

# Hogenberg's Ghost: New books on the Eighty Years' War

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## Reviewed books

Arnout van Cruyningen, *De Opstand 1568-1648. De strijd in de Zuidelijke en Noordelijke Nederlanden*, Omniboek, 2018, 320 pp. ISBN 9789401912662.

Anne Doedens and Jan Houter, *De watergeuzen. Een vergeten geschiedenis, 1568-1575*, Walburg Pers, 2018, 192 pp. ISBN 9789462492868.

Ronald de Graaf, *De Prins. Willem van Oranje, 1533-1584*, Karmijn, 2018, 256 pp. ISBN 9789492168191.

Raymond Fagel, Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, and Bernardo J. García García (eds.), 1568. *Het begin van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog*, Instituto Cervantes/Fundacion Carlos de Amberes, 2018, 99 pp. ISBN: 9788492632824. Also published in Spanish: 1568. *El Comienzo de la Guerra de Ochenta Años*, Instituto Cervantes/Fundacion Carlos de Amberes, 2018, 99 pp. ISBN. 9788487369841.

Simon Groenveld, *Facetten van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog. Twaalf artikelen over de periode 1559-1652*, Verloren, 2018, 400 pp. ISBN 9789087047269.

Gijs van der Ham, Judith Pollmann, and Peter Vandermeersch, *80 jaar oorlog*, Atlas Contact, 2018, 256 pp. ISBN 9789045037660.

Anton van Hooff, *Het Plakkaat van Verlatinge. De eerste onafhankelijkheidsverklaring*, Omniboek, 2018, 216 pp. ISBN 9789401913119.

Barbara Kooij, *Spaanse ooggetuigen over het beleg van Haarlem (1572-1573)*, Verloren, 2018, 336 pp. ISBN 9789087047467.

Jan J.B. Kuipers, *Willem van Oranje. Prins in Opstand*, Walburg Pers, 2018, 176 pp. ISBN 9789462493445.

Anton van der Lem, *Revolt in the Netherlands. The Eighty Years War, 1568-1648*, Andy Brown trans., Reaktion Books, 2018, 272 pp. ISBN 9781789140866. First published as *De Tachtigjarige oorlog in woord en beeld*, Vantilt, 2014, 260 pp. ISBN 9789460043925.

P.J. Schipperus, *Philips Willem. De verloren zoon van Willem van Oranje*, Omniboek, 2018, 495 pp. ISBN 9789401910705.

Roel Slachmuylders, *De verhoren van Briellenaar Jan Blois van Treslong, de broers Bronckhorst van Batenburg en zestien andere geuzen*, Historisch Museum Den Briel, 2018, 56 pp. ISBN 9789080587861.

Michel Van der Eycken (ed.), *Filips Willem. Prins van Oranje, heer van Diest 1554-1618*, Amsterdam University Press, 2018, 196 pp. ISBN 9789462988538.

As Jan Romein noted in 1941, in the Dutch Golden Age, the history of the Dutch Revolt was usually presented as a 'parade of readily recognizable historical events'.<sup>1</sup> The number of events that figured in this parade was small, and primarily related to the earlier stages of the conflict, ending with the 1584 assassination of William of Orange or the Fall of Antwerp a year later. Arguably, we owe much of this tradition to one person, the mapmaker Frans Hogenberg. Several years before Michael ab Isselt and Emanuel van Meeteren began to write their histories of the Revolt of the Netherlands, it was Frans Hogenberg who had been the first to structure the events of the Revolt into a history, a history in pictures. Four hundred and fifty years later, richly illustrated books are still being produced to tell the story of those same years.

This essay will explore thirteen books about the Eighty Years' War that were published in 2018, when the Dutch commemorated the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William of Orange's first campaign of armed resistance to the Habsburg overlords of the Low Countries. The significance of 1568 is a leftover from the days when the Dutch thought of the Revolt as a 'national story', and the battle of Heiligerlee on 23 May 1568 as an epic victory for the House of Orange. It is a year that means little for the collective memory of Spain; in Belgium it is remembered primarily as the year of the execution of the Counts of Egmond and Horn but no longer a great *lieu de mémoire*. Most historians would agree that a much more obvious starting date for the conflict is the 'Wonderyear' of 1566, yet in the Netherlands that has never been deemed suitable for commemoration, perhaps because no one takes pride in the iconoclastic fury of that year. In 2016 there was thus virtually no commemorative interest from heritage organisations, museums, and publishers in the Netherlands, although the Belgian broadcaster Klara made an excellent radioseries on the subject of iconoclasm, and there were local commemorations in the Westhoek of Flanders,

<sup>1</sup> Jan Romein, 'Spiegelhistoriael van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog', in J. Romein, B.W. Schaper [pseudonym of Jacques Presser], and A.J.C. de Vrankrijker (eds.), *De Tachtigjarige oorlog* (Amsterdam 1941) 11-13. See also Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (London 1988) 86, and Jasper van der Steen, *Memory wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700* (Leiden 2015).

where the image-breaking started.<sup>2</sup> Even though the 1568 battle of Heiligerlee no longer has the national and orangist glamour it once did, there were practical reasons that made 2018 the right year for a commemoration for the Rijksmuseum and Dutch broadcaster NTR, who took the lead in celebrating this anniversary. In collaboration, they presented a highly successful exhibition and a well-received television series that were both entitled *80 jaar oorlog. De geboorte van Nederland*. Many smaller museums and local organizations offered contributions of their own, while Dutch publishers clearly saw this as a good year to bring out books on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

It was not self-evident that the exhibition and the television series should have aspired to cover the full eighty years of the conflict. Historians started to take issue with the term Eighty Years' War in the 1960s, and for some decades argued that it was misleading to think of it as one conflict; instead it should be seen as a series of revolts that had turned into a series of wars in which the stakes had changed enormously. This was an understandable reaction to the anachronistic Dutch tradition of reading the war backwards, as a conflict that was, from the start, waged to gain independence from a 'foreign' power. Moreover, it was also a way of emphasising that its early decades should be studied in the comparative context of what, at the time, were seen as typically 'Calvinist' revolts across Europe.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, however, we have come to think that the term Eighty Years' War also has a lot to recommend it. For one, it is a contemporary term. Both in Spain and the Low Countries observers in 1648 thought they were ending an 'eighty years war'. Secondly, this sense of continuity was politically relevant; even if the *casus belli* had, in practice, altered over the years, one reason why it proved so hard to end was that after 1621 still *imagined* the war as a continuation of the conflict that had begun in 1566. The seventeenth-century imagination of the war, in turn, owed much to Hogenberg.

Frans Hogenberg was from Antwerp, but had fled to the safe haven of Cologne in the 1560s, probably because he was a Lutheran and concerned about his safety after the launching of the Council of Troubles. In 1570 he produced his first sequence of prints on the troubles in the Netherlands, one that presented the events as they had unfolded between

2 The radioseries on 1566, <https://klara.be/podcast-beeldenstormen-aflevering-1-0> (Accessed on 28 April 2020). See also Andrew Spicer, 'Iconoclasm', *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017) 1007-1022. There was more academic interest, see e.g. Anne-Laure van Bruaene, Koenraad Jonckheere, and Ruben Suykerbuyk (eds.), 'Beeldenstorm. Iconoclasm in the sixteenth-century Low Countries', special issue of *BMGN/Low Countries History Review* 131.1 (2016). On the reasons for the lack of commemorative interest in the Netherlands, see in that issue Judith Pollmann, 'Iconoclasts Anonymous. Why did it take Historians so long to identify the Image-breakers of 1566?', 155-176.

3 See for an overview of the various activities in the Netherlands in 2018: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/80-jaar-oorlog/tentoonstelling>. In Belgium, there were a series of activities surrounding the execution of Egmond and Horn, especially in Zottegem, Weert, and Brussels.

4 J.W. Smit, 'The Present Position of Studies regarding the Revolt of the Netherlands', in John Bromley and Ernst Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (London 1960) 11-28; Gordon Griffiths, 'The Revolutionary Character of the Revolt of the Netherlands', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1960) 452-472; J.W. Smit, 'The Netherlands Revolution', in Robert Forster and Jack P. Greene (eds.), *Preconditions of Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore 1970) 19-54; Henk van Nierop, 'De troon van Alva. Over de interpretatie van de Nederlandse Opstand', *BMGN* 110 (1995), 205-223. An English translation of this article appeared as Henk van Nierop, 'Alva's Throne - making sense of the revolt of the Netherlands', in Graham Darby (ed.) *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt* (Routledge 2001) 29-47.

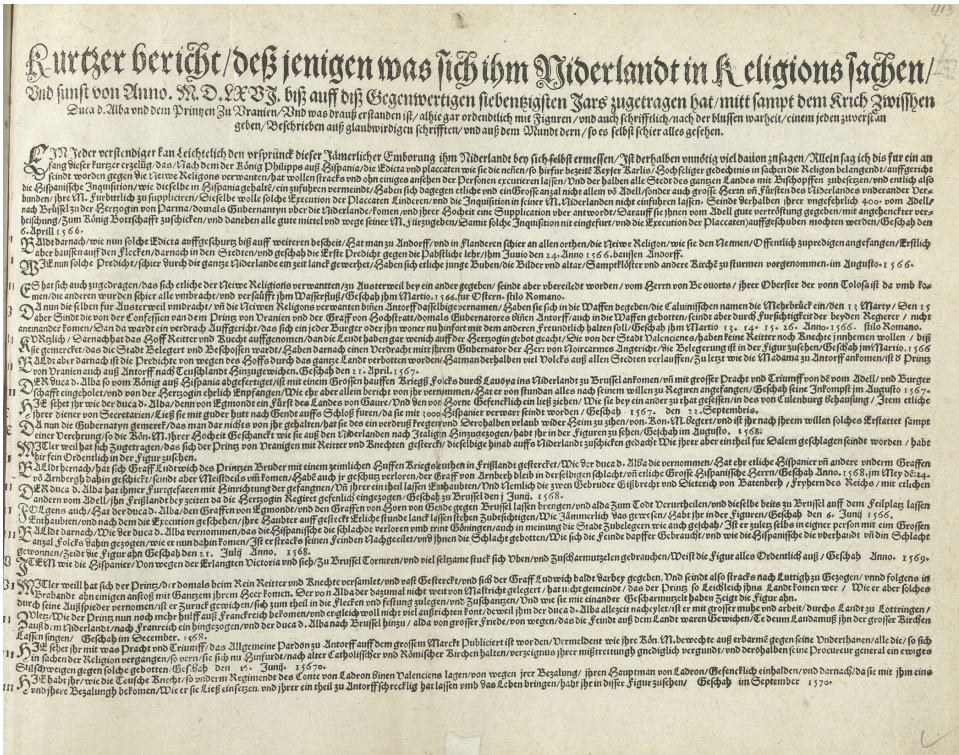


Fig. 1 Title page of Frans Hogenberg, Kurtzer bericht, Cologne 1570, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

1566 and 1570 in twenty images. Such a graphic history was quite new as a genre. Its first expressions had been celebratory, like the *Victories of Charles V* produced by Hieronymus Cock, and Hogenberg's own prints of Charles' victory at Tunis. As Philip Benedict has shown, Hogenberg borrowed the idea of a graphic history about a civic conflict from the Calvinist exiles Tortorel and Perrissin, who had published their *Quarante Tableaux* of the French Wars of Religion in Geneva in 1569.<sup>5</sup> Having plagiarized and successfully marketed his own version of the *Quarante Tableaux*, Frans Hogenberg apparently realised that events in the Netherlands offered a similar opportunity and so produced his *Kurtzer Bericht* (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> The piece was conceived as a history, and was preceded by a contents page that offered both a summary and an interpretation of events, which he argued had been

5 Philip Benedict, *Graphic history. The 'Wars, Massacres and Troubles' of Tortorel and Perrissin* (Geneva 2007).  
 6 Frans Hogenberg, *Kurtzer bericht dass jenigen was sich im Nederlandt in Religions sachen/und sunst vom Anno MDLXVI biss auff diss Gegenwertigen siebentzigsten Jars zugetragen hatt/mitt sampt dem Krich Zwischen Duca d'Alba unde dem Printzen zu Uranian* (Cologne: Frans Hogenberg, 1570). On Hogenberg's work, see Ramon Voges, *Das Auge der Geschichte. Der Aufstand der Niederlande und die Französischen Religionskriege im Spiegel der Bildberichte Franz Hogenbergs* (ca. 1560-1610) (Leiden 2019). A sample of the prints on the Revolt were published in Karel Kinds (ed.), *Kroniek van de opstand in de Lage Landen, 1555-1609. Actuele oorlogsverslaggeving uit de zestiende eeuw met 228 gravures van Frans Hogenberg*, 2 vols. (Wenum Wiesel 1999).



caused by the royal heresy-legislation and the subsequent attempts by the nobility to get it revoked.

Together, Hogenberg's images thus offered a fairly coherent narrative about what had happened and why, running from the presentation of the Request for moderation of the anti-heresy legislation that the lesser nobility presented to the regent Margaret of Parma in April 1566 to the open air sermons that the Reformed organised across the country and the wave of iconoclasm in August and September in 1566. Then followed the 1567 defeat of Calvinist armies at Oosterweel, Alba's arrival, and the departure of Margaret of Parma and Orange. For the years 1568-1570, Hogenberg depicted the execution of the Counts of Egmont and Horn, and William of Orange's military campaigns, up to the celebration of the royal and papal 'pardon' for the long suffering Netherlands. With the exception of the last image, which concerned the ruthless punishments meted out to mutinying German soldiers by their Spanish commander Ladron, it is familiar stuff. So familiar indeed, that it seems self-evident that this selection presented us with the 'main events' of these years; indeed, I still present them in exactly this way in lectures to my first-year students.

It is easy to overlook, therefore, that this was also a specific selection of events, produced in the first instance for a German audience, by a Lutheran. We see nothing, for instance, of the early trials of iconoclasts initiated by stadtholders such as Orange, or of the guerilla attacks of the wood- and seabeggars; there is no sign of the great processions that were held across the Low Countries to celebrate Alba's victories over William of Orange. As with later Hogenberg prints, the first series underplayed the civic nature of the conflict, and following hard on the heels of Orange's propaganda, his captions tended to present the conflict as between the 'Spanish' and their victims, not one in which the people in the Netherlands were at odds with each other. It would not be until the later twentieth century that historians would start to interrogate this assumption, and realise that the earlier decades of the Revolt were, in fact, a civil war.<sup>7</sup>

Hogenberg himself emphasised that he was well-informed. On the title page to his *Kurtzer Bericht* he explained that he based his images on what he had read and heard from witnesses who had seen it 'virtually' all themselves. Born into a family of mapmakers, and having started his career by making maps, Hogenberg included a great deal of topographical detail in his history prints, so strengthening the impression of having been an 'eye-witness'. The similarity to newsprints also created a sense of immediacy that further enhanced their claims to truth. For that reason, the information in the prints has continued to be taken quite seriously as evidence. His print of the assassination of William of Orange in 1584, for instance, played a considerable role in the forensic historical reconstruction that took place a few years ago.

The authoritative format he chose helps explain Hogenberg's spectacular success and influence; he and his relatives produced a number of follow-ups to these earlier series, as well

7 H.A. Enno van Gelder, 'Een historische vergelijking. De Nederlandse Opstand en de Franse godsdienstoorlogen', *Verslag van de algemene vergadering [...] van het Historisch Genootschap* (Utrecht 1930) was the first to suggest this, but after the Second World War his interpretation reverted to the 'national'. See Smit, 'The Present Position'. Henk van Nierop, *Treason in the Northern Quarter War. Terror, and the Rule of Law in the Dutch Revolt* (Princeton, NJ 2009), originally published in Dutch in 1999, has done most to expand on this idea.



## Don FREDRICKS MOORT TOT NAERDEN

Don Fredrick die Zutphen schende  
 Weer nae Hollandt t'Legher wende  
 Speelt te Naerden sulcken part  
 Die noch in veel herten smart  
 Sy de Sleutels hem toe brochten  
 Vriendelyck genae versochten  
 Souden Spaens en Koninghs syn  
 En met hem trecken een lyn

11

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

Na het wederoververen van veele der Steden, die den Prince en andere sijn Medegenoten gewonnen hadde en toegevallen waren, had Naerden hoe slegt van tegen weer, het waare de kloekmoedigheid van de Poorten voor den Vyand te sluyten maar eyndelijk overweldigt, wierd jammerlijk door Don Frederic mishandelt, en de meeste Borgers daar binnen op een snoode en ongehoorde wyse vermoordt, gelijk hier nevens verhaalt word.

II.

Fig. 2 Anonymous, Don Frederik's Murder at Naarden, etching, 17,5 x 13,5 cm, in: *De Spaensche Tiranye gheschiet in Nederlandt*, ca. 1620, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

as many newsprints on Revolt-related events. His prints were also included in the earliest written histories of the Revolt, by Michael Ab Isselt and Emanuel van Meeteren, while a series of subsequent pictorial histories were, in one way or another, building on and expanding Hogenberg's accounts, thereby amplifying and further enhancing both the authority of his pseudo-newsprints and the inevitability of his technique of episodic storytelling. Willem Baudartius' history of the Revolt, for instance, and similar books that began to appear in the early seventeenth century, were based on Hogenberg's sequences, occasionally adding scenes to amplify the history.<sup>8</sup> By retaining the look of the newsprints and the captions, Baudartius' series and its successors created the sense that they were collection of authentic and contemporaneous 'documentary' newsprints, rather than a series of new images that had been made for the explicit political purpose of supporting the war party in the Dutch Republic.

This war party was made up of exiles from the Southern Netherlands like Baudartius, who worried that a peace treaty would mean a lasting division of the Netherlands, and so end their chances of return, as well as merchants and investors who feared concessions that would damage the prospect of expanding trade routes in Asia and the Americas. Between 1609 and 1621 many of them would also turn into the staunchest supporters of the Contra-Remonstrant cause, and enemies of Oldenbarnevelt. As the end of the Truce drew near, they intensified their plea for a continuation of the war. They did so partly by recycling images from the earlier stages of the Revolt, which now assumed an increasingly canonical character. War propaganda paired and compared Hogenberg's newsflashes from the past with those emerging in the present. In series such as the *Spiegel der Spaensche tyrannye* of 1620, emblematic images were created by zooming in on one aspect of familiar episodes from the Hogenberg collection.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these images created a focus on individual heroics or victimhood and suffering, preferably that of women and children (fig. 2). Even as the conflict evolved into both an economic and, eventually, a world war, new generations 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. Seventeenth-century historians such as Pieter Bor, Hugo Grotius, and P.C. Hooft tried to tell a much fuller and nuanced tale of the Revolt that devoted much more attention to the bigger political picture, but they never succeeded in offering a master narrative as compelling as the one created by Hogenberg and his successors. This was important, because while this helped sustain the willingness to pay for the war, it also prolonged it; every time peace negotiations were on the cards, the decontextualized episodes from the past were used as evidence that militated against peace in the present. By the time the war ended in 1648, most contemporaries in the Republic found it hard to imagine the history of the conflict in any way other than the one shaped by Hogenberg's legacy.<sup>10</sup>

8 Willem Baudartius, *Afbeeldinghe, ende beschrijvinghe van alle de veld-slagen, belegeringen, en and're notable geschiedenissen, ghevalen in de Nederlanden, geduerende d'oorloghe teghens den coningh van Spaengien* (Amsterdam: Michiel Colijn, 1616).

9 *Tweede deel van de Spiegel der Spaensche tyrannye, Gheschiet in Nederlandt. vvaer in te sien is de onmenschelijke ende wreede handelingen der Spangiaerden, die sy in dese ende andere onligghende plaetsen bedreven hebben* (Amsterdam: Jan Everts Cloppenburg, 1620).

10 On these developments, see: J.C. Breen, 'Gereformeerde populaire historiografie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', in J.A.L. Lancée, *Mythe en werkelijkheid. Drie eeuwen vaderlandse geschiedbeoefening, 1600-1900* (Utrecht 1979), 40-67; Judith Pollmann, *Het oorlogsverleden van de Gouden eeuw* (Leiden 2008); Judith



In the Southern Habsburg Netherlands, things were somewhat different, as Jasper van der Steen and Marianne Eekhout have already shown. There, the story of the Revolt was more often told through the eyes of the main political protagonists, with a good king clashing with ambitious nobles, and a church triumphing over the attacks of foreign heretics. The acts of oblivion that sealed the reconciliation of the Southern cities encouraged a very eclectic take on the history of the Revolt, and few local communities were keen to highlight the involvement of their citizens in the rebellion. Yet even in the South, the pictorial sequence of Hogenberg remained influential, for instance through images of the execution of Egmont and Horn, and the English and French Furies.<sup>11</sup> In other instances, a judicious choice of scenes supported alternatives to the atrocity tales from the North, such as the decision to choose one of Hogenberg's images of Alessandro Farnese's taking of Maastricht in 1579 over the other. While Baudartius had opted for the print that emphasised the massacre in the city, a version of Famiano Strada's history of the Revolt was illustrated with the more heroic and distant version (figs. 3 and 4). Other images were clearly developed as an alternative to the versions from the North, such as the sequences in Richard Verstegan's *Theatrum crudelitatum*, which was the first illustrated martyrs' book of the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

How do we account for the extraordinary influence of Hogenberg's images? It helped, of course, that he was the first to create an image of many of the Revolt's events at all, and also that he was in a position to produce work for a transnational market. Moreover, it both was and still is extraordinarily difficult to know how to write the history of a conflict that played itself out at so many different places at once, and that had so many stakeholders. Hogenberg's method offered a narrative solution that also proved to be very applicable to written histories, and that was rhetorically effective. By offering windows onto particular events, he not only privileged them, but also made them emblematic. His prints suggest that the author had just selected one scene out of his survey of a much bigger landscape, one of many others that he could have offered us, while the level of narrative and topographical detail simultaneously created an impression of 'deep' knowledge. This is exactly how most historians since, myself included, have continued to tell the tale of the Revolt. Since there is not just one vantage point from which we can cover the whole story, we have to tell it by offering windows onto a selection of episodes or locations. Yet the choice of windows has to be made consciously, and explicitly; this means moving beyond the early modern canon of the Revolt that emerged from Hogenberg's work.

It was as a conscious break with tradition, then, that in 2018 the Rijksmuseum created an exhibition on the Eighty Years' War that showed only one Hogenberg print. Its curators, Gijs van der Ham and Stephanie Archangel, also consciously avoided the

Pollmann 'No Man's Land. Reinventing Netherlandish Identities, 1585-1621', in Judith Pollmann and Robert Stein (eds.), *Networks, Regions and Nations. Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300-1650* (Leiden 2010) 241-261; Judith Pollmann, 'The cult and memory of war and violence', in Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Jansen (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge 2018), 87-114; Van der Steen, *Memory wars*; Marianne Eekhout, *Material memories of the Dutch Revolt. The urban memory landscape in the Low Countries 1566-1700*. PhD diss., Leiden University, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Marianne Eekhout, 'Furies in beeld. Herinneringen aan gewelddadige innames van steden tijdens de Nederlandse Opstand op zeventiende-eeuwse schilderijen', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 30 (2015); Van der Steen, *Memory wars*.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum crudelitatum hæreticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp: Adrian Hubert, 1587).



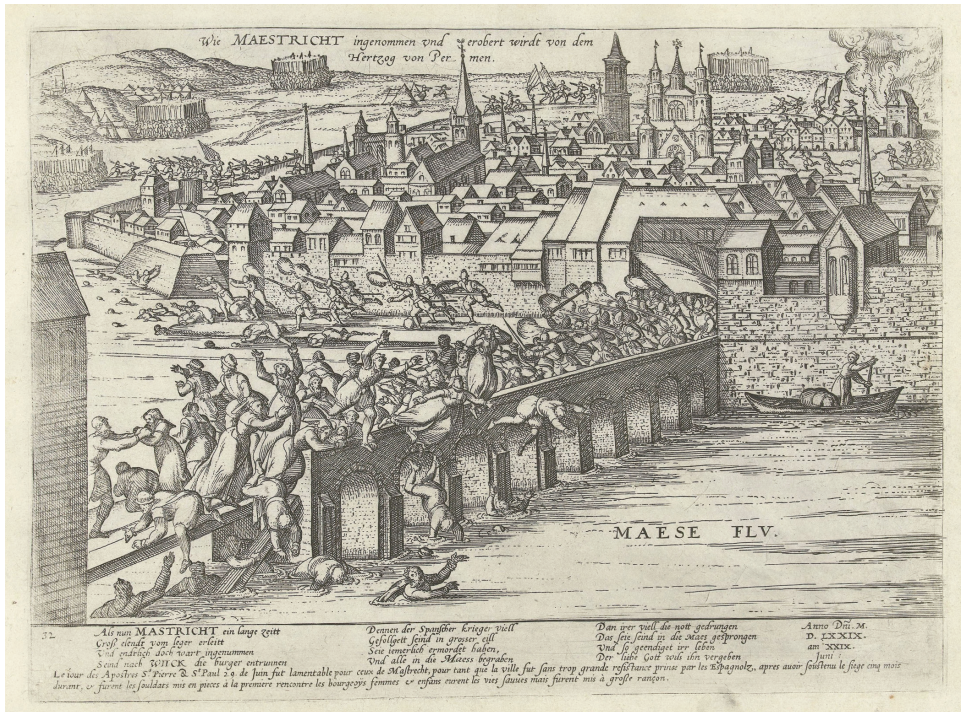


Fig. 3 Frans Hogenberg, The Capture of Maastricht in 1579 (1579-1581), etching, 21 x 28 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

canonical history of the Revolt in the structure of the exhibition. Instead they opted for a thematic approach; the eight rooms centered on *Order* (the ancien regime), *Chaos* (iconoclasm, riot, and civil war), *Banished* (on the role of both Catholic and Protestant refugees), *Rupture* (on the break with the King), *Warfare* (on the military aspects), *Identity* (on the appeals to the patria, and the separation of the Republic from the Southern Netherlands), *Boundless* (on the globalisation of the war), and *Peace*. Van der Ham adopted the same chapter structure for the accompanying book. While not a catalogue, it includes all the images in the exhibition, and also a picture file that discusses stills from the episodes of the television series, as well as some shorter contributions chapters by Peter vander Meersch, Stephanie Archangel, and myself. Yet it is Van der Ham’s chapters that make up two thirds of the book, and which make it important. His narrative approach actually remains Hogenbergian, but it is now used to foreground a much broader range of perspectives and opinions on the war. Each chapter begins with a discussion of one of the central objects relating to the theme, using it as a springboard from which to tell the story. Through the eight themes, Van der Ham is telling a subtle new tale, with a focus on losers as well as winners, Catholics as well as Protestants, the Southern Netherlands as well as the future Dutch Republic, and with a key awareness of the role colonial warfare played in the second half of the war. To those in the know



Fig. 4 Anonymous, after Hogenberg and copied from Jan Miel, The Capture of Maastricht in 1579, etching, 22 x 27,2 cm, in: F. Strada, De Bello belgico decades, Mainz 1651, inserted after p. 434, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

it is evident that it is all based on the latest scholarship, but the touch is light, and the book is extremely readable.

Another conscious attempt to broaden the range of windows through which we look at the Revolt comes from the short and very effective book 1568. *Het begin van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog*, written by Raymond Fagel, Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, and Bernardo García García, and published simultaneously in Spanish and Dutch in a co-production between the Fundación Carlos de Amberes and the Instituto Cervantes. This offers us a timeline for the year, and Hogenbergian newsflashes, not just on events in the Low Countries, but also on the other important events in the *monarchía*. Ever since Parker's study of the Revolt, we have been keenly aware that the Low Countries did not always take top priority with Philip II and his successors.<sup>13</sup> This explains why the armies were so often starved of funds, and why the

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Parker, 'Spain, her Enemies and the Revolt of the Netherlands', *Past and Present* 99 (1970) 72-95; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth 1977). The idea was further developed in Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven 1998).



rebels were given the opportunity to develop a way to consolidate the rebellion. This book, too, makes it very clear to the reader how much Philip II had on his plate, and why, from his perspective, losing the battle of Heiligerlee in April was just an incident. In 1568 Philip's only son Don Carlos died in custody, his wife died, and he had to contend with a major morisco revolt in the Alpujarras, all while keeping an eye on the wars in France, the movements of the Ottoman armies, diplomatic incidents with England, and conflicts in Florida.

More reliant on the Hogenbergian canon is Anton van der Lem's 2014 *Revolt in the Netherlands. The Eighty Years' War, 1569-1648*, that came out in English translation in 2018. Perhaps because it originated in 1994 as a book on the Revolt that only ran to 1609 (and that was also published on the important website curated by Van der Lem, <https://dutchrevolt.leiden.edu>), it is less innovative than Van der Ham's account. While certainly taking recent scholarship into account, the ambition of this book is not to rethink what these new insights should mean for the bigger picture or the way we tell the story of the Revolt. The book squarely focuses on the classic issues in the historiography, the motives for the Revolt, the role of William of Orange and the Revolt in the Northern provinces, and the integration of the Dutch Republic. Even so, *Revolt in the Netherlands* offers a clear and lively narrative, and is very useful also for student audiences. The choice of illustrations is outstanding, although in the English version published by Reaktion, they are of a lesser quality than in the Dutch version that was published by Vantilt in Nijmegen.<sup>14</sup>

One historian who never abandoned the term Eighty Years' War is Simon Groenveld. His *Facetten van de Tachtigjarige oorlog* is a collection of his twelve essays on aspects of the war that was published in 2018 at the initiative of some of his former doctoral students. The range of topics is quite traditional, but Groenveld's treatment of them impresses by virtue of the wide range of his expertise, his formidable knowledge of Dutch governance and administration at all levels, and his ability to explain complicated issues in very clear prose. Two of the essays were never published before, others published in books and journals that do not reach such wide audiences; he himself revised and updated them all. Groenveld has a keen eye for the fluid and dynamic character of power relations and administrative practices as they emerged in the course of the war. Some of the essays cover the impact that this had on its elites, ranging from losers such as Philip of Montmorency, Count of Horn, and winners such as the Van Wassenaer family, to the struggle to find qualified and Reformed regents to run the city of Breda. I was most impressed by two pieces. The first, an essay on the impact of the 1574 siege of Leiden on the surrounding countryside, displays his deep knowledge of the area, as well as a keen eye for the suffering caused by the war at a local level. The second is the chapter on the 1581 Act of Abjuration that does an exemplary job in situating this move to formally discharge all Dutch officials of their oaths to Philip II in its legal and intellectual context, before explaining the questions it left unanswered, such as where sovereignty would lie in the new situation, and why such a declaration of independence was not necessarily acceptable to other states.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Anton van der Lem, *De Opstand in de Nederlanden, 1568-1648. De Tachtigjarige Oorlog in woord en beeld* (Nijmegen 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Groenveld, *Facetten*, ch. 4, "Van vyanden en van vrienden bedroevet". De gevolgen van het beleg van Leiden voor de omgeving van de stad', 107-134, and ch. 7, 'Verlatinge en de erkenning van een nieuwe staat', 183-205.

The latter is to be much preferred over the book by classicist Anton van Hooff on the same subject, *Het Plakkaat van Verlatinge. De eerste onafhankelijkheidsverklaring*. Because he knows little about the sixteenth-century context, or indeed about the earlier and other versions of the arguments offered by the rebels and their international genesis, Van Hooff's summary and glosses on the Act's content are superficial. The second part of the book explores the very limited interest of future generations in the Act, which was unsurprising, considering that its main aim was to clear the way for the acceptance of a new ruler, François d'Alençon, Duke of Anjou, whose regime proved to be both short and a dismal failure. As Van Hooff himself shows, its alleged influence on the American Declaration of Independence is no longer credible. The book was commissioned and written in support of the idea of turning 26 July 1581 into a Dutch independence day, yet it did nothing to convince me that this is a good idea.

Some of the other books published in the anniversary year of 2018 were clearly also commissioned for the occasion, and stay equally close to the traditional agenda of Dutch historiography. Arnout van Cruyningen, *De Opstand, 1568-1648. De strijd in de Zuidelijke en Noordelijke Nederlanden*, combines parts of an earlier work with what he calls 'thematic chapters', which in fact mostly turn out to be a series of vignettes on places, people, and events, which have been grouped thematically. All of these are readable, some of them also very well-informed, while others remain rather basic. The feel is more encyclopedic than analytical; he has more to say on the Southern Netherlands than many Dutch historians of the Revolt, but is clearly much more comfortable with Protestant history than that of early modern Catholics.

Also commissioned for the anniversary was the brisk, conventional, and richly illustrated biography of William of Orange by Jan J.B. Kuipers. The author has written books on a wide variety of historical topics, and his take on William of Orange has no scholarly pretensions. Although he seems to have missed out on the best recent biography by Olaf Mörke, the author has taken on board some recent studies of Orange's life, and does not aim for hagiography.<sup>16</sup> Yet while Kuipers notes of some anecdotes about Orange that they may be fictional, and has tried for some subtlety in his handling of the prince's role, his stereotypical view of all the Spanish protagonists is the stuff of the 'Black Legend' about Spain. That is a pity, because turning all the prince's enemies into cardboard baddies actually makes many of the prince's decisions impossible to understand. The images, though plentiful, are not always of great quality; the use of nineteenth-century history paintings to 'illustrate' studies of the Revolt is not so helpful. The vignettes on topics like Orange's wives, his court, and his tomb, on the other hand, are much better illustrated and perhaps the best thing about this book.

The biography of William of Orange written by Ronald de Graaf is a more intellectually ambitious project, trying as it does to give us a new portrait of the prince in three roles, first as representative and protector of his *Hausmacht*, his family, second as leader of a rebellion, and third as the 'servant' of the States-General. It focuses especially on Orange's relationship with his brother-in-law Günter von Schwartzburg, and makes very good use

16 Olaf Mörke, *Wilhelm von Oranien (1533-1584). Fürst und 'Vater' der Republik* (Stuttgart 2007).



of the online database of the prince's letters as well as the Schwarzburg archives which, to my knowledge, had not been mined for this purpose before. This has the great advantage of showing the importance of Orange's German network both for the prince's agenda and for his access to help and resources. I was a bit puzzled that De Graaf does not visibly engage with Olaf Mörke's quite recent book about the prince, that pointed in the same direction. Because De Graaf's book is so heavily focused on the correspondence of Orange and Schwarzburg, it does at times descend into description at the expense of analysis, certainly in the second half. There is also a sense here that the author rushed to get it all done in time for the anniversary; there are digressions that could have been dispensed with, and the translations of quotations look very much like first drafts, with odd mistakes in word order and even idiom. To avoid note numbers, there is a deeply unhelpful system of endnotes. More peer review and use of expert editorial advice might also have helped to reflect on using William's claims in the *Apologie* as evidence for what happened before the conflict, and generally be more critical of using evidence that was produced long after the events described.

I had high hopes of *Philips Willem. De verloren zoon van Willem van Oranje*, the biography of William's eldest son by former lawyer P.J. Schipperus; a story beyond the canon that should be well worth telling. Philips Willem was taken hostage in 1567, and 'accompanied' to Spain, where he attended university before confinement but was kept in reserve as a bargaining-chip for future negotiations until he was finally given permission to move to the Habsburg Netherlands. There, he entered into complex negotiations with his siblings about the management of the family inheritance – or what was left of it – and tried to carve out a role for himself. In 1940 Johan Brouwer wrote a successful novel about the unfortunate prince, yet a serious study is lacking.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, Schipperus cannot fill the void. Because he has done no archival research, either in Spain (where Philips Willem lived for a quarter of a century) or the Low Countries, Schipperus had to make do with the published sources. As a consequence he actually has little to say on Philips Willem himself; the body of the book consists of a very, very antiquated take on the Dutch Revolt that ignores most of the post-World War II historiography. From an academic point of view its usefulness is limited to the last chapters, which bring together information on the management of the Prince's estates and negotiations with his brothers and the States-General of the Dutch Republic. One wonders what possessed Omniboek to publish this. Much to be preferred is the much shorter book *Filips Willem. Prins van Oranje, heer van Diest*, the catalogue of an exhibition in Diest, that was edited by Michel van der Eycken and published by Amsterdam University Press. Together with a range of collaborators Van der Eycken presents a crisper account that is also much better contextualised; we get a better sense here what the prince did with his limited room for manoeuvre and why. There are no notes, but a useful bibliography.

Also departing from a local perspective is the well-researched and well-argued *Watergeuzen* by Anne Doedens and Jan Houter, a book that seeks to highlight the activities of the privateers who were licensed by Louis of Nassau and William of Orange to take

17 Johan Brouwer, *Philips Willem. De Spaansche Prins van Oranje* (Zutphen 1940).

Habsburg prizes, and their impact on the Wadden area. The best existing study of these 'sea beggars', by J.C.A. de Meij, focused on the social composition and leadership of the circa 1400 men who eventually took part in these activities, their role in Orange's plans, and the government's efforts to curb them.<sup>18</sup> Doedens and Houter look at their activities from the perspective of the Wadden isles and the Zuiderzee. These islands, very much at the periphery of royal control but vital for the Baltic sea trade from Amsterdam and the other cities on the Zuiderzee, became important strongholds for the privateers. In the process, the islands suffered many depredations. In March 1572, for instance, they raided Den Burg on Tessel:

[They] forced the women on Den Burg, first to tear down the house of the priest and then the house of prior Pieter Jansz, that was burnt down. They continued pillaging and burning in Den Burg until midnight. Today, the 27th, the enemies ceased the arson and are taking a rest from their work. They say that for 900 guilders Den Burg will be spared further pillaging. They are charging 100 guilders or daalders for Den Hoorn.<sup>19</sup>

The government did too little to defend its control over the islands, and what action they took came much too late. As a consequence, the authors argue, the sea beggars were able not only to damage the trade from Amsterdam, but also to divert much of the shipping. No wonder that a growing number of local skippers decided to work with the *geuzen* rather than against them. The authors argue that it was a takeover of Enkhuizen and control over these shipping routes that was the key target of Lumey and his men when they left the English ports in 1572. That they ended up taking Den Briel instead, was 'second best'. However that may be, I think that the real importance of this book lies in its demonstrating the extent to which the government was unable to defend the coastal provinces, the shipping lanes, and fishing grounds. Arguably the Revolt erupted not because there was too much, but rather because there was too little effective Habsburg government in 1572 Holland and Zeeland. Just as was evident in the television series made by the NTR, it is such local and peripheral perspectives that can actually give new depth to our understanding of the Revolt.

Finally, the 2018 harvest includes two collections of primary evidence. Roel Slachmuylders has studied the statements of nineteen beggars who were tried for their share in the Troubles of 1566 and 1567, and executed on 1 June 1568 in Brussels (a Hogenberg print of the event is used as evidence). A full transcript of the statements in French and Dutch is offered on a USB key with the book, that itself summarises what these nineteen men had to say about their share the previous years' events, and about the role of the leaders who had, so far, escaped prosecution. The different chapters cover canonical events ranging from the signing of the Compromise and the Request of the nobility to the disarray among the Calvinists after the defeat at Oosterweel. Most of the men had been arrested while on board a ship from Medemblik, in the hope of rejoining Brederode at Emden. Because they had maltreated their skipper, he grounded his vessel on a sandbank near Harlingen, and betrayed the presence of the men to a royal galley that came to see what was up. Since they were of course keen to deny involvement in anything seditious,

<sup>18</sup> J.C.A. de Meij, *De watergeuzen en de Nederlanden, 1568-1572* (Amsterdam 1972).

<sup>19</sup> Anne Doedens and Jan Houter, *De watergeuzen. Een vergeten geschiedenis, 1568-1575* (Zutphen 2018) 120.

the statements are hardly good evidence on what they had actually done and why. To specialists they are interesting, nevertheless, in what they reveal about contacts within the opposition and about the chaotic situation of the spring of 1567 and the collapse of the Calvinist resistance.

More accessible to the general public is Barbara Kooij's excellent *Spaanse ooggetuigen over het beleg van Haarlem (1572-1573)*. As a hispanist she worked together with historian Raymond Fagel and a local Haarlem history group to put together this outstanding translated selection of accounts and letters of the 1572-1573 siege of Haarlem. Because the Duke of Alba had gout and had remained in Nijmegen (much to the chagrin of his men), this includes many letters between him and his son Don Fadrique and other high ranking officers near Haarlem, but there are also accounts that were less official. The collection offers a fascinating read in its own right as well as extremely useful material for students and non-hispanophone scholars alike. The letters and accounts give a very vivid insight in the conditions in the Spanish army. They testify to its expectations, the pride in the achievements of officers, as well as admiration for the valour of the citizenry and their troops. But they also highlight the gruesome conditions within the underpaid army that was facing combat in the middle of the winter, braving snow, ice, mud, and rain throughout the seven months of the siege. They were short of supplies and food. Many were killed during the attacks on the city or the battles with the relief troops that were sent by the rebels, yet others died of illness in the appalling conditions. No wonder there were many deserters. I was especially struck by the rumour circuit in the army. Through the work of Van Nierop and Femke Deen I knew of the importance of rumour in cities during the Revolt, yet it is very evident from these accounts, too, how closely soldiers were monitoring all information that might have a bearing on their situation. The many rumours among the officers that the rebel camp would soon fall apart were not just wishful thinking, although there was a fair amount of that in evidence. Rather they highlight that in the middle of the siege, Orange and Lumey were locked in conflict over control of the Revolt, and that Lumey's demise was less inevitable than subsequent historiography has tended to make out. It is one more reminder that for those who are prepared to look beyond the scenes that Hogenberg selected, there are still worlds to be discovered.

[Click here for Rosanne Baars's review of Ramon Voges's book on Hogenberg: DOI 10.18352/emlc.132](https://doi.org/10.18352/emlc.132)