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Righteous Citizens: The Lynching of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, The Hague, Collective
Violence, and the Myth of Tolerance in the Dutch Golden Age, 1650-1672.

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Ingrid Frederika DeSanto

2018

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Righteous Citizens: The Lynching of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt,
The Hague, Collective Violence, and the Myth of Tolerance in the Dutch
Golden Age, 1650-1672

by

Ingrid Frederika DeSanto

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles

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In The Hague, on August 20th, 1672, the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan DeWitt and his brother Cornelis DeWitt were publicly killed, their bodies mutilated and hanged by the populace of the city. This dissertation argues that this massacre remains such an unique event in Dutch history, that it needs thorough investigation. Historians have focused on short-term political causes for the eruption of violence on the brothers' fatal day. This work contributes to the existing historiography by uncovering more long-term political and social undercurrents in Dutch society. In doing so, issues that may have been overlooked previously are taken into consideration as well. Research pertaining the exposure to and acceptance of violence in the public sphere shows that, between 1650 and 1672, the municipal court of The Hague decreased the use of violent public punishment. The idea that the populace was usurping the role of judge

and executioner, as some theories suggest, is therefore unlikely. Exploration of actual day-to-day crime records reveals that violent crime was not dominant in The Hague. However, migration to The Hague increased significantly between 1650 and 1672. Without a permanent solution for the large influx of people, the magistrates resolved to ban all beggars from The Hague. There was no system in place to assure the expulsion of those “criminals.” This may have put a substantial group of homeless folks on the scene on August 20, 1672. Furthermore, the threat of a French invasion in the early months of 1672 had resulted in economic disarray in Holland, while reports on a failure to defend the East of the Republic from the French must have caused fear and anxiety among Dutch people. In combination, these long-term factors show that the image of the Dutch as tolerant of “others,” - during the prosperous seventeenth-century- may have only applied to people of a wealthier status. The threat of the French invasion of 1672 for a people that had experienced several wars in combination with the lack of governmental assistance for common people, probably set the events in motion that accumulated into the most famous massacre in Dutch history.

The dissertation of Ingrid Frederika DeSanto is approved.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor and mentor at UCLA, professor Margaret Jacob. Without her, I would not be where I am today. She supported me throughout my graduate studies, not only in my academic endeavors, but also in my life circumstances. Eventhough, the message was not always easy to hear, I knew she did everything in my best interest. In doing so, she has become my role-model and I am grateful to know her. I am honored to have studied under her supervision.

Second, I want to thank the other three members on my committee, professor David Sabean and professor Teo Ruiz from UCLA, and professor Ann J. Adams from UCSB. I am especially grateful for the patience with which professor Sabean read, corrected, and critiqued chapter after chapter. When I read back my first writings, I crunch at the grammar and errors. I attribute the improvement in my writing over the years to professor Sabean. In addition to the writing, professor Sabean has given me valuable comments on how to approach historical issues. I will be forever indebted. I want to thank professor Ruiz for his kind words and the feeling that all will be well, especially at times when I wanted to throw in the towel. A special thanks to professor Adams for her expertise-input on the evaluation of imagery as well as gently pushing me to keep deadlines and making me check administrative clutches that could delay my degree.

I could not have imagined any part of my life today if it was not for the professors of my undergraduate program at CSULB. Professor Sharlene Sayegh, my friend and role-model, was the first person who told me that I was smart, that I could own my words, and that the ability to think critically was an asset. She inspired me to dream bigger, to dream of obtaining a Ph.D. I also want to thank my friend and professor Sarah Schrank with whom I took a course in women's history that changed me fundamentally and inspired me to study gender. Furthermore,

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To my daughters, Elena and Alexandra, I want to express my love and gratitude for being easy going, understanding, and inspirational. I know that my graduate studies took time away from home, often at times when you needed me. Thanks to facetime we were able to stay close during my research year abroad. I missed you two terribly. You have become amazing, intelligent, sweet, and powerful women and I love you.

To Vincent, thank you for being there. I appreciate all you have done for me.

To Andreas, your love has carried me through the last three months of hard work.

To my dear friends, Morgan, Chien-Ling, and Subah for helping me through bouts of anxiety and for the laughter. You are amazing ladies.

For my father
Frederik Hans Karel Marek
1938-2014
and
my mother
Cornelia Frederika Marek-Boom
1944 -

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Introduction

In The Hague, on August 20th, 1672, the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan DeWitt and his brother Cornelis DeWitt were publicly killed, their bodies mutilated and hanged by the populace of the city. In *Public Offices, Public Demands: Capability in Governance in the Seventeenth Century Dutch Republic*, Robert von Friedeburg states that the murder of the DeWitt brothers might give “visible grounds for an inquiry into early modern violence along the lines of Natalie Zemon Davis’s work on religious ritualistic violence in sixteenth-century France.”¹ However, he continues to argue that such a study would not be necessary in Dutch history because the DeWitt incident “remained curiously isolated.” I disagree with his opinion. This dissertation argues that precisely because it remains such a unique event in the Netherlands, that this massacre needs thorough investigation. The underlying political and social circumstances should be explored and considered when explaining the eruption of this collective violence. In this study, I examine a variety of long-term factors that could have contributed to the motivation of the people to inflict such damage upon the brothers’ bodies that fatal day. Specifically, I examine the exposure to violence in the media during the seventeenth-century, actual crime and punishment in The Hague between 1650-1672 as well as lingering anxieties over ongoing war in the Dutch Republic, and especially the threat of the French invasion of 1672. This study shows that while the violence against Johan and Cornelis DeWitt was an isolated event, it was the

¹ Robert von Friedeburg, “Urban Riots and the Perspective of ‘Qualifications for Office’: The Peculiarities of Urban Government and the Case of the 1672 Disturbances in the Netherlands,” in Jan Hartman, *Nieuwestraten, Reinders, Michel eds. Public Offices, Personal Demands: Capabilities in Governance in the Seventeenth Century Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2009), p. 24.

eruption of long-term political and social issues that festered beneath the prosperity of the seventeenth-century.

My fascination with the topic comes from growing up in the Netherlands and hearing about this murder in school. Later, as an undergraduate student, I tried to find explanations of collective violence within the books and articles that were published on Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, but I was disappointed. These books either provided a detailed account of the personal life of the brothers or focused on the short-term events in their political career. Most works stopped by describing the horrendous end of Johan and Cornelis' lives without offering a clarification for the possible motives. Other researchers discard the gruesome nature of the incident as a very common occurrence in the political and social landscape of Early Modern Europe. But this conclusion is in contrast with research conducted on the Dutch seventeenth-century, better known as the Dutch Golden Age.

Books, such as *The Embarrassment of Riches* by Simon Schama or *Migrantenstad* (City of Migrants) by Erica Kuypers, portray the Dutch in the seventeenth-century as politically, socially, and culturally more tolerant, more open-minded, and less violent than the rest of Europe. World-wide trade was booming for the Seven United Provinces after they declared liberation from Spain on July 26, 1581 in the Act of Abjuration. They quickly became a major player on the international stage, holding territories in the Americas, South Africa, and East Asia. Investments in stocks of the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) were accessible to most citizens and consequently, the general level of wealth increased rapidly.² As Kuypers shows, Amsterdam became a magnet for migrants, who appeared

² The VOC was the first joint-stock company.

to have been welcomed and accepted. Schama discusses how the acquired wealth was used to support and manage the care of less fortunate people in society. Widows, orphans, old people, the mentally ill, criminals etc. were placed in designated houses separated from society, such as the *rasphuys* (wood rasping), the *spinhuys* (spinning and weaving), the *dolhuys* (mental institution), orphanages etc. Artwork from the period exhibits these riches and the tolerant atmosphere. Combined, these sources convey the message that life during the Golden Age was good and peaceful for the majority of Dutch residents. This imagery also serves as the foundation for contemporary Dutch cultural pride. However, within this historical context, the massacre of the DeWitt brothers becomes possibly even more peculiar and historians seem to struggle intellectually with this discrepancy.

Recently, Dutch historians start to examine the costs of acquiring the prosperity of the Dutch Golden Age. The affluence generated by the VOC and WIC has been contrasted with violence committed to indigenous people in other parts of the world to obtain land and tradable goods, as well as with Dutch participation in the slave-trade. Now that the full extent of naval war activities has been revealed, critics wonder if streets in Holland should still be named after seventeenth-century Dutch “sea-heroes.” One can also wonder who benefitted most from the social structure of housing the “underdog” of society. Men in rasping-houses and women in spinning-houses had to work long hours a day in return for their stay. The use of young orphaned boys as manpower on trade ships has been documented as well.³ It can be argued that, under this “guise” of charity, undesirable elements were kept off the street, making it more attractive for wealthy immigrants to settle and spend their money in Dutch cities. Following these “new”

³ Marianne Wever-Nierop, *Weesjongens uit Enkhuizen in Dienst van de VOC: een onderzoek naar achtergrond weeshuizen, hun binding met de VOC en de aanmonstering van weesjongens; tevens een vergelijking met Hoorn*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002.

perspectives on the realities of the Golden Age, avenues opened to examine other topics that may have been politically too complex previously, such as the murder of Johan and Cornelis.

Another motivation for my work is that histories regarding the Dutch Golden Age usually focus upon Amsterdam. The reason for this is obvious: Amsterdam emerged as the largest, most prosperous city in the seventeenth-century. Its historical records are well maintained and easy to accessible. However, I think it is incorrect to generalize research concerning Amsterdam to other parts of the Dutch Republic, especially The Hague. The Hague was the second largest city during the seventeenth-century and functioned as the seat of Dutch government. It also housed several European embassies. The fact that the murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt happened in this metropolis, is all the more reason to investigate its social character.

The Netherlands have been known by a variety of names throughout its history. In this work, I use the name that is time appropriate. This means that before 1581, I use the Low Countries as the combined name for present-day Belgium and the Netherlands. Between 1581 and 1650, it became the Seven United Provinces, and eventually, under the leadership of Johan DeWitt, it became the Dutch Republic. In addition, confusion often arises with the use of Holland and Westvriesland. It is important to note that this refers to the most prosperous province of the Netherlands located in the west and not the whole country. In case I refer to the whole country, I use the Netherlands.

The first chapter lays out the issues surrounding the topic that have been overlooked by previous discussions of the murders. I examine the dynamics of crowd violence, the impact of media on behavior, theories on evil-doing, transgenerational war trauma, and the complexion of communal interactions, among others. It draws from historical sources, but also from more

current studies in the field of sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general framework within which some of the occurrences of August 20th, 1672 can, to a more or lesser extent, be more efficiently explained. The aim of this chapter is not to find a definite motivation for the massacre, but rather to consider or eliminate possible explanations. Other chapters focus on specific topics more thoroughly.

In chapter two, I attempt to reconstruct the exposure to violence, either real or imagined in The Hague in the seventeenth century as well as the public sphere within which events occurred. The Knuttel archive in the Royal Library in The Hague contains thousands of pamphlets representing a variety of topics in Dutch history for historians to explore and investigate. From this archive, I use images through which multiple facets of The Hague's public sphere could be recreated. In addition, I selected images that portray violence comparable to that inflicted upon the bodies of the DeWitt brothers. It is possible that this imagery circulated within The Hague of the seventeenth century and to which people must have been exposed and reacted. Together these pictures show the possible psychological mindset of the actors responsible for the murder of Johan and Cornelis.

The research of the third chapter dives into the darker circles of society in late seventeenth-century The Hague. By transcribing, recording, and investigating 2,175 local court cases of the municipal archive of The Hague, between 1650 and 1672, it is possible to draw broader conclusions about the variations of crime and punishment over time. This in turn will provide a clear insight into the amount and intensity of violence within the city. In addition, from these sources, the general actors of these more deviant circles can be identified, those people who are more likely to participate in events in the public sphere. The records also provide an insight into the ways in which the judicial system of The Hague managed societal deviants.

Furthermore, the most relevant cases in the files of the *Hof van Holland*, the highest court of the Province of Holland are discussed as well.

This chapter contains several quantitative charts. I recorded and calculated demographic data from the judicial files. This general overview traces trends in crime and punishment over a twenty-two year period. This shows increases or decreases in crime rates, useful to place the murders of Johan and Cornelis in the context of violent crime. Individual cases are also discussed, usually because they deviate from the trend at a given time. It is clear that excesses in violence did happen, but not to the extent of the slayings of the DeWitt brothers.

The fourth chapter focuses on the French invasion before August 20th, 1672. Investigation into the municipal archive of Arnhem in the east of the Dutch Republic (and region of *Gelderland*) reveals the extent to which accounts about the behavior of French soldiers on the people of their conquered towns compare to the reality of affairs. At the same time, pamphlets from the Knuttel archive provide an impression of the news that reached the populace of The Hague about the advancing armies of the French monarch, Louis XIV. In addition, notes from the meetings of the Estates General of Holland of 1672 will demonstrate that Johan DeWitt's hands were tied to take any strategic and beneficial decisions regarding the defense of his Republic.

In combination, the studies of this dissertation shed light on long-term circumstances that contributed to the events that took place on the day that Johan and Cornelis were murdered. By no means does it provide a definite answer. However, it moves the focus of current popular – and even dismissible conclusions to consider the longer-term sources that may have played a part in the brothers' fate.

Chapter 1

Violence in Early Modern The Hague: Issues Surrounding the Murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, 1672

*Here lies Jan DeWitt
Not complete but part of him
His heart, his ears and his hands
Are distributed over many lands⁴*

On August 20, 1672, a large crowd gathered around the prison on the *Buitenhof* (the outside courtyard) in the center of The Hague. Some folks climbed on the roofs of the surrounding buildings, while others threw stones against the door of the prison, shouting for the brothers, Johan and Cornelis DeWitt to show themselves.⁵ The crowd was angry at the two men who had had political control for twenty-two years over Holland, the most influential province of the Dutch Republic.

The horrendous events that followed continued to attract attention from writers and publicists for many years after. In a description of the lives and murders of Cornelis and Johan De Witt, published in 1676, the author describes how the crowd, after the brothers were shot, undressed the two men, bound their arms and legs, dragged them to 't *Groene Zoodje* (The Green Turf, a brick, raised scaffold for public punishments roughly a hundred yards from the prison) and hanged their bodies upside down on the *Wip* (a wooden pole with cross bars). Once the brothers were hanged, people stormed the bodies and, as they

⁴ Sarcastic poetic grave inscription of Johan DeWitt after his murder, published in a pamphlet: Anonymous, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroederen Cornelis en Johan De Witt*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library in The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet Collection, # 11410, p.1.

⁵ Anonymous, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroederen Cornelis en Johan De Witt*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410, p.5.

allegedly attempted to bite off the penises, continued to slash the two bodies open lengthwise, cut out the hearts and tongues, poked out the eyes, took out and played with the intestines, and slit off the ears, fingers, toes, and noses. According to some accounts, people even roasted and ate pieces of the corpses. Clothing and body parts were sold to the public, and a spontaneous trading market for memorabilia emerged on the spot. The author concludes that it was the *grouwelijkste schouspel* (the most gruesome theater) that has ever been seen in the Netherlands and probably in the whole world, a scandal to remain in the collective memory of domestic as well as foreign communities for a long time.⁶ To find an explanation for this extraordinary display of violence against the bodies of Johan and Cornelis, it is necessary to start with an unraveling of the purpose of the vindictiveness from a psychological standpoint. The violence needs to be situated not only within early modern local, political, and public circumstances in Holland and The Hague, but also within a larger framework of crowd behavior in the public sphere, the frequency of forceful communal demonstrations, as well as the “normality” of body mutilation and cannibalism in the early modern period. This chapter provides theories regarding this larger framework of general issues that have been overlooked by historians and that could have influenced the events of August 20th, 1672. It is not until chapter two, three, and four that I attempt to apply these theories onto the murder of Johan and Cornelis. This chapter starts with the unique lay-out of The Hague and the ways in which the logistics of urban spaces contributed to the fate of the brothers DeWitt.

⁶ Anonymous, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroederen Cornelis en Johan De Witt*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library in The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet Collection, # 11410, p.6.

THE HAGUE: A DISTINCTIVE METROPOLIS IN 1672⁷

The Hague or its alternate name, 's *Gravenhage* (the Count's residence), developed differently than other towns and cities in the Netherlands. This unusual urbanization process brought with it a unique set of experiences and challenges for its inhabitants. Traditionally towns emerged along and at junctions of trade routes, either sea or land or both, usually around a common market square. The opportunities in these places attracted a variety of people, and the centers spiraled into hubs of social and economic exchange between different social groups. By contrast, The Hague originated after the Count of Holland, Floris IV, built a small castle in 1229 in the south of the province, in the country-side close to the North Sea. It was intended for use as a small hunting residence, a *haeghe*. His successor, Count Willem II, expanded the main building giving it the name *Het Binnenhof* (the inside courtyard). After Willem II died in 1259, his son, Count Floris V, added the *Ridderzaal* (Hall of knights). He used this hall to receive fellow landlords to discuss joint provincial administrative matters, a precursor of the Provincial Estates of Holland and Westvriesland.

During the fifteenth century, the Burgundian Dukes obtained the Low Countries, including the province of Holland and Westvriesland. Because the territory was too large to be governed by a single sovereign, a political structure was set up in which a representative of the dukes, a *Stadthouder* (Stadtholder), was appointed to preside over a province in collaboration with an advisory board. This board, the Provincial Estates, consisted of elected representatives of the three ruling estates (the cities, the nobility, and the church). For Holland and Westfriesland the Provincial Estates originated from the traditionally held meetings of the landlords in the

⁷ Th. Wijsenbeek, *Den Haag, Geschiedenis van de Stad: De Tijd van de Republiek, deel 2* (Den Haag: Wbooks, 2014) and Henk Frijters. *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van Den Haag* (Rijswijk: Seapress, 2014).

Ridderzaal. As a result, the seat of the Provincial Estates of Holland and Westfriesland was located in The Hague.⁸ In addition, after the Act of Abjuration in 1581 in which the seven Northern provinces of the Low Countries rejected the rule of the Spanish King and Duke of Burgundy, Philip II, the Estates General of the Dutch Republic chose The Hague as their central meeting place as well. At this point, The Hague had become the most important political center of the Dutch Republic. Thus, while economic motives were the driving force behind the development of other towns and cities in the Dutch Republic, The Hague rested on a political foundation, rapidly developing into a substantial metropolis. As a result, its lay-out, its social grid, and consequently its public space developed differently from other cities.

Cities and towns in the Netherlands developed mainly around one central square. The city hall, often including a local prison, with a public execution area, the markets, and the church were all built around this center. Although the difference between these spheres may have been complicated by invisible yet clearly defined social structures, on a material level political, economic, and social traffic was often firmly intertwined. By contrast, The Hague had multiple hubs, each serving a particular social purpose. In 1652, Joan Blauwe wrote a book about the major

⁸ The position of Stadtholder (literally holder of the city) is complicated. The meaning of the title as well as the rights and obligations adhered to it changed since the independence of the Netherlands from Spain in 1581. Originally, the Stadtholder of a province represented the ruler(s) (count or king) in meetings with the Provincial Estates. After William of Orange rejected the rule of Spain, the position of Stadtholder became obsolete. However, to honor William I, Prince of Orange (Stadtholder of Holland and Westfriesland at that time) for his part in the war for independence, the title of Stadtholder remained. To give the title meaning, the Stadtholder was appointed “Captain-General of the Army.” As such he had significant power within the political structure. The position of Stadtholder was not hereditary (although some Stadtholders tried to push legislation through to make the position inheritable). However, descendants of William I, Prince of Orange, have traditionally held this position in the Netherlands. This two-tier in political power has caused ongoing strife between the Oranges and some members of the Estates General in the Dutch political landscape. Twice the position of Stadtholder was abolished. Once between 1652-1672 and again between 1702-1747 until William IV, Prince of Orange resumed the title. On March 16th, 1815, after the rule of Louis Bonaparte (brother of Napoleon Bonaparte), Willem Frederik of Orange took the title of King William I, Prince of Orange, King of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

cities of the Low Countries.⁹ He describes The Hague as consisting of several spacious and open squares, each a “sieraet en vermaeck” (a jewel and entertaining).¹⁰ The *Binnenhof* (the inside courtyard) was the center of political life. The area outside the walls of the *Binnenhof*, *het Buitenhof* (the outside courtyard), became a place for outcast members of society. Consequently, a prison, the *Gevangenispoort* (Prisongate) was erected there with a place of public execution the *Plaetse* (the spot or place) located approximately a hundred yards to the right. The gate of the prison was one of three entrances onto the *Buitenhof*. The central market, including the fish, and meat markets, the town hall, several taverns and four different churches were situated on the left side behind the *Buitenhof*.



Picture 1. Center of The Hague, 1649¹¹

⁹ Joan Blaeu, *Tooneel der Steeden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, deel 2. (Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1652). Map. From Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, AC72.

¹⁰Joan Blaeu, *Tooneel der Steeden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, deel 2 (Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1652), p. 231. Map. From Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, AC72, p.231.

¹¹ Picture 1: Joan Blaeu, *Tooneel der Steeden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, deel 2 (Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1652), p. 231. Map. From Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, AC72.



Picture 2. Center of Amsterdam, 1652¹²

The comparison between a bird's-eye view of The Hague in 1648 (picture 1) and Amsterdam from a similar angle three years later (picture 2) clearly shows the differences in city layouts. In picture 2, the main single square, the *Dam*, is clearly identifiable as the main hub of social life. Located around this center are the most important spheres for social interaction, such as the church, the city hall with its place of execution, and the marketplace. Although not all streets necessarily lead directly to this center, it is obvious that this square served as the pivotal point of social life and was therefore difficult to avoid in the daily lives of people in Amsterdam. By contrast, in the lay-out of The Hague several focal points draw attention from the viewer. The church and the market place (located on the far-left side of the picture) are positioned around the corner from the place of execution, the *Plaetse* (visible in the top center of the image). The actual execution site, the *Groene Zoodje* is tucked away to the right side of this square against rows of trees. In addition, the *Binnenhof* and *Buitenhof*, the most important centers of political life, are

¹² Picture 2: Joan Blaeu, *Tooneel der Steeden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, deel 2 (Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1652), p. 132. Map. From Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, AC72.

situated more to the right side of the picture. This unusual, scattered city design of The Hague requires an in-depth investigation for considering the physical deed of murdering Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. Did the structural characteristics of the city facilitate or in any way contribute to the logistics of this crime?

The second main difference with other cities in the Low Countries comes from the fact that The Hague never obtained an official charter of city rights, issued by the Lord. From the early Middle Ages to the late sixteenth century, under the existing feudal system at the time, rulers in Europe, including the Low Countries, had the option to present towns with legal city rights. The size of the town did not matter.¹³ Usually, these rights were bought for large sums of money, either initiated by a Lord in need of monetary funds or by a town's administration striving for autonomy. These rights granted a town substantially more independence from the ruler in decision-making and provided certain privileges. Privileges included the right to build a defensive wall, to tax the town's inhabitants, to hold markets, to have and elect multiple administrative positions (burgomasters, pensionary etc), to execute justice, and in the Northern provinces of the low countries, most importantly, a vote in the Provincial Estates. The representatives of these Provincial Estates in turn had one combined vote in the Estates General, the government of the Dutch Republic. Inhabitants of a town became "citizens" with certain rights, for example protection from invaders, while at the same time duties, such as paying taxes to the city.

In the Netherlands, the power of command slowly shifted from the landowning nobility to the citizens of cities. For that reason, the Count of Holland refused to sign away his rights to

¹³ For example, Utrecht obtained official city rights in 1122, with approximately 2,500 citizens and Naarden obtained official city rights in 1355 with approximately 500 citizens.

The Hague. Still the most important political powerhouse in the Dutch Republic. By 1672, it had a population of 25,000 people and a thriving economy. Enfranchising The Hague would have deprived the count of its tax revenues. It was not until 1806, when Louis Napoleon, crowned king of the Netherlands by his brother Napoleon Bonaparte, gave The Hague officially the charter of city rights as a symbolic token of goodwill, and it kept this official label even after Napoleon was defeated in 1815.

Although The Hague had not obtained an official charter by 1672, its local administration had nonetheless acquired the power to act as a city. It had the right to hold markets, to have several associations of *schutterijen* (civic guards), to have and elect multiple administrative positions including several burgomasters, pensionary etc. and to have guilds. Most importantly, the administrative powers had full authority over the city's legislature and civil and criminal courts. Furthermore, The Hague did have one vote in the Provincial Estates. Finally, because it was the largest political center and home to national regents and international ambassadors, the architecture around the *Binnenhof* was as impressive in grandeur as in stature. According to Blaeu, The Hague was incomparable to other cities in "*pronck en vermaeck*" (splendor and entertainment) to such an extent that it could only be considered a city.¹⁴ Although The Hague was not legally a city in 1672, it operated and functioned fully as an official city. Beside its legal citizens, this vibrant metropolis attracted people from all over Europe. Some of them united in "the faceless mob" that killed Johan and Cornelis.

¹⁴ Joan Blaeu, *Tooneel der Steeden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, deel 2 (Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1652), p.231 and p.233. Map. Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, AC72.

THE PERPETRATORS

To arrive at some understanding of the motives behind the gruesome fate of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt on August 20, 1672, it is important to establish who “the faceless mob” was. Several “eyewitness sources,” written and visual, were published within a few years after the murders that can shed light on the construction of that crowd. Who were present, who were the instigators, and who were the perpetrators of this scene? It can be argued that eyewitness sources are hardly ever exact accounts of occurring events. For example, one of the sources is a published play written in Antwerp by Claes Voorvechter.¹⁵ It depicts the events accompanied by illustrations of the situation, but it is unlikely that the author was present to write in such detail about the actors and proceedings of the crime scene. Furthermore, even if the authors had been present, it is still not a guarantee that a story unfolded as they described. Certain details may have been framed according to political preferences and social desirability. The authors and artists probably collected eyewitness reports, editing the storyline as they saw fit. Nonetheless, from all these sources it is possible to assemble several features which together will give a fairly accurate description of the reason the people had gathered as well as the composition of that crowd on Saturday, August 20, 1672.

Based on two stories that quickly spread throughout The Hague, people started to gather around the prison on the *Buitenhof* over the course of that fateful Saturday. Earlier that morning, *het Hof van Holland* (Court of Holland) had pronounced its verdict concerning the alleged plan

¹⁵ Claes Voorvechter, *N.V.M. Tragoedie van den Bloedighen Haeg ofte Broeder-Moort van Jan en Cornelis de Wit, Geschiedt den 20 den Ooghst-maendt 1672. Binnen 's Gravenhage* (Antwerpen: in 't Witte Hooft, 1672). Pamphlet. From *Atlast van Stolk*, Rotterdam, inv. #750075-1, Van Stolk # 2480.

of Cornelis to have William III, Prince of Orange assassinated by Willem Tichelaer, a barber.¹⁶ A week prior, Tichelaer had claimed his innocence to the court. He explained that as a faithful servant of the state, he never intended to carry out the murder, but had pretended to agree to kill William III, Prince of Orange, in order to gather information so that he could warn the Prince of Cornelis' plans. The court ruled that Tichelaer was not guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. Cornelis was sentenced to eternal banishment from the provinces of Holland and Westvriesland. He was also discharged from his political positions.¹⁷ These were mild punishments considering the substantial charges of treason. This crime typically carried the sentence of public decapitation. After the verdict, Cornelis was free to leave the prison.

A prison maid notified Johan DeWitt that he could pick up his brother. He arrived around ten o'clock that same morning. Only two armed guards were present. However, the news travelled fast. Willem Tichelaer, also released from prison earlier that day eagerly informed people on the *Plaetse* (next to the prison) of his innocence and the *flauewelijke* (mild) verdict. He probably knew that this would cause an outrage among the large number of *Orangisten* (supporters of the Prince of Orange) in the city.¹⁸ In addition, a rumor spread that angry farmers from the surrounding country-side were on their way to The Hague to plunder the city, as the

¹⁶ For the full story of the alleged conspiracy see, Willem Tichelaer, *Waerachtigh Verhael van 't gepasseerde in, ende ontrent der saecken tusschen Willem Tichelaer, Mr. Chirurgyn tot Piershil En Mr. Cornelis de Witt, Ruward van Putten, Nopende de conspiratie tegen sijn Hoogheyten Heere Prince van Orangien* (1672). Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, # 10206.

¹⁷ Hof van Holland, *Sententie Van den Hove van Hollandt en West-vrieslandt, jegens Mr. Cornelis de Witt, Oudt-Burgemeester der Stadt Dordrecht, &c, Gepronuncieert den 20 Augusti 1672*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10191, p6.

¹⁸ Anonymous, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordyn, Opgeschoven voor de Heeren Gebroederen Cornelis en Johan DeWitt, Korte Beschrijvinge van 't Leven en Ombrengen der Heeren Gebroederen Cornelis en Johan DeWitt* (1672), p.5. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410.

ongoing wars with France had caused famine. The *Gemeente* (community) of The Hague was probably motivated to assemble in case of an attack.

By five in the afternoon, three groups of actors made up the crowd. The first group was the *Burgerwacht* (citizen guard). This guard consisted of a collection of *Vaandels* or *Schutterijen* (militias), groups of men with access to weapons who united to maintain civil order in the city. Only male *burghers* (legal citizens with a permanent address and respectable occupation) could become members of such groups.¹⁹ Participation was not mandatory, but it appeared to have been a moral obligation for men, who also enjoyed exclusive political and social rights based on their legal status.²⁰ Traditionally, these *Vaandels* consisted of skilled artisans such as silver smiths, basket weavers, masons, but also merchants or artists. The members of a *Vaandel* united in political views and social interests.

Six *Vaandels* were active in The Hague in 1672. To a more or lesser extent, the members were political supporters of the Prince of Orange. Hendrick Verhoeff was a member of the *Blaeuwe Vaandel*. He was silver smith and self-acclaimed organizer of the protest against the verdict on Cornelis. By the early afternoon of August 20, 1672, he had rallied all six *Vaandels*, culminating to over 400 men. All of them were armed with guns and other weapons, waiting for the release of the two statesmen in front of the prison gate.²¹ According to the silversmith, the

¹⁹ In The Hague there were six *Vaandels*, namely *Het Blauwe Vaandel*, *Het Witte Vaandel*, *Het Blauwe Vaandel*, *Oranje-Blanje-Bleu Vaandel*, *Het Groene Vaandel* en *Het Colombijne Vaandel*

²⁰ The word *Burgher* stems from medieval times and is related to the Dutch word for Castle, *burcht*. A *burgher* belonged to a *burcht* and as such had certain obligations as well as rights. Most *burchts* turned into cities over time, but the word *burgher* remained. *It is comparable to the French word bourgeoisie.*

²¹ Geereart Brandt, *Eenige Particularitetyten; voorgevallen op den 20 Augusty, 1672, als wanneer de twee gebroederen Cornelis en Johan de Witt van de Haeghse Borgeren wierden omgebracht, gehoort uyt de mont van Hendrick Verhoeff, Silversmit, wooneende tot Voorburgh, die bij de naergenoemde actien is present geweest* (1672). Pamphlet. From University of Michigan, interlibrary copy of original pamphlet, p.8, 9, and 10.

men were shouting anti-DeWitt slogans such as “The Prince on top, the DeWitts on the bottom and who thinks differently will wait the thunder.”²² This suggests that the civic guards were agitated by the legal decision of the court to set Cornelis free.

The second group consisted of three cavalry companies, armed forces employed by the Hague’s city council. The authorities of The Hague had mandated that they be on the scene to safeguard Johan and Cornelis. Earlier that day, Hendrik Verhoeff had visited burgomaster Groenevelt and had threatened to pick up the DeWitts from prison and *deselve om den hals te helpen* (kill them himself).²³ The cavalry’s presence was thus not necessarily motivated by their personal political preference like the civic guards. Furthermore, the exact number of men in each company cannot be determined, so it is impossible to estimate how many men were on the scene at which time during the day. However, by five in the afternoon, when Johan and Cornelis were released from prison the cavalry had left. About an hour earlier, frantic and persistent rumors spread that a group of farmers were making their way up to plunder the city. Consequently, the cavalry received orders to leave the *Plaetse* to safeguard the incoming roads. Although, it is impossible to unravel individual actions and underlying emotions of people on the scene, it is important to investigate the incentives of groups that were present. As a group, the cavalry had the professional task of protecting the brothers. For reasons beyond their control, they failed terribly. Because they were not on the scene when the slaying happened, this group did not participate in the massacre of Johan and Cornelis.

²²Geeraert Brandt, *Eenige Particularitetyten; voorgevallen op den 20 Augusty, 1672, als wanneer de twee gebroederen Cornelis en Johan de Witt van de Haeghse Borgeren wierden omgebracht, gehoort uyt de mont van Hendrick Verhoeff, Silversmit, wooneende tot Voorburgh, die bij de naergenoemde actien is present geweest* (1672). Pamphlet. From the University of Michigan, interlibrary copy of original pamphlet, p.6.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.9.

The third cluster is the most unidentifiable, yet largest group of people. It consists of the anonymous masses, the *Volck*, the *Gepeupel*, the *Caneilje*, the lowest echelon of society.²⁴ All sources, primary as well as secondary, mention that a large crowd gathered that day on the square between the main prison gate and the place of public execution. Rumors of an approaching farmer invasion, the expected release of Cornelis DeWitt from prison, and the tumultuous activity of the assembling *Burgerwacht* throughout The Hague predicted an imminent event. People were drawn to the *Buitenhof* to witness it. In the primary sources this group is clumped together as one large horde. They were apparently too anonymous to be mentioned for individual activity. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge about the political preferences, social interactions, and overall circumstances of these lowest ranks in The Hague during that time. In chapter three of this work, I intent to unravel some of the obscurity surrounding this faction by exploring lawsuits of the period. However, for the current discussion, I will regard these people as a group acting together.

To find the possible reasons for the immense violence against the bodies of Johan and Cornelis, it is essential to identify the perpetrators who committed this massacre. As early as 1885, when Antonin Lefevre Pontalis wrote the first biography of Johan DeWitt, historians have pondered this question. It will not come as a surprise that they come to vastly different conclusion, even though they all base their arguments on the same primary sources.

²⁴ *Caneilje* is derived from the French word *Caneille*, which comes from the Italian word *Canaglia* which is a horde of dogs, rabble. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009). Although the literal meaning and characteristics of each label is different from each other, they are often used interchangeable throughout the sources.

To begin with, two authors do not make a distinction between groups.²⁵ They refer to the actors as a mob of angry citizens or simply as a furious crowd. However, all eyewitness accounts make a distinction between the *Burghers* or *Vaandels* on the one side and the common folk on the other. Both historians Antonin Pontalis and Herbert Rowen concluded that the civic guards did indeed shoot the brothers in the head and helped to drag them onto the scaffolds. They retreated content and orderly after that.²⁶ The common folk, who stayed behind, proceeded to commit the actual slaughter. No armed guards were present. Both conclusions seriously minimize the active role of the *Burgherwacht* in this “theater of horror.”

More recently, Dutch historians have taken a renewed interest in the subject matter. Michiel Reinders and Ronald Prud’Homme van Reine agree in their conclusions.²⁷ They claim that the civic guards were solely responsible for the murder as well as the gruesome aftermath of chaos, body mutilation, and even cannibalism. Both authors state that common folk, the *graeuw* (the gray), the *gepeupel* (the lowest classes) did not participate in the events to the extent previously presumed. Michel Reinders says in an interview that the lowest classes of The Hague did not play a political role in everyday life and that the murder simply was a political reckoning

²⁵ Johan Theunisz, *Johan DeWitt* (Den Haag: H.P. Leopold’s Uitgeverij, 1938), p. 174. Dr. D.J. Roorda, *Het Rampjaar, 1672* (Bussum: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1971), p. 89 – 90.

²⁶ M. Antonin Lefèvre Pontalis, *John DeWitt, Grand Pensionary of Holland; Twenty Years of Parliamentary Republic* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1885), p. 493 – 494. Herbert H. Rowen, *John DeWitt, Grand Pensionary of Holland, 1625 – 1672* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 880 – 882. Most likely, both authors based this conclusion on the following primary sources, among others: *De Haaghse Broeder-Moort, Gepleeght aen de Heeren Johan en Cornelis DeWitt*, p.1. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10448 and *Verhael Van ‘t Oproer, nevens de Doodt van de Heeren Johan en Cornelis DeWitt*, p.1. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10192. *Haeghsche Verdedighingh ofte het toegeschoven Swart Toneel-Gordyn Voor de Heeren Gebroederen Cornelis en Johan DeWitt*, (1672), p. 26 – 27. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410.

²⁷ Michel Reinders, *Printed Pandemonium: Popular Prints and Politics in the Netherlands, 1650 – 1672* (Boston: Brill, 2013). Ronald Prud’Homme van Reine, *Moordenaars van Jan de Wit: De Zwartste Bladzijde van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2013).

by the *Burgherij* (all citizens).²⁸ It seems that both historians base their conclusion specifically on one published primary source.²⁹ Based on the eyewitness account of Hendrick Verhoeff, a key player in the event, this particular source provides a long list of participating *Burghers* and a description of the acts they apparently committed. At that time, Hendrick Verhoeff considered himself to be a hero for taking the lead in going after the brothers with such fury. It is therefore possible that he greatly exaggerated his role as well as that of his fellow civic guards. Historians thus have gone from one extreme to the other without, in my opinion, sufficient evidence.

The “who has killed them” question is in this work less important. Panhuysen, Reinders, and Prud’Homme van Reine argue that the actual setup for the murder and the fatal shot in the heads came from men in the *Vaandels*, while no person or group was present to protect Johan and Cornelis. Based on their extensive research, this point is convincing. But the extraordinary amount of violence displayed on the bodies and the acts of mutilation, even cannibalism afterwards was committed by the common people as well. To argue that the lower classes did not act in political matters is to forego the fact that many of the political pamphlets were published publicly, often accompanied by graphic images that left very little to the imagination. Chapter two and three address these publications in much more detail. At this point in the discussion, it suffices to acknowledge their existence. In addition, Simon Simonides, preacher in the New Church in The Hague, and fervent DeWitt hater, preached and published hateful speeches about the brothers in the community. On the morning of the murder, he attached a note to the church

²⁸ NRC Handelsblad, Digital version, 29 november 2008. Interview. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2008/11/29/burgerij-lyncchte-gebroeders-de-witt-11647101-a826937>.

²⁹ Geeraert Brandt. *Eenige Particulariteiten; voorgevallen op den 20 Augusty, 1672, als wanneer de twee gebroederen Cornelis en Johan de Witt van de Haeghse Borgeren wierden omgebracht, gehoort uyt de mont van Hendrick Verhoeff, Silversmit, wooneende tot Voorburgh, die bij de naergenoemde actien is present geweest*, (1672). Pamphlet. From the University of Michigan, interlibrary copy of original pamphlet.

door hinting at the events that should follow.³⁰ All these publications and word-to-mouth stories must have trickled down to all layers of the society, including the very lowest.

To answer the question who committed the violent and gruesome acts, it is useful to conduct research beyond the written material and examine the images that circulated after the lynching. For example, Pieter Frits' recently restored painting portraying the sequence of events on that fateful day (picture 3), clearly demonstrates that common folk mutilated the bodies while the brothers were hanging naked on the scaffold.



Picture 3³¹

Similarly, the last image of the famous and detailed etching *Witten Wonder Spiegel* by Romeyn de Hooghe (picture 4 and 5), not only shows how the brothers are dismembered by the

³⁰ Lia van Gemert, *De Haagsche Broedermoord: Oranje Ontmaskerd*, 1984. http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/geme003haag01_01/geme003haag01_01_0001.php ‘Belsebub schrijft uit de Hel; Dat Kees de Wit haast komen zel; Hij wacht hem in korte dagen; Maar zijn kop moet eerst zijn afgeslagen; En zijn broer is ook een schelm [...]’ (Belsebub writes from hell; That Kees de Wit will come; He expects him in a few days; But first he should be decapitated; And his brother is also a rogue), p.271.

³¹ Picture 3: Pieter Frits, *Moord op de Gebroeders De Witt*, oil on canvas (1672), Den Haag, Haags Historisch Museum. The restoration revealed a surprising fact. The area on the painting where the naked bodies hang was covered with the image of a canon. Only by restoring it to its original splendor does the viewer get to experience the full horror of the murder on Johan and Cornelis De Witt.

grauw, but the subtitle also states that the brothers were killed by the *Burghers* and horribly mutilated by the common folk afterwards.



Picture 4³²

³² Picture 4: Romeyn de Hooge, *Witten Wonder Spiegel* (1675), etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-77.116.



Ian en Cornelis de wit van de gevange poort gestooten
werden van de Borgers in den Haeg gedoot, en van't
gemeene volck op een ongehoorde schriklyke wys
mishandelt

Picture 5³³

An image in the booklet *T.V.M. Tragedie van den Bloedigen Haeg ofte Broerder-Moort van Jan en Cornelis de Wit; Gchiedt den 20 van Ooghst-maendt 1672 binnen 's Gravenhage* by Claes Voorvechter shows members of the community eating the bowels of Johan or Cornelis

³³ Picture 5: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Witten Wonder Spiegel* (1675), etching, cutout lower right corner, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-77.116. Text under image: Ian and Cornelis de wit, coming from the prison gate were killed by the citizens in The Hague, and mutilated by the common folk in the most unheard of and horrible manner.

(picture 6).³⁴ From these images, it seems that all layers of society were involved in this horrendous and chaotic display of violence, including women and children of the lowest classes. The most brutal violence was not carried out in a calculated and orderly fashion simply to execute justice as some historians suggest. The crowd was going wild and raged its fury on the two bodies.



Picture 6

³⁴ Picture 6: Claes Voorvechter, *T.V.M. Tragoedie van den Bloedigen Haeg ofte Broeder-Moort van Jan en Cornelis de Wit; Gechiedt den 20 van Ooght-maendt 1672 binnen 's Gravenhage* (Antwerpen: In 't Witte Hooft, 1672), p.54. Etching. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-77.130.

POLITICALLY MOTIVATED COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

The recent trend in clarifying the motives for the murder of the DeWitt brothers is to label it a well-planned, political reckoning by an influential, armed group of organized *Burghers* and thus should fall in the category of a political assassination.³⁵ The fatal head shots were clearly well aimed to kill the brothers. However, I think it is too simplistic to conclude the same for all subsequent actions of that day. I see two problems with it. First, the conclusion assumes that the crowd was motivated by the same political factors as the civic guards who shot them. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence's* defines political violence as “organized violence aimed at overturning or changing the political system”³⁶ In chapter one of the book, John Darby argues that political violence follows a bell-curve.³⁷ It starts with political tension between groups or between groups and the government, after which public protest follows. On the top of the curve, Darby situates the escalation of the underlying anger into violence (for example, the assassination of important figure or civil war). After this outburst, society comes out of the chaos and will work toward reconstruction under new political circumstances.³⁸ The immense ferocious escalation on August 20, 1672 does not come on top of this theoretical curve. The Dutch Republic already changed their political course in two weeks prior.

³⁵ Michel Reinders, *Printed Pandemonium: Popular Prints and Politics in the Netherlands, 1650 – 1672* (Boston: Brill, 2013). Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine, *Moordenaars van Jan de Wit: De Zwartste Bladzijde van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2013).

³⁶ Marie Breen Smyth, “Introduction,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012), p.2.

³⁷ John Darby is professor of comparative ethnic studies at Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

³⁸ John Darby, “Political Violence, an Overview,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012), p.20.

During the first half year of 1672, the failing policies of Johan DeWitt to protect the country had caused significant pressure on the government. On August 4th, 1672, Johan DeWitt gave in to the complaints of his political adversaries and resigned his position as Grand Pensionary. He turned the rule of government over to William III, Prince of Orange, *Stadtholder* of Holland and Westvriesland and Captain-General of the Dutch army. This event passed without any physical bloodshed. Therefore, a new government was already firmly in place two weeks prior to the murder of Johan De Witt, so the argument that it was a strictly politically motivated murder does not hold up.³⁹ The brothers did not get killed in an attempt to overturn their political organization or to change any laws associated with it. At the time of their assassination, the killers as well as the mob that executed the slaughter seem to have based their actions on personal rather than political motives.

This brings the discussion to the second dilemma. Political violence is not necessarily personal violence. It is intended to accomplish a certain political goal, a means to an end. Johan Galtrung explains in his article “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”⁴⁰ that although political violence might harm people on a massive scale and is directed at the bod(y)ies of its victim(s), the actor(s) is/ are emotionally detached from the act. The goal is to end the political system in place, change laws, or to make a political statement. Killing is the necessary action to achieve that objective. In case of personal violence, by contrast, the perpetrator is emotionally invested in the act and more detached from the outcome.⁴⁰ For this reason, a personal crime is often committed in close proximity of the victim(s). The actor(s) want(s) to witness the effect of his/

³⁹ Michel Reinders, *Printed Pandemonium: Popular Prints and Politics in the Netherlands, 1650 – 1672* (Boston: Brill, 2013). Ronald Prud’Homme van Reine, *Moordenaars van Jan de Wit: De Zwartste Bladzijde van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2013).

⁴⁰ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.6, issue 3 (1969): p. 167-191.

her assault on the object. Usually, the more injury is inflicted on the body, the more ferocious the actor's emotional investment is.

In this light, considering the amount of direct, body-to-body aggression involved, the motives for the lynching of the former Grand Pensionary of Holland and his brother seemed to have been more personal than political. The fact that both brothers were already deceased means that death was not the objective of the attack. Furthermore, both bodies were invaded, mutilated, and presumably consumed after death. This level of destruction necessitates intimate interaction with the bodies of Johan and Cornelis. Shooting a person in the head from afar is a different, more impersonal act than cutting of a nose, even for someone already deceased.

To conclude, although political motives and lingering anger played a part in the assassination of Johan and Cornelis, it is not enough to study this specific case as a political conflict between the House of Orange and the DeWitts and to dismiss the role of the lower classes as insignificant. To arrive at a deeper understanding of this event, it is useful to gain insight into collective aggressive behavior and see how it fits into The Hague's social structure of 1672, its folk culture, and its patterns of real or imagined violence.

THEORIES IN COLLECTIVE EVIL-DOING

Since the publication of Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, scholars have argued over her argument that collective violence is performed as an act of obedience and stupidity.⁴¹ Her thesis relies on the testimony of Adolf Eichmann, chief organizer of Hitler's "Final Solution," responsible for the genocide of millions of Jews during World War II. To justify his actions during World War II, Eichmann stated that "he was just

⁴¹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

doing his job.” The reference to “the banality of evil” points to the idea that people who perform atrocious acts against others often do so simply to obey authorized orders from above.

The motivation for the performance of authorized evil has been the subject of many psychological studies since Eichmann’s trial. The Milgram experiment of 1963 is perhaps the most well-known.⁴² Conducted by Yale University researcher Stanley Milgram, this study examines the reaction of a variety of people to performing acts that conflict with their conscience as instructed by a person of perceived authority (in this case the researcher giving the instructions). For example, participants had to inflict pain by submitting an electric shock to a stranger. The results of this study initially proved the strength of Arendt’s thesis “Banality of Evil.” People were indeed more than willing to obey the person of authority and perform the acts as requested, even if this caused visible pain to the receiver of the shock. As Arne Johan Vetlesen points out in his work *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evil-doing*, the Milgram research focuses mainly on the willingness to be obedient rather than on the ‘intent’ of some people to inflict pain on others.⁴³

In his work *What Evil means to Us*, philosopher and professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, C. Fred Alford, makes a distinction between evil-doing that is removed from the victim (as in the Milgram study where the victims were in another, albeit visible, space from the perpetrator), and face-to-face, collective violence on a social micro

⁴² Stanley Milgram, “Behavioral study of obedience,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, p. 371-378 (1963).

⁴³ Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evil-doing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 104.

level, where the acts are emotionally motivated.⁴⁴ Following this theory, it may be possible to explain the case of the collective slaying of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

Drawing on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Alford considers that the act of evil-doing is performed by individuals to make internal pain external. Sadism, he argues, is the joy of taking control of the experience of victimhood by inflicting it upon someone else.⁴⁵ This, in turn, provides a relief of one's own emotional suffering. Vetlesen adds to this argument: "The crucial point here is the 'object' of evil – evil conceived psychologically as an attempt to get relief from vulnerability induces dread by placing vulnerability to suffering in another and so outside of oneself."⁴⁶ In this case, Vetlesen explains, it is not through a process of dehumanization of the victim(s) that evil acts can occur. On the contrary, the humanity shared with the victims is the catalyst for the atrocious acts. Considering the circumstances of the people in The Hague, specifically the ongoing threat of war with France, this theory of expressing generalized angst by inflicting suffering upon the DeWitt brothers is plausible.

COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Moments of collective violence in history are interesting, because they present an opportunity "to study intersections in which lines between social and cultural processes inevitably are blurred."⁴⁷ Various historians, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Dennis Crouzet, E.P.

⁴⁴ C. Fred Alford, *What Evil Means to US* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evil-doing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.28.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.109.

⁴⁷ Barbara Diefendorf and Carla Hesse, Eds. *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 2.

Thompson, and Natalie Zemon Davis, have worked on the topic of collective violence and its social meaning in the early modern period. It is the goal here to provide a short theoretical framework from this existing material.⁴⁸

The historian E.P. Thompson demonstrated with his study on bread riots in eighteenth-century England, that lower classes were willing to jump into collective violent actions when they sensed moral injustice where the government fails to intervene. The populace thus assumes the role of the authorities in setting an injustice straight.⁴⁹ To develop this theory for the DeWitt case, Dutch historians have pointed to a political pamphlet signed by the “*Burghers* of the Seven Provinces.” This leaflet explains in glorious detail how and when the brothers’ “proper” sentencing will be carried out and how the different body parts related to specific criminal acts Johan and Cornelis committed in the previous 20 years.⁵⁰ Although the concept of citizens taking justice in their own hands may be useful in the case of bread riots in eighteenth-century England, in the scenario of the DeWitt brothers, there are problems with this primary source.

Although this unofficial pamphlet does not have a precise publishing date, the murder is described in so much factual detail that it must have been written after the lynching to justify the extraordinary violence. Instead of being appalled by the brutality of the actions, the writer(s)

⁴⁸ For more detailed reading see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984). Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France; Eight Essays by Natalie Zemon Davis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), Chapter 6. E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present*, No. 50, (February, 1971), p. 76-136. Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁹ E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth century.”

⁵⁰ Anonymous, *Sententie Der Burgeren van Mr. Cornelis deWitt, Oudt Burgemeester der Stad Dordrecht, ende van Mr. Jan deWitt, Gewezen Pensionaris van Holland ende West-Vrieslandt*, (Den Haag: 1672) p.7. Royal Library The Hague Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10411.

seem(s) to fit the punishments to the crimes in hindsight as if it was planned beforehand. However, if the crowd had wanted to implement some form of official justice, the castigation would have followed a controlled and structured ritual, more comparable to an authorized state execution and then why also slaughter Johan? All eyewitness accounts suggest it was a spur of the moment occurrence, a chaotic, unorganized event. As such Thompson's bread riot theory is not sufficient to explain the collective violence across social groups in the moment, the eating of the bodies, or the destructions of the graves a few days later.

Jill Stern has directed her attention to this topic and follows a similar "justification theory." In 2011, she wrote an essay named "Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672)." In this work she compares the ritualistic murders of Concino, Marquis d'Ancre, in Paris in 1617 with the killings of the DeWitt brothers in The Hague fifty-five years later based on a pamphlet from 1672 that links the two.⁵¹ Her proposition is that the violence in both the Concini case and the DeWitt case occurred because the people believed that the subjects of the murders had arrogantly, unjustly, and unlawfully usurped the position of the rightful ruler. This means in the DeWitt case that the brothers may have been publicly punished because they usurped the authority from the supposed-to-be stadholder, William III, Prince of Orange. Stern refers to this as tyrannicide, "the overmighty subject had deprived the rightful ruler of his authority."⁵² She explains how detailed, gruesome images of the slaying of Concini circulated within the Dutch Republic after the occurrence and the similarities between both murders. As

⁵¹ Jill Stern, "Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672)," in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p.121.

mentioned previously, Johan and Cornelis DeWitt were accused of usurping the power of the stadholders of the Dutch Republic, a role appropriated by the Orange family ever since William I, Prince of Orange led the revolt against Spain.⁵³ In this manner, Stern argues, the crowd could become part of the “symbolic cleansing of the past to restore authority to those to whom it rightly belonged.” In other words, Stern assumes that by killing the brothers in some sort of purifying ritual, society could start with a clean slate and place the proper ruler back into the position of lawful authority. But the processes involved in this cleansing ritual do not become clear from the article.

Stern’s research is based on one pamphlet that circulated within Dutch society. This makes her argument less compelling. Although pertinent is the fact that a contemporary in 1672 suggested a connection between the murders of Concini and the DeWitt brothers, including the mutilation of the bodies after death, it is unlikely that many people in Holland cared about Concini’s fate. Even more illogical seems the notion that The Hague’s population would imitate an act from an French event that happened in 1617 based on one pamphlet that circulated in the Dutch Republic. Most likely, the last the Dutch wanted to identify with in 1672, was that of their invader, France and thus, the idea of committing a similar act as the French population had done with Concini, would be rejected. If anything, the pamphlet describing Concini’s slaying would

⁵²Jill Stern. “Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672),” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p.121. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary the word “tyrannicide” means “the killing of a tyrant.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tyrannicide>. There are multiple meanings of the word “tyrant” in the same dictionary. One of them is “usurper of authority.” This definition of tyrannicide thus fits the alleged “crimes” of Concini and the DeWitts as perceived by the population. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tyrant>.

⁵³ In her recent book *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in word and image, 1650-75*, Jill Stern explains in great detail the working of Orangist propaganda in the murders of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

have been used to portray the French as “barbarians” and to juxtapose it with the image of the Dutch as non-violent people.

Denis Crouzet put forth theories regarding apocalyptic fears leading to collective violence between religious groups in sixteenth-century France in his work *Les Guerriers de Dieu, La Violence au Temps des Trouble de Religion*.⁵⁴ These theories may shed some light on the topic. The year 1672 is considered the *rampjaar* (disaster year) for the Dutch Republic. In that year, the country was invaded from three different directions, England from the West, France from the South, and the principalities of Munster and Cologne in Germany from the East. Half way through the year, France had progressed far into Holland already, while the once vibrant economy of the early seventeenth century was stagnating and famine had broken out. Due to the politics of the DeWitt brothers, the army was almost non-existent. The country was submerged in a feeling of doom. Consequently, Johan and Cornelis were solely held responsible for this accruing misfortune. The idea that the “wrath of God” had been placed upon the inhabitants of the country for allowing the brothers to stay in power at the expense of the House of Orange, must have been cause for anxiety and fear among all layers of society.⁵⁵ It is plausible that an ecstatic frenzy broke out to deal with such intense emotions. As Hendrick Verhoeff stated “God has come to take revenge on them, it is God’s miraculous will.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu; La Violence au Temps des Trouble de Religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, (Seyssel : Champ Vallon,1990).

⁵⁵ Luc Panhuysen *Het Rampjaar 1672: Hoe de Republiek aan de Ondergang Ontsnapte* (Amsterdam: Atlas, 2009).

⁵⁶ Geeraert Brandt, *Gedenkwaardige Stukken*,p.12. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11411A.

Mikhail Bakhtin was the first historian who did not equate the function of collective violence with fear or anger but with a sense of joy and freedom from social structures. He studied carnivals and other Catholic festivities of the market place in sixteenth-century France and drew the conclusion that collective violence within these events served as “a temporary liberation from the established social order, it was a universal spirit, of revival and renewal in which all take part.”⁵⁷ For the duration of the event, all people were equal, no social structure existed. Anthropologists refer to this phenomenon as “Communitas,” a sense felt by a group when their life together takes on full meaning and social structures are overridden. “Communitas” usually occurs during a crisis or a rite of passage, a gateway in which society moves from one state to another.⁵⁸

Bakhtin explains that during carnival, the abuse of bodies, obscene humor, and use of grotesque imagery was ambivalent. It was to purify, to destruct, to degrade and to humiliate, yet to transform and reconstruct society.⁵⁹ All that was socially prohibited in public life the rest of the year, was exaggerated, exposed, and cause for laughter, such as defecation, belching, or sexual acts during the feasts. Because humor apparently played a significant part in the lynching and its aftermath (many sarcastic jokes emerged after), the expressed emotions may not have been anger, but relief. As one eyewitness lightheartedly yelled “if I swallow the eye of Johan, will I shit it out whole tomorrow?”⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is within this theoretical framework still

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.9

⁵⁸ Edith Turner, *Communitas, The Anthropology of Collective Joy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), introduction.

⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.16.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroeders Cornelis en Johan De Witt*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410.

necessary to observe the fact that carnival and feasts were Catholic in nature, and such exaggerations of life's joys would have been seriously frowned upon by the puritan *Haagenezen* (citizens of The Hague) in 1672.

It is too early to draw conclusions based on the above-mentioned observations in the case of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. Natalie Zemon Davis, Denis Crouzet, and Mikhail Bakhtin studied group activities, either violence or joy, in sixteenth-century France mainly along religious lines. It would not be correct to copy and paste these events onto seventeenth-century The Hague without further research into the context of the displayed violence within the culture in general. Nonetheless, as Mikhail Bakhtin points out, these traditions are firmly anchored in a culture, sometimes over centuries. It seems unlikely that they all disappear within one hundred years merely based on social, political, or religious change. What authority prescribes for its people in the public sphere is often very different from what common folk do in private.⁶¹ At the very least, the implications of the work of Davis, Crouzet, and Bakhtin offers a starting point to lift the collective events of August 20, 1672 out of its political context and place them within the larger landscape of communal social life.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND EXECUTIONS

The public spectacle of torture and/or execution of law-breakers in the early modern period occurred a couple times a year on so called "execution-days." Historians who have studied these open displays of pain and death in the early modern period in Western European

⁶¹ Consider in this regard for example at the celebration of *Sinterklaas* (*Saint Nicolas*) on December 5 every year. Although the country became mostly Protestant, this Catholic tradition remained as a public feast until today.

countries agree that the event had a festive, ritualistic, almost carnivalesque character. It was filled with symbolism and served very specific purposes for the community.⁶²

The punishment had to reflect the crime and just as there was a gradation in crimes, there was a complex hierarchy of penalties ranging in severity from communal banishment to flogging, to torture, to mutilation and death.⁶³ During the day, on the way to the place of punishment, a criminal was often paraded throughout the city preferably passing the place where the alleged crime had occurred. The purpose of this procedure was to label, to humiliate, and to shame the individual. Before the penalty was carried out, the offender had to ask for forgiveness in a speech. This was an essential part of the ritual. Sometimes the crimes were re-enacted in a theatrical spectacle involving the perpetrator's body in some way. It was common to literally mark the criminal through torture to reflect the committed crime on the body, such as breaking limbs, cutting of hands or ears, or branding the forehead. In case of an execution or hanging, the bodies could remain on display on the scaffolds or outside of the city ranging from a few days to a few weeks.⁶⁴

Equally as interesting as the study of ceremonies surrounding public punishment is the exploration of contributions of the crowd in these rituals. Titles of books concerning public chastisement in early modern Europe, such as *Theater of Horror*, *Spectacle of Suffering* or *Staging Pain* suggest that people passively watched the events unfold as if spectators of a play.

⁶² Richard van Dulmen, *Theater of Horror: Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995). Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). James Robert Allard and Mathew R. Martin Eds., *Staging Pain, 1580-1800: Violence and Trauma in British Theater* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009). Among others.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995), 32.

⁶⁴ For an overview of an execution ceremony, see Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 47-48.

On the contrary, although these parades were highly spectacular and theatrical at the core, viewers played an active part in these ceremonies. Criminals went through the judicial system and sentenced by state courts, but the large crowd that gathered on execution days appears to have been the final voice of justice. Michel Foucault suggested in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, spectators witnessed a specific torture, hanging, or execution to make sure that it fit the crime and if so, that it was performed with integrity and in the proper manner. A “just” castigation would be celebrated as much as a sloppy job would surely bring about protest of the audience, sometimes to the point that the executioner had to fear for his life.⁶⁵ Either way, it would provoke intense emotions within the public space even when civil guards were present to prevent outbursts of violence. It needs to be noted therefore, that the public executions of criminals allowed for all layers of society, including the very lowest, to be involved in social and political outcomes. This definitely was the case on August 20, 1672.

During the seventeenth century, public torture and open violent punishment declined in Europe. Pieter Spierenburg, in his book *The Prison Experience*, argues that the Netherlands and particularly Amsterdam and The Hague, already had several social institutions firmly in place during the seventeenth-century. The emerging wealthy middle class sponsored these establishments. This institutionalization of justice removed the punishment of criminals from the public sphere.⁶⁶ As both Van Dülmen in his work *The Theater of Horror* and Spierenburg in his book *The Spectacle of Suffering* demonstrate, based on data from Holland and Germany respectively, the amount of actual executions declined sharply after 1650 and that those carried

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1995), p.61.

⁶⁶ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

out were stripped of their most violent character. Public mutilation and amputation, for example, was a rare occurrence after 1650, even though Cornelis was severely tortured within the secrecy of the prison walls.⁶⁷ The public murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt was not considered in these conclusions.

VIOLENCE IN MEDIA

In his book *Myth of Media Violence: A Critical Introduction*, David Trend examines the influences of different forms of media on the violent behavior of people.⁶⁸ Although he investigates modern mass-media outlets, his general focus is on the question “how the culture of violence in media contributes to broader social anxieties over harm and catastrophe.”⁶⁹ To answer this question, he proposes investigation into two sub-questions: the amount of actual crime and violent behavior in society and the degree to which consumption of violent media can be linked to violent crimes. These questions are equally important in the issues concerning the murder of Johan and Cornelis. To what violent imagery were people exposed (chapter 2)? And how did this translate into actual behavior (chapter 3)? The scientific study of violent behavior is highly complex. All human behavior is a mix of brain chemistry, environmental factors, and upbringing. However, it may be possible at least to show a correlation between violence in the media and consequent behavior.

⁶⁷ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.151 and Richard van Dulmen, *Theater of Horror: Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.117.

⁶⁸ David Trend, *Myth of Media Violence: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

DESECRATION OF DEAD BODIES AND CANNIBALISM

So far, I have tried to demonstrate that public torture, mutilation of bodies, and the actual killing of human beings as a means of judicial justice were normal occurrences in the public spaces of cities in early modern Europe. People were used to living with dead bodies around them.⁷⁰ As mentioned previously, the violent removal of limbs, hands, ears, noses, and even genitals all served a specific purpose progressively related to the committed crime. Blasphemy, for example, was dealt with by the piercing of or cutting out the tongue, theft with the amputation of a hand, false gossip with the cutting off an ear, and adultery with breaking on the wheel. The pain of the body as well as the visual mark left on the body had to reflect the hurt inflicted by the crime. This is how the *Burghers* of The Hague justified the extraordinary symbolic atrocities played out on the bodies of the brothers in the *Sententie Der Burgeren van Cornelis DeWitt ende van Jan DeWitt*.⁷¹ However, even if this fits the sentiment of its time, it does not explain why the lynching was performed on the dead bodies of the brothers or the fact that their graves were destroyed three days later.

Both Natalie Zemon Davis and Richard van Dülmen decipher the desecration of dead bodies by a crowd. Davis states that in Catholic society in sixteenth-century France, the dead bodies of Protestants were mutilated, the internal organs cut out, and genitals cut off and put on display as a means of deep humiliation of the corpses.⁷² Death alone was not degrading enough.

⁷⁰ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.57.

⁷¹ Anonymous, *Sententie Der Burgeren van Mr. Cornelis deWitt, Oudt Burgemeester der Stad Dordrecht, &c ende van Mr. Jan deWitt, Gewezen Pensionaris van Holland ende West-Vrieslandt*, (Den Haag, 1672). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10411, p.7. this leaflet explains in glorious detail how and when the brothers' "proper" sentencing will be carried out and how the different body parts related to specific criminal acts Johan and Cornelis committed in the previous 20 years.

The pornographic exhibit of body parts afterwards served as a trophy, the ultimate victory over the “polluter” of society, destroyed beyond human form, to gaze at and relive its obliteration. The problem in this case is that the populace of The Hague was officially not Catholic. Nonetheless, dehumanization, either before or after the victim’s death, is often a prerequisite for the perpetrator to commit the killing in the first place. By turning the victims into objects and literally stripping away their identities, the murderers can disguise and justify their own inhumane actions. The effect of erasing the identity is even stronger when the body is no longer alive and intimate confrontation with the victim’s suffering is completely expunged. For seventeenth-century inhabitants of The Hague, the psychology behind their deeds might have followed a similar process. As one eye witness observed “they were hanged upside down, like a butcher would hang his lifeless meat,” and another argued that “the brothers were not dignified enough to be hanged in a traditional manner.”⁷³ In addition, the fact that the responsibility for the lynching could be shared among so many spectators, including persons of authority, obliterates the possible accountability for any of the actors.

By far the most puzzling characteristic of this event is the intention to eat or the actual consumption of flesh cut from the bodies and the intestines of Johan and Cornelis. Several eyewitness accounts make note of this behavior that day. The idea of humans eating humans was, just as in the rest of early modern Europe, not a new concept for Dutch society. Throughout history, any time a specific group was prosecuted, such as witches or Jews, the accusation of

⁷² Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays by Natalie Zemon Davis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p.179 and Richard van Dülmen, *Theater of Horror: Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

⁷³ Anonymous, *Haeghsche Verdediging ofte het toegeschoven Swarte Toneel-Gordijn*. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410A, p.27 and Geeraert Brandt, *Gedenkwaardige Stukken, Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroederen Cornelis en Johan De Witt*, p.14. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410.

cannibalism, preferably the consumption of young children, was the surest way to install great fear within people and to move that group to the margins of society relatively quickly.

Cannibalism was, thus, equated with dark and evil forces and used to fracture societies along a “them-us” border on which anxieties were played out.

This was especially the circumstance in Dutch society. Narratives and images of savages and their customs in the New World circulated widely in the Netherlands since 1593. These images became of particular importance in 1568 after the war between the Dutch and their Spanish ruler, Philip II, started. Benjamin Schmidt in his book *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination of the New World, 1570 – 1670*, argues that Dutch propagandists used highly fantasized representations of vicious Spanish acts to demonize the Spanish Empire and to create a separate Dutch identity, a concept that has acquired distinction as “The Black Legend.”⁷⁴ Violent images of cannibalism were part of this literature. As one eyewitness of the DeWitt’s murders claimed: “I thought I was in Brazil, but I am in The Hague.”⁷⁵ The Dutch clearly insisted on viewing themselves morally superior to the Spanish, especially regarding violence and committed atrocities.

A more general explanation of cannibalism might unveil some answers to this dilemma. Anthropologists distinguish three reasons for cannibalism.⁷⁶ Two of those, long-term famine and

⁷⁴ Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination of the New World, 1570 – 1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁷⁵ Gearard Brandt, *Het Swart Toneel-Gordijn, opgeschoven voor de heeren gebroederen Cornelis en Johan De Witt*, p.4. Pamphlet. From the Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #11410, p.4..

⁷⁶ Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, “Aztec Cannibalism: An Ecological Necessity?” *Science*, New Series, Vol. 200, No. 4342 (May 12, 1978), Reay Tannahill, *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex* (New York:Stein and Day, 1975). Lawrence R. Goldman, Ed. *The Anthropology of Cannibalism* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey,

cannibalism as a sacred ritual, can be discarded in this discussion. People did not eat the brothers because they were hungry. Similarly, it is highly unlikely that people wanted to create a sacred union with Johan and Cornelis by eating their bodies. The third motivation for eating human flesh might be applicable in this work. People devour others as the ultimate revenge over that person. They want to destroy and overpower that human being, absorbing their core, leaving no trace of that person.⁷⁷ This type of cannibalism is often associated with rites of passage and of reconstruction after wars. It is aimed to ritualistically cleanse the landscape of the enemy by taking in their life force. In addition, consuming anything will lead to defecation at some point. Therefore, the enemy was quite literally transformed into feces which in turn could be used to fertilize the land, real or imagined, on which a new order could be build.⁷⁸ Johan and Cornelis DeWitt were enemies of the state in 1672. Although they had stepped down from their public positions, they were still held accountable for the disastrous state that people of the Netherlands found themselves.

COLLECTIVE AND TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

It is impossible, I think, to separate identity formation during and after the Dutch Revolt from the effects of the collective trauma that communities in the Dutch Republic endured during the seventeenth-century. Because trauma is an experience, whether individually or collectively felt, it is difficult to document it in the primary sources. As such it is an imposed idea. Does this mean that theories regarding trauma are not useful in this work? R. Srinivasa Murthy and Rashmi

1999), Heike Behrend *Resurrecting Cannibals; The Catholic Church, Witch-Hunts and the Production of Pagans in Western Uganda* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2100).

⁷⁷ Reay Tannahill, *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), p.6.

⁷⁸ Lawrence R. Goldman, Ed. *The Anthropology of Cannibalism* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1999). Heike Behrend *Resurrecting Cannibals; The Catholic Church, Witch-Hunts and the Production of Pagans in Western Uganda* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2100), p.42.

Lakshminarayana have done extensive research on the effects of war on populations.⁷⁹ They claim that “studies of the general population show a definite increase in the incidence and prevalence of mental disorders” during and directly after war.⁸⁰ Trauma can be identified as a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.”⁸¹ The images that I use in my work clearly show the war crimes committed by the Spanish army as well as the suffering this caused. I think that exposure those these events caused trauma, either individually or collectively in the seventeenth century Dutch populace. The psychological and behavioral consequences of this endured trauma can, therefore, be part of my investigation.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) classifies the psychological consequences of trauma on behavior under Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is characterized by four symptom clusters: re-experiencing, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, negative cognitions and affect associated with the trauma, and hyperarousal symptoms and signs.⁸²

The study “The Effect of Trauma with or without PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) on the Transgenerational DNA Methylation Alterations in Human Offspring,” critically reviews the existing neuro-scientific research on the biological component of psychological trauma. The conclusion from this review states that the reviewers “found an accumulating amount of

⁷⁹ R. Srinivasa Murthy and Rashmi Lakshminarayana, “Mental Health Consequences of War: A Brief Review of Research Findings,” *World Psychiatry*, vol. 5 (1) (2006), p. 25-30.

⁸⁰ Ibid, “abstract.”

⁸¹ Merriam-Webster dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma>.

⁸² American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed.; American Psychiatric Publishing: Arlington, VA, USA, 2013.

evidence of an enduring effect of trauma exposure to be passed to offspring trans-generationally via the epigenetic inheritance mechanism of DNA methylation alterations and has the capacity to change the expression of genes and the metabolome.”⁸³ Because of this biological foundation, it follows that the effects of exposure to trauma affects multiple generations.

Furthermore, although not every city and town in the Netherlands had suffered at the hands of the Spanish armies, vivid imagery in propaganda pamphlets did circulate within Dutch culture throughout the seventeenth-century and even beyond. Stories and songs regarding this trauma travelled from one generation to the next, keeping the imagery not only rich with gruesome detail, but was probably also subjected to exaggeration. This in turn may have reinforced the initial trauma as well as triggered an adverse response in generations that had not been directly involved with the Spanish, but who were faced with the invasion of another military force in 1672. From this argument follows that the populace of late seventeen-century The Hague suffered trauma from exposure to the carnage of war, either directly or indirectly. Consequently, theories regarding the psychological and behavioral effects of collective trauma do not need to be dismissed and are of value in this investigation.

Collective trauma, as Veerman and Ganzevoort explain, “applies to any society, ethnic group, social category, or class which has been exposed to extreme circumstances such as social, political, cultural, gender, ethnic, or religious prosecution.”⁸⁴ In addition to groups that have suffered the initial trauma, the authors speak of a “ripple-effect.” This is the notion that trauma

⁸³ Nagy Youssef, Laura Lockwood, Shaoyong Su, Guang Hao, and Bart P.F. Rutte, “The Effect of Trauma with or without PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), on the Transgenerational DNA Methylation Alterations in Human Offspring,” *Brain Sciences*, 2018, 8, 83, Abstract.

⁸⁴ Alexandre L. Veerman and R. Ruard Ganzevoort, “Communities Coping with Collective Trauma,” Paper presented at the IAPR, Soesterberg, Netherlands, 2001.

can spread among communities and even generations that identify with the primary group.⁸⁵ Societies that have been exposed to excessive violence are affected by physical as well as psychological injuries in several ways.⁸⁶ First, the collective trauma fractures the configurations of the social system by destroying and disrupting communality and systems of support.⁸⁷ For example, if large groups of men leave for war and do not return, society is left to cope with the resulting changes to family structures. Second, collectively experienced trauma disrupts basic confidence in the meaning that people give to their life and society. Especially, the trust in established structures such as police forces, the judicial system, as well as social structures such as churches may have been shattered if they did not provide the expected justice and safety. To project this theory onto the Dutch situation in late sixteenth century, often “trusted” Dutch officials who worked for the Spanish enemy. Third, just as trauma affects a person’s relationships on an individual level, collective trauma affects how different communities relate to each other. As Veerman and Ganzevoort clarify, a common phenomenon is distrust of and isolation from other groups.⁸⁸ This process forms a significant part of identity formation. It is during these processes that “them versus us” mentality is established and is anchored within a culture.

The question at this point is to which extent these processes affected the residents of the Netherlands one hundred years after the initial trauma of the Spanish war and its devastation.

⁸⁵Ibid, p.3.

⁸⁶ Kai Erikson, “Notes on Trauma and Community,” in C. Caruth, ed. *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (New York: John Hopkin University Press, 1995), p. 183-199.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.184.

⁸⁸ Alexandre Veerman and R. Ruard Ganzevoort, “Communities Coping with Collective Trauma,” Paper presented at the IAPR, Soesterberg, Netherlands, 2001, p.5.

Part of the answer lies in the coping mechanisms and strategies a community has available. Although the trauma endured, even by the second or third generation, may still be felt and continue to cause psychological problems for an individual, on a societal level healing can and does occur by desensitization through exposure to informative studies, books, documentaries, and movies on the subject matter or through the performance of shared rituals, such as an annual commemoration or even celebration as well as by the simple passing of time in which the primary group has died and the new generations adopt a more nuanced stance on the matter. For example, while in the Dutch movie *Soldier of Orange* (1977), the efforts of the Dutch resistance are highly glorified and all Germans are portrayed as appalling human beings, in the Oscar winning movie *Blackbook* (2006) by the same director, a finer distinction is made between the German officers and the Dutch men and women working for the Dutch resistance.⁸⁹ At the same time, I do not think that such healing had occurred in the seventeenth century Dutch society. Books, myths, pamphlets, plays, and images exposing the violence endured by the Spanish armies, circulated and were used in schools to educate Dutch children well into the eighteenth century. This may have created a strong Dutch identity, but it anchored the threat of violent “others” securely into Dutch collective memory as well.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed and summarized several theoretical issues surrounding the murder of the Grand Pensionary of the province of Holland, Johan DeWitt and his brother, Cornelis. I think that these subjects have either been overlooked by previous attempts to dissect the motivations of The Hague’s populace on August 20, 1672, or they do not provide a satisfying

⁸⁹ Paul Verhoeven, *Soldier of Orange*, film, Amsterdam, 1977 and Paul Verhoeven, *Blackbook*, film, Amsterdam, 2006.

conclusion and need a more in-depth analysis. These include The Hague's physical spaces within which that fateful day unfolded as well as the population's unique cultural experiences throughout the seventeenth century. Of importance in this case are theories concerning collective exposure to violence and injustice (real or imagined) in combination with its effects on communal behavior. Similarly, studies on transgenerational trauma may explain the accrued effects of a century long war on The Hague's populace. Lastly, through a full analysis of the city's criminal court records between 1650 and 1672, it is possible to reconstruct, at least to some extent, the cultural make-up of the crowd, possible trends in violent crime levels, and the state's response to this misconduct. This research generates a reference point to which the amount of violence displayed during the DeWitts' massacre can be compared.

Chapter 2

Collective Experiences in The Hague's Public Sphere in 1672

*The Whole Country in Small, the Weigh-house of the State
The Sander of the Youth, the School of the Deed
The Village of Villages where every Alley is a Path
But the Village of Cities where every Street is a City⁹⁰*

In Dutch history, the deaths of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt are such extraordinarily violent acts that they necessitate an explanation. Historians have set out to find it within the context of the 1672 political upheaval between the Orangist party and the supporters of the DeWitts. The existing historiography points to the increased circulation and hostile content of political pamphlets aimed at Johan and Cornelis in the years prior to their murder. Historians have hinted at the utter lack of virtuous character of the two brothers as well as their disloyal

⁹⁰ Constantijn Huygens, *Stede-stemmen en Dorpen*. (editie C.W. de Kruyter) (Zutphen: Thieme & Cie.), p.70.

scheme to work with the French to occupy the Dutch Republic, creating a political and cultural atmosphere in which the slayings became a plausible option for the inhabitants of The Hague.⁹¹ Although these publications may have contributed to an atmosphere of political antagonism, they do not account for the underlying cultural milieu that condoned and even supported such violence.⁹² To arrive at a more complete understanding of the circumstances surrounding the crime, one that exceeds fleeting political writings, it is critical to attempt to recreate the world of The Hague's citizens. This requires an investigation of their public customs and surroundings as well as their exposure to and participation in violent, even festive, communal events and rituals of punishment, including but not limited to the display of acts of barbarism in literature and pamphlets circulating in The Hague.

In this chapter, I will use printed materials, such as etchings and engravings, that represent acts of violence in global, European, and Dutch settings that probably were distributed in The Hague in the seventeenth century. They could have influenced the cultural undercurrent that affected the behavior of those involved in the murders of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. However, it is important to realize that visual sources are as open for interpretation as textual sources. The conclusions drawn from these images are thus my interpretations of the displayed events. I also assume that most creators of images were not eyewitnesses to events but based

⁹¹ Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders Eds., *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Jill Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image, 1650 – 1675* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010). Michel Reinders, *Gedrukte Chaos: Populisme en Moord in het Rampjaar 1672* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2010). Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en Publieke Opinie: Massamedia in the Zeventiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

⁹² For a full study on how pamphlets were used to influence public opinion in 1672 see Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987). Michel Reinders, *Gedrukte Chaos: Populisme en Moord in het Rampjaar 1672* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2010), and Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en Publieke Opinie: Massamedia in the Zeventiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

their work on hear-say, likely diluted by time, distance, translation of printed texts, or complete fantasy. In addition, many etchers were also the printers and distributors of these prints and inevitably published material of which the core might have been true, but whose details were altered or sensationalized to generate a profit or to be used as propaganda.⁹³ Besides these caveats, the images do provide a glance into the acceptance of public violence, either in real life or in printed sources. To which forms of visual violence were people exposed in daily life and what seemed “normal?” It is useful to analyze depictions that on some level relate to the massacre of the DeWitt brothers and that could have triggered collective violent outrage on August 20, 1672.

PUBLIC PUNISHMENT IN THE HAGUE

It can be argued that the crowd that was present when Johan and Cornelis were released from prison was there by choice. In general, in the early modern period in Europe, local governments carried out public executions in front of the city hall on the main square of a city or town. In this manner, the chastisement and killing of alleged criminals was woven into the experience of daily life within the community and became a virtually unavoidable practice for its audiences. The Hague had four distinct centers of public punishment. One was located in front of the *Hof van Holland* (highest courthouse of the province of Holland) within the political and social space of the *Binnenhof* (inside courtyard). The second was situated in front of the prison gate, the *Plaetse* (the spot/ area) with its public place of execution, *'t Groene Zoodje* (the Green Turf). In daily life, the *Plaetse* was used as a passage to and from the *Buitenhof* (outside courtyard), the *Binnenhof*,

⁹³For a full study on how pamphlets were used to influence public opinion see Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en Publieke Opinie: Massamedia in the Zeventiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) and Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987).

and the marketsquare, but it could easily be avoided by walking a different route. Similarly, taverns were located around the marketplace behind the *Buitenhof*, easily accessible without ever passing the prison. The Hague's city hall was situated at the marketplace as well and had its own place of execution in front of it. The gallows were the fourth public place of chastisement. It consisted of about four high, round platforms used for displaying seated dead bodies as well as gibbets to hang corpses or limbs of criminals. These were strategically positioned just outside the city, a short distance from the main entrance bridge, next to the mill, the *Laakmolen*. The rotting remnants of executed criminals served as a warning for visitors to obey local law.

Although the places of execution were separated by architectural structures surrounding them, open passages to and from social spots, such as the marketplace, made the various communal hubs accessible for all layers of society. Interaction among different social groups was commonplace and unavoidable in daily life. For example, people could witness Johan DeWitt walk, unguarded, from his home to work. It is within these spaces that crimes were committed and punishments were performed. Because many different routes were available to reach the same destination, witnessing these executions could be avoided without interfering with daily life. Therefore, whoever attended these displays of horror consciously, not coincidentally. Public punishment in The Hague, as elsewhere in Europe, served to penalize, shame, and humiliate alleged perpetrators as well as demonstrate the power of the state or city. Many different pamphlets, etchings, and engravings exist that portray the executions of several prominent political and religious figures between 1619 and 1623 in The Hague. Each of these representations provides an insight into the circumstances surrounding the executions, the strategic use of different social spaces, and the roles of different types of spectators. They also show the extent and purpose of the employment of violence by the authorities during public

punishment. Finally, the images lift some of the obscurity around the murder on Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

The first image (picture 1) represents the beheading of the highest political leader of the Provincial Estates of Holland, *Land's advocaat* (chief justice), Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, in The Hague on May 13, 1619. His trial and subsequent execution occurred under the most peculiar circumstances.⁹⁴ During the Dutch Revolt against the ruling Spanish monarch, Van Oldenbarnevelt had been a prominent strategist. However, after 1609, at the time of the twelve-year truce with Spain, he found himself on the opposite side of the Estates General of the Seven United Provinces as well as of Maurice, Prince of Orange, *stadtholder* of multiple Dutch provinces, Captain-General of the army, and son of *Pater Patria* (father of the fatherland), William I, Prince of Orange. The 71-year-old van Oldenbarnevelt had proposed to raise an armed guard for the province of Holland. The Estates General and Maurice felt that this would disrupt the balance of power in favor of Holland and accused him of treason against the Seven United Provinces. He was arrested and brought to trial. Because each province in the Dutch Republic had full authority over their own judicial system, there was no central court for the Seven United Provinces as a whole. This motivated Maurice to handpick an ad-hoc assembly of twenty-four judges who decided Van Oldenbarnevelt's fate during a meeting in the *Ridderzaal* (Hall of Knights) on May 12, 1619. The next day, an impromptu scaffold was erected in front of the *Ridderzaal* on the *Binnenhof*. This was unusual, because the common place for public punishment in The Hague was *'t Plaetse*. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, dressed in his underwear

⁹⁴ This position is equal to the position that Johan DeWitt held in 1672 and can be compared to that of a prime minister.

and nightcap, was beheaded with a single blow of the sword under the gaze of hundreds of spectators.



Picture 1⁹⁵

The etching of Van Oldenbarnevelt's beheading shows that the common public was present in large numbers to gaze at the evolving bloody events. The *Binnenhof* was a closed off courtyard with only two entrances/exits. It was mainly a political space in which social interactions would be limited to domestic and foreign state officials exchanging ideas about the events of the day. The Hague's populace had to make a conscious effort to attend the beheading that morning. In addition, according to the picture, men and women went to great lengths to have the best possible view by climbing on the structures surrounding the courtyard. Besides the location, the main difference between the image of the beheading of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and those that exist

⁹⁵ Picture 1: Claes Jansz Visscher, *Justitie van Jan van Oldenbarnevelt Geschied*. Etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-77.318/ Muller 1384.

of the murders of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt is the attendance of multiple assemblies of armed guards. Their presence at the execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt may have prevented a situation similar to that of the massacre of the DeWitts.

OTHER CASES OF PUBLIC PUNISHMENT

During the early seventeenth century, the state's supremacy over the implementation of justice as well as the accompanying legal rituals were important elements of social life. This becomes apparent with the odd case of Gilles van Ledenberg, secretary of the province of Utrecht and a political proponent of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. Like Van Oldenbarnevelt, Van Ledenberg was arrested by Maurice, Prince of Orange on suspicion of treason and held captive in the *Binnenhof*. While in prison, on September 28, 1618, he committed suicide. Instead of accepting this fact and declaring the charges against him void, the prosecution demanded that he would be put in a crate with brine to be preserved and to appear before the assembly of judges. On the day of the trial, May 12, 1619, Van Ledenberg was placed in a coffin and carried into the hall of judgment.⁹⁶ The judges decided that he should be punished by hanging posthumously, in his coffin, on the gallows just outside The Hague (picture 2). The coffin was left hanging for 21 days. In this case, it is clear that it was not the actual death of the alleged offender that served as a satisfying reprimand as had been the case with Van Oldenbarnevelt. The main objective in this punishment was the display of state authority as well as the legalized rituals of humiliation against the criminal body.

⁹⁶ It is unclear why there is such a time lapse between the suicide and the trial. As in the case of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who was in prison during the same time from September 1618 until his trial in May 1619, it appears that Gilles van Ledenberg was kept on brine for the same length of time in order to assemble a court.



Picture 2⁹⁷

Common people participated in the desecration of corpses, although not legally. On the day of the official burial, Van Ledenberg's grave was violated by vandals and the body was thrown in a field. After this incident the *Hof van Holland*, Holland's highest court, took legal measures against depredation of graves. Gilles Van Ledenberg was reburied in secret.⁹⁸ In my opinion, this shows that the state believed it had the monopoly on public displays of atrocities.

⁹⁷ Image 2: Simon Fokke, *Het Lijk van Gillis van Ledenberg, buiten 's Gravenhage in een kist opgehangen, 1619*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-80.901. FMH 1402-a.

⁹⁸ A.J. van der Aa, K.J.R. van Harderwijk, and G.J.D. Schotel, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden: bevattende levensbeschrijvingen van zoodanige personen, die zich op eenigerlei wijze in ons vaderland hebben vermaard gemaakt. Deel 11* (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1865), p.231-234.

The third example of public execution is by far the most gruesome as well as the most revealing in explaining the murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. During the 12-year armistice with Spain (1609 to 1621), the Seven United Provinces fractured internally along political and religious lines. Besides political conflicts between the Estates of Holland and Maurice, Prince of Orange, a religious conflict arose between the Calvinists and the Remonstrants. The latter group was inspired by the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, who preached against the doctrines of predestination and election. Maurice, a Calvinist, succeeded in removing several Remonstrant magistrates from office before the meetings of the Synod of Dort, held between November 13, 1618 and May 25, 1619. The purpose of the meetings in Dort was to discuss religious conflicts among Calvinists from several European countries. In a publication from the Synod, the Remonstrants were labeled heretics and consequently, many of them were removed from office, imprisoned, or banished.

In 1623, a group of prominent Remonstrants conspired to assassinate the Prince of Orange. They were exposed before they could execute their plans and imprisoned in the *Gevangnissepoorte* (Prisongate) in The Hague. The conspiracy was widely discussed and angrily exaggerated in pamphlets circulating within The Hague and the Dutch Republic in general.⁹⁹ For the year 1623, over half of the 126 pamphlets archived in the Knuttel pamphlet collection are concerned with this alleged treason against Maurice of Orange, stadtholder of

⁹⁹ Anonymous, *Moord ende Brandt, ontsteken in Hollant*, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #3459 and Anonymous, *Advysen uyt 's Gravenhage waerinne Pertinentelijck Beschreven ende ghededucceert word wat sich tot noch toe in het Ontdecken vande Grouwelijcke, Execrable, Barbarische, ende voordezen ongehoorde Conspiratie der Arminianen tegen de Loffel, Prince van Orangiën ende den Staet*. (Amsterdam: Marten Jansz Brandt, 1623), Knuttel pamphlet collection, #3440; and Anonymous, *Clare Afbeeldinghe, ofte Effigien der Voornaemste Conspirateurs. Staende op het Lichaem van de Hoofdeloose Arminiaensche Slange, Waer in vertoont word hoe den Orangiën boom, mitsgaders religie ende justitie door de strael Gods beschermt wordt* (Amsterdam: Jan Amelissz, 1623), etching, Arnhem: Gelders Archief, Familie van Rhenen pamphlet collection, #0911-44.

Holland and Westvriesland. On February 27, 1623, a first group consisting of Reinier van Oldenbarnevelt (Lord of Groenevelt), David Corewinder, Adriaen van Dijck, and Cornelis Gerritsz were publicly executed on 't *Groene Zoodje* in The Hague. On May 5, 1623, the masterminds of the plan, Hendrik Slatius, Jan Blancaert, Abraham Blancaert, and Willem Perty, suffered a similar fate.¹⁰⁰ The engravings that exist of these publicly exhibited capital punishments show the high motivation of the stadtholder to employ violence in cases when administrative superiority was challenged (picture 3).



Picture 3¹⁰¹

The sequence of events of these executions appears to follow a specific ritual and it becomes apparent, once more, that what mattered was not the actual death of the traitors, but the

¹⁰⁰ Three other men, Jan Pietersz, Samuel de Plecker, and Gerrit Kornelisz, were executed in Leiden on June 21, 1623. Klaes Michielsz Bontebal was executed for the same reason on July 3, 1623.

¹⁰¹ Image 3: Claes Jansz Visscher, *Justitie Over Enige Arminiaensche Verraders, Geschied in 's Gravenhage*, Engraving, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-81.021A.

violation of their dead bodies and the public exhibit of the remnants of the corpses on the gallows. In the center illustration of picture 3 (A), the accused, dressed in his underwear, is decapitated. This seems to be a swift act and an effort to minimize the suffering of the person on the scaffold. Then the sequence of ritualistic punishment follows. In figure (B), still on the place of execution in front of the spectators, the corpse is undressed and further mutilated. The body is cut open with an axe, the insides are taken out and limbs are cut off. At this point (C), the headless, empty cadaver is being taken to the gallows. It seems that in some cases the limbs were hanged from the gallows (D, E, and H), while in Slatius' case, the whole body was placed on a *staak* (a round, elevated platform) and the head was positioned on a long stick (H) stuck inside the body (picture 4). This method of display was not specific to the case of the Remonstrants. Many criminals in the early modern period in the Netherlands were publicly exhibited on a high, round platform at the gallows outside cities and towns.

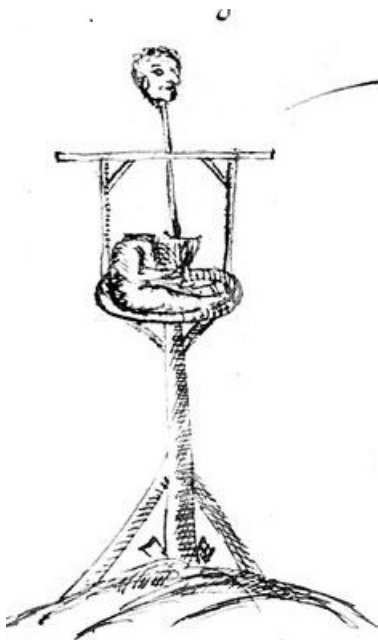


Image 4¹⁰²

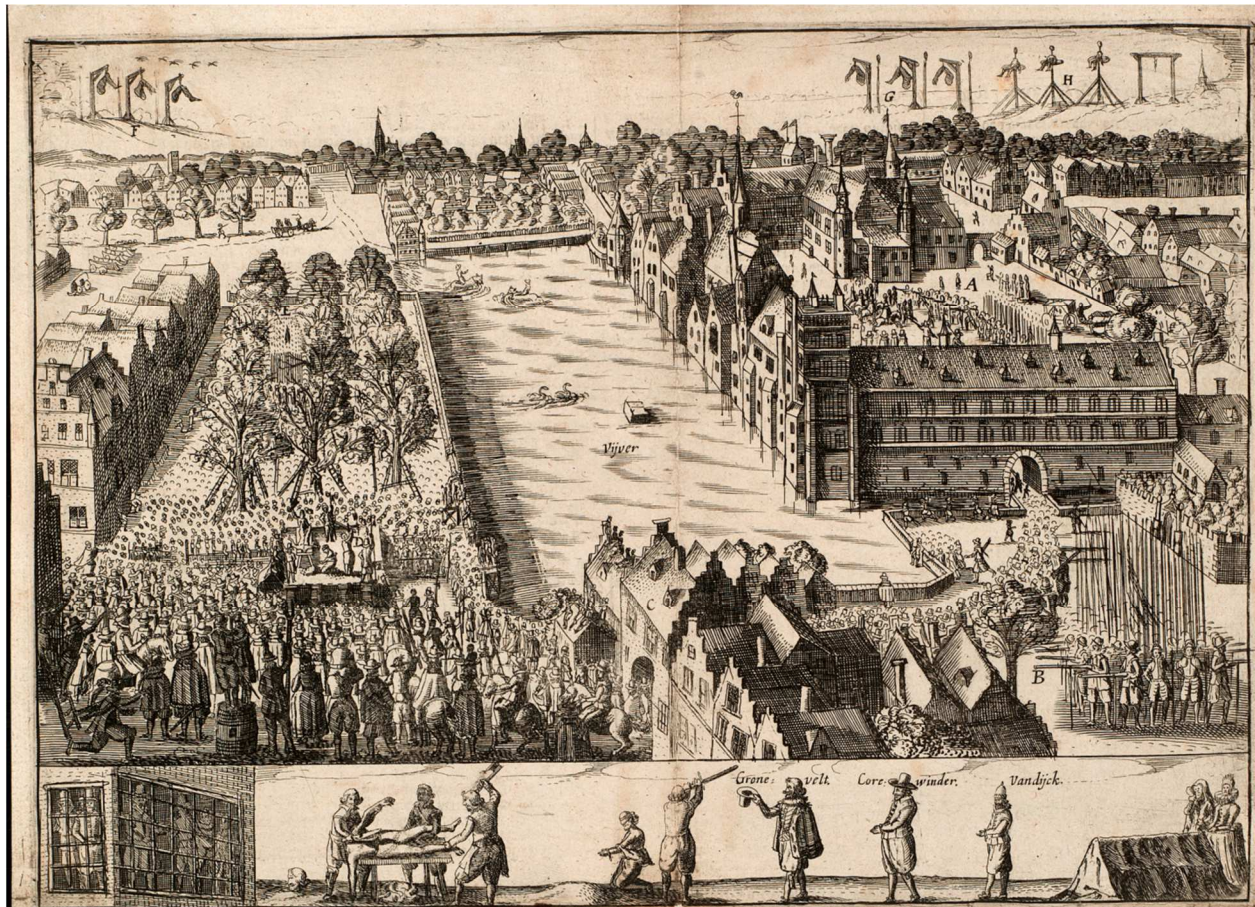
¹⁰² Image 4: Drawing attached to actual verdict, drawing, Middelburg: Rijksarchief Zeeland, inv. Nr. 3847, fo.200/NCRD Nationaal Gevangenis Museum, 084592869.

At the same time as Slatius, the Blancaert brothers, and Van Dijck were executed, three sailors received the death penalty and were placed on the platforms. It is therefore unclear which limbs or bodies belong to which person. However, whether the criminals were high ranking officials or common men, the images show that the principle of violation and humiliation of the criminals—a show of state power—followed a ritualistic sequence. In addition, it appears that the ignominy of the criminal body was a more important punishment than the actual death of the perpetrator.

Another interesting aspect of these three images is the observation that the scenes appear to be orderly and well-staged. Furthermore, the audience seems to know their place within the ritual. The people, including women and children of all layers of society, have gathered in front of and around the execution platform while groups of *Vaandels* (civic guards) are strategically positioned on the outer corners behind the spectators. They are awaiting the expected decapitation and consequent violation of the body. Spectators have climbed on roofs and in trees to find the best possible spot for viewing. However, in contrast to the illustrations regarding the murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, in which people seemed to fight each other to get a piece of the action, the audiences in these state orchestrated rituals appear calm and collected awaiting the unfolding events. The people in the lower left corner of the etching of the hanging coffin of Gilles van Ledenberg (picture 2) even suggests that the event was a family attraction.

The use of different public spaces, the roles of the audience, and the civic guards, as well as the orderliness of the entire ritual becomes most clear from the following image of the execution of the Arminians drawn in birds-eye view (picture 5). (A) shows the *Binnenhof* with the *Hof van Holland* (highest court of the province of Holland), where the prisoners heard their verdict; (B) shows the civic guards in charge of guiding the procession along the *Buitenhof* to the place of execution; (C) shows the prison gate with the square *'t Plaetse* in front of it; (D) shows

‘t *Groene Zoodje*, the elevated platform of the actual decapitation and violation of the body; (E) shows the *Vijverberg*, with guards of French soldiers; (F) and (G) show the quarters on their way to Delft and Leyden; and (H) show the gallows outside the city with the bodies of the three sailors on the exhibition platforms as well as the limbs of the Remonstrants hanging from the gibbets.



picture 5¹⁰³

The public exposure of mutilation and bloodshed during the executions of the Arminians may have been an exception to otherwise more matter of fact capital punishments in The Hague. The two most famous executions after 1650 were both carried out similarly to the one of Johan

¹⁰³ picture 5: Anonymous, Etching, Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, special collections (Pr. H74).

van Oldenbarnevelt. In 1666, during the Second Anglo-Dutch War, Henry Buat was accused of conspiracy along with the House of Orange and the English to overthrow the regime of Johan de Witt to restore the stadtholderate. He was beheaded on 't *Groene Zoodje* with a single blow to the neck. Similarly, Jacob van der Graaff, who had tried to kill Johan DeWitt on June 21, 1672, received the verdict of public beheading on 't *Groene Zoodje*. Although it took the executioner three blows to detach the head from the body, the intent was to make the execution quick.¹⁰⁴ It appears that this was a common execution technique. Because it is not known what happened to the bodies afterwards, both men were presumably buried after their death sentence was carried out. Nonetheless, both beheadings were later used against Johan De Witt in Orangist-oriented propaganda, no doubt adding to the hostile atmosphere in the town.

In contrast to images of systematic, state-organized public punishments of perceived enemies of the state stands the etching of the aftermath of the executions of Hendrik Slatius and the other three men (picture 6). After being exposed for several days on the gallows, the body and body parts of the Remonstrants were buried at a secret location to prevent further desecration of the corpse by the folk of The Hague. Unfortunately, the burial site was discovered accidentally on some farmland outside of the city. Almost instantly the word got out, and the site became a public attraction for the populace of The Hague. The beheaded body was dragged from the grave, transported to the gallows, and hanged upside down from the round platform in an attempt to reconstruct the original punishment.

¹⁰⁴ Michiel Reinders, *Gedrukte Chaos: Populisme en Moord in het Rampjaar 1672* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2010), p.107.



Image 6¹⁰⁵

In this print some similarities with the slaying of the DeWitt brothers become apparent. First, the dragging by the feet of the corpse of Hendrik Slatius and his naked, mutilated body hanging upside down are images that recur in every etching and engraving that has been published about the murder of Johan and Cornelis. In addition, the scene is not orderly. The two men who are preoccupied with hanging the body appear to be laughing, while small groups of

¹⁰⁵ Picture 6: Claes Jansz Visscher, *Slatius komt uit het Graf* (Amsterdam, 1623), etching, Rotterdam: Prentenkabinet Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, BdH 13996.

bystanders seem joyful looking at the violated corpse of Slatius. A similar scene can be observed in the aftermath of the killing of the DeWitt brothers.

At this point, based on the collection and sequence of images shown above, it can be argued that the unfolding events in the case of Hendrik Slatius help to explain the slaying of the DeWitt brothers by a crowd of common people. The argument has been made that because the court of Holland did not take the responsibility of ordering the execution of Cornelis, a man accused of conspiring to kill William III, Prince of Orange, the inhabitants of The Hague simply took the law into their own hands and performed the customary “ritual for traitors” themselves.¹⁰⁶ I agree, if the representations of events are factual, that the images show that the inhabitants of The Hague were intentionally present as spectators of and willing participants in state-organized bloodshed in the public sphere. It also follows, in my opinion, that some of the city’s men probably enjoyed these activities to the point where they wanted to recreate them after the event was over. However, the motivation of these actions remains obscure.

I think that the “justice-theory” to explain the slaying of the brothers is too simplistic and its reasoning is incomplete.¹⁰⁷ First, it appears relevant that the men present at the defilement of Slatius’ grave are wearing the uniform of civic guards (hat, cape, and sword). This suggests that they were men of higher status in the city. By contrast, the crowd in the images of the DeWitt murders are dressed in clothes associated with the lower classes. Second, the bloodiest group of images displays executions from a short five-year time span in the early seventeenth century, 50 years before Johan and his brother were murdered. It could be that Maurice, Prince of Orange

¹⁰⁶ Jill Stern, “Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672),” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, Eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 121 – 142.

¹⁰⁷ The common people taking law into their own hands because the government fails to do so.

was particularly bloodthirsty in showing the power of the stadtholderate over the authority of the Estates General. The public executions that were performed after 1650, for similar denunciations, appear to have been more pragmatic with minimal intentional bloodshed and less horrifying violent acts such as gutting the body or taking off limbs. Third, the slaying of the DeWitts did not follow a ritual similar to the executions of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the Arminians, Henry Buat, or Jacob van der Graaff. Johan and Cornelis were not decapitated, for example, nor were they taken to the gallows for further humiliation. Instead, the brutality of the inflictions on the bodies of the DeWitt brothers was more severe than those wreaked upon the other victims. Nothing seems to have been ceremonial in tearing apart the corpses of Johan and Cornelis. Fourth, the scene was far from orderly or strategically organized. On the contrary, all representations show a chaotic population falling over and fighting each other in an attempt to obtain a piece of the men's bodies. Lastly, not one image is constructed in the earlier pictures that displays or hints at the eating of body parts of the executed or the consumption of limbs hanging from the gallows, as was allegedly the case with the corpses of Johan and Cornelis. To conclude, several more issues need to be explained with regards to the massacre of Johan and Cornelis.

IMAGES OF CONCINI IN THE HAGUE

Before analyzing violent imagery from the seventeenth century within the framework of Dutch culture, a more in-depth consideration should be given to the work of Jill Stern. In her 2011 essay entitled "Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672)," Stern supports the proposition that "the ritual of 'tyrannicide' was an

integral part of the culture of early modern Europe.”¹⁰⁸. In this conclusion she relies on a pamphlet from 1672 that links the brutal murder of Concino Concini, Marquis D’ Ancre, in Paris in 1617, with the killings of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt 55 years later.¹⁰⁹

Concini Concino was a Florence-born nobleman who traveled to France with Marie de’ Medici to serve as a minister at the court of Henry IV. His influence on and power over Marie de’ Medici and thus the French government after Henry’s death in 1610 infuriated French noblemen, especially the Prince de Condé, and laypeople alike. The story goes that he was shot in 1617 by the royal guard in Paris and hanged. A mob of angry people took control of the situation and dismembered his body, paraded the body parts from square to square in Paris, and burned them in several places throughout the city. The details of the murder of Concini and the slaying of the DeWitt brothers appear to be very similar.

To examine this interesting link between the two murders, the following questions need answering: did the events occur because these types of ritualistic, cleansing murders were a fundamental part of early modern European society? Did the occurrence of the Concini murder in Paris and the circulation of the images of violence in the Dutch Republic inspire the citizens of The Hague to act in a similar manner when the opportunity presented itself? Was there an influence based on the distribution of images of Concini’s fate?

¹⁰⁸ Jill Stern, “Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concini (1617) and the Brothers DeWitt (1672),” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, Eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 121 – 142.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, “*Den Bedrogen Engelsman met de Handen in ‘t Hair (...), een vergelijkinckinge tusschen den Marquis d’Ancre en Cornelis en Ian de Witt.*” Knuttel pamphlet collection, # 10480.

Stern relies upon six Dutch pamphlets that circulated within the Dutch Republic in which the slaying of Concini is discussed and/or portrayed.¹¹⁰ Five of these six pamphlets were published in 1617, directly after the murder. Of these five, only one has a significant image on the cover page representing the murder (picture 7). This specific pamphlet most likely served as a means to inform the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic, albeit not very objectively, about the fate of Concino Concini.



Image 7¹¹¹

The pamphlet opens with the bold statement that it contains the true story of what happened in France after the regent, Marie de Medici, left in 1617. Then it continues by pointing out that the Marquis had committed treason to the person of the King Louis XIII by killing 60 to 80 of the

¹¹⁰ Stern mentions one other pamphlet that circulated in the Dutch Republic about the tyranny of Concini, but this was published in French and probably did not reach all layers of society. The focus here is therefore on visual publications or pamphlets written in Dutch.

¹¹¹ Picture 7: Anonymous, *Cort ende Waerachtich Verhael*. (Amsterdam: Broer Jansz, 1617), print, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2335.

King's highest servants. The representation of the events on the cover page is a provocative display of violent illustrations. By following the numbers in the picture while reading the corresponding text on top of the etching, a sequence of events can be extrapolated, which, in combination, exposes the horrendous details of the narrative. In doing so, the text explains: how D' Ancre was shot by the King's guard; how the body was attached to a wooden plank and laid down to view; how the body was buried but then dug up again and dragged by the legs to the gallows; how the body was cut loose from the gallows and dragged through the street of Paris after its genitals, nose, and ears were cut off; how the body was beheaded in front of the prison, the *Bastille*; and that the king was watching. Finally, the text makes clear that all these events happened in Paris.¹¹² Although the imagery is not very sophisticated and the crowds appear blurry and unidentifiable, the cruelty of the performed acts remains easy to follow.

From this print it becomes clear that the similarities between the fates of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt and D'Ancre were striking. Like Concini, the DeWitt brothers were first shot dead by guards after which a mob of common people arrived on the scene to undress the bodies and drag the men naked to the gallows to be hanged. All three men were heavily mutilated and hanged upside down as a display of horror, for the public to gaze at and participate in. Unlike the unfortunate Concini, the heads of the Dutch grand pensionary and his brother stayed attached to their bodies, and their remains were neither exhibited during a possession parade through the streets of The Hague nor burned in different places of the city for all citizens to partake in the excitement. However, overall there is no escaping from the fact that the ways in which the

¹¹² Translation from actual pamphlet: 1. Hoe d'Ancre doorschoten wert van 's Conincx wacht. 2. Hoe het lichaem ten toone legt/ en hout aangebracht wert. 3. Hoe het lichaem nadat het begraven was/ weder unter aerden geruct werd en bij de beenen naar de galge gesleept. 4. Hoe het lichaem werd afgeschneden ende langs de straten door het vier gesleept naar dat zij heeft zijn mannelijkheid, neus en oren afgesneden hadden. 5. Hoe het lichaem geslagen werdt in 't _____. 6. Hoe het hoofd afgesneden werd door de Bastilie in 't slepen door 't bier. 7. Den Conigh. 8. De Stadt Parijs.

slayings were carried out, as well as the most significant players in the crimes, were uncannily similar.

Two writings accompany this cover page. The main body of the pamphlet consists of a six-page French translation about the political background of the actions of Marquis D'Ancre in the years before his murder and makes no important comments about the details regarding the actual murder or its aftermath, except that it was justified based on the facts. In some instances throughout the text, the French King is speaking in first-person to explain the necessary actions against Concino Concini. Although the text is heavily biased in favor of the French King, the tone is factual and neutral, unlikely to be intended to provoke anger or excitement. In this form, the pamphlet has more the function of a newspaper and was most likely intended for a literate audience in the Seven United Provinces.

The text on the first page of the pamphlet is a song named *Legend-Liedt van Marquis D'Ancre, ende Sijn Huys-Vrou* ("Legend Song of Marquis D'Ancre and His Housewife"). The writer, who remains anonymous, directs the reader in mentioning that the song should be performed to the tune of another Dutch song entitled *Lieve Dochter vol van Leughden* ("Sweet Daughter Full of Lies").¹¹³ After transcription of the text, it is apparent that the language of the song's 20 couplets are written in plain Dutch and composed in the form of theatrical rhyme. The author describes the demise of the Marquis of D'Ancre, including the more horrific details, and warns the public that this is what happens when a person is disloyal to the King. However, there is no mentioning of cutting off the ears, nose, or genitals. Also, the roasting and eating of the flesh is not discussed in the song. It seems to be based on the events as displayed in the picture

¹¹³ Preliminary research into several Dutch archives yielded zero results for either title.

on the cover page. Clearly, the writer is of the opinion that Concino Concini got what he deserved.¹¹⁴

Songs had a significant position within early modern European culture. They served as ways in which information, either newsworthy or entertaining, could easily find its way through multiple layers of society. An attractive melody with stimulating lyrics to tell a story was then, as it is now, an easy pathway into the minds and memories of many as it appealed to different people. Traveling troubadours would utilize marketplaces in towns and cities to convey their musical messages of love and life to a larger audience. Once learned, a song could become embedded within a culture and be passed on, not only from person to person or group to group, but also from generation to generation—stretching over decades or even centuries. Along the way, lyrics were frequently altered and some songs disappeared, but it is possible—although no evidence can be traced—that the song about Concini’s murder in the pamphlet, including its gruesome details and important message, was still alive in society at the time of the DeWitt massacre.

Two other pamphlets under scrutiny in Stern’s work consist of news from France and its direct translation in Dutch. These two works were written in March of 1617 when the murder of the Marquis D’Ancre had not yet occurred. The texts consist of the “Declaration and Protest of the Princes, Dukes, Officers of the Crown, Governors, Lords, Knights, Noblemen and Cities and Town to Reinstall the Authority of the King and the Preservation of the Kingdom Against the

¹¹⁴ Concini’s wife, Leonora Dori, was arrested as well. She was beheaded in Paris on July 8, 1617. Her body was burned at the stake afterwards.

Conspiracy and Tyranny of the Marquis D’Ancre and his Adherents.”¹¹⁵ It appears to be political propaganda describing the acts of betrayal committed by Concini against the French King and the country as well as a warning for the Marquis to take heed. As such, it may have served as a forewarning to the horrible events that occurred on April 24 of that year in Paris.

News regarding meaningful events in Europe circulated in the Dutch Republic in the form of pamphlets as well. In two of such texts, containing mostly identical information, the murder of Concini is discussed through the publication of a letter from France allegedly written by a “good friend” of the country. Although the events surrounding the actual murder by the King’s guards are explained in the text, with one sentence about how Concini was dragged through the streets like a dog, the gruesome details of the day-long aftermath were left out.¹¹⁶ Similarly, both pamphlets contain a drawn picture of the murder of the Marquis on the cover page, apparently taken from a larger picture (pictures 8 and 9). Neither representation shows the actual bloodshed that accompanied this brutal event. In fact, it appears as if the ghastliest actions were deliberately taken out of the frame in an attempt to avoid the confrontation of the public with the bloody reality of the matter.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, *Declaration et Protestation des Princes, Ducs, Pairs, Officiers de la Couronne, Gouverneurs de Provinces, Seigneurs, Chevaliers, Gentils-Hommes, Villes et Communautés, affociés et confederés pour le rétablissement de l’authorité des Roy, et la conservation du Royaume, contre la coniuuration et Tyrannie du Mareschal d’Ancre, et de ses adherents*. (La Haye: Arnould Meuris), 1617. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2326A. And Anonymous, *Verklaringhe ende Betuyghinghe van de Princen, Hertoghen, Pairs, Officiers van de Kroone, Gouvernerus van Provincien, Heeren, Ridders, Edel-Lieden, Steden ende Ghemeenten, verzelfthapt ende verbonden om de wederoprechtinghe van de autoriteit des Konincks en de behoudenis van het Koninckrijcke* (Schiedam: Adriaan Cornelisz van Delft), 1617. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2327.

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, *Post-Brieven, soo uyt Vranckrijck, Duytslandt ende Italien, waer in verhaelt werd van de doot van de Marquijs Dancker*. (Utrecht: In ‘t Vergulden ABC), 1617. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2333 and *Extract uyt een Brief Uyt Parijs vanden 25 April, 1617, waarin verhaelt wert de doot vanden Maerschalck d’Ancre, ende op wat wijze hij omgebracht is, mitsgaders het versekeren van zijn huysvrouw ende ‘t gint der Maerschalck voortz aengeat*. (Amsterdam: Broer Jansz), 1617. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2332.



picture 8¹¹⁷



picture 9¹¹⁸

Other news in the pamphlets highlight events that happened throughout the month of April in both Germany and Italy. This type of news may have appealed to a larger audience.

¹¹⁷ Image 8: Anonymous, etching, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2333, it appears as if half of the image is out of frame.

¹¹⁸ Image 9: Anonymous, etching, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2332.

One pamphlet that Stern refers to deserves special attention. It is a published account of the “true” story of what happened in Paris on April 24, 1617. It was printed in Delft, only five miles from The Hague, which suggests that it circulated among peoples in The Hague’s city center.¹¹⁹ In her article “Poison in Print,” Stern claims that “it was reported in one pamphlet that the death of Concini resulted in demonstrations of joy in the Court at The Hague and that Dutch citizens openly danced in delight in the streets of the town.”¹²⁰ However, the meaning of the text is distorted in this reference to fit the argument that Dutch people supported the brutal lynching of Concini. Upon thorough examination of the pamphlet, I conclude that the text’s literal transcription/translation is that the Dutch ambassador to France, *Monseigneur* van Langherack, notified the Estates General of the Seven United Provinces about the death of the Marquis D’Ancre. Upon receiving this news, the captains of the French regiments in The Hague were happy and could be seen dancing as well as openly expressing joy op ‘t *Hof*, in the streets, and especially on the *Viver-berghe* (picture 10).



Image 10

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, *Cort ende Waerachtich Verhael van 't gheene den 24 April, 1617 den Marquis D'Ancre tot Parijs in 't hofvanden Coninck is wedervaren.....* (Delft: In 't Gulden A.B.C.), 1617. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2328

¹²⁰ Jill Stern, “Poison in Print;” p. 125.

To refer to the French captains as Dutch citizens is a generalization in this context. It erroneously evokes the impression that the news, and perhaps its details of bloodshed, had saturated several layers of The Hague's society. It also suggests that many Dutch people went to the Court and took to the streets to express their joy and support of this "tyrannicide" after hearing the news of Concini's death. However, it seems to have been a handful of French army men who were in high spirits because they did not have to make the trip south to fight Concini in a coup d'etat.¹²¹

A rare image of the murder of Concini can be found in a picture book at the archive "The *Prentenkabinet*" of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (picture 11). The information accompanying this print states that it is made by the famous Dutch etcher, Frans Hogenberg, who, like Romeijn De Hooghe 50 years later, excelled in portraying events in their most exaggerated and shocking form.¹²² The same print appears with German subtitles (picture 12).



Picture 11

¹²¹ From several sources it appears that notifications were sent out to French men in the Dutch Republic to assist the French in overthrowing the regime of the Marquis D'Ancre and that their help was no longer necessary. Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2332, p. 2 and Knuttel pamphlet collection, #2333, p.2. Although 't Hof literally means the Court, with respect to the city of The Hague, 't Hof very specifically refers to the seat of government *Het Binnenhof*.

¹²² Picture 11 and 12: *Varia of Foreign Affairs, 1571-1631*. Frederik Muller, *De Nederlandse Geschiedenis in Platen*. In six scenes the murder and mutilations, etchings, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-78.785-366. Both etchers are most famous for the detailed and brutal images of war (Hogenberg of the Spanish War and De Hooghe of the French War).



Picture 12

It is unclear where this print originated from or how and where it circulated, but this detailed engraving shows an eerily accurate account of the slaying of the Marquis. The similarities with the images of the DeWitt brothers after their murder are prominent, especially the image of the corpse hanging naked upside down (top-right) as well as the image of the cut off ears, nose, and genitals (bottom-left). In these images, however, the royal guards, not the common people, are portrayed as the perpetrators of this crime. This is a notable difference from the depictions of similar scenes in the DeWitt case. Nonetheless, the pornographic element in these images is strong and likely to have evoked emotions for its viewers.

The reach of the pamphlets and prints or the effect of the details they contain is impossible to measure. Consequently, while it is apparent that the news about Concini's brutal murder circulated within the Dutch Republic, it remains uncertain how many people had access to this information. Therefore, it is necessary to rely on other sources to provide some insight into the influence of the pamphlets on common people. Searching the Dutch *Knuttel* pamphlets archive for the year 1617 yields a total of 209 publications.¹²³ Of these 209 results, six pamphlet numbers are in one way or another associated with the murder of Concini. That is close to three percent, which is significant for the early modern Dutch pamphlet market. In addition, the issue appears to have been important enough that each publication in French was translated and published in Dutch as well to make it more accessible to a larger audience. Of importance in this respect is also the fact that multiple printers seemed to have wanted their share of the profit.

Each of the six pamphlets was published by a different printer in a different town or city throughout the province of Holland, Amsterdam, Delft, Utrecht, Schiedam, and The Hague. Unfortunately, there are no numbers available concerning the level of reprinting of the material either in French or Dutch. Thus, it is valid to suggest that people in Holland in 1617 were familiar with who Concino Concini, Marquis D'Ancre, was and the fact that he was killed by the King for committing treason. However, the most gruesome details do not become evident from the documents or the illustrations exhibiting the murder. Therefore, it is unlikely that it provoked a need among common people in The Hague to perform similar deeds when the fate of Johan and Cornelis had to be decided.

Of the multitude of pamphlets regarding the murder of the DeWitt brothers and its aftermath, only one makes a connection with the murder of Concino Concini 55 years earlier. A

¹²³ Early Modern Pamphlets Online, <https://brill.com/view/db/dupo>, Knuttel pamphlet collection.

pamphlet of 1673 discusses the politically tense situation among England, Holland, and France at the time. A side-by-side, 21-point comparison is made between the actions of the three men during their lifetime as well as the ways in which they finally came to their tragic ends.¹²⁴ The assessment seems farfetched, based on gossip, and can apply to any ruler under similar circumstances of war. For example, just like Concini, Johan and Cornelis were being accused of plotting to murder the Prince of Orange, stealing money from the state, advancing their adherents to high positions, and using state means to fight their own war, among other things.

After investigation of the information that was available to common people in 1617, it seems questionable that the murder of Concini Concino influenced the Dutch citizens to such an extent that they felt compelled to carry out the murder of the DeWitt brothers on August 20, 1672 in a similar manner.

OTHER IMAGES OF FOREIGN VIOLENCE IN THE HAGUE

The brutal massacre of the Protestant Waldensians by the troops of the Catholic Duke of Savoy in the region of Piemonte in Italy between 1655 and 1663 instantly became news throughout Europe, including the Dutch Republic. Two pamphlets in the *Knuttel* collection, both printed in 1655 and based on a missive from Paris, describe in gruesome detail the violent acts committed by the soldiers against men, women, and children.¹²⁵ These acts were greatly condemned by the person writing the story. Jodocus Hondius the Younger, etcher and printer in Amsterdam, subsequently created a pamphlet depicting these alleged criminal acts of the soldiers

¹²⁴ Anonymous, "Een Bedrogen Engelsman met de handen in 't Haar." Knuttel 10480.

¹²⁵ Anonymous, *Manifest of Verhael van het Bedrijf der Vaudoisen tegens Sijne Coninklijke Hoogheyt den Hertoch van Savoye, getransleert uit het Francois 1655*. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #7627 and Anonymous, *Wreede Vervolginge en Schricklijcke Moordt Aende Vaudoisen in Piedmont, geschiet in 't Jaer 1655*. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #7622, p.17 and 18.

in chronological order entitled *Gruesome Cruel Murder and Prosecution of the Vaudoisen, in Piemont, 1655* (see Image 13).¹²⁶ This title leaves very little to the imagination of the viewer and it is immediately understood that the acts of cruelty in the depicted scenes would be graphic.



Picture 13¹²⁷

As if the images are not graphic enough, the accompanying text to the etchings surely is. From top to bottom and from left to right, the writings explain that in the year 1655, on January 25, many thousands of Vaudoisen were driven into the mountains by the army of the Duke of Savoy.

¹²⁶Jodocus Hondius Jr., *Growlyke Wreede Moord en Vervolging, aan de Vaudoisen, in Piemont, 1655* (Amsterdam, Jodocus Hondius the Younger, 1655), etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 16091.

¹²⁷Picture13: Jodocus Hondius Jr., etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 16091.

After that, all abandoned goods were either destroyed or stolen. The people begged but were not heard. A false truce with the soldiers was established. Then, on April 21, everything was taken over by the army, who then robbed and killed indiscriminately. The church was set on fire. In Tillaret, they cut off the heads of women, children, and the elderly and cooked others on a fire and ate the brains. Women were sexually abused and cut in pieces. Children were thrown off cliffs. People were hanged, children were torn in two, and then the bodies were filled with salt and gunpowder and blown up. People were tied up with their heads between their knees and then thrown off cliffs. In a Turkish manner, men were pierced with a large wooden stick in the groin area while others were hanged upside down from a tree by one leg. Children's heads were cut off in front of their parents and the soldiers played with the heads as if they were balls. Lastly, soldiers poured melted lead in the mouths and ears of their victims and set them on fire. Barbaric acts against women and children were portrayed in detail in these images as well as in the text explaining the violent acts, in case it was not clear from the pictures. Nonetheless, for Hondius to print these images the demand must have been present, meaning that even though the behaviors of the soldiers were labeled barbaric and sadistic in the pamphlets that circulated in the Dutch Republic, people were willing to pay to see these atrocities.

The violence of the Catholic Savoy army against the Vaudoisen in 1655 was, most likely, a hot topic in the Protestant Dutch Republic. Besides the pamphlet by Hondius, another pamphlet displays images of the slaughter in Piedmonte accompanied by a short story about the wretched situation of its peoples (Picture 14). The etcher and publisher of this material are not known. It even appears as if the work of several different etchers was used to compile the story. In these images, just as in the work of Hondius, it is clear that brutal acts are committed, especially to women and children. The writing under the etching explicitly mentions barbaric acts, including

cutting off genitalia, breasts, and limbs, burning people, throwing children, and more. More important in this print is the notion of the religious conflict that preceded the massacre. The deeds of the soldiers are compared to acts of the devil and dogs from hell, while the victims are equated with martyrs of the Protestant faith loved by God. The center piece shows a crying angel symbolizing religion with two dead babies in front of her on the floor next to a sword. An image of a Catholic inquisition meeting is portrayed as well. The viewer becomes aware that a seemingly powerful Catholic army brutally slaughtered innocent, helpless Protestant people. This may have triggered memories of the Dutch revolt against their ruler, Spain, between 1568 and 1648, when Spanish soldiers conquered Dutch towns and inflicted harm on houses, goods, and the population. Besides the news value of this pamphlet and the condemnation of these acts, the images appear to have had a sensationalizing value for its viewers.



Image 14

THE SPANISH INVASION

In some histories, the Dutch war with Spain is referred to as the Eighty Years' War, lasting from 1568 until the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Strictly speaking, this name is not correct. The war lasted from 1568 until the Truce with Spain in 1609 and flared up again in 1621. By then, the Seven United Provinces had reinforced the defense walls around most cities

and had recruited a well-equipped army, which was able to defend towns and cities including The Hague. Nonetheless, the plunder, rape, and even killings committed by Spanish soldiers in towns of the Netherlands during the initial phase of the Spanish invasion must have left a considerable mark on The Hague as elsewhere in the Low Countries. Studies of victims of torture have shown that the children, and even grandchildren, of victims of severe war trauma suffer similar post-traumatic stress symptoms as their parents and grandparents. Displays of violent war crimes can be collectively re-imagined through story-telling, pictures, songs, plays, etc. from generation to generation. For that reason, collective experiences of the events may become permanently locked into a cultural memory throughout centuries.¹²⁸ I argue that the communal experiences of the Spanish invasions in the late sixteenth century, either directly witnessed or indirectly observed, may have created fear for the Dutch a shared fear and apprehension of other invasions throughout the seventeenth century. In this regard, it is useful to investigate the level of war violence The Hague's people endured.

In 1555, while the Protestant Reformation increasingly penetrated the Northern parts of Europe, the rule over the Spanish Empire, including the Low Countries, transferred to the hands of the Catholic Philip II, son of Charles V. Immediately, Philip II set out to obliterate any form of Protestant expression by issuing several placards throughout his lands in which he made it clear that heretics are to be prosecuted and executed. At the onset of active war between the Catholic Spanish monarch and his Protestant Dutch subjects, The Hague was a poor and dilapidated urban center. Besides the presence of the government of the province of Holland, nothing in the city was reminiscent of the times when important members of the nobility resided

¹²⁸ Atia Daud, Erling Skoglund and Per-Anders Rydelius, "Children in Families of Torture Victims: Transgenerational Transmission of Parents' Traumatic Experiences to their Children," *International Journal of Social Welfare* (2005), v. 14, p. 23-32.

in and around the castle on the *Binnenhof*. At that time, the drapery industry had flourished and people from different places in and outside of the Netherlands flocked the city. But the winter of 1564-1565 had been severe and the recurrence of the plague prevented the import and export of goods to sustain life. Hunger, floods, filth, and disease had driven most inhabitants to find their fate elsewhere, leaving the town nearly empty.

Between 1566 and 1572, small groups of Protestant *Geuzen* (Beggars) throughout the Northern provinces of the Low Countries, including The Hague, began to actively rebel against the Catholic government.¹²⁹ By no means was this a division between the Spanish and the Dutch at first. Rather, this fracture in the social landscape was based solely on religion. The Estates General, the Provincial Estates, and the Court of Holland were representatives of the Spanish monarch. They carried out his laws against Dutch Protestants. The *Geuzen* consisted of small, recruited armies of Dutch, English, and German Protestant men who fought on behalf of William I, Prince of Orange and other Dutch nobles against their respective Catholic rulers. At the same time, Dutch elites recruited young men to form armies on the Catholic side. The Dutch Revolt thus was initially a religious civil war between Spain and The Low Countries. It was fought on Dutch soil, particularly in The Hague.

The Hague had never obtained an official certificate of city rights. Therefore, its administration was not allowed to build a solid defense wall to protect its residents against intruders. This left the population of The Hague exceptionally vulnerable to invaders. As a result, at the start of the war with Spain, the city became a relentless battleground between armies

¹²⁹ The *Geuzen* (Beggars) received their nickname on April 5, 1566. Under leadership of William I, Prince of Orange, the Dutch nobility had ensembled (Compromise of Nobles) to offer a petition of grievances (the Request) to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, Spanish regent over the Low Countries at that time. The nobles were sent away for being “nothing more than beggars.” From that moment on, the small rebellious armies were collectively known as the Beggars. The most forceful of these small groups operated at sea and gained the name *Watergeuzen* (Seabeggars).

fighting on the Spanish side and the *Geuzen*. Sander Torck, leader of a small army of Beggars, marched into The Hague and settled in the city hall with his troops in 1567. At the same time, Eric van Brunswijk, a Catholic Dutch noble leading an army in name of the Dutch representatives to the Spanish monarch, was situated in the *Hof van Holland* on the *Binnenhof*, walking distance from city hall.¹³⁰ Both armies claimed food and shelter from the populace of The Hague, who were already suffering from the growing misery of a deprived food supply. The demand for wheat drove the prices up, while trees were cut down throughout the city to make weapons and build fires. The Estates General, the Provincial Estates, and *the Hof of Holland* wanted to crush the growing discontent among the Dutch population. Consequently, people fled The Hague to escape further mayhem. On June 25, 1567, van Brunswijck conquered The Hague, returning it to its Catholic roots.¹³¹ On August 22, 1567, the Duke of Alba, captain-general of the Spanish armies, took over Brussels and established the Court of Troubles, a judicial system to prosecute and punish Protestant rebels. Two important Dutch noblemen, the Counts of Horne, and Egmont, who advocated for the freedom of conscience for their people, were publicly decapitated on June 5, 1568. William I of Orange escaped to Germany promising to revenge his friends and obtain religious freedom for his people. From his location in Germany, he attempted to erect an army, but he was unsuccessful. However, the outrage of these events ignited the Dutch Revolt.

Between 1568 and 1574, during active war between the *Geuzen* and the Spanish armies, most important cities in Holland were closed by gates and defense walls. This left The Hague vulnerable to looting by members of both armies. People still resided there, but many houses

¹³⁰ J. Smit, *Den Haag in den Geuzentijd* (Den Haag: J.A. Meester, 1922), p. 79.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 82.

were empty and parts of the city were burned down. The small amount of goods people had left behind were unguarded. People who remained in The Hague were ordered to provide shelter and food for the Spanish army as well as clean beds, table linens, and kitchens.¹³² In addition, the full, Spanish-supporting government of Holland, out of fear for *Geuzen* armies, had left the city. Small gangs of robbers used the chaos to attempt to enter the city to plunder and even kill. Houses were demolished for their windows, wood, glass, and everything else of possible value. By the time the Spanish army leader Francisco de Valdes entered The Hague on October 30, 1573, the city was virtually empty.¹³³ The Dutch government, which by 1574 was replaced with Protestant activists and residing in Delft, ordered control over the prices of food and tried to take measures against the plundering and devastation. They failed in their efforts, and many cities were left in complete suffering from hunger, disease, filth, and utter defeat. It was not until the end of the 1570s, as the *Geuzen* armies grew larger and stronger with financial help of William of Orange, that the Spanish armies were overpowered by tactical war strategies, and the Estates General of the Seven United Provinces could start to build their Republic.

Many representations are available that depict the war with Spain and the cruelties that the Spanish army committed toward the inhabitants of Dutch towns and cities. In the early days of the war, the populace of The Hague suffered the effects of the war with Spain, until most of them fled to other towns. In addition, The Hague's populace may have experienced and even witnessed atrocities in their places of refuge, such as the nearby cities of Delft and Leiden. In addition, not only were there real significant cruelties inflicted upon communities, but representations of the slayings, rapes, hangings, and burnings performed by the Spanish soldiers

¹³² J. Smit, *Den Haag in den Geuzentijd* (Den Haag: J.A. Meester, 1922), p. 160.

¹³³ J. Smit, p. 209.

subsequently found their way into plays, books, etchings, and engravings printed and published several times throughout the seventeenth century in an attempt to both retrace and process the horrors of the past.

Scenes of the Spanish invasion were reenacted during theatrical plays. Haarlem was severely attacked by the Spanish armies in the years 1572 and 1573. While hiding behind the defense wall, the city was able to keep the soldiers at bay for months until July 13, 1573. Meanwhile the people suffered from hunger and despair. 88 years later, in 1660, a play was performed in Haarlem with the title *Honger-Dwangh, of Haarlem's Langhe en Strenghe Belegeringhe* (Hunger, or Haarlem's Long and Strenuous Occupation).¹³⁴ It consisted of four parts describing the Spanish invasion. In the monthly newspaper, *Inde Europische Courant* of March 6, 1645, under the heading *Spaensche Inquisitie* (Spanish Inquisition), the readers are warned that "whoever is found with Lutheran or sacrilegious matters will be burned without any mercy."¹³⁵ Other news sources that were printed and distributed monthly in the Dutch Republic between 1625 and 1651 contained news from the larger cities in Europe and frequently reported on the status and location of the Spanish army.¹³⁶ A small book published in 1581 entitled *Een Nieu Geusen Liet-boecken* (A new beggars song book) containing protest songs against the Spanish was reprinted in its original form throughout the following centuries until 1872. It was

¹³⁴ Steven van der Lust, *Honger-Dwangh, or the Langhe en Strenghe Belegeringhe, ende het Overgaen der Selver Stadt, door het Scherpen Swaerd der Ellenden. Treur-Spel met zijn Vertoonninghe, in vier Treur-deelen, Ghespeelt tot Haerlem op den 29 juni, anno 1660* (Haarlem: Kornelisz Teunisz Kas, 1660). Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 15193.

¹³⁵ *Inde Europische Courant* (Amsterdam: Mathijs van Meininga), 6-3-1645.

¹³⁶ *Tijdinghe Uyt Verscheijde Quartieren*, "Spaensche Extraordinaris in Rome." (Amsterdam: s.n.), 08-30-1625. *Tijdinghe Uyt Verscheijde Quartieren*, "Lijste vande Gevangens ende Dooden vande Spaensche Armade," (Amsterdam: s.n.), 05-10-1642. *Inde Europische Courant*, "Uyt Lisbon, 6 november 1646, Spaensche Leger is 10.000 man te voet ende 3.000 man te paard sterk," (Amsterdam: Mathijs van Meininga), 12-25-1646. *Europische Donderdaeghs Courant, no. 26* (Amsterdam: Mathijs van Meininga), 6-30-1644. *Courante Uyt Italien & Duytslant, no.26*, "Spaensche leger bij Rencourt." (Amsterdam: Casper van Hilten), 7-1-1651.

even illegally published in 1941 and 1944 with songs in which the collective enemy, Spain, was replaced by Germany as propaganda for World War II.¹³⁷ Still today, the victory over Leiden by the troops of William of Orange I on October 3, 1574 is reason for communal celebrations with herring and white bread in the city.¹³⁸ Most importantly, the present day Dutch national symbols such as the national anthem “Wilhelmus van Nassau,” which originated in the *Geuzen* song book in 1581, as well as the national color orange and the Dutch lion all originated during the Dutch Revolt. The war of independence from Spain seems firmly embedded in Dutch collective memory.

Frans Hogenberg (1535-1590) was an etcher, printer, and publisher from Mechelen in Belgium. He moved to London at age twenty, where he worked with his brother Remy. After a few years, he returned to the Continent, traveled around France for some time after which he settled in Cologne, Germany around 1570.¹³⁹ It is for that reason that many of his prints were also published in German. He produced a considerable number of images featuring the war between the Beggars and the Spanish troops. Most of these images were of a strategic nature to show how the Spanish or the Dutch had taken over a particular town or city. However, several of

¹³⁷ *Een Nieu Geusen Liederen-boeckken, Waarinne Begrepen den gantschen Handel der Nederlantschen Geschiedenissen – dees voorleden Jaeren tot noch toe ghedraegen – eensdeels onderwylen in Druck uitghegaen – eensdeels nu nieu bygheuoecht. Nu nieulick vermeerdert ende verbeterd* (Amsterdam: J. Schregardus, 1581). According to the website www.hetgeuzenproject.org, a publication exists from 1573. Globally, 33 references could be traced of the title. The most famous publication, the one referenced here, is from 1581 and was reprinted and republished as late as 1872. It was also published in English. The songs are since then used for different purposes, such as in 1941 and 1944 against the German enemy. In 1947 an edition was printed that included, besides the historic songs, some new songs and as late as 1950 it was published as a common song book. The song “Wilhelmus van Nassau,” from the 1581 edition, vol. 25, is the current national anthem of the Netherlands.

¹³⁸ After Leiden was recaptured from the Spanish on October 3, 1574, the hungry inhabitants received herring and white bread from the Dutch army. This has become the traditional meal during the celebrations of this victory.

¹³⁹ Installé, H., and A. Louis. 1985. *Tentoonstelling "Luister en rampspoed van Mechelen ten tijde van Rembert Dodoens 1585-1985"*. Brussel: Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Internationale Culturele Samenwerking, p. 98-100.

his images depict acts of Spanish soldiers carried out in Dutch towns and cities upon entry. It is possible, but unlikely, that Hogenberg was present during each siege of the towns and cities he portrays. It is more plausible that he based his work either on written eyewitness accounts, other stories that circulated within the Low Countries during the Dutch Revolt against Spain, or even his own fantasies.¹⁴⁰ Because other works of Hogenberg appear to have had news value, I assume that he intended his images to have proper news value, yet to be provocative enough to sell in high quantities. The display of extraordinary cruelty must have been a good selling point, for he leaves very little to the imagination of the viewer in his etchings featuring Spanish dominance over Dutch victims. One of his most famous etchings, *The Spanish Furie*, illustrates the invasion of Antwerp on November 4 and 5, 1576 (Picture 15).

¹⁴⁰ For a complete overview of war reporting in the Low Countries during the Dutch Revolt including images of the war by Frans Hogenberg see Karel Kinds, *Kroniek van de Opstand in de Lage Landen, 1555-1609: Actuele Oorlogsverslaggeving uit de Zestiende Eeuw met 228 Gravures van Frans Hogenberg* (Wenum Wiesel: ALNU, 1999).



Picture 15¹⁴¹

This etching circulated in its full form, conveying the progress of the invasion through a sequence of images varying from the entry of the city to the devastating end-result of the slaughter. Several of the individual images were used for publications as well, possibly for propaganda purposes. The two most significant picture-archives of the Netherlands, *Atlas van Stolk* in Rotterdam and *Rijksprentenkabinet* in Amsterdam, both contain a variety of reproductions of these and other images by Hogenberg, some of them in color. The following prints give an impression of the level of bloodshed portrayed in the images (see Images 16, 17, and 18). Towns as far north as Haarlem, Naarden, and Oudewater fell prey to the massacre of the Spanish army. Anybody gazing at the vibrant representations of the atrocities would deeply fear the arrival of any army.

¹⁴¹ Picture 15: Frans Hogenberg, *De Spaense Furie te Antwerpen*, 1576, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-76.862, FMH, 721-A.



Picture 16¹⁴²



Picture 17¹⁴³

¹⁴² Picture 16: Frans Hogenberg, *Invasie Haerlem*. Etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 50440, ext. 134.

¹⁴³ Picture 17: Frans Hogenberg, *Invasie Naerden*, etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 50440, ext. 158.



Picture 18¹⁴⁴

The two books *Spaensche Tiranye gheschiet in Nederlant* (Spanish Tyranny in the Netherlands) and *Spiegel der Spanesche Tyranye gheschiet in Nederlant* (Mirror of the Spanish Tyranny in the Netherlands) deserve special attention in this discussion.¹⁴⁵ Both books are essentially identical and contain a chronological presentation of images in which the story of the Dutch Revolt is told through the depictions of eighteen historical occurrences between 1568 and 1578. The massacres by the Spanish in different towns of the Low Countries are especially well-documented. Although there are some variations between prints, all publications also contain a few sonnets and each etching has an accompanying story and short poem (see Image 19). Interestingly, these books were published by different printers as late as 1641 and hold pictures that are reproductions of or based on the images of Frans Hogenberg. By that time, the majority

¹⁴⁴ Picture 18: Frans Hogenberg, *Moort te Oudewater*. Etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-79.620, FMH 703, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 50440.

¹⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Spaensche Tyrannye Gheschiet in Nederlant* (Amsterdam: Weduwe van C.L. van der Plasse, 1621). Anonymous, *Spaensche Tyrannye Gheschiet in Nederlant* (Amsterdam: Jacob Pietersz Wachter, 1641). And Anonymous, *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye Gheschiet in Nederlant* (Amsterdam: Evert Kloppenburg, 1638).

of the Spanish army had left the territory and the Dutch populace experienced a relatively peaceful existence with a thriving economy. The books must have served as a means to retell and process the massacres that occurred and to keep the images of the atrocities alive in the Dutch collective memory.



SPAENSCH FURIE TOT ANTWERPEN

Och Antwoyren hoech verheven
 Hoe heeft u eyncluck begiven
 Deen gij raackten in eynvelde
 Van die u heeft neer gevelt
 Onder schyn van myteneeren
 Ghingh den Spangiaert u opschieren
 Maar dan yst noch was gelyct
 Als men hier voor eegen siet

15

Moorden Branden Hengen Braden
 Spijgen met wrede daden
 Grouwen en swaer torment
 Wort hier allen een gewent
 Dit laet een exempel wesen
 Die den Spangiaert niet en vresen
 Maar kon wenschen hier te clande
 Door volkomen overflandt

De Stad Antwerpen door het onsinig mynen der Spangiaerden, die het Kasteel beset hadden, met vreesende die van de Stadt sij daer wort tegens voorsien meentende te hebben, werden aldaer met Branden, Blaken, Hengen op ongeborende wijzen en alle beduytelijke Moorderyen en Wretheden, sodanig mishandelt als geen van alle Steden nog gedaen was.

15.



MOORT BINNEN MAESTRICHT

O clende der clenden
 Hoe sach men de Steden schonden
 Hoe wort menich Steen gelyct
 Als u hier vertoont Maestricht
 Hier de Spangiaert on de Mofsen
 Die op boeye zoden Stieffen
 Plunderen roeven alles dat
 Sy hier vinden in de Stadt

14

Dus der lieden goet ontomen
 Die den slan nu was ontomen
 Weren gelyct overmacht
 In de Maas of in de Gracht
 Hoe wort weder daer bedreven
 Als te moorden nae het geven
 Als men geyt is al sijn goet
 Dat men dan noch fereen maet

In het Jaer 1576. Alexander Farnese Prince van Parma, tot de besettinge der Nederlanden gekomen sijnde werd de Stadt Maestricht die twee honde de Spaansche besetting vermaet hadde, van de sijn een Wijk gewonnen, en dier plunderrijch verwoest en moorden der Burgeren, tot een eilandig Schouw-Toneel van de Spaansche Wretheden gemaekt.

14.



WREDE MOORT TOT ZUTPHEN

Zutphen besich met verdragen
 Merkten niet de boefe lagen
 Van den Spangiaert vol bedroh
 Twisck veel lieden heuyt nach
 Als den Ysel was bevooren
 Wie vermach dit aen te hooren
 Sonder weenen, wie sal niet
 Schricken van die swaer verdriet

10

Uytgetrocken naecte lieden
 Konden niet den Doot ontvreden
 Maar sy segen onder ys
 Man in Madock out en ghes
 Voor het vrendelyck ontfangen
 Wert het oerfhot gekanton
 Stucken Boomen galpen velt
 Twonden daer het Spaens gewelt

Den Frederic, Seon van van den Hertog Alba, d'afgevallene Steden in Over-Yssel, het Graaffschap Zuiphen en daer omrent, weder oververt en in sijn magt gekregen behoudende, tegh van de Staat Zuiphen, een overgrote Moordery en alderhande onmenschelyke wretheden aan oeffnende aldaer een straffe, die alle reden en maet te loven gong.

10.



DON FREDRICKS MOORT TOT NAERDEN

Don Fredrick die Zutphen schende
 Wier nae Hollandt e Logher wende
 Speelt te Naerden sulken part
 Die noch in veel berten smart
 Sy de Stelut den toe brochten
 Vriendelyck genaue verfochten
 Souden Spaens en Koningsh sijn
 En met hem trecken een lyn

11

Als hy dus was in gelaten
 Niet en machte haer goethyt baten
 Out en lonck hy al vermoort
 T'ongeboren kint hy smoort
 Dooven mocht men niet begraven
 Siecken noch gewonden lauen
 En voor t'slot set dese quant
 Naerden in den lichten brant

Na het weder overveeren van vels der Steden, die den Prince en andere sijn Medegenoten gewonnen hadde en overvallon waren, had Naerden het slegt van tegen waer, het waare de kleskoudighd van de Poorten voor den Vyandte sluyten maar eyndelyck overweldigt, wierd jammerlyck door Don Frederic mishandelt, en de meeste Borgers daar binnen op een fonsde en ongehoerde wyse vermoordt, gelijck hier nevens verhaalt werd.

11.



WREETHYET TOT ROTTERDAM

Rotterdam heeft eerst bevonden
 Hoe men peylt de Spaensche gronden
 Als t'geghen van Hollandts leet
 Daer Bobsu sijn proeue doet
 Hy in plaats van doot te trecken
 Buyten ordre doet sijn Specken
 Vallen op de Borgery
 En haer brengen indt ly

8

Die sich hier wat tegen stelden
 Sy terflont ter neder velden
 Haere goederen men steelt
 En de lieden vierendeelt
 Dit dus weder vaert haer vrenden
 Die haer lieten in en dienden
 Wat hebben sy niet gedaen
 Die haer wilden wederstaen

Picture 19¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Picture 19: Both books as well as the individual images are archived in several Dutch archives, references for the Rijksmuseum, Prentenkabinet are respectively, *Spaensche Furie tot Antwerpen*, etching Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-78-996, *Moort binnen Maastricht*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-78.995, *Wrede Moort tot Zutphen*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-77.704, *Don Fredericks Moort tot Naerden*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-78.992, *Wreethyet tot Rotterdam*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-78.990.

Besides experiencing stress caused by the ongoing war, the few residents, who remained in The Hague endured an additional collective trauma which, from a psychological standpoint, could have exceeded the damages done by the skirmishing armies. Between 1567 and 1570, the Court of Holland and the administration of The Hague faithfully carried out the tasks mandated in the placards issued by the Spanish King and consequentially became representatives for the Court of Troubles.¹⁴⁷ In practice, this meant that inhabitants of The Hague and the province of Holland who had been responsible for alleged rebellion against the Catholic religion and/or the Spanish ruler were arrested and prosecuted, both members of the Dutch elite as well as common people. Pamphlets were nailed to the door of the newly built city hall in The Hague and called for the citizen's obligation to turn in alleged perpetrators.¹⁴⁸ Although many of these men had long fled The Hague in anticipation of these tactics, the prison on the *Buitenhof* was bursting at the seams. Too many prisoners were loaded into the few small cages, and even the attic served as a temporary prison cell. The food was minimal and rodents coinhabited the spaces.¹⁴⁹

On July 25, 1567, the full administration of The Hague, the burgomasters, the bailiff, the *schout* (head of the civic guards), and the *schepenen* (leaders of the *vaandels*) held its first court session against its own citizens. Although many of the prosecuted did not appear in person in court, the punishment for the heretic rebels was typically complete banishment from The Hague as well as confiscation of their property and goods. Often, this meant that women who had not fled with their husbands were evicted from their homes, leaving families homeless and without

¹⁴⁷ J. Smit, *Den Haag in den Geuzentijd* (Den Haag: J.A. Meester, 1922), p. 92.

¹⁴⁸ J. Smit, p. 94.

¹⁴⁹ The Prison gate on the *Buitenhof* is currently a museum. The inside is still intact as it was in the early modern period.

means to generate an income. The prosecutions of Protestant dissenters lasted four years, in which roughly every 14 days small groups of men were sentenced. Similarly, in January of 1568 alone, the Court of Holland had sentenced 65 men to permanent banishment from Holland.¹⁵⁰ These verdicts were mild compared to the punishments the Court of Holland had in store for the active ministers of the Protestant faith who had contributed to the rebellion.

Ever since the Protestant religion had made its entry into Dutch social life, ministers and preachers were prosecuted by the Court of Holland. This meant that since 1562, although sporadically, residents of The Hague had witnessed the public burning, drowning, decapitation, and mutilation of victims in the form of splitting of the nose or the tongue. In 1567, the Court of Holland ordered a horrific punishment against a prominent foreman of the Anabaptists, Paulus Merula. He was to be tied naked to an iron chain on the *Plaetse*. The chain was then attached to a ring and the ring was subsequently fastened to a heated spit. As a result, he was slowly roasted until his abdomen was blistering black and his intestines rolled onto the floor. His seven-year-old son had to endure a similar punishment.¹⁵¹ On November 13, 1568, Dirck Maertz van Schagen, a former priest converted to Calvinism, heard the verdict that he was to be guided to the *Plaetse* and, while standing on the *'t Groene Zoodje*, his beating heart would be removed, he would be decapitated, his head would be placed on a stick, and his body would be quartered. Then, his remains were to be exhibited on the gallows outside of the city.¹⁵²

Between 1567 and 1570, six ministers were publicly beheaded with their heads placed on sticks and their bodies displayed on wheels for public gazing. Four other men were burned on the

¹⁵⁰ J. Smit, *Den Haag in den Geuzentijd* (Den Haag: J.A. Meester, 1922), p.99.

¹⁵¹ J. Smit, p. 109.

¹⁵² J. Smit, p. 111.

pyre and had their charred bodies exhibited on the gallows.¹⁵³ The populace of The Hague must have watched in horror how the Court of Holland tortured its own citizens for their beliefs yet feared that their fate might be identical if they openly protested. The endured collective trauma found its outlet in songs. At first these were published on loose leaflets and distributed as propaganda, but as early as 1573 the songs circulated in books as well. As one song explains:

*Want vier pastors in 't lant
Die hebt ghij daer verbrant,
Is dit niet te beclaeghen?
Van Iselmont becant,
Lier en Monster, 't is schant.*¹⁵⁴

The damage of the war with Spain was as severe in The Hague as it was elsewhere in the Dutch Republic—especially in its direct aftermath, when the threat of war was still a probability. The memory of the committed massacre by the Spanish but also by The Hague's own administration must have left traces of communal fear. Some of the atrocities portrayed in the images concerning the actions of the Spanish army in the Low Countries between 1568 and 1578 as well as actions described in eyewitness accounts of the events resemble the horrifying acts of the people of The Hague almost 100 years later on August 20, 1672. Cutting off limbs, slicing people open, taking out bowels, and hanging humans either by neck or feet appeared to have

¹⁵³ J. Smit, *Den Haag in den Geuzentijd* (Den Haag: J.A. Meester, 1922), p. 111.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Een Liedeken van Vier Pastoren, die Sgravenhaghe om het Getuygenisse Christi Geworcht ende Gebrant zijn. Anno 1570, den 30 Mei," in *Schriftuerlicke Liedekens met noch Sommighe Lofsangen ende Ghebeden* (Leiden: Jan Paedts Jacobsz. en Jan Bouwensz., 1595), p.4.

*Oh Haegh merrily arbor,
four pastors have burned there
is that not to be pitied?
Of Iselmont becant
Winch and Monster, it's a disgrace
and that pastor of Schagen.*

been common place for the soldiers of Spain. Although some of The Hague's residents had escaped the city early on in the Dutch Revolt and may not have experienced any of these brutalities directly, the images circulated within the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century combined with the people's shared experiences during the war may have left permanent trepidation for war in The Hague's collective memory, one that transcends generations. Not only the fear for war as an abstract phenomenon - one does not need images to fear war - but the anticipation of the atrocious realities of such wars. For that reason, it is necessary to include images of the Spanish invasion in explaining the slaying of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

CANNIBALISM IN PRINT

The fact that a few eyewitness accounts of the murder of the DeWitt brothers claim that several body parts of the two men were roasted and eaten, including their genitals, leaves a lot to the imagination of the receiver of such news. From the vivid representations of the public executions as well as from the eyewitness accounts of the prosecutions of the pastors during the earlier years of the Reformation, it can be concluded that severing a head and limbs from the body, quartering people on the breaking wheel, displaying their limbs on the gallows, and even roasting a person until their intestines rolled out was a gruesome yet traditional manner of punishment. However, I have not been able to find any images of limbs or other parts of the human body being eaten by the audiences in The Hague. This does not mean that it was not part of the people's imagination of that time. Images of cannibalism did circulate within the Dutch Republic in the early modern period.

The 37-volume work *Oorsprongk, Begin, en Vervolgh der Nederlandsche Oorloggen* (Origin, Start, and Sequence of the Dutch Wars) written by the Dutch writer and historian Pieter Christiaensz Bor was first published in 1626 and republished throughout the seventeenth century.

It is a detailed account of the Dutch Revolt in which the writer was careful to present both sides to the battles.¹⁵⁵ The first page consists of a poem in honor of the author and gives a one-page, rhymed account of the war with Spain. Besides describing that houses were burned, and people were killed, the seventh line states *Dat d'een mensch d'ander eet en jammerlick verscheurt* (that the one person eats the other and sadly tears apart).¹⁵⁶ This sentence is probably a metaphor for the destruction inflicted on humans by humans during wartime. Nonetheless, to describe this through an allegory of cannibalism speaks to the imagination, to say the least.

The title of the book that displayed the atrocities of the Spanish army in the Dutch towns and cities was chosen for a specific reason. In 1552, the Spanish friar Bartholomé de las Casas published his famous book *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* in which he strongly criticized the treatment of indigenous peoples by the Spanish in the recently discovered Americas. In it he summarized all common atrocities committed by the Spanish soldiers towards the innocent, defenseless natives. This included descriptions of cannibalism.¹⁵⁷ By 1578, it was translated into Dutch and published as late as 1640 under the title *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye Geschied in den West-Indien* or *Den Vermeerderden Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye*

¹⁵⁵ Pieter Christaensz Bor was good friends with the etcher and publisher Frans Hogenberg. It is assumed that Frans Hogenberg based his famous etchings on the stories provided by Bor.

¹⁵⁶ Anonymous, in Pieter Christaensz Bor, *Oorsponck Nederlandsche Oorloghen, Beroerten en Borgerlijke Oneenigheden, volume II* (Amsterdam: Broer Jansz, Abraham Wees, 1626), p. xi.

¹⁵⁷ The demonization of the Spanish in their quests of the Americas is referred to as “The Black Legend.” Particularly helpful to me have been the following books pertaining to this topic: C. Gibson (ed.), *The Black Legend. Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York 1971); J. Lechner, ‘Vroege Nederlandse drukken en vertalingen van werken over de Nicuwe Wereld’, in: J. Lechner, H.Ph. Vogel (red.), *De Nieuwe Wereld en de Lage Landen. Onbekende aspecten van vijfhonderd jaar ontmoetingen tussen Latijns-Amerika en Nederland* (Amsterdam 1992), p. 75-96; K.W. Swart, ‘The Black Legend during the Eighty Years War’, in: J.S. Bromley, E.H. Kossmann (ed.), *Britain and The Netherlands V: Some political mythologies* (Den Haag 1975), p. 36-57; and Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Geschied in den West-Indien.¹⁵⁸ The sonnet at the beginning of the book explains in gruesome detail exactly what the reader could expect:

*Come here you Batavians, read about the evil deeds
Of the Cruel Spaniards,
How they have suppressed the West-Indien natives,
Scourged, Killed, Strangled, Burned, and Roasted,
Men, Women and Children Small (only for lust),
Cut off their noses, their ears, a very regrettable case,
To feed the dogs, as will be here explained, they used
human flesh.*¹⁵⁹

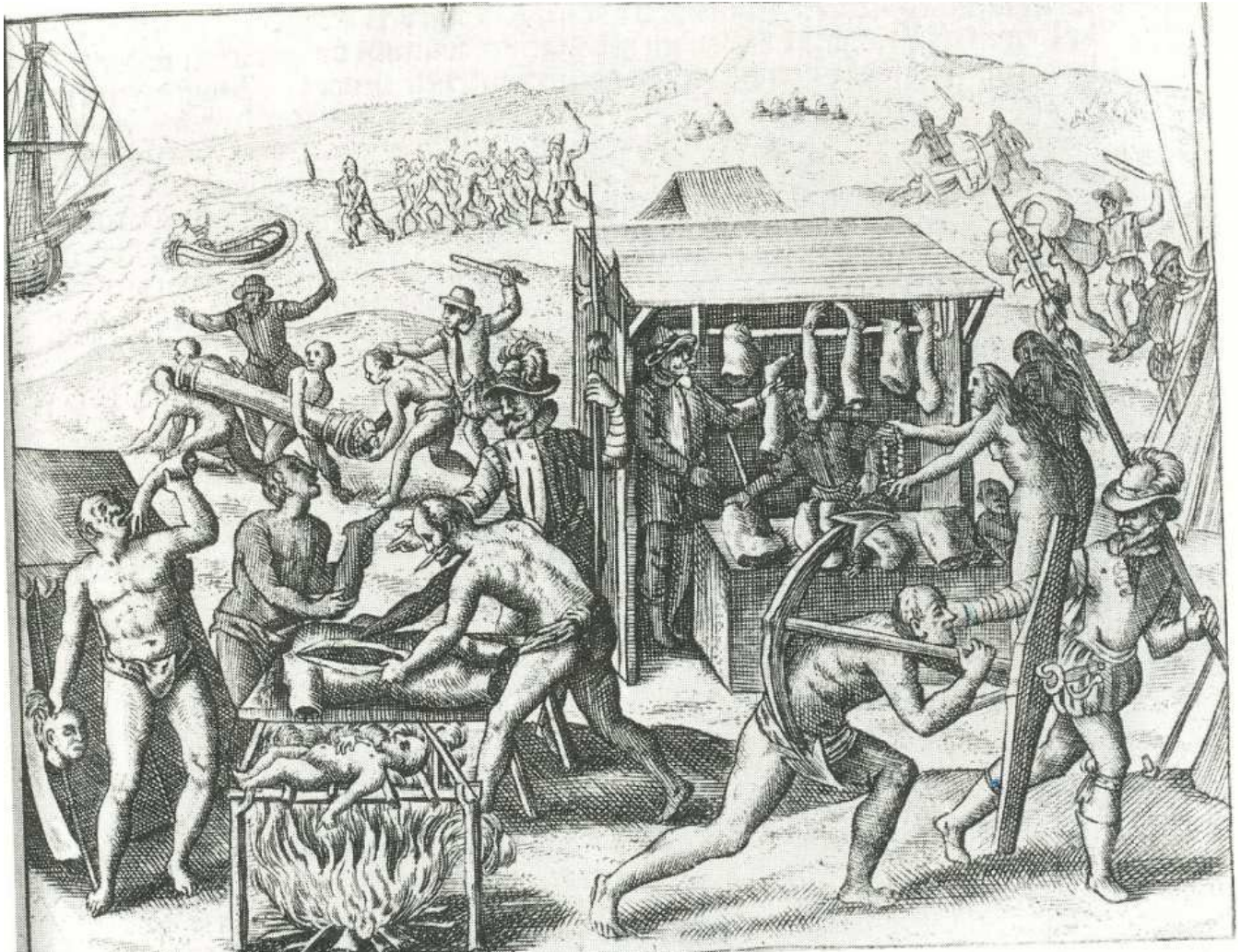
The Dutch editions were accompanied by images crafted by Theodore De Bry, a German based engraver, publisher, and goldsmith. The images by Hogenberg in *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye geschiet in Nederlant* and those of De Bry in *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye geschiet in West-Indien* are almost identical. They portray slayings, hangings, burning, torturing, and quartering of men, women, and children.¹⁶⁰ One image entitled “Human Abattoir” in the West-Indian version stands out, however, with no mirror image available in the Spanish atrocities committed in the Netherlands (picture 20). It shows the Spaniards in their uniform as well as native men and women, who are half or fully naked. The locals are roasting a child and cutting open a corpse, while on the left side of the image a native is taking a bite out of an arm. In the background, it appears that local women are obtaining the limbs in exchange for some

¹⁵⁸ *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye Geschiet in den West-Indien*. (Amsterdam: C.L. van der Plasse, 1596 – 1634). *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye Geschiet in den West-Indien* (Amsterdam: Jan Evertsz Kloppenburg, 1620-1640). *Vermeerderden Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye* (Amsterdam: C.L. van der Plasse, 1621).

¹⁵⁹ *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye Geschiet in den West-Indien* (Amsterdam: Jan Evertsz Kloppenburg, 1620), p. x

¹⁶⁰ A side-by-side comparison between the images in both historical books is beyond the scope of this argument. However, Benjamin Schmidt in *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670*, p.116-119, provides an interesting side-by-side account.

jewelry. Additionally, the scene shows natives working for the Spaniards. Their reward is, as it appears, a piece of human flesh.



Picture 20¹⁶¹

The idea of indigenous people eating their own or their enemy's flesh is in line with an imagination about the practices of human flesh eating that is likely inspired by the book of Amerigo Verspucci, an early sixteenth century Italian explorer who returned after his voyages with stories of the natives as cannibals. The first woodcut depicting a cannibalistic tribe in the

¹⁶¹ Image 20: *Spiegel der Spaensche Tyrannye geschiet in West-Indien* (Amsterdam, Jan Evertsz Kloppenburg, 1620), 44.

“New World” was made by Johann Froschauer and published in 1505 in Augsburg in an edition of Verspucci’s book, *Mundus Novus*. However, I have been unable to trace the publication of this book in the Dutch Republic. Similarly, other engravings by Teodore de Bry have accompanied the stories of other sixteenth-century explorers in publications since 1557. Another book in this respect, Hans Staden’s *Warhaftige Historia, und beschreibung eyner Landschafft der Wilden Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschfresser-Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelegen* (True History, and an Account of a Captive of the Wild, Naked, Grimm, Human-eating Tribes in the New World America) is equally as interesting, yet more gruesome in the depictions of natives as cannibals. The book was an assumed eyewitness account of cannibalistic practices during Staden’s captivity in Brasil in the early sixteenth-century. Research shows that the books have been translated in many languages until 1600 and have been reprinted from those originals ever since. The Royal Library in The Hague has a German copy, for example. I have not been able to trace a Dutch copy of this work. It is therefore unknown if the books and the images circulated within the Dutch Republic in general or The Hague specifically. They do, however, give an impression of the idea of “New World” cannibalism in the early modern period (picture 21, 22, and 23).¹⁶²

¹⁶² Hans Staden, *Warhaftige Historia und beschreibung eyner Landschafft der Wilden Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschfresser-Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelegen*, (Marpurg: Kolb., 1557). Royal Library The Hague, request number: 7032 A 23



Picture 21



Image 22



Image 23

These exotic human-flesh-eating tribes lived in the Caribbean. The graphic display of their customs and rituals in books most likely evoked great curiosity and maybe disgust, but I do not believe that the population of the Dutch Republic identified with the deliberate habit of consuming another human being for nutritional purposes. This does not mean that the concept was completely foreign to the Dutch in the early modern period. The most horrific images of cannibalism circulated within the Netherlands, including those of the consumption of children in Germany during the Thirty Years' War.

The politically inspired and religiously motivated Thirty Years' War lasted from 1618 to 1648. Although it involved many European countries, the most severe fighting occurred in the Holy Roman Empire, in today's South Germany. By 1632, the food supply was dried up and people were desperate to find anything to eat. The pamphlet *Duytslants Treur-Toneele ofte Spieghel der Hongers-Dwangh* (Germany's Theater or Mirror of Hunger), which must have circulated in the Netherlands given its Dutch title, showed provocative images and

accompanying explanatory texts (picture 24). The subtitles inform the viewer that cats and dogs were sold as meat, that mothers killed their children to eat, and that people were dug up from their graves for consumption, among other gruesome exhibits of cannibalism.¹⁶³ It is questionable if these acts really occurred, but the fact that these pictures were available in the public sphere for viewing, suggests that they created, at a minimum, the idea that the portrayals could represent reality.

The image radiates despair and horror. The three portraits, each person visibly distraught, at the top of the image represent (from left to right) the Elector of Mentz, Ernst Casimir, a woman from Hornbach who murdered her own children, and Elector/Palatine Charles. From left to right the pictures depict the following scenes: (1) their holes are filled with stinking water; (2) a woman praying to the passengers for some food; (3) folks picking the graves; (4) cadavers of humans are eaten by dogs; (5) people selling dogs and stuffed cats as meat; (6) the Count giving his dogs to his subjects to eat; (8) people fighting for a piece of the dead body; (9) two old maids slaughtering a woman; (10) the daughter of Altheim is beheaded for helping to kill four individuals; and (11) the dead are taken out of the earth to be eaten. The most heart-wrenching is the image in the middle, where women are cutting their children into pieces to be consumed. It seems that the gruesome details of this pamphlet served to draw the public's attention to the current circumstances in Germany and could have been completely made up or exaggerated. However, the Dutch, including the inhabitants of The Hague, who had a few decades earlier escaped the Spanish and the horrors of severe hunger themselves, might have been able to relate to the images.

¹⁶³ Anonymous, *Duytslant's Treur-Toneele ofte Spieghel der Hongers-Dwangh*, 1632-1637, etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 21970.



Image 24

One scene clearly portrays the actual roasting of a human body (picture 25).¹⁶⁴ The text below it states that these men were burning the corpse and eating his brains. The title of the pamphlet suggests that this too was done to alleviate severe hunger. No other explanation is given for eating the brain instead of the corpse.

¹⁶⁴ Jodocus Hondius jr., *Growlijke Wreede Moord en Vervolging, aan de Vaudoisen, in Piemonte, 1655* (Amsterdam, Jodocus Hondius the Younger, 1655), etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 16091.



Image 25

So far, exotic tribes with their outlandish rituals and Europeans troubled by desperation are represented in images exhibiting cannibalism. Although the Dutch did not identify with the first, and could maybe only imagine eating another person in case of severe famine, cannibalism in print was reserved for evil men.

In 1566, the Duke of Alba and his army marched into the tumultuous Low Countries to restore order. As a representative of the Spanish King, Philip II, it was his responsibility to wipe out Protestant rebels with the greatest force necessary, which he did. He erected the Court of Troubles (to prosecute Protestants), killed the responsible Dutch nobles, and violently took back control of the northern parts of the Low Countries. Tax measures for the already suffering populace were put in place to finance the army.¹⁶⁵ In the Netherlands, he rapidly attained the reputation of a heartless, malicious tyrant who, with the support of Spain and the Catholic

¹⁶⁵ The Duke of Alba put in place the “famous” tenth penning as a tax measure, meaning that a tenth of each penning went to the state as tax. It is a well-known concept in Dutch culture and is often cynically used when the current government put a new tax measure in place.

church, did not let anything or anybody stand in his way of obtaining complete power over the provinces of the Netherlands.¹⁶⁶

In 1572, the year when Spanish troops viciously attacked, plundered, burned, and killed the people of cities and towns in the Province of Holland, such as *Naarden* and *Woerden*, a leaflet circulated within the Low Countries.¹⁶⁷ This leaflet, most likely for the purpose of propaganda, consisted of detailed and graphic images exposing the shady character and malevolent motivations of the Duke of Alba. Text, both in Dutch and French, underneath the pictures explains the gravity of the situation. The fourth page of this pamphlet is especially graphic for its viewer and leaves very little to the imagination (picture 26).¹⁶⁸ Because the pictures clearly position the Duke of Alba on the center stage in a highly undesirable light, the creator of this pamphlet is anonymous.

Dominantly, in the middle of the page, sits the Duke of Alba on a fancy chair. To his right (the viewer's left side of the page), stands a horse-like animal with three human heads. The names above the heads are Loreyne, Guyse, and Granvelle, leaving no room for speculation as to who these heads belong to. All three men were collaborators with the Spanish King in the fight against the Dutch rebels. On the left of the Duke of Alba (the viewer's right side of the page), flies a creature with animal legs and a monk-capped human head. He is holding a device to the ear of the Duke of Alba and wears a rosary. I speculate that this image points to the Catholic church instructing the rules of the inquisition to the Duke of Alba. Further, on the opposite sides

¹⁶⁶ During World War II, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, representative of Hitler in the Netherlands, was often compared to the Duke of Alba.

¹⁶⁷ Anonymous, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, OB 79.012 FM521. The archive of the Rijksmuseum contains two of the four images.

¹⁶⁸ Picture 26: Anonymous, *Ambassadeur van Lucifer*, 05-30-1672, etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 16217.

of Alba stand, respectively, a Spanish soldier and a Dutch farmer, likely symbolizing the Dutch Revolt. By positioning the characters in this manner it becomes obvious to the spectator that the Duke of Alba is in full control of the current, devastating state of affairs in the Low Countries.



Picture 26

At the bottom of the page, under the feet of the Duke of Alba, lie the decapitated bodies of the Count of Egmond and the Count of Horne. Together with Willem of Orange, these two men were chiefly responsible for the first protests against Spanish authority. Already in 1568 these two men were targeted, prosecuted, and executed. Willem of Orange managed to escape to Germany. The text under the image states, "He [Duke of Alba] has taken the lives of Egmond and Horne. This to the dismay of farmers and civilians." Again, the disrespectful way in which the two bodies are positioned shows Alba's dominance over not just these two men, but the Dutch northern provinces in general.

The most striking, and in the context of cannibalism, the most important fragment of the full image is that of the Duke of Alba and the head of Granvelle biting into a leg and an arm of a naked child. The text above the full picture states, "He [Duke of Alba] violently takes the wealth of the country and has hanged and burned much innocent blood." The child in the image seems to represent the northern provinces of the Low Countries. Granvelle and Alba eating the child may not only symbolize the literal bloodshed inflicted upon the people by both men, but also the taking of significant portions of the wealth of the country as well. Although it is doubtful that the creator of the image intended for the viewer to think that the Duke of Alba literally ate children, the chosen symbolism suggests and reflects the idea of cannibalism as a means to devour and thus destroy the perceived enemy for pleasure and gain.



Den AMBASSADEUR VAN LUCIFER.
Ieder werelt gefonden tot een Krygs Transformatie.
Lucifer

Image 27

One hundred years later and a few months before the murder of Johan and Cornelis, in May of 1672, a similar horrific image circulated in the Dutch Republic (picture 27).¹⁶⁹

It is a critical print with regards to the pressing situation in the Netherlands after the invasions of the French army. Large and in the center of the picture stands a terrifying, devilish looking being who is eating men standing on the wall or bridge. In the background, a town is burning. The text below explains that this creature is the ambassador of Lucifer, sent to the world to transform men into soldiers. The text underneath the picture states:

*And Younger Devil hear in short
When the country is short on soldiers
It devours everything in the house
And shits soldiers out.*¹⁷⁰

From the variety of images discussed above it can be concluded that residents of the Dutch Republic and The Hague were likely exposed to imagery surrounding cannibalistic behavior. Many of those pictures were used for their symbolic and propagandistic power. The portrayed acts were always committed by others, not by the Dutch, thereby signifying and categorizing “the Other.”

COLLECTIVE JOY: COMMUNAL FESTIVITIES IN THE HAGUE

¹⁶⁹ Anonymous, *Ambassadeur van Lucifer, Inde Werelt Gesonden tot een Krygs Transformatie*, etching, 05/30/1672, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk Inv. nr. 16217. A discussion in Malcolm Jones, “The Common Weales Canker Wormes, or the Locusts Both of Church, and State: Emblematic Identities in a Late Jacobean Print,” in Michael Hunter Ed., *Printed Images in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Interpretation*, (London: Routledge, 2010), Chapter 10, suggests that similar prints were published in 1621 in German. It follows then that the print was not created for the purpose of propaganda against the French invasion per sé, but that it was reprinted in 1672 to suit the circumstances in the Dutch Republic.

¹⁷⁰*En Joncker Duyvel hoor in 't kort, Wanneer het aan soldaten schort, Soo vreet van alles in 't Huys en Schijtse voor Soldaten uit.*

Life in the seventeenth century surely did not *only* consist of tragic and threatening events or the exposure to the imagery surrounding collectively experienced violent occurrences. Throughout the year several festivals were organized for the inhabitants of the towns and cities in Holland. Even after Protestant rulers had taken away some of the Catholic-oriented feast days, people often continued to participate in the events.¹⁷¹ They were joyful occasions and recurring rituals that the community celebrated together. In The Hague, with its relatively large group of upper-class and royal residents, celebrations pertaining to weddings, births, important political events, and changing leadership were often the occasion for organized festivities in the *Binnenhof* and fireworks above the *Hofvijver*. One of these events, and arguably the most important communal event for royalty and plebs alike, was the annual fair: the *kermis*. Dynamic representations of this event in the seventeenth century show a rare insight into these communal celebrations and offer a stark contrast with the static images that are available of the same community watching the chilling scenes of public punishment. At the same time, these pictures convey information about crowd behavior in The Hague in the seventeenth century and may contribute, at least to some extent, to the explanation of the murder of the DeWitt brothers.

The Hague's fair, famously and nationally known as the *Haegsche Kermis*, traditionally held on the *Buitenhof*, attracted young and old, rich and poor men and women from all over the Dutch Republic and beyond. As Jan van Hoven explains in 1715 in his book *Schilderij van de Haegsche Kermis*, "the *Buitenhof* is filled with all kinds of different folks."¹⁷² From the Middle Ages to 1645 it was held bi-annually, once in the spring and once in the fall. But since 1645,

¹⁷¹ For example, the market for the feast of *Sinterklaas* (Saint Nickolas) continued to be held on December 5.

¹⁷² Jan van Hoven, *Schilderij van de Haegsche Kermis, nevens de Rarekiek van de Amsterdamsche Kermis* (Den Haag: Jacobus van Gazelle, 1715), p. 1.

only the spring fair remained. It was a day to save up for and look forward to with anticipation; it was filled with fun activities to watch, such as acrobatic acts, dressed up animals, exotic curiosities, and usually the performance of a theater group that presented drama or comedy at a time when theaters were a rarity. At the same time, merchants from different trades attempted to make some money and sold their goods or services. For example, the farmers sold their fruits and vegetables; the barber/*chirurgijn* pulled some teeth; the charlatan foretold the future, cast spells, and sold his/her potions; the waffle maker baked waffles; bakers sold their famous *kermiskoek* (special fair cookies); and the taverns were packed with beer-drinking and feasting men and women. Of course, these events also attracted beggars, thieves, and outcasts of all kinds. All in all, a highly diverse crowd mingled during this annual event.

The famous painter, etcher, writer, and publisher Adriaen van de Venne circulated in the higher echelons of The Hague's social realm. He was friends with the eminent Dutch poets Jacob Cats and Christian Huygens and for a living, he painted portraits for noblemen and magistrates of the *Binnenhof*. Nonetheless, his other work is known for its critical and satirical view on the collective carousals of the lower classes. In 1635, he wrote and published *Tafereel van den Belacchende Werelt* (Scene of the Ridiculous World).¹⁷³ In this sardonic story, the reader follows the endeavors of a young male- and female-farmer-duo, Tamme Lubbert and Frijtje Goris, who explore the *Haegsche Kermis* one sunny day in May.

The small poems in the margins, the rhymed storyline, and the provocative images in the book are intended to make the reader laugh about the simplicity of the farmer folks and their excesses, as the very first and last sentence of the introduction explicitly mentions (pictures 28,

¹⁷³ Adriaen van de Venne, *Tafereel van den Belacchende Werelt, en deselfs Geluckige Eeuwe, Goet-Rondt, met Bij-Gevoeghde Raedsel-Spreucken, Aen-Ghewesen in de Boer-Achtige Eenvoudigheyt, op de HAEGSCHE KERMIS, verciert met Konst-rijcke Af-beeldingen* (Den Haag: A. van de Venne, 1635).

29, and 30). However, at the same time, the writer conveys messages of proper moral conduct as well as warnings. He criticizes the flirting behavior of the youth, condemns the acrobats and actors for their frivolous acts, mentions all the possible spells and old-maid's tales surrounding childbirth, ridicules the dressed-up animals as excessive, severely criticizes a long list of people who unjustly make use of the benefits of the poorhouse, and, last but not least, categorizes and labels 42 deviants of society who are conning law-obeying citizens out of their money.

Belacchende Werelt /

5

aen-gewefen
inde vryen omme-gang van de Boersche een-voudigheyt,

BEVATTENDE
De hedendaegsche geluckige Eeuwe, verthoont inde Haegsche
Kermis, op het Buyten-Hoff.



Een buyte-Vryer, genaemt Tamme Lubbert, genegen zijnde om binnen de Hof-felijcken Hage te komen op de vrye handel ende wandel-Marct, krijgt op de wegh een degelijcke Vrijster, daer mede hy den in-tree doet van het Velt, sprekende t'samen op dese wijze:

Tamme Lubbert,

Fijtje Goris, hoort een poosje;
Wel, hoe vaarje keurlijck Troosje,
Segh een reysje: mach ick mé?

A 3

Beginnen is 't Werck,
't Wragen is vry.

Fijtje

Picture 28¹⁷⁴

The book is interesting in this context because as the reader follows the story, it becomes apparent that the behavior of the *Een-voudighe* (simple) farmers is getting increasingly out of control by sundown, after drinking excessively throughout the day.¹⁷⁵ The writer finds this

¹⁷⁴ Adriaen van de Venne, Adriaen van de Venne, *Tafereel van den Belacchende Werelt, en deselfs Geluckige Eeuwe, Goet-Rondt, met Bij-Gevoeghde Raedsele-Spreucken, Aen-Ghewesen in de Boer-Achtige Eenvoudigheyt, op de HAEGSCHE KERMIS, verciert met Konst-rijcke Af-beeldingen* (Den Haag: A. van de Venne, 1635). Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 10530, p.5.

¹⁷⁵ Beer and wine drinking has over 19 references in regular intervals throughout the book. Adriaen van de Venne, *Tafereel van den Belacchende Werelt, en deselfs Geluckige Eeuwe, Goet-Rondt, met Bij-Gevoeghde Raedsele-Spreucken, Aen-Ghewesen in de Boer-Achtige Eenvoudigheyt, op de HAEGSCHE KERMIS, verciert met Konst-*

repulsive and his language is condescending toward those involved in the chaos. Thus, although the day starts out sunny, calm, and pleasant—as the picture on the title page implies—by the end of the book women are fighting over men and the crowd has exploded into a chaotic, drunken brawl. These last two images provide a parallel with the imagery concerning the slaying of the DeWitt brothers.



Picture 29¹⁷⁶

rijcke Af-beeldingen (Den Haag: A. van de Venne, 1635). p. xxviii, xix, 8, 9, 53, 57, 71, 84, 117, 133, 135, 138, 176, 177, 183, 185, 191, 227, 256,

¹⁷⁶ Adriaen van de Venne, etching, Rotterdam: Atlas van Stolk, inv. nr. 10529, p. 241.



Picture 30¹⁷⁷

August 20, 1672, the day of the murders of the DeWitt brothers was, most likely, very similar to a day at the *Haegsche Kermis*. It was a Saturday, the day on which the market next to the *Plaetse* was held. It was summer; most likely a warm day with plenty of people out drinking and eating in the taverns along the market and the *Buitenhof*, especially around the end of the afternoon when Cornelis was released from prison. It was also still light out when the hostile and probably drunk crowd gathered on the *Plaetse*. With the guards not present or not performing their duties, the mob had every chance to go wild.

Despite the identity of the Dutch as nonviolent, tolerant, and victims of gruesome invasions in the early modern period compared to other European nations, I have accumulated

¹⁷⁷ Adriaen van de Venne, p. 257

and exposed material that may conclude otherwise. Notably, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch appear to have been as capable of religiously inspired killings and the display and witnessing of gruesome public punishment as people in their neighboring countries. However, besides some drunken brawls during markets and collective celebrations, the state seems to have had the monopoly on violence, especially in The Hague, with its multiple institutions and several places for the execution of some of the most horrific, yet legal public punishments. Comparable acts of violence, at least in imagery, were committed by the “Other,” not by the residents of The Hague. The goal here is ultimately to understand the forms of violence people were exposed to, not their cause. Although the cumulation of different violent acts in imagery may explain the acceptability of the level of violence exhibited in the slaying of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, it does not clarify how and why The Hague’s population carried out these acts themselves. In order to explain that behavior, it is necessary to dive into the criminal archives, both of the *Hof of Holland* and the The Hague’s municipal criminal record archive, to find out exactly how violent the people of The Hague behaved in day-to-day life.

Chapter 3

The Criminal Justice System in Early Modern The Hague: A Study of Day-to-Day Crime

*As for the furniture of this place:
Great, heavy stocks grace those halls
with ball and chains, and naked walls
fetters and shackles for hands and feet
are there, renegades to shamefully greet
There are dungeons filthy and jet-black
And for a couch a bloody rack.¹⁷⁸*

On the cover of his book *De Moordenaars van Jan de Wit*, Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine labels the murder of Cornelis and Johan DeWitt “the bleakest page of the Golden Age.”¹⁷⁹ It remains one of the most unexplainable and macabre events in Dutch history because it clashes significantly with the image of the “tolerant,” prosperous Dutch during the seventeenth-century Golden Age.¹⁸⁰ Historians generally make two assertions to explain the chilling circumstances that unfolded that Saturday afternoon in August of 1672. The first is that the assumed anger for the public policies that the two statesmen endorsed spiraled out of control because of a stream of antagonistic propaganda. The second points to the failing punitive system. Historians have

¹⁷⁸ D.V. Coornhert, *Comedie van Lief en Leed*, 1567. Written while he was imprisoned at the *Gevangenispoort* in The Hague for his resistance against the Spanish king. Dialogue between the person *Gevanghenisse* (prison) and the *Mensch* (human). Translation of work taken from Henk Bongers, *The Life and Work of Dirck Volkertsoon Coornhert* (Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot, 1978), 43.

¹⁷⁹ Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine, *Moordenaars van Jan de Witt, de Zwartste Bladzijde van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2013), cover page.

¹⁸⁰ For an overview of literature describing Dutch prosperity and tolerance during the seventeenth-century see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches, An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) and Erica Kuijpers, *Migrantenstad, Immigratie en Sociale Verhoudingen in 17e-eeuws Amsterdam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005).

argued that people on the scene took the law into their own hands after the judicial system failed to order Cornelis DeWitt's public execution for treason against the state. Cornelis was arrested after Hendrik Verhoeff, black smith in The Hague, stated to the burgomaster of The Hague that Cornelis DeWitt tried to recruit him to assassinate William III, Prince of Orange, a crime that carried the death penalty.¹⁸¹ However, the judges at the Court of Holland ruled mildly. They sentenced Cornelis to eternal banishment from the Dutch Republic and ordered him to step down from all his political positions. He was free to leave prison after the verdict. This sequence of events, the theory argues, was enough to infuriate the crowd enough to perform the massacre. Both explanations are based on very general assumptions, insufficient proof, and are, at the very least, incomplete. Neither theory clarifies the level of violence used in the aftermath of these murders in an assumed tolerant time.

In this chapter, I will attempt to reconstruct social and criminal activity in The Hague during the first so-called "stadholderless period" from 1650 to 1672. Through a thorough investigation of the criminal court files during this period, specifically the examination and sentencing books, I intend to uncover the actors in the Hague's social and judicial space as well as the mentality of the possible participants in the murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. If it is possible to get a glimpse of the social and criminal construction of the city and variety of people that were present, it will be possible to systematically analyze the motives for their actions. At the same time, by investigating local governmental authority and their methods for executing punishments, it may become possible to identify causes where the judicial system failed in

¹⁸¹ Although William III, Prince of Orange was not stadtholder at the time, the Orange family still had a large club of supporters in the political as well as in the public realm. Assassination of a William III would have been considered a political murder and a crime against the state of Holland.

preventing the events of August 20, 1672. In addition, it is worthwhile to evaluate the city's level of violence used in criminal acts to put the details of the murder into perspective.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN HOLLAND

Pieter Spierenburg has long been acknowledged as the expert among Dutch historians on crime and punishment in Western Europe. His book, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, provides valuable insights into the criminal justice system as well as the rituals, the criminals, and their punishments in Western Europe from its emergence in the Middle Ages into the eighteenth century.¹⁸² However, this research is exceptionally general and broad. It appears to be a seemingly haphazard accumulation of random acts to prove a point. It covers places from the Low Countries to England and from France to Germany. But The Hague—the second largest city in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century—is not part of the investigation at all. Since the two most brutal murders in Dutch history were committed in The Hague, this seems important. In addition, the research spans a very long time period: from the early Middle Ages to the late eighteenth century. Although some aspects of Spierenburg's work may be useful in my work for comparative purposes, my research is conducted not to map The Hague's criminal justice system in the early modern period per se but to reconstruct the social grit of The Hague's population between 1650 and 1672. However, it is necessary to first sketch the framework of the criminal justice system within which the events took place.

¹⁸² Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and Evolution of Repression: from Perindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

A criminal justice system emerged in Western Europe during the early Middle Ages as an interdependent relationship between subjects and feudal lords.¹⁸³ On the one hand, it was a means for feudal lords to have control over the poorer populations and pressure them into “appropriate” social behavior. On the other hand, the population expected that a just judicial system would prevent chaos as well as establish and maintain order in the community. During the same period, under watchful eye of the Catholic church, more and more acts were identified as immoral and deserving of punitive consequences. As a result, a penal system was put in place in most countries of Western Europe, including the Low Countries. Its purpose was twofold: to provide clear social boundaries within society and set examples for others.

The early stages of urban development brought with it a new and complex system of ways in which to organize society. As cities grew larger and became increasingly autonomous and stratified, an urban ruling elite emerged with authorities. Originally, these were noblemen and wealthier merchants. Courts were initially put in place to handle private disputes between citizens of the same or even different cities. However, slowly the power to design and execute laws, including criminal laws, also shifted to the town’s higher class. The same was the case in The Hague.

By 1650, on the local level of the government of The Hague, a *Schout* or *Bailjuw* (Sheriff) and his *Schepenen* (Aldermen) functioned as prosecutors and judges in the criminal justice system. These positions were occupied by the highest members of the *Vaandels* (city guards)—often men who were educated, especially in law. Once an alleged wrongdoer was

¹⁸³ For a full overview of the emergence of a criminal system in Europe, see Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and Evolution of Repression: from Preindustrial metropolis to the European experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-12.

arrested on suspicion of a crime, he or she was first imprisoned and after one or two days (sometimes much longer) brought in front of the *Schout* and *Schepenen* at the city hall behind the Prisingate. After initial examination of the suspect on the so-called “justice days,” the *Schout* would demand a certain punishment to be carried out to which the *Schepenen* could agree or disagree. Failing conviction, there would be a vote on how to proceed. The whole procedure was executed thoroughly for its time, and even petty “criminals” such as beggars, prostitutes, and thieves would receive a trial. All prosecutions were carefully documented in the *Examenboek* (Examination Book), while the punishments were recorded in the *Vonnissenboek* (Sentencing Book). Many terms used in these procedures made it into the judicial system of today’s courts.¹⁸⁴

By the middle of the sixteenth century, a mentality shift occurred in some countries in Western Europe, including the Low Countries.¹⁸⁵ Instead of public, physical punishments of criminal deeds, Dutch magistrates came to believe that criminals could be rehabilitated given the opportunity. According to humanist writer Volckert Dirckz Coornhert in his book *Boeventucht* (“Discipline of Thieves”), petty criminality sprouted from poverty and the excessive consumption of alcohol. Furthermore, the punishments in place for alleged criminals were not sufficient to scare them from reoffending. Their lives were often so desolate that even the punishment of death may have been a welcomed measure. Coornhert wrote the first draft of this book in 1567 while he was incarcerated in the Prisingate of the Hague for his alliance with William I, Prince of Orange against the Spanish King. Although he was kept prisoner in one of the nicer rooms, he was close enough to the actual prison and torture chamber to offer the idea

¹⁸⁴ Terms used in The Hague’s Examination and Sentencing books are identical to terms used today in Dutch courts.

¹⁸⁵ Website Koninklijke Bibliotheek on prisons and punishments, <https://isggeschiedenis.nl/nieuws/rasphuis-voorloper-van-de-moderne-gevangenis>. Accessed, 10/21/2016.

that instead of severe punishment, criminals could benefit society while at the same time be given a chance to develop marketable skills and become productive individuals.

The remedy to cure society of the ills of misbehavior was simply to put delinquents to work in specially designed workplaces. Repeated offenders could be branded or mutilated by splitting the nose, to make them more recognizable to law enforcement, besides the obvious punishment of the inflicted injury. It needs to be noted that the link between the book *Boeventucht* and the establishment of the first *tuchthuysen* (houses of discipline) is not necessarily a direct one. Nonetheless, after publication of the book in 1596, Amsterdam opened the first *tuchthuys* and soon other cities in the province of Holland followed. By 1650, the judicial system of the province of Holland consisted of a complex system of rehabilitation houses that were paid for and governed by rich merchant families. However, The Hague did not have a house of discipline until 1662. These houses of discipline divided criminals along specific demographics to exercise strict control over men, women, and often children in custody. The ideals that inspired this organization were multifaceted. Not only could the stoic, Calvinistic wealthy of the cities feel accomplished in sharing their wealth for the benefit of society, but the system would also provide a workforce to process the increase in production of the Dutch Golden Age, such as wood rasping or fabric spinning. The removal of “unwanted elements” from the street, undoubtedly, also facilitated the appearance of a prosperous, hygienic city epitomized in the painting on the cover of Simon Schama’s book *The Embarrassment of Riches* (picture 1).¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches, An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), cover.

Picture 1: Jan Havicksz Steen, *Adolf en Catharina Croeser, de Burgemeester van Delft en zijn Dochter (A Burgomaster and his Daughter)*, 1655, oil on canvas, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.



Picture 1

This in turn probably attracted people to the city. Although, historians have praised the Dutch for their tolerance and efficient, humane organization of perpetrators during the Golden Age. In reality, mainly wealthy merchants benefitted from this disciplined social framework. Able men and women had to work long hours in those facilities in turn for their food and shelter.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE HAGUE

It is useful to sketch a network of spaces that existed during the period under investigation in The Hague's public sphere (1650-1672). The purpose is to outline a structure that functioned with the intent of monitoring petty thieves, beggars, whores, gamblers, adulterers, and scammers. The result is a discussion of crime in The Hague, its places of operation as well as its means of punishment that I have encountered during my examination of The Hague's municipal criminal court files between 1650 and 1672.

The most important symbol of the Hague's judicial structure must have been the remarkable building of the *Gevangenispoort* (Prisongate), often referred to simply as the *Poort* (Gate).¹⁸⁷ Today, the Prisongate is a museum. Its interior is still the same as when Cornelis DeWitt was held prisoner in August of 1672. Although it is not an imposing building, its location in the city landscape demands respect from its viewers. Situated across the squares of the governmental *Buitenhof* and *Binnenhof* (Outside and Inside Courts), with the gate providing access to other areas of the city, it likely was an unavoidable object in the daily activities of life. The heavy iron rods on the outside of the windows unequivocally signal its importance in the city scene.

¹⁸⁷ Picture 2: The Prisongate in The Hague, website <https://www.gevangenpoort.nl/en/homepage>, accessed 10/16/2016.

The poem at the beginning of this chapter gives a description of the Prisongate in 1567.

Upon entrance into a small enclosure, a visitor to the Prisonsgate is guided along a round, narrow staircase that leads to the main prison cells. These were not individual cubicles as is common today, but three larger (12'x12'), dark, empty spaces with sparsely covered hay on the stone floor. A fabricated hole in the ground in the corner of the room functioned as a toilet, draining to the water of the *Hofvijver* (a pond) next to the buildings of the *Binnenhof*. There was no heating, water, or separation by gender and age. Meals of prisoners consisted of a tasteless porridge and water. As many people as possible would be stowed in these rooms waiting for their day of examination, most likely sharing their space with a few rats as well.

The desolate spaces in which regular prisoners were kept formed a sharp contrast with the luxurious space in which wealthier prisoners, such as writer Volckert Dirckz Coornhert in 1567 and Cornelis DeWitt in 1672, were held captive. This room is large and bright with partially plastered walls and a high ceiling. A fireplace on the left-hand side upon entrance is sufficient to provide plenty of heat in the winter. The four-post bed is made up with a comfortable mattress, goose down pillows, linens, and wool blankets.¹⁸⁸ In addition, the prisoners of this room would be provided with literature and/or writing material to keep boredom at bay. They would also be allowed to receive guests, including their wives and children. A long list of food and drink items described in the court case of Cornelis DeWitt suggests that he enjoyed lavish meals filled with fresh vegetables, fruits, meats, fresh bread, wine, and beer—although at his own expense.¹⁸⁹

The blueprint of the first floor of the Prisonsgate from 1680 shows an examination room, the judges quarters, and a chapel. The chapel was used for prisoners who were sentenced to

¹⁸⁸ Museum The Prisonsgate has kept the room of Cornelis DeWitt as authentic as possible. A down mattress, wool and linen blankets still cover the bed.

¹⁸⁹ Court case Cornelis DeWitt. Municipal Archive The Hague, Hof van Holland archives, inv. # 5296.

death. It is there that they waited for their day of execution and enjoyed their last “gallows” meal.¹⁹⁰ However, in the *Examenboeken* of 1650 through 1672, none of these places were mentioned as being used in criminal cases. During the period under investigation, prisoners were brought from their place of captivity to the city hall to be heard by the *Schout* and *Schepenen*. The basement of the city hall served as a prison as well. City hall—not the Prisonsgate—was the place for the general execution of the criminal justice system.

The *Pijnkelder* (Pain Dungeon, or torture chamber) is located in the Prisonsgate across the main entrance on the first floor. The walls are decked with tiles for the easy removal of bloodstains. In the middle of the room stands the *pley* (pain rack), a torture device. If, after investigation by the *Schout*, an alleged criminal would not confess, he or she could be brought into the pain chamber for a *scherper examen* (sharper examination). Thus, the mere suspicion of a criminal act was enough to undergo this torturous treatment, although it was mostly used for serious crimes, such as stealing, murder, or adultery. The person would be bound to the *pley*, stretched out, and tortured into confession of the crime. Under the *pley*, in the floor, a clever drainage system would collect the blood. It was a gruesome device and an effective way to retrieve further information from the alleged offender. In the court files under investigation, this appears to have been the only device used to force people into confession. Records show that this apparatus was used on average three to four times a year.

According to the court records, The Hague had a variety of correctional facilities. There was the *spinhuis* (spinster house) for women to learn the art of spinning different kinds of fabrics, the *werckhuis/tughuis* (work house/house of discipline), the *weeshuis* (orphanage),

¹⁹⁰ Museum Prisonsgate, website <https://www.gevangenpoort.nl>, accessed 10/16/2016.

and the *dolhuys* (crazy house, or mental illness institution).¹⁹¹ Unlike Amsterdam, where each facility had its specific place in the landscape of the city, The Hague had the spinster house and the house of discipline clumped together in 1662 in an impressive, new building on the Prinsegracht. However, the evidence suggests that there was no spinster house or house of discipline in the Hague before 1662. The very few prisoners that were sent to the *tughthuys* before 1662 as a punitive measure were sent to other cities, such as Amsterdam, Gouda, or Schiedam. Although a separate *rasphuys* (wood rasping house) was a famous feature of the Amsterdam judicial system, there is no equivalent in the Hague's files between 1650 and 1672.

People who had become or were viewed as outcasts of society were sent to the *dolhuys*, either because of their unsocial behavior, their “crazy” ideas, or both. It was not unusual for families to bring an “uncontrollable” family member to this mental institution, although the family did have to provide the cost of living and care. Unlike the rehabilitating function of the work houses, people in this institution did not work for rehabilitation, but were often merely imprisoned against their will, usually for life. Their care depended upon the wealth of the family. A person without family who ended up in the *dolhuys* through arrest and sentencing would receive the absolute minimal amount of care necessary to stay alive.¹⁹²

One last option available to the *Schout* and *Schepenen* was to send a person to the *diaconie* (deaconry). Since 1575, this Protestant goodwill institution provided minimal relief for the poorest people in the city.¹⁹³ Volunteers would hand out bread and small amounts of money for basic survival. Being sent to the deaconry was an unusual merciful sentence, and therefore

¹⁹¹ There is reference to these places throughout the criminal records under the period of investigation (1650-1672). Municipal Archive The Hague, archive # 0351-01 (1650 – 1672).

¹⁹² Museum *Het Dolhuys*, Haarlem, website <https://www.hetdolhuys.nl/het-museum/historie>, accessed 10/16/2016.

¹⁹³ Jurjen Vis, *Diaconie, Vijf Eeuwen Armevoorzorg in Den Haag* (Den Haag: Boom, 2017).

only given if the administrators took severe pity on the accused. For example, Pouwel Cornelisz, an 88-year-old man, was imprisoned for begging—normally a sentence that carried a ban of at least three years. However, the *Schout* sent him to the *diaconie* because he was very old and a “*Haegsche kint*” (a child of The Hague, born in The Hague).¹⁹⁴ Only twice more in the 22 years under investigation did the judges make such an exception: once for a child and once for a pregnant woman.

The underlying motivation for the installment of these well-intended institutions of “rehabilitation” could be that the splendor of the Hague’s public space remained untainted from the social and physical “diseases” that social deviants carried with them. However, it is clear from the actual court cases, the *dolhuys*, the *spinhouse*, and the *tuchthuys* in reality seemed to have served also as temporary stations to collect the overflow of arrested offenders from the Prisonsgate and the city hall basement. This meant that men could be awaiting their trial in the *spinhuys*, which was intended for women only, while “sane” felons had to stay in the *dolhuys* for a few days before appearing in front of the judges in the city hall. The overflow of prisoners was, at times, dire enough to place alleged criminals wherever room was available in any of the judicial spaces in the city.

One other reservoir for prisoners that appears in the court documents, although not until 1655, was the so-called *bodehuysje* (delivery house) located across from the Prisonsgate. In this office, goods, packages, and letters were distributed among transporters for transference to other cities. Thorough investigation into this *bodehuysje* of The Hague unfortunately did not yield any results to help uncover details about this special space. Nonetheless, it is clear from the court

¹⁹⁴ Judicial archives The Hague, 0351-01; inv. # 72 Criminal examinationbook 1650-1654, 02/25/1651

files that it sometimes, although not very often, served as a place where alleged criminals were kept until their court date.¹⁹⁵

PUNISHMENTS

As Pieter Spierenburg points out in his book *The Spectacle of Suffering*, the punishments available to the criminal courts in the early modern period were often physical in nature. Criminals had to be damaged either physically by the infliction of pain or emotionally through the practice of public shaming rituals in which their bodies served as the display of municipal authority. The purpose of these events was dual. First, it allowed society to show contempt for perpetrators of alleged norm-deviating crimes, such as adultery or “*onechtelijk huyshouden*” (having a household while not married). It also served as a lesson for the offender to refrain from recidivism and posed a serious warning for the people watching.

The Hague’s municipal criminal court judges often used a combination of the arsenal of punishments available to them. Each sentencing, except for the act of begging, ended with the specific statement that the crime could not be tolerated in a place of police and justice and had to be corrected. Furthermore, it stated that the alleged criminal had to serve as an example for others by being led to the place where the physical punishment would be administered.

“Aan de kaak stellen” is still a proverb in the Dutch language. Clearly derived from the early modern public punishment *Aan de kaeck zetten*, it means that someone is going to publicly address or investigate a problematic or shameful issue.¹⁹⁶ In 1650 The Hague, the proverb meant that an offender had to stand on display on a wooden raising attached to the wall of city hall with

¹⁹⁵ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial archive 0351-01, inv. # 72.

¹⁹⁶ It is most likely derived from *op de staeck zetten* (to have the head put on a stake), which is explained in chapter 2.

their neck in an iron cast ring.¹⁹⁷ In two cases, the women had to stand *aan de kaeck* on the cemetery.¹⁹⁸ The reason for this specification does not become clear. Criminals had to stand for a short period of time—half an hour to an hour at most—but long enough for the citizens to laugh at, gaze at, throw items at, or even urinate on the perpetrator. Although it did not include a description of the crime, people knew that the offense committed was of a lewd nature, such as adultery. In some cases, when a whipping would be a more suitable punishment, but the criminal would be unfit to undergo a beating due to pregnancy or old age, the magistrates would vote to put the lawbreaker on the *kaeck* with the whipping rods in their hands. That way it was clear to the public that they deserved much worse.

The judges used more intense measures of inflicting shame on alleged criminals when the crimes involved morally corrupt behavior, such as cheating during a card game, prostitution, or fraud. In these cases, the offender had to carry an item of shame through the most “notable streets” of The Hague. This tour started at the city hall, proceeded through the *Schoolstraat*, the *Venestraat*, and the *Vlaminghstraat*, and ended at the general marketplace (*Markt*). It made a perfect square through the middle of town. The method proved efficient in that it attracted plenty of viewers along the path and, thus, the punishment of humiliation was sufficiently covered. Prostitutes in The Hague, for example, especially those who reoffended, were sometimes condemned to “carry the [heavy] stone” through the streets of The Hague. The court cases refer to it as *de Haegsche steen dragen* (to carry the stone of The Hague), which suggests that each town used a special stone for this purpose to add symbolism to the penalty. In addition, the penalty was an intense physical task, not easy to accomplish for the weaker prisoners.

¹⁹⁷ http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/stoe002nede01_01/stoe002nede01_01_1050.php

¹⁹⁸ Municipal archives The Hague; Judicial archives 0351, inv. 72, 08/1653 and 04/1656.

Adding a symbol of shame to the reprimand emphasized the nature of the crime. The *houten schaamhuyck* (wooden cone of shame), for example, was a heavy wooden semi-pointed hat with carvings of animals, such as snakes or frogs. In the 22 years under investigation, this punishment was given only one time. In January 1652, Gerrit Jansz from the country of Luyck, soldier for the Estates of Holland, was an accomplice to the theft of ten chickens from a house in *Loosduinen*, a small town next to The Hague. As a punishment, he had to wear the wooden hat of shame with carved out illustrations of chickens through the notable streets of The Hague while holding his hands on his belly where the chickens had ended up. He was also banned from the city for three years.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, in two fraud cases, one in which the person had written counterfeited obligations and another in which a person falsified the testament of his mother-in-law, the scammers had to walk around The Hague with the forged documents around their necks.²⁰⁰ Similarly, a notorious swindler who used a fake card game had to show himself in public with the specific card game around his neck.²⁰¹ These added elements of embarrassment in the sentencings were crucial to the effectiveness of the punishment, not only for the offender but also for the community. The spectators could perhaps assume moral superiority while gazing at the shameful culprits of society.

Whipping with a *roede* (rod made of tree branches or thin leather belts) on the bare backs of felons remained a go-to measure for petty thieves and repeat offenders. The judicial system provided several levels and methods of whipping, correlating intensity to the severity of the crime. The lowest level consisted of watching a whipping of another person, preferably a loved

¹⁹⁹ Municipal archive of The Hague, Judicial archives 0351, inv. # 103, 03/04/1652.

²⁰⁰ *Idem*, inv. # 103, 03/1667 and 02/1668.

²⁰¹ *Idem*, inv. # 103, 06/1658.

one. For example, in cases where a man and a woman had committed a robbery together, but the wife was pregnant and thus unfit for a beating, she had to watch the flogging of her husband. Once or twice the accomplice had to view the whipping with rods in their hands to add insult to injury. In two specific cases concerning teenage boys stealing apples, the thieves had to whip each other while the parents were watching.²⁰² The second stage was the *heimlijcke* or *binnen camers* (in secret or behind closed doors) whipping. This was unpleasant, no doubt, but not nearly as humiliating as the public variation.

Public whipping, the third stage, was reserved for the more notorious reoffenders. It was done at the place of public execution, the *Plaetse* (the same spot where the DeWitt brothers were hanged). The accused were fastened to the pole. Sometimes, items referring to the crime were attached to the pole above the criminal's head. In the case of the public whipping of Willem Bontje, who was the instigator in the chicken theft, several dead chickens were nailed to the pole.²⁰³ In serious cases, the offenders were symbolically warned that their next recidivism would result in hanging "*tot de doot erop volght*" (till death sets in) by whipping them with the hanging rope around their neck. If the warning really needed to be heeded, the executioner would first swing his sword across the blindfolded criminal's back and neck suggesting symbolic beheading. In these cases, criminals were also branded with the *Haegsche* iron. Public floggings, especially the variations with the sword and the rope, were regarded as the most severe measures against a lawbreaker—one step away from the death penalty. In addition to physical pain, the person would also have to endure public exhibition and most likely the ridicule of the town at their most vulnerable moment. In a few cases, when the *Schout* ordered a public whipping, the

²⁰² Municipal archives, Judicial archives,, inv. # 103, 05/1654 and 05/1655.

²⁰³ Municipal archives, Judicial archive 0351, inv. # 103, 02/1652.

Schepenen agreed that this punishment would be too harsh. In such cases, the sentence was reduced to a secret beating. Banishment from the city usually followed castigation. Investigation to uncover the populace's reactions to these public events yielded no result.

In general, being detained in jail was a temporary condition while a person awaited trial and not a verdict in itself. However, one punishment deviated from this. The courts could decide to put somebody on water and bread for several weeks to a few months depending on the offense, either in the Prisongate or the *tughthuys/spinhuys*. This meant spending time in the designated facility while only being provided with the absolute minimum to stay alive: once daily, small amounts of bread and water.²⁰⁴ Thus, the physical punishment consisted of hunger pangs and thirst; not a good way to spend time, but less invasive than the public penalty variants available to the executioners of the law. In addition, in case of less serious crimes, the penalty could be bought off with a substantial fine. Lastly, banning a petty thief, prostitute, beggar, adulterer, gambler, or charlatan from The Hague, its jurisdiction, or even the province of Holland for a period of three years to life appears to have been the most common punishment.

In the remainder of this chapter, the workings of the different stages of punishments becomes clearer. At this point, it suffices to have identified the various levels used in the courts during the time period under investigation. It is possible that other punitive measures were used in different times and in different courts of The Hague or other cities in the Dutch Republic. However, my topic of interest is not the criminal justice system *an sich*, but rather a reconstruction of the social atmosphere in The Hague from 1650 to 1672 to explain the fate of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

²⁰⁴ It is worth noticing that most diets in the early modern period consisted of bread. The punishment was the small amount received per day

METHODS OF ANALYSING MUNICIPAL COURT CASES

To arrive at an analysis of the social analysis of people that appear in the 2,174 court cases of The Hague between 1650 and 1672, I constructed comprehensive tables that separates gender, age, accused crime, received punishment, and place of origin of the perpetrators covered in the files. For this I have used the examination books to specify the crimes and the sentencing books to outline the punishments. Combined they make up 2,174 complete and detailed cases. However, to avoid getting lost in too many intricacies of individual cases and observe larger trends, it was necessary to categorize the crimes in a more general way.

The categories are constructed for each month and each year between 1650 and 1672 to maintain some detail, if necessary. That way, trends can be tracked, and comparisons can be made over smaller or larger amounts of time depending on the subject of investigation. The gender category is straightforward. The age category is made to facilitate a quick differentiation between people in various stages of life: children and young adults (0-19), adults (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59), and seniors (60+). It is important to analyze age along these lines for purposes of this investigation. A group of healthy, young men filled with testosterone will display different behavior from sickly, older women, for instance. It also matters how many able bodies appeared in the judicial system, because it shines a light on the people who roamed the streets of The Hague and a possible reason for their misfortune. The last age classification is “of unknown age,” because either the magistrates would not record age or, in some cases, people did not know their age.

The third category on the chart consists of the alleged crimes that were recorded. Some classifications are easier to clarify than others, such as “begging” and “theft.” However, crimes that have a similar underpinning are grouped together to simplify the numbers. For example, all

violent acts against a person are grouped under “assault.” Similarly, under “vandalism” is clustered every act that involves damage to property, but no personal injuries. These crimes often consisted of “*het inschmeyten van glaesen*” (smashing out windows) after a drunken brawl. Lastly, the classification “other,” which as the name suggests, pertains to any illegal act for which people could have been arrested. This includes adultery, “*t vleeschelijcke converseren*” (literally “physical conversation,” but refers to sexual relations) fornication, gambling, and swindling to mention the most common, but also the use of foul language or causing an accident. Because it is possible that the same person had committed more than one crime—for instance, assault and vandalism often went hand in hand—the crimes are recorded separately. This means that the number of crimes is higher than the number of court cases filed.

Authorities in The Hague had several judicial measures to assert their power to control the social space in the city. Seven can be identified from the criminal court files. First, and almost always used initially, is the ban from the city and surrounding areas. Certain punishments are grouped because they serve the same purpose of punishment. For example, physical punishments such as “carrying the stone,” “*aan de kaeck setten*,” and “wearing the wooden hat” all serve the purpose of public shaming. Similarly, sentences that functioned to rehabilitate perpetrators, such as being sentenced to the *tughthuys* or the *spinhuys*, are grouped together as well. In addition, two castigations that are sufficiently different to justify their own column are whipping (either publicly or secretly) and being put on “water and bread.” Although both are intended to cause physical and emotional discomfort, whipping appears to have been reserved for more serious crimes.

The remaining two are “torture” and “other.” Torture refers to the mid-trial measure of eliciting a confession by stretching people on the rack. It is a physical and emotional control

mechanism intended to either inflict bodily harm on the criminal or threaten the individual with injury—and therefore it is an extraordinary measure of power. Lastly, the classification “other” refers to any remaining measure taken against an arrestee. Some people were found innocent and were released, while others disappeared from the files without a definite penalty. As explained in the section on crimes, perpetrators could be sentenced to more than one punishment. It was not unusual, for example, to spend fourteen days on water and bread in prison only to be banned upon release. As a result, the category “punishment” also computes to more punishments than there are cases.

These first four main categories—gender, age, crime, and punishment—serve to gain some insight into the workings of the judicial system. It will provide an answer as to who was sent where and for which crime. Equally interesting is the question: where did these people come from? And who were these individuals that ended up in the dungeons and dark prison spaces? Fortunately, the magistrates of the municipal court kept records of the places of origin of the people that stood before them. Of course, some of the people wandering around were born in The Hague. Therefore, The Hague is the first place of origin. Next is the Province of Holland. If people fell on hard times, they would most likely travel to the nearest city to find their fortune. Third are residents of the Dutch Republic. Because the Republic at that time was limited to the seven northern provinces, people coming from Brabant and Limburg in the south, provinces that are currently part of the Netherlands, were considered “coming from abroad.” This term applies to everybody who was born outside of the Dutch Republic.

THE TALE OF RIGHTEOUS CITIZENS?

Graphic Dutch pamphlets of the early 1600s reveal the ways in which stadtholder Maurice I, Prince of Orange, son of William I of Orange, punished religious deviants or traitors

of Holland in 1623. He had them quartered during a public spectacle on The Hague's place of execution. Other media show dead bodies hanging on the gallows or sitting, decapitated, on the wheel with their heads on a stick. In these portrayals of state power, a large audience is watching the spectacle. These images invoke the impression that this type of punishment occurred on a systematic basis and was, therefore, a consistent part of every city's public life and the anticipation of the people suggests that public punishment served as a social event that included and their magistrates. However, as Pieter Spierenburg concludes from his research conducted in Amsterdam, by 1650 this type of severe physical disfigurement and gory demonstration of authority was generally terminated. In fact, between 1650 and 1672, when Johan DeWitt ruled the province of Holland and Westfriesland, the Hague's population only witnessed two cases of this type of physical mutilation.²⁰⁵

In the Spring of 1654, Dorothea Hendricx, a single, 45-year-old woman came to The Hague from *Groningen*, the most northern part of the Seven Provinces, and was probably looking for a relief from poverty.²⁰⁶ Earlier, in 1642, she had gone to Rotterdam where she was soon arrested for theft. As punishment, she was put on the *kaeck* and banned from the city. Then she went to *Leiden* but was quickly imprisoned there as well. Upon her release, she moved to Amsterdam, only to be imprisoned again for stealing and *quaat leven* (immoral living, most likely prostitution). This time the magistrates of Amsterdam sentenced her to public whipping. But all these efforts from the authorities to set Dorothea straight had not worked, and in April 1654 she was arrested in The Hague for stealing some fabric and lace. The sheriff, mister

²⁰⁵ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 111.

²⁰⁶ Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Examination book, inv.# 102, 04/30/1654.

Quintijn, specifically mentioned in his demand that this woman had failed to be corrected, even after several attempts, and was therefore to be punished by public whipping. Her right ear was to be cut off and nailed to the whipping pole above her head. She was also banned from Holland for 25 years. The punishment had caused so much injury that she was unconscious for three days and a doctor had to come to stop the bleeding of the right side of her head. However, this event occurred twenty years before the murder of Johan and Cornelis. It is therefore highly unlikely that this bloody event served as an excuse for the multiple and severe mutilations that the brothers endured in their final hours.

In the twenty-two years under investigation, only one time did the *Schout* and *schepenen* literally state that the corporal punishment of a man should be turned into a public spectacle in order to add severe shame to injury. On December 28, 1669, Jacob van Biest had been drinking at the house of Willem, a nail maker. Aeltje, Willem's wife, returned home between eleven and twelve o'clock at night from an evening with friends and told Jacob to go home. Jacob refused this request, so Aeltje decided to take him by the arm and push him out the door. This worked and after some polite words it appeared that Jacob had left. However, Jacob returned with a knife and stabbed Aeltje in the back. She died 15 minutes later.²⁰⁷

When Jacob stood trial on March 29, 1670, the sheriff and his aldermen were appalled by this display of violent aggression towards an innocent woman in her own home. The punishment for this murder was the death penalty by sword on the place of execution, a common penalty for murder. In addition, however, prior to the execution, while standing on the scaffold, Jacob's right hand was to be cut off. After the execution, as was specifically stated, the body would be carried to the place outside of The Hague where it was normal to execute punishments. There, the body

²⁰⁷ Municipal archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Sentencing books, Inv. # 104, 03/29/1670.

was to be placed on a wheel and the head on a *staeck* (pole) for the public to watch while nature deteriorated the remains. Although Jacob's tragic end may evoke disgust, it in no way compares to the way in which Johan and Cornelis DeWitt were eventually slaughtered. Furthermore, such severe punitive measures of the municipal authorities only happened one time in the twenty-two years before the murder of the DeWitts. That makes such a bloody spectacle an exception instead of a common occurrence.

The use of penalized dead bodies as an exemplary display on the gallows outside of The Hague can be compared to the hanged, tormented bodies of Johan and Cornelis on the *Plaetse*. However, there is no case in the archives in which the remains of executed criminals were left at the *Plaetse* to be viewed. The hanging of villains at the gallows also did not ensue regularly every week, month, or even year. In fact, only four cases of hanging were recorded between 1650 and 1672. Of those four cases, three specifically mention that the bodies would serve as a public display on the outskirts of the city to ensure that people, upon entrance, would realize that The Hague was a place of police and justice where certain crimes would not go unpunished. In addition, the choice for a hanging sentence seemed to have been fairly random and given under different circumstances. I discuss these four cases in detail below.

Suicide was considered a punishable crime. On July 12, 1652, Gerrit Pietersz had hanged himself on one of the blades of the large windmill outside of the city.²⁰⁸ The prosecutor insisted that this crime was as unlawful as a homicide. He demanded that the dead body of Gerrit be placed on a dog carriage and hauled through the streets of the city to the gallows where it was hanged "between heaven and earth" for everybody to see. In this case, disgracing of the body seems to have been the most significant purpose of this specific castigation. One other case of

²⁰⁸ Municipal Archves The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, Examination book, inv. # 72, 07/12/1652

suicide is recorded in the files, but it does not reappear in the trial books or the sentencing books, so it is impossible to trace what punishment, if any, was given.²⁰⁹

The other case of public hanging in which the element of shame seemed especially important was in the case of Claes Claesz. Claes was a notorious thief who had been causing mayhem all over the province of Holland. In May of 1657, he was arrested in The Hague after he had been accused of the theft of golden rings and silverwork, vandalism, and a slew of public violence incidences. Earlier, he had been imprisoned, branded, publicly whipped, and banned from the village of Maerssenbroeck in Holland. After he was tortured by the *scherprechter* (executioner) of The Hague in the torture chamber of the Prisongate, he confessed to all the crimes he was accused of. As a result, on June 17, 1657, he was sentenced to the gallows to be hanged by a rope around his neck until death.²¹⁰ Furthermore, it was particularly emphasized that his body would be left to the elements until rotten.

Very similar to the fate of Claes Claesz is the end of Pieter Borisz, also known as Piet from Emmerick—only 29 years old and already a *befaamd* (famous) criminal in the Province of Holland. He was captured by The Hague's city guard on January 29, 1663, after a trail of burglaries in his name. This was not the first time Pieter had been arrested. He had appeared before the courts of the cities of Dort, Leiden, Gouda, and even Utrecht. He was imprisoned in houses of discipline, branded, and publicly whipped with the rope around his neck several times, but nothing seemed to have worked. Instead his felonious behavior had gone from bad to worse over the course of ten years. Although he denied all the allegations at first, a torture session led

²⁰⁹ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Autopsy book, Inv.# 106, 06/02/1655.

²¹⁰ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Sentencing book, inv.# 104, 06/17/1657.

him to confess all his suspected wrongdoings. Consequently, on February 23, 1663, the sheriff and aldermen agreed that he was to be punished by hanging on the gallows after which his remains would stay there for the birds and air to devour.²¹¹

Exemplary exhibition of the dead corpse was not always part of the hanging verdict. Jannes Griffyt from England was a 20-year-old imposter and con artist who had come to The Hague to swindle poor people and the church out of money. His trial record states that he pretended to be very much in need of help even though he was perfectly able to take care of himself.²¹² Fraud, in any form, was heavily punished by the courts, and his trial ended in the corporal sentence of death by hanging at the gallows. However, instead of adding the phrase that the body should be left to the elements, it is specifically mentioned that Jannes was to be buried immediately upon his expiration.²¹³ This was unusual, yet no reason is given for this specific addition. In conclusion, however, it becomes clear that the exposure of dead bodies did happen on occasion. If imitation of regular punitive procedures motivated the murder on Johan and Cornelis, the killers would have dragged the bodies to the gallows rather than left them hanging in the middle of The Hague.

Several other punishments were performed in public on the scaffold of the *Plaetse*. The most common was public flogging. In one case the items of the crime were nailed to the whipping pole.²¹⁴ On February 22, 1652, 31-year-old Willem Boety from Germany had stolen chickens and doves from a local farmer. He was sentenced to public whipping with the rope

²¹¹ Municipal Archives of The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Sentencing book, inv. # 106, 02/23/1663.

²¹² Municipal Archives of The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Criminal trial register, inv. # 73, 03/10/1653.

²¹³ Municipal Archives of The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, Sentencing book, inv. # 105, 03/1653.

²¹⁴ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv. # 104, 02/22/1652.

around his neck and branding. In addition, the stolen chickens and doves were to be nailed above his head while being whipped, so that his crime and the reason for his punishment would be clear to the audience. No other similar cases have been recorded.

A total of sixty-two public whippings took place between 1650 and 1672 (an average of 2.9% of all cases).²¹⁵ Of these, sixteen were performed with the symbolic rope around the neck to serve as a final warning. In some instances, branding with the *Haegsche ijzer* (a branding iron with the symbolic stork of The Hague) was part of the public lashing ritual. It was reserved for the most notorious and reoffending thieves and prostitutes. In the twenty-two years before the DeWitt murders, branding was performed eighteen times—less than once a year on average (1% of all cases).²¹⁶

Public decapitations with the sword were rare but important occurrences. A verdict of this type was either set aside for convicts who had been arrested for attempted murder or for felons who had committed a homicide. The courts put much effort into uncovering the complete story about a physically violent crime, and the accused had several chances (with the help of a court-appointed attorney) to defend themselves against the indictments. On July 13, 1667, Jacob Leendertsz, shoe polisher in The Hague, murdered Jan van Berg after a drunken brawl. After three intense court hearings with witnesses, the judges decided that he had acted in self-defense

²¹⁵ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv.# 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 4 in 02/1651, 1 in 03/1651, 1 in 05/1651, 2 in 11/1652, 3 in 08/1653, 1 in 04/1654, 1 in 11/1654, 1 in 10/1654, 1 in 05/1655, 7 in 08/1655, 1 in 02/1656, 2 in 08/1656, 1 in 04/1657, 3 in 06/1657, 1 in 07/1659, 1 in 04/1659, 1 in 01/1669, 4 in 04/1660, 1 in 09/1661, 2 in 05/1662, 1 in 01/1663, 1 in 05/1662, 5 in 06/1664, 1 in 10/1664, 1 in 09/1664, 1 in 03/1665, 1 in 05/1666, 1 in 07/1666, 3 in 05/1667, 4 in 02/1668, 1 in 07/1671, and 2 in 09/1671.

²¹⁶ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv. # 103, 104, 105, 106, 2 in 02/1651, 2 in 02/1652, 1 in 07/1653, 1 in 08/1653, 1 in 11/1654, 1 in 12/1654, 1 in 05/1655, 2 in 08/1656, 1 in 04/1657, 1 in 07/1659, 1 in 09/1661, 1 in 03/1665, 3 in 02/1668, and 1 in 07/1671.

and he was released.²¹⁷ On the other hand, when Adam van Breda killed Lucas van Hoorn on July 30, 1664, by stabbing him in the neck from behind, seven witnesses spoke in favor of Lucas. Consequently, Adam was sentenced to public decapitation.²¹⁸

The judicial courts of The Hague rarely made use of the verdicts “*zwaerde over neck en hooff*” (swinging sword over neck and head as a warning) or “*gestraft te worden met de zwaerde tot de doot erop volght*” (decapitation). Between 1650 and 1672, as few as seven people were threatened with decapitation (0.32% of all cases) while six convicts were actually beheaded on the scaffold (0.27% of all cases).²¹⁹ However, these penalties seem not to have been designed to turn into a bloody spectacle for public entertainment. The neck was sliced with one quick blow to the neck (although sometimes several blows were necessary). The records show that the courts of The Hague have never given or executed a verdict resembling the gravity and sequence of the massacres of Johan and Cornelis. The argument that these types of punishments were common in the early modern period is therefore not valid for The Hague.

Between 1650 and 1672, the courts of The Hague handled 2,174 criminal cases. Of these, only 101 events were played out in the public arena one way or another. In comparison, Amsterdam had an estimated 8660 criminal cases (overall population of 200,000 people) and 554 carried a publicly executed verdict.²²⁰ Therefore, not only were people in Amsterdam over five

²¹⁷ Municipal Archives, Judicial Archives 0351, inv.# 106, July 1667.

²¹⁸ Municipal Archives, Judicial Archives 0351, inv.#105, July 30, 1664.

²¹⁹ Municipal Archives, Judicial Archive 0351, inv.# 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, Sword over neck and head, 1 in 12/1650, 2 in 11/1652, 2 in 3/1670, 1 in 2/1669, and 1 in 10/1666. Decapitation, 1 in 07/1664, 1 in 1667, 3 in 03/1670, and 1 in 10/1670.

²²⁰ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: from a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 113.

times more exposed to public chastisements of its criminals, but the municipal courts of The Hague were also more reserved when it came to corporal punishments.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the murders of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt did not evolve the way they did because people usurped the power and authority of the local courts out of discontentment with Cornelis' verdict. In fact, in the 22 years prior to the slaying of the brothers, the courts of The Hague had been relatively mild in their verdicts. Bloody spectacles, the few that occurred, do not seem to have been used to satisfy the public's need for justice. What becomes clear is that the sheriff and aldermen controlled the city as a place of justice, in which criminal behavior did not go unpunished. The judges stated repeatedly that certain felons should serve as an example to maintain order. Based on the records, it appears to me that shame was considered a harsher punishment, even after death. The acts performed on the bodies of Johan and Cornelis and the exposure of their mutilated corpses seem to fall into this category. Nonetheless, the structured, well-mannered, and sophisticated court system of The Hague does not compare in any way to the chaos that transpired on August 20, 1672. Usurpation of judicial power as an argument does not seem to explain the extent of the violence either. The courts of The Hague had not exposed their inhabitants to similar acts.

VIOLENT CRIMES IN THE CITY

Not all violent crimes committed in The Hague between 1650 and 1672 were recorded in the trial and sentencing books. Murders and serious assaults did occur in The Hague like anywhere else, but the perpetrator(s) was/were not always caught. A glimpse of these cases appears in the autopsy records of The Hague. Autopsies of corpses were performed by the city doctor and the *chirurgijn* (surgeon). If murder was suspected, the sheriff and aldermen (and sometimes a few city guards as well) would attend the autopsy. The autopsy reports of the

victims are factual and consist often only of a medical description of the damage found on the victim with no details of the crime. Therefore, the motivation or reasoning for the crime does not always become clear. In some instances, the cases of the autopsy files, the trial book, and the sentencing book can be combined to reconstruct a complete case. If not, the autopsy reports alone can at least reveal the ways in which the victims were killed and what caused their death.

Between April 22, 1650, and April 24, 1671, The Hague witnessed twenty-eight murders, twenty-four ((85.7%) of which were stabbings with a sword.²²¹ Although dueling was strictly prohibited, the majority of the deadly assaults seem to have occurred between young men. For example, on July 30, 1667, a dead soldier named Floris Arentsz van Berenhoeck was brought into the autopsy chamber. His neck was sliced from beneath his chin into his thorax. He had died immediately. Several witnesses pointed to Jan Lodij, also a soldier, as responsible. However, Jan had left the city. The sentencing book makes a reference to this case and states that Jan would be decapitated the moment he entered The Hague again.²²² On April 24, 1671, two young male bodies were brought into the autopsy chamber: 20-year-old Pieter Jansz and 30-year-old Hugo van Esch. Both men were employed as riders in the company of the Lord of Noortwijck, and both bodies had several deep wounds. Clearly, these two men had killed each other in a sword fight. Again, in January of 1668, Gijbert the Cocq, a rider, had been drinking with his fellow riders in a tavern in Waeldorp. During the night a verbal fight broke out that quickly escalated into a physical match. Eventually Gijbert called for a duel with Adriaen in which the latter died. Gijbert was sentenced to death, although he was on the run.²²³

²²¹ Municipal Archives, Judicial Archives 0351, Autopsy records, inv. # 116, appendix 3.

²²² Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, inv.# 116, 06/03/1667 and inv. # 106, 07/30/1667.

²²³ Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Records, inv. # 116, 01/1668.

Besides members of the army, the city guards, and other officials, the majority of men carried a sword as part of their dress. That made a visit to the tavern at times especially dangerous, because several crimes were committed at night during drunken brawls. Although most victims had only one or two stab wounds, a lot of damage could be done to vital organs with one well-aimed swing. Death was almost always instant. If the initial piercing did not kill them, sometimes infection did. Jacob Getingrij received a minor injury from a sword in the middle of April of 1668. He was immediately brought to the doctor who provided necessary medical care. Fortunately, the wounds were not fatal. Nonetheless, by May 28, 1668, he ended up on the autopsy table of the surgeon. Incurable infections of the first wound eventually led to his death.²²⁴

Two women became the victims of a violent crime. On October 2, 1664, Machtelt de Mist, housewife of Hendrick Berrings, was found strangled to death in her home.²²⁵ This murder remained a mystery, and the killer was never identified. The second was Magdalena van Candris, only 22 years of age. She was found in the basement of her home with a multitude of injuries all over her body. The surgeon claimed that she was so severely attacked that no part of her body seemed to have been spared. He adds that she must have died instantly.²²⁶ Her murderer was also never captured.

In only three cases did the doctor and surgeon make the specification that the death of those persons were likely motivated personal murders rather than incidental fights with strangers or accidents. On July 31, 1662, the surgeon and doctor were called to the tavern *'t Lammeken*

²²⁴ Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, inv. # 116, 05/28/1668.

²²⁵ Ibid., inv. # 116, 10/02/1664.

²²⁶ Ibid., inv. # 116, 01/20/1668.

Groen (the Green Lamb). Dirck, the owner (no last name provided), lay dead in the hallway with several severe injuries to his body. Although the examiners had no doubt that this was an intended homicide based on the location of the body and the wounds, it did not become clear why Dirck was killed. Similarly, Pieter La Brille, cook of Prins Willem of Nassau, was found dead on the morning of July 30, 1665. He lay on the stone kitchen floor of a tavern at *het Spuy* (famous passage street of The Hague). The doctor concluded that he must have been there all night. He had several stab wounds in his back and legs. This meant that he could not have defended himself and that the murder was either intentional, aimed at him specifically, or a by-product of a cowardly act of robbery. In the same way, doctor Gerrit Saetman was killed in the middle of the street. The surgeon described his death as the most brutal of murders. No witnesses came forward and the case went unsolved.

The homicide numbers do not provide much insight into the killings of the DeWitt brothers. It appears that violent crime was always present, but not exceptional for the time. In other words, the people of The Hague in the second half of the seventeenth century were not any *more* or *less* ferocious than in other places in Holland. Furthermore, no criminal case in the archives under investigation compares remotely to the ways in which the brothers were slain. Nonetheless, what does stand out and may have added to the events that ensued on August 20, 1672, is the fact that in 85.7% of the murder cases, the weapons used—a knife or a sword—were identical to those used in the mutilation of the corpses of the DeWitts. In addition, it appears as if young men were quick to use their swords when offended or challenged.

OBSERVATIONS OF GENERAL CRIME NUMBERS AND TRENDS

Instead of examining individual cases to draw conclusions for the slaying of Johan and Cornelis, I think it is useful to investigate general trends over the twenty-two years prior to the

murders. It is possible that the judicial situation as well as the actors within this framework will reveal a trend in the system that might clarify some of the ambiguity surrounding the activities of the crowd present on the *Plaetse* on August 20, 1672. This study will show that the municipal courts of The Hague were not just mild when it came to a politically important person such as Cornelis DeWitt, but that their methods of discipline, or lack thereof, were too lenient overall. The use of percentages is useful when calculating trends because the number of crimes registered varied per year: from a mere 16 crimes in the first seven months of 1672 to 195 crimes in 1669, averaging 94.5 cases per year. Percentages generalize these absolute numbers to spot the trends of several signifiers, such as gender, crime, physical punishment, and place of origin.

One conclusion retrieved from the investigation of the 2,174 court cases is that begging was the most frequent “crime.” Of the 2,174 cases, 51.6% were begging-related. Usually, large groups of beggars were captured at once and imprisoned together but had to appear before the Sheriff and Aldermen individually. Precise records were kept of these people. This high number of beggars within the judicial system can easily be explained. First, begging was prohibited in an important placate that was spread all over The Hague. Second, city guards could earn three nickels for each beggar they brought in. Furthermore, there was a significant increase in beggars between 1650 and 1670. The percentage of beggars went from 10.2% in 1650 to 58.5% of total crimes just one year later, reaching significant peaks in 1660 (77.3%), 1668 (70.8%), 1669 (81%), and 1670 (71.1%). Part of this increase can be explained by the influx of people from outside of the Dutch Republic to The Hague after 1650.²²⁷

²²⁷ Records on famine in Early Modern Europe do not explain this influx of foreigners. Besides a wave of famine in Ireland during the Cromwellian Conquests (1649-1653), no significant famines have been reported. Furthermore, Between the Thirty-Year War (1618-1648) and before the Invasions of France (1670), Europe had no significant wars that might explain the possibility of people seeking refuge in The Hague. The two wars between Holland and England (1652-1654 and 1665-1667) were mainly fought out on sea and probably had little effect on daily life in each country.

The end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 as well as the newly established government of The Hague in 1650 created circumstances that inspired people from around Europe to settle in The Hague. The Republic of the Seven Provinces had given aid to the Swedish during the Thirty Years' War, but the country had not been an active player in the turbulence of war events. The Hague was, therefore, stable and prosperous in the first decades of DeWitt's reign. Exact numbers are impossible to retrieve, but the criminal records show that women and men of all ages came from as far away as Brazil, although most came from Germany, France, Belgium, England, and Ireland. When these immigrants failed to support themselves, they had to revert to crime or begging. No other relief was provided for these folks. During the extreme harsh winter months in 1655, 1656, 1669, and 1670, their circumstances must have been dire.²²⁸

Over the years between 1650 and 1672, an average of 49.6% of all arrestees were foreign, with increases to 70.7% in 1658 and 65.9% in 1670. Some of these immigrants, especially young girls, were lured to The Hague under false pretenses. Two famous female criminals solicited young English girls to come to The Hague for marriage proposals. Of course, as soon as the girls arrived, they were put to work as prostitutes in the tavern *De Malle Molen*— according to a statement from the Sherrif “one of the most notorious whorehouses in the region.” Every now and then, and especially before 1662, this alleged tavern was raided and the girls were brought in for questioning. At times, as many as ten girls were brought in at once, increasing the overall percentage for that year. For example, in August of 1662, prostitution made up 25% of all recorded crimes. After that year, the arrest for prostitution decreased from 12.4% in 1663 to zero in the last three years before 1672. It is doubtful that the “oldest profession in the world” no

²²⁸ James A. Marusek, *A Chronological Listing of Early Weather Events*, <https://wattsupwiththat.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/weatherl.pdf>, p.168

longer existed after 1669. Instead, it is possible that the members of the judicial system of The Hague were preoccupied with more important matters than female trafficking and girls selling their bodies to survive, such as emerging political conflicts and threats of a French invasion.

The overall numbers show that men and women appeared in almost similar quantities before the courts between 1650 and 1672. Some years, such as 1652, 1670, and 1672, are clearly overrepresented by men (respectively 72.1% and 79.1%). In these years, small groups of six to seven men were arrested for assault and/ or vandalism, which increases the overall percentage significantly when the overall numbers are low already. Although, on average, the male-to-female ratio is 55.9% to 44.1%, the percentages for males increased with 30.4% within the years prior to the murders of Johan and Cornelis: from 50.6% in 1671 to 81% in 1672. In addition, 68.8% of all convicts were between the ages of 0-49. These percentages suggest that plenty of criminal young men roamed the city in the months leading up to August 20, 1672.

No-one was arrested for a violent crime from 1671 through the first seven months of August of 1672. One explanation for this is that the courts of The Hague only processed sixteen criminal cases total in the months leading up to the murder of Johan and Cornelis, half of which consisted of the prosecution of beggars. Even when taking into consideration the difference between calculated months (twelve months for other years and only seven months in 1672), it appears as if the magistrates of The Hague were too preoccupied with the complications that the French and English invasions caused in December of 1671. Maintaining order in their own city may not have been of the utmost importance at that point. This lack of interest from the judicial system in the safety of The Hague's population in turn might explain people's belief that they could get away with behavior they otherwise would have been arrested for, including perhaps the attack on the bodies of Johan and Cornelis.

The judicial framework of The Hague gradually changed their system of punishments from a punitive structure to a more correctional one. For example, in 1652, 19.6% of all crimes, were violent crimes and, consequently, 31.3% of the punishments were physical in nature (9.8% tortured, 6.6% shamed, and 19.7% whipped). In comparison, in 1659, the percentage of violent crimes was 19.1% while the physical punishments decreased to 14.6% overall. By 1662, The Hague had built and controlled its own house of discipline and, consequently, people were sent there more frequently. Before 1662, the highest percentage sent to a house of discipline was 5.9% in 1656. This compares to 37.5% in 1672. Furthermore, the rise in correctional punishments correlates with a decrease of physical punishments in general. Between 1663 and 1672, the percentages of physical punishment gradually decreased (with a few exceptions in 1665 and 1666) to below 10%. There were no physical punishments in 1672, while at the same time a whopping 37.5% of the criminals were sent to the house of discipline—the highest percentage of all 22 years prior.

Simply banning people from the city or the whole province of Holland was the most utilized sentence. Initially, a ban was given for three years, but reoffenders could face up to 25 years to life. The percentages are truly staggering. If in 1650 the ban was used in only 12.2% of the cases, each year thereafter the ban consisted of at least 50% of the cases, and in some years even over 90%, such as in 1659 (95.6%) and 1660 (93.8%). The overall average is 76.2%.

The judges did not discriminate. Both genders, all ages, handicapped people, citizens of The Hague, inhabitants from the Dutch Republic or foreigners, and everybody appearing before them were either released or punished with at least a three-year ban. Even in cases of obvious suspicion of a crime, if the perpetrator did not confess he or she would just be banned from the city. On February 11, 1650, silverwork was taken from the court of the Prince of Orange. This

was considered a serious crime and consequently a poster was spread over town to find the offenders.²²⁹ Relatively quickly, the guards arrested a suspect: Jan Hall, alias Jan Roos, from England.²³⁰ He denied the allegations, even after intense torture (as Cornelis had done), and was subsequently ordered to pay his prison cost and was banned from the city for 25 years. Even criminals who confessed to a crime and who were punished in other ways were eventually banned from the city and surrounding areas. In addition, people who had no means of supporting themselves other than begging or prostitution, such as handicapped soldiers, orphaned children, single women, and old people, received the three-, six-, or even twelve-year ban. Moreover, criminals who reoffended were expelled from The Hague in addition to previous bans.

The problem with this policy was that there were no direct means to make sure that the people who received the bans actually left the area—and often they did not. On the contrary, the same offenders reappeared time after time in the records. The reason for this is straightforward: they did not have any other places to go and often wandered from town to town. Begging and prostitution were prohibited, but alternatives were not available. People truly suffered through the criminal court system as a lifetime career. In the winter, the idea of being inside, even if it was a dark prison cell, may have looked better than sitting out on the street without food. Death may have even been appealing at that point.

The result of the banning process was that criminals who were ordered to leave went underground, hid in the forest close to The Hague, or stayed in the city, roaming the streets without purpose. Even if they did not have violent or criminal intentions, the large amount of

²²⁹ Author unknown, *Waerschouwinge, dat tussechen den thienden ende elfden February 1650, des snachts op het Hoff van hare Coninglyke Hoogheydt, de Princesse van Orangien, in s'Gravenhage ghestolen, het navolgende....* (Den Haag: Johannes Breekevelt, ende Michel Stael, 1650).

²³⁰ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv. #72, 03/1650.

beggars on the streets must have created instability in a city as small as The Hague. In conclusion, where a city like Amsterdam had several correctional institutions in place to handle and control its criminal population, The Hague, until 1662, simply relied on a ban to keep offenders at bay. It is obvious, from the records, that this was not an effective measure.

UNUSUAL CASES, REMARKABLE POINTS

The percentages recorded in appendix 4 provide an overview that sketches a general, yet simplified, image of the actors in the criminal system. The most remarkable findings/ occurrences cannot be deduced this way. However, they do cause spikes in the percentages, and it is useful to discuss them in more detail.

Assaults on city employees were not uncommon in The Hague. For example, in December of 1650, a group of four young men, two from The Hague and two from England, was arrested for vandalism and assaulting a city guard. Eventhough they were between 17 and 27 years old, each of them had threatened surrounding audiences with their swords.²³¹ Similarly, in August of 1653, Grietje Hendricx, Anneke Davids (both 19 years old), and Jan Janz (17 years old) were arrested for throwing stones at the fiscal officer for collecting taxes that they considered unjust.²³² The situation escalated rapidly as more people joined in the assault. The Sheriff and Aldermen took the attack on a state official very seriously, and all participants were subject to stringent investigation. Grietje, who was identified as the instigator by multiple witnesses, was severely tortured into confession. The three other main actors were punished by public whipping, and others were simply released and banned. Two years later, Jan Cornelis Mol, a 32-year-old from

²³¹ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv. #72, 12/1650.

²³² Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archives 0351, inv. #72, 08/1653.

The Hague, was agitated when a city official wanted to attach an official poster to his house. He admitted to hitting the man very hard on his head.²³³ He was banned for two years.

Many violent crimes occurred after a night of drinking. Teenagers Casper Leemans from The Hague, Hendrick van Nieuwekercken from The Hague, and Jacob Warbont from The Hague were arrested for drawing their swords and smashing in windows of a tavern after they had been drinking all night. All three were ordered by the courts to behave better in the future.²³⁴

Twentyone-year-old Claes Zegers from The Hague had been drinking with his friends in tavern *'t Lammetje Groen*. After drinking plenty of brandy, the tavern's keeper wanted them to leave the premise. Of course, Claes and his friends refused this request and decided to draw their swords. The city guards were called, but this only escalated the situation further. Claes persisted that he did not hurt any guards or throw in any windows. He was released and ordered to behave properly.²³⁵ In the years when the percentages of assaults were high, young men from The Hague typically wreaked havoc after drinking. It is likely that young men had been drinking all day or at least during the afternoon on the Saturday of John and Cornelis' murder. By the time Cornelis was released at six o'clock in the evening, the alcohol must have obstructed the men's reasoning abilities. Drunken men with swords were likely unpredictable and treacherous, especially when the crowd was already in a heightened state of exhilaration.

Another recurring presence in the court cases are bands of thieves that roamed the city. In many of these cases, these groups consisted of men and women, usually between 30 and 40 years old, from outside of The Hague, who had been travelling from city to city in the Province of

²³³ Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, inv. #72, 03/1655

²³⁴ Ibid., inv. #72, 04/1655.

²³⁵ Ibid., inv.#72, 05/1657.

Holland and who committed serious theft crimes everywhere they went. Although they were arrested, imprisoned, and punished by public whipping in most towns of Holland, their criminal ways seemed impossible to correct. For example, in February 1652, Hester Pietersz, Hilbregt Verbeeck, Cornelia van Gils, and Joseph Jansz were brought before the court for a slew of serious thefts. All four of them were tortured into confession. Eventually, they were publicly whipped and banned.²³⁶

Only in cases of very severe recidivism were the punishments severe, such as public whipping with a rope around the neck. In all cases, however, the criminals were banned from the city. Nonetheless, such groups were dangerous on the streets of the cities in Holland and may have very well been present during the slaughter of Johan and Cornelis.

March 1670, was an unusually violent month. Not only were there three murders in The Hague, but it also appears that the magistrates of The Hague acted stricter toward criminals. This moment correlates directly with the initial threat of the approaching French army, which had advanced as far as Dunkirk, Belgium.²³⁷

In this month, the courts decided to make a spectacle of a convicted killer. He was to be decapitated and put on a wheel outside the city. In the same month, two men were punished by having the sword swung over their head as a warning. The last death penalty is recorded in October 1670 for a murder committed in the Cape of Good Hope by Bastiaen de Brae. He was imprisoned there, but managed to break out and return to The Hague. After thorough

²³⁶ Municipal Archives The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, inv.# 72, 02/1652

²³⁷ Chapter 4 will study this invasion in depth.

investigation of the circumstances, he was convicted and put to death.²³⁸ After this October, violent crimes as well as the violent punishments seemed to have disappeared.

CONCLUSION ON LOCAL CRIME

At first glance, the crime records of The Hague in the decades before the slaying of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt provide little context for the events that occurred on August 20, 1672. It does not appear that the people or court officials of The Hague were extraordinarily violent in their behavior or punishments. It can also not be concluded that crime was escalating towards the year 1672—on the contrary. However, the murder and assault cases do show that the use of large swords by The Hague's young, male population was a relatively common feature in daily life and that hot-headed men had no problem utilizing this weapon, often without legal consequences. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the most serious crimes of assault and serious theft were committed by groups from within the Dutch Republic. In addition, although the Sheriff and his Aldermen clearly tried to be professional, correct, and thorough in their investigations, their way of handling crime of any sort was inadequate.

On the one hand, the punishment of banning seems to have been lenient for serious offenders and was often not taken seriously by the criminals, causing them to remain in or return to the city. On the other hand, the courts were ruthless in banning poor, sick, old, and handicapped beggars from the city without providing any form of relief for their situations. Without any other place to go, most of them remained in The Hague. The records suggest that the number of beggars continued to increase overall over the twenty-two-year period under investigation. The citizens of The Hague might not just have been angry because of the mild

²³⁸ Municipal Archive The Hague, Judicial Archive 0351, inv.#74, 03/1670.

punishment of one single person, Cornelis DeWitt. Instead, they could have been angry because of the overall weakness of The Hague's municipal judicial system in properly dealing with the obvious social problems in the city since 1650, especially because their own needs for protection from the French invasion by the government was increasing rapidly between 1670 and 1672. Although similar social problems existed everywhere at that time, the lenient punishment of Cornelis DeWitt is uniquely *Haaghs*. This occurrence united political conflict that had been played out in The Hague throughout the seventeenth-century with an accumulation of irritations over a failing judicial system. Add the pressures of social crowding and the threat of a French invasion and one can understand how a point of escalation might have been reached.

THE HOF VAN HOLLAND

Most of the criminal cases were handled by the lower, local courts. However, the *Hof van Holland*, the highest court of the Province of Holland, Westvriesland, and Zeeland would consult, advise, and execute binding rulings in cases of crimes against the state, capital felonies, intercity disputes, or justifications for warfare with other nations, among others. This court was erected in 1428 by the Burgundian ruler (House of Valois), Philip the Good. It was intended to be an independent structure, but because it was related to the government, the location of the *Binnenhof* was chosen as the seat of this court. This judicial structure consisted of twelve judges, three from Zeeland and nine from Holland, including the president. After its establishment, it continued unaltered through the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. In 1672, during the trial against Cornelis DeWitt, Adrian Pauw, a member of a famous regent family, was the president of the Hof van Holland. Historically, both families had strong ties with each other.

I will discuss the most relevant cases of the *Hof van Holland* in the early months of 1672, leading up to the events of August 20. In the first part of this chapter, I tracked changes in

violence and criminal behavior over a 22-year period to signal trends. In this part, I will focus exclusively on cases in the year 1672 that in one way or another provide an insight into the slaying of the Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

The most important case regarding the murder of the DeWitt brothers is the attack on Johan DeWitt on June 21, 1672.²³⁹ Johan had been working late on the *Binnenhof* that day. Between eleven and twelve o'clock, he walked home accompanied by his domestic servant, Jan van der Wisse, who was carrying Johan's briefcase containing *land's stukken* (the country's documents). Another man holding a torch walked slightly ahead of them, lighting the path to DeWitt's house. As soon as they passed the Prisingate, just when they were about to step onto the *Plaetse*, a man approached out of the dark and attacked the torch carrier with *seer groote furie* (great force). The torch dropped, taking away clear vision for the three men.

Johan kept walking, but as soon as he was halfway across the *Plaetse*, three other men came from behind the trees with their *bloote degens* (bare swords) drawn. They stabbed him twice. Once in the right side under the fifth and sixth rib and once in the back in the left shoulder. As Johan tried to wrestle the men off him, he fell to the ground and hit his head severely on the cobble stones. The four men ran away. Doctors Helvetius and Van der Straaten as well as *chirurgijn* De Wilde later confirmed the gravity of Johan's injuries and claimed that he was a very lucky man to have survived this aggressive occurrence. Although the attack did not kill him, Johan stated in his witness report that he was unable to perform his governmental duties for some time—which was highly unfortunate given the *landt's becoomerlijcke tijde* (country's difficult times).

²³⁹ National Archives, Archive of the Hof van Holland, inv. # 5296

The judges of the *Hof van Holland* seemed appalled. Although the main perpetrator, Jacob van der Graeff, was apprehended almost immediately, a reward of 5,000 guilders was issued on June 22, 1672, for any information that would lead to the arrest of the other three men.²⁴⁰ People who hid any of the criminal actors would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law accomplices. Within hours, Jacob's brother Pieter van der Graeff, Cornelis DeBruyn, and Adolph Borreback were arrested. Jacob and Pieter van der Graef were the sons of Jacob van der Graef, the Elder, a councilman of the court. The two other men were the sons of higher local officials as well. All three families were known to support the House of Orange.

In a publication concerning the arrest and the sentencing of Jacob van der Graeff, Jacob's father points to a direct link between the violent act of his two sons and the threat of a French invasion.²⁴¹ He states that the French troops had advanced as far as Woerden and Utrecht and that it was only a matter of time before they would invade The Hague. The urgency was so high that councilman Van der Graeff had moved his wife and daughter to Delft. He continues that on June 21, 1672, the three presidents of the High Council of the Court had asked Johan DeWitt what to do in such perplexing times. Johan had shrugged his shoulders and stated that the only thing they could do was to accommodate the French. Johan continued by explaining that the French armies were extraordinarily well-equipped to conquer The Hague. Jacob van der Graeff, the Elder, explained further that this was great cause for distress among the inhabitants of The

²⁴⁰ An eerie coincidence but interesting fact: on May 6, 2002 Pim Fortuyn, candidate for the position of prime-minister was murdered. His murder is the first political assassination since Johan and Cornelis DeWitt's. His last name is also "Van der Graaf."

²⁴¹ Anonimous, *Waerlijck Verhael, Van 't Geene (sonderling na 't Wereltlijcke) is Voorgevallen Op en nae de Apprehensie, Sententie en Executie, den 21 en 29 Juny 1672, tegens den jongen Heer Jacob van der Graef, alsmede de Wonderlijcke Opmerckinge omtrent het Sterven vande Twee Grootte vermaerde Mannen, Mr. Jan en Kornelis de Wit* (1672), 3.

Hague. He justified his sons' actions against the Grand Pensionary as an attempt to protect the property and wealth of their parents.

To defend the four young men, their lawyer greatly downplayed the injuries of Johan DeWitt during the trial. He stated that if they intended to murder him, they would have attacked him from behind and would have inflicted much deeper wounds. All that was visible now, he argued, were some superficial scratch wounds.²⁴² On the opposite side, the Estates General demanded swift and rigorous justice to set an example and plead for the death penalty of the main perpetrator, Jacob van der Graeff.²⁴³ The *Hof van Holland* judged that Jacob van der Graef had committed a *Crimen laesae Majestatis* (Crime Against the Majesty) punishable by decapitation.²⁴⁴ On June 29, 1672, Jacob van der Graeff was publicly executed with the sword on the *Plaetse* in The Hague.²⁴⁵

According to the writer of the publication, the populace of The Hague was outraged over this verdict.²⁴⁶ Not only because Jacob van der Graeff had not actually killed Johan DeWitt, but the wounds were not life-threatening either. In addition, the author argues, a *Crimen laesae Majestatis* was to be reserved for cases of harm against royalty. Johan DeWitt, the writer states,

²⁴² Anonymous, *Waerlijck Verhael, Van 't Geene (sonderling na 't Wereltlijcke) is Voorgevallen Op en nae de Apprehensie, Sententie en Executie, den 21 en 29 Juny 1672, tegens den jongen Heer Jacob van der Graeff, alsmede de Wonderlijcke Opmerckinge omtrent het Sterven vande Twee Groote vermaerde Mannen, Mr. Jan en Kornelis de Wit* (1672), 5.

²⁴³ Ibid, 6.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 7, and Crime laesae Majesty is a term from the Middle Ages for having committed a crime against the king, either through physical harm or by insults with words.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 7.

²⁴⁶ Anonymous, *Waerlijck Verhael, Van 't Geene (sonderling na 't Wereltlijcke) is Voorgevallen Op en nae de Apprehensie, Sententie en Executie, den 21 en 29 Juny 1672, tegens den jongen Heer Jacob van der Graeff, alsmede de Wonderlijcke Opmerckinge omtrent het Sterven vande Twee Groote vermaerde Mannen, Mr. Jan en Kornelis de Wit* (1672), Ibid, 7.

was not the majesty, and that argument should have been rendered void.²⁴⁷ After the execution, the people of the Province of Holland and Westvriesland *raeckte aan het hollen* (started running) and demanded the restoration of William III, Prince of Orange, to the stadtholderate of Holland and Westvriesland.²⁴⁸ This proposition became official on July 3, 1672, when Johan was still recovering from his injuries at home. He stepped down from his position as Grand Pensionary on August 4, 1672.

Another case of relevance is the attack on the burgomaster, regent of Rotterdam, Pieter de Groot, on July 10, 1672, by a mob from Rotterdam.²⁴⁹ Although, as Rudolph Dekker has shown in his book *Holland in Beroering: Oproeren in de Zeventiende – en Achtiende eeuw* (Holland under Disturbance: Riots in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries), riots against regents, especially during the turbulent times of the Disaster Year, 1672, was not an unusual occurrence at all.²⁵⁰ Dissatisfaction with the policies of regents was often handled by the people by showing up at the house of a magistrate demanding answers. Although these events were not always completely peaceful, they rarely led to arrests, grave violence, or involvement by the *Hof van Holland*.

The dispute between burgomaster Pieter de Groot and the people of Rotterdam was long-standing. The file on this event contains documents as far back as 1667 concerning the dissatisfaction of the Rotterdam's populace about the political policies of the burgomaster. When he failed to take action against the ambassadors of England and France in 1672, enemies of the

²⁴⁷ , Anonimous, *Waerlijck Verhael, Van 't Geene (sonderling na 't Wereltlijcke) is Voorgevallen Op en nae de Apprehensie, Sententie en Executie, den 21 en 29 Juny 1672, tegens den jongen Heer Jacob van der Graeff, alsmede de Wonderlijcke Opmerckinge omtrent het Sterven vande Twee Groote vermaerde Mannen, Mr. Jan en Kornelis de Wit* (1672), p.7.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.8.

²⁴⁹ National Archives, Hof van Holland, inv. # 5293 - 36

²⁵⁰ Rudolf Dekker, *Holland in Beroering: Oproeren in de Zeventiende – en Achtiende Eeuw* (Baarn: Ambo, 1992).

Dutch Republic at the time, a mob of inhabitants of Rotterdam showed up at the city hall when the burgomaster left work for the day. Witnesses Gerrit Dijckhoff and Claes Visser testified in court that a group of burghers, including Justin Verschure, Bastiaen van Bortel, Christiaen Dronp, Hendrick Corstiaense, Thomas Thomassen, Gerrit van Stuyden, Jaacq de Gaen, Jacob Remy, Rombout Maastricht, Claes Jorissen, Jacq Verasmus, Claes Pietersen, Jan Michielsen and his housewife, Leyntje Michielsen, as well as a group of anonymous supporters, obstructed the burgomaster from leaving by cornering him on the steps of city hall on July 10, 1672. Although he made it to his carriage, the group then smashed the windows of the carriage and obstructed the horses from leaving the scene. As a result, he was forced to retreat into city hall again. In a later document, Pieter de Groot explains that he felt very threatened that day and that he had received intimidations against his house and family members for quite some time, causing him to feel unsafe living in Rotterdam. He demanded help from the *Hof van Holland* to restore order.

This specific case stands out in two ways. First, the date of the final hearing is August 27, 1672—exactly one week after the fatal day of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, an event that occurred less than 100 meters from the *Binnenhof*. However, even though the situations are similar in essence, there is no reference to the murders of the brothers a week prior. Second, the final verdict is surprising. At first the judges urge Willem III, Prince of Orange, to intervene in the dire situation. However, the burgomaster and other regents did not want to negotiate with the burghers, so the court suggested firing the ruling elite and replacing them with others. In other words, the court sided with the people. Burgomaster Pieter de Groot was furious. He wrote several letters to the high court to express his utter disappointment with the ruling of his case, stating that he had been more than a loyal servant to the state and that he did not deserve such

treatment, especially since he had given his best years to the state and was now a fragile and sick man.

On July 27, 1672, the members of the *Hof van Holland* met to discuss a leaflet, published and distributed by *boosaerdighe en onrustighe personen* (angry and restless persons) with the title *Waarschouwinghe aan alle edelmoedige en getrouwe inwoonders van Nederland* (Warning to all loyal and honorable inhabitants of the Netherlands).²⁵¹ This *pasquille*, they stated, contained *schandelijcke en vuyle leugens* (shameful and dirty lies) about Johan DeWitt. In addition, they argued, that it was unlawfully spread among the *eenvoudighe menschen* (simple people) of Holland to turn them against the Grand Pensionary. The men concluded that the author, the publisher, and the distributor should be located and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Although there seems to have been no verdict in this case, the fact that a pamphlet against the DeWitts was discussed in the highest court and the conclusion to act against such publications signals an increased fear for the well-being of Johan DeWitt and an attempt to stop the negative current.

Mediation for cases between inhabitants of different countries was also part of the activities of the *Hof van Holland*.²⁵² This practice became complex during the Anglo-Dutch wars (1652-1654, 1665-1667, and 1672-1674). Two English publications state that the high court of Holland and Zeeland was partial and even fraudulent in deciding lawsuits involving both English and Dutch citizens. In one pamphlet, the court decided on legal rights of the Dutch citizens in Little and Great Yarmouth, two small villages located in England almost directly across the North Sea from Amsterdam. The route was favorable for trade between England and Holland.

²⁵¹ National Archive, Hof van Holland, inv.# 5293 – 7.

²⁵² National Archive, Hof van Holland, inv.# 5293 – 12.

England, the court concluded should allow all Dutch traders free access to conduct business and the right to settle if they wished to do so. The English response was one of anger. The court ruling was used to identify the Dutch negatively to justify and gain support for another war with the Dutch Republic.

In a pamphlet published on June 20, 1672, written in English, a person with the initials G.C. writes the following,²⁵³

Prince William of Orange Nassau, who established the foundation of the Seven Provinces made three political observations upon that state which he gave to the general assembly as maxims for support of their government:

1. Due justice to all strangers
 2. A fair correspondence with France
 3. The preservation of a firm and inviolable peace with England
- The Dutch are hypocrites and used violence to conquer the world. Now they are visited for the sins of their fathers, to third and fourth generations. *War against the Dutch is therefore justified.*²⁵⁴

Similarly, in a complicated heritage affair that started in 1631 between an Englishman, James Bove of London, and a Dutch merchant, Peter Boudaen of Middelburgh, the High Court of Holland decided in favor of the Dutchman. In a pamphlet, the author states that “many thousands of pounds in money and goods, gotten into their hands by fraud, violence, and practice.”²⁵⁵ In turn, he writes and publishes the “true” story behind this complex case and explains his motives as follows:

²⁵³ A later case played out against two English spies who were imprisoned in the Prisongate in July 1672 and who were presented to the Court on August 18, 1672. One of the men was identified as George Curules. This could refer to the initials G.C. of the pamphlets. He was accused of fiscal fraud and for stirring the *quade gemoederen* (evil reactions) of the people.

²⁵⁴ National Archive, Hof van Holland, inv. # 5293 – 12.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, inv. # 5293 – 12.

When Subjects appeal to their Sovereign for Justice Against a foreign state, the appealants ought not to offer anything but matter of record in their complaints. In this case the substance of every paragraph is extant either in the register of Publick Notaries, Courts of Admiralties, or other Court so Judicature in England or the United Netherlands.

The author of this Remonstrant hath spent twenty years of his life, and many thousands pound sterling in seeing after justice (to the 23rd of January 1672) at Amsterdam, Middleburgh and The Hague, where it is not to be found.²⁵⁶

The actual heritage lawsuit spanned many decades and involved complicated legal constructions reaching as far as the trade in the East Indies. For that reason, the intricacies of the case are not relevant for this work.

Another interesting and relevant case is the lawsuit issued by the higher ward council of the United Netherlands against Johan Barton de Mombas.²⁵⁷ In June 1672, De Mombas, a commissioner general of the Dutch cavalry, faced the forces of the French army crossing the Rhine in the *Betuwe*. Instead of taking charge of his troops, on foot and on horseback, De Mombas decided to leave his post and join the French army. This *schandelijcke daad* (despicable deed) left the Dutch territories open to French invasion. Although he was not present during the hearing, he was accused of treason and disloyalty to and disrespect of the state and then sentenced to death by public hanging.

On June 21, 1672, in a similar lawsuit, Jacob Rogier, captain of the Dutch garrison in charge of defending the village of *Rijnbeck*, had been arrested and transferred to be prosecuted

²⁵⁶ National Archive, Hof van Holland, inv. # 5293 – 12.

²⁵⁷ National Archve, Hof van Holland, inv.# 5293 – 13.

by the ward council.²⁵⁸ Although he did not desert his post in the army, he did capitulate instantly without fighting the French armies at *Rijnbeck*. This was viewed as a *schandeleuse daad* (scandalous act). Johan de Mombas and Jacob Rogier were not the only army officials who decided to give up and surrender Dutch cities and villages to the French monarch. According to the court documents, many villages, such as Orfoy, Wesel, and Ghees, located in Overijssel and Gelderland, surrendered at the sight of the French troops approaching.²⁵⁹ In this court file it is announced that all officers who left their post and capitulated would be prosecuted by the ward council. In addition, William III, Prince of Orange, and admiral general of the Dutch army would be notified about these occurrences. The circumstances and verdicts were published in a pamphlet, which probably circulated throughout The Hague. To conclude, the populace of The Hague could not only read that the French were rapidly approaching, but also that the army was refusing or failing to protect Dutch territory. This in turn may have added to the already existing anxieties in the city, such as those caused by social and political problems.

CONCLUSION

In this part of the chapter, I have discussed the most relevant cases pertaining to the circumstances surrounding the murder of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. From the lawsuits in these archives of the High Court of Holland, it can be concluded that tension was building among the common people of The Hague and other cities of the Province of Holland. Although the attack on the life of Johan DeWitt might be viewed as the most important signifier of the events that would occur only a month later, on August 20, 1672, other cases point to increasingly troubling

²⁵⁸ National Archive, Hof van Holland, inv. #5295 - 26

²⁵⁹ In chapter 4 will describe the circumstances under which the officers had to leave their posts. In this chapter it suffices to notice this trend and its consequences.

times as well, such as the discontent with the policies of the burgomaster of Rotterdam was getting out of hand when a mob of the populace attacked him in front of the city hall. Furthermore, it is clear from the sources that people heard the news of the French army advancing as far as Utrecht with very little manpower on the Dutch side to stop them. In addition, the news that trickled down from the front in the East was not exactly reassuring that the non-professional ad-hoc Dutch army of *huysluyden* was performing the necessary tasks to protect Dutch territory from the enemies.

Chapter 4

The Influence of the French Invasion on the Murders of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt: the “Disaster Year” 1672

*This is how DEWITT lived, in the heart of all sincere hearts
The mouth of freedom, and the States most loyal council
His death, undeserved, will damage Holland for ever
He died for the fatherland, as a martyr of the State²⁶⁰*

In Dutch history, 1672—the year when Johan and Cornelis DeWitt were murdered—is referred to as the “Disaster Year” (*Rampjaar*). During this year the Dutch Republic, under leadership of Johan DeWitt, was attacked by the French in the south, the English in the west, and two German Catholic principalities—Munster and Cologne—in the east. The French army’s intention to invade, under direction of French King Louis XIV, was already known two years prior. Previous attempts to invade had failed because the major rivers—the Rhine, the Waal, and the Maas—served as buffers between the Dutch Republic and southern invaders. However, on June 12, 1672, the water in the Rhine at Lobith was at its lowest point in history.²⁶¹ As a result, the French army marched through Gelderland virtually unrestrained, conquering villages and cities like Arnhem and Deventer. It was a very threatening situation for the Dutch Republic.

Reports about these alarming events, both accurate and sensationalized, traveled quickly throughout the provinces of Holland and Westvriesland, and Zeeland, probably putting the citizens on edge. The murders of Johan and Cornelis in August of 1672 might have been the

²⁶⁰ Joost van den Vondel, “Op den Afbeeldinghe van Heere Meester Joan DeWitt, Raetpensionaris van Hollant, Vader des Vaderlands” (1672). Translation from original: “Soo leeft DEWITT, in het heart van alle oprechte harten, De mondt des vrijheid, en de Staeten trouste raet, Zijn doot al t’onverdiend, zal Hollant eewig smarten, Hij storf voor het vaderland, een martelaar van de staet.”

²⁶¹ The Old Dutch Waterline (*Oudnederlandse Waterlinie*) had always been a line of defense because the tactical use of dams allowed the flooding of large areas, separating the Province of Holland from the rest of the Republic.

accumulation of those tensions in a population that was still coming to terms with the invasion of the Spanish a century earlier. In this chapter, I first describe briefly the political circumstances in the year 1672 to create context. Subsequently, I discuss several publications and the graphic work of Romeyn de Hooghe related to the French invasion, as this propaganda might have circulated in the Dutch Republic and The Hague, probably stirring up emotions among the population, such as xenophobia, fear, and anxiety. The content of these sources is subsequently compared to sources from the Municipal Archive of Arnhem and records of the meetings of the Estates General concerning the facts surrounding the invasion. This comparison is useful in order to separate “real” from “fake” news about the French threat of 1672.²⁶² By doing this, it will become clear that propaganda greatly exaggerated the events and the actions of the French soldiers to generate aggression toward the ruling elite, especially Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

THE POLITICAL PRELUDE TO THE INVASION

Between January and October of 1648, European leaders united to draft and sign the Peace of Westphalia. This agreement was necessary to stabilize the religious and political conflicts that inspired the start of the Thirty Years’ War in 1618. One of the conditions specified in the treaties, the Treaty of Munster, was the independence of the Dutch Republic from the Spanish King, Philip IV.²⁶³ The people of the Republic, after eighty years of war, rejoiced and celebrations were held throughout the country. Unfortunately, this peace would not last long.

²⁶² Nierop, Henk, and Ellen Grabowsky, Anouk Janssen, Huigen Leeftang en Garrelt Verhoeven Eds., *Romeyn de Hooghe, De Verbeelding van de Late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008). Knuttel Archive online through the Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag. The Municipal Archive of Arnhem contains all historical records from the province of Gelderland.

²⁶³ The area given to the Dutch included two small areas in the south: Brabant and Limburg. Stadholder Frederick Hendrik, half-brother of Maurice of Orange, had captured the main cities in these regions with the help of the French in their fight against the Spanish.

The English Commonwealth, by then under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell and the States General of the Seven United Provinces led by *Raadspensionaris* Adriaan Pouw, had been in conflict over trade rights in their respective colonies since 1650. When negotiations between 1650 and 1652 failed, the First Anglo-Dutch War erupted after the English navy attacked Dutch ships in the North Sea. By 1654, the English fleet had raised a full blockade in front of the Dutch coastline, inhibiting exports and imports. Note that in this year, Johan DeWitt had become *Raadspensionaris*. The blockade quickly resulted in devastation in the Dutch Republic, mainly caused by rapidly declining profits and a lack of import foods like Baltic wheat.

The English initially profited from their blockade, but Oliver Cromwell realized that trade suffered in England as well, while the Spanish reaped the economic rewards of this conflict. Cromwell proposed a peace settlement, and - after negotiations - on April 15, 1654, the Treaty of Westminster brought an end to the war. Part of this treaty was the Act of Seclusion, which stipulated that the Dutch Estates General, *stadhouderloos* (without a Stadholder) since 1650, could never promote a member of the Orange family to a position of stadtholder again. Cromwell hoped that this would prevent a merger between the English and the Dutch royal houses, which would threaten his power.

The established peace remained fragile as tensions over trade and foreign land continued. This ongoing conflict eventually resulted in another war by 1665, the Second Anglo-Dutch war. Although the English won the first battle, the Dutch navy, under leadership of Admiral DeRuyter, declared victory in every subsequent encounter. The most decisive triumph of this war was the battle of Chatham in 1667, in which Cornelis DeWitt accompanied DeRuyter in a

strategic move to break the defense lines and sail directly into England. Cornelis was heralded as a true hero and several paintings of the battle glorified his contribution.²⁶⁴

Peace in other parts of Europe remained unstable as well. The most important threat to order was the continuous strain between the French and the Habsburgs, who controlled Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the south of the former Low Countries (by that time called the Spanish Netherlands).²⁶⁵ French King Louis XIV kept pressing for expansion along French borders to the south, east, and north, mostly into Habsburg territory. The Habsburgs, however, won decisive battles in Italy as well as in the Spanish Netherlands. England joined the army of Louis XIV and was given the city of Dunkirk as a reward for victory over the Spanish. Nonetheless, by 1659 it was clear that the Habsburg were once again victorious over the French armies in Italy and Catalonia. On November 5, 1664, the Peace of the Pyrenees established stability between the two forces. Louis XIV's drive for conquest, however, did not stop with the Peace of the Pyrenees. In 1668, his army marched north and took back Dunkirk from the English. At this point, it must have been clear to other European leaders that Louis XIV was determined to continue invasion efforts in Europe.

The safety of the Dutch Republic was threatened by the sudden move of Louis XIV to take back Dunkirk, a town very close to the border of the Dutch Republic. Johan DeWitt consulted with King Carl XI of Sweden and King Charles II of England for the formation of a

²⁶⁴ Jan de Baen, *De Verheerlijking van Cornelis DeWitt*, 1667 (this painting was attacked and destroyed by angry people at city hall in Dordrecht in 1972). Anonymous, *Allegorie op de Tocht naar Chatham*, (1668), Oil on canvas, currently at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam under reference 90402_M_NL_Rijksmuseum.

²⁶⁵ This region is present-day Belgium and the provinces of Brabant and Limburg of the Netherlands.

Triple Alliance to combat the French army in case they would enter Dutch territory.²⁶⁶ In response, Louis XIV set out to conquer the Dutch Republic. He closed a secret agreement with the English, who were still after Dutch international trade. Sweden was bribed to withdraw from the Triple Alliance. Large sums of money convinced the leaders of the German kingdoms of Brandenburg, Munster, and Köln to assist the French. These territories bordered the Dutch Republic in the east near Arnhem and *Nijmegen* at the crossing of the major rivers. As a result, these lands provided a perfect access point for the French armies. The Dutch would soon face their enemies from the west, east, and south.

PUBLICIZING THE FRENCH THREAT AND THE GENERATION OF FEAR

Dutch historians have pointed to increasing negative propaganda aimed at Johan and Cornelis DeWitt to explain the anger and aggression executed on August 20, 1672.²⁶⁷ Although, I do agree that this high volume of propaganda could have been an important factor in the brother's fate, I argue that that viewpoint is too simplistic. Other emotions must have lingered within society that contributed to the explosion of violent events that day. The Dutch propaganda machine that worked in favor of the Prince of Orange was effective in positioning Johan and Cornelis DeWitt in a negative light. Particularly, the ways in which the brothers were handling the French invasion was met with extraordinary criticism. However, the political division between the House of Orange and the Estates General as well as the propaganda accompanying

²⁶⁶ For a complete overview of the political situation before the French invasion, see Luc Panhuysen, *Het Rampjaar: Hoe de Republic aan de Ondergang Ontsnapte* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2009) and Petra Dreiskämper, *Redeloos, Radeloos, en Reddeloos: De Geschiedenis van het Rampjaar, 1672* (Amsterdam: Drukkerij Verloren, 1998).

²⁶⁷ Michel Reinders, *Gedrukte Chaos: Populisme en Moord in het Rampjaar 1672* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2010). Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en Publieke Opinie: Massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011). Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Popular culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987). Jill Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in word and image, 1650-75* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

this rift started a century prior after William of Orange was killed. It is therefore not limited to the second half of 1672, but characteristic for most of the seventeenth century. Throughout this century, several wars in Europe were strategically used to plot against the ruling magistrates of the Estates General of the United Netherlands. In that scenario, the French invasion was merely another useful occurrence for the Orangists to propagate their position.

In the following section, I trace publications that may explain causes for increasing xenophobia and anxieties within the Dutch Republic at a time that French armies continued their conquests into Germany and the Spanish Netherlands. I argue, that in The Hague, these media sources contributed to an atmosphere of general distrust, fear for, and hostilities toward perceived enemies of the Dutch Republic, such as Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, but also French people in general. Pamphlets published in and circulated throughout the political and public spheres of Holland - between 1670 and 1672 - show that although the population, based on news outlets, either real or fake, became increasingly concerned about the motives of the French monarch and his approaching army, the Dutch magistrates, including Johan and Cornelis DeWitt, erroneously trusted the promises of peace from Louis XIV. As a result, the brothers maintained a diplomatic relationship with the king in the hope of finding resolutions without going to war. The DeWitt's intention was noble, no doubt, as they attempted to safeguard their people from another devastating war. However, this lack of forceful action as well as their continued interactions with Louis XIV was used in negative propaganda against the brothers contributing profoundly to their unpopularity.

By 1670, the threat of French conquests was undeniable, and rumors probably reverberated within larger Dutch cities like The Hague, stirring up emotions. On the political stage, writers started to voice their criticism concerning the blatancy and arrogance of the French

monarch. A Dutch pamphlet published in 1670 discusses the political arena of Europe after the Peace of the Pyrenees in relation to the invasions of France.²⁶⁸ The author appears to write with contempt when he states that Louis XIV had been transparent in his plans for European conquest and he finds this attitude, “within the decency of political relations,” completely unacceptable. According to the writer, Louis XIV openly discussed the agreements he made with different principalities in Germany as well as his desire to conquer all of Germany by disarming one city after another.²⁶⁹ In addition, the author notes that the monarch had no problem conveying his message publicly to other nations by stating that if they did not succumb to his rule, he would overtake these lands violently. Apparently, the French king had also said that the Triple Alliance would be void within three months. The author mocks Louis XIV and points to the fact that the Triple Alliance was still intact after two years. He even goes as far as calling Louis XIV an unfit ruler, a *wanschepsel* (miscarriage), and a schoolboy.²⁷⁰ It is unlikely that Louis XIV ever publicly announced any of these statements. Nonetheless, it is useful to analyze political written material in general, and the perceptions concerning Louis XIV in particular, because these media sources influenced the opinion of people regarding the political players, which in turn set the political stage for events to come.

The author of this work appears to have been politically educated. He refers to complex relationships between the European powers as well as the many wars that were fought throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between these nations. By describing

²⁶⁸ Anonymous, *D'Ongeregeltheyt van het Beleyt van Vrankrijk ende van Grond-regelen van desselfs Staat-kunde ondekt ende toon gestelt*. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9811.

²⁶⁹ Anonymous, *D'Ongeregeltheyt van het Beleyt van Vrankrijk ende van Grond-regelen van desselfs Staat-kunde ondekt ende toon gestelt*. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9811, 3-4.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

various political intricacies, he makes an argument against France's "rights" to brutally invade so many European villages, towns, and cities.²⁷¹ He reserves special criticism for French writers Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac and Bonair, who earlier in the seventeenth century wrote books against the Spanish kings and the Habsburgs, and who glorified French war efforts. The writer seems bothered that these issues were discussed in the public arena because common people would hear about the progressing conquests. He argues that this knowledge would make *het Volck* (the common people) uncomfortable and fearful. The author then states his belief that writers have the responsibility to take people's suffering into consideration. People of Europe, he argues, have endured many wars and finally found some peace and to stir up fear is irresponsible. If people were not already fearful, they would be after reading this warning.

Besides criticizing French tactics to conquer Europe, the anonymous writer offers solutions for Dutch leaders to handle their affairs with Louis XIV. He claims that the interests of the Dutch Republic has changed since the signing of the Peace of Munster.²⁷² According to the writer, it is vital that the regents understand how to maintain a balance between European powers as well as peace within their cities. The author continues with the warning that it is dangerous to accept foreigners living within the Dutch Republic for possible disloyalty and that it is prudent to expel all French soldiers from Dutch territory. The French and the Dutch had been allies up to 1668 and French soldiers were still present in Dutch cities, including The Hague. Should these eviction attempts fail, he notes, the Dutch should stand up against the French in the same manner

²⁷¹ Anonymous, *D'Ongeregeltheyt van het Beleyt van Vrankrijk ende van Grond-regelen van desselfs Staat-kunde ondekt ende toon gestelt*. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9811, p.5.

²⁷² Anonymous, *D'Ongeregeltheyt van het Beleyt van Vrankrijk ende van Grond-regelen van desselfs Staat-kunde ondekt ende toon gestelt*. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9811, p.6.

as the Dutch populace had done against the Spanish a century prior.²⁷³ By writing this, the author creates an atmosphere of xenophobia for the French in general, not just anxiety for an approaching invasion. This could have created tensions in the public sphere between French people living in The Hague and the local Dutch population, adding to emerging anxieties regarding an invasion.

On May 2, 1668, the Peace of Aachen was signed between France and Spain. This ended the War of Devolution that had started a year prior. In this treaty, Spanish territory, mainly in the north, such as Veurne, Charleroi, and *Rijssel*, went to Louis XIV. A Dutch pamphlet published in 1670 reasons against the rights of the French monarch to obtain the villages of Condé and Linck as discussed in the Peace of Aachen.²⁷⁴ Again, great concern is given to the people of the Spanish territories who just started to enjoy some peace and were now faced with a take-over by the French enemy. The author warns that it would be difficult to introduce new laws to a people whose hearts were still filled with hate against the French and that it would be necessary to monitor local positions of power.²⁷⁵ This pamphlet also describes the complex political context of the state of affairs in Europe. The audience for these media sources were most likely educated men and women, people on both sides of the political debate who would understand the intricacies and influences of the argument made. The common man or woman most likely did not read or heard about these works, although news might have trickled down in society. Nonetheless, the importance of these pamphlets is the fact that both profoundly criticize the

²⁷³ Ibid., p.10.

²⁷⁴ Anonymous, *Consideratien en Redenen of Vranckrijck oock ghesondeert is of niet, in 't pretenderen van de Plaetsen, Conde en Linck*. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9812.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, p.3.

French in their effort to conquer Europe. This signals a heightened awareness of the dangers that could come from the reign of Louis XIV. In addition, both describe the heightened tensions and anxieties among the common people, either real or imagined, for the approaching invasion of the French armies. The propaganda also suggests that people should be afraid and need to get scared if the French king continues his conquests.

While the intellectual elite in the Dutch Republic reasoned on paper against the brutality of Louis XIV and questioned his right to act in certain ways, and the Dutch ruling class felt a false sense of security because of the formation of the Triple Alliance with England and Sweden, the French army continued to march upward in the direction of the Dutch Republic. On April 12, 1671, the Utrecht-based printer Johannes Ribbins published a pamphlet, written in Dutch, intended for Dutch audiences. It contains extensive military information about locations, routes, and exact formations of the French troops.²⁷⁶ Ribbins claims that it was translated from a publication issued by French troops that were stationed in *Rijssel* near the Dutch border. According to this information, an army of 28,480 foot-soldiers would arrive in Dunkirk by April 6, 1670, with the intention to continue the French conquest upwards.²⁷⁷ It is unlikely that an army would publish its strategies and therefore, the source should be questioned. In addition, the distribution data of this pamphlet is, as is the case with almost all publications, untraceable. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the material was translated to intentionally reach a Dutch speaking audience, most likely to heighten awareness about the threat of invasion. People reading this source must have been concerned. The direct distance on foot between Dunkirk and

²⁷⁶ French army, *Lyste van d'Aentocht der Franse volckeren na Duynkercken, Geschreven door het Franse leger te Rijssel en van daar aen seker Heer tot Utrecht overgeschreven op den 12 april 1671* (Utrecht: Johannes Ribbins, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2-4.

The Hague is 43 hours, a mere two days if the troops march straight up into the Dutch Republic. That leaves little time to prepare for a defense. Whether the information was accurate or not is irrelevant at this point. The goal is to expose printed sources that could have contributed to increasing tensions within The Hague for an imminent French invasion. The notion that a violent attack might be only two days away must have raised cause for fear.

On a local level, it appears that officials realized that the news of the approaching French army signaled a serious problem for the Dutch Republic. In 1671, a pamphlet written in 1666 by Nicolaas van Solingen, member of the local council of Utrecht, was re-published.²⁷⁸ In this work, he emphasizes the need to prevent a recurrence of the security predicaments of the Dutch Republic in 1665. In the Summer of that year, during the second Anglo-Dutch war, the Bishop of Munster, Bernhard von Galen, unexpectedly invaded the Dutch Province of *Overijssel* in the east of the Dutch Republic.²⁷⁹ Because the focus of the Dutch defense efforts (money, material, and trained men) was on England in the west, they were utterly unprepared for an attack from the east. As a result, an ad-hoc army had to be drafted. These troops consisted only of inexperienced young boys and other unskilled men. Consequently, this army was powerless against the invading troops of the Bishop of Munster.

Nicolaas van Solingen proposed a practical solution for future attacks. He states that Utrecht held a consensus among its people to obtain information about the amount of able men in the district. Utrecht calculated that a total of 4,297 able men (which would result in 25

²⁷⁸ Nicolaas van Solingen, *Project om Vijftich Dusent man en meer in Wapenen te brengen Ende teonderhouden sonder eenighe lasten van de Generaliteyt* (Utrecht: 1672), p.2. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection.

²⁷⁹ Nicolaas van Solingen, *Project om Vijftich Dusent man en meer in Wapenen te brengen Ende teonderhouden sonder eenighe lasten van de Generaliteyt* (Utrecht: 1672), p.2. Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection.

companies) could be drafted, not with the intention to form a permanent army, but to train half of the men in gun agility and the other half in combat with spears. Each company would be under leadership of a professional sergeant as well as accompanied by flag bearers and drummers.²⁸⁰ Because this military force would only be erected in case of threat and did not need maintenance during peaceful times, the tax burden on citizens would be greatly reduced. Furthermore, Van Solingen advises all provinces to follow this defense strategy, so that in case of invasions a capable and fierce army of 51,564 men could quickly be instituted against the enemy.

It is important to note that the pamphlet was written in 1666, about four years before the news that the French army was marching northwards reached The Hague.²⁸¹ Nonetheless, the fact that it was reprinted in 1671 suggests that the proposed idea of training a strong local defense force to protect villages in case of an invasion was brought into the public realm again. The author's concern for the erection of a semi-professional army seems justified. However, the document also suggests that there is no current well-trained army to defend against a possible invasion and that this same fact had been detrimental to the Dutch in 1666. That statement, whether true or not, cannot have been very reassuring for the citizens of The Hague following news sources about the upward marching French troops. When other news sources, at the same time, suggests that the magistrates of the Dutch Republic remain idle in facing the French threat, people must have felt defenseless about the approaching troops.

In 1671, publisher Christiaan Volsorge from Frederickstadt in Norway issued *D'Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Roomsche Rijks Afgesonden* (the Sincere Speaking

²⁸⁰ Anonymous, *D'Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Roomschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaan Volsorge, 1671). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9891, p.3.

²⁸¹ The French army was fighting with the Dutch against the Spanish at this point.

Frenchman; Sent to the kings of the Holy Roman Empire).²⁸² The author is anonymous, but he starts the document with an unambiguous and urgent warning for leaders of the Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands, and all of Europe: “Wake up! Wake up, Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands, and the rest of Europe, the French wish to take away your freedom.”²⁸³ He continues by stating that “the German eagle is silent, the Dutch lion is intoxicated, and the bear does not move.”²⁸⁴ The author wonders where the bravery of the Dutch, the loyalty of the Germans, and the unity of the Holy Roman Empire have gone. The writer appears to be greatly concerned about the inactions of the leaders of Europe to what seems to him such an obvious threat. He advises that the European magistrates halt their political negotiations with Louis XIV and unite in order to act forcefully against this ruthless French monarch with his extensive and aggressive military.²⁸⁵

This pamphlet appears to be an example of propaganda of the time, aimed at generating fear among the populace of the Dutch Republic, and pointing specifically to failing leadership of

²⁸² Anonymous, *D’Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaan Volsorge, 1671). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9891. The fact that the publisher is from Frederickstadt, a city in Norway, suggests that the initial product was published in Norway and then translated to other languages, including Dutch. The pamphlet in the Knuttel archive is written in Dutch.

²⁸³ Anonymous, *D’Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaan Volsorge, 1671). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9891.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

The symbolism used refers to images historically assigned to specific countries, the German eagle and the Dutch lion.

²⁸⁵ Anonymous, *D’Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaan Volsorge, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive # 9891, p.3.

European authorities in charge of defense. He characterizes them as cowardly, disloyal, and disruptive. This word-use in turn could stir up anxieties about an impending war in which the population have to vent for themselves. If the author was truly concerned, instead of spreading untraceable gossip, he may have chosen a different route in approaching the leaders of the countries under threat. However, he published the work with the intention of reaching the common population, most likely to generate commotion and anger against leaders, including Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

On the front cover, the author identifies himself as the “Sincere Speaking Frenchman.” This suggests that the writer is French and that he had access to information regarding the “true” motivations of Louis XIV, which was to conquer all of Europe, including the Dutch Republic. He warns that French people are deceitful, that the king feigns peace and friendship with neighboring countries while simultaneously conducting conquest after conquest. After all, the writer claims, the French joined forces with both the English and the Dutch during the Second Anglo-Dutch War.²⁸⁶ It remains obscure how the author obtained this information. The xenophobic warning pertaining to French people in this document is very clear though, generating, intentionally, tension between people.

Besides being dishonest, the French monarch was also exceptionally sly, according to the author of the document. He warns that when Louis XIV was only a year and a half old, a coin was pressed in his honor. The coin featured him with a laurel wreath on his head, holding a snake in one hand while having one foot on an eagle and the other on the head of a lion, in which the

²⁸⁶Anonymous, *D'Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaen Volsorge, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9891, p.3.

eagle stands for Germany and the lion for the Dutch Republic.²⁸⁷ Clearly, the writer argues, this coin shows France's initial motivation for the current conquest of Europe by Louis XIV. The author claims that the French monarch attempted to convince kings and princes of Europe that certain areas of Europe already belonged to him based on his royal heritage (like he did with the Netherlands through lineage of his wife).²⁸⁸ Furthermore, it angers the writer that the Bishops of Cologne and Munster were contemplating capitulation in exchange for large sums of money. This would only be good for the kings, not for the common people, the author argues, because this king was a tyrant and would take away people's freedoms. "Wake up," he warns again, "take up your arms against this common French enemy, for your religion, your freedom, and your children."²⁸⁹ The sense of urgency and fear that radiates from this pamphlet is undeniable.

French women appeared to have had a special position in this assumed plan to conquer Europe. Much like the biblical story of Delilah who knew how to secretly rob Samson of his male powers, the writer claims that French women were experts in seduction and were sent to other European countries to manipulate men on both sides of the negotiations.²⁹⁰ For example, he writes, the Woman of Orleans was sent to break up the Triple Alliance by causing conflict between parties, the author explains. He does not specify who this woman was.

Along the same lines, in the pamphlet *De Schijndeugd en Huichelrij der Franse Burgerinnen* (fake virtue and hypocrisy of the French female burgher), André Olier dedicates a twenty-one

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.6.

²⁸⁸ Anonymous, *D'Oprecht Sprekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaan Volsorge, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9891, p.5.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p.5.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p.4.

page song to warn against the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of French women in general.²⁹¹ Unlike honorable (Dutch) women “who have been purified of deceit and distrust, who fear the Lord under obedience of her married and peace-loving man,” French women, Olier states, are lazy, vain in the way they dress, fake in the way they look, hypocritical about their church-going habits, and likely to party and eat and drink excessively.”²⁹² The fact that this was a song suggests that it circulated verbally within Dutch society, and may have ignited animosity against French women living in the Netherlands, especially in political The Hague. When anxieties rise within a community, the creation of a public scapegoat onto which people can release their fears seems inevitable.

So far, I have shown that inhabitants of the Dutch Republic including The Hague were exposed to several media sources that not only reported on the approaching French army and the slyness of the French king, but also warned against French people, especially women, residing in Dutch cities. In addition, some propaganda pointed to failing European leadership as well as inadequate defenses against French threats of invasion. It is impossible to draw any conclusions about the ways in which this information was received by the audience or the feelings these sources generated. Nonetheless, I argue that the fact that this material circulated within The Hague shows that an atmosphere was created in which fear and xenophobia could easily spread among a populace that had endured war most of the century prior.

OTHER INTERESTING SOURCES

²⁹¹ Anonymous, *De Schijndeugd en Huichelrij der Franse Burgerinnen beneffens EEns Edelmanns Brief aan een Juffrouw: en Het Antwoord van de Juffrouw aan de Edelman* (André Olier, 1671). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9909.

²⁹² Anonymous, *D'Oprecht Spreekende Fransman; Aen de Vorsten des H. Rooschen Rijks afgesonden* (Frederickstadt: Christiaen Volsorge, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9891, p.5.

One French tactic to weaken the Dutch Republic was the attempt to ruin all Dutch foreign commercial endeavors. The strategy was simple: prohibit all imports and exports from Dutch territory worldwide.²⁹³ In addition, France hoped to gain cooperation from England, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in the destruction of the Dutch Republic by promising these countries the opportunity to take over control of international trade from the Dutch.²⁹⁴ This proposal must have been appealing to the other nations. The Dutch United East India Company (*VOC*) and West India Company (*WIC*) had dominated foreign trade since the late sixteenth-century, replacing the Portuguese and Spanish in the Eastern trade. Attempts from other countries to break into this highly profitable enterprise largely failed, because the Dutch attacked any trade ship that challenged Dutch dominance in a territory. Especially England wanted a share of the material prosperity the Dutch had generated during the seventeenth-century. In the latter part of the seventeenth-century, they declared war on the Dutch Republic three times, and battles were fought between 1652-1654, 1665-1667, and 1672-1674.²⁹⁵ Considering this history, it is not surprising that the English, and other nations, joined the French in their efforts to conquer the Dutch Republic.

On November 2, 1671, in response to the French boycott of Dutch goods, the Estates General of the Dutch Republic issued a placard to all Dutch inhabitants stating that it was no longer allowed to import, buy, sell, consume, or trade in French wines, vinegars, canvas, paper,

²⁹³ Anonymous, *Les Moyens de la France pour ruiner le Commerce des Hollandois, avec ses interests a l'esgard des Estrangers, presentés au Roy pas ses Ministers* (Brussels: Laques Petit, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9887, p.3.

²⁹⁴ Anonymous, *Les Moyens de la France pour ruiner le Commerce des Hollandois, avec ses interests a l'esgard des Estrangers, presentés au Roy pas ses Ministers* (Brussels: Laques Petit, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #9887, p.9.

²⁹⁵ See J.R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch wars of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996).

and chestnuts.²⁹⁶ Although, none of these goods were necessary to sustain life, specialized stores prospered in selling these products to wealthy customers, and many merchants earned a living in this chain of trade. The direct and indirect consequences of these maneuvers, on the French as well as on the Dutch side, must have had an apprehensive effect on society. The placard was intended to reach all layers of the population. The tensions between the royal house of France and the Estates General of the Netherlands was, at least by November 2, 1671, undeniable, and the general public must have been aware of it.

One of the most fascinating pamphlets in the archive is titled *French Prognosticatie ofte Prophetische Voorseggingen, door Michel Ruholts, huysman in Westphalen, buyten de stad Boeckholt* (“French prognoses or prophetic foresight, by Michiel Ruholts, houseman in Westphalen, outside of the city of Boeckholt”).²⁹⁷ H. Wageveldus in Amsterdam, translated this Westphalian publication from German to Dutch. Author Michiel Ruholts, a psychic adviser, was heralded for “correctly predicting” the invasion of the Bishop of Munster in Dutch territory in 1665, among other important events. In this work he gives a month-to-month prediction for the year 1672 to the Bishops of Cologne and Strasbourg. However, his predictions for the year 1672 were terribly inaccurate.

A note of caution is necessary at this point. I want to emphasize again that the reach of and reactions to circulating pamphlets and other material is impossible. I can only evaluate the sources and the context, and speculate about the ways in which the populace might have received the information. This is especially true for the following publications/ propaganda that are based

²⁹⁶ Estates Generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden, *Placcaet inhoudende verbodt tegens het inbrengen, verkopen, koopen ofte consumeren van alle Fransche koele-wijnen, azines, canvas, paper, ende kastanien* (The Hague: Jacob Scheltus, 1671). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #9885.

²⁹⁷ Michel Ruholts, *Fransche Prognosticatie ofte Prophetische Voorseggingen, door Michel Ruholts, huysman in Westphalen, buyten de stad Boeckholt, uyt Westphaals, translated by H. Wageveldus* (Amsterdam/Santfoort: Fredrick Klinckhamer, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #9923.

on the supposed psychic abilities of two human beings. Although people in the early-modern period may have been more superstitious and therefore more gullible in accepting what they read or heard, the truth value given to these two sources can simply not be uncovered. I do argue, however, that for the people who did believe the premonitions, the future must have looked frightening. This fear of future events, even if only experienced by a few, may have become a slumbering undercurrent in society, ready to be awoken when events escalated on Saturday, August 20, 1672.

Ruholts predictions for the first half of 1672 were as follows. France would triumph in conquering most of Europe, much like Julius Caesar had done.²⁹⁸ In January, a French army would invade Picardy and Charleroi, alarming the magistrates in the Netherlands. By February, the French would have made it to Maastricht in the province of Limburg (most southern point of the Netherlands today). The village of *Nieuwberg* would accept Louis XIV as ruler, allowing the French military forces to march up closer to the Dutch Republic. It would not be until March that the French monarch declares war on Holland. Then, Ruholts predicted, England would come to support the Dutch at sea and the Dutch would raise two armies—one next to and the other above the French military camps. Sweden would enter the stage on the side of the Dutch in April. This would frighten the French troops. Brandenburg would appear with a military force as well. In May, the French troops would march further into the Netherlands, resulting in an influx of *bars volck* (crude folk).²⁹⁹ Both the Dutch and the English would take their fleet to fight the French at sea. It would not be until June that the French army would be defeated by the Spanish between

²⁹⁸ Michel Ruholts, *Fransche Prognosticatie ofte Prophetische Voorseggingen, door Michel Ruholts, huysman in Westphalen, buyten de stad Boeckholt, uyt Westphaals, translated by H. Wageveldus* (Amsterdam/Santfoort: Fredrick Klinckhamer, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #9923, p.2.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

Maastricht and *Uften*, resulting in devastation for the people. Eventually, there would be a naval confrontation in front of Calais between the French on one side, and the Dutch and English on the other. The Dutch would capture two French ships and the Dutch population would rejoice.

Michiel Ruholts' predictions for the second half of 1672 failed to mention the horrendous destiny of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt in August. Quite the opposite, he predicted a victory for the Dutch lion that month. By September of 1672, Ruholts states, the violent confrontations between powers would be at their worst and forces would start to get exhausted. The King of France would get attacked with a stabbing to the chest in November, but he would survive. In the same month, because of the unexpected cold season, French troops would withdraw to temporary forts along the Rhine River. By December, the "European wolves" would start to bite each other and commence negotiations for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts. Furthermore, in this last month of the year, parties would nominate ambassadors for different countries, guaranteeing peace for 1673. It appears that Michiel Ruholts' psychic foresight was based on information that was already available in the public sphere, such as the formation of the Triple Alliance and the advancements of the French troops.³⁰⁰ Nonetheless, this type of propaganda, either factual or concluded from nonsense, circulated in the Dutch Republic and indicated war and overall devastation for the inhabitants of the Netherlands.

More accurate predictions were given in the pamphlet *Waerachtigh Verhael, van twee Wonderlijcke Voorteecken en die Godt Almachtigh gelieft heeft te openbaren omtrent de Stadt Arnhem* ("True Story of two Miraculous Predictions that the God Almighty has revealed

³⁰⁰ For a more scientific and realistic month-to-month account of events, see J.A. Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672* (Bussum: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1971).

regarding the city of Arnhem”).³⁰¹ This publication was written after the French had conquered Arnhem. The author claims that God had given the people of this city two very clear foresights of the advancing military forces, and the subsequent invasion, but that they had not heeded the warning. The first one describes the case of two women who worked at night in the bleaching factory by the mill. During one night, they heard the most alarming noises in the field behind the mill as if large groups of people were walking. These people spoke French and were throwing citizens of Arnhem into the Rhine river. Although the tumult continued for an hour, when the women went out to see what was going on, nobody was there. Before the French attack on Arnhem, it had been unfathomable that a French army could cross the Rhine to reach the city of Arnhem, let alone conquer it. As a result, the author explains, the attack could have been prevented if the story of the women would have been taken seriously.³⁰²

In the second story, the army of the Prince of Orange plays an important part. This foresight positioned the French king with his troops on the hill situated in front of Arnhem. From this hill, the *Betuwe* (area along the Rhine) could be watched. Around 2:30am, the guard of the St. Jan’s gate heard terrifying noises coming from the hill, as if thousands of horses were galloping towards the city. He quickly alarmed every city guard to take position and defend the city. For a short while, there was hope among the people of Arnhem that the army of the Prince of Orange was on its way to defeat the French troops, but this turned out to be false. When the

³⁰¹ Anonymous, *Waerachtig Verhael van Twee Wonderlijcke Voorteecken en die Godt Almachtigh gelieft heeft te openbaren omtrent de Stadt Arnhem, dienende tot troost en seeckerlijcke hoop van hare toekomende Verlossinge uyt desen tegenworodigen droevigen toestand* (1672). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel archive #10080.

³⁰² Anonymous, *Waerachtig Verhael van Twee Wonderlijcke Voorteecken en die Godt Almachtigh gelieft heeft te openbaren omtrent de Stadt Arnhem, dienende tot troost en seeckerlijcke hoop van hare toekomende Verlossinge uyt desen tegenworodigen droevigen toestand* (1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #10080, p.3-4.

guards investigated further, nobody appeared to be on the hill and the alarm was halted.³⁰³

According to the writer, these “dreams” were warnings from God for the approaching danger and a clear sign that the army of the Prince of Orange would not rescue the citizens of Arnhem from their demise. As a result, the writer claims, the fear for the French should be graver than ever.³⁰⁴

The fact that these stories were published in pamphlet form and circulated in the Dutch Republic suggests that this was another form of propaganda. The actions of the French troops in these stories, throwing people in the river and a full attack by French forces on the city, were most likely made up to turn the population against the French monarch, as well as to invoke fear in the people of Arnhem. The last story can also be seen as propaganda against William III, Prince of Orange, because the story conveys that not even the prince’s armies could rescue the suffering people.

Early in 1672, a publication appeared that was allegedly translated into Dutch from a written document issued out of the royal court of France.³⁰⁵ It is highly unlikely that this ever occurred. Nonetheless, this text circulated in the Dutch Republic and should therefore be included to trace invasion-related publications, although with the assumption that it is propaganda. In this document, the King of France, supposedly backed up by two experts in State affairs (Lionne and Colbert), unambiguously set out his plans for the conquest of Europe, and the

³⁰³ Ibid, p.6.

³⁰⁴ Anonymous, *Waerachtig Verhael van Twee Wonderlijcke Voorteecken die Godt Almachtigh gelieft heeft te openbaren omtrent de Stadt Arnhem, dienende tot troost en seeckerlijcke hoop van hare toekomstende Verlossinge uyt desen tegenworodigen droevigen toestant* (1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #10080, p.7.

³⁰⁵ King of France and Navarre, Louis XIV, Mr. Colbert, and Mr. Lionne, “*van Gerechtigheid en het Recht van Oorloge, in Frankrijk tegenwoordig gebruickelijc. Dewelke onder de beschuttinge van de Staets-kundige Professoren, de Heren Lionne en Colbert, tegens aller Rechtsgeleerden inworpen heeft voorgenomen te sustineren Ludowijck den XIV. Koninck van Vranckrijk en Navarre. Ende is gedisputeert geworden het Konincklijcke Paleys den 14 January 1672* (Paris, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #10002.

tactics he would use, as well as the legal foundation on which he would base the justification for his strategies.³⁰⁶ The pamphlet further states that people are created for the benefit of the king and he has the right to be deceitful towards them. A king should promise a great deal, while not acting upon it, the author claims. Similarly, concerning Europe, the desire to rule is sufficient to attack other nations and there is no need to officially declare war. Magic potions or unfamiliar weapons may be used in order to weaken the adversaries. Lastly, to cause suffering it is effective to pollute drinking water and halt the food supply of the enemy.³⁰⁷ The content of this publication, in which the French king is a ruthless, deceitful, and arrogant ruler, clearly did not come from the French council, but must have been intended to invoke fear for a possible rule of the French monarch.

The remainder of the document, titled *Methods to Suppress the Dutch People*, probably terrified the Dutch populace, if they believed it. The author, allegedly Louis XIV himself, emphasizes that through his marriage with the daughter of Philip IV of Spain, he has the right to rule over the Dutch Republic (the Right of Devolution). Also, because the Dutch were not willing to hand over the Republic voluntarily, the French monarch states that France would unite with England and the rest of European powers against the Netherlands by promising these forces parts of Dutch territory. Even the Papal States would join, per Louis XIV, because of their detestation of Protestantism. Furthermore, Louis XIV declares that he would use treason and deceit to get his way, with a special treatment reserved for the public of the Netherlands. At first,

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Waerachtig Verhael van Twee Wonderlijcke Voorteecken en die Godt Almachtigh gelieft heeft te openbaren omtrent de Stadt Arnhem, dienende tot troost en seeckerlijcke hoop van hare toekomende Verlossinge uyt desen tegenworodigen droevigen toestant* (1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlets archive #10080, p.2, points 2, 3, 6, 10, 15, 16, 59, and 60.

he would “lure the people by promising them wealth and prosperity, only to proceed with devastation and death. “We (the French) will set fires, plunder, rape, and kill all people. Even babies in the mother’s womb will not be spared.”³⁰⁸

As obvious as it may seem that this pamphlet is fake and clearly intended to ignite fear in the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic, for seventeenth-century Dutch folks it may have appeared very real. Memories of an oppressive ruler, Philip II, spreading public warnings of religious violence, war, and arrests, still lingered in Dutch society through textbooks and songs about the eighty-year war with Spain. Direct violent action, war atrocities, and empty promises made by the Duke of Alba, had only been too real a century before. News about the French invasion coming from the East, described similar atrocities committed by French troops that were on their way West. The idea of Louis XIV taking over the Dutch Republic, a Republic that had fought a long, harsh war to be freed from an oppressive ruler, must have been a scary foresight for the Dutch, even if the content was not taken literally.

Starting around June 1, 1672, French military forces were advancing rapidly in the direction of the Dutch Republic. In a *blauw boeckjen* (little blue book) published in Amsterdam in 1672, an anonymous writer warns the Dutch population about the violent attacks occurring in *Orsoy, Rhijnberck, Weesel, Burick, Rees, and Emmerijck*, villages along the Rhine River.³⁰⁹ He

³⁰⁸ King of France and Navarre, Louis XIV, Mr. Colbert, and Mr. Lionne, *Postitie van Gerechtigheid en het Recht van Oorloge, in Frankrijk tegenwoordig gebruikelijk. Dewelke onder de beschuttinge van de Staets-kundige Professoren, de Heren Lionne en Colbert, tegens aller Rechtsgeleerden inworpen heeft voorgenomen te sustineren Ludowijck den XIV. Koninck van Vranckrijk en Navarre. Ende is gesidputeert geworden het Konincklijke Paleys den 14 January 1672* (Paris, 1672). Knuttel 10002, p. 7, points 2 and 3, and p. 8, point 8.

³⁰⁹ Anonymous, *Bondigh en Waerachtig Verhael van het voornaamst voorgevallen aan de Rhijn bijzonderlijk in, voor, en omtrent Orsoay, rhijberck, Weesel, Burrick, Rees, en Emmerijck. Nauwkeurig opgesocht, en beschreven van een oogh, en oorgetuigh van het principaelste deselfs, na de oprechte Waarheydt*, (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velzen, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection.

A *blauw boeckjen* (a little blue book) is a publicized news medium of more than one page unlike a pamphlet. These little blue books are part of the Knuttel archive.

emphasizes that these stories were well-researched and recorded by an eyewitness. However, just like present-day gossip-magazines that make similar claims of telling the truth based on eyewitness accounts, this statement should be taken with a grain of salt as well. In addition, even if the content was written by an eyewitness, it is still the perception of that one person and not facts. But true or fake news, the author intentionally communicated the following to his audience. He starts by cautioning the people of Holland that the King of France, Louis XIV, expressed the desire to duplicate the conquests of Julius Ceasar and was forcefully going to bring all of Europe under his rule, including large parts of the Dutch Republic.³¹⁰ The writer further states that already 40,000 foot soldiers and cavalry had arrived at the borders of the United Provinces, followed by young men, thieves, prostitutes, and more dubious folk, resulting in an army of 146,270 people.³¹¹ The last part of this warning is outright amusing and not true. If it is a true observation, this plethora of criminals did not settle in The Hague. No court records show such an influx of criminals in the judicial system in 1672. In addition, the author reveals that that “this army would bring horrifying bombs and grenades, heavy weaponry of all sizes, all kinds of fireworks, as well as wagons filled with tools, saddles, boots, clothing and everything else an army would need.”³¹² Because this information seems outrageous as well, I think it is safe to assume that the content of this “little blue book” should not be taken very seriously.

³¹⁰Anonymous, *Bondigh en Waerachtig Verhael van het voornaamst voorgevallen aan de Rhijn bijzonderlijck in, voor, en omtrent Orsoay, rhijberck, Weesel, Burrick, Rees, en Emmerijck. Nauwkeurig opgesocht, en beschreven van een oogh, en oorgetuigh van het principaelste deselfs, na de oprechte Waarheydt*, (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velzen, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection. p. 4.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.5.

³¹² Anonymous, *Bondigh en Waerachtig Verhael van het voornaamst voorgevallen aan de Rhijn bijzonderlijck in, voor, en omtrent Orsoay, rhijberck, Weesel, burrick, Rees, en Emmerijck. Nauwkeurig opgesocht, en beschreven van een oogh, en oorgetuigh van het prnicipaelste deselfs, na de oprechte Waarheydt* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velzen, 1672). Knuttel 10045, p.5

Like the authors of other news sources, this writer of the blue book appears irritated, even angry by arguing that the Dutch did not take the advancements of the French serious. He complains that common people stayed silent while the magistrates negotiated peace with Louis XIV through elaborate correspondence that was not yielding any results.³¹³ Furthermore, the author continues, meetings of the Dutch ward council resulted in a deadlock because some of the captains urged to surrender under favorable conditions, while, others expressed a strong interest in fighting the French along the Dutch border. The net result was complete inaction from Dutch authorities, according to the author.³¹⁴ In the meantime, the author continues, the “French fury” was relentless in capturing villages along the Rhine. They erratically shot innocent people, demanded a direct surrender, plundered, stole goods, and took the clothing off people’s backs to beat them.³¹⁵

In the last part of his article, the author increases his scare-tactics by claiming that in case a village surrendered, such as Wesel on June 4, 1672, and Rees on June 9, 1672, the conditions stipulated in the *articulen* (articles) were straightforward. All soldiers would be made prisoners of war, but they could pay a ransom to free themselves. Furthermore, women, children, servants, horses, wagons, and household goods were to be brought within the village wall. Ammunition and weapons had to be handed to the French authorities, who were in control of the village. In addition, all soldiers were under command of the French king.³¹⁶

³¹³ Ibid., p.5.

³¹⁴ Anonymous, *Bondigh en Waerachtig Verhael van het voornaamst voorgevallen aan de Rhijn bijzonderlijk in, voor, en omtrent Orsoay, rhijberck, Weesel, Burrick, Rees, en Emmerijck. Nauwkeurig opgesocht, en beschreven van een oog, en oorgetuigh van het principaelste deselfs, na de oprechte Waarheydt*, (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velzen, 1672). Pamphlet. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet collection, #10045, p.8.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p.6.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 23 and 39.

Later in this chapter, I compare factual events with the content of this article and although the author is correct on some of the points, it seems that he had little insight or nuance in explaining the evolving events. More important, however, is the fact that this little book did circulate in the Dutch Republic and most likely, also in The Hague. A gullible reader, already tense considering the information floating in the public sphere about the French threat, may feel angered about the inactions of the magistrates while the French could seemingly march uninterrupted into the Dutch Republic with a slew of criminals behind them.

Noteworthy is also that the author reminisces over the actions of William I, Prince of Orange against the Spanish ruler a century prior. He heralds the armies of the prince, pro-actively defeating the powerful Spanish troops and setting the Dutch free. In doing this, the author expresses the desire for a strong military strategy rather than surrender or negotiate to avoid a confrontation. He claims that the Dutch lion is being bullied by the French, while the current magistrates of the Republic collaborated with Louis XIV, causing the defeat of the Dutch Republic.³¹⁷ By stating this, he points directly at Johan and Cornelis as the culprits of a seemingly unavoidable invasion of enemy forces. He takes this point even further.

This author is the first who directly advocates killing Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. Written two months before the brutal murder of the brothers, the accuracy in describing the details of this horrendous event is uncanny. He writes that the *grouwelijcke* (nasty) betrayers (Johan and Cornelis as well as their followers), would have to flee or they would be put to death in the most horrifying manner after which their bodies would be left to the elements. Their remnants would

³¹⁷ Anonymous, *Bondigh en Waerachtig Verhael van het voornaamst voorgevallen aan de Rhijn bijzonderlijk in, voor, en omtrent Orsoay, rhijberck, Weesel, burrick, Rees, en Emmerijck. Nauwkeurig opgesocht, en beschreven van een ooggh, en oorgetuigh van het prncipaelste deselfs, na de oprechte Waarheydt* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velzen, 1672). Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #10045, p. 43.

decay, the author continues, and the smell would be agonizing. Over time, the writer claims, nothing would remain of these traitors and they will be forgotten. The aim was to restore the “old” fatherland to its glorious state once more, while freedom and joy would return to the people.³¹⁸ The purpose of this little blue book is obvious. It is written by a supporter of the House of Orange and should be categorized as propaganda against Johan and Cornelis. I doubt that this one pamphlet directly influenced the people to commit the gruesome deed on August 20, 1672. Nonetheless, after people read the horrendous details of the actions of the French troops, especially coming from an alleged eyewitness, DeWitt supporters may have changed their mind in favor of the Prince of Orange.

As rumors of French military forces approaching the borders of the Dutch Republic increased and became more persistent, Johan and Cornelis suffered more frequent direct attacks in the media. In *Waerschouwinghe aen alle Edelmoedige en getrouwe Inwoonderen van Nederlandt, July 1672* (“Warning for all the Noble and Loyal Citizens of the Netherlands, July 1672”), a case is made against the DeWitt brothers. It references directly to the “betrayers of the *Loevensteinse Huis*.”³¹⁹ This group of men had actively resisted Maurice, Prince of Orange earlier in the seventeenth-century. It included Johan and Cornelis’ father, Jacob DeWitt, as well as Hugo Grotius and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. In this publication, Johan and Cornelis are also accused of working with the French monarch to enrich themselves at the expense of the people of the Dutch Republic. According to the writer, Johan had done everything in his power to halt the progress of the Prince of Orange through bribery and betrayal, and apparently had claimed

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.44-45.

³¹⁹ Anonymous, *Waerschouwinghe aen alle Edelmodiege en getrouwe inwoonderen van Nederlandt*. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #10346, p.1.

that he would “rather be French, than Prince.”³²⁰ In addition, the author argues, the only reason Cornelis DeWitt wanted to assist Admiral DeRuyter in the attack on the English was to glorify himself. However, he continues, contrary to past princes of Orange who fought on the front line of the war against the Spanish, Johan DeWitt was nowhere to be seen in defending the Dutch people from Louis XIV. Clearly, this too is Orangist propaganda and emphasized once more the inactiveness and disloyalty of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

I have attempted to show that besides propaganda directly aimed at the DeWitt brothers (as other Dutch historians have argued), other publications about the French and an upcoming invasion circulated within the Dutch Republic as well. Propaganda about the sinister plans of Louis XIV, the untrustworthiness of French people, and fabricated stories about the conduct of French troops in Arnhem may have caused an undercurrent of apprehension, tension, and fear within The Hague’s public sphere. Men and women were, most likely, discussing these unfolding events among each other, possibly twisting or exacerbating the events with each person. Publications, either real or fictionalized, pertaining to war, atrocities committed by foreign forces, and dangers of approaching armies were not new to the Dutch populace.

Although, the Dutch Republic experienced relatively peaceful twenty-four years prior to the French invasion (the wars with England were fought at sea), it had endured numerous direct and indirect consequences of several European wars, the most significant of course the war of independence with Spain which was fought out on Dutch soil. Reminders of this war were still tangible in Dutch society and anxieties from these experiences might have been easily provoked by stories about a new invasion, especially if authors made a direct comparison between the

³²⁰ Anonymous, “*aen alle Edelmodiege en getrouwe inwoonderen van Nederlandt*. Royal Library The Hague, Knuttel pamphlet archive #10346, p. 2.

Spanish and French invasion. Before I discuss factual events of the French invasion as documented in the Municipal archive of Arnhem to compare fake from real news, it is interesting to examine the ways in which the Estates General handled the information about the approaching French troops.

THE ESTATES GENERAL AND THE FRENCH INVASION

Johan was often referred to as a *schelm* and *landverrader* (rogue and traitor) for his continued efforts to negotiate peace with the French monarch.³²¹ The accusation of treason did not fit Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. Notes from meetings of the Estates General of the Province of Holland show that the brothers were tied by the rules of the political system that had been in place for centuries.³²² In this system, each province had a representative in the Estates General. In addition, each city sent a representative to participate in the meetings as well. Lastly, the Dutch nobility claimed their rights to one vote total in important decisions also. Instead of a majority rule, there had to be a one hundred percent agreement between all three groups of representatives for decisions to be executed. As a result, with each passing day that the French

³²¹ Anonymous, *Waerlijck Verhael, Van 't Geene (sonderling na 't Wereltlijcke) is Voorgevallen Op en nae de Apprehensie, Sententie en Executie, den 21 en 29 Juny 1672, tegens den jongen Heer Jacob van der Graef, alsmede de Wonderlijcke Opmerckinge omtrent het Sterven vande Twee Groote vermaerde Mannen, Mr. Jan en Kornelis de Wit* (1672), p. 3.

³²² Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903).

were progressing further toward and into the Dutch Republic, the Estates General were debating identical issues from one meeting to the next without coming to any decisive action.

At the same time, the Estates General received reports that large French armies - assisted by the armies of England and Kingdoms of Brandenburg and Köln - were advancing along the Rhine in the east of the Dutch Republic. The number of French troops reported in the minutes of the official Estates meetings is staggering. However, changes in military strategy after the Thirty-year war may explain the recorded numbers. John Childs in his article "The British Brigade in France, 1672-1678," states that the Thirty-year war (1618-1648) had produced the concept of a large, national, standing army in most European countries.³²³ In times of need, expanding a national army could be accomplished in two ways. First, as Childs explains, "one formed, national army hired its troops to another (nation)."³²⁴ Second, trained soldiers from other countries could be recruited privately to join a standing army.³²⁵ By 1672, under the Secret Treaty of Dover, England had provided 6,000 troops to the French standing army for the conquest of the Dutch Republic. When, in February of 1672, Louis XIV officially declared war on the Dutch Republic, he had an army of at least 120,000 trained soldiers.³²⁶

What follows are the almost day-to-day recordings of the meetings of the Estates General as they face several dilemmas in deciding how to defend the Dutch Republic from the French

³²³ John Childs, "The British Brigade in France, 1672-1678," *History*, vol. 69, 227 (1984), p.384-397, p. 384.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 384.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 384.

³²⁶ John Childs, "The British Brigade in France, 1672-1678," *History*, vol. 69, 227 (1984), p.384-397, p. 386. Other research concluded that, since 1660, the French army grew to a total of 250,00-340,000 effective soldiers, J.A. Lynn, "Recalculating French Army Growth during the Grand Siecle, 1615-1715, p.117-147 in Clifford J. Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (New York: Avalon Publishing, 1995), p. 125.

invasion. Their most important problems are the consequences of not investing in a professional army during the twenty-two years prior and the indecisiveness in how to allocate the money per province.

By the end of 1671, the notes of the Estates General confirm that the French troops are in the South of the Spanish Netherlands advancing rapidly along the Rhine river toward the border of the Dutch Republic.³²⁷ Although it is unknown at this point where the focus of protection should be, an urgent demand is made by the Council of State for the swift fortifications of cities along the border as well as the purchase of extra cannons. To finance these expenses, the council suggest that each province contributes financially for an initial amount of seven million guilders. The representatives of the provinces agree to this support, but also state that “money cannot fight” and that besides money, manpower is needed to form an army. For example, the representative of Friesland states that it will arrange for 10,000 men to fight the French at sea.³²⁸ A comment is made that the governor of Limburg (in the South) is fearing the arrival of French troops and seeks help. Although the governor is correct in his assumption, apparently the Estates General ignore the request.³²⁹

A main concern for the Estates General is the fact that two important rivers, the Rhine and the *Ijssel*, running from east to west in the Republic, need to remain open for the transportation of foodstuff and goods to Holland. The members of the Estates General argue

³²⁷ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903). p.2.

³²⁸ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.54.

³²⁹ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.59.

therefore that fortifications along those rivers are necessary. At the same time, the locks in the rivers should be opened to overflow the area between *Zutphen* and *Deventer* as an added defense. Amsterdam is ordered to strategically place larger ships on the Rhine and the *Ijssel* to protect itself from intruders. In the meantime, on March 30, 1672, the French armies are approaching *Rijnbeck*, close to the Dutch border, with a total of 97,000 soldiers.³³⁰ Again, during the meeting, the demand is made for more foot soldiers to serve in the Dutch army and a debate starts on how to accomplish this.

Complaints have come from the cities in Gelderland that the soldiers and officers of the Dutch army are unprepared in equipment and inexperienced in their skills. Although by now a defense structure of 161 companies on horseback and 709 companies on foot was in place, most of these men did not have proper military training because they had been recruited from the regular populace. It is also noted that the avenues to recruit more men were exhausted and that even foreign sources had dried up.³³¹ In other words, all men that were available already served in the armed forces of the Dutch Republic. Johan DeWitt states that only with resolute action and enough financial support can the Dutch be saved from the French. DeWitt continues by claiming that the preparations are in progress, although it remains unclear what these preparations are.³³²

³³⁰ Ibid., p.99.

³³¹ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.101.

³³² Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p. 103.

However, the French are strengthening their forces daily. By May 13, 1672, the French army is close to the Dutch border.³³³

In the meeting of May 20, 1672, a proposal is issued that *burghers* and *huysluiden* (common people) should be forced to participate in the defense with household tools such as spades.³³⁴ This proposal seems unrealistic. How did they expect a force of common people to fight a professional army of over 120,000 men with household tools? Furthermore, the Estates General recommend that all capable men should be forced to serve in the army. An ill-advised suggestion as it turns out. The news angers the population and local conflicts arise in the province of Holland. In *Scheveningen*, for example, the farmers threatened to shoot the colonel in the head, while in *Noordwijk* a rebellion of 200 to 300 women arises against the plan.³³⁵ The cities of *Delft* and *Enckhuysen* side with the burghers and advocate voluntary participation for its citizens.³³⁶ Utrecht claims that the city will send 1,000 burghers and 1,000 *huysluyden* to aid in the east, along villages near the Rhine river. Thus, not only did the Estates General face the French threat, they now also had to deal with a tense internal situation.

The Estates General faced the dilemma of not knowing where the French were planning to cross the border.³³⁷ They anticipated two possible locations for invasion. One was in the south, along the *Maas* river and then on to *Gorinchem*. The second option was crossing the Rhine at *Rhenen* and then marching on to *Utrecht*. The main concern was that if the troops advanced to

³³³ Ibid., p. 71.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

³³⁶ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p. 144.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 152, June 8 and 9, 1672.

Utrecht, and Utrecht's defense forces would be unable to defeat them, the route to *Woerden* and *Naerden* on the border of the Dutch waterline was easily within reach. Therefore, the focus, as the Estates General argued on June 4, 1672 should be on defending the river the *Ijssel*. On June 2, 1672, William III, Prince of Orange, advanced to *Boeckholt* near *Arnhem* with an army of 8,000 horsemen and 1,000 Spanish soldiers to protect the *Ijssel* from the French troops, hardly enough to make a dent in the French offense.

There are well over fifty cities along the Rhine and *Ijssel* rivers, and the Prince of Orange quickly called upon the Estates to send five more companies.³³⁸ At this point, the members of the Estates General felt assured that the current military forces, combined with 12,000 *huysluyden* and 1,000 people from Utrecht as well as 2,000 Spanish soldiers under the command of the marquis van Westerlo will be able to stop the French in their tracks on the east border of the Dutch Republic. Johan DeWitt, probably feeling the pressure to get proactively involved in the defense efforts, stated that he could not possibly leave The Hague as his political duties should be given priority. However, he argued, "we have made enormous progress in our defense forces. We have received Spanish aid, fortified villages, and drafted enough men into the army."³³⁹ Clearly, both the Estates General and Johan DeWitt were unjustly optimistic about the Dutch military forces. Erroneous observations like the ones stated above show how naïve Dutch magistrates were their dealings with the French monarch and his troops.

³³⁸ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.145.

³³⁹ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p. 149, June 4, 1672.

By June 9, 1672, countless complaints from the front reached the Estates General. The Dutch army lacked proper nutrition and became sickly.³⁴⁰ Further demands included money, an increased supply of gunpowder as well as extra canons. *Raadspensionares* DeWitt admitted during the meeting that there were not enough funds to cover more manpower or material cost. In the assembly of June 10, 1672 an alternative solution was formulated. Instead of actively fighting the French soldiers, the focus should shift to maintaining the current position along the *Ijssel* river.³⁴¹ In other words, save all material and manpower for defense efforts rather than use these sources for attacking an army that was much stronger. As the anxiety regarding the failing defense forces clearly increased in the notes of the General Estates, the French crossed the border at *Lobith*, near *Nijmegen* in the east on June 12, 1672. The water of the Rhine had been at a historic low, clearing the route for the French to cross the river into the Dutch Republic. High water in the large rivers historically protected the northern provinces of the Netherlands from invasion. Consequently, this point of access had not been taken into consideration by the Dutch, and defense power in the area was non-existent. Obviously, the actual invasion was cause for great alarm in the Dutch Republic. The first orders were given to open the locks to flood the area around the Province of Holland for protection.³⁴²

After a week of failing to prevent the French military from advancing toward Utrecht, the burgomaster of *Woerden* (slightly under Utrecht on the map), warned that if the French soldiers would arrive at Utrecht, the city would immediately surrender to avoid a disaster for the

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p.153, June 9, 1672.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 153, 154, and 156, June 9 and 10, 1672.

³⁴² Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), , p.160 and p.162. June 11 and 12, 1672.

populace. Unrealistically, the Estates General agreed that *huysluyden* should be mandated to serve in the defense for the Province of Holland under penalty of death.³⁴³ This caused tremendous upheaval in the towns of Holland and province-wide protests began instantly. Johan DeWitt warned the Estates General that great confusion controlled the people and that if the regents were unable to exhibit powerful leadership and take charge of their people as well as the situation within their villages, then “the enemy within is greater than the enemy on the outside.”³⁴⁴ Ironically, with this statement Johan DeWitt recognizes the threat that comes from an angry, fearful population.

In the meantime, news reached the Estates General that the cities of *Arnhem*, *Nijmegen*, and *Doesburg* had surrendered to Louis XIV. The situation for the inhabitants of the Province of Holland appeared grim. Trade, export, and import conducted over the major rivers had come to a halt. The Amsterdam stock market had plummeted from its highest point of 566% in July 1671 to 290% by July 1672, the biggest drop in its history. This in turn generated insecurities for investors and the population alike.³⁴⁵ Farmers started to arm themselves, not against the French, but against their own burgomasters and regents.³⁴⁶ As the propaganda machine in favor of the Prince of Orange was at full speed by this time, the first demands were made for Johan DeWitt to step down.

³⁴³ Ibid., p.165, June 20, 1672.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 165, June 20, 1672.

³⁴⁵ H. den Heijer, *De Geoctrooieerde Compagnie: de VOC en de WIC als Voorlopers van de Naamloze vennootschap* (Deventer: Uitgeverij Kluwer, 2005), bijlage 4.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 165, 166.

The notes of June 22, 1672, include a short description of the first attempt to severely harm or even kill Johan DeWitt.³⁴⁷ On his way home, Johan was attacked by four young men, who were later identified as the sons of councilmen (Orangists) of The Hague, Van der Graaf, De Bruyn, en Borbagh. The *raadspensionaris* had received four deep stab wounds with a sword in his torso, injuring him critically. Jacob van der Graeff was arrested for this crime and imprisoned in the *Gevangenispoort*. The Estates General awarded the sum of 5,000 guilders for information about the other perpetrators. A day later, the notes reveal a short discussion about the legal circumstances of this crime. The members of the Estates General took the situation very serious and agreed that because Johan DeWitt was the highest member of the Estates General of Holland, the event should be considered a crime against the state. As a result, not the local courts of The Hague should handle the judicial procedures, but the higher court, the *Hof van Holland*.³⁴⁸ The members of the Estates General were not as pro-active when Johan and Cornelis were murdered. Nobody was prosecuted for those crimes. In the meantime, the Bishops of Cologne and Munster in cooperation with a total of 16,000 French soldiers and under command of the Duke of Luxembourg – who had been recruited by Louis XIV - invaded *Deventer*.³⁴⁹

Between June 22 and June 25, 1672, all cities and towns in the path of the French army had surrendered. The situation for the Province of Holland became hopeless which resulted in wide spread rebellion against the ruling elite of town and cities. The Estates General held daily

³⁴⁷ See chapter 3, Hof van Holland cases.

³⁴⁸ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, “Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675” in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), and 171, June 22, 1672, p.170.

³⁴⁹ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.171.

meetings, frantically discussing a solution for the increasing tumult. The main debate focused on the question of surrender. *Leiden*, *Dordrecht*, and *Haarlem* wanted to capitulate without even exercising the thought of fighting the French monarch. Other cities disagreed with this approach and kept advocating the possibility of drafting people into the army. By June 28, 1672, Johan DeWitt had entered peace negotiations with Louvois Pomponne, representative to the French king.

After June 25, 1672, social and financial troubles arose throughout the Province of Holland. Rebellions occurred in the important cities of *Delft*, *Dordrecht*, *Gouda*, and *Rotterdam*, where fishermen and farmers from *Maassluis* had taken up arms against their regents.³⁵⁰ The people demanded that William III, Prince of Orange should be instated as Stadtholder, so he could take charge of the dire situation against the French similar to the actions of William I, Prince of Orange in 1568 against the Spanish invader. However, on August 5th, 1667, during peace negotiations with England, the Estates General had adopted the *Eeuwige Edict*. The goal of this agreement was to let the stadtholderless period (that started in 1650 after the death of stadtholder Frederick Hendrick) last infinitely (*eeuwig*). Under this agreement, Princes of Orange could not become stadholder. The main petition of the populace of Holland and Westvriesland was for the instant removal of Johan DeWitt from office and the restoration of William III, Prince of Orange as stadtholder of Holland and Westvriesland. Cornelis DeWitt, regent of Dordrecht, was forced by his people to denounce the *Eeuwige Edict*, which he strongly refused at

³⁵⁰ Daan J. Roorda, *Partij en factie: de oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen, 1961), p. 214 and Rudolf Dekker, *Holland in Beroering: oproeren in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Baarn, 1982).

first. Nonetheless, on July 1, 1672, Cornelis succumbed, albeit under protest.³⁵¹ Johan DeWitt stepped down from his political position on August 4, 1672.

From the sequence of the notes and the sentiments contained within those documents, it can be concluded that on August 20, 1672, the accumulated tensions among the people and their rulers were coming to a climax. Gaspar Fagel has become Grand Pensionary of Holland and Westvriesland in lieu of Johan DeWitt. The notes state that commotion has arisen in front of the *Voorpoort*, because Cornelis DeWitt will be released from prison that afternoon. The members of the Estate General agreed that order should be restored as quickly as possible, so they decide to send a company of horsemen with arms to break up, and if necessary, to shoot into the crowd. Rumors of angry farmers approaching spread through the city as well, adding to the existing turmoil. This meeting ends at 11.30am.³⁵² Johan and Cornelis DeWitt will be killed later that day.

The next Monday, August 22, 1672, the gruesome reality of the death of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt become apparent to the members of the Estates General. The notes state that most armed men had been sent to the four main bridges to prevent the alleged rioting farmers from entering the city. Because of this lack of armed control over the populace, the *burghers* of The Hague started shooting at the gate of the prison shouting for Cornelis to come out. Once the brothers appeared, they were shot dead immediately. Although the notes also state the sequence of events, from undressing the brothers to hanging them as well as cutting off and selling their

³⁵¹ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, "Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675" in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), 208, 209, 210, and 211.

³⁵² Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, "Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland," 1671-1675 in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p. 334 and 335, August 20, 1672.

body parts, there is no mention of eating their limbs or intestines. This meeting ends with the statement that the current police force of the city did not handle the situation adequately enough, that the bodies should be taken down, and that further rioting should be prevented. A special remark is made that it is better not to prosecute anybody who had been part of the manslaughter because important members of the *burgherij* (citizens) were involved, citizens who supported the Prince of Orange.³⁵³ To prosecute those members would probably cause more conflict within the city. In addition, these members were most likely also protected by the Prince, which made a trial complicated.³⁵⁴

After August 22, 1672, the Estates General resumed business as usual. The new Grand Pensionary appeared unexperienced and the same issues remained unsolved. Between August 22, 1672 and December 1672, the meetings become less and less frequent, from once a day to twice a week to once a month. Problems such as lack of money, manpower, and food shortage stayed on the agenda without any solutions being reached among the provinces, cities, and nobility. From the notes of the meetings of the Estates General it can be concluded that Johan DeWitt and his brother did try to actively defend the Dutch Republic from the French invader prior to their murder, but their hands had been tied because of complicated political rules and the continuous unwillingness of the provinces to find a common strategy. Instead, the Estates General kept proposing unrealistic measures such as raising an army of common people, which only caused great internal conflict between local magistrates and their citizens. This added to feelings of anxieties regarding the approaching French army and the knowledge that the Dutch army was not

³⁵³ Cornelis Hop en Nicolaas Vivien, *Notulen gehouden te Staten Vergadering van Holland, 1671-1675* in Dr. N. Japikse *Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1903), p.335 and 336., August 20 and 22, 1672.

³⁵⁴ For an overview of these speculations see, Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine, *De Moordenaars van Jan de Witt: de Zwartste Bladzijde van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2011).

professional and strong enough to defend the Republic adequately. A complete French take over seemed only a matter of time.

Furthermore, the notes show that money was running out, that people in Holland continued to revolt against the proposed measures of drafting men into the army, and that transportation of goods was halted by French occupation of the major rivers. As it appears from these documents, Johan DeWitt had no choice but try to negotiate some type of peace agreement during the initial invasion of the French into Gelderland in June of 1672, to save the populace of the Dutch Republic. This in turn was used by the Orangists to install deep distrust in the leader of the Province of Holland as well as his brother and to glorify the Princes of Orange as the saviors against enemies, whether the Spanish army in the sixteenth century or the French in the late seventeenth century.³⁵⁵

THE FRENCH INVASION IN GELDERLAND, 1672

On June 12, 1672, the French armies marched along the Rhine River upwards and crossed the border of the Dutch Republic at *Lobith* in Gelderland. Rapidly, they had made their way to *Arnhem*, the Republic's most prosperous city in the east at the time.³⁵⁶ In this part of the chapter, I attempt to reconstruct the situation in which the populace of the region and especially the city of Arnhem found themselves during the frightening times of the invasion. Was the news, that reached the western Dutch Republic, i.e. The Hague regarding the behaviors of the French soldiers, accurate or largely taken out of context and sensationalized? Were the worries, anxieties, and fears of the people in The Hague justified? The French armies did not invade the Province of Holland until the Winter of 1672, long after the murder of Johan and Cornelis. This

³⁵⁵ For a study on the full scope of the Orangist propaganda, see Jill Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image, 1650 – 1675* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

³⁵⁶ In 1343, Arnhem had become part of the Hanseatic League and was an important Rhine port.

means that the news that reached The Hague with regard to the atrocities of the French army before August 20, 1672 were thus hear-say. Therefore, I focus on the months of June, July, and August. I explore the archive with the title “The French Invasion,” located in the state archive of *Gelderland in Arnhem*.³⁵⁷

It appears that the magistrates of *Arnhem* and surrounding villages instantly surrendered when the French armies advanced. There are no records of violence, plunder, or bloodshed in the area in June. However, the burgomasters of *Arnhem* and *Deventer* did attempt to negotiate the rights of their citizens directly with Louis XIV.³⁵⁸ Their correspondence *Au Roy* (to the King) was written in French and in the name of *vos tres humbles et loyaux sujets de votre ville d’Arnhem* (your very humble and loyal subjects of Arnhem).³⁵⁹ Although, the use of the French language was common in the Dutch Republic, especially among nobility and state officials, it is clear that the magistrates recognized, at least in official documents, the French monarch as their king.

The requests of the regents were straightforward; they bargained for the protection and preservation of previous rights for their citizens.³⁶⁰ The first appeal is a plea for the freedom of conscience. This petition included the allowance to practice the Protestant religion in churches and by pastors who were already in charge. With the Roman Catholic French king as their ruler, the people must have been afraid that the religious foundation of the Dutch Republic was at risk. Furthermore, half of the document is dedicated to ensuring that physical bodies, the livelihood,

³⁵⁷ This archive contains a collection of historical records of all towns in Gelderland.

³⁵⁸ Municipal Archive Arnhem. Block nr. 2000, inv. #3514.

³⁵⁹ Municipal Archive Arnhem. Block nr. 2000, inv. #3514, file 1.

³⁶⁰ Municipal Archive Arnhem. Block nr. 2000, inv. #3514, file 1.

and the properties of the inhabitants of *Gelderland* would not be harmed by the French soldiers. The burgomasters of *Arnhem* also argue that the people who wished to leave the city should be able to do so without suffering penalties. Furthermore, the request states that local communities would not be obligated to take in and care for French troops. In addition, the French monarch had to agree that Dutch magistrates could remain in control, albeit under the king's leadership. The *Arnhemse* magistrates argued that the legal foundation for maintaining certain rights, privileges, and customs of local inhabitants had to be based on the lawful covenants negotiated with the "ancient regime" of Emperor Charles V in the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555.

There is no official record of the response from the king to this document, but his Chief in Command in *Gelderland*, Louis Robert (knight of the king and keeper of justice, police, and finance) delivered an ordinance on July 4, 1672. It becomes clear from this statement that the attempts to negotiate favorable conditions for *Gelderland's* citizens were ignored by the French. The decree states that citizens of Arnhem would have to adjust voluntarily for housing a full garrison of soldiers in addition to letting the troops pass without harassment or obstruction.³⁶¹ The next logical tactic of the French ruler was to confiscate all weapons and other tools that could serve as weapons from the conquered regions. As a result, on July 8, 1672, French army authorities sent an official announcement to the burgomasters of *Arnhem*, *Deventer*, and *Nijmegen*, which specified that the people were summoned to bring their arsenal of weapons to the city hall of Arnhem.³⁶² Sixty-nine pages of well-ordered records in the Arnhem's archive shows that nobility, regents, as well as common people surrendered their weapons to the French

³⁶¹ Archive of Arnhem, block 2000, inv. #3517.

³⁶² Ibid, block 2000, inv. #3516.

establishment between July 8 and 17, 1672. These records contain full names along with a per-item list of the weapons and tools that were handed in.³⁶³ For example, lieutenant Evert Wilbreninck brought in two muskets, two pistols, one round stick, two *snaphaenen* (rifles), and a sword. The purpose for registering each and every weapon was, I assume, that the Dutch authorities entertained the possibility that these objects would be returned to the rightful owner one day.

Because the inhabitants of the larger cities of Gelderland abstained from fighting the French troops and voluntarily complied with the invader, the events of the infiltration - between the initial invasion in June and the slaying of the DeWitt brothers on August 20, 1672 - were disturbing but not nearly as horrendous as described and predicted in the many news outlets that circulated in the western Dutch Republic. Nonetheless, this gap between the actual events and the version reported in publications might have been the instigator for violence against the Estates General in The Hague. Whether the actuality of the events was true or false is irrelevant. Useful to note is that the people in the West heard about horrendous current events in the media that were purposefully compared to the invasion of the Spanish a century prior. Combined with the observation that the Estates General failed to take decisive action, it may have been anticipated that the French would take over the Dutch Republic at a faster rate than was predicted. This, in turn, must have been a source for apprehension within the city of The Hague. French soldiers who occupied Gelderland may not have killed and raped, their presence came at a high cost to the authorities and inhabitants of Gelderland. On August 29, 1672, a letter from Louis Robert to the magistrates of the conquered places in the eastern Dutch Republic, states that

³⁶³ Archive of Arnhem, block 2000, inv. #3515.

the rights of the regents will remain intact, but only under certain conditions.³⁶⁴ The first specification of the contract emphasizes that although “old” rights will be in place, the French monarch must approve any expansion of these privileges. The second stipulation directly handles the price of these privileges for Dutch regents under French control. The Estates of Gelderland are mandated to pay the sum of 1,000 guilders on the first day of the following three months, August, September, and October.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, in addition to these costs, the fees that are connected to the collection of these sums, such as wages for the collectors, will also reside with the Estates of Gelderland. Documents in the archives reveal that similar demands were made for every month of occupancy, in some cases up to the amount of 160,000 florins a year.³⁶⁶ The third requirement of the ordinance states that the authorities of different villages and towns of Gelderland will be responsible for the cost of eating, drinking, and living of the French infantry. For example, it was estimated that each garrison would need forty kegs of beer and twelve canisters of wine per day.³⁶⁷

In addition to paying large sums of money to the French monarch, the regents of the larger cities of Gelderland, specifically *Arnhem*, *Deventer*, and *Nijmegen*, had to relinquish five percent of tolls collected from rivers and roads. It states furthermore that the clerk of *Arnhem* will oversee that all ships and wagons carrying goods or commodities, will be weighted and charged per customs laws.³⁶⁸ The boats and carriages that paid their duties were given a passport

³⁶⁴ Archive of Arnhem, block 2000, inv. 3517.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, inv. #3517.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, inv. #3517, September 7, 1674.

³⁶⁷ Municipal Archive Arnhem. Block nr. 2000, inv. #3514. # 3517.

³⁶⁸ Ibid ,inv.#3517.

for passage. In cases that this specific passport could not be shown upon request of the clerk, the entire ship or carriage would be confiscated.³⁶⁹

The financial burden was substantial for the common people of *Gelderland* as well. The inhabitants of *Arnhem*, for example, had to be taxed a sum of 7,000 florins for the troops in addition to 2,100 florins to be paid directly to the regime of captain Montegue that was stationed around Arnhem.³⁷⁰ In addition, on December 11 and 31, 1672, the wine-sellers, beer suppliers, sheet bleachers among other craftsmen of Arnhem, were taxed a total of 4,800 florins toward the consumption requests of the troops.³⁷¹ The archive contains long lists of participating burghers and the amount they contributed.³⁷² People who did not want to pay, risked having their children taken away.³⁷³ In some instances, the French soldiers forcefully collected large sums of money from wealthy citizens. Dr. Willem van Holten, writer of *The Veluwe*, complains in a letter to the burgomasters of Arnhem that French soldiers extorted the sum of 10,000 florins from him, which he had paid under protest.³⁷⁴

Louis Robert and the burgomaster of Arnhem came to several agreements. First, citizens of the province of *Gelderland* were required to house troops, the army's horses, wagons, and other material. Moreover, each soldier should be given a lamp or a candleholder in the amount of five florins each.³⁷⁵ A specific stipulation states that the soldiers should be properly taken care

³⁶⁹ Ibid, inv.#3517.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, inv.#3517, April 7, 1673.

³⁷¹ Ibid., inv. #3522

³⁷² Ibid., inv.#3522

³⁷³ Ibid, family of Rhenen, inv. # 0911 – 242.

³⁷⁴Municipal Archive Arnhem. Block nr. 2000, inv.#3523, July 25, 1673.

under the threat of property confiscation. Flour as well as other goods for locally stationed garrisons should be bought at a store in Arnhem and delivered to the troops.³⁷⁶ Linens for injured soldiers must be provided by the people.³⁷⁷ This cooperation with the French negatively affected local regents as they were accused of treason. I could locate only one letter directed at the Estates General in Holland asking for help. In that document, the burgomasters ask for assistance in the safe transportation of important people traveling west. Furthermore, the burgomasters note that all expenses resulting from plundering and robberies by the French troops will be reimbursed from taxes from the quarter in which they occurred for as much as the people can contribute. While in the Province of Holland the populace rebelled directly against rulers who did not defend citizen's interests, the populace in the east did not act out. The presence of French forces in the east most likely prevented bloodshed toward treacherous leaders.³⁷⁸

Probably, as a result of the substantial load that people had to carry to accommodate the French troops, many individuals fled their houses and gave up their livelihood to settle in other areas in the Dutch Republic. I make this conclusion based on a pamphlet that was issued on September 6, 1672, and that was signed by the king. It was written in the Dutch language and directed at all citizens of *Nijmegen, Arnhem, Grave, Tiel, Bommel, St. Andries, Voorn, and Schenckerschans* as well as all the lands belonging to these town.³⁷⁹ In this note, the French monarch orders that all people who had fled their houses should return immediately and resume

³⁷⁵ Ibid, inv.#3517

³⁷⁶ Ibid, inv.#3517

³⁷⁷ Ibid, inv#3518, a precise list was kept by the burgomasters of Arnhem of which citizens contributed what items.

³⁷⁸ In some instances, burgomasters or other officials stepped down voluntarily from their posts, especially burgomaster Reinier van Everingen who did not want to comply to the French demands. Archive of Arnhem, block 2000, inv. # 3519.

³⁷⁹ Archive of Arnhem, block 2000, inv.#3220.

their daily business of working the lands, executing their craft, or building in order to pay a daily fee of five guilders for the maintenance of the king's folk. Failure to comply would result in confiscation of all their assets as well as appropriation of their homes and timberlands. Furthermore, military men of all ranks should be given free passage through the areas surrounding the towns at the threat of corporal punishment. The writer of the leaflet specifies that the pamphlet is written in Dutch so that nobody can pretend not to know about these strict measures.³⁸⁰

In conclusion, the files in the archive of Gelderland reveal that the citizens and Estates General of Gelderland carried a strenuous social and financial burden during the French invasion. People were forced to share their houses with as well as feed and care for individual soldiers. Although the practice of housing soldiers, either foreign or domestic, was common in times of war, it must have made an impact on the *burghers* that the enemy lived within city-walls. Large sums of money had to be paid by the burgomasters as well. The initial request from the local regents that citizens should be free to leave, was met with strict measures against anyone who attempted to flee from their home. The people of Gelderland were under financial and probably emotional pressure from June 1672 until December 1672. However, because of their swift surrender and cooperation with Louis XIV as well as his representative, Louis Robert, the predicted and publicized tragedy of plundering, raping, drowning, and murder did, as far as this file reveals, not occur. Fear, anxieties, and xenophobia that may have been experienced by the populace in the Province of Holland that was based on those stories was therefore unjustified

³⁸⁰ Ibid, inv.#3220.

during the first month of 1672. However, this does not alter the observation that people in The Hague were probably unsure about the situation and the accuracy of the news.

THE IMAGINATION OF THE FRENCH INVASION

Between the December, 17 and 28, 1672, while the Dutch armies were heading to *'t Land van Luyk* near *Nijmegen* with the goal to liberate the eastern part of the Dutch Republic, a French army of circa 15,000 soldiers - under command of the Duke of Luxembourg - made its way from the east to the west, and crossed the Dutch “waterline.”³⁸¹ This waterline consisted of several smaller rivers and waters running from the *Zuiderzee* in the North to the South surrounding the Province of Holland along the east border of the region. The main vein of this system was the river *'t Y*. In case of emergencies, several locks could be opened, flooding large parts of the Province of Holland, creating a buffer against invaders.

³⁸¹ A.T. Verduyn, “Spiegel der Fransse tyranny, Gepleegt op de Hollantsche Dorpen,” (February 1673). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183. in Donald Haks, “De Franse Tirannie: De Verbeelding van een Massamoord,” in Henk van Nierop, Ellen Grabowsky, Anouk Janssen, Huige Leeftang, en Garrelt Verhoeven eds., *De Verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008), 86 – 99.



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However, the winter of 1672 was fierce and the river 't Y as well as the smaller waters connected to it froze solid, providing an unobstructed passage for the French soldiers to cross the ice into the Province of Holland. A day later the rivers thawed, and most of the troops were sent back to *Woerden* and *Naarden*. Nonetheless, a group of around 3,500 men did make it across into Holland, marching to the towns of *Bodegraven* and *Swammerdam*. Both towns are located a seven-hour-walk from The Hague. According to eyewitness accounts, the soldiers were plundering homes and burning houses along the way. However, none of these events are recorded in the notes of the Estates General. This discredits these eyewitness accounts. If the situation had been as severe as reported, it, most likely, would have been discussed in the meetings of the Estates General. Nonetheless, on December 25, 1672, rumors indicated that

³⁸² www.mediabank.omgevingseducatie.nl

French troops were rapidly approaching The Hague. The threat of war became real, rather than imagined for the populace of The Hague.

The damage that the French inflicted in the towns of *Bodegraven* and *Swammerdam* seems to have been significant and recorded by two alleged eyewitnesses. One, *Spiegel der Fransse Tyrannie*, written by A.T. Verduyn and published in 1672. The other, *Advis Fidelle aux Veritables Hollanda* is created by Abraham Wicquefort and published in French in 1673.

Romeyn De Hooghe created detailed imagery for both publications.³⁸³

In the first pamphlet, a letter from an eyewitness in *Swammerdam* states that a home containing five sick people was burned to the ground. The writer also mentions that his sixty-eight-year old sister was brutally raped by French soldiers. In addition, all women were forced into the church where their money and best clothing were confiscated. One of the women managed to escape but was soon captured and severely beaten. Her clothes were taken from her, including her shoes and hat. After that, the soldiers put her out in the snow-covered street, where she was found by family members. Other women, the eyewitness continues, were taken by the French soldiers and physically used for their pleasure.³⁸⁴ Although, these accounts must have been a horrible experience for the women involved, it does not confirm any of the horrendous stories publicized in Holland about behavior of French soldiers in occupied towns.

³⁸³ A.T. Verduyn, “Spiegel der Fransse tyranny, Gepleegt op de Hollantsche Dorpen,” etching (February 1673). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183. in Donald Haks, “De Franse Tirannie: De Verbeelding van een Massamoord,” in Henk van Nierop, Ellen Grabowsky, Anouk Janssen, Huige Leeftang, en Garrelt Verhoeven eds., *De Verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008), 86 – 99 and Romeyn DeHooghe, “Spiegel der Fransse Tirannye, gepleeght op de Hollandsche Dorpen”, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183.

³⁸⁴ A.T. Verduyn, “Spiegel der Fransse tyranny, Gepleegt op de Hollantsche Dorpen,” etching (February 1673). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183.

The town of *Bodegraven* suffered even more damage, Verduyn claims. Although many people could flee before the French arrived, limiting the effects of the invasion for most people, the remaining populace was locked within the city walls. French soldiers took over houses and beat up its inhabitants. Gijsje Koerten, een blind woman, as well as her four children were burned and killed when their house was set on fire. In addition, Cornelia Korfen managed to escape but was found and shot to death. Simon Branden, Grietje Lambers, and Marritje Wolpherts suffered the same fate, and apparently, many of *Bodegraven*'s citizens were still missing. Many of the men and women who managed to escape had died along the way. Furthermore, cattle were burned alive. When, on December 30, 1672, the French had to withdraw from *Bodegraven* and *Swammerdam* back to Woerden, they left a trail of devastation, killings, and arson in their path, according to the writer. Both the churches of *Bodegraven* and *Swammerdam* were burned to the ground as well. At the end of the publication, the author states “*de wreedheyd is niet om uyt te spreecken*” (the instigated cruelty is beyond words).³⁸⁵ Again, the reported events may appear to show relatively little devastation for a present-day observer. The stories also do not seem to compare to the written accounts describing alleged actions of the French troops. However, it is impossible to draw conclusions on how these “eyewitness accounts.” People in The Hague were most likely fearful after hearing these tales of invading French armies.

If the words of the writer in this publication did not ignite the imagination of the readers, the accompanied engraving (image 1) by Romeyn de Hooghe surely would have.³⁸⁶ The etching

³⁸⁵ A.T. Verduyn, “Spiegel der Fransse tyranny, Gepleegt op de Hollantsche Dorpen,” (February 1673). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183.

³⁸⁶ Picture 1. Romeyn De Hooghe, *De France Tirannie*, etching (February 1673), Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-77.183.

portrays horrendous devastation caused by French troops in the towns of *Bodegraven* and *Swammerdam*. In a relatively small frame, as many committed atrocities as possible are staged, from raping women to burning houses to torturing and murdering men. The imagery is so dense



Picture 1

with action that it is difficult to separate out individuals (a trademark for De Hooghe). This artistic set-up created a scene of chaos and despair.³⁸⁷

Donald Hak in *De Franse Tirannie: De Verbeelding van Massamoord* investigates the validity of the tales of A.T. Verduyn in “Spiegel der Fransse Tyranny” as well those documented by Abraham de Wicquefort in the *Advis Fidelle*.³⁸⁸ He reaches the conclusion that the two provided eyewitness accounts are not exaggerated. With supporting evidence, Hak shows that at least one hundred people were killed and as many houses were destroyed. He states “if one then takes into consideration that most of the population had already fled the towns, it can be assumed that most of the staying inhabitants did not survive the invasion.”³⁸⁹ Hak also concludes that the names of the victims mentioned in the eyewitness accounts are not fictional, but traceable in the records of the towns of *Swammerdam* and *Bodegraven*.³⁹⁰ Documented by several eye witness accounts and confirmed in the *Advis Fidelle* is that fact that the French soldiers did burn down the towns. In a pamphlet titled *Troost der Vroomen in der Tijd van Benauwtheyd, copy van een Brief geschreven uyt den Haegh, aen een Vriendt tot Francefort, van den 31 december 1672* (comfort for the pious in a time of tension, copy of a letter written from The Hague, to a friend in Francfort, on December 31, 1672), the author states that ships and 2,000 houses were burned in *Swammerdam* and *Bodegraven*.³⁹¹ This pamphlet also points to the Dutch Admiral General of the

³⁸⁸ Donald Haks, “De Franse Tirannie: De Verbeelding van een Massamoord,” in Henk van Nierop, Ellen Grabowsky, Anouk Janssen, Huige Leeftang, en Garrelt Verhoeven eds., *De Verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008), 86 – 99, p. 89.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 92.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 92.

army, William III, Prince of Orange, as the person who could have prevented the invasion, “the army simply left their posts and left cannons behind for the enemy.”³⁹²

In a discussion of the re-imagination of the French invasion of the late seventeenth-century, etcher and engraver Romeyn de Hooghe must be included for his remarkable work on the subject. Born in Amsterdam in 1645, and a fervent Orange supporter throughout his life, his art skills in combination with his political participation made him one of the most influential artist of the late seventeenth-century. In his earlier work, he relied on eyewitness accounts to sketch a realistic image. For example, as a young man of twenty-two, he etched the accompanying picture to the news rapport of the Anglo-Dutch sea battle on the rivers of Rochester and Sattam, better known as the victorious conquest of Chatham by Admiral DeRuyter and Cornelis DeWitt.³⁹³ He had not been a part of that journey, therefore much of the sketched events must have been imagined by De Hooghe himself. Although his first etchings were as complex and sophisticated as his later work, they were neutral in political color and seem to have represented a “trustworthy” state of affairs as much as possible.³⁹⁴

In his later years, Romeyn de Hooghe became progressively invested in the political division between the House of Orange and the Estates General and consequently, his work increasingly favored, even glorified, the contributions of William III, Prince of Orange to the victories of the Dutch armies against the French invader. For example, in an elaborate pamphlet

³⁹¹ Anonymous, *Troost der Vroomen in den Tijd der Benauwtheydt: copy van een Brief, Geschreven uyt den Haegh, Aen een Vrindt tot Francefort, van 31 December 1672*. Arnhem, Archive of the Nobility, inv.# 0911 – 237.

³⁹² Anonymous, *Troost der Vroomen in den Tijd der Benauwtheydt: copy van een Brief, Geschreven uyt den Haegh, Aen een Vrindt tot Francefort, van 31 December 1672*. Arnhem, Archive of the Nobility, inv.# 0911 – 237, p. 3.

³⁹³ Henk van Nierop, Grabowsky Ellen, Janssen Anouk, Leeftlang, Huigen, and Verhoeven Garrelt eds., *Romeyn de Hooghe, De Verbeelding van de Late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008), p. 67. (Romeyn de Hooghe, “Tocht naar Chatham en de verovering van het eiland Sheppey (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1667). Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-79.256. See picture 2.

³⁹⁴ He made similar etchings of the Peace of Breda.

published in 1674, several of the prince's victories are portrayed (see picture 2).³⁹⁵



Picture 2.

³⁹⁵ Picture 2: Romeyn DeHooghe, *Beleg en Overgaen van de Stadt Grave door den K.H. Wilhelm Hendrik, Prince van Orangien, Stadhouder van Holland en Zeeland*, etching, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-AO-16-132.

The pictures that he published during the political skirmish between the two political groups in the first six months of the disaster year 1672 were not overtly hostile toward the DeWitt brothers or any other players on the European war stage. On the contrary, at first glance the etchings portray stately representations of Johan and Cornelis as well as of William III, Prince of Orange, stadtholder of Holland and Westvriesland, and Zeeland, Louis XIV, king of France, Charles II, king of England, Christoph Bernard van Galen, bishop of Munster, and Maximilian Henry of *Beieren*, bishop of Cologne (picture 3).



When the same images are turned around, however, they reveal without ambiguity De Hooghe's exact state of mind in issuing these engravings for the public. Upside down, the

characters in the pictures morph into exhibits of symbolic meaning about the alleged true nature of each actor and their motivation in the ongoing events. Louis XIV becomes a lion, a symbol of power. The bishops of Cologne and Munster transform into a donkey and a pig respectively. Both animals may be representations of stupidity and greed, because the two men took large sums of money from Louis XIV to aid in the invasion of the Dutch Republic, while covertly being used by the French monarch. Charles II, king of England, is portrayed as a fire-spitting tiger, a symbolism of violence perhaps. The mask in the lower left corner of the image may refer to Charles' deceit by breaking the Triple Alliance with the Swedish monarch and the Estates General of Holland. Lastly, the chain of French lilies appears to point to his hidden relations with Louis XIV. Johan and Cornelis DeWitt's image, calculatedly sketched together *en profile*, resemble a fox and a wolf when reversed. These obscure characters seem to symbolize cunning and hidden deceit. Only the Prince of Orange, William III morphs into the war-god Mars, the courageous hero in Roman mythology. It seems that, in this artwork Romeyn De Hooghe tried to manipulate the general populace into suspicion about any possible secret negotiations that took place between the European leaders.³⁹⁶

As the threat of the approaching French armies increased, so did the negative presentation of Johan DeWitt in the work of Romeyn De Hooghe. In his etching *Anticurius Loevesteyn*, Johan DeWitt openly informs Louis XIV about the best time and place to invade the Dutch Republic. In addition, he is sitting on *Het Loevensteynse Huys* (picture 4).³⁹⁷ This directly points to the political movement of Johan's father Jacob DeWitt which included Johan van Oldenbarnevelt

³⁹⁶ Images and symbolic explanations provided by Herman van Gessel, www.cultuurwijzer.nl

³⁹⁷ Picture 4: Romeyn DeHooghe, *Anticurius Loevesteyn*, etching, 1674. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-79.152.

and Hugo Grotius (among others), both were members of the Estates General in the early seventeenth-century and rivaled politically with Maurice, Prince of Orange, stadholder of Holland and Westvriesland.



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Picture 4.

These men politically opposed Maurice, Prince of Orange and remained portrayed throughout Dutch history as traitors of the state by facilitating the invasion of the Spanish armies during the eighty-year war. Other symbolism in this engraving leaves no doubt about the deceitful characters of Oldenbarnevelt, Grotius, as well as the DeWitts. In other words, in this image, De Hooghe draws an unambiguous link between the demise of the Seven United Provinces during

³⁹⁸ Romeyn DeHooghe, *Anticurius Loevesteyn*, etching, 1674. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-79.152.

the Spanish invasion of late sixteenth-century and the events of the current French invasion in the Dutch Republic of Johan DeWitt. In suggesting this connection, he purposefully triggers remnants of lingering emotions, such as fear and anxiety, from a collective memory held by the people of Holland.

Even less abstruse is Romeyn De Hooghe's impressive sequence of portrayals of the French invasion, named *De Fransse Tyranny* (the French tyranny), published in early 1673. Hence, this is a spin on the title and work *De Spaansche Tyranny* (the Spanish tyranny) of etcher Hooghenberg in the early seventeenth century.³⁹⁹ Both engravings display horrific war crimes committed by foreign armies invading Dutch territory throughout the seventeenth-century. In the book *Romeyn De Hooghe: De Verbeelding van de Gouden Eeuw* (Romeyn de Hooghe: the imagination of the Golden Age), Donald Haks in *De Franse Tirannie: De Verbeelding van een Massamoord* (The French tyranny: the imagination of a Mass Murder), compares some of Romeyn De Hooghe's sketches of the actions of French soldiers with similar material represented in the etchings of Hooghenberg.⁴⁰⁰ Although De Hooghe's art skills are more sophisticated and therefore more realistic, the parallels are undisputable.

The main similarities exist in the committed brutality of the soldiers and the ways in which they torture the local population. Burning houses, drowning people, publicly shooting fleeing men, setting people on fire, killing babies and small children, raping women, and plundering houses are common themes in both DeHooghe's and Hooghenberg's art representing the atrocities of both invasions. Comparable to Hooghenberg's work, the images of De Hooghe

³⁹⁹ Chapter 2 contains an in-depth discussion of the work of Hooghenbergh on the Spanish invasion.

⁴⁰⁰ Henk van Nierop, Grabowsky Ellen, Janssen Anouk, Leeftang, Huigen, and Verhoeven Garrelt eds., *Romeyn de Hooghe, De Verbeelding van de Late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008), p. 88, 89, and 95.

accompanied a publication claiming that the events on display were correct and authentic representations of the events that occurred and remembered by an eye-witness.⁴⁰¹ However, what is important for my argument is not whether the events occurred in reality, but in which ways and to what extent information about the French armies was conveyed to and received by the inhabitants of The Hague.⁴⁰² Although, the images of De Hooghe were not published until well into 1673, thus long after the murder of Johan and Cornelis, it is probable that stories about these invasions of *Naerden* and *Swammerdam* in July of 1672, circulated in The Hague. If Romeyn De Hooghe can reimagine and compare the atrocities of the Spanish and French assaults based on tales, almost certainly so can common people who lived in Holland and who faced the advancing French troops.

In conclusion, in this chapter I tried to show that the circulating propaganda against the DeWitt brothers in the first half of 1672 did not stand alone resulting in the horrific slaying on August 20, 1672. On the contrary, I argue that inaccurate sources of propaganda pertaining the threat of a French invasion were published to cause upheaval among the people of the Dutch Republic. Although sources in the municipal archive of Arnhem show that most towns immediately surrendered to the French precisely to limit the damages incurred by the French, the propaganda machine of the Dutch Republic functioned in high gear reporting on alleged atrocities going on in the eastern part of the Republic. Notes of the meetings of the Estates General in the first half of 1672 reflect a long-term underlying disease that had been

⁴⁰¹ Romeyn De Hooghe's work was complimentary to the publication *Advis Fidelle aux veritables Hollandais. Touchant ce qui s'est passe dans les villages de Bodegraven and Swammerdam*.

⁴⁰² I have attempted to find material in the archive of *Naerden* to uncover the accuracy of the tales. Only one file contained a note about a lawsuit of a man who claimed that the French soldiers had destroyed some of his property and he requested to be compensated for that. Similarly, in the notes of the Estates General, no trace of these atrocities can be found.

undermining proper functioning of Dutch politics throughout the seventeenth century. This in turn caused a complicated, inefficient decision-making system in which the Estates General was paralyzed to take any action. This was blamed on Johan DeWitt, resulting in the resurrection of a decade long conflict between the Estates General on one side and the House of Orange on the other. These short, and long-term tensions spanning at least two generations were used strategically to prompt people facing the French invasion to reimagine and relive injuries inflicted by the Spanish invasion in the early seventeenth century. Stories and imagery of new mayhems must have caused fear and anxiety within the community, searching for a way to be released. When the possibility presented itself on August 20th, 1672, nothing stood in the way to express these emotions to the gravest extent.

Conclusion

Today, The Hague is a quaint city, topping, in my opinion, Amsterdam in its magnificent architecture and Dutch *gezelligheid*.⁴⁰³ Its history is one of international grandeur and its importance is based on its function as the seat of Dutch government. Since, signing the Act of Abjuration (July 26, 1581), the official declaration of freedom from Spain, many crucial decisions regarding the fate of the Netherlands were made in the *Ridderzaal* (hall of Knights) on the *Binnenhof* (Inside courtyard). Crossing the *Binnenhof* onto the *Buitenhof* (Outside courtyard), the Prinsengate is the first structure in the cityscape. After passing the gate, on the left-hand side, stands the statue of Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan DeWitt and his brother Cornelis. They are overlooking 't *Groene Zoodje*, the place where they were murdered by a mob of The Hague's populace on Saturday, August 20, 1672. Their bodies were left hanging, upside-down, mutilated, and eviscerated. It remains arguably the most gruesome, yet insufficiently explained event in Dutch history.

In this dissertation, I have tried, as other historians have done before me, to find a motivation for this massacre. Where other researchers have focused on short-term political causes for the eruption of violence that day, I have attempted to uncover a more long-term undercurrent in Dutch society. These trends may provide more context for this seemingly isolated incidence in the history of the Netherlands. Rather than one unfortunate occurrence in an otherwise prosperous, tolerant, and peaceful country, I argue that the murders of Johan and Cornelis appear to have happened at the high point of the Dutch Golden Age. Prosperity and international power slowly declined around the same time. Long-time insecurities, fears, and

⁴⁰³ The term *gezelligheid* is difficult to translate. It means something to the extent of "a joyful atmosphere among people."

anxieties experienced by lower levels of society seem to have festered beneath the abundant lifestyle of the wealthy, and came to the fore when the threat of another, rapidly approaching invasion came to a head.

Assassinations of political players are not unique in any time period and happen everywhere. Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine has tackled satisfactorily the possibility of a conspiracy to eliminate the DeWitt brothers in his book *De Moordenaars van Jan DeWitt*. My focus is therefore not on the actual death of Johan and Cornelis, but on the sequence of events after the murders as that remains the most baffling to me, especially the total desecration of the bodies. It seems illogical that a people, who had been tolerant, open-minded, and peaceful throughout the seventeenth-century suddenly turn into villains that created the most gruesome sequence of events ever recorded in Dutch history.

Because I do not think that the event was an isolated incidence, I also assume that the motivation for it cannot be found in a single explanation. Most of the evidence is thus necessarily circumstantial and should be so understood.

My first approach was to clarify some of the main issues surrounding the massacre. I looked at the unique origin and development of The Hague compared to Amsterdam and concluded that its lay-out may have contributed to the events of August 20, 1672. The *Binnenhof*, *Buitenhof*, and the *Prisongate* with the place of execution next to it, are situated in such a way, that they create closed spaces with minimum escape. However, because of The Hague's origin as a political city rather than a center of trade, its many squares made it possible for audiences to avoid events, such as public punishment. The people that were on scene that day, choose to be there. Similarly, the fact that The Hague was the seat of government played a major role, simply because Johan lived and worked in The Hague and was, as the most important figure head of the Estates

General, an easy target. Furthermore, The Hague had a municipal court as well as a high court, and exposure to public punishments were therefore more frequent than in other cities and towns. This in turn may have made the actions on August 20, 1672 a more common occurrence for The Hague's populace.

I dismissed eyewitness accounts that claimed that the brothers' body parts were grilled and eaten by the populace. I am not arguing that this did not happen, but evidence is lacking and images of cannibalistic acts that circulated within the Netherlands are of outside sources and do not seem to have been inspirational enough to copy.

Because I argue that developments over time play a factor, I proposed the theory that psychological trauma resulting from the liberation from Spain had carried over generations through stories, books, and songs.⁴⁰⁴ I argue that this created a collective history with shared anxieties. Gruesome images of the Spanish invasion circulated within The Hague well into the seventeenth century. The approaching invasion of the French in 1670 may have triggered certain anxieties. Especially, because some authors purposefully referred to the war with Spain while discussing the upcoming French invasion. However, this theory is difficult to proof in a historical context. Current research in neuro-psychology and anthropology suggests that trans-generational trauma, the transfer of war-induced anxieties over generations, does occur in victims of violence. Although, I argue that there is validity in my theory, it is also clear that much more research on this topic needs to be conducted. I do not argue that this theory is going to provide a full explanation of what happened to Johan and Cornelis, but it may be a piece of the puzzle.

To place the slayings of the brothers in a broader context of violence in general, I concentrated most of my work on the population's exposure to violent imagery as well as on the

⁴⁰⁴ Many of these songs were reproduced during World War II about the German invader.

actual level of violent crimes in The Hague during the reign of Johan DeWitt (1650-1672). How violent were The Hague's citizens and what level of violence was accepted and tolerated, either in media, committed by the government, or by the people? This research yields some interesting results.

Imagery from the reign of Maurice of Orange, stadholder of Holland and Westvriesland in the early seventeenth-century (1585-1625), show that this prince was relentless in punishing his enemies with gruesome, public deaths. His most important opponent in Dutch government in 1619, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, was publicly beheaded with a single sword-blow to the neck, a relatively merciful way of punishment. However, Maurice's religious adversaries paid a high price for disagreeing with him. Detailed images of their executions show a public spectacle that was carried out on the same spot where Johan and Cornelis would find their fate fifty years later. The portrayed actions also exhibit similarities with the killings of the brothers. Limbs and heads were removed, and publicly exposed on the gallows. Their bodies were disemboweled as well. In all instances, large audiences were present to witness these executions. In addition, images imply that people visited the gallows to gaze at the displayed body parts or went as far as digging up alleged traitors to re-hang them. This suggests an acceptance for publicly displayed bloodshed. I conclude that the populace of The Hague, during the first half of the Golden Age, were as violent toward and intolerant of "others" as any other place in Europe during that time. If the slaying of Johan and Cornelis had happened in the first few decades of the seventeenth-century, the explanation other historians have argued would have been more plausible. However, after 1650 capital punishment diminished greatly in The Hague and so did the public bloodshed that often accompanied it.

Johan's reign started in 1650 and introduced a period of relative peace after decades of war with Spain and the Thirty-Year war (1618-1648). Holland was invaded by England between 1652 and 1654, and again between 1665 and 1667, but these wars were played out at sea and consequently did not affect the common populace's daily lives much. By exploring the actual crime records between the start of Johan's reign and his death, I hoped to find a clue or a trend for the onset of the slaughter. I transcribed and quantified 2.174 criminal court cases of the municipal courts of The Hague. The results reveal some interesting points.

The local as well as the high court of Holland significantly declined their violent public punishments over the twenty-two year period. Only in case of proven murder were the judges willing to expose The Hague's population to an actual beheading. In addition, only one time, during a serious homicide trial, did the judge specifically state that the execution should turn into a public spectacle. Similarly, in one case, for unspecified reasons, a woman's ear was cut off publicly on the scaffold of *'t Groene Zoodje*. In most cases, however, the sword was placed over the neck symbolically to warn the alleged criminal for future consequences. Adultery and fraud also carried a public sentence. However, it was never of a bloody nature, but sought merely to inflict shame onto the perpetrators. Based on these findings, I argue against theories that claim that the populace assumed the role of judge and executioner because local authorities failed to give Cornelis a proper verdict for treason. Even if this had been the situation, the events would not have escalated to the extent that they did.

The criminal records of The Hague between 1650 and 1672 predominantly reveal petty crimes, such as burglary, theft, prostitution, and begging. Most of these crimes carried a punishment of banishment from the city and its surrounding areas for three, five, or more years. The records also shows that the number of immigrants increased greatly during the reign of

Johan. The prosperity of The Hague's Golden Age may have attracted many people from other towns of the Dutch Republic as well as from other countries in Europe. Most of these people had been wandering around from town to town, trying to earn a small living and turning to petty crimes to survive. In contrast to the idea of the Dutch Republic as a place that was tolerant toward and welcoming of migrants, The Hague municipal court records show that instead of helping the great influx of poor foreigners, they were arrested and banned from the city. This policy included children, pregnant women, and old people. This solution for the increase of poor migrants is, in my opinion, not very tolerant. Acceptance of "others" is easy when one can pick and choose who to welcome and who to dismiss.

The crime records also reveal that violent crimes, such as assaults and vandalism, usually after a night of drinking, were most often committed by young male citizens. The majority of these men had been born and raised in The Hague. Gangs of thieves also roamed the streets of The Hague. Often, these groups had committed serious crimes all over the Dutch Republic and had been arrested and punished several times to no avail. The local government did not act swiftly in these matters and usually simply continued to ban these thieves, probably in the hope that they would stay away to find their fortune elsewhere. In addition, the sword was the weapon of choice in most assault and murder cases. This suggests that knives were a common feature of male attire.

Although the second half of the seventeenth-century was relatively peaceful for The Hague's residents, starting around 1668, the threat of a French invasion became a reality. News sources, either fake or real, discussed and predicted the military strategy of the French troops marching toward the Dutch Republic, often exaggerating the number of soldiers and speed of approach. Other propaganda warned of the shady character of Louis XIV, who they claimed to

be a ruthless and sly king. In some sources, the approaching invasion was compared to the Spanish invasion a century prior and warned the people that similar war atrocities were about to happen. At the same time, several media outlets reported that the Dutch army was unprepared to fight the French in case of war.

Reports on the actual situation in the East of the Dutch Republic were milder. French troops had reached Arnhem and the inhabitants were expected to house them and provide food. Louis XIV also placed a heavy financial burden on the local governments and residents in the form of taxes. Rape, killings, and beatings were reported, but not nearly as frequent as had been predicted, definitely in comparison to the atrocities committed by the Spanish troops. Nonetheless, people in The Hague were unaware of these realities and may have believed the exaggerated version displayed in propaganda. The heightened tension, either real or imagined, must have made people angry and anxious, especially when news emerged that the government wanted common folks to take up arms against the French invader.

Daily reports from the Estates General show that Johan DeWitt was helpless in his efforts to come up with a military strategy against the French. Unforeseen circumstances, such a low water in the rivers and an exceptionally harsh winter in 1672 made it possible for the French troops to invade the East of the Republic and to march inland to *Naarden* and *Swammerdam* in Holland. Eventually, the French armies were only a few miles from The Hague. Attempts from the Estates General to make any unanimous decisions to defend the Dutch Republic failed due to the political structure in which it operated. Rather than a majority vote, each of the seven provinces had to agree to a solution. Consequently, the French invasion became a breeding ground for flare-up of ongoing political rivalry between supporters of the House of Orange and those of the DeWitts. Orangists propaganda pushed William III, Prince of Orange, forward as the

savior of the Dutch Republic, while portraying the DeWitts as traitors. Dutch historians, such as Michel Reinders and Luc Panhuysen argue that this propaganda is the reason Johan and Cornelis were massacred. However, I think that this was only one of the factors that lead to the events of August 20, 1672.

The seventeenth-century is the era that the Netherlands experienced its Golden Age, a century of tremendous prosperity and international power. Popular media have heralded the people of the Netherlands as more tolerant, open-minded, and peaceful than other European countries in the Early Modern Period. Dutch people today still pride themselves on that image. But what if the Golden Age was only golden for relatively wealthy citizens of the Dutch Republic, people that had become rich enough to establish a social structure of places where they could send the deviants of society? Deviants that in turn for shelter and a meager meal, could work for the merchants, while orphanages raised young boys to become free deckhands on the trade ships. Amsterdam may have been welcoming of all sorts of immigrants, The Hague surely shows a different pattern between 1650 and 1672. Migrants were sent away, banned, and at times branded as unwelcome. Surely, for native people of the Dutch colonies, the seventeenth-century was not golden. Neither was it for the slaves that passed through Dutch trade harbors. What if the seventeenth-century with its wars and constant threats of invasion had not been that good at all for the lower levels of society?

Johan and Cornelis DeWitt were killed at the height of this period when yet another invasion was on the horizon. I am not suggesting that there is a causal connection or even a correlation between the death of the DeWitt brothers and the decline of Dutch empire. What I do propose, however, is that the brothers were the unfortunate victims of common people that had suffered and had felt powerless under the constant strain of war, poverty, and intolerance while

the wealthy were getting wealthier, yet failed to invest in solid protection and to provide proper food and shelter for its less fortunate populace. Small group-attacks on local government officials were reported throughout Holland, suggesting that tension was building. When the French invasion became a reality, common people were commanded to step up and erect an ad-hoc army. The lower levels of Dutch society were becoming increasingly nervous, anxious, and angry.

It was a warm Saturday on August 20, 1672. People had been drinking in taverns around the marketplace, as they usually did. Around noon, rumors spread through The Hague that a large mob of angry farmers was on its way to the city. Guards were instructed to defend The Hague's entrances. Coincidentally, Cornelis would be released from prison later that day. His brother, Johan, was set up to be present as well. I do follow the argument, made by Ronald Prud'Homme van Reine, that an Orangist conspiracy was responsible for killing the brothers with a single shot to the head upon leaving prison. But without guards present, there seemed to have been no consequences for participating in events that day. It was a perfect opportunity to collectively release anger, anxiety, and fear onto the powerless bodies of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt.

When France invaded the Netherlands again, first in 1747 and later in 1795, Johan DeWitt's philosophies regarding "true freedom" that he put forth in his work *Deductie* (1654), became popular propaganda for the Dutch patriot party. Statues of Johan and Cornelis can be found throughout the Netherlands and they are favorably discussed in educational Dutch history books. An association named "The Friends of DeWitt" keeps the brothers memory alive by rewarding grants to students who write a master thesis related to the brothers or their politics. I think Johan and Cornelis deserve this recognition.

It is clear that this dissertation does not provide a conclusive explanation for the massacre of Johan and Cornelis DeWitt. Instead, I have attempted to reconstruct life in The Hague during the decades leading up to the fatal day to place the events into context. In addition, I have tried to debunk or validate arguments of historians who have tackled the topic before me. I hope I contributed small pieces of the puzzle and that my work provides avenues for further research as this event remains the most puzzling in Dutch history.

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