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Pollmann, J.S.; Helmers, H.J.; Janssen, G.H.

Citation

Pollmann, J. S. (2018). The cult and memory of war and violence. In H. J. Helmers & G. H. Janssen (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion of the Dutch Golden Age* (pp. 87-104). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3465778

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JUDITH POLLMANN

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The Cult and Memory of War and Violence

If war was the sinew of early modern states, this was especially so in the Dutch Republic. In 1579, a number of the rebel provinces in the Netherlands had joined forces in the Union of Utrecht for the express purpose of waging war against their Habsburg overlords. When this war ended at last, with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, the option to disband the Union was mooted quite seriously, and it took a major political crisis and several years of soul searching and hard negotiation for the provinces to decide they would continue to collaborate.

Even so, no one knew whether the Dutch state could survive without constant war. During the Twelve Years' Truce of 1609–21, political tension had brought the seven provinces to the brink of civil war, and many feared that a peace would give free rein to the disagreements that were endemic in the Union and so lead to its collapse. As we have seen in Chapter 4, this fear proved unfounded not least because the United Provinces continued to be at war on one front or another until well into the eighteenth century. It was not just the key decision-makers in the Republic, especially the urban elites of Holland, who considered warfare necessary to protect their commercial interests; for some, war also created opportunities to obtain profit and status. Aristocratic families, especially the House of Orange-Nassau, built family fortunes and reputations on achievements in land war, while the – mostly non-aristocratic – naval commanders of the Republic could gain spectacular fame and rewards at sea. Many jobs lower on the social ladder also depended on the ongoing military campaigns.

Yet this was not the only reason why war played a major but also quite contradictory role in the self-image of the Dutch in the Golden Age. Because decision-making about war and peace was so devolved that there were many stakeholders, there was wide interest and involvement in military matters among the urban elites of the Republic. Yet for the same reason matters of war and peace were often deeply contested and subject to public debate. Campaign plans had to be defined and decided on collectively; when campaigning the stadholders were accompanied by field deputies of the States General. From 1598, recurring debates on the merits of continuing the war with the Habsburgs led to fierce and emotional public discussion. After 1648, one of the most persistent flashpoints for political conflict in the Republic was the question of whether the States General should focus their spending on the navy, as commercial interests dictated, or on the land army. The latter position was defended by provinces that were more vulnerable to direct attack over land, and usually also by the stadholders and their supporters.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, since warfare had to be paid for, the Republic's taxpayers also had to be persuaded of its merits. To finance the wars, the Dutch paid far higher taxes than they had ever done in the days of the Habsburgs and had to shoulder a huge public debt. Their willingness to do so was partly sustained by relatively high wages and by the fact that most taxes were indirect, and therefore came to be factored into the expected cost of living. There were, moreover, also many small investors in the public debts. Yet the urgency of financing the war was also maintained by a steady stream of reminders in the public sphere that the wars in which the Dutch were involved were necessary, urgent, just, and glorious. These reminders were targeted at the taxpaying populations in the seven provinces, especially Holland.

In this need to justify war in the public eye, the Dutch Republic was not unique – even regimes which could rule in a much more 'absolute' manner than that of the United Provinces felt they had to expend considerable energy on the justification and glorification of war. The States-General imitated the policies of European princes in announcing national days of prayer, penance, or thanksgiving in support of military campaigns, by keeping and displaying the banners which their armies had seized from defeated enemies, and by minting medals in commemoration of great victories. Princes and republics alike rewarded poets who eulogized the achievements of armies and navies, and paid for the funerary monuments of military heroes. Yet more so than the subjects of most monarchs, or even those of a republic like Venice, the Dutch were exposed to mixed, and often also contradictory, messages about their military needs and achievements. They were not only familiar with a discourse that highlighted and glamorized the glorious achievements of the Republic's army and navy. Side by side with this there emerged a discourse that centred on victimhood, sacrifice, and the glories that they brought. This chapter will discuss how these two coexisting discourses came into being and gained a prominent presence in the cultural landscape, before briefly turning to the silences surrounding war.

Victimhood

Long after becoming a major military power, the United Provinces liked to emphasize their smallness, their vulnerability, and the miraculous, and therefore also precarious, fact of the state's survival against the odds of a conflict with a much stronger enemy. The popularity of these tropes dated back to the early days of the Revolt, when the States General had to overcome the distaste for rebellion and disorder among their subjects and foreign rulers alike, so as to attract support or at least forbearance of both locals and European rulers. This was all the more important since they lacked other important sources of legitimacy, such as tradition and historical continuity. The rebels therefore chose to emphasize that theirs was a war of self-defence, not directed against their king, but against the tyranny of the 'evil counsellors' who had misled the monarch. This fiction was maintained until 1581, when the States General decided to abjure their overlord formally, so as to be able to appoint another prince in his stead. After the experiment with their new overlord failed, as did the governorship of the English earl of Leicester, it was only in 1588 that the States General declared that, from then on, they would rule themselves as a republic, a federation of seven sovereign provinces.

In making the case that they had the right do so, leaders of the Revolt not only had to marshal legal and political arguments for the right to political resistance such as were also being developed in other parts of Europe, they also needed to persuade a wider audience of their plight. For this purpose, they could to some extent rely on a transnational politico-religious sensibility that had developed among Calvinist Europeans in the second half of the sixteenth century, and that had spread through the international circuits of exiles, nobles, and intellectuals who believed they were suffering and fighting for the same cause. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tales of the martyrdom of Protestants across Europe were collected in immensely influential martyrs' books, while refugees were compared to the biblical people of Israel and their enemies to Pharaoh. Calvinist rebels liked to present themselves as the hapless victims of conspiracies instigated if not by the devil himself, then at least by his servants, such as the papacy, the Spanish Inquisition, the Jesuit order, and the Catholic Guise family, as well as the Spanish Habsburgs, who were seen to be striving for 'universal monarchy'. From the perspective of Reformed Europeans, this was a transnational, even cosmic, struggle, in which the godly suffered and fought side by side.

Although Calvinists did at times also think in national terms and might claim that God was an Englishman, or that the Dutch were a second Israel, they simultaneously cherished explicit transnational sentiments. This zeal did at times result in practical support. Just as William of Orange and his brother Louis of Nassau supported the French Huguenots against their Catholic opponents, many of the English and Scottish soldiers who came to fight in the Netherlands were motivated by zeal to further the cause of Reformed Protestantism. While Reformed rulers were often reluctant to offer support to co-religionists abroad, their subjects were often much more generous. Although the Republic offered very limited assistance to the Protestant princes fighting in the Thirty Years War, Dutch believers avidly followed the news about events in the Holy Roman Empire. Calvinists throughout seventeenth-century Europe enthusiastically collected huge sums of money for Reformed victims of Catholic violence in Ireland, the Palatinate, and the Valtelline. In the 1680s, the plight of the Huguenots in France, too, triggered outrage among Protestant Europeans.

This Reformed tradition was, however, of limited use to the political elite of the United Provinces, mainly because it was unsuitable for garnering the support of the large religious minorities within the Republic, some of whom had themselves been victim of Reformed aggression, and many of whom venerated martyrs and exiles of their own. Since they also needed the support of Catholics, Mennonites, and Lutherans, the rulers of the Dutch Republic could simply not afford to tie themselves too closely to an aggressively Reformed confessional agenda. In an attempt to develop a secular alternative, propagandists around William of Orange in the 1570s marshalled the support of non-Calvinists for the Revolt by framing it as a war between Netherlandish 'patriots' and evil foreigners, in which the people of the Netherlands were presented as victims of 'Spanish tyranny' rather than of Catholic oppression. Both propagandists for the Revolt and local communities found the trope of secular martyrdom very suitable also to describe and lament the civilian victims of the Revolt, especially the women and children who were often described as the favourite targets of the Spanish 'wolves'. In hindsight, moreover, the notion that the Dutch were, collectively, victims of a war against a foreign enemy could be usefully deployed to overwrite memories of the terrible civic and religious strife that had characterized the early decades of the Revolt. Leiden's memory culture, for instance, foregrounded the burghers' heroic endurance of the famine during a Habsburg siege in 1574, celebrating it as a collective sacrifice by a united population, thus ignoring the deep divisions in the town.

At first, such war memories were evoked above all in local and provincial contexts. This changed when, around 1600, the new rulers of the war-weary Habsburg Netherlands, the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, first began to moot proposals for a peace between themselves, the king of Spain, and the rebel United Provinces. Within the Republic, many were appalled at the prospect of a peace. Since any peace agreement would require the Republic to give up its aim to conquer the southern provinces for the Reformed religion, it was especially opposed by the tens of thousands of Flemish and Brabant Reformed exiles in the north who hoped, one day, to be able to return to the Southern Netherlands. Many others had economic concerns – Zeeland's and parts of Holland's economy thrived on the Republic's blockade of Antwerp, or were investing in projects to compete with the Spanish and Portuguese empires overseas which would also have to be abandoned in return for peace.

From around 1600 and especially from 1607, pro-war campaigners in the Low Countries therefore began systematically to revive memories of the 1560s and 1570s, so as to argue that Spanish peace offers could not possibly be trusted. In ever more graphic terms, plays, songs, prints, and children's books evoked the bad old days of the 'Inquisition', the trials conducted by the 'Blood Council' of the 'Iron Duke' of Alba, and the punitive sackings of the Netherlandish cities in the 1570s. In such accounts there had been tens of thousands of victims in every town, blood gushing through the streets, mass rape, and massacres of women, children, and the elderly. Memories of the 1584 assassination of William of Orange by a Catholic Habsburg agent who had insinuated himself into the household by pretending to be a Calvinist refugee epitomized the dangers of trusting the 'Spanish' enemy. Even if it was commercial considerations that motivated much of the political opposition against the peace, it was this historical, moral take on the conflict that dominated public debate.

The rhetoric about Dutch innocence and vulnerability that was developed in the pamphlet war surrounding the peace talks of 1607–9 might have disappeared after the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce, had it not been for the fact that the architect of the truce, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, between 1610 and 1618 succeeded in making an enemy both of the orthodox wing of the Reformed Church and of Stadholder Maurice of Nassau. In the vicious public debates during the Truce, Oldenbarnevelt's religious and political enemies increasingly used his association with the peace talks to present him as a stooge of the Spanish, explaining how the Remonstrants and their leaders were crypto-Catholics and had by association, or even by choice, become agents of the Habsburg enemy. Counter-Remonstrants, by contrast, took it upon themselves to deliver 'wake-up calls' to those Dutch who had forgotten, or failed to remind their children of, the clear and present danger that the Spanish and the fifth column of their Remonstrant supporters were presenting.

By the time Maurice made his move to unseat Oldenbarnevelt in 1618 and had the old man arrested, tried, and executed, what had begun as the ad hoc rhetoric of the war party had developed into national, secular canon of Revolt memories, of a type that is more often associated with the nationalism of the 1800s. In books, verses, prints, songs, paintings, plays, and sermons, the Dutch reminded themselves again and again of the evil days of the wicked duke of Alba, the dangers of Spanish rule, and the providential role of the House of Orange-Nassau as deliverer from this danger. A popular children's version of the Republic's blood-curdling Revolt memories entitled *Mirror of Youth* argued that no one worth his name as a Netherlander should allow the past to be forgotten. The same book was described by its translators into French as a 'catechism of the state'.[1] Even at an Amsterdam fairground visitors were encouraged to behold and shudder at the spectacle of 'the Tyranny of Alba'.

By extension, this rhetoric also allowed the Dutch to see themselves in the role of 'liberators' of other victims of the Spanish. Campaigners for the founding of a West India Company (WIC) liked to compare the Dutch with the innocent 'Indians' who had fallen prey to Spanish cruelties in the New World and who were believed to be pining for liberation by the Dutch. It is no accident that in 1620 there appeared new, expensively illustrated companion volumes about the Spanish tyranny in the Netherlands, and its equivalent in the Indies.[2] In the 1620s and 1630s, the Dutch were to design costly overseas commercial projects predicated on the idea that, as fellow victims of the Spanish, they would be welcomed as liberators by indigenous peoples in the New World.

In a Dutch context, the atrocity tales were revived in public debate whenever peace talks were proposed. Many contemporaries found it hard to imagine the nature of the conflict in any way other than the one that was shaped by the propaganda of the 1570s. After 1621 the newsflashes from the past were paired and compared with those emerging in the present. In this way contemporaries were encouraged to think about the history of the conflict in a way that suggested at the very least a *moral* continuity between the events of the 1570s and those of their own time. It helped sustain the willingness to pay for the war, but it also prolonged the war itself, because every time peace negotiations were on the cards in the 1630s and 1640s the decontextualized episodes from the past were used as evidence that militated against peace in the present.

Even after the war with the Habsburgs ended, interest in the atrocities of the Revolt did not recede – quite the opposite. The city of Oudewater, for instance, in 1650 commissioned a painting for its city hall that showed how the town had been taken and pillaged in 1575. The painting became a fixture in the annual commemoration of the 'murder' of the city that had commenced early in the seventeenth century. Every year, after hearing a sermon that recalled their plight and deliverance, the town's citizens walked to the city hall, to hear and be shown the harrowing details of the events of 1575. The suffering of Oudewater was deemed so great that, early in the seventeenth century, the States of Holland had already granted a pension to all remaining survivors. Perhaps because of this, some of their stories remained well enough known for them to be retold as late as the 1660s, when the local grocer Adam Duin recorded them in his account of the massacre. An immensely popular play on the siege and relief of Leiden in 1575, which had been written by pastry cook Reynier Bontius in 1645, was reprinted 111 times before 1850 and performed every year in both Leiden and Amsterdam, as well as touring the countryside around Holland. It was accompanied by gruesome 'spectacles'. As late as the 1770s, one Rotterdam gentleman reported the 'most harrowing sight' of seeing a 'fire in which a Spaniard was about to throw a swaddled infant' during one of these performances.[3]

It is no wonder that, even after 1648, Revolt memories were constantly remediated when new military crises erupted. During the Anglo-Dutch War of 1652–4 it was said that Orangist ministers promoted 'for reason of state, from the pulpit, during meals, in barges and on carts to tell, yes for children to learn at their mother's knee, that a hundred thousand were killed for the sake of religion, that the duke of Alba himself had prided himself on killing eighteen thousand … it would well nigh be idolatry should one not believe it'. The French invasion of 1672–3 was also directly compared with the sufferings of the Revolt. 'I have often heard my parents talk', said one author, describing the massacres at Bodegraven and Zwammerdam, 'about the Spanish cruelties committed at Zutpen and Naarden at the beginning of the troubles, but this French torching, murder and rape outweighs all the cruelties of the Spanish' (see Figure 5.1).[4] One publisher efficiently recycled an old account of Habsburg tyranny by simply substituting all references to Spanish and Spain in the text with French and France.

But it was not only during periods of foreign threats that such memories were rekindled; Oldenbarnevelt was only the first Dutch public figure to be accused of being a 'latter-day duke of Alba' – so were both Stadholder William II, for instance, and Pensionary Johan de Witt. In the course of the Golden Age, references to the Dutch sufferings of the early days of the Revolt had become central to their understanding of themselves, and a benchmark for good and evil. As one Reformed minister put

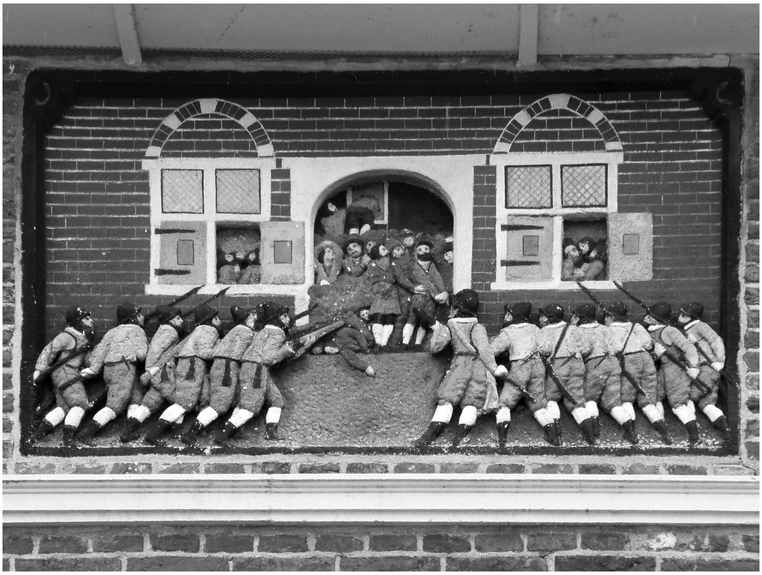

Figure 5.1 Anonymous, *The Massacre of Naarden*, c. 1615.

it in a sermon of thanksgiving for a victory in 1704: 'having crossed a red sea of an eighty years' long bloody war, we have been recognised by the Spanish monarch as a free people, and then liberated from the miseries that can be found in the Dutch histories'.[5]

Glory

Side by side with the boundless interest in Dutch suffering and Spanish atrocities, however, war was also present in a much more positive light. From the start, the Dutch rebels also celebrated their victories, their heroes, and their occasional heroines. Song, a medium of huge importance in sixteenth-century Europe, was one major medium in which this could be done. In 1570, the songs composed about individual issues and episodes of the Revolt were first collected in the *Beggars' Song Book* (*Geuzenliedboek*), which was to remain a bestseller throughout the Golden Age. With its contents placed in chronological order, the collection became a dynamic popular history of the conflict, and was constantly reissued and updated to include the latest triumphs. Often, it was the authorities who took the lead in celebrating achievements in war. The traditional way of involving the public in military triumphs was by proclaiming general processions in all cities of the kingdom, with Te Deums in the churches, which might be followed by public illuminations and the like. After the Reformation, Te Deums and religious processions were abolished, so this was obviously no longer an option. In the Dutch Republic, cities occasionally organized triumphal entries for visiting stadholders, but ritual thanksgiving was done mainly through sermons in the public church. There were, however, other well-established ways to publicize achievements in war, notably through imagery.

From the 1570s both cities and provinces spent large sums on commemorative war imagery; Alkmaar, for instance, commissioned large paintings of its siege, while the States of Zeeland commissioned four enormous tapestries representing the naval engagement of the early decades of the Revolt. Among the spectacular windows in Gouda's Sint Jan Church are two stained glass windows commemorating the siege of Leiden, one of them paid for by the city of Delft, which had played a major part in the operation to flood much of south Holland so as to enable a fleet of flat barges to sail to the besieged city. Yet there also emerged a tradition of heroizing the achievements of ordinary citizens: Kenau

Simonsdochter Hasselaar in Haarlem, who led the women of Haarlem during the defence of the city, is only the best-known of a range of local heroes and heroines whose achievements were collected in seventeenth-century books, and whose feats were immortalized locally in gable stones, small paintings, and the like. The carpenter who used his pole to cross the *polders* between besieged Alkmaar and Hoorn to take a message to the States, the man who rescued his elderly mother from Spanish troops in Westzaan, and the woman who helped demolish Vredenburg castle in Utrecht were all held up to urban audiences as civic role models, emphasizing that this was a war in which all burghers were stakeholders.

The States General were much slower to commission works of commemorative war art but, like local authorities, they commissioned medals which were widely used both to reward combatants and to commemorate victories. Medals were kept with pride, as is evident from their presence in portraits of the combatants who received them, and even in portraits of the children of those combatants; such medals also became collectors' items, which might be reissued at the anniversaries of major victories or other important events. The imagery on medals was often repeating that of the immensely popular news maps that were published from the 1570s. The Habsburg overlords of the Low Countries had been early users of the printing press as a medium to celebrate military and dynastic triumph, but in the Revolt it was no longer the authorities but print-makers themselves who took the initiative to publish war news. The famous print series of events in the Revolt that was produced in Cologne by the firm of the exiled Antwerp printer Frans Hogenberg and his successors was a commercial venture. Having first plagiarized a graphic history of the French wars of religion, Frans Hogenberg around 1570 began to create pictorial histories of the Dutch Revolt from prints that were topographically quite accurate and looked like (but had not always originated as) news prints and so carried an air of immediacy. While initially these also highlighted political events, massacres, and civilian suffering, from the late 1580s, the prints increasingly focused on the detailed mapping of episodes in the war, especially sieges, and soon other publishers began to compete with the Hogenbergs. Prints in this tradition prided themselves on immediacy and accuracy, closely mirroring the information in other media. Some of the artists and publishers involved, like Hogenberg himself, had trained as mapmakers, and many worked in close collaboration with surveyors and engineers in the States Armies.

It is hard to say who initiated such collaborations. Siege warfare was the rule during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Maurice and Frederick Henry specialized in waging it through careful, expensive engineering works, which were designed with mathematical precision. Maurice commissioned painted maps for his own use and, since we know he was keen to foster his reputation as a military innovator, he may have encouraged the spread of his innovation through the medium of news maps. From a military point of view these were more interesting, innovative, and relevant to publish than individual feats of heroism. That the artists and publishers were given help and the opportunity to work may be an indication that officers and commanders themselves also appreciated what the prints could do for their reputation.

Publishers could also expect to be rewarded by the States General or, especially initially, to be given patents. From the late 1590s, the States General seem to have realized the propaganda value of news maps. In 1597, they ordered a Jacques de Gheyn print of the Battle of Turnhout to be put on display in a public area of their quarters in the Binnenhof. Soon afterwards, they considered commissioning a series of prints celebrating the victories of the States Army as a way of impressing the king of France.

Yet the copper engravings that were increasingly used for such prints were so expensive a medium that we must assume that they were produced for a much bigger market. Perhaps buyers were found among the international corps of officers fighting on both sides as well as military professionals abroad. Others have suggested their relevance to many urban regents and investors who were keen to follow the progress of the campaigns. However that may be, it seems evident that at some stage news maps also captured the imagination of a bigger audience of buyers. When war resumed in the 1620s, news maps and news prints were produced routinely by publishers who were constantly checking what did and did not work in the ever growing market for news and commemorative publications.

At the same time, the States General and Stadholder Frederick Henry, too, began actively to participate in and to encourage the spread of news of the stadholder's triumphs. The taking of the tiny, but strategically important garrison town of Grol, now known as Groenlo, in 1627 was Frederick Henry's first major feat, a way to make up for Maurice's much-criticized failure to take the town twenty years earlier, as well as the first good military news after years of plague, economic disaster, and

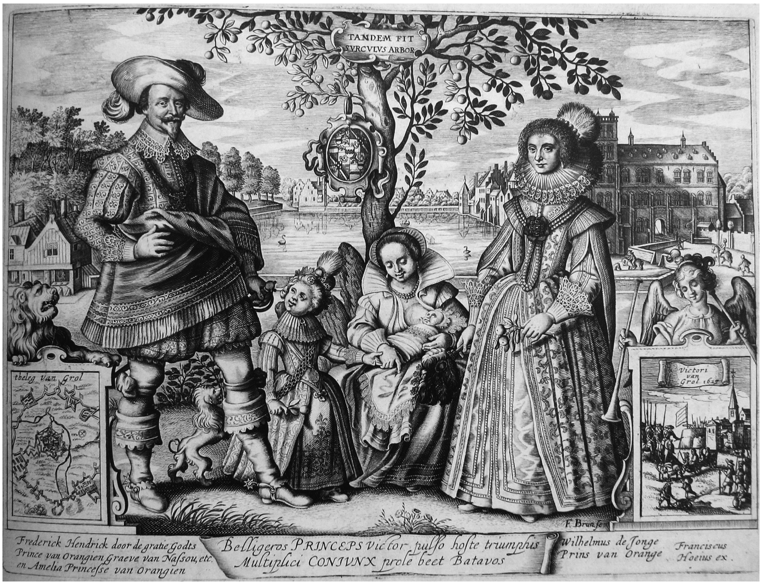
TANDEM FIT SVRCVLVS ARBOR
tbeleg van Grol
Victori van Grol 1627
F. Brun. fe.
Frederick Hendrick door de gratie Godts Prince van Orangien Graeve van Nassou, etc. en Amelia Princesse van Orangien
Belligeros PRINCEPS Victor pulso hoste triumphis Multiplici CONIVNX prole beet Batavos
Wilhelmus de Jonge Prins van Orange
Franciscus Hoeius ex.

Figure 5.2 Frans Bruynen, *Tandem Fit Surculus Arbor*, allegorical print, 1627.

political strife. The taking of Grol was therefore greeted with a wave of public rejoicing, a triumphal entry into The Hague, medals, prints, and poems to heroize the achievements of the prince of Orange (Figure 5.2). This set the tone for the great celebrations to follow in subsequent years, when the taking of Den Bosch and Maastricht were to definitively establish Frederick Henry's reputation as the *Stedendwinger* ('conqueror of cities'), and a match for that other great Protestant hero, King Gustav Adolfus of Sweden, who was lionized across Europe. After Frederick Henry's death, his widow Amalia van Solms sealed his posthumous reputation by the commissioning of the Oranjezaal ('Orange Hall'), where a range of the best Flemish and Dutch artists executed a stupendous ensemble of paintings to celebrate the military reputation of Frederick Henry and his family.

The standards set by Frederick Henry were not easy to match. One reason that Frederick Henry's son, William II, was so opposed to a peace with the Habsburgs was his awareness that an end to the conflict with Spain would rob him of an opportunity to emulate his father. For the military reputation of the House to be renewed, the family had to wait for the elevation of William III to the position of captain-general and stadholder in 1672. Having been raised to his dignities by popular demand, William III was deeply aware of the importance of propaganda, and he spent considerable time and energy on managing his own reputation as a godly champion of liberty against the might of the French king Louis XIV, and a worthy descendant of the father of the fatherland, William of Orange. Artists such as Romeyn de Hooghe not only glorified the prince but also satirized his political opponents. Once Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and William III had been welcomed as the harbinger of a 'Glorious Revolution' to protect the English from popery and tyranny in 1688, the propaganda for the French wars took on a generically Protestant hue.

Although William had to overcome early conflicts with the Amsterdam regents, the continuous pursuit of the French wars caused virtually no public debate in the Republic. This may seem odd, considering the huge expense of the war, not to mention the scale and bloodiness of the conflict. Yet pamphlet debates regarding war and peace seem to have emerged in the Dutch Republic only when there was disagreement within and between the urban elites and other main players – recent scholarship has learned not to equate pamphlets with the 'voice of the people'. Scholars have identified other ways to access this voice. A recent study of thousands of 'lottery rhymes', the mottoes which ordinary citizens added to their lottery tickets and which were read out during the hour-long draws of the winning tickets, suggests that the writers, without being opposed to the wars as such, held distinct views about the motives and consequences of the wars. Showing almost no interest in the religious rhetoric that was central in the States General's propaganda for the wars, and quite aware of setbacks on which the propaganda press and newspapers were quiet, ordinary people were most interested in the economic issues at stake and increasingly keen on peace.

It would be a mistake, though, to think that it was only the States General and the stadholders who had a stake in the publicizing of war. The East and West India Companies, for instance, realized very well what war news could do to share prices. In the 1620s and 1630s the WIC, very much in need of political support, went out of its way to publicize its achievements, like the capture of the Spanish silver fleet by Piet Heyn in 1628. Piet Heyn received a hero's welcome in various Dutch cities, there were banquets and fireworks in his honour, and many commemorative medals, prints, and poems were produced. A recent study of the publicity surrounding the conquests in Brazil has highlighted the extensive media campaign initiated by the WIC, the effect of which was amplified by the discovery of news-makers that news about Brazil sold well. Such public success could backfire; the consequence of promoting the conquests in Brazil as beneficial to everyone in the Republic was that discussions about the response to the loss of Brazil in the 1640s became very public and extremely acrimonious.

Other important stakeholders were the five Admiralties and their admirals and vice-admirals, from whose ranks came the naval heroes whose sumptuous tombs continue to adorn a range of the major churches in Holland. Like most other issues in the Republic, decisions about naval war were politically contested. This created an incentive for individual Admiralties, and for commanders, to appropriate victories and the enormous rewards these could bring, and to show this not only by commissioning many works of art and artefacts to commemorate the victories of their ships, but also by publicly honouring the men in their service. In this context, it is significant that explorer and vice-admiral Jacob van Heemskerck, who died during the Battle of Gibraltar in 1607, was honoured with a splendid funerary monument in Amsterdam several years before the States-General at last agreed to finance a monument for William of Orange.

Since towns and Admiralties often had different views on what the targets for joint action should be, there were sometimes acrimonious discussions about the merits of the various admirals and vice-admirals, which the stadholders and pensionaries could not always settle in private. Admiral Maarten Harpertz Tromp became a very wealthy man and was ennobled by the kings of both France and England, besides being immensely popular, yet a defeat enabled his old rival Witte de With, who supported the regime of Johan de Witt, to seize his chance and have the Orangist Tromp unseated as admiral. Often in disagreement with each other, and always in competition, the Admiralties worked hard to highlight the achievements of the ships and commanders under their auspices, but they also found a very enthusiastic audience for such forms of reputation management. Unlike most army officers, the naval heroes of the Republic were usually commoners, a factor that captured the imagination of the wider bourgeois public. Much more so than about officers in the land armies, the Dutch public devoured news about the lives, careers, and dictums of these naval heroes, whose personal histories were indeed exciting, studded as they were with periods in captivity, narrow escapes, great personal sacrifices, and the adoration of the men serving them. Naval warfare also became a popular subject for paintings not only in public buildings, but also in private homes. Inns were named after naval battles and great commanders, and war memorabilia found a ready market.

Even those commoners who had never boarded a ship could to some extent share in the military reputation of their communities through their membership of the civic militia companies, which usually consisted of all able-bodied men who could afford their own equipment. Since the towns often had virtually no police force, and usually only few soldiers in garrison, the militias played a key role not only in securing the cities at night, but also in keeping the peace during episodes of internal disorder and riot. Very occasionally militiamen were sent out to support the war effort of the States Army, mostly for guard duty in strategic posts whose garrisons had had to go into battle; such feats were celebrated with the commissioning of commemorative prints and other memorabilia. Yet their local role was also considered to be very significant. Their officers frequently had themselves portrayed in their role as guards of civic peace, security and unity, most famously of course in Rembrandt's *Night Watch*. While the pacifist Mennonites could buy themselves out of militia duties, Catholics, Remonstrants, and Lutherans continued to serve, so also supporting a creditable claim to civic equality. Although in the past members of the militias have often been dismissed as rather self-important amateurs, recent scholarship has come to appreciate the militias' importance both as a vehicle for civic pride and during political crises. The early years of the Revolt against the Habsburgs had shown that town councils were powerless once they had lost the trust of (part of) the militias, and these were the natural vehicle for many an urban coup, when armed citizens took on the mantle of political authorities who were seen to have failed in their duties.

Acts of Oblivion

As noted above, the Dutch were able to overwrite memories of civil strife in the Revolt with memories of the heroic suffering of a united Dutch population under the onslaught of a Spanish enemy. This process was much assisted by the oblivion clauses in the Pacification of Ghent of 1576, in which the provinces had agreed that all the events of the previous years would be forgotten. Such oblivion clauses, which were used as an instrument for peace-making across Europe, were not meant to suppress memories as such, but to deactivate them as triggers and justification for further violence, public recrimination, or lawsuits. In the Dutch context this meant, for instance, that Catholics could no longer be prosecuted for efforts to resist the Revolt. Conversely, the existence of certain war crimes by the rebels was acknowledged, but responsibility for them was assigned to individual scapegoats outside the civilian population. A good example of this is what happened to the reputation of Beggar commander Lumey, whose name is associated with the martyrdom of nineteen Franciscans from Gorinchem in 1572. Whereas Catholic accounts stressed that the population of Brielle had been laughing and jeering while the captured Franciscans were forced to walk the town in a mock procession and, in a parody of the sprinkling of holy water, had used brooms and buckets to bless them, the historian Pieter Bor and subsequent historians held only Lumey and his soldiers responsible. According to Bor, the episode in Brielle had happened 'to the great discontent and displeasure of the good citizens, who were horrified by such cruelty', and in disregard of instructions by William of Orange.[6] Since Lumey had been dismissed in 1574 and had subsequently reconciled with the Catholic enemy, he was an ideal scapegoat, and his role was recalled with a view to demonstrating the virtues of Orange rather than to acknowledge the deep divisions within the Dutch population.

Later acts of war, too, were discussed and remembered very selectively. While army discipline improved rapidly and mutinies were rare in the States Armies after the 1580s, the inland provinces all remained vulnerable to attack, and fishermen and the sailors manning small merchant vessels were at constant risk of being imprisoned or killed. Even so, once people in Holland no longer had war on their territories, from 1578 they showed little interest in the plight of compatriots who had to live with the consequences of sustained warfare. The Republic's self-image might be built around a love of 'liberty', but contemporaries thought of this not as a generic human right, but as a specific set of rights and privileges that extended only to those who were 'represented' in the Provincial Estates. When deciding on war aims, the interests of communities that were not represented in the States General counted for very little. People living in those parts of the Dutch Republic without representation in the States General, the frontier zones in the east and south, the conquered areas known as the Generality Lands, and peoples living in striking distance of the East and West India Companies, felt the burdens of war most acutely, yet no one showed any interest in their wishes. As we have seen, Frederick Henry's feats were greeted with waves of public praise, but in these celebrations local voices were conspicuously absent. While supporters of the West India Company continued to fantasize about the possibility of natural alliances between the Dutch and 'Indian' victims of Spanish tyranny, Dutch settlers waged war against native Americans. And while the extermination of virtually the entire population of the Banda Islands, in 1621, attracted criticism within Dutch East India Company (VOC) circles, it was only the first of a long range of vicious campaigns against Asian enemies, in which civilians were not spared. While defeated European enemies were given quarter, Asian enemies were routinely enslaved. It was rare for anyone in the Republic to ask publicly how violent a price the Dutch were entitled to exact for living in a Golden Age. Yet of course others were doing so for them. The makeshift legal procedure by which the VOC commanders in 1623 in Ambon executed ten Englishmen and nine Japanese soldiers who had allegedly plotted to take over Fort Victoria, for instance, caused outrage in England. After exonerating the judges at a subsequent enquiry in the Republic, the Republic considered the matter closed. Yet, in England, memories of the 'Amboyna Massacre' were rekindled until well into the eighteenth century and did much to fire animosity against the Dutch during the Anglo-Dutch Wars.

Conclusion

While reminders of war and atrocity were thus in abundance in the Republic's cultural landscape, warfare also came at a cost that remained hidden from the Dutch public sphere. War was central to the Dutch self-image, but the Dutch did not see themselves as warlike – to the contrary. The early history of the Revolt was rewritten as a story of victimhood and civic courage against foreign enemies, and so created a powerful founding myth for the new state. On closer inspection, there were many voices missing from the din of publicity and discussion surrounding matters of war and peace, most notably the voices of those who had no representation in the States General. The consequences were serious, not only for their victims but also for the Dutch themselves. Policy-makers in the United Provinces were frequently deluded about how others viewed them and their motives, and had little understanding of what moved their enemies. Thus Maurice and the States General were genuinely surprised when Flemish peasants near Nieuwpoort did not welcome them as liberators during the 1600 campaign. Both the WIC and the VOC built castles in the air when thinking about securing local allies against their Iberian competitors in the New World. By 1650 the ruthlessness with which the Dutch pursued their self-proclaimed right to trade had become proverbial across Europe. Even so the Dutch habitually continued to think of themselves as vulnerable and small. As a consequence, they were genuinely surprised when, in 1672, a coalition between the kings of England and France and the prince-bishops of Cologne and Münster went on the attack, and even more so that their plight attracted little pity among the other European powers. That even Dutch foreign policy-makers found it hard to understand, let alone handle, the animosity which the United Provinces attracted as the seventeenth century progressed was the result of the cognitive dissonance between the self-image they had so usefully created and the political reality that others witnessed, that the Dutch Republic of the Golden Age was, also, an aggressive superstate.

Notes

1. Cited in J. Pollmann, *Het oorlogsverleden van de Gouden eeuw*, Leiden, 2008.
2. W. Cilleßen, 'Massaker in der niederländischen Erinngerungskultur. Die Bildwerdung der Schwarzen Legende', in C. Vogel (ed.), *Bilder des Schreckens. Die mediale Inszenierung von Massakern seit dem 16. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, 93–135.
3. Cited in Anna de Haas, 'Gruwelen op het achttiende-eeuwse toneel. "Wij openden het gordijn van ons bebloet toneel"', *Literatuur* 19 (1995), 201.
4. Cited in J. Van der Steen, *Memory Wars in the Low Countries*, Leiden, 2016, 278.
5. Cited in Van der Steen, *Memory Wars*, 283.
6. P. C. Bor, *Vande Nederlantsche oorloghen, beroerten ende borgerlijcke oneenicheyden, gheduerende den gouvernemente vanden hertoghe van Alba inde selve landen: warachtighe ende historische beschrijvinghe*, Utrecht, 1601, 121. The contrast was first noticed by my former student Leon Geutjes, who discussed it in a seminar paper in 2008.