.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 5: 'Het is niet vreemt / het gedenckt my noch wel / in mijnen ancxstigen tijdt / en bekommerlicke dagen / hoe my het herte trilde / ende hoe kleyn my den appetijt was om te nuttigen / doen ick Haerlem soo sagh getracteerd / Naerden geviroleert en soo schrickelijck mishandelt / Leyden belegert / Amersfoort ingenomen / en hoe menichte andere doodelijcke zwaarigheyt my het herte druckte.'

<sup>49</sup> For example protests in Brussels against French troupes being billeted on people's houses: Karin van Honacker, *Lokaal verzet en oproer in de 17de en 18de eeuw. Collectieve acties tegen het centraal gezag in Brussel, Antwerpen en Leuven* (Heulen: U.G.A., 1994), p. 369.

or law of devolution, which was still valid in parts of Flanders and Brabant.<sup>50</sup> This ancient common law laid down, as a contemporary pamphleteer recounted, that ‘the children by the first marriage go away with the whole inheritance of their father, the children of the same father, by a second marriage, being excluded.’<sup>51</sup> This suited Louis XIV well because on 9 June 1660, as part of the Peace of the Pyrenees, he had married the only surviving child of Philip IV of Spain’s first marriage to Elisabeth of France: Infanta Maria Theresa. Louis argued that this gave him precedence over Philip IV’s successor Charles II, who was born from the Spanish king’s second marriage to Archduchess Mariana of Austria. Louis therefore claimed dominion over the lands in which the law of devolution was valid.<sup>52</sup> However, there were some difficulties to be overcome. In a marriage settlement with the Spanish crown, the French king had previously agreed that his wife Maria Theresa would give up her place in the succession of Spain to prevent a merger of the two crowns. Louis XIV got round this obstacle by relying on the proviso that the pre-nuptial agreement would come into effect only once the Infanta’s dowry was paid by the Spanish king. That had not happened yet, and it was unlikely that Spain was going to come forward with the money any time soon.

Historian Paul Sonnino rightly calls the French king’s use of the law of devolution a mere pretext.<sup>53</sup> Similar criticism from contemporaries did not bother Louis XIV ‘blessed as he was with a plentiful capacity for self-delusion.’<sup>54</sup> The French army of twenty-five thousand men, commanded by Louis XIV himself, met with little resistance and successively captured cities in the Southern part of the Habsburg Netherlands, such as Lille, Douai, Courtrai, and Charleroi, after which it further pierced through Flanders. A pro-French chronicler of the invasion, Pierre Dalicourt, described the campaign in the Low Countries and compared the smooth capture of the Flemish city of Oudenaarde with an earlier siege in 1582. The proud author wrote that the French conquest ‘took very few men,

<sup>50</sup> P.J.W. van Malssen, *Louis XIV d’après les pamphlets répandus en Hollande* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1936), p. 14; Isaac Laurillard, *Het devolutie-regt in het hertogdom Brabant* (Leiden: Hazenberg, 1855), pp. 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> P. Dalicourt, *A relation of the French kings late expedition into the Spanish-Netherlands in the years 1667 and 1668 with an introduction discoursing his title thereunto, and an account of the peace between the two crowns, made the second of May, 1668* (London: John Starkey, 1669), ff. a3v-a4r.

<sup>52</sup> Antoine Bilain, *Dialogue sur les droits de la Reyne tres-chrestienne* (Paris, 1667).

<sup>53</sup> Some historians evaluate Louis XIV’s claim more positively. Charles-Édouard Levillain considers it, for instance, ‘a strong legal case’: Charles-Édouard Levillain, ‘The Intellectual Origins of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance’, Séminaire de recherche sur les îles Britanniques, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, 20 June 2011, <http://britaix17-18.univ-provence.fr/texte-seance5.php>, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Sonnino, *Louis XIV and the Origins of the Dutch War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 9; Rowen, *John de Witt*, pp. 481-483.



and we took in fewer then four and twenty hours a place that Strada makes a great noise of in his history of the Low Countries, and magnifies the duke of Parma exceedingly for having conquered it in two moneths [sic].<sup>55</sup>

Although halted between Ghent and Brussels during the abortive siege of Dendermonde, the French aggression imperilled the future of Habsburg rule in the Southern Netherlands. The regime ordered inhabitants to offer resistance to the French invaders.<sup>56</sup> This seems to have had effect. The South Netherlandish chronicler Jacquinet from Tienen recorded that

the French king, hearing that the Brabanters were much resolved to bravely defend themselves and remain loyal to their young duke Charles of Brabant [Charles II], as those of Leuven always did, in previous times of which the memory is still fresh, i.e. of the last siege of the States Army with the French, anno 1635, [...] changed his mind of invading Brabant, thinking that it would cost blood and people.<sup>57</sup>

French aggression was clearly not a new experience for inhabitants of the Southern Netherlands. Unlike most of the provinces in the Dutch Republic, Holland especially, the local population of the South had for the duration of the Revolt and the conflicts with France experienced battles, sieges and massacres on its soil. And after the Peace of Westphalia the end of war was not in sight. During the Franco-Spanish War, in 1658 France coordinated a successful attack on the Flemish town of Dunkirk. R.A. Stradling has convincingly argued that the loss of Dunkirk made it more difficult for the Habsburg dynasty to resist the rise of France from the Netherlands and that it further exposed the Southern Netherlands to the whims of its neighbours.<sup>58</sup> Spain began to realise it could no

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<sup>55</sup> Dalicourt, *A relation of the French kings late expedition* (1669), p. 76.

<sup>56</sup> *Don Francisco de Moura ende Cortereal, Marck-grave van Castelrodrigo, van den Raede van Staete van Sijne Maiesteyt, Stadt-houder, Gouverneur, ende Capiteyn Generael vande Nederlanden, ende van Bourgundien, &c. Hebbende Vrancckryck tegehenwoordelijck vercondight...* (Ghent: Weduwe ende Hoirs van Ian vanden Kerchove, 1667), s.p.

<sup>57</sup> Jacquinet, 'Historie der Nederlanden', KBR, MS 15938, ff. 348v-349r: 'Den Fransen koninck hoorende dat de Brabanders seer wel geresolveert waren om hun vromelyck te verweren ende hunnen iongen hartoghe Carolus van Brabant getrauw te blyven, gelyck die van Loven altyts gedaen hebbende, in voor leden tyden waer van dat de memorie noch versch is vande leste belegeringe van 't Staten volck met de Fransen, anno 1635, et., soe heeft den Fransen koninck Lodewyck syn voor nemen verandert van in Brabant inte vallen, wel denckende dat het bloet ende volck [349r] saude moeten kosten.'

<sup>58</sup> R.A. Stradling, *Europe and the Decline of Spain: A Study of the Spanish System, 1580-1720* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 145.

longer be relied upon to defend the Southern Netherlands and that diplomacy was to be the key in preserving the Low Countries. In turn, it made people in the Southern Netherlands realise what help they might expect from Spain: not much.<sup>59</sup>

Still, the on-going experience of war and the bad prospects for the future did not foster strong anti-Habsburg sentiments in the South. Robert Muchembled has shown that local elites attached importance to Counter-Reformation ideology, local privileges and opposition to undesirable foreign influences, which explains persistent loyalty to the Habsburg cause in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup> Aversion to Dutch Calvinism and Gallican Catholicism further boosted Southern people's preference to be ruled by a Habsburg overlord.<sup>61</sup> These considerations coexisted with, and softened, concerns about Philip IV and Charles II's inability to defend their Low Countries. The continued loyalty to the house of Habsburg can explain the efforts of South Netherlandish authors to oppose the French king's claim to dominion over the Spanish Netherlands. For them – Habsburg officials and other supporters of the regime – it was not very difficult to contest the French king's legal justification. Lawyer and 'keeper of old memorials of Brabant'<sup>62</sup> Pierre Stockmans, privy councillor of Brabant, demonstrated that devolution had never been common practice in the Habsburg successions.<sup>63</sup> When Philip II ceded the Low Countries to his daughter Isabella, for example, he took no notice of any restrictions the law of devolution might impose upon him. Stockmans added, however, that Louis XIV's arguments were actually 'superfluous,' since 'it is apparent that with regard to public successions, neither in Brabant, Limburg and Gelderland, Namur, nor in any other province or domain of the Catholic King is this law of devolution valid.'<sup>64</sup>

Habsburg diplomat François Paul de Lisola also criticised Louis XIV's reading of the law of devolution. He opposed the French justification for annexing the Southern

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<sup>59</sup> Herman Coppens, 'Het overheidsbeleid,' in: Paul Janssens, ed., *België in de 17de eeuw* (Gent: Snoeck, 2006), p. 198.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Muchembled, 'Koningstrouw', in: Paul Janssens, ed., *België in de 17de eeuw* (Gent: Snoeck, 2006), p. 185.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>62</sup> 'Bewaerder der Oude Geheug-schriften van Brabant'.

<sup>63</sup> Stockmans was apparently a kind of expert on the law of devolution. In the year of the French invasion he published *Tractatus de jure devolutionis* (Brussels: Franciscus Foppens, 1667).

<sup>64</sup> Pierre Stockmans, *Deductie, waar uyt met klare ende bondige bewijs-redenen getoont en beweesen wordt, datter geen recht van devolutie is, in het hertogdom van Brabant* (Amsterdam: Jacob Vinckel, 1667), p. 11: 'Maer dese dingen welke van de Devolutie ende van de derogatie des selfde geseyt worden, zijn ten overvloet by gebracht, nadien het kennelijk is dat ten regarde van publijke successie, niet alleen in Brabant, Limburg, Gelderland, Namen, noch ook in gene andere Provintie, ofte Dominie van den Catholijcken Koning dit Recht van Devolutie kracht heeft, gelijk genoeg bekent is aan alle menschen die in publijke saken ervaren zijn.'

Netherlands and made efforts to organise a coalition against Louis XIV's ambitions of universal monarchy. He was one of the diplomats who achieved the alliance between the Dutch Republic and Austria, a coalition Spain at a later stage would also join. Apart from his diplomatic activities, Lisola was an influential pamphleteer. In 1667, he wrote *The Buckler of State and Justice*, originally published in Brussels.<sup>65</sup> It aimed to refute a tract written by the jurist Antoine Bilain in support of Louis XIV's claims.<sup>66</sup> Six editions of Lisola's publication appeared, and the text was part of many libraries including those of John Locke and John Evelyn.<sup>67</sup> Lisola's main argument against the claims of the French monarchy was that the law of devolution had nothing to do with the laws of succession in Brabant and Flanders. According to him, 'it was never heard of in the empire that any sovereign fief should be regulated by the local customs'.<sup>68</sup> One of his supporting arguments relied on the Pragmatic Sanction of 1549, the 'indivisible union' enacted by Charles V.<sup>69</sup> Since the union of all Seventeen Provinces was to be passed to the next generations undivided, there could be no occasion to allow different rules of succession in the fiefs. But this is what would happen if the succession in Brabant and Flanders were regulated by devolution. After all, as Lisola explained, 'it might fall out that the daughters of the first bed should carry away a part of them [the provinces] by the devolution, and the males of the second marriage by the law of the countrey should possess the other.'<sup>70</sup> That was not what Charles V had intended, Lisola claimed. The Infanta Maria Theresa's sex was also an issue. The 1549 Pragmatic Sanction legislated that daughters could succeed only in the absence of male heirs. Since there was a male heir from Philip IV's second marriage, Charles II, Maria Theresa's claim was invalid.<sup>71</sup>

Legal precedent confirmed that local laws and customs in particular fiefs, in this case in Brabant and Flanders, could not influence the line of succession. Citing the

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<sup>65</sup> The original French edition is François Paul de Lisola, *Bouclier d'estat et de justice, contre le dessein [...] de la monarchie universelle, sous le vain pretexte des pretentions de la reyne de France* (Brussels: Franciscus Foppens, 1667); I cite here from the English edition for purposes of readability: François Paul de Lisola, *The buckler of state and justice against the design manifestly discovered of the universal monarchy, under the vain pretext of the Queen of France, her pretensions* (London: James Flesher for Richard Royston, 1667).

<sup>66</sup> Antoine Bilain, *Samenspraak over de rechten der aller-christelijkste koningin van Vrankryk* (1667), Knuttel 9536.

<sup>67</sup> Levillain, 'The Intellectual Origins of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance', p. 4; The text was read by Sir Samuel Pepys who thought 'the whole body of the book very good and solid': Sir Samuel Pepys, *The diary of Samuel Pepys M. A., F. R. S.* 7 edited by Henry B. Wheatly (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896), 10 February 1667/68, p. 314.

<sup>68</sup> Lisola, *The buckler*, p. 213.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Southern antiquarian Christophe Butkens, Lisola mentioned Godfrey III of Leuven, duke of Brabant (1142-1190) who had married twice, first to Margaret of Limburg and later to Imagina of Loon. Despite the fact that a son, Henry, was born from the first marriage, children from the second marriage also inherited some property. Henry became the next duke of Brabant, but a son of Imagina, William, 'had for his share the lands of Perweys, Ruysbroeck, and others; which Godfrey could not have done if the devolution had taken place.'<sup>72</sup>

The rhetoric used by Louis XIV's adversaries relied not only on legal precedent but also on political arguments. The French king, they argued, had no right to claim dominion over the Low Countries, but, more importantly, Louis XIV would not be a good overlord of the Low Countries. This view implied that the Southern population had Charles II as their sovereign not only because he had the right to rule but also by choice. Memories of the Revolt could support this thought. Lisola, for instance, listed commendable characteristics of Spanish 'great princes' as opposed to the French 'conquerours'.<sup>73</sup> One of the maxims to which the kings of Spain had adhered since time immemorial was 'to prefer religion always before reason of state; which is directly contrary to the rule of conquerours, who do dexterously make use of all sorts of sects to compass their own ends.' Here, Lisola put religion into the equation, by arguing that whereas the Spanish kings had of old been religious rulers, Louis XIV was an opportunistic monarch with loose Catholic morals and no real concern for the salvation of his people. Conversely, when faced with the sixteenth-century religious turmoil in the Netherlands, Charles V (as a Spanish monarch) felt compelled to go to war.<sup>74</sup> And his son Philip II 'had no inclination at all to arms, nor ever took them up but for his defence, or out of necessitie to humble those who fomented rebellions within his kingdoms.'

Another maxim was the selflessness of the Spanish monarchy, of which 'the glorious reigns of Charles the Vth and Philip the IId' were prime examples. 'We find that in all the actions of those two great monarchs,' Lisola wrote, 'they never applied any one of their conquests to their own particular benefit, except what did belong to them by just successions.'<sup>75</sup> Again, the Habsburg selflessness and devotion to the Southerners' cause was juxtaposed to the opportunism and religious desolation of the French. These two

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 216-217.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

maxims: putting religion before ‘reason of state’ and being a selfless monarch were embodied *par excellence* by Emperor Charles V. The past emperor ‘espoused with the empire all the quarrels of religion and of state which the conjuncture of those times had stirred in that great body, which did take up, in favour of others, the most part of his care and forces.’<sup>76</sup> Here the author touched upon the religious turmoil in Europe in the sixteenth century and lauded Charles V, and also his son Philip II, for directing their attention to those issues where attention was most needed.

Pro-Habsburg propagandists thus juxtaposed discussions of the legitimacy of the French king’s claims with emphases on the good governance of former Spanish sovereigns. Faith in the Habsburg dynasty did, however, not quite yield the desired results. The war ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668). France was allowed to keep twelve cities, including Lille where Pierre Chavatte, mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, had to get used to the fact that he was no longer a subject of a Habsburg overlord but of a Bourbon king of France. A Southern pamphleteer was not convinced by the peace, claiming that the ‘unforeseen’ French aggression was entirely ‘against what was promised’ in the earlier Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659. Yet, the French, he claimed, did not care about the illegitimacy of their military venture and, accordingly, felt no scruples about invading the land and engaging in cruelties such as ‘destruction, fire, murder, pillaging, and violation’.<sup>77</sup>

### **History as a trap in the Dutch Republic, 1650-72**

The French aggression in the Habsburg Netherlands and later also in the Dutch Republic motivated both states in 1673 to sign the Treaty of The Hague, which was the first sign of an alliance between the two former antagonists. Although there came to be a political rapprochement in the period after 1648, the enmity between the two countries did not simply vanish. More importantly, the memories that had functioned to justify this enmity could be picked up whenever the need arose.<sup>78</sup> As we have seen, for instance, the Twelve Years’ Truce (1609-1621) had been opposed by an anti-peace lobby, and similarly opponents of peace with Spain continued to voice their bellicosity after 1648. At such moments, old arguments could easily be recycled. In 1653, for instance, printer Jan Pietersz in Haarlem brought out a new edition of an old pamphlet: *Useful Comments on the Spanish*

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>77</sup> Anonymous, *Fransman, Vlaminck, over de vertrouwtheydt van den vrede, nu onlanx opgerecht tusschen de croonen Vranckrijk en Spangien* (1668), Knuttel 9638, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Rodríguez Pérez, *The Dutch Revolt*, pp. 258-259.

*Council* [*Dienstige aenmerkingen op den Spaensen raedt*].<sup>79</sup> It contained the advice allegedly given to the Spanish king Philip II at the end of the sixteenth century by three learned men, Justus Lipsius, Erycius Puteanus and Friar Campanella. According to the story, they had urged Philip to negotiate a peace with the rebels so that the Dutch could be lulled to sleep. The king would subsequently need only to mount a surprise attack to bring the disobedient provinces back under his rule.<sup>80</sup> A ‘true patriot’ argued in the preface of the 1653-edition that the war should be resumed and tried to convince his readers by refreshing the memory of Spanish untrustworthiness. Yet, he admitted that not even those of ‘the smallest intellect’ needed to be reminded of all the obstacles that had led to the foundation of the Republic, indicating the lively memory culture about the Revolt, especially among old people for whom ‘there is not a sweeter pastime [...] than when they may speak about the old times’.<sup>81</sup>

The *Useful Comments* illustrate how, after 1648, the war against Spain remained an important narrative frame for government authorities and interest groups in the Dutch Republic when dealing with contemporary political issues. Literary scholar Marijke Meijer Drees has observed two changes in the way Dutch people remembered the Revolt after 1648. Firstly, the Black Legend, which was a widespread frame of reference for voicing anti-Spanish sentiments from the late sixteenth century onwards, acquired alternative functions. Whereas it originated as a form of war propaganda aimed at ‘othering’ the enemy, this tactic ceased to be of any real political interest. Instead, the Black Legend was redeployed as a means to strengthen the view of Hollanders as a freedom-loving people, regardless of the identity of the enemy threatening their liberty. This allowed propagandists, for instance, to substitute France for Spain as the object of vilification. Secondly, the ever-changing balance of power in Europe mitigated the hostility towards Spain. As France and England increasingly contested the Dutch Republic’s commercial hegemony on the world

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<sup>79</sup> Anonymous, *Dienstige aenmerkingen op den Spaensen raedt, eertijds door Justus Lipsius [...] gegeven aende koninck van Spaengien, hoe men de Vereenichde Nederlanden alderbest wederom onder zijn gebiedt soude kunnen brengen* (Haarlem: s.n., 1653), Knuttel 7451; this pamphlet is an edition of a text published in 1617: Anonymous, *Spaenschen raedt, hoemen de vereenichde Nederlanden alderbest wederom sal kunnen brengen onder't ghebedt van den koninck van Spagnien* (s.l.: s.n., 1617), Knuttel 2458.

<sup>80</sup> Nicolette Mout, ‘Justus Lipsius Between War and Peace: His Public Letter on Spanish Foreign Policy and the Respective Merits of War, Peace or Truce (1595)’, 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, 2007), pp. 142-143.

<sup>81</sup> Anonymous, *Dienstige aenmerkingen*, pp. 4-5: ‘aldergeringhsten van verstandt’; ‘Daer is geen soeter liefkoserie voor oude luyden / als datse van den ouden tijdt moghen spreekken’.

seas, Spain stopped being the prime target for defamation.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the Revolt remained a politically potent episode in public memory. Historians Pieter Geyl, G.O. van de Klashorst, and Jill Stern have shown that supporters of the house of Orange extensively evoked Prince William I of Orange's role in the Revolt of the Netherlands.<sup>83</sup> Stern demonstrates that from the moment the prince's great-grandson William III was barred from the stadholderate during the First Stadholderless Period (1650-1672), the new order had 'to pass judgement on the practices of the old regime [...]. The "canon" of accepted truths about the national past was changed in order to reflect and emphasise new political realities'.<sup>84</sup> Opponents of the house of Orange and members of what historians call the States Party (also known as supporters of 'True Freedom') hence reinterpreted the past rebellion against the Spanish king in their attempts to marginalise the young prince of Orange, William III, and his supporters.<sup>85</sup> But spreading an anti-Orangist reading of the past could be quite a challenge. Looking back on the continued references to the past during the disorders and troubles at the time of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), which was lost by the Republic, diplomat and historian Lieuwe van Aitzema explained how clergymen especially had deliberately propagated the dominant Orangist reading of the past. He wrote that Orangist propagandists had felt it was necessary

for reason of state, on the chair, during meals, in barges, and on carts to tell, yes for children to learn at their mother's knee, that a hundred thousand were killed for the sake of religion, that the duke of Alba had prided himself on killing eighteen thousand [...] And the history of one hundred thousand, and of eighteen thousand

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<sup>82</sup> Meijer Drees, 'De beeldvorming', p. 169.

<sup>83</sup> Pieter Geyl, 'Het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur onder De Witt', in: Pieter Geyl, ed., *Pennestrijd over Staat en Historie* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1971, chapter first published 1947), pp. 3-71; G. O. van de Klashorst, "'Metten schijn van monarchie getemperd'. De verdediging van het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur, 1650-1686', in: H. W. Blom and I. W. Wildenberg, eds., *Pieter de la Court in zijn tijd (1618-1685). Aspecten van een veelzijdig publicist* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1986); Jill Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in word and image, 1650-1675* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 160-165.

<sup>84</sup> Stern, *Orangism*, p. 157.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-160; Gees van der Plaats calls this reinterpretation of the past an 'anti-Orange myth': Gees van der Plaats, *Eendracht als opdracht. Lieuwe van Aitzema's bijdrage aan het publieke debat in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), pp. 164-165; for an overview of the term 'party' in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, see: D.J. Roorda, *Partij en factie. De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1978), pp. 1-10.

put often on the stage served to move the people to endurance and perseverance. It would well-nigh be idolatry, should one not believe it.<sup>86</sup>

Stern's argument that the supporters of True Freedom needed to develop an alternative interpretation of the Revolt is convincing in many respects, but since she focuses on Orangist rhetoric she has not asked why authors who sympathised with the States Party felt obliged to relate their political ideology to the existing popular historical narratives about the conflict. These were, after all, tainted by Orangist associations and, furthermore, opponents of the Orange dynasty already had a wide repertoire of alternative ways to argue why the Republic did not need the house of Orange. Holland's medieval history and the Batavian Myth both suggested Dutch people disliked over-ambitious princely rulers and that they were historically capable of resisting a foreign tyrant without an Orange prince as stadholder. Anti-Orangist propagandists frequently deployed such alternative frames of reference.<sup>87</sup>

This section will explore, first, why despite the pro-Orange character of the historical canon of the Revolt, members of the States Party nonetheless used references to the Revolt in support of their political arguments, and, secondly, how they solved the problems they encountered in doing so. Two cases will be examined in detail: the aftermath of William II's attack on Amsterdam (1650-1651) and the political controversy surrounding the Exclusion Act of 1654. We will see that, just as in the Habsburg Netherlands, dominant narratives about the past could be redeployed for new political purposes.

### ***The Great Assembly of 1651***

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 concluded the Eighty Years' War. While Spain was no longer an enemy, the peace occasioned an internal disagreement about the dismissal of

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<sup>86</sup> Lieuwe van Aitzema, *Saken van Staet, In, ende omtrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden, Beginnende met het Jaer 1645, ende eyndigende met het Jaer 1656* (The Hague: Johan Veely, Johan Tongerloo and Jasper Doll, 1669), p. 1234: 'om reden van Staet / op den Stoel / op maeltijden / in Schuyten / en op Wagens te segghen / ja de kinderen met haer pap in te geven dat hondert duysent waren om het geloove omgebracht / dat Duc d'Alba alleen sich hadde geroemt van achteen duysent. [...] Ende de historie van hondert duysent, ende achteen duysent menighmael op het Toneel ghebracht / heeft ghedient om de gemeente te bewegen tot lijdtzaamheydt ende stantvastigheyt. Ende 't soude bykans een afgoderye zijn / soo men 't niet geloof.'; see also: Van der Plaat, *Eendracht*, p. 73.

<sup>87</sup> For the use of Holland's medieval past by supporters of True Freedom, see for instance: Pieter de la Court, *Interest van Holland, ofte gronden van Hollands-Welvaren* (Amsterdam: Joan Cyprianus vander Gracht, 1662), ff. 6v-7r, pp. 188-206.



troops: now that the war was over, many Holland regents urged a reduction of troops to relieve the tax burden. The other provinces and the stadholder Prince William II were less keen on Holland's plan, fearing its implementation might weaken the Republic. The prince and his supporters believed that the Dutch profited from war because having a common enemy had brought and kept the country together.<sup>88</sup> The example of the Twelve Years' Truce, when confessional struggles had brought the country to the verge of civil war, was still fresh in the public memory.<sup>89</sup> In arguing their case, opponents of Holland's desire for the dismissal of troops turned to the most important constitutional document of the Republic, the Union of Utrecht (1579), which established that the military matters fell under the authority of the Generality and not of individual provinces.<sup>90</sup> Holland could thus not simply discharge the military regiments on its own. According to Holland, however, this interpretation of the Union of Utrecht was acceptable only in war time, whereas now that the war was over, it was reasonable to doubt the Union's constitutional status. Since there was no central financial administration in the Republic and individual provinces were responsible for paying the troops allocated to them ('apportionment'), the States of Holland could decide unilaterally to suspend the payments to their regiments, which it did.<sup>91</sup> In reaction to this measure, and citing his oath to uphold the Union, Prince William II captured six members of the States of Holland who sympathised with the States Party and tried to take by force the most powerful engine behind Holland's opposition to the prince: the city of Amsterdam. The attack failed as a number of companies lost their way. A courier from Hamburg had seen the troops and notified Amsterdam's magistrate of the imminent arrival of a large army. The city subsequently locked its gates and could no longer be taken by surprise. A few months after the failed attack, the prince died unexpectedly.<sup>92</sup> Although William II's only son was born eight days after his father's death, Holland and the other provinces decided to leave the stadholderly office vacant and not to appoint the young William III, or any other member of the Orange dynasty, as their new stadholder.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> William II also considered war as an important source of prestige, see: Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, pp. 79-83.

<sup>89</sup> Stern, *Orangism*, pp. 165-176.

<sup>90</sup> Van Aitzema, *Saken van Staet [...] Beginnende met het Jaer 1645, ende eyndigende met het Jaer 1656*, p. 445.

<sup>91</sup> More about 'apportionment' or 'repartitie', see: Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, pp. 190-191; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, p. 84.

<sup>92</sup> For the prince's actions in 1650, see: G.W. Kernkamp, *Prins Willem II, 1626-1650* (Rotterdam: Donker, 1977, first published 1943), pp. 97-146.

<sup>93</sup> Friesland employed a different stadholder, William Frederick of Nassau, a cousin of William II. He remained in office in this province, and after William II's death also became stadholder of Groningen and Drenthe.

William's sudden death prompted the States General to convene the Great Assembly of 1651 to find a durable solution for the dismissal of troops and other disagreements about the Union.<sup>94</sup> Representatives from all provinces of the Republic attended the assembly, which was held in the Great Hall of the Inner Court ('Binnenhof') in The Hague. Grand Pensionary Jacob Cats opened the first meeting in January 1651. In a speech that was later published, Cats thanked God 'that this solemn assembly could be held in a place where formerly [in 1581] the king of Spain was abjured, his yoke thrown off, and the grounds laid for the liberty of these lands.'<sup>95</sup> It is not inconceivable that the grand pensionary looked up when he continued: 'where the trophies and the marks of the victory granted from time to time by the merciful God to this state, are hanging above everyone's head.'<sup>96</sup> (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Bartholomeus van Bassen, The Great Hall of the Inner Court ('Binnenhof') in The Hague during the Great Assembly of the States General of 1651 (c. 1651), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-C-1350.

<sup>94</sup> The interest in the Union of Utrecht around 1650 is evidenced by the fact that at least seven editions of the tract were printed that year alone: Frijhoff and Spies, 1650. *Hard-won unity*, p. 77.

<sup>95</sup> Jacob Cats, *Anvanck vande Groote Vergaderinge der Vereenichde Nederlanden* (Leiden: M. Sebastiaenszen, 1651), Knuttel 7029, f. 2r: 'dat dese solemnele Vergaderinge mach werden gehouden in eene plaetse / daer eertijts den Koninck van Spaighen is af gesworen / syn Jock verworpen / en de Gronden vande Vryheyt deser Landen zyn geleyt'.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.: 'Daer de Trophëen ende Zegel-teecken / vande Victorien by den goedertieren Godt aen desen Staet van tijt tot tijt genadelijck verleent, over yders hooft [...] zyn swevende'.

To Holland's satisfaction, the Great Assembly confirmed the sovereignty of the provinces. Yet it did not solve the continuing tensions between provincial autonomy and the delegation of authority to the Union. Already well before the assembly began, supporters of True Freedom and Orangist propagandists were engaged in a media war.<sup>97</sup> In their political arguments in the 'present', both parties claimed to act in the spirit of the past Revolt against the Spanish king. The well-known anti-Orangist pamphlet *Holland Talk* [*Hollants praatjen*], published shortly after William's II's attack, considered the actions of the prince as an unacceptable break with the moral legacy of the Revolt. The author for example suggests that William II treated the cities of Holland 'as if they were cities of the king of Spain'.<sup>98</sup> In the pamphlet, four men from Gelderland, Holland, Friesland and Brabant discussed the prince's recent coup. Holland decried William II for 'doing everything to the city [Amsterdam], that an enemy would be able to do'.<sup>99</sup> In response to the Gelderlander's accusation that Holland had acted unconstitutionally in the matter of military demobilisation, the Hollander explained that 'The seven provinces are united, or connected to each other, but it is not a single body, only in matters of war'. He cited the first article of the Union (which, as he points out, gave the Republic its name of 'United Provinces' – in the plural) to point out that the provinces remained separate polities.<sup>100</sup> Since the war was over and the basis for such collaboration had vanished, Holland had every right to act as it did and was justified even within the confines of the Union.

In response to the Gelderlander's question whether the prince's attack on Amsterdam should really be taken so seriously, the Hollander replied: 'Yes, it is of such great significance, that the old lord prince of Orange [...] his highness' grandfather, judged

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<sup>97</sup> Several historians have studied this media war, including many of the texts covered by this chapter. See: Van der Plaats, *Eendracht als opdracht*, pp. 143-173; Dingemanse, *Rap van tong*, pp. 99-179; Stern, *Orangism*, pp. 84-105; Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en publieke opinie*, pp. 91-127; Vroomen, 'Taal van de Republiek', pp. 119-163.

<sup>98</sup> Anonymous, *Hollants praatjen, tusschen vier personen [...] aangaande de souverainiteyt van syn hoogheyt* (Antwerp: Hieronymus Verdussen, 1650), f. a2r: 'als of het de Steden van den Koning van Spangien waren'; The author claims he had the text printed in Antwerp in the Southern Netherlands to evade censorship or public censure, but as Clazina Dingemans has shown, this claim was probably a rhetorical trick to show that the supporters of the prince violated the freedoms of the land so that the author had to turn to Antwerp in the Habsburg Netherlands to express his opinions: Dingemanse, *Rap van tong*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>99</sup> Anonymous, *Hollants praatjen*, f. a2r: 'Hy heeft alles aen de Stadt gedaen / wat een vyand soude konnnen doen.'

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., f. a4r: 'De seven Provintien zijn wel geunieert / of t'samen verbonden / maer 't en is geen een lichaem / dan in't stuck van d'oorloge [...] Men noemtse Seven vereenigde Landen, of Provincien'.

that the duke of Anjou, then duke of Brabant, for that reason forfeited his dukedom.<sup>101</sup> Here the Hollander referred to the high-handed attempt of Francis, duke of Anjou, who had been appointed as sovereign by the rebels in 1581 but was given so little power that he became frustrated and tried to seize Antwerp in 1583. As a result, the States General revoked their recognition of the duke as their sovereign. By invoking this historical example, the author of *Holland Talk* showed that it was not impossible to appropriate the memory of William I while criticising his grandson William II. To further emphasise that William II had acted even worse than Anjou, the Hollander argued that ‘here there is no sovereign, but a stadholder; here there is no parliament that is called by the sovereign and, when he pleases, dissolved. Here there are States, who stand in their own right, and who acknowledge no one as a higher lord.’<sup>102</sup> Although Anjou had acted reprehensibly, at least he did so as a sovereign. William II was merely a stadholder, which meant his conduct was unconstitutional. A similar argument can be found in the *Right Second Part of the Holland Talk* [*Het rechte tweede deel, van't Hollands praatje*], in which a Brabanter claimed that William II surpassed even the duke of Alba in wickedness. The Gelderlander was shocked by this statement: ‘I don’t know how the gentleman from Brabant can substantiate that [claim], that the prince could be compared to the duke of Alba, the cruelest tyrant of the world’. The Brabanter subsequently explained that Alba acted on the orders of his natural lord, Philip II, while William II counteracted the orders of his, the States of Holland.<sup>103</sup>

The clergyman Jacobus Stermont in The Hague reacted to the *Holland Talk* by writing *Laurel Wreath, Wreathed for His Highness, William* [*Lauweren-krans gevlochten voor syn hoocheyt, Wilhelm*].<sup>104</sup> Stermont also wrote his text as a dialogue, but he chose for his protagonists two Hollanders, one from Leiden and one from Amsterdam. The Leidener complains about the slanderous accounts of William II that were being spread by booksellers around the country. His interlocutor replies: ‘That is a sign of the country’s

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., f. a2v: ‘Ja/ daer is so veel aengelegen / dat de Ouden Heere Prince van Oraignien, hooghloff. gedach. Sijn Hoogheys Groot-vader, oordeelde / dat den Hertog van Alençon, doe Hertog van Brabant / om die oorsaec / was vervallen van zijn recht van't Hertogdom’.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., f. a3r: ‘hier is geen Souverain, maar een Stadhouder; hier is geen Parlement dat van een Souverain geroepen wert / en / als't hem belieft / weder moet scheiden. Maer hier zijn Staten, die uyt haer selven bestaen / en die / boven haer / niemant en kennen.’

<sup>103</sup> Anonymous, *Het rechte tweede deel, van't Hollands praatje, verdedigende het recht van de [...] Staten van Hollandt en West-Vrieslandt* (Antwerp: Hieronymus Verdussen, 1650), p. 6: ‘Ick weet niet waer dien Brabandschen Heer dat vast soude maken / dat den Prince in vergelijckinge soude komen met Ducq d’Alf, den wreedsten Tyran van de Werelt’.

<sup>104</sup> Jacobus Stermont, *Lauweren-krans gevlochten voor syn hoocheyt, Wilhelm [...]. Over sijne eeuwig roembaere handelinghe, gepleegt tot ruste deser Vereenigde Lantschappen, in't jaer 1650* (s.l.: s.n., 1650), Knuttel 6851.

freedom, and Holland's good nature, to have such a government that allows every man to freely make known his feelings to the world: why not also pertaining the prince?'<sup>105</sup> The man from Leiden disagrees and points to William's illustrious descent from forefathers, who 'have been, besides God, the scourge of Spain, the gate to our freedom, the trestle of our state, the pride of our friends, and the terror of all our enemies'.<sup>106</sup>

The published fictional dialogues between Dutch people from all corners of the Republic demonstrate that authors sought to increase the persuasiveness of their argument by presenting speakers with diverging opinions and then having the author's opinion prevail – in this case the Hollander's.<sup>107</sup> Another good example is the anti-Orangist *The Hague Shoptalk* [*Haagsch vvinkel-praatje*], published after the death of William II and at the time of the Great Assembly. Four men (a Hollander, a Zeelander, a Frisian and a Groninger) gather in a bookshop in The Hague and discuss the political situation. The Groninger has just entered and asks for news, specifically for tidings from France or England. The Hollander answers that they were not talking about England or France but about 'the great changes, now for a year or a bit more time occurred in these United Provinces'.<sup>108</sup> He thanks God for the positive turn events had taken – William II died at the end of 1650 – and says 'I cannot see that for the duration that we were at war with the king of Spain we had ever so great a victory as now a year ago'.<sup>109</sup> The Hollander considers the death of Prince William to be the best thing that had ever happened to the Republic. The Groninger does not quite understand this celebration of the prince's death and proposes to discuss the matter further.<sup>110</sup> After the unsuccessful attack on Amsterdam, the prince and the States had reached an agreement about disbanding the troops. Was it not a bit cruel to celebrate William's death as a triumph? The Hollander explains that just before his death,

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., a2r: 'Dits een teken van 'tLands Vryhey, ende de Hollandse goedt-aerdigheyt, sulck een Regeeringe te hebben daer inne het aen ieder mensch vry-staet sijn gevoelen de werelt bekend te maken: ende waerom oock niet vande Prins?'.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., ff. a2r-v: 'wiens Hoogloffelijcke Voor-ouders sijn geweest, naest Godt, den Geessel van Spanjen, de poort onser Vryhey, de Schraeg onser Staet, den Trots van alle onse vrienden, ende een schrik voor alle onse Vianden'.

<sup>107</sup> Dingemanse, *Rap van tong*, pp. 130-139.

<sup>108</sup> Anonymous, *Haagsch vvinkel-praatje, oft Gesprek, voor-gevallen in den Hage, tusschen vier personen [...]* *nopende de amnestie, dank, en vier-dag* (Leeuwarden: Claude Fonteyne, 1651), Knuttel 7039, p. 3: 'de groote veranderingen / nu in een jaar / of wat meer tijds / in dese Vereenigde Provincien voor-ghevallen'.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 4: 'dat ik niet en kan sien dat wy soo lang / als wy met den Koning van Spaignien in oorloog hebben geweest / oyt soo grooten zegen en victorie gehad hebben / als nu een jaar herwaerts'.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

the prince was as bellicose as ever. His death may have been tragic, but ultimately it benefitted the country.<sup>111</sup>

To prove his point, the Hollander offers a brief history lesson in which he gives a new spin to existing narratives about the Revolt. He refers to the sixteenth-century past to show that from the greatest evil good things could arise. The Hollander recalls a series of events, beginning with the religious persecutions under Philip II. These persecutions violated local privileges, but the positive result was public discontent. Discontent in the 1560s was the prelude to the grand-scale Revolt, which ultimately gave rise to the freedom that people enjoyed 'now'. The next episode in the story of the Hollander was the governorship of the duke of Alba at the end of the 1560s and beginning of the 1570s. The frequent references to his oppressive tribunal, the Council of Troubles, in a variety of media show that by 1650 the duke was still an example capable of evoking strong associations with injustice. But although Alba was perceived as wicked, his regime had strengthened the rebels in their convictions and had motivated them to continue fighting. Then the Hollander arrives at the famous capture of Den Briel by the rebels in 1572. When 'the queen of England denied entry to the Water Beggars (as people called them), since she had peace with the king of Spain; this seemed a very evil sign, but it was the beginning of our deliverance, as the new beggars [...] not knowing where to harbour, came in Den Briel.'<sup>112</sup> The capture of Den Briel was the first rebel take-over of a city, and it was followed by other cities siding with the rebels.

The Hollander continues to enumerate canonical episodes of the history of the Revolt, such as the atrocities committed by Spanish soldiers in Rotterdam (1572), Zutphen (1572), Naarden (1572) and Haarlem (1573). In most narratives, authors used these episodes as evidence of the cruel nature of Spanish rulers and to justify the war against Spain.<sup>113</sup> The Hollander looks at the situation from a more positive perspective. When they were besieged in 1573-4, inhabitants of the cities of Alkmaar and Leiden knew about the cruelties committed in other towns and were so horrified by them that they refused to surrender and were willing to fight until the very end. This proved to be the best strategy, and both cities fought off the Spanish army. The Hollander ends with the murder of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 15: When 'de Koninginne van Engeland de Water-geusen (soo men die noemde) haer land ontsayd / alsoo sy met den Koning van Spaignien vrede had; 't welk een seer quaat teyken scheen te zijn / en 't was 't begin van onse verlossing / alsoo die nieuwe geusen [...] niet wetende waer sy soudén havenen / in den Briel quamen'.

<sup>113</sup> See for instance the history of the Revolt *Spiegel der Ievgh* (1614) which was republished throughout the seventeenth century: Cilleßen, 'Der Spiegel der jeugd', pp. 60-62.

William of Orange by Balthasar Gérard in 1584: ‘Then everyone thought the land was lost; but it was a great blessing for the land’.<sup>114</sup> In 1584, the States of Holland had intended to make the prince count of Holland ‘as a result of which we would have changed lord, but not condition, as we would not have been better off with Orange than with Spain: so his death brings us more good, than evil’.<sup>115</sup>

### *The Exclusion of 1654*

States Party propagandists apparently considered it useful to refer to the Revolt in their political texts, even though this required a constant and sometimes laborious reinterpretation of the dominant historical canon. To further illustrate the difficulty of using references to the Revolt while casting off the dominant Orangist interpretation of the past, it is worthwhile to look at the Exclusion Act, a secret agreement between Stadholderless Holland and Commonwealth England that was part of the treaty that ended the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654): the Treaty of Westminster. In signing the Exclusion Act, Holland succumbed to pressures from England’s protector Oliver Cromwell and promised never to appoint the son of William II as stadholder. Cromwell’s demand was informed by the fact that the young prince of Orange was a nephew of the exiled king Charles II. Should this William III become stadholder of the powerful province of Holland, he might eventually help restore his uncle as king of England. Holland had signed the secret clause without consulting the States General, thereby angering Orangists at home and in other provinces of the Republic.<sup>116</sup> The States of Friesland, for instance, complained at the States General about this act which they felt slighted the descendant of ‘the lord prince William the Elder [...] whose bones are in Delft beneath a tomb erected in his honour and in his eternal memory by the State itself.’<sup>117</sup> By mentioning a physical reminder of William of Orange, namely his tomb, the States of Friesland sought to convince the delegates in the States

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<sup>114</sup> Anonymous, *Haagsch vinkel-praatje*, p. 15: ‘Doe meende elk dat het Land verlooren was; en het was een groote zegen voor ’t Land’.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 15: ‘daer door wy wel van Heer soudent verandert hebben / maer niet van Conditie / alsoo wy geen beter soudent gehad hebben aen Oraignien, als aen Spaignien: soo dat die dood ons meer goed / als quaat dede.’

<sup>116</sup> Guido de Bruin, ‘Political Pamphleteering and Public Opinion’, in: Femke Deen et al., eds., *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Cited in Lieuwe van Aitzema, *Historie of Verhael van Saken van staet en Oorlogh, in, ende ontrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden, beginnende met ’t uytgaen vanden Treves* (The Hague: Johan Vely, 1663), p. 110: ‘Wiens Beenderen noch by ons tot Delft, onder een Graft t’sijner eeren, ende tot een eeuwighe Memorie bij den Staet self gedaen’.

General of the gratitude that was owed to the Orange dynasty. Excluding the extant prince of Orange from public office was, they felt, the worst kind of ingratitude.

Most Orangist publications of the period centred their arguments on the debt of gratitude owed to the Orange dynasty.<sup>118</sup> To give one other example: during the Exclusion controversy in 1654, rhetorician Johannes Beuken wrote a poem in honour of the house of Orange-Nassau and dedicated it to the government of the city of Leiden. In his dedication he wrote: ‘What Netherlander is not most highly obliged to the serene house of Nassau? That house to which, apart from God, we owe our freedom’.<sup>119</sup> By successfully fighting off the Spanish king from 1566 onwards, the rebels (led by Orange) had laid the first stone of a new state: the Dutch Republic. After exhorting his readers to praise the house of Orange, Beuken gave a poetic account of important sieges, battles and other events from the beginning of the Revolt in 1566 to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, and beyond. The author claimed that what had happened during the war against Spain was ‘known to virtually all’. Yet, he advised ‘who does not know, [to] read Emanuel van Meteren and other memoirists’.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, for the readers who were less familiar with the historical narrative, Beuken clarified names and dates in explanatory footnotes.

Due to the widespread criticism of the Exclusion, notably by Zeeland and Friesland, Holland’s grand pensionary Johan de Witt wrote a defence of this measure: the *Deduction*. The English ambassador in The Hague observed that the text was ‘as big as half the bible’ and although this was an exaggeration, it took the grand pensionary five hours to deliver his *Deduction* on 6 August 1654 in the assembly of the States General.<sup>121</sup> In it, De Witt argued that political power should not be a birthright and that the monarchical presence of the princes of Orange as stadholders was incompatible with the state’s republican constitution. These were fundamental principles, yet De Witt used historical precedents, especially the Revolt, to argue at greater length why Holland was justified in denying the young Prince William III the right to succeed as stadholder. He posed the rhetorical question: ‘in people’s remembrance or the memory of histories, has not the most important matter that has occurred in these Netherlands taught us that such a negative

<sup>118</sup> See also Van de Klashorst, “‘Metten schijn’”, p. 100; Stern, *Orangism*, pp. 68-74, 160-161.

<sup>119</sup> Beuken published his poem in 1668: Johannes Beuken, ‘Orangiens en Nassouwse Louwer-krans’, in: *Rijmen, verdeeld in Drie Boekken, als 1. minne-dichten. 2. veelderley. 3. Bybel-werk* (Leiden: Maerten van Leeuwen, 1668), f. 11r: ‘wat Nederlanders is niet ten hoogsten verplicht aan dat doorluchtige Huys van Nassouw? dat Huys aan wien wy (naast God) onse Vryheyd schuldig zijn’.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 19r: ‘is yder by na bekend. Die het niet en weet, lese Emanuel van Mètre en andre Gedenk-Schrijvers’.

<sup>121</sup> *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe II*, edited by Thomas Birch (London: Thomas Woodward, 1742), p. 497; Rowen, *John de Witt*, p. 235.



resolution and engagement is sometimes necessary?’<sup>122</sup> The ‘negative resolution’ De Witt referred to was the States of Holland’s decision in April 1581 to abjure the king, Philip II of Spain, a decision that the States General had adopted in their Oath of Abjuration a few months later. By likening the Abjuration of 1581 to the Exclusion of 1654, De Witt reinterpreted a canonical episode in the history of the Revolt and cleverly disentangled the abjuration of Philip II from the Orangist associations the event had acquired over time. The references to the Revolt in the *Deduction*, as well as the fact that the tract was publicly recited in the highest political assembly of the Republic, demonstrate that De Witt recognised the political potency and canonical status of narratives about the past rebellion against Philip II.

As we have seen, the Union of Utrecht (1579) was an object of contested interpretations because of its constitutional importance. De Witt and the States of Holland argued that the Union had established the sovereignty of each of the confederated provinces, whereas the other provinces claimed that by accepting the Act of Exclusion, Holland had exceeded the Union’s constitutional bounds. De Witt also used less constitutionally relevant references to the Revolt to show that Holland’s acquiescence in the Exclusion was lawful. He asserted, for instance, that it was not the Exclusion Act that had caused disunity within the Republic – as some provinces claimed – but that ‘the Netherlands were foremost brought in a state of discord by the heads’, i.e. princes.<sup>123</sup> De Witt drew on the sixteenth-century past to substantiate this assertion. He briefly touched upon ‘the old histories and chronicles’, which ‘nowadays still show us with fright in what ways our ancestors have lived under the dukes, counts, bishops, and lords in continuous dissension and disagreement’.<sup>124</sup> Evoking the public memory of Burgundian and Habsburg rulers, with particular attention to the persecution of heretics by Emperor Charles V and King Philip II, the author arrived at ‘those times, which are actually applicable to these’: the period of the 1580s when according to De Witt all domestic troubles were caused not by the

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<sup>122</sup> Johan de Witt, *Deductie, ofte declaratie van de Staten van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslandt [...] tot justificatie van't verleenen van seeckere acte van seclusie, raeckende 't employ vanden heere prince van Oraigne [...] op den vierden mey 1654 ghepasseert* (The Hague: Hillebrandt Jacobsz van Wouw, 1654), p. 14: ‘heeft niet de alderimporteniste saecke die / by de Menschen memorie / ofte geheuchenisse van historiën / in dese Nederlanden voorgevallen is ons gheleert dat soodanige negatieve resolutie ende verbintenissen somwijlen nootsaekkelijk is?’

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59: ‘dat de Nederlanden meest in eenenigheyt zijn ghebracht door de Hoofden’.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62: ‘De oude Historien / ende Chronijcquen doen ons noch huyden 's daechs met verschrickinghe sien in wat voeghen ons Voor-ouderen onder Hertoghen / Graven / Bisschoppen / ende Heeren/ niet alleen in continuele dissention / ende oneenicheden hebben geleeft’.

many threats of war but by the Dutch princely rulers themselves.<sup>125</sup> The Anjou debacle, mentioned above, was an episode supporters of True Freedom referred to in order to prove that in the past it had always been ambitious rulers who jeopardised the peace of the land. Similarly, after Anjou, the States had appointed Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, as governor, and he, too, had refused to settle for the power conferred on him by the States General, instead aiming to centralise his authority at the expense of local privileges.<sup>126</sup>

Inasmuch as the misgovernance of over-ambitious princely rulers could torment a country, De Witt explained, the death of such a ruler could be a great cause for relief. Just as William II's death had been a blessing in disguise, the death of William of Orange should not be seen as a tragedy. In 1584, the States of Holland had intended to grant Prince William I the sovereignty of the province. But while they were drafting this proposal, Balthasar Gérard assassinated the prince. De Witt exhorted his audience: 'look, a dishonourable and godless murderer was conceived who, being bribed by the enemies of the land, took the life of that glorious prince'.<sup>127</sup> The grand pensionary condemned the murder but added that despite the fact that the country was robbed of its leader, 'God Almighty has nonetheless created light from such deep darkness, and not only kept the state standing, but also preserved its inhabitants, and guarded them from the new subjection they were already being rushed into.'<sup>128</sup> Here, De Witt implied that Orange would have become a tyrant after his inauguration as count of Holland. He also attributed the success of the Revolt to divine intervention in order to downplay the role that Orangists ascribed to William of Orange.

Finally, De Witt argued that William of Orange's descendants Maurice, Frederick Henry and William II were 'honoured as if they had been lawful princes of the land'.<sup>129</sup> Considering that, formally, in the Dutch Republic they had never been more than stadholders, the princes of Orange claimed more respect than they were entitled to. He addressed 'the sensible reproof and emotional reproach of ingratitude, and underestimation of the house of Orange aforesaid' and rejected the argument that gratitude towards William

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 62: 'die tijden / die in desen eyghentlijk zijn applicabel'.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 50: 'Siet / daer werdt een eer- ende Godtloos Moordenaer verweckt die / van 's Landts Vyanden omgekocht wesende / dien glorieusen Prince het leven berooft'.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.: 'soo heeft nochtans Godt Almachtich uyt soo dicke duysternisse een helder licht gheschept / ende niet alleenlijk den Staedt genadichlijk ende wonderbaerlijk staende ghehouden / maer oock d'Ingesetenen van dien ghepreserveert / ende behoedt voor de nieuwe subjectie daer inne de selve albereyts genoehsaem waren geprecipiteert.'

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 73: 'ghe-eert / even als of sy wettighe Princen van den Lande waren gheweest'.

III and his forefathers was incompatible with the Exclusion.<sup>130</sup> He probably used the words ‘sensitive’ and ‘emotional’ in acknowledgement of the emotions that the past could stir up. For this reason indeed it seems De Witt felt compelled to add the disclaimer that although Maurice, Frederick Henry and William II deserved to be criticised, the States of Holland ‘nevertheless have to confess that the lord prince William the Elder, great-grandfather of the present prince of Orange, deserves to be considered differently’.<sup>131</sup> He challenged the States of Friesland’s accusation of ingratitude and inquired after its conduct at the time of William I’s death. In 1584, the Frisian States had refused to employ the prince’s son Maurice as stadholder, instead granting the stadholderate to William of Orange’s nephew, William Louis. De Witt jeered: ‘where, at that time, were those who now write and go on so much about due gratitude?’<sup>132</sup>

The *Deduction* is only one example of the States Party’s frequent use of references to the Revolt and of the strategies they employed to disconnect narratives about the conflict from pro-Orange associations. In many other publications, adherents of True Freedom made similar efforts.<sup>133</sup> Discussions like these did not by themselves change the course of history; political arguments and rhetoric reflected ‘real’ actions that made a lasting impact on society. A remark of the English Ambassador in The Hague, John Thurloe, illustrates the importance of the political context for the success of having one’s own interpretation of events accepted by others. He observed in 1654, just after the publication of Johan de Witt’s *Deduction*, that:

There are some, who do prognosticate to Holland some harm from this apology; as in like manner in the year 1617, when [Olden]Barnevelt published his apology, exposing himself at that time to the assaults and insulting pens of so many famous writers, who writ against him. But the States of Holland have supporters, which

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 71: ‘het sensibel verwijt / ende de ghevoelijke reproche van ondanckbaerheydt / ende mescognaissance teghens ‘tgemelte Huys van Oraigne’.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 74: ‘Soo moeten haer Ed: Groot Mo: nochtans bekennen dat / ten regarde dat den Heere Prince Willem d’oude / over-Groot-Vader van den jegenwoordigen Prince van Oraigne / andere consideratie zijn vallende.’

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.: ‘Waer waren als doen die gene die nu soo veel van schuldige danckbaerheydt schrijven ende vrijven?’

<sup>133</sup> See for example the following succinct booklets: anonymous, *Zeeuwze ratel, geroert tusschen dry personen, een Hollander, Zeeuvv en Hagenaar, over het uitsluiten en deporteren van een stadhouder en generaal* (Middelburg: Philippus van Esch, 1654), Knuttel 7564; anonymous, *Noodig bericht aan alle oprechte patriotten [...] nopende, dat den prince van Oranjen, noch de grave van Nassouw [...] geen oorszaak zijn tot ons aller behoudenis* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1654), Knuttel 7567; anonymous, *Wederlegginge vande valsche verkeerde rekeninge en calculatie, onlangs in druck uytgekomen, aengaende de pretense-onkosten die gedaen soudén wesen by Willem de I, (s.l.:s.n., 1655), Knuttel 7662.*

Barneveldt had not; for Barneveldt and the States of Holland were not masters of the militia, as the States of Holland are at present. Secondly, those of Holland are and will be back'd and assisted by England.<sup>134</sup>

Past experience had taught the Dutch that criticising a prince of Orange could be risky. However, the political context had changed radically since 1617: the relatively powerful stadholderate in the period 1617-50 had been replaced by the stadholderless regime examined in this chapter. By the 1650s it had become less dangerous to criticise the Orange dynasty in the present and trivialise its achievements in the past.

Even so, despite these political changes, the dominant Orangist narrative about the Revolt proved remarkably resilient and grew even stronger as supporters of the house of Orange became more outspoken in their propaganda. In 1669, Orangist playwright Arent Roggeveen published a play about William of Orange's role in the Revolt. Addressing the prince's great-grandson, William III, he explained that:

Surveyors begin from an indivisible dot or point, which needs to be understood rationally rather than shown empirically [...] such has been (serene prince) your great-grandfather William first prince of Orange: a dot hardly visible in the eyes of Spanish pride and yet the foundation on which the Netherlandish freedom [...] has been built.<sup>135</sup>

Already in 1662, Pieter de la Court noted the continued difficulties facing supporters of True Freedom in their efforts to circumvent the Orangist frame of history.<sup>136</sup> An adherent of the States Party, he wrote the preface to an edition of the history of the Dutch Revolt by Viglius van Aytta (1507-1577). Viglius had been a member of the Council of State, an important councillor to Philip II of Spain when the Revolt broke out, and an outspoken critic of the leader of the Revolt, William I of Orange. Prince William and his supporters, De la Court alleged, ultimately won the war and this meant:

<sup>134</sup> *A collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe II*, edited by Birch, p. 496.

<sup>135</sup> Arent Roggeveen, *'tNederlantsche treur-spel, synde de verkrachte Belgica* (Middelburg: Pieter van Goetthem, 1669), f. \*\*\*2r: 'Meeters nemen haer beginsel van een ondeelbaer stip of punt, 't welck meer met het verstant moet begrepen dan het Tuygh-werck lijck kan getoont worden [...] Alsoo is (doorluchtighe Vorst) u out Groot-Vader Wilhelmus eerste Prince van Oraengien geweest, een punt nauliks sichtbaer inde oogen vande Spaensche hovaerdie; enwas nochtans de fundamenta waer door de Nederlantscher vryheyt hoogh-loffelijcker memory is opgebout'.

<sup>136</sup> Stern, *Orangism*, p. 159.

that in narrating the history of the troubles, our historiographers as subjects of the princes, put on the stage their brave deeds and exaggerated them, concealing in the meantime, and trivialising as much as possible, their vices and follies.<sup>137</sup>

The same could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, for the Habsburg Netherlands. De la Court argued that South Netherlandish historians were driven by motives similar to those affecting their Northern colleagues, and that ‘in describing the troubles, [they] trivialise the vices and follies of the king of Spain, in order to be able to blame the troubles on the Netherlandish nobles, and particularly on the princes of Orange.’<sup>138</sup> De la Court attributed Prince William’s heroic reputation in the Republic not so much to his exceptional skill and courage as to the outcome of the war: the separation between the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Interestingly, De la Court toned down William of Orange’s glorious war record by presenting the prince’s heroic reputation as simply the result of political and military circumstances outside his control. Without risking accusation of a lack of patriotism, De la Court could thus justify the stadholderless political system that he envisaged.<sup>139</sup>

Although De la Court’s perspective appears distinctly modern to readers in the twenty-first century, his relativist approach to the past would probably not have appealed to the average early modern inhabitant of the Republic. De Witt’s practical usage of the past demonstrates this. Every time anti-Orangist political activists like him deployed the Revolt in support of their agenda, they felt compelled to address the Orangist slant of most historical narratives about the conflict. The canon about the Revolt had clearly become a central part of Dutch culture that political propagandists could not simply ignore.

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<sup>137</sup> Pieter de la Court, ‘Voor-reden’ to Viglius van Aytta, ‘Grondig berigt van ’t Nederlands oproer zo onder de hertogin van Parma, als den hertog van Alba. Beschreven in ’t François’, in: Pieter de la Court, ed., *Historie der gravelike regering in Holland* (s.l.: s.n., 1662), p. 209: ‘dat Onse Historie-Schrijvers als onderdaanen der selver, in het verhaalen der gemelde Troubelen, alle de kloeke daaden der Princen op het tooneel bragten, ende die booven de waarheid vergrooteden, verswijgende onderentusschen ofte verkleinende soo veel doeneelik, der selven ondeugden ende dwaasheden.’

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210: ‘in het beschrijven der gemelde Troubelen [...] de ondeugden ende dwaasheden der Koningen van Hispanien verwijgen ofte verkleinen, om alle den schuld der zelve Troubelen, ten laste de Nederlandse Heeren, en bysonderlijk op de Princen van Oranjen te konnen leggen’.

<sup>139</sup> See also Geyl, ‘Het stadhouderschap’, p. 12.

## Conclusion

What happened to canonical narratives in the Northern and Southern Netherlands after the Peace of Westphalia ended the Eighty Years' War? The long-term perspective enables us to see that changing political contexts did not automatically mean that the Revolt gradually lost its political potency. Even in peace time the conflict remained a significant frame of reference, although in the South less so than in the Republic. Still, Habsburg government officials – both local magistrates and bureaucrats in Brussels – used the past rebellion as an important example in their political arguments. These elites tended to favour *laissez-faire* Habsburg rule above French or Dutch domination. Interestingly, their opposition to Louis XIV's interpretation of the law of devolution and their devotion to the Habsburg dynasty relied to no small degree on narratives about the Revolt and its origins, on how Charles V and Philip II had preferred to combat evil heretics instead of finding 'French' solutions to the religious problems. One could even say that the legacy of the Revolt was cherished. In the face of French expansionism, Southerners celebrated the triumph of Catholicism and Habsburg respect for their local privileges.

In the Republic – more than in the Habsburg Netherlands – the Revolt had become a pillar of 'national' identity and was considered a relevant and very useful frame of reference. Since the Revolt was considered a more 'usable' past in the Republic than in the South, we can draw some more specific conclusions about the dynamics of memory in the North after 1648. We have seen that propagandists of the States Party, critics of the house of Orange, could not easily disentangle themselves from Orangist narratives about the Revolt. There are two important explanations for the use of historical references to the Revolt by supporters of True Freedom. In the first place, the historical canon was recognised by many as the foundation narrative of the Republic. In that capacity it was an important frame of reference which the States Party was unable to ignore in discussions about the Republic's legal constitution in the 1650s and '60s. The problem, however, was that supporters of the house of Orange had in the preceding decades successfully claimed the legacy of the Revolt as their moral property. As a result, recognition of William of Orange's achievements became difficult to reconcile with denying the stadholderate to the prince's great-grandson William III.

Secondly, a polemicist who appropriated the popular historical frame of reference about the Revolt effectively compelled the opposition to do the same. Orangists accused the States Party of ingratitude and a lack of patriotism. The only way to counter these

accusations – and this also explains how the States Party circumvented the Orangist slant of the dominant narrative – was to challenge the Orangist interpretation of the past and replace it with an anti-Orangist alternative. The existence of a popular and dominant interpretation of the past – in this case notably the celebration of William I of Orange as a national hero – did not preclude the existence of other interpretations, but it forced people with alternative views to position themselves grudgingly against the canon, compelling them constantly to debunk their opponents' reading of the past.

