

‘Only the Strangest and Most Horrible Cases’: The Role of Judicial Violence in the Work of Jan Luyken

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Abstract

In 1685, Dutch Calvinist publishers brought to the market a new edition of the Anabaptist martyrology *Het bloedig tooneel*. Marketed mainly towards wealthy Dutch Anabaptists, the book included 104 high-quality etchings made by the Amsterdam artist Jan Luyken. Famous for their explicit depiction of executions, these images of martyrdom have been studied and explained mainly with reference to Luyken's Anabaptist leanings, older illustrated martyrologies, and the textual elements of *Het bloedig tooneel*. However, Luyken matched his work on martyrdom with an impressive production of secular execution prints that are often indistinguishable from their religious counterparts. Taking these similarities as a point of departure, this article will argue that Luyken's work was not solely concerned with religious and political views, but also with judicial violence as a visual theme in its own right. Besides partisan or sacred readings of violence, Luyken's prints framed executions in terms of diversity and specificity, leading to the production of a wide variety of explicit and unique images of beheadings, hangings, and burnings. Within this context, Luyken's execution prints turned scaffold violence into a marketable theme that was eagerly exploited by Amsterdam publishers across a wide variety of illustrated books.

Keywords: martyrdom, book illustrations, executions, Jan Luyken, violence, printed image

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If you only wish to make title plates, or other [prints], for books that are in agreement with your conscience, then it is time that you stop. But I see your prints in such books, and concerning such matters, of which I think you hold the greatest revulsion in your heart: of murder, strangling, burning, and bloodshed, with which [your prints on] the Crusades overflow.¹

With these words, the Mennonite writer Barend Joosten Stol tried in 1689 to convince the prolific Dutch artist Jan Luyken to create a frontispiece for his forthcoming critique on the German theosophist Jakob Boehme.² Stol had earlier borrowed some of Boehme’s writings from Luyken, and decided he disagreed profoundly with the German mystic. Luyken, however, was a devout follower of Boehme, and refused to produce an illustration for Stol on account of their newly discovered religious disagreements.³ According to Stol, these differences should not have precluded Luyken from providing a frontispiece. For had Luyken not illustrated all manner of horrible acts that he presumably disagreed with wholeheartedly, such as the bloodshed in his prints for Louis Maimbourg’s *Histoire des Croisades*?

Stol’s argument points towards a clear theme in Luyken’s oeuvre: violence. Without a doubt, one of the most famous examples of this theme is the 1685 edition of the Anabaptist

1 Stol, *Verhandeling van den christelijken leidsman*, 429-30: ‘Indien gy geen Tijtel-plaeteu of anderen wilt maken/als voor soodanige boeken/die geheel met u verstant over-een-komen. Soo is ’t tijd dat gy “er uyt scheeyt; maer ik zie u prenten in soo-danige boeken/en voor soodanige saken/daer van ik meen/dat gy in u herte een aller-grootste afgrijzen hebt: soo van Moorden/Worgen/Branden en Bloed-vergieten/gelijk de kruys-vaerden daer van overloopen.’ This article is the result of my work as a PhD candidate within the research programme *Imagining Violence. Techniques of Early Modern Performativity in the Northern and Southern Netherlands, 1630-1690*, financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Part of the research for this article was carried out at the Gotha Research Library and made possible by the Herzog-Ernst scholarship financed by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. I would like to thank the EMLC editors, the anonymous reviewers, as well as Yannice De Bruyn, Inger Leemans, Frans-Willem Korsten, and Erika Kuijpers for their helpful feedback on earlier versions of this paper.

2 The argument between Luyken and Stol took place in an exchange of letters, which were later published by Stol in his anti-Boehme booklet *Verhandeling van den christelijken leidsman*.

3 For a discussion of their religious differences, see Van der Does, ‘Het Conflict tusschen Barend Joosten Stol en Jan Luyken’.

martyrology *Het bloedig tooneel* ('The bloody stage'), for which Luyken produced 104 high-quality etchings. Known for their explicit depiction of all manner of early modern execution methods, these violent images of martyrdom have been studied and explained mainly with reference to Luyken's Anabaptist leanings, older illustrated Catholic and Protestant martyrologies, and the textual elements of *Het bloedig tooneel*.⁴ However, as Stol's remarks already suggest, Luyken's work on violence hardly restricted itself to the religious theme of martyrdom. For example, in Luyken's prints for Maimbourg's history of the crusades he portrayed violent themes of a more profane nature: plundering crusaders in their trek across Europe, bloody hand-to-hand combat in the Promised Land, and, finally, the gruesome execution by flaying of the assassin of Richard the Lionheart. As Stol implied, these prints were hardly an exception. In Luyken's oeuvre at large, the martyr print had a counterpart in an impressive production of execution prints created for books on history, politics, and the so-called *histoire tragiques*. Alongside the martyr prints that portrayed capital punishment for heresy, there were plenty of 'secular' execution prints that concerned convicts killed either for political reasons or crimes like theft and murder.⁵ Strikingly, many of these prints are indistinguishable from their sacred counterparts as found in *Het bloedig tooneel*. In fact, Luyken's countless images of executions deal with a great variety of religious and political issues that raise a number of questions about the iconography of explicit judicial violence.

Up until now, only a small part of Luyken's work on executions has been discussed in academic literature. The martyr prints for *Het bloedig tooneel* are either invoked simply as illustrations without reference to the particular context of their production and dissemination,⁶ or studied solely within the context of Mennonite religiosity.⁷ Sarah Covington has recently broken with the narrow historiography on Luyken's martyr prints by placing *Het bloedig tooneel* within a broader context of early modern martyr books, connecting it to older illustrated Catholic and Protestant martyrologies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸ However, she has done so without taking into account Luyken's impressive

4 Covington, 'Paratextual Strategies in Thieleman van Bragt's Martyr's Mirror'; Covington, 'Jan Luyken, the Martyrs Mirror, and the Iconography of Suffering'. Henk van 't Veld shortly mentions the violent character of Luyken's prints, both secular and religious, yet he does not problematize the presence of violence as a distinct topic, and never seeks to connect secular and religious types of imagery: *Beminde broeder die ik vand op 's werelts pelgrims wegen*, 92.

5 I use the term 'religious executions' to denote executions for heresy, specifically those portrayed in early modern martyr books. 'Secular executions' refers to political and more mundane crimes, even though it is important to note that both 'types' of executions were often the responsibility of secular authorities. On the interaction and distinction between religious executions (for heresy) and executions for non-religious crimes in the case of early modern France, see Friedland, *Seeing Justice Done*, ch. 5.

6 Knipping, *De iconografie van de contra-reformatie*, 188; Puppi, *Torment in Art*, 58; Uppenkamp, *Judith and Holofernes*, 59; Moscoso, *Pain*, 17; Dittmeyer, *Gewalt und Heil*, 96.

7 Dickey, 'Mennonite Martyrdom in Amsterdam'; Covington, 'Jan Luyken, the Martyrs Mirror, and the Iconography of Suffering'; Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror*.

8 Covington, 'Paratextual Strategies in Thieleman van Bragt's Martyr's Mirror'; Covington, 'Jan Luyken, the Martyrs Mirror, and the Iconography of Suffering'.

corollary output on executions in the secular sphere, focusing instead on a particular ‘Mennonite sensibility’.⁹

Within the broader historiography on judicial violence and criminology, visual sources have mostly been treated unproblematically, as illustrations of written sources rather than sources in their own right.¹⁰ In his seminal work on judicial violence in early modern Amsterdam, Pieter Spierenburg only invokes Luyken’s work insofar as the prints support or elaborate on views of executions stemming from written sources.¹¹ Images, however, raise questions of their own, for instance on the imagination and popularity of violence in seventeenth-century Dutch print culture. At the same time, works that do pay attention to the imagery of judicial violence have often done so by closely reading iconic images rather than engaging with images from a serial perspective, as is the case with the often repeated dissection of Hogarth’s famous 1747 work on a hanging at Tyburn.¹² For the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, well known for its rich visual culture, an assessment of serial representations of violence is especially apt, and the productive Jan Luyken offers an ideal case study.

Taking the overlap of religious and secular execution prints as a point of departure, this article argues that Jan Luyken’s work was not only concerned with the production of religious or political meaning, but also with judicial violence as an overarching visual theme in its own right. While Luyken’s martyr prints moved towards their secular counterparts in a newfound focus on human interaction over divine intervention, his prints for more profane works incorporated elements often associated with the visual culture of martyrdom. Simultaneously, secular and religious execution prints came together in a more pronounced focus on the concrete physicality of judicial violence, exploring the destruction of the human body within the confines of the printed book illustration. Thus, apart from being partisan readings of religion, history, and politics, secular and religious execution prints also demonstrated a particular concern with an overarching category that treated judicial violence as a theme in its own right, stressing visual diversity (in terms of the sorts of punishments shown) and specificity (in terms of showing the often explicit details related to particular execution stories). Within this context, Luyken’s execution prints turned scaffold violence into a marketable theme that was eagerly exploited by Amsterdam publishers across a wide variety of illustrated books.

Jan Luyken and the Dutch Book Industry

Jan Luyken was unique in his unparalleled output of book illustrations, yet at the same time he neatly embodied the nature of the late seventeenth-century Dutch book industry.

9 Judith Pollmann has argued that the sensibility that Covington sees as particularly Mennonite extended to a wider Dutch context and is equally discernable in Luyken’s work on the Eighty Years’ War: Pollmann, ‘Met grootvaders bloed bezegeld’, n. 14.

10 Carrabine, ‘Picture This’, 253.

11 Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 72, 92.

12 For two different uses of Hogarth, see Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 95; Carrabine, ‘The Iconography of Punishment’.

Spanning the years between 1677 and 1712, Luyken's career as an etcher coincided with the growth of the Dutch book industry at the end of the seventeenth century. Luyken's background as the son of a German immigrant likewise embodied the diverse character of seventeenth-century Amsterdam. His father, Casper Luyken the elder, had moved from Essen to Amsterdam in 1628 and was known as a follower of the aforementioned theosophist Jakob Boehme.¹³ In his youth Jan Luyken seems to have revolted against the strong Pietist spirit of his father, devoting himself to the writing of love poems. In 1671, a collection of these mildly erotic works was published under the title *De Duytse lier*.¹⁴ After these youthful endeavors, Luyken returned into the Pietist fold: around 1675 a strong religious experience moved him to rearrange his life according to the spiritual principles of his late father. A few years later, he gave up painting, for which he had been in training between 1661 and 1668, in order to focus on the art of etching.¹⁵ His venture proved extremely successful. Together with his son Casper Luyken the younger, the only of his five children to survive into adulthood, Jan Luyken produced around 4500 etchings, almost all of them book illustrations.¹⁶ In line with his religious beliefs, much of Luyken's income from these works went to local charities.

Luyken's productivity, however, was not simply a byproduct of his strict religiosity. It was intrinsically connected to the high value placed on illustrations in the Amsterdam book industry. As Benjamin Schmidt has succinctly put it: 'Pictures in their own rights sold books.'¹⁷ From the perspective of publishers, images could even overshadow the text they were supposed to illustrate. The Dutch printing industry scoured the continent far and wide for its textual sources, importing and translating numerous French, German, and English works to feed the presses across the Republic. Yet when it came to etchings and engravings, publishers in the Dutch Republic often relied on prints from local workshops.¹⁸ Enterprising Dutch publishers invested heavily in the production of new plates for a wide variety of books, ranging from Bibles to geographies, and from devotional literature to histories.¹⁹ From the late seventeenth century onwards, publications at the high end of the market were increasingly illustrated with original content rather than the copies that often circulated in the early modern printing industry. Claartje Rasterhoff has explained part of this renewed production as a result of increasing market saturation. To keep selling books, publishers had to differentiate their products; adding unique and high-quality illustrations was one way of doing so.²⁰

Within this context, Dutch publishers also started to illustrate imported works that had originally been printed without illustrations. Gottfried Arnold's *Die Erste Liebe Der*

13 Van Eeghen, 'Jan Luyken (1649-1712) and Caspar Luyken (1672-1708)', 129.

14 Van Eeghen and van der Kellen, *Het werk van Jan en Casper Luyken*, I, xxii.

15 Van 't Veld, *Bemide broeder die ik vand op 's werelts pelgrims wegen*, 73, 76.

16 Van Eeghen and van der Kellen, *Het werk van Jan en Casper Luyken*, I, iii.

17 Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 100.

18 On the importance of varied and original book illustrations in the Amsterdam print industry, see Kolfin, 'Amsterdam, Stad van Prenten', 31; Rasterhoff, *Painting and Publishing as Cultural Industries*, 140-141.

19 On illustrated Bibles and religious literature at large, see Stronks, *Negotiating differences*, 231. On exotica, see Schmidt, *Inventing exoticism*.

20 Rasterhoff, *Painting and Publishing as Creative Industries*, 158-160.

Gemeinen Jesu Christi (*The First Love of the Christian Community*), for example, did not include any images beyond a frontispiece in its original 1696 German edition.²¹ The Dutch translation published four years later, by contrast, was illustrated with no less than 93 prints by Jan Luyken.²² This radical change was reflected in the Dutch title, *Waare afbeelding der eerste Christenen* (*True Image of the First Christians*), in which the words ‘true image’ from the German subtitle (*Wahre Abbildung*) had been moved to the main title. Dutch translations such as these transformed a foreign-language text by adding unique and newly made prints to an otherwise unillustrated original.²³ In turn, the prints could easily overshadow the original textual work for which they had been commissioned. Jan Luyken’s prints for *Waare afbeelding der eerste Christenen* were republished in Amsterdam in 1722 and 1740, both times without any of the original textual work of Arnold.²⁴ Instead, they were accompanied by short verses made specifically for the subject matter of the prints. Text thus followed image, rather than the other way around.

Violence was a particularly flourishing theme on the buoying market for illustrated books. The way to its popularity had mainly been paved by the only other printmaker that could match Luyken’s productivity in the late seventeenth century, the prolific Romeyn de Hooghe. De Hooghe had initially made his mark with a number of prints connected to the Disaster Year of 1672, in which he explored the absolutism of Louis XIV and the cruelties that were said to have been perpetrated by invading French soldiers.²⁵ De Hooghe found himself comfortable in the role of propagandist, and during the build-up to the Glorious Revolution he would bind himself to the cause of William III. Versatile in his political allegiances as much as in artistry, he also produced Habsburg propaganda for the victories of the Holy League during the Great Turkish War. In all these cases, a ‘gruesome realism’ was emblematic of De Hooghe’s unique artistic signature.²⁶

The propagandistic nature of many of De Hooghe’s violent works, however, clearly sets them apart from Luyken’s. As propaganda, De Hooghe’s prints were not only published in illustrated books, but also in the form of broadsheets.²⁷ In contrast, Luyken worked almost exclusively on book illustrations, steering away from media forms that directly served propagandistic efforts.²⁸ Henk van ’t Veld has thus contrasted De Hooghe’s opulent Baroque style – well-suited for glorification of political rulers – with Luyken’s more reserved disposition, even if both drew heavily on a visual culture focusing on graphic

21 The full title of the first 1696 edition published in Frankfurt am Main reads: *Die erste Liebe der Gemeinen Jesu Christi, Das ist, Wahre Abbildung der Ersten Christen Nach Ihren Lebendigen Glauben und Heiligen Leben*.

22 Arnold, *Waare afbeelding der eerste Christenen*.

23 Similarly, the richly illustrated Dutch edition of Maimbourg’s *Histoire des Croisades* contrasted strongly to the French productions, which were virtually without images. For the Dutch edition illustrated by Luyken and others, see Maimbourg, *Historie der kruisvaarders*.

24 Van Eeghen and van der Kellen, *Het werk van Jan en Casper Luyken*, II, 453; Luyken, Langendijk, and Bruin, *Tafereelen der eerste Christenen* (1722, 1740).

25 On De Hooghe’s works concerning the Disaster Year, see Haks, ‘De Franse Tirannie’.

26 Van Nierop, *The Life of Romeyn de Hooghe*, 71.

27 For an overview of De Hooghe’s work on so-called news prints in broadsheet format, see Van Nierop, ‘Profijt en Propaganda’.

28 Van Nierop, *The Life of Romeyn de Hooghe*, 216.

violence.²⁹ Despite their great versatility, this difference allowed both artists to carve out their own niche. While De Hooghe was famous for his high-quality battle scenes, sieges, and triumphalia, Luyken focused more on Biblical stories, history (ancient history in particular), and emblems.³⁰ This division also fitted in with distinct approaches to the print market. De Hooghe, who was eager to participate in high society, often dedicated works to important political actors at home and abroad, and was even commissioned to glorify rulers such as King John III Sobieski of Poland.³¹ Luyken, on the other hand, lived a quieter life, working first and foremost with local publishers rather than for foreign courts.

Within the context of a profitable and 'violent' Dutch print market, a number of Calvinist publishers decided to put together a second edition of Thieleman van Braght's Anabaptist martyrology *Het bloedigh tooneel der doops-gesinde en weereeloose Christenen*. This venture required a considerable investment, not in the least because of the addition of etchings, and was thus published 'en compagnie', in order to share the financial risks. Initially, this enterprising group included Hieronymus Sweerts, Jan ten Hoorn, Jan Bouman, and Daniel van den Dalen. At a later stage of the project, they were joined by Jacobus van den Deyster, Herman van den Berg, Jan Blom, the widow of Steven Swart, Sander Wybrants, and Aart Dircksz. Oosaaan.³² These Reformed businessmen were interested in profit rather than the promotion of Anabaptist martyr stories.³³ Specifically, they would have had in mind the commercial success of the two illustrated editions of Adriaan van Haemstede's famous sixteenth-century Calvinist martyrology, *Historie der martelaren*, published in 1657 and 1659.³⁴ Packed with no less than 177 illustrations, these editions can be seen as an early example of a new wave of publications that included high-quality and original imagery, foreshadowing the boom in illustrated works towards the end of the century.³⁵

The editorial work that set the 1685 publication of *Het bloedig tooneel* apart from the first edition of 1660 was rather modest. Van Braght, who had died in 1664, was still named as the author of the work, whereas the editor of the 1685 edition remained anonymous. Instead, it was the inclusion of 104 etchings by Luyken that drastically changed the face of the martyrology. Van Braght's original work had included no images, save for a frontispiece, but the second edition was the first ever illustrated Anabaptist martyrology.

29 Van 't Veld, *Beminde broeder die ik vand op 's werelts pelgrims wegen*, 80-81.

30 Van 't Veld has classified all Luyken's prints based on the catalogue of van Eeghen, and concludes that his main focus was on Biblical stories (30 percent) and profane and church history (23 percent). However, he did not create a specific category for emblemata, which presumably have been subsumed under other categories such as 'daily life', 'genre', and 'allegorical subjects': *Beminde broeder die ik vand op 's werelts pelgrims wegen*, 85-86. De Hooghe's interest in contemporary affairs can be illustrated by the relative absence of the Dutch Revolt in his oeuvre. In fact, most of De Hooghe's prints on the Revolt were produced for French and Spanish editions of Famiano Strada's *De Bello Belgico*, where he portrayed only the victories of the Spanish and none of the traditional Dutch themes of 'Spanish tyranny'. For details on this peculiar publication, see Begheyn, *Jesuit Books in the Dutch Republic and its Generality Lands*, 185.

31 De Haas, 'Commissaris van zijne Majesteit en Mikpunt van Faamrovende Paskwillen', 12-14; Van Nierop, *The Life of Romeyn de Hooghe*, 195.

32 Visser, 'De Pelgrimage van Jan Luyken', 170.

33 Visser, 'De Pelgrimage van Jan Luyken', 171.

34 Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror*, 90-91.

35 Plomp, 'Gerbrand van den Eeckhout's Illustrations', 186.

The addition of Luyken's etchings was also reflected in the price. Unlike woodcuts, etchings could not be printed together with the text, and therefore required a more expensive production process with two separate print runs. With a 'common' edition at eight and a half guilders, and a 'fine' edition with better paper at thirteen guilders, the book was aimed at the more prosperous members of the Dutch Anabaptist community.³⁶ Just as the prints for Arnold's *Waare afbeelding der eerste Christenen*, Luyken's etchings for *Het bloedig tooneel* were soon appropriated by other publishers. Around 1712 they appeared in Leiden with added French and German descriptions as *Theatre des Martyrs [...] Schau-Buhne der Martyrer*.³⁷ This publication was completely devoid of Van Braght's martyr stories and contained only the prints that had made the 1685 edition famous. An Italian edition of the prints appeared in Venice in 1696, again without any reference to Van Braght's original work. Jan Luyken's prints, then, had a much wider reach than the Anabaptist martyr stories they were meant to illustrate. The first translation of *Het bloedig tooneel* appeared only in 1748-1749; this was a German edition published in Pennsylvania for the Mennonite community in the American colonies.³⁸

Without a doubt, the spectacular, violent nature of Luyken's prints for *Het bloedig tooneel* greatly contributed to their popularity. In an Italian description of the Venetian edition, the reader was promised that Luyken's work would reveal the full array of cruelties inflicted on Christians ever since the crucifixion of Christ. At the same time, the 'teaser' emphasized that the prints' beautiful portrayal of horrible acts constituted an ambiguous balancing act.³⁹ These claims were hardly overstated. The second edition of *Het bloedig tooneel* included images depicting the skin burning off martyrs' faces, charred bodies consisting of a mix of roasted flesh and half exposed bones, and the dramatic unfolding of a botched beheading. Yet one did not need to turn to Luyken's work on martyrs to see these types of explicit execution scenes. In fact, many of Jan Luyken's illustrations on judicial violence stem from illustrated books on history and politics. The most prominent examples of such secular prints were made for the 1698 edition of *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige mannen* (*The Tragic Stage of Illustrious Men*), a compilation of 'tragic histories' put together by the prolific writer and translator Lambert van den Bos. This book on the rise and fall of powerful men (and the occasional woman) went through numerous editions from the 1650s onwards, with each consecutive work illustrated more richly than the previous one. Whereas the early editions only included (copied) portraits, later versions showed new and original artwork, often portraying the tragic end of these famous leaders at the hands of the executioner.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, the most copiously illustrated edition

³⁶ Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror*, 91.

³⁷ Luyken, *Theatre Des Martyrs*.

³⁸ Gregory, 'Anabaptist Martyrdom', 467.

³⁹ Albrizzi, *La Galleria di Minerva*, 150: 'L'opera è l'idea, & l'accuratezza dell' intaglio, non puole non essere che bella, e vaga, se l'horrida faccia della crudeltà, che vi si scorge, non s'ingegnasse non so se debba dire, di toglier, o pur accrescere la vaghezza con tutta la lunga serie di ben espressi tormenti.' I would like to thank Alessio Panichi and Caro Verbeek for their help with the translation of this Italian text.

⁴⁰ The earliest edition dates from 1650, and was largely based on Claude Malingre's *Les Histoires tragiques de nostre temps*. All illustrations in this edition are copied portraits: Van den Bos, *Het treur-toonneel der doorluchtige mannen onser eeuw*.

was filled with prints by Jan Luyken. This work from 1698 must have been a particular successful venture, as the publisher of the book, Jan ten Hoorn, soon brought a spinoff to the market in the form of Laurens van Zanten's 1699 *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen* (*The Tragic Stage of Illustrious Women*) – again illustrated with new and original work by Luyken. In addition to these 'stages of sorrow', numerous execution scenes by the hand of Luyken could be found scattered amongst his work for books that concerned a wide array of topics: from local histories to all-encompassing chronicles, and from the Dutch Revolt to the popular genre of exotica.

Of course, the distinction between a 'secular' and a 'religious' corpus was not always clear-cut in early modern Christian Europe.⁴¹ Thus, the image in *Het bloedig tooneel* of the execution of Felicitas and her seven sons in ancient Rome was strikingly similar to the martyrdom of the seven sons of the Jewish Solomonia in Ten Hoorn's history of illustrious women. Moreover, various characters whose execution Luyken depicted for profane history works, including Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Charles I, and Lady Jane Grey, were treated as (semi-)religious martyrs in some circles. In Luyken's work on 'tragic histories', on the other hand, these characters were not surrounded by prints of fellow martyrs, as was the case in *Het bloedig tooneel*. Instead, in Ten Hoorn's *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen* Solomonia and her seven martyred sons are placed within a pictorial cycle where they are surrounded by (in)famous noblewomen, murderesses, and adulteresses – colorful characters from all sorts of religious backgrounds. Indeed, as the publisher himself explained in his address to the reader, it was not martyrdom or even religion in a broader sense that connected the images, but the tragic and violent deaths of their protagonists, either in the form of murder, execution, or an unfortunate accident.⁴²

In a similar vein, Jan Luyken did portray the occasional Protestant victim of religious persecution in his prints for *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck* (Leiden, 1698), the extended Dutch translation of an early seventeenth-century German chronicle. Yet these prints of Protestant martyrs were included besides numerous other images of executions, including the public dismemberment of men in the Ottoman Empire, the hanging of Catholic clergy during the German Peasants' Wars, and the public burning of arsonists in sixteenth-century Prague.⁴³ While all these images participated in distinct religious and political discourses, they were also part of a broader visual category concerned with explicit scaffold violence. Thus, whereas violence is a subtheme within the broader category of martyrdom in the prints for *Het bloedig tooneel*, Luyken's work on profane history positions judicial violence as a parallel category in its own right. In other words, these prints were concerned not only with possible partisan or polemic religious narratives (which, of course, could still be present), but equally with the visual framing of executions in terms of diversity and explicit violence.

Yet even as Jan Luyken's execution scenes could be found in a wide variety of books on both religious and profane themes, their appearance remained remarkably similar. Most

41 For a general discussion on illustrated religious literature in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, see Stronks, *Negotiating Differences*. Stronks, however, does not discuss martyr books as part of her research.

42 Van Zanten, *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, 3.

43 Gottfried, *Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, 1, resp. 1057, 93, and 533.

importantly, they show that Luyken approached the visualization of martyrdom and of secular executions in a similar fashion, and that few of the central themes of violence as found in his martyr prints were unique to his iconic work for *Het bloedig tooneel*. Indeed, many of these themes could also be found in his extensive contributions to profane histories. To further explore this overlap, the next section offers a more thorough comparison of some of Luyken's execution prints.

An Anabaptist Martyr, a Spanish Nobleman, and a Portuguese Murderess

Luyken's prints for *Het bloedig tooneel* followed the chronological structure of the book, starting with the crucifixion of Christ and ending with the martyrs of the Reformation. The majority of the prints depict the early Christian martyrs and their early modern Anabaptist counterparts; some medieval religious dissenter movements, like the Albigenses and Waldensians, serve to fill the temporal gap between these two major groupings. In terms of iconography, the early martyrs would still be clearly recognisable to most Christians, as many were identifiable by particular execution methods: Christ by the Cross, Saint Andrew by the Saint Andrew's Cross, Saint Bartholomew by being flayed alive, etc. Yet as the martyrology progresses into the early modern era, the executions turn into a blur of beheadings, hangings and burnings, taking on Anabaptist martyrs that have no set personal iconography or visual tradition. These are precisely the images that share many similarities with the execution prints that could be found in illustrated books published in the Dutch Republic.

Apart from the lack of distinct iconographical traditions for individual Anabaptist martyrs, a second aspect that promoted the overlap between religious and secular execution prints was the fact that Jan Luyken's work for *Het bloedig tooneel* had little to no place for the visualization of the divine. Especially in the case of the early modern martyrs, there are almost no visual cues referring to the hand of God. When the prints do allude to the inhuman endurance of some of the martyrs, it is always with reference to the physical signs of divine intervention. A man called David, who was burned in Ghent, was supposedly still alive after his ordeal at the stake, a sure sign of divine election in the eyes of Van Braght.⁴⁴ In an attempt to finish the job the executioner punctured the martyr's bowels three times with a pitchfork, but when even this failed, David's neck was broken to seal his fate. To drive home the physicality of the ordeal, Luyken portrays the moment when the charred body of David (showing the bare bones of his right leg) is penetrated by the executioner's pitchfork (fig. 1). Similarly, in Luyken's image of the beheading of Hans Misel, divine intervention is suggested by showing that Misel's body miraculously stayed in a position of prayer after his head had been cut off. Here, Luyken portrays the moment when onlookers react in shock to this bizarre sight, while a fountain of blood is spraying out of Misel's upright body. Again, it is the physicality of the miracle, rather than the distinct iconography of martyrdom, that is underlined in the image.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, II, 161.

⁴⁵ Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, II, 562.



Fig. 1 Jan Luyken, *The burned bodies of David and Levina in Ghent*, 1685, etching, 11,7 × 14,6 cm, in *Tielemann Jansz. van Braght, Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weerloose christenen* (Amsterdam 1685) II, 161, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Even so, the examples of David and Misel are the exception, not the rule. Even in cases where van Braght's text offered plenty of opportunity to portray the dramatic gestures of martyrdom, Luyken seems hesitant to seize the opportunity to do so. Van Braght narrates how in 1562 the Anabaptist Hendrik Eemkens was executed in Utrecht by a combination of strangulation and the ignition of gunpowder. While the text states that the martyr dramatically raised his hands towards heaven after the gunpowder had been set alight, the image shows us how Eemkens meekly hangs on the strangulation pole with the gunpowder set aflame on his chest (fig. 2).⁴⁶ Sarah Covington has argued that the rays of light emerging from the sack are supernatural in character (the text is silent on the nature of the flames, only stating that Eemkens's hair refused to burn).⁴⁷ However, in early modern prints, and those of Luyken in particular, explosions and fire often take the form of rays

⁴⁶ Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, II, 295.

⁴⁷ Covington, 'Paratextual Strategies in Thielemann van Braght's Martyr's Mirror', 19; Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, II, 295.



Fig. 2 Jan Luyken, Hendrik Eemkens killed by gunpowder in Utrecht, 1685, etching, 11,6 × 14 cm, in Tieleman Jansz. van Braght, *Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weereelose christenen* (Amsterdam 1685) 11, 295, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

emerging from the center of its source.⁴⁸ Rather than the divine, the rays emerging from Eemkens's chest relay the complicated reality of portraying a burning sack of gunpowder within the means of early modern etching techniques, as well as a strong concern with the concrete physicality of the execution in question.⁴⁹

If these images are the exception, what was the rule? The answer is that most images simply portray men and women readied for execution, hanging lifelessly from the gallows or kneeling before the executioner's sword. Various authors have argued that in such cases

⁴⁸ In fact, this technique returns in *Het bloedig tooneel* in a print on the Catholic practice of trial by fire, which shows a glowing rod of iron with similar rays of light emerging from the source of heat. Naturally, Van Braght argued against the validity of trial by fire, which he saw as a folly of men, stating that those who were forced to hold the heated piece of iron were burned without exception and judged as heretics by the Inquisition. Clearly, this glowing rod represents the opposite of the divine, yet the rays of light, like in the execution of Eemkens, are present nonetheless. See Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, 335.

⁴⁹ See for example the 1683 print by Luyken of an exploding ship in Van den Bos, *Leeven en daaden der doorluchtigste zeehelden*, fol. 123.



Fig. 3 Jan Luyken, Jan Smit hanged by one leg, 1685, etching, 12,1 × 14,1 cm, in Thielemans Jansz. van Braght, *Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weerloose christenen* (Amsterdam 1685) II, 641, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

particular iconographical signs can be connected to the identification of martyrdom.⁵⁰ For example, the folding of hands in prayer and the raising of the eyes towards heaven are generally interpreted as ‘iconographical cues’ that identify a convict as a martyr. Yet following these cues in the case of Luyken’s oeuvre would lead to countless misinterpretations. The first problem is that many Protestant martyr prints do not fall in line with older iconographical themes of martyrdom that remained prominent in Catholic imagery, such as the opening of the heavens or the presence of angels and palm branches. Let us consider the case of the Anabaptist Jan Smit, hanged by his foot from the gallows, a particularly harsh and degrading punishment in early modern Europe.⁵¹ The print shows the martyr hanging from the gibbet, with Smit’s arms dangling aimlessly towards the ground (fig. 3). In short,

⁵⁰ Waite, ‘Naked Harlots or Devout Maidens?’, 48; Covington, ‘Paratextual Strategies in Thielemans van Braght’s *Martyr’s Mirror*’, 19.

⁵¹ Härter, ‘Images of Dishonoured Rebels and Infamous Revolts’, 81.

the print simply portrays a man hanging helplessly from the gallows by his foot. Outside the context of Van Braght's martyr story, it would be impossible to deduce that this particular image depicted a martyr.

Luyken's martyr prints were thus much more likely to portray martyrdom similar to any kind of other violence familiar to the early modern European justice system. This becomes exceedingly clear when we compare some of the aforementioned examples to 'secular' execution prints. One of the most remarkable examples concerns the print of the hanging of Don Pacieco in Vlissingen, a work that preceded Luyken's contributions to *Het bloedig tooneel*.

Around 1680, Luyken worked on a reprint of the famous historiographical account of the Revolt by Pieter Christiaenz Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen* (*Causes, Beginning, and Continuation of the Dutch Wars*), first published in 1595. Bor relates the story of a Spanish nobleman called Pacieco, who ended up as a captive of the rebels in the city of Vlissingen in 1572. Supposedly related to the much-hated governor-general, the Duke of Alba, Pacieco was sentenced to be hanged from the gallows. Refusing to reconcile himself with his impending death, he offered great sums of money for his release, and when his pleas fell on deaf ears, he begged for a noble death by beheading.⁵² In all aspects, Pacieco was an anti-martyr, unable to embrace death – he even tried to negotiate the mode of his execution according to the privileges of the second estate. Yet Luyken portrays none of Pacieco's hesitation. Instead, he shows the moment when Pacieco reaches the top of the ladder leading up to the noose, his face directed to the light of the sun, eyes towards heaven, and with bound hands folded in prayer (fig. 4). The contrast with the image of the martyr Jan Smit dangling gracelessly from the gallows, or the original disdainful description of Pacieco's behavior by Bor, is striking.

The print of Pacieco is far from unique, as similar cases abound in Luyken's oeuvre. The artist's visualization of the execution of the Portuguese noblewoman Bellinde de Corzora is another case in point. The back story, recounted in Van Zanten's *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, is one of great Portuguese drama, with a chain of adulterous affairs leading up to Bellinde cutting the throat of her sleeping husband. At the end of the narrative, Bellinde is sentenced to die at the stake for her crimes, and Van Zanten describes how this 'moorddadig vrouwelijk gedrogt' ('murderous female abomination') prayed many Hail Marys under her breath in the last moments before her death.⁵³ Luyken chose to portray this very moment, depicting Bellinde's hands making the sign of the cross (fig. 5). This image of a woman burned at the stake while in the midst of religious devotion is mirrored in Luyken's etchings of the burning of the Anabaptists Maria and Ursula van Beckum in *Het bloedig tooneel* (fig. 6). In both images, we see a woman tied to the stake, praying as the wood at her feet is set alight. Yet while the print of the Van Beckum sisters portrayed the making of martyrs, the execution of the murderous and adulterous Bellinde was described by Van Zanten as a case of divine retribution.⁵⁴

52 Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen*, 370.

53 Van Zanten, *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, 162.

54 Van Zanten, *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, 153.



Fig. 4 Jan Luyken, The hanging of Don Pedro Pacieco and two Spanish noblemen in Vliissingen in 1572, ca. 1679, etching, 27,3 × 35 cm, in Pieter Christiaenzoon Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen* (Amsterdam 1679-1684) I, 370, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

This overlap is not entirely surprising. Medieval and early modern executions were rife with religious meaning, their function intertwined with Christian notions of suffering, forgiveness, and redemption.⁵⁵ The inescapable religious framing of executions is what partly makes it so problematic to relate certain ‘religious’ iconographic elements to martyrdom, because almost all people would have prayed before their end at the executioner’s hands. Their deaths might even be lamented by onlookers as a cruel but necessary sacrifice to cleanse the community of sin.⁵⁶ From this perspective, Luyken’s prints are quite different. By cleansing his images of the traditional Christian iconography of martyrdom – a broader Protestant process already discernable in the famous woodcuts for Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* – they efface the difference between martyrdom and capital punishment in general.⁵⁷ In Luyken’s work, martyrdom has become a constituent part of the broader

55 Puppi, *Torment in Art*; Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*; Klemetilä, *Epitomes of Evil*; McKenzie, *Tyburn’s Martyrs*.

56 Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul*, ch. 1.

57 King, Foxe’s “*Book of Martyrs*” and *Early Modern Print Culture*, 212-215.



Fig. 5 Jan Luyken, Bellinde de Corzora burned at the stake outside the walls of Stremos, 1699, etching, 18,9 × 14,7 cm, in Laurens van Zanten, *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen, of Op en ondergang der vorstinnen*. (Amsterdam 1699) IV, 162, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 6 Jan Luyken, Sisters Maria and Ursula van Beckum burned at the stake in Delden, 1685, etching, 11,4 × 14,5 cm, in Tieleman Jansz. van Braght, *Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weerloose christenen* (Amsterdam 1685) II, 65, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

visual culture of judicial violence. Due to the disappearance of the divine, new themes could be accentuated within this visual culture, not in the least the destructive effects of judicial violence on the human body.

The Botched Beheading, a Dutch Specialty

While Luyken's secular and religious execution prints blend together in a shared lack of the divine, they focus all the more strongly on the human dimension and the explicit portrayal of bodily destruction. This new focus on bodily destruction is most clearly illustrated by the artistic panache Luyken displayed throughout his oeuvre of execution prints.⁵⁸ It is

⁵⁸ For the importance of 'diversity' within a specific category (for instance animals or plants) in late seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, specifically the works of Willem Goeree and Samuel van Hoogstraten, see Weststeijn, 'Schilderkunst als "zuster van de bespiegelende wijsbegeerte"', 199-200.

apparent, for instance, in the staggering diversity he brought to his topic. Most executions in *Het bloedig tooneel* concern burnings, yet even within this single mode of execution Luyken developed a wide variety of images, depicting half-burned bodies, bodies turned to ashes, bones sticking out of charred flesh, burning by gunpowder, mass burnings, burning at the stake, in a straw hut, or in a boat, and victims tied to a stake or a ladder.⁵⁹

This variety contrasts sharply with older Dutch martyr books. Woodcuts used in the 1609 edition of van Haemstede's martyrology were hardly concerned with the individual fates of martyrs. Identical prints of burnings were re-used multiple times throughout the book to illustrate distinct martyr stories. In some cases, even two consecutive images supposedly illustrating different martyrdoms were completely identical.⁶⁰ There could be good reasons for this approach: the use of repeated woodcuts – which were generally cheaper than etchings or engravings – would certainly have kept down the cost of the book. In contrast, the high quality and diverse etchings of the 1685 edition of *Het bloedig tooneel* were specifically included to turn the martyr book into an expensive and luxurious item.

The combined issues of diversity and the specificity (as every scene included details unique to the text it was supposed to illustrate) of execution methods are mirrored in Luyken's secular execution prints. In his letter, Stol actually praised Luyken for staying close to the texts of the works that he illustrated, even if this practice led to the production of gruesome and violent images.⁶¹ Accordingly, Luyken's work on exotica includes many strange and cruel execution methods from around the world, explicit prints that were supposed to make books on the 'exotic' world attractive market products.⁶² The same holds true for Luyken's work on profane histories. *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck* offered numerous stories and topics to be illustrated, yet the publisher – the successful Pieter van der Aa – seems to have made sure that the many execution scenes included in the book by both Jan Luyken and his son, Casper junior, were sufficiently diverse. Among other things, one can find an execution by firing squad, a botched beheading, a postmortem quartering, and an execution by burning in an unorthodox form.⁶³

In these cases, Luyken did not always portray the most well-known and iconic executions. Of course, the book included the beheading of the famous Dutch statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, as well as a print by Casper Luyken portraying the execution of Charles I. Yet one could also find a print showing the curious case of the beheading of the Imperial officer Cronsbruck. His case seems to have been included mainly on account of his strange execution. According to the chronicle, Cronsbruck was determined to literally dodge his fate and refused to sit still in the traditional manner expected of a convict. In the print he is shown tied to a chair, having thrown himself on the ground, with the headsman trying to finally end the farce.⁶⁴ Luyken also opted to depict an unorthodox burning in

59 Weaver-Zercher counts 31 prints of execution by burning in *Het bloedig tooneel*: Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror*, 99.

60 The consecutive woodcuts in Van Haemstede, *De historien der vroemer martelaren*, 457 and 472, are identical, and are also used in other places, for example on page 316.

61 Stol, *Verhandeling van den christelijken leidsman*, 430.

62 Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, ch. 3.

63 Gottfried, *Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, I, 533, 786, 1115, and 1134.

64 Gottfried, *Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, II, 1403.



Fig. 7 Jan Luyken, The beheading of Wolfgang Pinder, 1685, etching, 11,5 × 14,7 cm, in Tieleman Jansz. van Braght, *Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weereלוose christenen* (Amsterdam 1685) II, 540, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

sixteenth-century Prague, concerning a number of unnamed arsonists, on which only a few words are spent in the accompanying text.⁶⁵

Yet the most remarkable products of Luyken's eye for explicit violence are undoubtedly found in the scenes of botched beheadings. The theme first emerges in Luyken's work for *Het bloedig tooneel*, which included a print of the execution of Wolfgang Pinder, a German Anabaptist sentenced to death by beheading in 1570. In Luyken's print we see Pinder's executioner in the midst of a nervous breakdown, as he is unable to behead his victim in a single strike and is forced to use his sword as a glorified knife (fig. 7).⁶⁶ Such a gruesome sight would not have been uncommon in the early modern era. Beheadings required a

⁶⁵ The execution of the men was accomplished by chaining them to a pole, but leaving them with enough room to walk in circles. Fires were then lit, forcing the men had to run around the poles. If they stopped and sat on the ground to escape the heat, hot oil was thrown on them, as shown in Luyken's print. The text calls the execution method a 'most gruesome punishment': Gottfried, *Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, I, 532-533.

⁶⁶ Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*, II, 540.



Fig. 8 Jan Luyken, *The beheading of Henri de Talleyrand-Périgord by an inexperienced executioner*, 1698, etching, 10,9 × 15,3 cm, in Johann Ludwig Gottfried, Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck (Leiden 1698) I, 1115.

skilled executioner with a steady hand, and we have plenty of records about incidents in which the headsman failed to execute his victim with a single blow – often to the displeasure of the onlookers.⁶⁷ Yet even though beheadings went awry on a regular basis, the bulk of explicit prints of botched beheadings was created by Amsterdam printmakers, who produced a series of such images between 1685 and 1698.⁶⁸ Almost all of these instances

⁶⁷ See for example Spiereburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 39, 194. On botched executions in the late Middle Ages and the social standing of executioners, see Klemettilä, *Epitomes of Evil*, 50, 74.

⁶⁸ The infamous beheading of Mary Queen of Scots was botched, with the executioner having to strike twice with the axe. However, this theme was never visually exploited in Catholic propaganda. In his famous print on Mary's beheading, the Catholic polemicist Richard Verstegan does show a small cut in the Queen's neck, implying that the strike that the headsman is about to deliver is the second one. However, neither crowd, Queen, or executioner show any reaction to the unfolding of the botched beheading, and besides the small cut shown in Mary's neck, the beheading is similar to all other ones found in Verstegan's work. See Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis*, 85. Some crude and far less explicit prints of botched beheadings appeared around 1670, following the execution of the ringleaders of the Zrinski-Frankopan Conspiracy in Austria. See for instance the *Warhaffte Contrafactur und Abbildung, deren ehmal Vornehm-Berühmten drey Ungarischen Grafen* (s.l. 1671), Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, Digitale Sammlungen, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:2-> (Accessed on 3 November 2018); *Eigentliche Conterfactur und Bildniss des Rebellen*

of uniquely graphic violence are by the hand of Luyken, Pinder's martyr print being only the first of its kind.⁶⁹ Another example in *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck* concerned the French nobleman Henri de Talleyrand-Périgord, executed by an inexperienced headsman who needed more than 20 strikes to complete his task (fig. 8). No fewer than three Luyken prints depicted the botched execution of the Duke of Monmouth in 1685. The would-be king of England suffered a gruesome end for his attempt to take the throne from James II, with the executioner unable to sever the duke's head even after several strikes with the ax (fig. 9).

In the case of Monmouth, the explicit and unique violence shown in Luyken's prints has only been explained from the viewpoint of politics. Regina Janes, for instance, has argued that Dutch craftsmen 'executed prints for two audiences: one content to see in the execution a lawful exertion of authority, and the other eager to see in Monmouth's mangling a judgement not on Monmouth, but on James and his court'.⁷⁰ The first type represented a wide-angle print, with the executioner raising Monmouth's severed head before a silent and disciplined crowd; the second type shows the unfolding chaos as the executioner is desperately trying to sever the duke's head. However, such an interpretation negates the variety of material available and the complex interplay between text and image.⁷¹ For instance, a German broadsheet in favor of James II had no problem pointing to Monmouth's botched execution. In this print, the executioner has discarded his ax and wields a knife, referring to the problematic beheading that had just unfolded. The accompanying text in turn states that Monmouth had been executed in the most horrible manner, an incident that is interpreted as a just retribution for the duke's revolt against his rightful sovereign.⁷² In another case, a Dutch Stuart propaganda print from 1685 illustrated by the Amsterdam artist Adriaen Schoonebeek showed the failure of the execution regardless of its condemnation of Monmouth's rebellion, with a small print portraying the headsman stepping back in horror from the half-beheaded duke. The accompanying text serves up the popular story of how a half-beheaded Monmouth had turned his head menacingly

Hanns Erasmi gewesenen Grafen von Tättenbach, Porträtsammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, 1 13288, <http://portraits.hab.de/werk/21578/> (Accessed on 3 November 2018).

⁶⁹ I have identified seven instances of Dutch prints portraying a botched beheading, of which five were produced by Luyken; the Amsterdam based printmakers Pieter Pickaert and Adriaen Schoonebeek each created one print, both dealing with the execution of the Duke of Monmouth. For the prints of Pickaert and Schoonebeek, see Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, B-0696-5, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467403>, and RP-P-OB-82.798, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467809> (Accessed on 21 November 2017).

⁷⁰ Janes, *Losing Our Heads*, 56.

⁷¹ To my knowledge, there are no wide-angle prints of the beheading of the duke from Dutch workshops. The wide-angle print Janes refers to is in fact a German broadsheet that copied the wide London background from an earlier print of Wrenclaus Hollar depicting the execution of Thomas Wentworth: Janes, *Losing Our Heads*, 56.

⁷² *Der um einigen, durch das Königreich Engelland, wider den König erregten, und viel Bluts gekosteten Auf-fruhrs willen, durch das Rach-Beyl elendiglich hingerichtete Herzog von Monmouth*, Nuremberg, ca. 1686, Saxon State and University Library Dresden, <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/id36653436X> (Accessed on 21 November 2017).



Fig. 9 Jan Luyken, The beheading of the Duke of Monmouth, 1698, etching, 19,5 × 15,1 cm, in Lambert van den Bos, *Treur-toonneel der doorluchtige mannen, of Op- en ondergang der grooten* (Amsterdam 1698) III, fol. 77, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

towards the bungling executioner before being subjected to two more blows of the ax, and, finally, a knife to the throat.⁷³

Clearly then, we should not put the *political* (or the religious, for that matter) before the *visual*.⁷⁴ The fact that Monmouth's execution was a popular visual topic was clearly connected to its political significance, especially in relation to the unfolding of the Glorious Revolution. As Helmer Helmers has shown, the instrumental use of Monmouth's execution for William III's propaganda only started in 1688, three years after the tragic beheading.⁷⁵ In accordance with this timeline, two of Luyken's prints on Monmouth were published in 1689.⁷⁶ A third print appeared only in 1698 (fig. 9). Yet the particular way in which the execution was portrayed seems to be completely disconnected from any partisan context. Within this light, Luyken's prints on the Duke of Monmouth should not only be considered as part of the political climate in which they were produced, in the same sense that Pinder's beheading should not be reduced to an emblem of Mennonite martyr culture or a 'Mennonite sensibility'. The political significance of Monmouth's execution does not answer the question why the botched beheading became part of the unique output of the Dutch printing industry of the late seventeenth century, and of Jan Luyken in particular. Rather, Monmouth's execution was portrayed in such an explicit manner because it fitted into a wider print culture that had become invested in the diverse theme of judicial violence. Thus, all three Monmouth prints produced by Luyken are found in publications written by the aforementioned Lambert van den Bos, who embodied the political as well as the popular in his exploitation of Monmouth's execution. Van den Bos was both a fervent supporter of William III and a successful *veelschrijver* (polymath), whose *Treur-tooneel* went through numerous editions between the 1650s and 1698. In this sense, the explicit print of Monmouth was as much a testament to Van den Bos' political convictions as to his successful career as a popular writer, with a particular knack for the exploitation of the tragic and bloody histories of the world's men of power.

On the level of publishers, a similar argument can be made. The long-standing cooperation between Jan Luyken and Jan ten Hoorn tells us something about the importance certain specialized publishers attributed to explicit images of judicial violence.⁷⁷ Ten Hoorn published not only several editions of the *Tragic Stages*, but also had Luyken illustrate the 'exotic' execution methods described in travel accounts.⁷⁸ This focus can be seen in the light of Ten Hoorn's reputation as an unscrupulous publisher with an eye for popular

73 *Stuarts Koninklijk Huis, Door Rampen Verdrukt en Verheerlijkt*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-82.798, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467809> (Accessed on 21 November 2017).

74 In this respect, it is worthy of note that William's chief visual propagandist, De Hooghe, never bothered to portray the botched execution of Monmouth.

75 Helmers, '1685 and the Battle for Dutch Public Opinion', 112-113.

76 *Engeland beroerd onder de regering van koning Jacobus de II. En hersteld door Willem en Maria, prins en prinsesse van Orangie [...]*, fol. 65; *Pers, Romeynschen Adelaer*, III, fol. 406.

77 Luyken illustrated no less than 76 books for Jan ten Hoorn: 'Father and Son Luyken', <http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/en/geheugen/pages/collectie/Boekillustratoren+Jan+en+Casper+Luyken/Vader+en+zoon+Luyken> (Accessed on 19 November 2017).

78 For example Melton, *Zeldzaame en Gedenkwaardige Zee- en Land-Reizen*; *Dan Historie van Barbaryen en des zelfs zeeroovers*; Havart, *Op- en ondergang van Coromandel*.

demand and profit. Both Jan and his brother Timotheus (who published Maimbourg's work on the crusades to which Stol referred in his letter) were vilified in a 1690 pamphlet for publishing pulp solely to attend to a 'vulgar' but profitable market.⁷⁹

The above is not to reiterate the simplistic and timeless argument that 'violence (or sex, for that matter) sells'. Rather, I argue that some forms of explicit violence, like the botched beheading, were specific to the output of late seventeenth-century Amsterdam. This article has argued that such explicit images should be interpreted as part of a print market that obliged publishers to add distinctive and new material in order to sell their goods. Indeed, Jan ten Hoorn explained that the additions to the series of the *Treur-tooneel* brought new content that was in line with the (violent) spirit of previous editions. His address to the reader of the 1699 edition claims that 'one will find nothing common here, but, to the contrary, [only] the strangest and most horrible cases'.⁸⁰ Luyken's elaborate and violent prints should be seen within this context: as additions that diversified the content of these books, while simultaneously falling in line with the themes readers expected on the basis of earlier editions.

Barend Stol's plea to Luyken cited at the beginning of this article also emphasized the pervasive market influence on Luyken's violent secular output. Hoping to convince Luyken to illustrate his anti-Boehme polemics, Stol argued he did not hold Luyken's horrific prints against him, but believed the artist simply made them to support his family.⁸¹ While we do not know whether Luyken ever replied to this remark, it is clear that he had a personal preference for a different type of imagery. In those books that Luyken wrote, published, and illustrated himself, we find exclusively religiously charged emblematic imagery, at times modelled on older Catholic works.⁸² Yet as has been argued here, the publishers who hired Luyken for his services did not look for emblems that stimulated quiet religious introspection. Instead, they saw value in those prints that provided readers with a direct look into the freshly opened bodies of the executed. Within this context, the Duke of Monmouth and his unfortunate end at the hands of the executioner's ax provided a welcome opportunity that spoke not only to the current political climate in the Dutch Republic, but also to the publishers' expressed appreciation of horrible and unique cases of violence.

Conclusion

Stol's anti-Boehme booklet would eventually be published without a frontispiece. Clearly, the Mennonite polemicist had failed to convince Luyken with the sly argument that the artist regularly created prints that clashed with his religious and pacifist convictions. Yet

⁷⁹ Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 175. Leemans has connected this criticism of the Ten Hoorns, and of Timotheus in particular, to their involvement in the Dutch market for pornographic novels.

⁸⁰ Van Zanten, *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, 4: 'Om kort te gaan, men vind 'er niets gemeens, maar in tegendeel de vreemdste en schrikkelijkste gevallen'.

⁸¹ Stol, *Verhandeling van den christelijken leidsman*, 430.

⁸² For a discussion of Luyken's religious emblematic work and its relationship to Catholicism, see Stronks, *Negotiating Differences*, 233, 241.

as we have seen, Stol's rhetoric succinctly pointed to an aspect of Luyken's oeuvre that has largely been ignored by researchers: regardless of his religious beliefs and spiritual aspirations, Luyken had no qualms about illustrating all sorts of works with explicit violence. His enormous output alone speaks volumes. More importantly, Luyken felt little inclined to make a clear distinction between religious and secular violence, creating martyr prints that overlapped with his works on history and politics. Religious iconography was hardly confined to the images of martyrdom, whereas the mundane aspects of judicial violence were present all the more strongly in both categories. Meaning-making was thus for a large part dependent on the text and context of the image, and not intrinsic to a specific religious or secular representation of violence – this in sharp contrast to the rich iconographic tradition of Catholic martyr imagery. Thus, even though texts might stress the physical endurance of martyrs, in the medium of the printed image they suffer identically to their counterparts convicted for more mundane reasons. Corpses of martyrs do not dangle from the gallows any differently than those of Spanish noblemen. Necks of martyrs do not react differently to the unsteady hand of a nervous executioner than those of the high-born. In visual terms, judicial violence was a category in its own right, with Luyken paying close attention to the particularities of execution stories and methods, as well as the physicality of the destruction of the human body.

In addition to the partisan or sacred readings that Luyken's images surely invited, we should add a third interpretation, which takes into account the place of violence in the printing industry of the Dutch Republic, and of Amsterdam in particular. As the case of Monmouth shows, the explicit violence that was so characteristic of Luyken's output was not only a reflection of concrete political concerns. In Luyken's unmatched production of execution scenes, the portrayal of explicit or unique forms of judicial violence was a given regardless of specific political or religious angles. In this vein, writers and publishers of the books illustrated by Luyken stressed the unique nature of their products and the variety that was to be found within the violent subject matter they addressed. Thus, while Stol talked about Luyken's violent images in terms of revulsion, a publisher like Jan ten Hoorn was keen to stress the unique and horrible nature of his illustrated books as positive qualities.

The primary goal of this article has been to show how Luyken's many execution prints blurred the line between martyrdom and secular executions in visual terms, and how judicial violence itself was a broader theme that became framed in a drive for diversity and specificity. This practice would ultimately lead to unique and explicit content, of which the short-lived popularity of the botched beheading is a striking example. The underlying assumption – that judicial violence in itself became a popular topic in the Dutch Republic – has been touched upon only with regard to the market incentives felt by some publishers who worked closely with Luyken. Naturally, the publishing market is only one aspect of a larger phenomenon that requires a more comprehensive explanation. With the striking amount of violent imagery being produced in the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic at large, the close examination of a particular violent Dutch print production provides a promising avenue to further pursue the questions that have been raised here in the re-evaluation of Luyken's oeuvre. In particular, it offers a new window onto the role of violent imagery vis à vis actual practices of violence. In Amsterdam, for instance, the explosion of high-quality execution prints contrasts with an overall drop in executions

and public punishment throughout the seventeenth century.⁸³ As such, further research might approach Luyken's work as the result of a moment when executions in the flesh were increasingly being replaced by executions in print. Within this context, explicit execution prints can be viewed as a prefiguration of an eighteenth-century 'sensibility' towards suffering and judicial violence.⁸⁴ The fact that Luyken's prints were often found in publications that were only affordable to the middle and higher classes provides an interesting angle for the renewal of older discussions concerning the emergence of elite revulsion towards judicial violence.⁸⁵ A work like *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck* cost at least 42 gulden (a small fortune at the time), whereas *Het bloedig tooneel* was mainly marketed towards the prosperous members of the Dutch Anabaptist community.⁸⁶ If images of executions were a prominent elite product, these prints can perhaps be considered as items that facilitated a reflexive stance on judicial violence, to be explored within the safe confines of one's own home rather than on the bloodstained Dam Square during justice day.

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83 As Spierenburg has argued, this was not a linear process. In Amsterdam, the number of executions and their severity rose in the first half of the eighteenth century. Only four convicts were broken on the wheel between 1650-1700, but in the years 1700-1750 this number rose to 36. At the same time, Spierenburg does argue for some form of increased sensitivity among Dutch elites towards capital punishment already in the second half of the seventeenth century. See Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 74, 200. On the decline of executions in seventeenth-century Europe and its rise in the first half of the eighteenth century, see Ward, 'Introduction', 4.

84 Friedland positions a first, gradual change in attitudes towards executions in France around 1700, coinciding with the output of Luyken's execution prints. Interestingly, unlike their Dutch counterparts, the original French *histoires tragiques* were never published as illustrated volumes. See Friedland, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 158.

85 Spierenburg, *The spectacle of suffering*; Ruff, *Violence in early modern Europe*, 109.

86 Hoftijzer, *Pieter van der Aa (1659-1733)*, 74, and for a reference to the chronicle's commercial success, 40.

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