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Looking for justice: execution spectators and the Revolt in the Low Countries, ca. 1520-1585

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6. Losing Control

The Breakdown of Justice in the Cities of the Low Countries, 1572–1585

In August 1572, the Haarlem chronicler Willem Janszoon Verwer recorded in his *memoriaelbouck* that “on the second, in the afternoon around a quarter to three, a woman named Aecht Jansdr, alias Jassagis, was burned alive, charged with conspiring together with Jacob Foppensz, who used to be the bailiff of Haarlem, to murder an old maid.”¹⁰⁶⁹ At first glance, this execution does not seem unusual. Jaffegers (as her name was written in the verdict) was sentenced for murder, an offense often punished by fire.¹⁰⁷⁰ Jaffegers’ case was, however, rather exceptional. She was sentenced not by the Haarlem magistrate but by two “commissioners,” Gerrit van Berkenrode and Pieter Jansz Kies. These commissioners had been sent to Haarlem by William of Orange in the preceding months, and under their influence, the city became one of the towns in Holland to join the rebellion against the Habsburg government in the spring of 1572.¹⁰⁷¹ Both men had been exiled and their possessions confiscated under the regime of the Duke of Alba, and they had been fervent supporters of the Prince of Orange ever since. As a result, the legal structure under which Jaffegers’ trial took place was very different from what it had been just a few months earlier.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Willem Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck: Dagboek van gebeurtenissen te Haarlem van 1572-1581*, ed. J. J. Temminck (Haarlem: Schuyt and Co C.V, 1973), 12. ‘Den 2e is nae middach omtrent quartier voer drien levendich verbrant eenen Aecht Jansdr. alias Jassagis uuijt laste dat zij, zoe men zeijden, beleden hadde met Jacob Joppienss eertijts schout van Haerlem, een oude maecht vermoert te hebben etc’. This paragraph is based on: Isabel Casteels, “Aecht Jansdr Jaffies,” in Belt et al. “1572: Opstandig Holland”.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem, Oud Rechterlijk Archief van Haarlem, inv.nr. 1167: ‘Vonnis van de commissarissen van de Prins van Oranje waarin Aechte Jaffegers de doodstraf wordt opgelegd wegens diefstal, brandstichting en verraad’, afschrift (beschadigd), 1572. A note on the name: Verwer writes Jassagis; her verdict reads Jaffegers; Kooi uses (based on the judicial administration) Jaffjens; Els Kloek writes Aagt Jafies. I chose to follow the writing in the sentences in the Haarlem city archives. ‘Jassagis’ might be a mistake in the transcription of Verwer’s *memoriaelboeck*.

¹⁰⁷¹ On Haarlem and the Revolt, see Johanna W. Spaans, *Haarlem na de Reformatie. Stedelijke cultuur en kerkelijk leven, 1577-1620*, Hollandse historische reeks 11 (’s-Gravenhage: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1989).

This was not to her advantage. Although she had officially been brought to trial for murder, Verwer added that “five or six had been banished from the city because of Aecht.”¹⁰⁷² Indeed, the verdict notes that Jaffegers had been responsible for informing on several Reformed Haarlem citizens to bailiff Jacob Foppensz while the city was still under Habsburg rule. Some of these had been sentenced to banishment in absentia. At least one, the Lutheran Anneke Ongiers, had been condemned to death by the Haarlem *vierschaar* and executed by drowning in 1569.¹⁰⁷³ Consequently, Jaffegers had a notorious reputation among her Reformed fellow citizens, who now held power. When, shortly after the Haarlem magistrate sided with the rebels, an attempt was discovered to open the city gates to the loyalist governor of Holland, the Count of Boussu, Jaffegers was immediately suspected. According to her sentence, she confessed to having planned to set fire to four corners of the city—one of them being the confiscated brewery of Commissioner Kies. Suddenly, several neighbors were found who, during her trial, testified that Jaffegers had been involved in murder two years earlier.

Largely due to an effective propaganda campaign from the side of the new Calvinist regime, Jaffegers would go down in history as an evil woman, a traitor to her pious Reformed neighbors.¹⁰⁷⁴ In the nineteenth century, several historical novels appeared about her story, time and again framing her as the ultimate collaborator with the “Spanish” usurper.¹⁰⁷⁵ Had Jaffegers indeed been an opportunistic informer, conspiring against her fellow citizens by reporting them to the authorities in return for money? Or was she set up after the regime changed and used as a scapegoat, the victim of revenge and retribution from neighbors harmed by the government policy of the previous years? The available sources will never allow us to answer such questions. For contemporaries, whether Jaffegers’ trial and execution could be considered “justice” would have

¹⁰⁷² Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 12. ‘ende noch vijf of ses uuter stadt gebannen die welck om Aecten willen voors. gevangen waren’.

¹⁰⁷³ NHA, ORH, 1167: ‘Vonnis van de commissarissen van de Prins van Oranje’. See also Ongiers, Anneke, in: Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland. URL: <https://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Ogiers> [13/01/2014]

¹⁰⁷⁴ Spaans, *Haarlem na de Reformatie*, 40–43.

¹⁰⁷⁵ J. van de Capelle, *Schout foppens en Aacht Jafies. Historisch romantisch tafereel uit den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog* (Amsterdam: Der Erven H. van Munster & Zoon, 1848); W. van den Heuvel, *Neerlands roem: Historisch-romantische episoden uit den Tachtigjarigen oorlog* (Amsterdam: Kesteren, 1841), 1–192.

largely depended on which side of the conflict they were on, their religious inclinations, and the extent to which they felt aggrieved by the Habsburg regime.

The ambiguity of Jaffegers' case is exemplary of the experience of justice in the years between 1572 and 1585. In the previous chapter, we saw that although executions carried out under Alba's regime were no longer unifying or restorative events, the sword of justice still remained largely in the hands of the local authorities. As armed rebellion commenced in 1572, however, this control slipped through their fingers entirely. In April 1572, a group of rebels succeeded in capturing the coastal town of Den Briel, and in the subsequent months, many other cities in Holland and Zeeland followed. At the same time, William of Orange embarked on another military campaign, invading the eastern and Walloon provinces. By October 1572, the Army of Flanders managed to contain the rebellion within the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, and the years that followed were characterized by sieges, sacks, and pillaging armies. In 1576, violent mutinies within the Army of Flanders led the loyalist provinces to reunite with the rebellious provinces on their own account by concluding the Pacification of Ghent, which largely restored peace in the north. Shortly afterward, however, internal turmoil shifted to the south. Following the Orangist coup in Brussels in 1576, "Calvinist republics" were installed in the major cities of the southern Low Countries, governed by radical "committees of eighteen." As Calvinist fanaticism alienated many inhabitants, from 1578 onward, the new governor-general Alexander Farnese (1545–1592) succeeded in pacifying the Walloon provinces and Catholic nobility under the Habsburg regime. Farnese then militarily overthrew the Calvinist regimes in the south, ending this chaotic phase in 1585 when he recaptured Antwerp. The military and political instability of this period led to frequent regime changes and power vacuums. In this context, urban magistrates lost their control over executions. Time and again, military tribunals, self-appointed "committees," or ad hoc law courts appropriated—and often abused—the administration of justice. How did the lines between legitimate and illegitimate capital punishment come to be blurred and contested as the revolt escalated into a full-scale civil war?

The legitimacy of violence in the context of war has been explored mainly from the perspective of (un)just warfare. Taking examples from the military expedition of the Army of Flanders in 1572, Geoffrey Parker analyzed in a seminal contribution what he termed the "etiquette of atrocity," the norms and codes of conduct of warfare as they developed across Europe between 1550 and

1700.¹⁰⁷⁶ Although undoubtedly a terrible experience, Parker showed that the desolation and killing that took place during the sieges and sacks, for example in Mechelen in 1572, were often not considered a transgression of these norms. After all, Mechelen willingly opened its gates to the troops of William of Orange, and according to the laws of war, the Army of Flanders was justified in sacking the city after retaking it. Thus, Parker showed that contemporaries were well aware of what actions were—and what actions were not—transgressions of this set of (often unwritten) rules. Rebel war propaganda focused primarily on such transgressions, highlighting attacks on the very old, the very young, and the sick or on stories of rape and violence committed against clerics and churches, as according to the laws of war, those who did not participate in armed battle should not be harmed.¹⁰⁷⁷ This fueled the myth of the Black Legend and tales of the exceptional cruelty of “Spanish” soldiers (although, as we have seen, most of the soldiers of the Army of Flanders were not Spanish at all).¹⁰⁷⁸ Peter Arnade showed that the sacks of reclaimed cities during the military expedition of the Army of Flanders in 1572 featured prominently in the memory culture and historiography of the Dutch Revolt. Judith Pollmann and Erica Kuijpers have argued, however, that a collective narrative around this war violence emerged only later, after ca. 1600.¹⁰⁷⁹ In the 1570s and 1580s, no framework or consensus yet existed for the inhabitants of the Low Countries to create a collective narrative or memory culture concerning their suffering.¹⁰⁸⁰

We are less well informed about the perception of judicial violence and legal transgressions during this period. It was the historian Henk van Nierop who in 1999 drew attention to the experience of “ordinary” people in this phase of the Dutch Revolt, which he described as a civil war.¹⁰⁸¹ Using the well-documented

¹⁰⁷⁶ Geoffrey Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity: The Laws of War in Early Modern Europe,” in *Empire, War and Faith in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 156–157.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity,” 146. For a contemporary discussion on ‘just war’ and ‘just killings’ during warfare from a legal perspective, see also Damhoudere, *Practycke ende handbouvck in criminele zaeken*, 123–26.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts and Civic Patriots*, 212–59.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Pollmann and Kuijpers, “Why Remember Terror?,” 190.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Although exceptions exist. For example, Josse de Weert in detail described the Antwerp Fury of 1576.

¹⁰⁸¹ van Nierop, *Het verraad van het Noorderkwartier*. English translation Henk van Nierop, *Treason in the Northern Quarter: War, Terror, and The Rule of Law in the*

case study of the 1575 trial of Jan Jeroensz in Hoorn, Van Nierop vividly described the terror and anxiety that plagued the inhabitants of the Low Countries. Jan Jeroensz, a Catholic burgher of good standing from Hoorn, in the by-then Calvinist bulwark of the *Noorderkwartier*, was accused of treason, imprisoned, and tortured. Although Jan Jeroensz himself escaped execution, the rebel authorities of the *Noorderkwartier*, headed by rebel leader Diederik Sonoy, frantically tried to uncover a nonexistent treason plot, torturing and killing many innocent people in the process, mostly poor Catholic farmers, beggars, and vagabonds. Interestingly, Van Nierop showed that despite the transgressions of the trial, Jan Jeroensz maintained his faith in the rule of law. Indeed, following the Pacification of Ghent, the 1576 peace treaty between the provinces of the Low Countries that largely restored order, Jan Jeroensz received justice as Sonoy and his men were summoned before the Court of Holland for their transgressions.¹⁰⁸²

Based on chronicles written between 1572 and 1585, this chapter will show that cases such as those of Jan Jeroensz and Aecht Jaffegers fit into a wider pattern. Everywhere in the Low Countries, legal transgressions took place as rebel regimes took over from urban authorities and gained control of the administration of justice. Moreover, we will see that even in times of war, contemporaries, much like Jan Jeroensz, were well aware of the boundaries of justice—and when these were crossed. Indeed, chroniclers carefully recorded transgressions of justice in this politically unstable period. Interestingly, there is a clear difference in how they dealt with violence during sacks, punishment after sieges, and casualties of war, on the one hand, and unjustified legal violence, on the other. As Pollmann and Kuijpers have observed, very few detailed eyewitness accounts of sacks exist.¹⁰⁸³ Nonetheless, chronicles written in this period attest to the enormous internal tensions existing in the cities of the Low Countries in these times of war and the transgressions of legal norms that accompanied them. In this context, the administration of justice became subject to dynamics other than the legal and procedural customs and regulations that until then had protected law and order—dynamics such as revenge, fear, and terror. As a result,

Dutch Revolt (Princeton, N.J., Woodstock: Princeton university press, 2009). See for the interpretation of the Revolt as a civil war: Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd en burgeroorlog*.

¹⁰⁸² van Nierop, *Het verraad van het Noorderkwartier*, 223–31.

¹⁰⁸³ Pollmann and Kuijpers, “Why Remember Terror?,” 190.

summary executions, punishments without proper trial, and even mock executions eroded the integrative function of execution rituals completely.

The *Watergeuzen* and William of Orange

Many inhabitants of the Low Countries experienced the capture of Den Briel in April 1572 by the *watergeuzen* as a turning point in history. For Willem Janszoon Verwer, from Haarlem, it was reason enough to start recording events in his memory book—together with the proclamation of Alba's hated Tenth Penny tax.¹⁰⁸⁴ The *watergeuzen* were a group of rebels and privateers made up of outcasts of all kinds. Some had been banished by the Habsburg regime or were religious refugees, but deserters, farmers, and common criminals were also part of this rebel army.¹⁰⁸⁵ Although they would be celebrated in later propaganda as freedom fighters, in 1572, most towns in Holland and Zeeland were not overly keen to receive the *watergeuzen*. This is not particularly surprising: The *watergeuzen* were far from a professional army. Using guerilla techniques, they kidnapped, robbed, killed, and attacked targets at sea or in the coastal waters of Holland, Zeeland, and Flanders.

Since 1568, William of Orange had cooperated with these *watergeuzen* by providing them with letters of marque to attack enemy ships in his name. He issued these as prince of the autonomous Principality of Orange, thus giving the piracy of the *watergeuzen* a veneer of legitimacy.¹⁰⁸⁶ In many cities in Holland and Zeeland, it was not only the violence of the *watergeuzen* but also changing internal dynamics that eventually led the magistrates to side with the rebels. Immediately after the occupation of Den Briel, William of Orange began sending "commissioners" to the cities of Holland. It was often these commissioners who pressured the magistrates into joining the rebels' cause. Often, the commissioners were in good standing with the civic militia—in 1572, as in 1566,

¹⁰⁸⁴ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 55. On the Tenth Penny, see Chapter Five.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Doedens and Houter, *De Watergeuzen*, 7–8. The name *watergeuzen* refers to those *geuzen* who operated from the water (as opposed to the *bosgeuzen*, who operated from the forests).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Doedens and Houter, *De Watergeuzen*, 14.

it was the civic militias that were often the decisive factor.¹⁰⁸⁷ In any case, one by one, the cities of Holland and Zeeland sided with the prince.

In their attacks, the *watergeuzen* regularly mocked rituals of judicial violence. The memoirs of the Utrecht-born *watergeus* Splinter Helmich are telling. Helmich, previously in exile in London, had been recruited by Count Lumey de la Marck (ca. 1542–1578), the first admiral of the *geuzen* fleet. On April 20, 1572, only a few weeks after the capture of Den Briel, Helmich set sail for the coastal region of the Low Countries. Describing the *geuzen's* occupation of the town of Veere, Helmich wrote that “while they withdrew, some of us charged from the city, so I shot an enemy sergeant, who was dragged under the gallows in the city by some [soldiers], and his ears were cut off (because he was the first of the enemy who was captured).”¹⁰⁸⁸

Although the violence used by the *watergeuzen* certainly did not adhere to the “etiquette of atrocity” described by Parker, such violence was still part and parcel of early modern warfare. At the same time, however, in virtually every place taken over by either the *watergeuzen* or the troops of William of Orange, chroniclers soon started recording not only casualties of war but *legal* transgressions as well. The death of the Spanish officer Don Pacheco in Flushing in May 1572 is a case in point.¹⁰⁸⁹ On April 6, only days after the *watergeuzen* took Den Briel, three quartermasters from the Army of Flanders came to Flushing to prepare for the arrival of a new garrison of around five hundred Spanish soldiers to defend the coastal regions. The population grew restless upon

¹⁰⁸⁷ Grayson, “The Civic Militia in the County of Holland, 1560–81”; Prak, “Citizens, Soldiers and Civic Militias in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe” For the shifting power dynamics in Delft, see Johan Visser, “Om de vrijheid van religie? Het mislukken van Oranjes religievrede in Delft,” in Belt et al. “1572: Opstandig Holland”, 16.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Splinter Helmich, “Journaal van Splinter Helmich: Soldaat en later hopman in dienst van den lande, van 1572 tot 1589, medegedeeld door R. Fruin,” *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* 31 (1875): 164. ‘Ende int aftrecken vielen onder sommighe uyt die stadt, so dat ick onder al een sergent van die vijant schoot, den welcken (omdat hij den eerste was die van die vijant ghecreghen worden) binnen der stadt van sommighe onder die galch ghesleept worden, sijn oren afghesneden wesende’. The city’s secretary described the *geuzen* who entered Veere as ‘Huguenots de toutes nations’, see Rooze-Stouthamer, *De opmaat tot de Opstand*, 132.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Rooze-Stouthamer, *De opmaat tot de Opstand*, 102–7; Raymond Fagel, “Don Pacheco in Vlissingen terechtgesteld (1572): Was hij een wrede onderdrukker of een onschuldige slachtoffer?,” *Archief: Mededelingen van het Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen* 1 (2021).

their arrival, perhaps encouraged by one of William of Orange's commissioners. The existing Walloon garrison was also not keen to receive the Spanish regiment. Soon, the civic militia took control of the city. When a Spanish officer named Don Pacheco approached Flushing a day later, his ship was boarded and he was imprisoned, together with two messengers from Brussels.¹⁰⁹⁰ Raymond Fagel has recently shown that many false rumors about this officer circulated both around the time of his death and in later memory culture—one example being that he was a cousin of the Duke of Alba.¹⁰⁹¹ Moreover, he had been responsible for several executions in Deventer in 1570, where he was sent by Alba to punish an attempted treason plot.¹⁰⁹² His poor reputation cost him dearly now that the rebels had taken over. After the *watergeuzen* suffered losses in an attack by the Army of Flanders near the towns of Veere and Arnemuiden, the officer and messengers were put to death without a proper trial. Splinter Helmich recorded that “they were hanged all three in Flushing, which I have seen myself.”¹⁰⁹³

The leaders of the rebel regimes targeted not only soldiers but also their fellow Netherlandish citizens. In Flushing, two mayors were also imprisoned—although they were not executed. We have already seen how the change of regime in Haarlem ended for Aecht Jaffegers. Her accomplice, the former bailiff Jacob Foppensz, only temporarily escaped the same fate. He fled to Amsterdam, by then the only royalist stronghold left in Holland. Chronicler Wouter Jacobsz Maes recorded in October, however, that the bailiff had been captured and shot: “This good man has suffered a lot because of his office. He was very zealous, and I believe he made himself very odious because of that.”¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹⁰ Rooze-Stouthamer, *De opmaat tot de Opstand*, 101–10.

¹⁰⁹¹ Fagel, “Don Pacheco in Vlissingen terechtgesteld (1572),” 44–51.

¹⁰⁹² These executions were recorded by one of Deventer's mayors, see Johannes de Hullu, “Het dagboek van Dr. Johan Dorre: Burgemeester van Deventer,” *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis van Overijssel* 11 (1896): 338–39. The mayor regarded the treatment of the patients as extremely harsh and shameful.

¹⁰⁹³ Helmich, “Journaal van Splinter Helmich,” 163. ‘ende den 26 Aprilis sijn sij alle drie binnen Vlissinghen gehangen, hetwelek ick gcsien heb’.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz. Amsterdam 1572 - 1578 en Montfoort 1578 - 1579*, 2 vols., ed. Isabella H. van Eeghen (Groningen: Wolters, 1959), I, 38.. ‘dese goede man heeft veel eertijts geleden van sijns officiën wegen; Hij was seer zeloos ende is te vermoeden dat hij hemselfen daerdoer seer odioes maecktede’.

Wouter Jacobsz Maes' diary attests particularly strongly to the cruelties committed by the rebels against clergy. Wouter Jacobsz was himself a member of the clergy. Originally from Gouda, where he was prior of the house of canons, he escaped to Amsterdam after the rebels took over Gouda in 1572. There, he kept a diary from the end of August 1572 onward. Time and again, he mentioned the deaths of monks, many of whom he knew personally.¹⁰⁹⁵ There is continuity here with the religious violence committed by Protestants we have come across in the previous chapters: First, with the appropriation of judicial violence during iconoclasm in 1566, images of saints were "executed"; then, in the winter of 1567–1568, the *bosgeuzen* had assumed judicial repertoires in their torture and lynching of clergy members, including the cutting off of ears, noses, or genitals. The *watergeuzen*—and especially the leaders Lumey and Sonoy—took this even further in the cities under their control. The violence now took on the form of mock trials, a ritualistic inversion of judicial repertoires that gave these murders an air of legitimacy. On June 24, the *watergeuzen* occupied Alkmaar, taking several Franciscans prisoner. Diederik Sonoy brought them to Enkhuizen, his main base since his appointment as governor of West-Friesland by William of Orange, where they were tortured and urged to renounce their faith. They refused. In Amsterdam, Hendrik van Biesten recorded how the rebels "captured four [sic] monks and brought them to Enkhuizen, which four brothers were hanged there."¹⁰⁹⁶

Even more infamous were the executions in July 1572 in Den Briel of seventeen members of the regular clergy without any form of trial, conducted on Lumey's order. Many chroniclers recorded the hanging of the brothers, who were taken to Den Briel after the *watergeuzen* captured the town of Gorcum.¹⁰⁹⁷ Among the martyred monks was also a former priest from Eekloo in Flanders. In Ghent, Van den Vivere described in excruciating detail how this man was executed:

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, I, 48–49; 101–102; 137; 141.

¹⁰⁹⁶ "Vervolg der anteykeningen van Broer Hendrik van Biesten," 441. 'Ende namen vier monniken gevangen die sy brochten tot Enckhuisen, welke vier Broeders aldaer gehangen wierden'.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 266–67. Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 107. *Kroniek eener kloostertzuster*, 35. Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 197. One of the chroniclers included a letter received by the sister of one of the executed monks: *De kroniek van het St.-Geertruiklooster te 's-Hertogenbosch*, 218–19.

First, they cut off both his ears and put them on his chest, and they had a rope, on which was a hook, with which the hangman pierced the roof of his mouth, and he was then pulled upwards and left hanging there to die. It was said that he lived for three more days. [...] This is how the *geuzen* lived with the Catholics.¹⁰⁹⁸

Of course, we cannot be certain about such details: All kinds of rumors circulated about those martyred.¹⁰⁹⁹ Although these accounts do not necessarily reflect the actual course of events, however, it is clear that for chroniclers, such executions were abominations against justice. It is noteworthy that contemporary accounts emphasized the ritual inversion of judicial repertoires and the mockery inflicted on the monks during their trial and execution.¹¹⁰⁰ The main hagiographic account of the events in Den Briel was written by an eyewitness, a nephew of one of the monks, Rutger van Est.¹¹⁰¹ Van Est had been captured together with the monks but was released. His account reported that the monks were forced to walk backward around gallows erected especially for the occasion and were paraded through the city in a procession. The prisoners were forced to sing hymns during this procession—the Catholic counterpart of the psalm-singing of condemned Protestants on the scaffold. Moreover, the monks were executed wearing their habits—as we saw in Chapter Two, the degradation of clergy to laity was an important part of the ritual of executions for heresy. As the ecclesiastical courts “did not shed blood,” members of the clergy suspected of heresy had to be

¹⁰⁹⁸ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 266–67. ‘Alder eerst sij sneden hem af beyde zijn ooren ende zij staecken hem die in sijnen boeseme; ende sij hadden een coorde, daer eenen haeck hanne was, die den buel in sijne verhemelsche slouch in sijnen mont, ende was alsoo upghetrocken ende alleene daer laeten hanghen steerfven; ende bleef levende, zoomen zeyde, drij daghen. Ende de vier Spaengnaerden, die met hem ghevanghen waeren, wierden ooc ghehanghen upde zelve huere, up elcke zijde vanden pastoir twee Spaengnaerden. Alsoo leefden de guesen met de catholijcke.’

¹⁰⁹⁹ For example, Van Campene mistakenly wrote that the priest from Eekloo was executed in Flushing instead of Den Briel. Van Haecht even reported that one of the executed monks in Den Briel had been in fact ‘an inquisitor’.

¹¹⁰⁰ W. Vroom, “De martelaren van Gorcum,” in *Waar de blanke top der duinen en andere vaderlandse herinneringen*, ed. N. C. F. van Sas, 2e dr (Amsterdam: Pandora, 1995), 108.

¹¹⁰¹ Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 159–62.. See also Craig E. Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale. Mathias Hovius among his flock in seventeenth-century Flanders* (New Haven, London: Yale university press, 2002).

defrocked first and then tried by a worldly court. Executing the monks in their habits was thus mocking this ritual. After the execution, indeed, the habits were sold as mock relics, while the bodies of the monks were severely mutilated and dismembered. Lumey himself justified all of this by claiming that he wished to set an example and had acted according to “martial law.”¹¹⁰²

William of Orange—who still presented himself as an advocate of religious peace—was clearly not in control of the violence exercised by those ruling in his name. Perhaps to get a grip on abuses of power, from July 19 to 23, 1572, the prince initiated the organization of a meeting, alleged to represent the States of Holland, which cemented the alliance between the *watergeuzen*, Orange himself (who sent Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde, as his representative), and the cities of Holland (with notable exceptions, such as Amsterdam, which remained loyal to the Habsburg regime).¹¹⁰³ The insurgent States again proclaimed Orange as their legitimate stadtholder, which he had previously been until 1567, when he was replaced by the Count of Boussu.¹¹⁰⁴ During this meeting, rebel leader Lumey was officially appointed governor of Holland in an attempt to regulate his behavior. In his letter of commission, Orange spelled out at length the transgressive behaviors that had to end, including the unfounded trials of clergy members.¹¹⁰⁵

It soon transpired that this assembly had not put an end to violence against the clergy. Even Orange’s own soldiers repeatedly transgressed the law of war by attacking monasteries and killing clerics. Only a few days after the meeting of the States of Holland in Dordrecht, Orange laid siege to the city of Roermond. On taking the city, his soldiers sacked the nearby Carthusian monastery and tortured and killed twelve clergy members. One local chronicler

¹¹⁰² Quoted in Vroom, “De martelaren van Gorcum,” 108. ‘den anderen ten exempele [...] geen ander rechtsvoordering gebruyckt is dan krijchsrecht’.

¹¹⁰³ For the functioning of the States of Holland in the context of the revolt, see: J. W. Koopmans, *De Staten van Holland en de Opstand. De ontwikkeling van hun functies en organisatie in de periode 1544-1588* 13 (’s-Gravenhage: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1990). For the position of Amsterdam, Deen, *Amsterdam ‘Moorddam’*, 161.

¹¹⁰⁴ Judith Pollmann, “Oranje en de Eerste Statenvergadering: Een goed verborgen revolutie,” in *Willem van Oranje en de eerste vrije statenvergadering 1572 Dordrecht*, ed. C.A Tamse (The Hague, 2019), 18–19. Judith Bravenboer, “Drie partijen – één missie? De dynamiek tussen Willem van Oranje, de steden van Holland en de geuzen in 1572,” in Belt et al. “*1572: Opstandig Holland*”, 8.

¹¹⁰⁵ Pollmann, “Oranje en de Eerste Statenvergadering,” 15.

recalled how the prince, “with all his violence, attacked and conquered the city, harming the burghers, clergy, and laity, especially the Carthusians, killed and murdered them, despoiled the city, imprisoned and ransomed many, and installed a new law and council.”¹¹⁰⁶ In Antwerp, even the Lutheran Van Haecht remarked dismissively that “papists and monks and clergy were also murdered and were sacked more than other civilians.”¹¹⁰⁷

Not only in Holland but in other provinces, too, the installation of rebel regimes led to dubious semilegal practices and executions without proper trial. In Hainaut, William’s brother Louis of Nassau had taken Mons at the end of May. The magistrate and civic militia had resisted the coup, leading Nassau to replace the government after taking control.¹¹⁰⁸ In July, the anonymous author of the *Antwerpsch Chronyckje* recorded three executions for heresy in Brussels of burghers from Mons.¹¹⁰⁹ According to Antwerp chronicler Van Haecht, Nassau retaliated by organizing executions on his own account: “Louis [of Nassau], in Mons, Hainaut, hearing the rumor that the Duke of Alba still did not stop burning for religion, also burned several captured Spaniards.”¹¹¹⁰

In the east of the Low Countries, William of Orange’s brother-in-law Count Willem IV van den Bergh had supported his invasion by attacking Guelders in August. In a short time, Van den Bergh successfully conquered numerous important towns in Guelders, including Zutphen, Kampen, and Zwolle. The chronicle of Kampen mayor Arent toe Boecop covered the period

¹¹⁰⁶ Jan van Ryckenroy, *Kroniek der Stad Roermond van 1562 - 1638*, 98. ‘mit allen synen gewalt die stadt befallen ende soe eroeuert, der burgeren , geistelicke ende weltlicke , veel erbarmlofh ende insonders den Cathuser heren, doot geslaegen ende ombracht , die stadt gespolieert, veel gevangen ende geransonneert worden, oik eene nieuwe weth ende raedt aengestelt’.

¹¹⁰⁷ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 200. ‘Papen en monicken en kercken werden oock som dootgesmeten en meer dan ander borgers geplondert’.

¹¹⁰⁸ Yves Junot, “Gueux et huguenots aux frontières de la France et des Pays-Bas espagnols de la ville « surprise » à la forêt refuge (1572-1574),” in *Environnement, territoires et sociétés: Études interdisciplinaires offertes à Corinne Beck*, ed. Marie Delcourte Debarre et al. (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2021), 211.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Antwerpsch chronyckje*, 243.

¹¹¹⁰ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 199. ‘Dese fame comende voer Loduwyc in Bergen Henegou, dat Ducdalbe noch niet op en hielt van branden om saken der religien, heeft oock eenige gevangen Spaengiarden, die hy in scermutsinghe gecregghen heeft, doen verbranden’.

of Van den Bergh's regime. The count besieged the city on August 9, 1572, and Toe Boecop—much against his will—was sent as a representative to surrender the city. Carefully, Toe Boecop recorded in his chronicle the conditions on which the city magistrates surrendered, emphasizing that “all rights, freedoms and justices, privileges, possessions, and customs” would be respected.¹¹¹¹ Only one day later, however, Toe Boecop noted that Van den Bergh already transgressed this agreement by having the provost arrest one of Kampen's burghers, Willem Sanderson, “a very pious man,” because the count “was very angry with him.” Apparently, Sanderson had rented some land previously owned by Van den Bergh, which had been confiscated under the regime of the Duke of Alba. Although several other burghers objected, the count “ordered him to be decapitated in front of the *Vischpoorte* without any manner of justice.”¹¹¹² When the count ordered the provost to imprison several more burghers, Toe Boecop went to ask that he release them. It did not take long before Toe Boecop himself was captured and held prisoner without being properly charged. Moreover, when the magistrate refused to pay some taxes the count asked for, Van den Bergh simply dismissed the entire council and replaced its members with his own men.¹¹¹³ In October, Toe Boecop recorded that the count had imprisoned and tortured another “pious man,” the bailiff of IJsselmuiden, because “a rogue captured in Steenwijck” had accused him of having been “paid by him to commit murder and arson and other crimes.” When the “rogue” himself was about to be executed, however, he confessed to having “falsely accused the bailiff out of hate, envy, and revenge.”¹¹¹⁴

¹¹¹¹ *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 126. ‘Alle haer rechten, vrij- ende gerechtigheden, privilegien, possessien ende gewoonten, als sij tot nu toe gehadt, genooten ende gebruijckt hebben’.

¹¹¹² *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 128. ‘was seer op hem vertoornt; Was een seer vroom man; sonder eenige maniere van rechte liet hy hem voor de Vischpoorte onthalsen’.

¹¹¹³ *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 142.

¹¹¹⁴ *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 141–42. ‘Grave van de Berge hadde aen doen grijpen Jacob Joncker scultus van Ysselmuijden, dat een vroom man was ende va nniemant na gesecht dan alle vromicheyt, omdat hem een stucke schelms, binnen Steenwijck gevangen, uijt haet ende nijdt nagesecht, dat hij van hem tot moerbrant ende andere schelmerien gecocht was; beleden, dat hij den voors. Schulte van Ysselmuijden onrechtelyck uijt haet nijdt, ende wraecke beschuldicht hadde’. It is not clear what happened to the bailiff.

Cities Under Siege

The advancing Army of Flanders, which had embarked on a counteroffensive over the summer and fall of 1572, further increased internal tensions. Orange's invasion plan was in large part based on the expected support of Huguenot forces from France. On Saint Bartholomew's Night in Paris, however, the night of August 23–24, 1572, France's Catholic faction murdered the Huguenot leaders, and a further ten thousand or so Huguenots were killed across France.¹¹¹⁵ Without support from France, Louis of Nassau was forced to surrender Mons on September 19. The city was spared a sacking, and the soldiers were allowed to leave after swearing an oath never to take up arms against His Majesty again. The Duke of Alba immediately opened an investigation into those who had collaborated with the rebels, arrested about a hundred inhabitants, and executed forty-four.¹¹¹⁶

The situation was much worse for Mechelen, the next rebellious city, to which Don Fadrique—Alba's son—laid siege. After the city capitulated, soldiers made their way through it, destroying, killing, and raping whatever and whoever lay in their path, over the course of three days.¹¹¹⁷ For many chroniclers, the violence was shocking: Verwer wrote that Mechelen was "outrageously sacked [...] with various manners of offenses and violence."¹¹¹⁸ In Antwerp, the

¹¹¹⁵ Rosanne Baars, "'The Birds Were in the Net': Reactions in the Netherlands to News of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, 1572," *French History* 35, no. 2 (2021): passim; Jérémie Foa, *Tous ceux qui tombent. Visages du massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy*, À la source (Paris: La Découverte, 2021). Calvinist in the Low Countries where shocked by this devastating blow, but Catholic chroniclers were more understanding. De Pottre explained that 'the King had understood that the admiral wanted to murder him and his two brothers and other lords as well [...] which is why the King killed him first, as was said here'. See *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 46. 'want de coninck verstaen hadde dat den admyrael hem en sijn twee broederen ende noch andere heeren doeden wouden, om dat hij op den coninck vermoede dat hyen hadde doen schieten, daer omme dede den coninck hem erst doeden, alsoe men hier doen sayde'.

¹¹¹⁶ Junot, "Gueux et huguenots aux frontières de la France et des Pays-Bas espagnols de la ville « surprise » à la forêt refuge (1572-1574)," 216–17.

¹¹¹⁷ Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts and Civic Patriots*, 226–29.

¹¹¹⁸ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 13–14. 'Den eersten dach heeft Mechelen swaren last moeten lijden want tis van Remigius ende Bavo des hertochs van Alba zijn volck ingenomen ende zoe schandelijck geplondert, geestelijck ende waerlijck nijemant uutgenomen, als men oijt gesien gehooert heeft, met oeck verscheijden manieren van schoffiericheijt ende geweld, dat God ontfarmen mochte'.

Lutheran Van Haecht, too, vividly described the plundering, robbing, and destruction of the city, recording that the stolen goods were brought into Antwerp.¹¹¹⁹ Although Geoffrey Parker showed that the sack itself accorded with the “etiquette of atrocity” of the time, some of the perceived laws of war were nonetheless transgressed.¹¹²⁰ Chroniclers were especially outraged that the Army of Flanders sacked government and church buildings. In government circles, the violence was similarly frowned upon.¹¹²¹ Nevertheless, the sack served its purpose: Alba hoped to force the other Brabantine cities to surrender, a goal in which he succeeded. Consequently, some chroniclers seem to have been rather relieved about the defeat of the rebels. In Brussels, Jan de Pottre emphasized that after the conquest of Mechelen, the other cities in Brabant soon “came to the mercy of His Majesty”.¹¹²²

The situation was very similar for the cities of Guelders, the Army of Flanders’ next target. On November 16, the army laid siege to Zutphen. The city surrendered and was sacked shortly afterward. Immediately after the sack, rumors circulated that “Spanish” soldiers had slaughtered the population: Van Haecht wrote that “it was heard that at least eight hundred burghers died” and that “on the roads outside of the town, they found many murdered women and children.”¹¹²³ Recently, however, Johan Visser has shown that most of those killed were soldiers, not burghers.¹¹²⁴ As in Brabant, the other towns of the province surrendered after the sack of Zutphen. In Kampen, mayor Arent toe Boecop described the unceremonious exit of Van den Bergh, who was caught trying to

¹¹¹⁹ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 217–218.

¹¹²⁰ Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity,” 156–157.

¹¹²¹ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 93.

¹¹²² *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 51. ‘Item, doen Mechelen ghewonnen was, trock den leegher nae Loeven ende vort nae Diest ende nae Thienen, die alle quamen tot zijnder ghenaden, ende voorts nae Maestricht om nae Remonde, ende die van Remonde quamen oock tot zijnder ghenaden, ende alsoe vorts nae Niemeighen om voerts nae Zuffen te trecken’.

¹¹²³ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 222. ‘Ende soo men hoorde bleven daer wel by 800 borgers doot, so gehangen en verdroncken [...]; op de wegen buyten stat, vont men oock viel vrouwen en kinderen vermoort ligghen’.

¹¹²⁴ See, Johan Visser, *Zutphen 1572: De geschiedenis van een bloedbad* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2022), passim. These soldiers had served under Louis of Nassau in Mons, and had been allowed to leave the city freely, on condition that they would not take up arms against the King again. However, they had immediately joined Van den Bergh’s forces in Zutphen and were now hanged without mercy.

escape the city on a manure cart, “dressed as a maid,” after which his soldiers deserted en masse.¹¹²⁵ Like De Pottre, in his chronicle, Toe Boecop emphasized mercy rather than violence, recording how Kampen, Zwolle, and Deventer were received in mercy after performing a ceremonial bending of the knee.¹¹²⁶

For Naarden, the first city in Holland to come under siege, the Army of Flanders intended to use the same strategy. Closer to the rebel strongholds of Holland, however, Alba encountered greater resistance, and the city did not open its gates immediately. After the city surrendered, the royal army massacred most of the population.¹¹²⁷ This outrageous violence proved counterproductive. Even though Naarden had eventually surrendered voluntarily, the population was still massacred. Instead of forcing the other towns of Holland to surrender, this approach led the rebels to take tighter control of those towns, and tensions between the rebels and other inhabitants increased even further.

The next target of the Army of Flanders was Verwer’s Haarlem. Verwer was very well informed about the internal power dynamics in his hometown; his father, Jan Jansz Verwer, was one of the city’s mayors.¹¹²⁸ The son described how the radical rebels seized power after representatives of the regime were sent to Amsterdam to negotiate a surrender with the royal governor of Holland, the Count of Boussu, who promised mercy for all inhabitants.¹¹²⁹ The rebels framed those representatives as traitors who wanted to surrender the city to the enemy and used the chaos to justify installing a military regime. Several prominent Catholic burghers from Haarlem who had already fled to Amsterdam tried to

¹¹²⁵ *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 148.

¹¹²⁶ *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 148–49.

¹¹²⁷ Hortensius and Lambertus, *Over de opkomst en den ondergang van Naarden*, ed. P. Peerlkamp and A. Perk (Utrecht: Kemink en zoon, 1866). Lambertus Hortensius wrote and published an eyewitness account of the events in Naarden, which played an important role in the development of a collective memory culture around the sacks of the Army of Flanders. Still, Hortensius’ account also attests to the internal tensions within Naarden. In his narrative, the two mainly responsible for the slaughter of most of the population were in fact former inhabitants of Naarden who had been banished under the rebel regime. It was them who encouraged the sack and murder of their own fellow citizens, as revenge.

¹¹²⁸ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, I–II.

¹¹²⁹ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 18. Pieter Janssz Kies - who had been responsible for sentencing Aecht Jaffegers - was the most prominent amongst them.

convince their fellow citizens to surrender, but their messenger was hanged by the rebels in a clear statement of intent.¹¹³⁰

After the Army of Flanders laid siege to Haarlem on December 4, panic also spread to rebel areas outside the city, and the militant rebel leaders' actions grew out of control. As in Henk van Nierop's *Noorderkwartier* a few years later, fear and anxiety were used to justify far-reaching "security measures," while legal instruments that had been the prerogative of the urban or provincial law courts were appropriated for radical use. Verwer recorded that when Haarlem representatives returned from Amsterdam—unaware of the regime change—they were captured on the spot and sent to the Prince of Orange in Delft. One of them, pensionary Adriaan van Assendelft, was executed in Delft as a traitor on December 24. Wouter Jacobsz recorded that he was hanged, decapitated, and quartered—Verwer noted that "his head was put on a spike for two hours."¹¹³¹

The clergy, in particular, were not safe. Prior Wouter Jacobsz, who recorded one attack after another in this period, was especially shocked by the death of Cornelis Musius in Leiden, the prominent and well-respected prior of the Saint Agatha convent in Delft.¹¹³² Musius had been a personal friend of William of Orange, who had resided in the convent since taking over the city in the spring. After being threatened by Lumey, Musius had left the city with a letter from the prince to ensure his safe passage. He was subsequently captured, however, by rebel soldiers and brought to Leiden on the orders of Lumey. There, during a mock-trial, Musius was first forced to dispute matters of faith with a Reformed preacher.¹¹³³ Afterward, he was tortured, allegedly to force him to disclose the location of some church treasures. The torture took place in the

¹¹³⁰ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 20–21.

¹¹³¹ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, 111; Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 30.

¹¹³² *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, 87, 99, 101–102. See for a martyrological account for the many Catholic deaths in this period also P. Opmeer, *Martelaars-boek, ofte historie der Hollandse martelaren, welke om de Christen Catholijke gods-dienst, soo ten tijden van de woeste heidenen, als der Hervormde nieugesinden seer wreed zijn omgebracht* (By Petrus Pratanus, 1700). Musius' case on p. 85. Opmeer was a fellow citizen of Leiden and knew Musius personally. Musius' death was for him the reason to join the Army of Flanders in the fight against the rebels.

¹¹³³ For the Catholic memory culture that developed around Musius' torture and execution see C.M. Lenarduzzi and Judith Pollmann, "Bread and Stone: Catholic Memory in Post-Reformation Leiden," in *Remembering the Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Walsham et al., 1st, *Remembering the medieval and early modern worlds* (London: Routledge, 2020), 67.

house of a Catholic Leiden burgher who had recently gone into exile. Interestingly, one of the remaining residents protested on the grounds that such practices should take place in the city prison.¹¹³⁴ Shortly thereafter, Musius was hanged on the gallows on the *Blauwe Steen*, the execution place in the city center, without any form of trial or sentence. Moreover, his death was exceptionally slow due to a tumor in his neck. When the *watergeuzen* refused to release his body, the nun Susanna van Etten allegedly paid a substantial ransom to bury the prior in consecrated ground.¹¹³⁵ Like the martyrs of Gorcum, a cult of martyrdom soon developed around Musius. In just one manifestation of this, in the first half of the seventeenth century, Jan van de Velde published a print of the prior surrounded by scenes of his torture and death (Fig. 6.1).



Figure 6.1 Jan van de Velde (II), *Portrait of Cornelis Musius, with Scenes of his Martyrdom*, 1632–1634, 27.7 × 32.2, etching, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

¹¹³⁴ Judith Pollmann, *Tussen Lumey en Oranje. Leiden en de opstand van 1572*, 3 Oktoberlezingen 2022 ([Leiden]: Primavera Pers, 2022), 25–26.
¹¹³⁵ Els Kloek (red.), *1001 Vrouwen uit de Nederlandse geschiedenis*, Nijmegen 2013, 189–190.

Back in Haarlem, transgressions worsened as the siege continued. On January 17, in retaliation for an attempt by the Army of Flanders to storm the city, twelve captured soldiers were hanged. After their deaths, according to Verwer, their heads were severed and thrown over the city walls toward the besieging enemy.¹¹³⁶ The most shocking executions, however, were undoubtedly those that took place on May 27. Verwer describes how first, the Army of Flanders, having erected gallows upon their camp bulwark, scandalously hanged several Haarlem burghers and soldiers naked, upside down, “before the eyes of the city.”¹¹³⁷ The soldiers within Haarlem were utterly infuriated and “ran like raging feral dogs” at the sight of this transgression.¹¹³⁸ They erected a gallows of their own on top of the city wall and hanged eleven respectable Haarlem citizens who were known to be loyal to the Habsburg government and had been held hostage since the beginning of the siege.¹¹³⁹ “What anxiety there was in the city this night,” wrote Verwer, “that they were all hanged and drowned together, without sentence or verdict, against all laws and justice.”¹¹⁴⁰ Verwer’s own father was a loyalist prisoner—although he was not hanged. Outside of Haarlem, too, the actions of the soldiers made an impression. In Amsterdam, Wouter Jacobsz recorded the killings.¹¹⁴¹ In Antwerp, the Lutheran Van Haecht emphasized that the executions took place “without the consent of the council or the captains, because they had only been sentenced to banishment or flogging.”¹¹⁴²

¹¹³⁶ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 37. Many more similar accounts of mutilated and executed enemies follow in Verwer’s diary, hanging, drowning, or stabbing anyone suspected of treason. Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 67. 33, 50, 52, 62, 71.

¹¹³⁷ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 81–82. ‘hebben haer voer die des stads ooghen opgehangen ende een met zijn been omhooghe, moedernaect’.

¹¹³⁸ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 81–82. ‘het was al op den been ende liepen als raesende verwoeste honden’.

¹¹³⁹ Verwer listed all their names, among them Lambert Rosevelt (mayor and pensionary of Haarlem), and Quirijn Thalesius (mayor, an old and learned man, former acquaintance of Erasmus of Rotterdam), together with his daughter, a beguine.

¹¹⁴⁰ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 81–82. ‘Watten benauthelijck is, onder alle menschen. Dus zijn zij alle te samen opgehangen ende verdroncken sonder sententie of vonnis tegens alle rechten ende justicien’.

¹¹⁴¹ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, 135.

¹¹⁴² Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 250. ‘alles sonder concent van raet oft capiteynen, want sy waeren maer verordeelt gegheeselt en gebannen te syn’.

After a siege of six months, Haarlem was obliged to surrender to the Army of Flanders. The rebel soldiers were all put to death. The first to be executed, recorded Verwer, was the soldier responsible for the deaths of the loyalist burghers at the end of May.¹¹⁴³ In the days that followed, Verwer recorded that, in total, around 1,735 soldiers were killed (Alba himself mentioned around twenty-three hundred).¹¹⁴⁴ The city itself managed to buy off a sack, and the population was spared. The population received a royal pardon, except for fifty-seven burghers who were to be held as prisoners to keep the city under control.¹¹⁴⁵ Verwer was clearly relieved. He emphasized the mercy the city had received and described how the former enemy now provided the famished population of Haarlem with bread.¹¹⁴⁶ Once again, chroniclers in other cities, too, were well informed: In Antwerp, Van Haecht recorded in detail the numbers of executed rebels in Haarlem, as well as the burghers kept as hostages.¹¹⁴⁷

In the summer of 1573, the Duke of Alba finally left the Low Countries to be succeeded by Luis de Zúñiga y Requesens (1528-1576).¹¹⁴⁸ Requesens continued the expedition against the rebels in Holland and Zeeland but was not very successful. By the fall of 1573, the siege of Alkmaar had turned into a failure, and the Habsburg fleet lost a sea battle on the Zuiderzee to the rebels, who captured the royal governor of Holland, the Count of Boussu. The siege of Leiden, which lasted for an entire year, ended in a defeat for the Army of Flanders in October 1574. Nor did the rebels' endeavors proceed without serious setbacks. A new invasion by William of Orange and Louis of Nassau in 1574 ended in failure after the Battle of Mookerheyde, during which both Louis and another of Orange's brothers, Henry of Nassau (1550-1574), died.¹¹⁴⁹

Although the line between killings under martial law and legal transgressions was thin, chroniclers continued to distinguish between the two.

¹¹⁴³ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 113–20.

¹¹⁴⁴ Gachard, *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, II, 391-395.

¹¹⁴⁵ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 121–27.

¹¹⁴⁶ Verwer Janszoon, *Memoriaelbouck*, 110.

¹¹⁴⁷ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 258–260.

¹¹⁴⁸ Soen, "Philip II's Quest: The Appointment of Governors-General during the Dutch Revolt (1559-1598)," 9–11. Already from 1570 onwards, Alba had repeatedly requested to leave the Low Countries, and a successor was appointed in 1571: Juan de la Cerda, the Duke of Medinaceli (c. 1514 – 1575), but because of a conflict with Alba, the latter never came into function.

¹¹⁴⁹ van Stipriaan, *De zwijger*, 430–32.

Gasparus de L'Agarge, a priest in the entourage of the loyalist Gilles de Berlaymont, Lord of Hierges (ca. 1540-1579), kept a chronicle of his experience during the Battle of Mookerheyde and the subsequent expedition through the Bommelerwaard in the summer and autumn of 1574.¹¹⁵⁰ Recording the arrival of the Army of Flanders in the village of Rosmalen, in Brabant, he complained that they were poorly received by the local farmers, who even killed some soldiers.¹¹⁵¹ In retaliation for the "arrogance and spite" of these farmers, the surviving soldiers decided to set fire to as many houses in the village as the number of soldiers killed. In L'Agarge's opinion, this response "would be considered reasonable according to the art of war"; however, when the arsonists were subsequently hanged by the army's commanders, L'Agarge agreed that "they were treated justly because even if the farmers did this, it should not be avenged by the common soldiers but should be reserved for correction by His Majesty."¹¹⁵² Eventually, the rebels in the Bommelerwaard succeeded in breaking up the Army of Flanders again by flooding the surrounding land. Admittedly, this technique led them to victory during the sieges of Alkmaar and Leiden, but the local farmers suffered great losses from these inundations. The method was so destructive that even Philip II did not allow Alba to use it when the latter proposed to flood the rebel provinces of Holland and Zeeland, because "this strategy would give rise to a great disadvantage: that once broken, the province would be lost and ruined forever,

¹¹⁵⁰ Gilles de Berlaymont, Lord of Hierges was stadtholder for the king of Drenthe, Friesland, Groningen and Overijssel, Guelders, Namur, and Artois, and substitute stadtholder of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht. As *maestre de campo* he also commanded a *tercio* in the Army of Flanders: in this capacity, he was responsible for the infamous Sack of Oudewater in 1575.

¹¹⁵¹ Gasparus de L'Agarge, *De Blokkade van Zalt-Bommel*, ed. H. F. M. Huybers, Werken, uitgegeven door Gelre. Vereniging tot beoefening van Geldersche geschiedenis, oudheidkunde, en recht 16 (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1925), 32–33. 'mer wanner het geviel, dat die Geusse knechten Karen duertocht namen duer dit voorss. dorp, zoo was daer alle dynck in abundantia'.

¹¹⁵² L'Agarge, *De Blokkade van Zalt-Bommel*, 33. 'waren se gedachtich den hoemoet ende spiit [...] ende het scheen oock wat rationabel te ziin te achten nae den kriishandel; nochtans d' autoren ofte hoofden van desen feyt, als se gemelt wairen, worden se gehangen [...] mer recht word't hair gedaen, wandt al wast sullicx geschiet van die boren van Rosmael, dit behoorde nochtans die ghemeine soldaden niet te wreeken, mer behoorde gereserveert te worden tot correctie des Maj'.

nor must we do so, because we should also recognize that it would earn us a reputation for cruelty that would be better avoided.”¹¹⁵³

The context of war continued to put pressure on the internal dynamics within cities under siege. In 1574, after leaving the Bommelerwaard, the Army of Flanders laid siege to Zierikzee. One of the city’s mayors, Cornelis Claesz, described in his chronicle the conflicts that arose over the inundations of the land initiated by the rebel leader Ruichaver. Cornelis Claesz recorded that he was threatened by “those spoilers and piercers of the land” when he tried to prevent the inundations: “It was said to us that [...] if we valued our lives, we should not come around there, then we could keep our heads this time, and that we would find other land.”¹¹⁵⁴ According to Cornelis Claesz’ account, the conflict between the Zierikzee magistrates and Ruichaver reached its climax in October, when Ruichaver arrested the entire board of magistrates and even attempted to murder them. The chronicler recorded Ruichaver’s statement that “these lords are in the place where they will die,” to which one of the magistrates answered, “How? Lord Captain, do you plan to kill us without a trial? If we committed a crime, take us prisoner and interrogate us.”¹¹⁵⁵ It did not come to that, but Cornelis Claesz himself was stabbed and wounded in the arm. As he fell ill following this injury, he did not directly witness the defeat of the rebels and their departure from the city, but he was still well informed: Relieved, he wrote that the city was to be spared a sack if its people would pay a ransom.¹¹⁵⁶

The Provinces Under the Habsburg Regime

With the change of regime as Requesens succeeded Alba, local authorities that had remained loyal seemed, at first, to be regaining some of their autonomy. One

¹¹⁵³ Quote and translation from Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity,” 153.

¹¹⁵⁴ J. Pot, “Verhaal van het beleg voor Zierikzee (1575-1576) door Cornelis Claes,” *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 50 (1929): 118. ‘op soo lief als wij ons lijf hadden, dat wij daar niet omtrent komen en zouden, dan konden wij desemaal onse halsen behouden; dat wij wel een ander land vinden zouden’.

¹¹⁵⁵ Pot, “Verhaal van het beleg voor Zierikzee (1575-1576) door Cornelis Claes,” 123–24. ‘den voorszegde Ruijghaver onder andere seyde: dese heeren zijn hier op de plaatse, daar se sterven sullen etc. Zulks dat de voornoemde Thomas Leendertse seijde: ‘Hoe? heer capiteijn, wild gij ons aldus vermoorden ongehoord? Hebben wij wat bedreven, neemnd ons gevangen en laat ons hooren ete’.

¹¹⁵⁶ Pot, “Verhaal van het beleg voor Zierikzee (1575-1576) door Cornelis Claes,” 131.

of the first steps Requesens took as the new governor of the Low Countries was to convene the States General of the loyal provinces in June 1574.¹¹⁵⁷ During the meeting, he announced the cancellation of the plans for the Tenth Penny and the abolition of the Council of Troubles. The activities of the latter had already decreased significantly after the pardon of 1570, but after Alba left the country, no further executions took place on its orders.¹¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Requesens proclaimed another general pardon to reconcile Philip's subjects with their king.¹¹⁵⁹ As in 1570, the proclamation of the pardon was accompanied by the symbolic removal of gallows. Ypres chronicler Van Hernighem recorded how the gallows "that had stood there for a long time" were taken down when it was proclaimed.¹¹⁶⁰ In the rebel provinces, unsurprisingly, the pardon did not make a great impression. Tellingly, the Lutheran Van Haecht reported how "the cities of Holland and Zeeland mocked the pardon, [...] some nailed the placard of the pardon, with its image, on the gallows."¹¹⁶¹

Despite Alba's departure, heresy prosecutions continued. In Antwerp, the Anabaptists remained the primary target of prosecution.¹¹⁶² In February 1573, Van Haecht recorded the executions of seven Anabaptists, who were burned alive with their mouths sewn up; he recorded more executions of Anabaptists in May and October.¹¹⁶³ In Ghent, heresy executions seem to have been more controversial. Van Campene recorded that the magistrates did not dare to read the sentences aloud—which conflicted with the legal procedures in place at the

¹¹⁵⁷ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 98–99.

¹¹⁵⁸ Gustaaf Janssens, "« L'abolition du Conseil des Troubles du duc d'Albe, un conseil "communément haï" aux Pays-Bas (1573-1576) », in *Légiférer, gouverner et juger: Mélanges d'histoire du droit et des institutions (IXe-XXIe siècle) offerts à Jean-Marie Cauchies à l'occasion de ses 65 ans*, ed. Eric Bousmar, Philippe Desmette and Nicolas Simon, Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis-Bruxelles Histoire 144 (Bruxelles: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2016), unpaginated online resource.

¹¹⁵⁹ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 100.

¹¹⁶⁰ Augustijn van Hernighem, Den tweeden bouck inhoudende alle de geheschiedenesse [...], Fonds Goethals-Vercruysse, ms. 296., State archives, 28.

¹¹⁶¹ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 310. 'maer de steden van Hollant en Zeeland hielden haeren spodt met het perdon; [...] sommige nagelden het placcaet van 't perdon met syn conterfeytsel aen de galghe en soo voorts'.

¹¹⁶² Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, 164–65. According to Marnef, 38 anabaptists were executed in 1573, 8 more in 1575, 2 in 1576, and 6 in 1577.

¹¹⁶³ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 241.

time.¹¹⁶⁴ Moreover, multiple times, he reported unrest during Anabaptist executions. Although the practice of mouth-blocking was by this point standard procedure, spectators had little fear in consoling their coreligionists on the scaffold.¹¹⁶⁵

In the cities remaining under Habsburg rule, as in those under rebel control, the context of war led to internal tensions, fear, and anxiety around treason. Chronicles testify to an increasingly significant role for the personal dynamics around revenge in the administration of justice. Van Campene recorded how in February 1574, the Ghent magistrate sentenced to death a prison guard from Kortrijk who had “developed a bitter hate” for a Kortrijk pensionary called Parmentier.¹¹⁶⁶ Together with the collector of confiscations in the Castellany of Kortrijk, Jan Haesbijt, the prison guard had blackmailed a man imprisoned for Anabaptism and sedition (he had joined the *watergeuzen* in Flushing in 1572): Promising his release, they forced the prisoner into giving false testimony against Parmentier and claiming that he, too, had been involved in heresy. When the prisoner discovered that he would be executed regardless, however, he withdrew his statement and reported the blackmail by the guard and collector. As a sign of mercy, he was hanged rather than burned. Some weeks later, the prison guard was executed, his body displayed on the gallows field afterward, and his possessions confiscated for the Crown.¹¹⁶⁷ In March, the collector Jan Haesbijt was also condemned to death for his role in the plot. He was decapitated in a chair because he had fallen seriously ill during his trial.¹¹⁶⁸ Chronicler Van den Vivere described his death, including how the chair “fell backward after the decapitation because [it] broke down in two places.”¹¹⁶⁹

As in the rebel provinces, fear and anxiety around treason were used to justify the appropriation of legal power by higher authorities at the expense of the urban courts. In Antwerp, chroniclers paid much attention to executions in

¹¹⁶⁴ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 116.

¹¹⁶⁵ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister* 117–18.

¹¹⁶⁶ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 126–27. ‘Den 19 werd ter galge veroordeeld de cypier van Kortrijk, die eenen bitteren haet hebbende opgenomen tegen den pensionaris van die stad’.

¹¹⁶⁷ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 127.

¹¹⁶⁸ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 129.

¹¹⁶⁹ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 268. ‘ende wiert onthoofd jn eenen dronckaerts stoel gheheel nieuwe ende viel naer tonthoofden van achterwaerts omme dat den zelven stoel jn twee plaetsen brack’.

the context of treason conspiracies. In March 1574, an attempt was discovered to open the gates for the troops of William of Orange.¹¹⁷⁰ Van Haecht recorded how two Spanish soldiers and two Anabaptists were quartered on the Meir and their body parts displayed on the citadel. Interestingly, the Lutheran chronicler seemed relieved that the plot had failed, writing that “it looked very terrible to cut people into pieces like this, but they had started an evil work: If they had succeeded, the city’s and land’s well-being would have depended on it, but it did not come this far.”¹¹⁷¹ Again in December 1574, Van Haecht recorded four executions of “traitors” who tried to deliver the city into rebel hands. The four men were “dragged through the city on a cart, and afterward, three of them were hanged, and one of them was quartered after he died and the body parts put on the city walls.”¹¹⁷² In January 1575, another seven conspirators were executed, and fourteen more followed in February. Guido Marnef has shown that it was the governor, Requesens, and not the urban government that was responsible for these spectacular executions.¹¹⁷³ Requesens did not trust the local judges: Indeed, it soon turned out that several of them had been part of the treason plot themselves. The Antwerp magistrates protested that the sentencing of Antwerp burghers should be carried out by the urban alderman’s bench, but it was to no avail. Requesens ordered that the Council of Brabant be expanded with two councilors of the Council of State, the chairs of two other provincial councils, and a former councilor of the Council of Troubles to conduct the trial.

Even more of a threat to the authority of urban governments, however, were the soldiers of the Army of Flanders. In 1574, Van Haecht recorded how the widow of Gerard Sterck had to leave her house “because of the violence and

¹¹⁷⁰ See also Guido Marnef, “Antwerpen en de Opstand 1568-1574: Een analyse van complotten en gewapend verzet,” in *HistoriANT: Jaarboek voor Antwerpse geschiedenis* (Antwerp: Gompel&Svacina, 2020).

¹¹⁷¹ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 288. ‘Die welcke op de Meerebrugghe gevierendeelt werden, synde eerst een weynich geworcht. De quartiren werden rontom aen ’t casteel gehangen; de borgeren waeren haer monden gestopt, omdat sy niet van de catolycke religie en waeren. ’t Stont seer deerlyck de menschen also in stucken te houwen, maer hadden oock een quaet wercke begonnen: hadden sy ’t connen volbrengen so hadde er mogen der stats en landts welvaren aen gelegen syn’.

¹¹⁷² Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 328. ‘Item op den 24 dach Desember so werden 4 mannen op een horde alle de stadt door gesleypt en daer naer soo werden die dry gehangen en een van dien doot wesende, wert gequartiert ende terstont de virendeelen ter stadt uyt gestecken’.

¹¹⁷³ Marnef, “Antwerpen en de Opstand 1568-1574,” 62.

multitude of whores whom the Spaniards brought in daily.”¹¹⁷⁴ One of her servants remained in the house to keep an eye on the situation. When that servant wounded one of the soldiers during a confrontation, the soldiers brought him to one of their “electors”—a representative elected by the troops—for punishment. The elector wished to investigate the matter, but when the wounded soldier died, his comrades’ behavior spiraled out of control. Van Haecht describes how “they took [the servant] from the elector’s hands [and] brought him underneath the gallows on the market square.” Shortly afterward, following a brief escape by the unfortunate servant, they

killed him with many injuries, by shooting as well as stabbing, and dragged him to the market square and hung him from the gallows from his feet. The people moaned, but no burgher dared help him. The next day he was brought down and buried, and money was collected to hold a requiem for his soul.¹¹⁷⁵

Eventually, it would be the large-scale mutinies within the Army of Flanders that led to a rapprochement between the rebellious Holland and Zeeland and the other provinces. There had been growing discontent among the soldiers about late—or nonexistent—payments. After the sacks of 1572, the army increasingly allowed cities to buy their freedom from sacking after a siege. Although this was a huge relief for the populations in question, the soldiers were now denied their income. Already in Haarlem in 1573, mutiny had arisen after the soldiers were not permitted to sack the city; the leaders, despite being granted a pardon, had been shot.¹¹⁷⁶ By 1575, the war was far from over, as peace negotiations initiated by Requesens had recently foundered on the topic of religion, but in September 1575, King Philip II was officially bankrupt. After the troops of the Army of

¹¹⁷⁴ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 301–302. ‘welcke vrouwe haer huys verlaten hadde om ’t gewelt en menichte der hoeren, die de Spaengiarden daer dagelycx inbrochten’.

¹¹⁷⁵ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 301–302. ‘aen den avent namen sy dien uyt des electuurs handen, vuerden hem onder de galge op de Merckt staende; en eenige hadden hem wel willen gracie doen, ommers hy geraeckte aen ’t loopen ende liep tot in de Swerdsusterstrate, daer se hem doyden met vuel wonden, so scieten en steken; en sleypten hem op de Merckt, hingen hem met een voet aen de galge. Wat de mensche kermde, geen borger en dorst hem helpen; des anderdaech werdt hy afgedaen ende begraven en bedelden geldt om een sielmisse te doen’.

¹¹⁷⁶ Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659*, 172.

Flanders were denied a sack of Zierikzee in the spring of 1576, the situation got out of hand. By then, the soldiers stationed in the Low Countries had not been paid for almost forty months. Tensions arose when the city was not able to pay its ransom, a task in which it eventually succeeded only with the help of the States of Brabant. According to Mayor Cornelis Claesz, the costs were so high that the burghers, “as a manner of speaking, went from purgatory to hell.”¹¹⁷⁷ Cornelis Claesz also described how the Welsh regiment killed some soldiers of the Spanish regiment in the hope of being paid first.¹¹⁷⁸ General Cristóbal de Mondragón (1504/1514-1596) tried desperately to keep the peace, but it was no use. A large-scale mutiny emerged over the summer of 1576, with soldiers now not only targeting the rebel provinces of Holland and Zeeland but looting the loyal provinces as well. In July, the mutineers conquered the town of Aelst, in Brabant, which they used as a stronghold.¹¹⁷⁹

To make matters worse, the sudden death of Requesens in early 1576 left a power vacuum in the Low Countries. In the absence of an appointed governor, King Philip II transferred power temporarily to a local institution, the Council of State.¹¹⁸⁰ The pace of events accelerated considerably when the council permitted the States of Brabant and other local authorities to raise troops of their own as protection against the mutinying soldiers. The States of Brabant—by now backed by their own soldiers and in close contact with William of Orange—soon effected a coup and took control of the Council of State.¹¹⁸¹ The polarization between (Spanish) soldiers and inhabitants of the Low Countries increased still further when the mutineers were outlawed; soon afterward, another placard made their killing mandatory.¹¹⁸² Soldiers who had not previously been part of the mutiny now saw no other option but to join the roving bands out of fear for

¹¹⁷⁷ Pot, “Verhaal van het beleg voor Zierikzee (1575-1576) door Cornelis Claes,” 134. ‘ende waren bij maniere van spreken van 't vagevuur in de helle gekomen’.

¹¹⁷⁸ Pot, “Verhaal van het beleg voor Zierikzee (1575-1576) door Cornelis Claes,” 132.

¹¹⁷⁹ Mutiny was always a risk in Early Modern warfare, but the situation was extremely tense in the Low Countries in the 1570s. Geoffrey Parker showed that the period between 1572 and 1576 was one of the absolute highpoints of unrest within the Army of Flanders with no less than five large scale mutinies taking place in these years.

¹¹⁸⁰ Gustaaf Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer: Loyale oppositie tegen Spanjes bewind in de Nederlanden van Alva tot Farnese 1567-1578* (Heule-Kortrijk, 1989).

¹¹⁸¹ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 108–9. The imprisonment and

¹¹⁸² Geoffrey Parker, “Mutiny and Discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders 1572-1607,” *Past & Present*, no. 58 (1973).

their lives. Disposing of the mutinying soldiers was now the top priority for all authorities: In October, the Council of State convened the States General on its own account, including the rebel provinces, to continue negotiating a peace treaty. In November 1576, the representatives of the provinces signed the Pacification of Ghent, which stipulated that they would join forces to defend the country from the mutineers.¹¹⁸³ Around the same time, the mutiny peaked as the soldiers marched on Antwerp and sacked the city over three days.¹¹⁸⁴ In horror, Antwerp chronicler Josse de Weert spent many pages recording those who had been killed in the violence.¹¹⁸⁵

It is little wonder, then, that chroniclers everywhere were relieved about the peace treaty. In Brussels, Jan de Pottre recorded the development of the peace negotiations in detail, emphasizing the pending departure of the soldiers.¹¹⁸⁶ The Pacification of Ghent put an end to the chaos and legal transgressions taking place in the rebel provinces. Like most early modern peace treaties, it stipulated that all grievances should be “forgotten.”¹¹⁸⁷ In terms of criminal justice, the agreement meant amnesty for all and even required the destruction of judicial administrative records and files. On the one hand, Catholics were now better protected against the legal transgressions of the *watergeuzen*, and many Catholic exiles returned to their homes. *Watergeuzen* leader Lumey had been arrested by the States of Holland in 1573, and now,

¹¹⁸³ Michel Baelde and P. van Peteghem, eds., *Opstand en pacificatie in de Lage Landen: Bijdrage tot de studie van de Pacificatie van Gent verslagboek van het Tweedaags Colloquium bij de vierhonderdste verjaardag van de Pacificatie van Gent* (Gent, [’s-Gravenhage]: Snoeck-Ducaju; Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1976)

¹¹⁸⁴ Recently, Raymond Fagel has shown that a battle between the mutineering Spanish soldiers and the Army of the States between the city walls actually preceded the pillaging: see Raymond Fagel, “The Origins of the Spanish Fury at Antwerp (1576): A Battle Within City Walls,” *Early Modern Low Countries* 4, no. 1 (2020).

¹¹⁸⁵ Weert, Chronycke oft journal, 82–85.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 71.

¹¹⁸⁷ A. S. de Blécourt and N. Japikse, *Klein plakkaatboek van Nederland: Verzameling van ordonnantiën en plakkaten betreffende regeeringsvorm, kerk en rechtspraak, (14e eeuw tot 1749)* (Groningen: Wolters, 1919), 113–17. ‘Eerst dat alle offensien, iniuriën, misdaden ende bescadicheden, gesciet ter zaken van den troublen tusschen den ingesetenen van de provincien, die in dit jegenwoordich tractaet gecomprenhendeert zijn, zoe waer ende in wat manieren dattet zy, zullen vergeven, vergeten ende gehouden zijn als niet gesciet, zulcx dat ter oirzake van dien te geenē tyde mentie gemaect oft yemandt aengesproken en zal moegen worden.’

investigations against Sonoy were opened.¹¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, the anti-heresy placards were canceled in all provinces, and the Criminal Ordinances were abolished.¹¹⁸⁹ The question of religion, the most controversial point of divergence between the Reformed rebel provinces of Holland and Zeeland and the other fifteen provinces, which were concerned with protecting Catholic primacy, was postponed to a soon-to-be-held meeting of the States General. Although the Pacification of Ghent is traditionally regarded as the “end” of religious persecution in the Low Countries, however, it is worth noting that heresy executions continued to take place in the subsequent months. In January 1577, six Anabaptists were burned at the stake in Antwerp, among them Hans Bret, who would become a well-known martyr on account of the tongue screw that was saved after his execution (Fig. 6.2).¹¹⁹⁰



Figure 6.2 Tongue Screw of Hans Bret, family archive De Hoop Scheffer, Amsterdam.

¹¹⁸⁸ Pollmann, “Oranje en de Eerste Statenvergadering,” 24; van Nierop, *Het verraad van het Noorderkwartier*, 223–31.

¹¹⁸⁹ Blécourt and Japikse, *Klein plakkaatboek van Nederland*, 113–17. ‘Ende opdat midlertijt niemant lichtelicke en stae tot eenigen begrype, captie oft pericle, zullen alle placcaeten, hiervoertijts gemaect ende gepubliceert op stuck van heresie, mitsgaders die criminele ordinantie, by den hertoghe van Alve gemaect ende gevolcht ende executie van dien gesuspeneert wordden, totdat by de Generaele Staeten anders daerop geordineert zy, welverstaende datter egheen scandael en gebuere in maniere voirscreven.’

¹¹⁹⁰ Genard, “Tijdsdordelijke tafel der namen van personen te Antwerpen in de XVIe eeuw voor het feit van religie gerechtelijk vervolgd,” 98–99.

When the new governor, Don Juan of Austria (1547-1578), half-brother of King Philip II, arrived in the Low Countries at the end of 1576, he had no choice other than to negotiate with the pacified provinces. In February, Don Juan issued the Perpetual Edict, to which the king grudgingly consented, in which he acknowledged the Pacification of Ghent and agreed to discharge the soldiers. In return, the States General accepted him as governor and promised to strive to respect and maintain Catholicism. Don Juan himself soon turned out to be a militant protector of the Catholic faith. As Requesens had done, he personally interfered with local justice after his Joyous Entry in June 1577 into the city of Mechelen—which had been violently sacked by mutinying soldiers only a few months earlier. There, the governor pressed for the prosecution of Pieter Panis, a tailor who had been caught attending a Protestant meeting.¹¹⁹¹ Because of Don Juan's involvement, Panis was burned at the stake. Such actions further eroded whatever trust the provinces had in the newly appointed governor. The provinces of Zeeland and Holland—and their governor, William of Orange—had been reluctant to sign the Perpetual Edict from the start, and Don Juan's actions in Mechelen damaged the precarious rapprochement even further. When, by the summer of 1577, the former rebel provinces still had not signed, Don Juan became impatient and decided to resume the war by attacking the citadel of Namur, thereby breaking the stipulations of his own edict.¹¹⁹²

The Calvinist Regimes in the South

Don Juan's actions alienated the Brabantine and Flemish cities. In Brussels, the breaking of the Perpetual Edict by the governor led to the installation of a "committee of eighteen" in August 1577, in which guilds were strongly represented.¹¹⁹³ The members were Catholics but firmly on the side of the States General. The support for William of Orange in Brussels became very clear during his Joyous Entry into the city in September: Jan de Pottre drew attention to how the representatives of the craft guilds, the magistrates, and the

¹¹⁹¹ Violet Soen and Elisa Masschelein, "Het Eeuwig Edict en de Intredes van Don Juan in 1577," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 129, no. 2 (2016): 192–93.

¹¹⁹² Soen, *Vredehandel*, 114.

¹¹⁹³ Guido Marnef, "Het Protestantisme te Brussel, ca. 1567-1585," *Tijdschrift voor Brusselse geschiedenis* 1, 1-2 (1984); Olivier Cammaert, "L'Iconoclisme sous la République Calviniste à Bruxelles," in Weis, *Des villes en révolte*.

rhetoricians “all received him triumphantly, which was beautiful to see.”¹¹⁹⁴ In Antwerp, Josse de Weert likewise wrote that “the Prince of Orange came into Brussels with great happiness.”¹¹⁹⁵ The situation, however, soon became more radical. As in Holland and Zeeland in 1572, the changing political climate meant the return of many (Reformed) exiles to the south. More than those of the north, the cities of Flanders and Brabant had an important history of powerful corporate organizations. The guilds and corporations had seriously diminished in influence under Habsburg rule but were able to reassert their power in the context of the current political crisis. In Brussels, the Calvinization of the government was a gradual process, but following the retreat of the Army of Flanders and the breach with Don Juan, “Calvinist republics” were proclaimed in the most important cities of Flanders and Brabant over the course of 1577. In Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Bruges, Ypres, and Malines, city magistrates were replaced by committees of eighteen. In Holland, too, the last Catholic strongholds—Amsterdam and Haarlem—turned Calvinist in 1578.¹¹⁹⁶

Chroniclers had initially been delighted about the peace and the retreat of the soldiers, but the new governments brought difficulties of their own. Although “religious peace” was proclaimed in those cities under Calvinist rule, Judith Pollmann has shown just how frustrated contemporary chroniclers were about the ever-increasing limitations imposed on Catholic services and the

¹¹⁹⁴ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 76. ‘die hem alle inne haelden zeer trionfantelijck, dat schoen om sien was’.

¹¹⁹⁵ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 102. ‘met groote blijdschap’.

¹¹⁹⁶ After the Pacification of Ghent, the city magistrate of Haarlem came under authority of William of Orange. Like in the cities in the south, a religious peace was declared (a ‘satisfaction’) that was meant to accommodate religious coexistence of Catholics and protestants, following the ideology of William of Orange. Verwer writes in March 1577 that ‘now both Paapse and Geuzen service is held within Haarlem’. Again, the religious peace did not last long as the Calvinists gained influence. On Sacrament’s Day 1578, Verwer describes a violent attack on the Catholic churchgoers, during which a priest was murdered. Over the course of the following months, Verwer describes the destruction of churches and interiors, the increasing suppression of the Catholic religion, and the exodus of many clergy members. Catholicism went underground but was not banned. In Amsterdam, the transition was more radical. Amsterdam acknowledged the peace treaty of Ghent only after sieges 1577 and 1578 by Calvinist troops. After the takeover, the most prominent clergy members and magistrates were banished out of the city. However, in Haarlem and Amsterdam there were no longer similar revenge dynamics in execution practices – they had probably already had their share in the previous years.

expansion of the rights of Calvinists over the final months of 1577 and the first of 1578.¹¹⁹⁷ In addition, chroniclers were extremely worried about the state of justice under these new regimes. In Brussels, Jan de Pottre soon wrote that criminals now had free rein “because stealing was no longer a sin, as no justice was done. Just think what a distressing time this was; the people were sorry to be alive.”¹¹⁹⁸

The city of Ghent, in particular, would soon develop the most radical and influential of the Calvinist regimes.¹¹⁹⁹ Here, the symbolic punishment of 1540, when Charles V had stripped the rebellious city of its privileges, was still felt by many.¹²⁰⁰ The humiliation of the “noose bearers” now fueled the radicalization of the city. Van Campene recorded how after a committee of eighteen was installed in November 1577, the governor of Flanders, the bailiff, several members of the Council of Flanders, and the bishops of Bruges and Ypres were taken prisoner.¹²⁰¹ Fellow Ghent chronicler Jan van den Vivere soon complained of how the soldiers “robbed and pillaged” the entire land “without

¹¹⁹⁷ Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 113–17.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 81. ‘want stelen en was geen sonde meer, want men en dede geen Justicie; dinck wat benauden tijt dat doen was; dat menich mensche verdroot te leven’.

¹¹⁹⁹ The literature about the Ghent Calvinist Republic is vast. See: A. Despretz, *De instauratie der Gentse Calvinistische republiek, 1577-1579* (Snoeck-Ducaju & zoon, 1963); Nicolas Debruyne, “Een Gentse staatsgreep: De Gevangenneming van de Hertog van Aarschot en andere edelen te Gent op 28 oktober 1577,” *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 64 (2010); Johan Decavele, “Op de calvinistische toer: Het Land van Waas tijdens de overheersing van het revolutionaire Gent, 1578-1583,” *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* LXVIII (2016); Johan Decavele and Dirk Coigneau, *Het eind van een rebelse droom: Opstellen over het calvinistisch bewind te Gent (1577-1584) en de terugkeer van de stad onder de gehoorzaamheid van de koning van Spanje (17 september 1584)*, with the assistance of Johan Decavele, and Dirk Coigneau (Gent Stadsbestuur, 1984). For an analysis of the recording of the Ghent Republic in the memory books of the city, see Anne-Laure van Bruaene, *De Gentse memorieboeken als spiegel van stedelijk historisch bewustzijn (14de tot 16de eeuw)*, *Verhandelingen van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 22 (Gent: Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde, 1998), 260–67.

¹²⁰⁰ Decavele and Coigneau, *Het eind van een rebelse droom*, 33–35.

¹²⁰¹ This event attracted international attention as well. Recently, the city archive of Ghent acquired a handwritten letter from Queen Elizabeth of England addressed to Jan van Hembyze, the leader of the Calvinist regime in Ghent, imploring him to release the prominent prisoners under his arrest.

law or justice.”¹²⁰² The Calvinist regime in Ghent soon took control of the entirety of Flanders. In Ypres, Van Hernighem described the chaos, the stealing and violence of the soldiers, and the imprisonment of the government in detail.¹²⁰³ Conflicts over justice started immediately, recorded Van Hernighem, when the inhabitants of Ypres complained to the commander, Willem de Kethulle, about one soldier who had been extremely violent in the house of a burgher. The burghers wanted the soldier executed, but his companions revolted and threatened to prevent the execution. In the end, peace was restored by Kethulle, and the soldier was shot.¹²⁰⁴ Several days later, however, three other soldiers were granted mercy for similar crimes because of the unrest the execution might cause.¹²⁰⁵ In Bruges, the tailor Willem Weydts, who recorded events from 1571 but intensified his recordkeeping after the Calvinist takeover in 1578, repeatedly mentioned the lack of justice under the new regime.¹²⁰⁶ Describing the theft and destruction wrought by the soldiers in the churches and monasteries, he wrote that “the community was very worried. But that which they had stolen remained gone, and they were not punished.”¹²⁰⁷

As had happened in the cities in the north, the Calvinist radicalization soon transgressed what many inhabitants considered the boundaries of justice. Once again, instances of iconoclasm mirroring traditional rituals of justice took place in the cities under Calvinist rule. In August 1578, Van den Vivere described how a statue of Our Lady was pulled from its socket on the *Hoofdbrug* (Head Bridge) in Ghent, significantly adding that this was “where they used to

¹²⁰² Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 301. ‘Ende up desen tijt lacht rontomme Ghendt al vol soldaeten, waerduere het gheheele landt gherooft ende ghepilgiert wiert, zoo wel van vrienden als vianden, zonder recht ofte justitie’.

¹²⁰³ Hernighem, Den tweeden bouck inhoudende alle de geheschiedenesse [...], 80–85.

Like with other charged events, he wrote a poem: ‘On the 20th day of July, on Saint Margareth’s Day / Called the fiery / Came those of Ghent, hear my complaint / to Ypres as rebels’ (‘Op den 20 dach van wedemaent op st margryten dach / gheheeten de felle / quaemen die van ghent hoort myn gheclach / binnen ypere als rebelle’).

¹²⁰⁴ Hernighem, Den tweeden bouck inhoudende alle de geheschiedenesse [...], 85.

¹²⁰⁵ Hernighem, Den tweeden bouck inhoudende alle de geheschiedenesse [...], 87–88.

¹²⁰⁶ Guillaume Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, ed. Émile Varenbergh (Bruges, La Haye, 1869).

¹²⁰⁷ Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 15. ‘wandt eet ghemente vas zeere ontrust. Maer dat zy ghestoelen hadde dat bleef vech, ende men straffenze daer of nyet’.

decapitate burghers who deserved it.”¹²⁰⁸ According to Van den Vivere, “the lords of the law were willfully blind” to the destruction. In September, Van Hernighem recorded how in Ypres, Calvinist soldiers broke statues, including, again, a statue of the Virgin, standing on top of the city hall, “and put their heads on top of the gallows before the guard’s house and hanged one on the pillory tied together with ropes.”¹²⁰⁹

Hostility against the clergy came to a head when several mendicants were burned at the stake in Bruges and Ghent during Pentecost 1578—exactly ten years after what Van Campene had termed the “Passion week” under Alba’s regime. Officially, the mendicants were charged with sodomy. Suspicions of sodomy among Catholic clergy members were not uncommon: Already in 1569, for example, the Lutheran Van Haecht complained that a priest had tried to rape a young boy but was apparently set free.¹²¹⁰ In the case of the Ghent mendicants, however, Jonas Roelens has shown that slander, anticlerical sentiments, and religious polemic were actually behind the trials.¹²¹¹ Moreover, Roelens has shown that Ghent’s Catholic chroniclers did much to exonerate the friars in their writings. Van den Vivere, in particular, stressed their innocence as he described how the assisting clergy and the audience “grumbled that they were killed, as even the minister himself knew that they were innocent.”¹²¹² In Bruges, where the burnings took place on July 26, Weydts interpreted the executions as an act of

¹²⁰⁸ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 271. ‘Jn dit zelve jaer, den II Ougste, jnder nacht, zo was onze Vrouwen beelde van motale upde Hooftbrugghe afgeworpen, daermen de poorters vooren onthoofde, diet verdient hadden’.

¹²⁰⁹ Hernighem, Den tweeden bouck inhoudende alle de geoeschiedenesse [...], 101. ‘ende de souldaten hadden de nacht te vooren eenighe beilden ghebroken voor de kercke duere ende het sdaechts te vooren onse vrouwe beilden voor de vaulte ende oock voor het gast huus ende de hoofden opde galge ghestelt voor het bezant ende ende eene ghehanghen t en pelloryn t in een cynghel ghebonden met lonten’.

¹²¹⁰ Haecht, *Kroniek over de troebelen*, II, 96.

¹²¹¹ Jonas Roelens, “From Slurs to Silence ? Sodomy and Mendicants in the Writings of Catholic Laymen in Early Modern Ghent,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 46, no. 3 (2015). See also Johan Decavele, “Brugse en Gentse mendicanten op de brandstapel in 1578,” in Soly; Vermeir, *Beleid en bestuur in de oude Nederlanden: Liber amicorum prof. dr. M. Baelde*. Decavele and Coigneau, *Het eind van een rebelse droom*, 43. See for the description of the trials by Van Campen: Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 200 and 203; Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 270.

¹²¹² Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 270. ‘ende daeromme zeer murmereerden dat mense doode, aenghesien dat den minister zelve kende dat zij onnoosel waeren’.

revenge: He wrote that “the *Geuzen* were very happy about it.”¹²¹³ Virtually all chroniclers describing the execution emphasized the youth of the condemned—as we have seen, the execution of the very young or very old was considered cruel. Interestingly, Weydts emphasized that the friars in Bruges were “burned in their habit, like they wore daily.”¹²¹⁴ As was the case during the executions of the martyrs of Gorcum, the Calvinist authorities inverted the ritual of justice by executing the mendicants in their clerical dress. The fact that Weydts recorded this in his diary shows us that such mockery was not lost on Catholic spectators. In the prints published by Frans Hogenberg of the event, too, the moment immediately before the execution is shown, and the mendicants are clearly depicted wearing their habits (Figs. 6.3 and 6.4).¹²¹⁵

Van den Vivere particularly emphasized the conversation between the youngest of the mendicants and a Reformed minister accompanying him to the scaffold. This is interesting, as intercession for the soul was, of course, not part of Reformed doctrine—in fact, it was one of the most radical points of divergence between Protestants and Catholics. Admittedly, the need for pastoral care and assistance in dying a good death was also important in Reformed religious culture.¹²¹⁶ Whether one’s soul would be saved, however, was, according to Reformed doctrine, predestined, regardless of how well one died. The main deathbed role of the Reformed minister was to console the moribund by preaching the Word of God (without, of course, the presence of the traditional crucifix, holy water, incense, or last sacraments).¹²¹⁷

¹²¹³ Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 4. ‘wandt de Guesen daer in zeere verblyden’.

¹²¹⁴ Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 4. ‘openbaer ghebrandt met huerlyeder abyten, zoe zy daghelychxs ghynghen’.

¹²¹⁵ Frans Hogenberg, Execution uber Sodomitigsche Buben binnen der Statt Gendt, c. 1578-1580, etching, 210 x 280 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (photo: Rijksmuseum-Stichting) ; Frans Hogenberg, Execution uber Sodomitigsche Gottlosigkeit in der Statt Brug, c. 1578-1580, etching, 210 x 280 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (photo: Rijksmuseum-Stichting). On Hogenberg execution prints, see : Casteels, “Death on Display.”

¹²¹⁶ In Reformed liturgy, the traditional *ars moriendi* were replaced with ‘comfort for the sick’; see Erik de Boer, “‘The Comfort for the Sick’ as *ars moriendi*,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 102, 3-4 (2022).

¹²¹⁷ Deschryver, “Revolt Bodies,” 84–86.



Figure 6.3 Frans Hogenberg, *Execution über Sodomitische Buben binnen der Statt Gendt*, c. 1578-1580, etching, 21 x 28 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 6.4 Frans Hogenberg, *Execution über Sodomitische Gottlosigkeit in der Statt Brug*, ca. 1578–1580, etching, 21 x 28 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

In the first instance, the Ghent Calvinist regime apparently denied criminals the assistance of clergy before their execution. Just a few weeks before the executions of the mendicants, Van Campene recorded how patients sentenced for murder, “having no one with them to comfort their souls, requested prayers from the spectators.”¹²¹⁸ For the executions of the friars, however, a Reformed minister was present.¹²¹⁹ Interestingly, the remarks Van den Vivere described are very similar to what a Catholic priest would have said: “The preacher, who joined them to comfort them, standing on the scaffold, cried out aloud, saying that they would pray for them.”¹²²⁰ Despite the differences in doctrine, then, there was a remarkable continuity in practice. An execution described by Van Campene in 1580 again clearly shows how the assistance of a minister could resemble Catholic dying rituals: “He had with him the minister of Saint James’ Church, who admonished him to put all his hopes for forgiveness on the Passion of Christ; this criminal sought forgiveness for all his wrongdoings, either words or deeds, from all the spectators, and the minister requested the community to pray for him, leading them in the paternoster.”¹²²¹

If, in the case of the mendicants, the motive of retribution remained camouflaged by sodomy charges, the executions of several former legal councilors in the fall of 1578 were openly acts of revenge. Van Campene furiously recorded how after suffering some serious defeats in battle, two important representatives of the old regime, who had been imprisoned since the Calvinist coup of 1577, were executed without proper trial—and, once again, without their being allowed confession.¹²²² One of them was Jacob Hessels: He had been a

¹²¹⁸ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 199. ‘niemand by zich hebbende om hen naer de ziele troosten , maer zy verzochten zelve de gebeden der omstaenders’.

¹²¹⁹ In 1572, Kampen mayor Arent Toe Boecop also mentioned the presence of two Evangelical ministers during the execution of Simon Gabriels under the regime of Van den Bergh. See *Uittreksels uit het dagboek van Arent toe Boecop*, 141.

¹²²⁰ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 270. ‘Ende den predicant, die bij hemlieden was om hemlieden te troosten, staende up tschavaut, riep overluyt, segghende dat men voor hemlieden zoude bidden’.

¹²²¹ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 261. ‘Hj had by zich den minister van S. Janskerke, die hem vermaende dat hy alle hope van vergiffenis zou stellen op de verdiensten van de passie Christi; dies de misdadiger van al de omstaenders vergiffenis verzocht, van alles wat hy met woorden of met werken mocht misdaen hebben , en de minister verzocht de gemeente dat zy voor hem bidden zouden, voorgaende met het lezen van den Vader Onze’.

¹²²² Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 210–11.

member of the Council of Flanders and the Council of Troubles. It was Hessels who had been responsible for signing the death sentences of the Counts of Egmont and Horne in 1568. The other patient was Jan de Visch, whom we met in the previous chapter, as he features extensively in Van Hernighem's chronicle: As provost in Ypres, he had been responsible for the executions carried out for iconoclasm. Van Campene described how the two were taken out of the city on a cart, where they were, "after a heavy and difficult imprisonment, without any form of legal procedure, and without having the opportunity to confess, hanged from a tree along the road."¹²²³ To make the humiliation complete, Van Campene mentioned how "part of Hessels' beard was mockingly cut off and given to Ryhove and the other captains." Although Van den Vivere did not describe the execution itself, he did include in his chronicle the polemical song *Den oorlof ofte adieu van Jan van Imbieze* (*The Farewell or Goodbye of Jan van Hembyze*), an anti-Calvinist song written upon Van Hembyze's departure from the city after a conflict with William of Orange. In this song, too, the execution of Hessels is presented as unlawful, as Hessels was "not charged."¹²²⁴

Political Executions and the Disintegration of Ritual

As in the north, legal transgressions and the disintegration of rituals worsened as the Calvinist regimes came under threat. In several places where Calvinist coups had taken place, the loyalist or Catholic party soon succeeded in gaining the upper hand.¹²²⁵ In the French-speaking parts of the Low Countries, the

¹²²³ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 210–11. 'maer nu zoo is hy naer eene zware en moielyke gevangenis, zonder eenige vorm van rechte, zonder dat het hem geoorlofd was te biechten, op den weg van Kortrijk, aen eenen boom gehangen [...] een deel van den baerd van den raedsheer Hesselt werd schimpelijk afgesneden en aen Ryhove en de andere kapiteinen gegeven'.

¹²²⁴ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 295. 'onbeschuldich'.

¹²²⁵ In Arras, a Calvinist coup took place and a 'committee of fifteen' was installed here. However, it was soon deposed by the Malcontent forces and the States of Artois. See for a contemporary description Pontus Payen, *Discours véritable de ce qui s'est passé en la ville d'Arras. Depuis l'union et confédération des Etatx d'Artois avec aultres provinces du Pays Bas*, ed. Alexandre Henne (Bruxelles: Société de l'histoire de Belgique, 1860–61). Orangist coups also took place in Tournai (where the Calvinist regime lasted until 1581) and Valenciennes (where the civic guard prevented the coup from being succesfull). See Junot, *Les bourgeois de Valenciennes: Anatomie d'une élite dans la ville (1500-1630)*,

treatment of the clergy and the radicalization of Calvinist city governments in Flanders and Brabant led magistrates and nobility to work together to defend the Catholic interpretation of the Pacification of Ghent. In 1578, several prominent nobles joined together in a Catholic league, the “Malcontents,” and split off from the army of the States General.¹²²⁶ In the final months of 1578, Alexander Farnese (1545-1592), the Prince (later Duke) of Parma, had been appointed by King Philip II as the governor of the Low Countries following the sudden death of Don Juan. Once again, a new governor meant a change in policy, and this time, the diplomatic and political strategist Farnese chose a more moderate approach focused on clemency and reconciliation.¹²²⁷ He succeeded in negotiating with and eventually winning over the discontented Catholics, and in May 1579, the Treaty of Arras marked the reconciliation of the French-speaking provinces (Hainaut, Artois, and the city of Douai) with the king, an accord in which they agreed on the continued departure of foreign troops and the acceptance of Catholicism as the only religion.¹²²⁸ In response, the provinces where Calvinism had risen to power formed the Union of Utrecht, in which “freedom of conscience” was a leading principle.¹²²⁹

These agreements increased tensions in many cities. Chroniclers in ‘s Hertogenbosch, for example, are testimony to the violent form these divisions

79–100; Frédéric Duquenne, “Des ‘Républiques Calvinistes’ avortées? La contestation des échevinages à Douai et Arras en 1577 et 1578,” in Weis, *Des villes en révolte*.

¹²²⁶ Yves Junot and Violet Soen, “La révolte des Pays-Bas habsbourgeois:

Reconsidérations à partir du cas des provinces francophones,” in *Paradigmes rebelles: Pratiques et cultures de la désobéissance à l’époque moderne*, ed. Gregorio Salinero, Manuela-Águeda García-Garrido and Răducu-Gabriel Păun, Histoire des mondes modernes en ligne (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2018), 218.; Robert S. DuPlessis, *Lille and the Dutch revolt: Urban stability in an era of revolution, 1500-1582* (Cambridge [England], New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 277–79. Soen, “Les Malcontents au sein des États-Généraux rebelles aux Pays-Bas (1578-1581): Défense du pouvoir de la noblesse ou défense de l’orthodoxie?,” in *La noblesse et la défense de l’orthodoxie XIII-XVIII^e siècles*, ed. Ariane Boltanski and Frank Mercier (Rennes, 2011), 135-149.

¹²²⁷ Violet Soen, “Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592),” *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012): passim.

¹²²⁸ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 131–35.

¹²²⁹ On the Union of Utrecht see S. Groenveld, H. L. Ph Leeuwenberg and Heleen van der Weel, *Unie, bestand, vrede. Drie fundamentele wetten van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009).

could take.¹²³⁰ After first joining the Union of Arras in January, the city eventually also joined the Union of Utrecht in July 1579 under the influence of William of Orange and the radical Calvinists. After the terms of the latter union were read publicly in the market square, militant Catholic burghers and members of the Calvinist civic militia attacked one another—about 40 people died, and 120 were wounded.¹²³¹ For Heyman Voicht van Oudheusden—a clerk of the episcopal court and a fervent proponent of the Catholic faction in his city who wrote an account of the events, it was reason to celebrate: The Catholic side won, and the magistrates now firmly chose the loyalist side.¹²³² Another chronicler, however, emphasized the internal division, and wished that “father, child, brothers, uncles, cousins, and brothers-in-law would listen to one another and stop killing each other, which hasn’t happened in any city in these Netherlands during these troubled times”.¹²³³

Elsewhere, too, the fluidity of allegiances created an atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty. In the northern provinces of Groningen and Friesland, the states’ governor, Rennenberg, had first joined the Union of Utrecht but then, in 1580, joined the loyalist faction and the Union of Arras (an act that would in later—Protestant-minded—historiography be termed “treason”).¹²³⁴ On the other side of the Low Countries, William of Horne, Lord of Hèze, was a prime example of the changing allegiances of the nobility during the conflict. Hèze had been one of the main instigators of the coup in Brussels in 1576 but had subsequently reconciled with Farnese and the Spanish king. Subsequently growing dissatisfied, however, with the delays in the departure of foreign

¹²³⁰ Heyman Voicht van Oudheusden, *Vruchten van de goede en de slechte boom: Heyman Voicht van Oudheusden over de godsdiensttwisten in zijn stad 's-Hertogenbosch en in Breda (1577-1581)*, ed. Jozef Hoekx et al. (Den Dungen: Tilia Levis, 2008).

¹²³¹ Voicht van Oudheusden, *Vruchten van de goede en de slechte boom*, 22–23. See also: Leo Adriaenssen, *Staatsvormend geweld: Overleven aan de frontlinies in de meierij van Den Bosch, 1572-1629*, Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het Zuiden van Nederland 32 (Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 2007), 87–88.

¹²³² Voicht van Oudheusden, *Vruchten van de goede en de slechte boom*, 152–53. See also

¹²³³ “Tweede vervolg op de kronyk van Aelbertus Cuperinus,” 338. ‘vader, kynt, gebroeders, oomen, neffen, swagers en. naebuieren maelcanderen wilde verstaen en. ophouden van maelcanderen doot te slaen, twelck noch in geene steden vande Nederlanden geduerende dese trouble en is geschiet’.

¹²³⁴ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 11–14.

regiments, he again initiated contact with William of Orange. After his plans were found out, he was executed by beheading in Artois in November 1580.¹²³⁵

In this anxious atmosphere, suffused with fears of treason, both the Calvinist regimes and the Malcontents increasingly eroded and transgressed existing rituals of justice. This is particularly clear from the violation and dismemberment of dead bodies and the stealing of body parts on both sides. At the end of 1580, Van Campene recorded the spectacular execution in Ghent of Adriaen van Caseele, former prosecutor for the Council of Flanders. Caseele was charged with treason the previous year: He had helped prominent clergy members who had been imprisoned during the Calvinist coup escape and had then joined the Malcontents. He was captured and hanged, and afterward, "his head was cut off and put on an iron spike on the *Brugse Poort*, and the four quarters of his body were hanged from the four gates of this city."¹²³⁶ A few weeks later, however, Van den Vivere recorded that the Malcontents had stolen one of the quartered body parts of the prosecutor, leaving a threatening note addressed to "you noose bearers of Ghent." The Malcontents proceeded to put the body part in a coffin and "buried it with great dignity" in the church at Aelst.¹²³⁷

In 1582, Josse de Weert recorded the execution of a certain "Alonso Lopez, a Spaniard who had served the States of Brabant piously and knightly during many facts of war."¹²³⁸ Lopez had been captured by the Duke of Parma after the town of Lier was taken by the Malcontents. According to De Weert, however, none of the soldiers or the executioners in the Army of Flanders wished to execute him, as he had been partially ransomed. Some local farmers who had come to watch the execution took matters into their own hands and attempted

¹²³⁵ Soen, *Vredehandel*, 143; Stensland, *Habsburg Communication in the Dutch Revolt*, 96–97.

¹²³⁶ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 275. 'zoo werd zijn hoofd afgesneden en gesteld op eene yzeren pinne aen de Brugschepoort, en de vier quartieren van zijn lichaem aen vier poorten dezer stede gehangen'.

¹²³⁷ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 317. "Ghij bastdraghers van Ghendt, al hebdi tlichame van Casele gheschent, men salder niet om trueren: dier minst om dinct, die salt besueren". Item binnen drij daghen daernaer zoo quam de tijdinghe jn Ghendt dat de Malecontenten tvoorseide quaertier van Casele jn een kiste gheleyt hadden ende met grooter weerdicheyt begraven hadden jnde keercke binnen Aelst'.

¹²³⁸ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 161–64. 'Capiteyn Alonso Lopez wesende eenen Spaigniaert de staeten van Brabant in vele verscheyde feyten van wapenen vroomelyck ende ridderlyck gedient'.

to hang him. When the rope broke, he was killed with a knife and cut to pieces. His body parts were put on display on the gates of the town. This time, a former soldier from Lopez' regiment risked his life and took the head from its spike before smuggling it into Antwerp and taking it to the house where the officer used to live, "where this head was seen by many people; *ego vidi* that it was the same head of the aforementioned captain, as I have known him very well."¹²³⁹ A few weeks later, De Weert described in detail how the head was buried in Antwerp with much pomp and circumstance.¹²⁴⁰

While such juggling with body parts might be ascribed to the context of warfare, within the Calvinist republics themselves, the lack of proper ritual during executions was an ever-increasing worry for chroniclers. In Ghent, Van den Vivere complained repeatedly about the poor skills of the hangman. In July 1580, the executioner "had failed unseemly, so he had needed multiple blows before the head came off."¹²⁴¹ Van Campene also recorded this execution: After the patient knelt, "the hangman only barely wounded him, so he scandalously turned the collapsed patient and sawed off his head, so his hands were covered in blood."¹²⁴² Perhaps because of this failure, for the next decapitation recorded by Van den Vivere, in June 1581, the hangman of Middelburg was summoned. According to Van den Vivere, "he did this so fine, the likes of which has not often been seen."¹²⁴³ One month later, the chronicler reported that a new hangman had been hired by the aldermen's bench.¹²⁴⁴ Apparently, he was not satisfactory either: As soon as January 1582, Van den Vivere wrote that the hangman of Bruges was now being called as a substitute.¹²⁴⁵ Much to the chronicler's frustration, once again, the executioner failed in his job: The patient was "terribly failed and

¹²³⁹ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 164. 'Ende het selve hooft ende gesien geweest van vele menschen ;et ego vidi; dat t'selve was het ghooft die voorseyde capiteyn als hem seer wel gekent hebbende'.

¹²⁴⁰ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 166–68.

¹²⁴¹ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 311. 'ende leelicken ghefaelt, zoo dat hij (de beul) diveersche slaghen slouch eer thoof af was'.

¹²⁴² Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 261. 'maer daer de scherprechter den zelve maer een weinig kwetste, zoo heeft hy den gevallen schandig omgewend en het hoofd afgezaegd , zoo dat zyne handen heel bebloed waren'.

¹²⁴³ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 323. 'Den scheerprechter was ontboden van Middelburch, den welcken zoo fray dede, dat sghelijcx niet vele ghesien en es gheweest'. Also in Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 282.

¹²⁴⁴ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 324.

¹²⁴⁵ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 334.

murdered, because of which unrest arose and the people cried 'Kill the thief!' [...] The second one he executed decently, and he prayed the burghers for forgiveness, falling on his knees, promising it would never happen again. But he lied."¹²⁴⁶

Several remarkable mock executions that took place under the Calvinist regimes further hollowed out the rituals of justice. In Antwerp, one chronicler described mock executions carried out in 1581 to celebrate the capture of Cambrai by Francois, Duke of Anjou (1555-1584).¹²⁴⁷ Anjou, the younger brother of the king of France, was envisioned by William of Orange as the new sovereign of the Low Countries after the States General deposed Philip II in 1581.¹²⁴⁸ When Anjou defeated the army of the Prince of Parma on his way to the Low Countries, this was celebrated in the Calvinist cities as a major victory. The anonymous chronicler recorded how

in the celebrations, the Reformed took a party of wooden statues, which they placed in public in front of the city hall surrounded by firewood, their eyes blinded so they would not see who wanted to burn them and who inflicted this pain on them, and with a piece of iron or wood in their mouths so they would not speak and justify themselves.¹²⁴⁹

¹²⁴⁶ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 334. 'ende was vanden scheerprechter van Brugghe zeer deerlic ghefaelt ende vermoort, zoo datter een roere duer rees, ende men riep: 'Slaet den diefdoot!' maer daer en ghebuerde niet anders. Ende den tweeden executeerde hij deghelic, ende badt alsdoen de borghers verghiffenisse over beede zijn knien, segghende dat hem noinct meer en ghebuerde. Maer hij loogher om'.

¹²⁴⁷ A. Erens, "Kronijke van gebeurtenissen, te Antwerpen vooral, van 1572 tot 1585," *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 25, no. 4 (1934): 186.

¹²⁴⁸ Anne-Laure van Bruaene, "Spectacle and Spin for a Spurned Prince. Civic Strategies in the Entry Ceremonies of the Duke of Anjou in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent (1582)," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11, 4-5 (2007).

¹²⁴⁹ Erens, "Kronijke van gebeurtenissen, te Antwerpen vooral, van 1572 tot 1585," 186. 'ende int vieren van dyen hebben die ghereformeerde ghenomen een partie houten beelden, welcke sy int openbaer voir dat stadhuis met een deel mutsaerts om sedt, ende haer ooghen verblindt op dat niet en soudien sien wie haer verbranden wilde ende wie haer die groote pijn aandoen soude oft wilde, met oock eenen beyl oft dweershout in haren mont opdat sy niet spreken ende haer verantwoorden en soudien'. These mock executions are also recorded in Willems, Jan Frans, "Brieven Uit Antwerpen Geschreven in de Jaren 1581-1584," in *Mengelingen van Historisch-Vaderlandschen Inhoud*, ed. Jan Frans Willems (Antwerpen, 1833), 89-223. Thanks to Louise Deschryver for this reference.

Once again, the mocking of the rituality of heresy executions is patent—clearly, the burnings for heresy that had continued in Antwerp up to 1577 (including the painful practice of mouth-blocking) were still vividly remembered.

In Bruges, Willem Weydts recorded how in 1582, during the Joyous Entry of the Duke of Anjou, a decorative ship was constructed on the market square, which was “full of puppets, and inside were many cats and gunpowder.” When the ship was set on fire, the cats “screamed so loudly it was miraculous to hear because they could not escape the fire, because they were locked with chains: This was to show that the *geuzen* wanted to burn and obliterate all Catholics.”¹²⁵⁰ The torture of cats was culturally significant in early modern Europe, as Robert Darnton’s essay on the “great cat massacre” in Paris in the eighteenth century has shown.¹²⁵¹ In the Low Countries, cats also featured regularly in popular festivities. Van Hernighem, for example, describes in detail how living cats were thrown from the Belfort during the *Ypermaert* in 1590.¹²⁵² Anne-Laure van Bruaene has drawn attention to the ubiquity of animal-based satire in the polarization between opponents in the revolt of the Low Countries: In this context, religious violence was often more verbal than physical.¹²⁵³ Admittedly, in Bruges, too, the burning of cats was meaningful in a polemical, propagandistic context, as it happened during the Joyous Entry of the contested Catholic duke. At the same time, however, the satirical uses of repertoires of justice make clear that the original sacred meaning of execution rituality was lost completely.

¹²⁵⁰ Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 59–60. ‘voert, op de myddel van de Mardt, vas een scypt ghesteldt op een groete maerst vul puppen, ende daer in veel catten ende veel buspoer, ende als snaevens daer in eet vyer ghesteken vas, zoe vloeghen al dye puppen al barnende daerhut, ende dat poer byerd och te branden, ende de catten dye vyerden och te branden alyns, ende dye macten zoe groeten ghetyer dat vonder vas om hoeren, wandt zy en costen eet vyer nyet ontsprynghen, duer dat zy met cetens ghebonden vaeren; dit vas te bedyenen dat de Ghuesen vel vylden alle de catelycken verbranden ende te nyete doen’.

¹²⁵¹ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

¹²⁵² Augustijn van Hernighem, *Beschryfvynghen Croonyckwys alle de rechte gheschiedenesse dat ghebuert ende heschiet es binnen de stede van Ypere [...], 1589-1591*, Fonds Goethals-Vercruysse, ms. 296, State archives, 248. Cat day is still celebrated in Ypres, but since 1817 not with living cats anymore.

¹²⁵³ Bruaene, “Revolting Beasts: Animal Satire and Animal Trials in the Dutch Revolt.”

The Downfall of the Calvinist Republics

The death of William of Orange in the summer of 1584 heralded the downfall of the Calvinist republics in Flanders and Brabant. On July 10, 1584, the religious fanatic Balthazar Gerards shot the prince in his residence at the *Prinsenhof* in Delft.¹²⁵⁴ Several murder attempts had preceded Gerards' attack. If the fear and anxiety over the prospect of treason had justified legal transgressions before, this was now all the more true in the trials of those who would have murdered the most important political figure of the time. Ad hoc legal courts and accelerated trials would more than once circumvent the legal procedures in force.

Philip II had outlawed Orange in 1580, setting a bounty on his head.¹²⁵⁵ In the years that followed, chroniclers in the Calvinist republics in the south recorded multiple executions for the prince's attempted murder. In Antwerp, Josse de Weert extensively described the failed murder attempt by the Spanish merchant Joan Jauregui and the subsequent executions.¹²⁵⁶ In Brussels, Jan de Pottre, too, recorded the events in his chronicle.¹²⁵⁷ Jauregui himself was stabbed by Orange's guards after he tried to murder Orange by shooting him in the head; two accomplices, Antonis Temmerman and Antonio de Vivero, were arrested shortly afterward. The case of Antonis Temmerman, a Dominican friar who allegedly knew about the planned murder because Jauregui had confessed to him, is particularly dubious. Shortly after the event, two propagandists in Orange's entourage published a pamphlet about the attempted murder, entitled *Bref Recueil*, in which they included transcriptions of the hearings of the suspects.¹²⁵⁸ Later research based on the archives of the Antwerp *vierschuur*, however, showed that these transcriptions were false and that there were severe legal

¹²⁵⁴ Nanne Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards. Moordenaar en martelaar*, Delfia Batavorum 10 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), 47–48.

¹²⁵⁵ Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards*; van Stipriaan, *De zwijger*, 575–76. Johannes G. Frederiks, *De moord van 1584: Oorspronkelijke verhalen en gelijktijdige berichten van den moord gepleegd op Prins Willem van Oranje* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1884), 1–25.

¹²⁵⁶ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 140–43.

¹²⁵⁷ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 119.

¹²⁵⁸ *Bref recueil de l'assassinat, commis en la personne du très illustre prince, Monseigneur le Prince d'Orange, Conte de Nassau, Marquis de la Vere [...] par Jean Jauregui [...] (Icy apres suivent les copies des pappiers trouvez sur l'assasinateur: les depositions des criminels letres d'Añastro & du prince de Parme)* (Chr. Plantin, 1582).

problems with the procedures followed in the trials of the two accomplices.¹²⁵⁹ Perhaps the authorities felt the need to set an example, and the early death of Jauregui robbed them of a spectacular execution. In any case, Temmerman and De Vivero were subjected to a theatrical death. De Weert described how they were strangled in front of the city hall, after which they were quartered and their body parts put on display. Jauregui's dead body, recorded De Weert, was similarly quartered postmortem and put on display.¹²⁶⁰ The prince, who survived the attack, continued to fear for his life. In Bruges, Willem Weydts recorded how treason was again discovered during the stay of William of Orange and the Duke of Anjou in the city, shortly after the burning of the cats.¹²⁶¹ Several suspects were arrested, among them the Italian Fransisco Baza. After torture, he confessed to having planned to murder Orange. Although Baza killed himself in prison, Weydts recorded that "he was, being dead, still executed by the hangman."¹²⁶²

In the case of Balthasar Gerards, the perpetrator's guilt was beyond doubt. Gerards was captured immediately after committing the murder while trying to escape. In Brussels, Jan de Pottre was clearly relieved to hear of the death of "the oppressor of the clergy, him who allowed all evil," and regretted that Gerards did not succeed in fleeing the scene. In detail, De Pottre described the punishment that Gerards received:

First, the pistol he used was broken before his eyes, then his eyes were bound, and with a glowing plate of iron, like a waffle iron, his hands and legs and arms, his whole body, was pinched, then he was put on a bench, and his manly parts were cut off, and then his stomach was cut open from bottom to top, his heart was cut out and put in his mouth, so he died.¹²⁶³

¹²⁵⁹ For the discussion of the guilt of Temmerman see Albert de Meyer, *Le Procès de l'attentat commis contre Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange, 18 mars 1582. Étude critique de documents inédits, etc* (Pl. XVI. Bruxelles, 1933); P. L. Lotar, *Le cas du P. Antoine Temmerman: Mémoire sur l'affaire Jauregui Anvers, mars 1582* (Bruxelles: L'Édition universelle, S.A, 1937). See also Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards*, 41.

¹²⁶⁰ See also Deschryver, "Revolted Bodies," 393–94.

¹²⁶¹ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 345. See also Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 345.

¹²⁶² Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 62–63. 'ende den lasten der maendt, vas hy, doet zynde, noch by den buel gherecht'.

¹²⁶³ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 134–35. 'eerst de pistolet daer hy mede ghedaen hadde, worde voer zyn ooghen in stucken gebroken, daer nae syne ooghen verbonden ende een gheloevende plaet van ysere ghelijck wafelijser, syne handen ende beenen ende aermen ende allen syn lichaem door mede ghenepen, ende wort op een bancke ghelagt ende syn

The details in De Pottre's description indeed correspond to the punishment stated in Gerards' sentence and to other accounts of the events.¹²⁶⁴ Chroniclers such as De Pottre and Josse de Weert were well informed because the murder and subsequent executions were international news: Gerards' execution was publicized far and wide.¹²⁶⁵ The severity of the assassin's death sentence—even by the standards of the time—was considered unjust by many Catholics.

During the execution, unrest arose among the audience, and one woman was reported to have demanded, screaming, why the authorities “had to put him through a thousand deaths.”¹²⁶⁶ Several pamphlets appeared shortly after the murder and subsequent execution, and once again, Frans Hogenberg



Figure 6.5 Frans Hogenberg, Execution of Bathasar Gerards, 1584, c. 1584-1585, etching, 21 x 28 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

mannelijckheyt afghesneden ende vorts sijnen bueck van beneden tot boven open ghesneden ende syn hert wt ghehaelt ende in synen mont ghesteken, alsoe ghestorven’.

¹²⁶⁴ Transcription via <https://dutchrevolt.library.universiteitleiden.nl/>, accessed on 1/8/2024. The original in Gemeentearchief Delft, Oud Rechterlijk Archief, inv.nr 46 (Eerste Crimineel Boeck 1536 – 1591), folio 170recto – 171verso.

¹²⁶⁵ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 218.

¹²⁶⁶ Quoted in: Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards*, 92.

published an execution print (Fig. 6.5).¹²⁶⁷ In the Catholic bulwark of Cologne, Hogenberg's hometown, the chronicler Hermann Weinberg recorded that he had bought the print of Gerards' execution, and he also recorded the punishment in detail in his chronicle.¹²⁶⁸ For the Catholic Weinberg, Gerards' "terrible" execution was no cause for celebration. According to his account, "many people in Cologne praised this deed [the assassination of William of Orange] and had great compassion with [Gerards'] bitter suffering and death."¹²⁶⁹ It seems that Gerards himself had actively sought a martyr's death: He confessed immediately and showed no regret after the assassination. In the many pamphlets circulating after his execution, time and again it is emphasized that Gerards was steadfast in the face of death and underwent extreme torture without so much as a kick. De Pottre, too, writes that despite his pain, "he never called *Amij!* This is certain; those who have seen it have said so."¹²⁷⁰ Balthasar Gerards would, indeed, be revered as a martyr. Eventually, his head would even be transported to Cologne, where it would be put on display as a relic and become a place of pilgrimage.¹²⁷¹

In Gerards' trial and punishment, it was the States of Holland that made the decisions as to the severity of the penalty. The trial itself had been questionable. The first interrogations under torture were carried out on the orders of the Delft aldermen, but the States of Holland soon became involved,

¹²⁶⁷ Frans Hogenberg, Execution of Balthasar Gerards, 1584, c. 1584-1585, etching, 210 x 280 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (photo: Rijksmuseum-Stichting).

¹²⁶⁸ For Weinberg's perception of Hogenberg's prints in general, see: Ramon Voges, *Das Auge der Geschichte. Der Aufstand der Niederlande und die Französischen Religionskriege im Spiegel der Bildberichte Franz Hogenbergs (ca. 1560-1610)*, Studies in, ed. Andrew C. Gow (Leiden en Boston: Brill, 2019), 319-36.

¹²⁶⁹ Hermann Weinsberg, 'Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs: Digitale Gesamtausgabe, Bandangabe, Folio-Seitenangabe', 462v. Consulted on 14 January 2022 on www.weinsberg.unibonn.de. 'Vil leut in Coln lobten dissen dieter und hatten grois mitliden mit sinem bittern liden und toit'.

¹²⁷⁰ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 134-35. 'maer noyt en riept hy: Amij! Dat es sertayn van die 't ghesien hebben die hebben 't ghesayt, sy deden hem alsulc quaden doot aen om dat hy huerlieden Godt van de Calvenisten ghedoot ende van de eerden ghenomen hadde'.

¹²⁷¹ Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 127-28; Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards*, 94-101. For the documents concerning the attempted beatification of Gerards see Frederiks, *De moord van 1584*, 145-53.

given the gravity of the situation.¹²⁷² Although Gerards immediately confessed, he was heavily tortured multiple times.¹²⁷³ The law court that judged Gerards was an ad hoc assembled constellation consisting of deputies of the States of Holland, the Court of Holland, and the High Court of Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland, which had been established in 1582 as the counterpart of the Great Council of Mechelen, thus serving as the highest court of appeal in the dissenting provinces.¹²⁷⁴ Only one year earlier, a similarly questionable legal constellation had sentenced Cornelis de Hooghe to death for treason.¹²⁷⁵ De Hooghe was a cartographer from The Hague who claimed to be the bastard son of Emperor Charles V and aspired to reunite the northern Low Countries with the rule of his alleged half-brother, the king of Spain. He campaigned throughout the Low Countries and published pamphlets to rally support for his cause. He was charged with treason, executed, and quartered and his body parts were put on display. De Hooghe was judged by the Court of Holland, but it had been the States of Holland that denied William of Orange's request to pardon him.¹²⁷⁶ In Antwerp, Josse de Weert had heard about his execution and recorded it.¹²⁷⁷

Orange's untimely death only added to the troubles of the already politically unstable Calvinist republics. Alexander Farnese continued to accumulate military and diplomatic successes.¹²⁷⁸ In the spring of 1584, Ypres and Bruges had already surrendered to him, and Ghent was now largely isolated. Its committee of eighteen became embroiled in one plot after another, executing traitors repeatedly. Chronicler Jan van den Vivere recorded emotionally how one Lievin van den Vijvere was executed for treason after being tortured so heavily

¹²⁷² Frederiks, *De moord van 1584*, 26–41. See also G. Donker and S. Faber, "Het proces Balthazar Gerards (1584)," *Ars Aequi*, 2003, 417–27.

¹²⁷³ Bosma, *Balthazar Gerards*, 89–92.

¹²⁷⁴ On the High Court of Holland see Marie-Charlotte Le Bailly and Christel Madeleine Odile Verhas, *Hoge Raad van Holland, Zeeland en West-Friesland: 1582 - 1795*, *Procesgidsen* 5 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006) On the involvement of the States of Holland and the States General see Frederiks, *De moord van 1584*, 122–26.

¹²⁷⁵ J. Smit, "De aanslag van Cornelis de Hooghe op de veiligheid van den staat, 1583," *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde*, 1936, 99–100; Jacob Gestman Geradts, "'Altijds vernedert, nochtans De Hooghe': Biografie van Cornelis de Hooghe (1541-1583)" (Doctoral dissertation, KU Leuven, 2019), 33–63.

¹²⁷⁶ Gestman Geradts, "'Altijds vernedert, nochtans De Hooghe'," 47.

¹²⁷⁷ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 188.

¹²⁷⁸ Soen, "Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592)," 6–7.

that he “couldn’t move, nor stand, nor kneel.”¹²⁷⁹ He died a beautiful death, according to Van den Vivere, but the chronicler was furious about his charges: “Whether it was true what was said about him and others is unknown to me, because anyone who was known to be Catholic would be held by the *geuzen* and the ministers for a traitor, spreading many evil and false lies about them, trying to get them killed.”¹²⁸⁰ Van den Vivere’s tone was very different, however, when it became clear that even the radical Calvinist Jan van Hembyze, one of the main instigators of the installation of the republic, had sought contact with Parma to negotiate a surrender. He was not immediately executed, which, according to Van den Vivere, “was much against the will and consent of the community, which was so weak, given that the case was so important for the city of Ghent, for the entire community, men, women, and children.”¹²⁸¹ Eventually, Van Hembyze was executed at the beginning of August, shortly after William of Orange’s death. Van Campene recorded that he was decapitated on Saint Pharaïldis Square, after which his head was displayed on a spike. When the head subsequently fell down from the spike, the audience almost erupted into uproar.¹²⁸²

Van Hembyze’s decapitation in early August could not prevent Ghent’s recapture by the end of the same month by the Army of Flanders. That summer, Parma also laid siege to both Brussels and Antwerp. After months of hunger and poverty, as described by De Pottre, the chronicler was relieved when Brussels surrendered in the spring of 1585. When the peace was proclaimed at the city hall, “many people were happy because now we are united again with our old king of Spain, praise the Lord, which we Catholics have desired for a long

¹²⁷⁹ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 355–56.

¹²⁸⁰ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 355–56. ‘maer oft al waer was datmen van hem ende van noch meer andere seyde, es mij onbekent, want wien men kende voor catholijck, wierden vande guesen ende ministers uuytghegheven voor verraeders, stroyende veel quaede onwaerachtighe lueghenen van hemlieden, souckende daermede hemlieden anden hals te bringhen’.

¹²⁸¹ Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 351–52. ‘het welc jeghens den danck ende goetdincken was vande ghemeenten, dat zoo slappelic toeghinc, ghemeert dat de zaecke van zoo groote importantie was ende de stadt van Ghendt aen hinck, met alle de ghemeenten, mans, vrouwen ende kinderen’.

¹²⁸² Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 339.

time.¹²⁸³ In Antwerp, the death of Orange also seems to have added to the existing dissatisfaction of the inhabitants. An anonymous chronicler recorded that in July 1584, a man was executed “who said that now the Prince of Orange is dead, they should capture and kill all of the colonels and captains.”¹²⁸⁴ Despite this man’s punishment, ever more inhabitants called for negotiations with Parma: In October, Josse de Weert recorded how several burghers were prosecuted and fined because “they had spoken about making peace with the Prince of Parma.”¹²⁸⁵ In July 1585, De Weert even described an attempted murder on one of the colonels of the Calvinist radical government, for which the perpetrator was executed the very next day.¹²⁸⁶ Finally, after a siege of fourteen months, Antwerp was the last Calvinist stronghold in the south to capitulate, doing so in October 1585.

The treatment of the reclaimed cities by Farnese was notably different from that of his predecessors as governor-general, marking a clear break with the past.¹²⁸⁷ In place of retaliation and mass executions, Protestants were allowed to stay in the reclaimed cities for a stated period (in Ghent, for example, two years, and in Antwerp, four), in which time they were expected to reconcile with the Catholic Church. If they did not, they would be allowed to leave the city, taking their possessions with them. Some Protestants reconciled with the regime and the Church; many others left, leading to an exodus from the south to the north.¹²⁸⁸ Still others stayed and continued to practice their religion

¹²⁸³ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 161. ‘daer menich mensche om verblijft waren, alsoe dat wy nu al eens syn met onsen ouden coninck van Spaennen, God hebbe den lof, daer wy, catolijcke, langhe begheert hebben’.

¹²⁸⁴ Erens, “Kronijke van gebeurtenissen, te Antwerpen vooral, van 1572 tot 1585,” 196. ‘Den vierden Augustus a0 lxxxiiij so isser een binnen Antwerpen omdat hij maer en hadde gheseyt nu die Prinche van Araengien doot is, datmen die colonels ende capiteynen soude apprehendren ende dooden, [...] voir dat stadhuys binnen Antwerpen onthalt is.’

¹²⁸⁵ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 224. ‘gesproken hadden om peys te maecken metten Prince van Parma’.

¹²⁸⁶ Weert, *Chronycke oft journal*, 229–30.

¹²⁸⁷ Soen, “Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592),” *passim*; Violet Soen, “De reconciliatie van “kettters” in de zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanden (1520-1590),” *Trajecta* 14 (2005): 355.

¹²⁸⁸ See: Asaert, *1585*; Geert H. Janssen, “Quo Vadis? Catholic Perceptions of Flight and the Revolt of the Low Countries, 1566–1609 *,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2011).

underground. The authorities were remarkably lenient toward these people.¹²⁸⁹ Instead of punishment, Farnese focused on the restoration of the material infrastructure of the Catholic Church.¹²⁹⁰ This restoration also extended to those executed by the enemy. In Antwerp, Josse de Weert recorded how the bodies of soldiers hanged more than a year earlier were taken from the gallows by the hangman's assistants and buried with a markedly visual display of traditionally Catholic funerary rites, including candles, clergy, and crucifixes.¹²⁹¹ The most fascinating example comes from Ghent, where the hated councilor Hessels, who had been ritually executed in 1578, was now dug up from the gallows field and granted something like a state funeral. Van den Vivere recorded in detail how

they put the body on display for everyone to see and witness, for three or four hours, and many people came to see it, and the body was still recognizable; and you could clearly distinguish his shape, his flesh still covering his bones, and there was little more damage to his body than his sunken eyes; his fingers were still intact, and the people touched his legs, knees, and face to feel if it was still firm, and it was, so many people thought it was a miracle.¹²⁹²

In Brussels, De Pottre recorded the practice in reverse: There, several prominent Calvinists were exhumed from the Church of Saint Gudula "because they were not worthy to lie in consecrated soil."¹²⁹³

¹²⁸⁹ Marie Juliette Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen (1585-1676)*, Verhandelingen / Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Jg. 57, nr.155 (Brussel: Palais des Académies, 1995); Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 129–30.

¹²⁹⁰ Spicer, "After Iconoclasm: Reconciliation and Resacralization in the Southern Netherlands, ca. 1566–85," 413.

¹²⁹¹ Weert, Chronycke oft journal, 260–61. See also Deschryver, "Revolting Bodies," 356–368.

¹²⁹² Vivere, *Chronijcke van Ghendt*, 376–77. 'Ende men heeft het lichaem een yeghelick laeten aenschauwen ende aensien drij zo vier hueren lanck, daer menich meinsche quam om siene, welck lichaem noch kennelic was; ende men sach meerckelic noch zijn vitmus van ghedaente, zijn vleesch noch hebbende over zijn ghebeente ende luttel schade aen zijn lichame ghedaen, dan dat zijn ooghen jnghevalen waeren; zijn vingheren waeren noch gheheel jn wesen, ende tvolck dau en taste zijn beenen, knien ofte aensichte oft noch hart was, maer jaet, zoo dat menich meinsche dachte een mirakel te sijne'.

¹²⁹³ *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 163. See also Bousard, "Aan de rand van het graf. De transformatie van het funeraire leven en landschap in Antwerpen en Brugge tijdens de calvinistische republieken (1577/1578 – 1584/1585)," 59.

Conclusion

Chroniclers experienced the fall of the radical Calvinist republics as an end point. In Bruges, Willem Weydts believed it time to conclude his chronicle: "I end my writing here because I arrived at a turning point in time, and we now have our churches again."¹²⁹⁴ In Ghent, Van Campene, too, ended his chronicle on a cheerful note. The coats of arms of Emperor Charles V, King Philip II, and the Golden Fleece were restored in the Church of Saint Bavo, and to celebrate the procession of Corpus Christi, all orders of the clergy came together, and a priest fulminated, as in the old days, against heresies "that are well known and despised by all good Catholics."¹²⁹⁵ During this procession day, concluded Van Campene, "more honor and devotion to the sacrament was observed than had been done for fifty years." Although Catholic chroniclers in the north, such as Wouter Jacobsz and Verwer, could not celebrate a similar victory for their Church, many of them had already stopped recording shortly after the Pacification of Ghent: Indeed, Jacobsz and Verwer themselves had ended their chronicles in 1579 and 1581, respectively.

Although the war in the Low Countries would continue for decades, for most chroniclers, the peace treaties and the shift in policy under Farnese meant that the legal instability, excessive executions, and erosion of the procedures and rituals of justice seen in the preceding years would decrease significantly. Starting with the capture of Den Briel by the *watergeuzen* in April 1572, chroniclers had recorded that wherever the rebels took over, the city magistrates were pushed aside. Motives other than order, peace, and redemption came to dominate the logic of justice. In the towns of Holland and Zeeland, members of the clergy and government were executed without proper trial in a process that mocked the rituality of justice and often parodied the hated heresy trials. The subsequent reality of warfare, sieges, and battles led to a spiral of violence and revenge and confronted chroniclers with the other end of the spectrum of rituality: The countless summary executions of soldiers and mass executions after the surrender of besieged cities were characterized by an utter lack of ritual. This

¹²⁹⁴ Weydts, *Chronique Flamande 1571-1584*, 151. 'Ich laete hyer myn scryven, om dat ic ben tot eet keeren van den tydt, ende om dat wy hebben vederomme de kercken. God zy ghedanck, dye ons de gracyhe heeft verlendt.'

¹²⁹⁵ Kempenare, *Vlaemsche Kronijk of Dagregister*, 359. 'als wel geweten en by alle goede Catholyken verfoeid [...] dat in vijftig jaren de gemeente zoo groote eerbiedigheiden eere niet betoond had aen het Hoogwaerdigste als op dezen dag'.

may explain why there are not many contemporary eyewitness accounts of these acts of slaughter, as it was presumably difficult for chroniclers to integrate so much violence, suffering, and meaningless death into a greater edifying narrative. After the final departure of the Duke of Alba, the Habsburg authorities would slowly shift toward a new, more moderate course. The great financial stresses faced by the government, however, led to continuous problems with the payment of soldiers, who became increasingly difficult to control. In 1576, a large-scale mutiny led to several “furies” in loyal Brabant, which eventually resulted in the uniting of the rebel and non-rebel provinces on their own account, without the central government’s involvement, to fight the mutinying soldiers.

The Pacification of Ghent meant the restoration of order in the north, but in the south, the worst was yet to come. There, chroniclers recorded with sorrow how Calvinists managed to claim ever greater power within the city governments, leading to the proclamation of Calvinist republics in the most important cities of Flanders and Brabant. Within these republics, dynamics emerged that were very similar to those seen in the north. Revenge and retribution, anger and anxiety, and political polemic were the main motives for executions. Again, the inversion of the ritual of heresy executions was recorded by chroniclers in the revenge executions of mendicants in Ghent and Bruges. Increasingly, rituals of justice were used to make a political point, as in the mock trials of cats or the ritual burning of statues. In the meantime, regular justice came almost to a standstill—in those executions that were carried out, the proper rituality was not observed. In the context of war between the republics and the Malcontents, the dismemberment and humiliation of the bodies of the enemy became common practice. The chaotic rule of the Calvinist regimes came to an end in the years 1584–1585 when the successful military strategist Alexander Farnese successively reconquered the cities. The death of William of Orange in 1584 proved a conclusive blow. Farnese took a radically different approach toward the reconquered cities from that of his predecessors, focusing on restoration and rehabilitation. Instead of new executions, chroniclers now reported exhumations and funerals of those who had died under Calvinist rule. In the rebel provinces, on the other hand, the political supremacy of the States of Holland became powerfully clear in the high-profile treason trials of the time, resulting in the extremely harsh and spectacular executions of “enemies of the state,” foremost among them Orange’s assassin, Balthasar Gerards.

Whereas historians of the Dutch Revolt have devoted much attention to this important period, they have often focused on the complicated political developments, peace treaties, and revolutionary character of the time, with its sudden twists and turns, treason plots, and changing allegiances at the highest political levels. However, political instability went hand in hand with the instability of justice: It was here, indeed, that the breakdown of authority was most strongly felt among ordinary people. The findings set out in this chapter thus make clear that the legal transgressions Henk van Nierop identified in the trial of the Hoorn lawyer Jan Jeroensz were occurring everywhere in the Low Countries. Most notably, we have seen that chroniclers in the Low Countries paid considerable attention to these transgressions—more than deaths occurring in the context of armed conflict, they focused on judicial deaths. By recording these in detail, they once again profiled themselves as guardians of justice.

Finally, it is remarkable that also in this chapter, we have seen that much religious violence in the Low Countries took place in legal contexts. We saw in the previous chapters that Catholics here rarely attacked Protestants themselves—unlike, for example, Catholics in France.¹²⁹⁶ The same was largely true for Protestants, who did not, for example, murder clergy en masse during the Iconoclast Fury of 1566. Admittedly, lynchings of clergy by rebel soldiers did occur, but Protestant inhabitants of the cities of the Low Countries do not seem to have turned on their Catholic neighbors to such an extent. Once in power, however, armed Calvinist rebels did not hesitate to take revenge. Often, the violence that followed, be it against clergy or with religious undertones, took place in semilegal constellations, whether in Den Briel in 1572 or in Ghent and Bruges in 1578. Chroniclers, of course, were not convinced of the legitimacy this conferred. In their eyes, it took more than a ritual for an execution to be considered justice.

¹²⁹⁶ Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France”; Pollmann, “Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: Clerical Leadership and Catholic Violence 1560–1585*.” For a recent analysis of how also St. Bartholomew’s Night was fueled by interpersonal violence and conflict see Foa, *Tous ceux qui tombent*.