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Dutch History in Public Politics, 1736-1739

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Dutch History in Public Politics, 1736-1739

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Introduction

Lieven Ferdinand de Beaufort (1675-1730) had been a Dutch lawyer, politician, and political philosopher from Zeeland before he died in 1730. Among others, he left behind a manuscript called the *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet* [Treatise on Liberty in the Civic State] on freedom and its manifestation in civil society and government. The manuscript was published as a book in 1737.¹ In its introduction, Beaufort told his readers his work is an homage to freedom written ‘from an inner longing for the preservation and wellbeing of our dear homeland, and from high regards and respect for our Free Government and Religion [...]’.² And out of love for his homeland, government, and religion, Beaufort did not want to stir any controversy and thought it wise not to write about the history of the Dutch Republic. He therefore wrote a lot about the history ancient Rome, Athens, and Israel instead.³ Yet by the last chapter, however, it seems Beaufort had given up on this promise. Not only did he discuss the history of the Dutch Republic, he also lashed out at its stadtholders, whom he accused of a lust for power, writing for instance that William I of Orange (1533-1584) had not fought for the liberties and freedom of the Dutch provinces during the Eighty Years’ War (1566-1648) but had wanted to seize the Dutch provinces for himself, and that his son and successor Maurits (1567-1625) had even provoked a civil war in an attempt to broaden and strengthen his grasp on power.⁴

In the Dutch Republic, such accusations were sensitive. The stadtholderate was a provincial office and, although its occupants were formally elected by the provincial government, usually hereditary. When stadtholder William III of Orange (1650-1702) died without an heir in 1702, the Frisian branch of the family, which had held the stadtholderates of Friesland and Groningen, came to be known as the House of Orange-Nassau and would be in the natural line of succession. However, opponents of the stadtholderate rallied support and prevented this, which ushered in the Second Stadtholderless Period (1702-1747), although by 1722, William IV of Orange-Nassau (1711-1751) was already elected stadtholder in Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, and Gelderland. His supporters continued to lobby for his election in Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, and Overijssel as well.⁵ During this time, so-called

¹ P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam. Deel II, 1648-1751* (Amsterdam 1949) 315; R. Melchers, *De Beaufort. Geschiedenis van een aanzienlijke familie van 1613 tot 1876* (Hilversum 2014) 96-100.

² ‘[...] uyt een innerlyke zucht tot het behoud en welwesen van ons lieve Vaederland, en uyt een hoogachting en eerbied, beide voor onse vastgestelde Vrye Regering en Godsdienst [...]’ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, vii.

³ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, i-iv, viii.

⁴ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 560-567.

⁵ J.L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford 1994) 134-148; M. Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje. De strijd van de Friese Nassaus voor erkenning van hun rechten, 1702-1747* (Hilversum 2007) 12-13, 79-94; F. Jagtenberg, *Willem IV. Stadhouder in roerige tijden, 1711-1751* (Nijmegen

Republicans like Beaufort used history to argue against the ambitions of William IV.⁶ Their references to the past were not incidental but in response to the supporters of William IV, the Orangists. Jasper van der Steen has argued that Republicans during the First Stadtholderless Period (1650-1672) ‘could not easily disentangle themselves from the Orangist narrative.’ The Republicans were forced to talk about the Orangist narratives about the past because the history of the Republic was closely tied to the House of Orange and this history was used by the Orangists to argue against the Republicans.⁷ In this study, we will see if this was also the case during the Second Stadtholderless Period. For Orangists, the stadtholders had not been filled with lust for power but were guardians of Republic’s freedom. Their most illustrious example was stadtholder William I of Orange, who not only opposed the tyranny of king Philip II of Spain but even risked his own life and property to defy his rule.⁸ They used this past to rally support for William IV.

This clash between different understandings and uses of history has been studied before. For example, Lotte Jensen and Lieke van Deinsen have studied the use of history in Dutch theatre plays and have argued that the past was only politicized when pro- and anti-stadtholderates clashed in the 1780s.⁹ However, the politicization of the past was nothing new in the late eighteenth century. There had for instance already been a polemic between Republicans and Orangists only a few decades prior. This so-called *Wittenoerlog* from the 1750s was about the expedience of Republican governance, personified by the Holland politician Johan de Witt (1625-1672) and his attempts to keep William III out of office during the First Stadtholderless period (1650-1672).¹⁰ During this polemic, there were even reprints of the works from an early eighteenth-century polemic the work of Beaufort had been a part of. Similarly, the politicization of the past predated the early eighteenth-century. For example, Jill Stern has argued the past was used to construe an

2018) 11-35; M. Prak, *Citizens without Nations: Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, 1000-1789* (Cambridge 2018) 195-196; D. Onnekink and G. Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World: A History of a Global Power* (Cambridge 2019) 199-201.

⁶ G.J. Schutte, ‘Grondvester of belager der vrijheid? Willem van Oranje in de ban der achttiende-eeuwse tegenstellingen’, in: E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and A.E.M. Jansen (eds.) *Willem van Oranje in de historie, 1584-1984. Vier eeuwen beeldvorming en geschiedschrijving* (Utrecht 1984) 63-90, at 72-76, 80-84; W.R.E. Velema, ‘God, de deugd en de oude constitutie. Politieke talen in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw’, *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 102:1 (1987) 476-497, at 489-490; W.R.E. Velema, ‘Early eighteenth-century political languages’, in: ibidem (ed.) *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden-Boston 2007) 53-76, at 69-70. See also J. Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image, 1650-75* (Manchester-New York 2010) 156-177; J.A. van der Steen, ‘The trap of history: The States party and the revolt of the Netherlands, 1650-1660’, *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 29:2 (2013) 189-205.

⁷ Steen, ‘The trap of history’, 205.

⁸ Schutte, ‘Grondvester of belager der vrijheid?’, 72-76, 80-84; Velema, ‘God, de deugd en de oude constitutie’, 489-490; Velema, ‘Early eighteenth-century political languages’, 69-70; Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image*, 156-177.

⁹ L. Jensen and L. van Deinsen, ‘Het theater van de herinnering. Vaderlands-historisch toneel in de achttiende eeuw’, *Spiegel der Letteren* 54:2 (2012) 193-225.

¹⁰ S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland, 1766-1787* (Amsterdam 1995) 43, 123.

Orangist myth of the stadtholderate during the First Stadtholderless Period.¹¹ Similarly, Jasper van der Steen has argued the histories of the Dutch Revolt and William of Orange specifically were politicized during the political troubles in the early seventeenth century.¹² This study will contribute to bridge the seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries by studying a polemic from the early eighteenth century, from 1736 to 1739, asking how Orangists and Republicans used the history of the Dutch Republic during the long seventeenth-century (1566-1702) to argue the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the stadtholderate and support for William IV.

Between Orangists and Republicans

According to Stephen Klein, the polemic was the first public debate about the merits of the stadtholderate in the eighteenth century.¹³ There were many different reasons for why it occurred in the 1730s. Firstly, there were political concerns. William IV had been in a dispute about his inheritance from his father, the late Frisian stadtholder Johan Willem Friso (1687-1711), and the Holland stadtholder William III. The anti-stadtholderate Republicans wanted to thwart William IV from his inheritance, while the pro-stadtholderate Orangists sought to defend it. This dispute was most ferocious in the province of Zeeland. Zeeland, like all provinces in the Republic, was a federation. Its government, the States of Zeeland consisted of the deputies from six towns: Middelburg, Zierikzee, Tholen, Goes, Veere, and Vlissingen. Before 1702, there had also been a deputy from the nobility, the so-called First Noble. This dignity had been in the hands of the House of Orange, but after the death of William III, it was abolished, restricting the influence Johan Willem Friso and William IV could have in the politics of Zeeland.¹⁴ A similar but more recent issue was the dissolution of the Marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen in 1732. The ownership of this marquisate had given the House of Orange control over the appointment of the magistrates of the two towns, and thereby influence in the States of Zeeland. Its dissolution had meant a victory for the Republican cause, further restricting the influence of the House of Orange-Nassau by empowering local political families.¹⁵ This also restricted the influence William IV could have on the government of the Republic, the States-General, which was comprised of delegates from the seven

¹¹ J. Stern, 'The Orangist Myth, 1650-1672', in: L. Cruz and W. Frijhoff (eds.) *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Leiden-Boston 2009) 33-51.

¹² J.A. van der Steen, 'A contested past: Memory wars during the Twelve Years' Truce, 1609-21', in: E. Kuijpers, J. Pollmann, e.a. (eds.) *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden-Boston 2013) 45-62.

¹³ Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 43.

¹⁴ Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 159; S. Groenveld, 'De Oranjes als markiezen van Veere. Hun politieke invloed in Zeeland en de stad Veere, 1581-1702', in: P. Blom, P.A. Henderikx, and G. van Herwijnen (eds.) *Borsele Bourgondië Oranje. Heren en markiezen van Veere en Vlissingen, 1400-1700* (Hilversum 2009) 105-152, at 116-132.

¹⁵ A.J.C.M. Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaar en de dienaar als heer. Het stadhouderlijk stelsel in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw* (Den Haag 1990), 64; Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 293-294; Groenveld, 'De Oranjes als markiezen van Veere', 105-116, 133-149.

constituent provinces of the Republic.¹⁶ Therefore, the dissolution of the marquisate was also welcomed by Republicans in the other provinces, of which we will see more in the second chapter of this study. As the marquisate was tied to tangible political influence, its dissolution was debated in the early eighteenth-century polemic. Orangists argued it had been an injustice which violated personal rights and therefore had to be reverted, whereas Republicans argued it had been a legal exercise of provincial sovereignty.¹⁷

Provincial sovereignty was to play an important role in the polemic, defended by Republicans and Orangists alike. Indeed, it was without a doubt the most important political concern. Republicans saw the stadtholderate as a danger to provincial sovereignty, and therefore wanted to restrict the influence of William IV by abolishing the dignity of the First Noble and dissolving the marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen, but they also obstructed William from obtaining a high-level rank in the army of the Dutch Republic, a rank they feared he might abuse. History played an important part in their reasoning, and we will see how Republicans used history to validate their fears about William IV in this study. They argued that the stadtholders had always been power-hungry and prone to abuse all the influence they could wield, including command of the army. Conversely, the Orangists dismissed this. They argued the Republicans were not defending provincial sovereignty but were violating the personal rights of William IV and the sovereignty of the provinces who had elected William to be their stadtholder. They used history to show that the stadtholders were not power-hungry but servile to the provinces of the Dutch Republic instead.

A second reason why the polemic occurred in the 1730s was therefore ideological. Orangists and Republicans were concerned about provincial sovereignty, but also freedom more broadly as they believed the stadtholders were either a blessing or a curse to the freedom of the Dutch Republic. Both parties valued personal freedom, which they defined as the rights to life and property.¹⁸ Beaufort called this freedom 'particular liberty', explaining that:

[P]articular liberty for citizens and residents entails that they enjoy protection under the law, that they are the masters of their own life, freedom,¹⁹

¹⁶ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 211-220, 221-234; S. Groenveld, P. Wagenaar, and F. van der Meer, 'Pre-Napoleonic centralization in a decentralized polity: The case of the Dutch Republic', *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 76:1 (2010) 47-64; Prak, *Citizens without Nations*, 192-197.

¹⁷ Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 489-490; Velema, 'Early eighteenth-century political languages', 53-54, 69.

¹⁸ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 25, 30; [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 17-18; [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 33-34. [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de Vryheid*, 4-5, 7.

¹⁹ In this quote, 'Vryheit' or 'freedom' means the capacity to do with your life and goods as you desire, so long as these desires are subject to just moral, natural, and positive laws, and reason. [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den Burgerstaet*, 25.

and goods, and that they must not be robbed of these unless they committed a crime and were convicted by a lawful judge.²⁰

However, such freedom could only be guaranteed under a free government, and Orangists and Republicans disagreed on what such government looked like. Republicans warned against unchecked government power and usurpation by powerful men. In their eyes, a stadtholderate would centralize too much power in a single individual and pose a grave danger to the Dutch Republic.²¹ In the third chapter of this study, we will see how Republicans used history to argue how and why this had happened time and time again. We will also see how Orangists rebutted this Republican reading of history. If anything, the dissolution of the marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen had shown that a Dutch Republic without stadtholder could decay into a tyranny of magistrates.²²

Alongside these political and ideological concerns, there were also personal interests. Beaufort was born into a minor patrician family. His uncle Benjamin de Beaufort (1625-1697) had been a magistrate and mayor in Hulst, and his father Bernard Laurens de Beaufort (1630-1702) had been active in the military and promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1681. Beaufort studied law at the Universities of Franeker and Utrecht and started work as a lawyer in 1695. From 1701 to 1710 he was active as pensionary of Sluis but moved to Tholen to become a magistrate in 1712. He was appointed to the Board of the Admiralty of Zeeland in 1715.²³

Besides Beaufort, Jan Willem Claus van Laar (1697-1769) also defended the Republican position. Laar was of a less prestigious background. His parents had been quakers, his father a bookseller. By 1737, Laar was working as a writer in Amsterdam. In 1738 he published the *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid* [Canid Reflections on Liberty] in defense of Beaufort.²⁴ It consists of two parts. In the first part, he outlines a case against the stadtholderate, and in the second part he wrote letters in response to the works of Orangists.

These Orangist works were written by Epo Sjuick van Burmania (1698-1775) and Wybrand van Itsma (1693-1759). Burmania was born into one of the oldest noble houses of Friesland. He became a magistrate in Dokkum and was deputy to

²⁰ [...] soo is de Vryheit in 't bysonder, en soo veel elk Burger en Ingeseten aengae, daer in gelegen, dat sy onder de bescherming der wetten gerust mogen leeven, dat sy haer leeven, vryheit en goederen in alle eigendom, en onafhankelyk van alle andere menschen bezitten, en dat sy daer van niet berooft mogen werden, dan door haer dagelyksen ofte wettigen Rechter.' [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 30; Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 480.

²¹ Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 478-489; Velema, 'early eighteenth-century political languages', 56-69.

²² [Itsma], *Tweede Jagt-praatje*, 131-134; Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 491; Velema, 'Early eighteenth-century political languages', 71.

²³ P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 6* (Leiden 1924) 83-84; Melchers, *De Beaufort*, 87-93.

²⁴ P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 3* (Leiden 1914) 232-233; T. Jongelen, 'De volmaakte Hollandse broodschrijver Jan Willem Claus van Laar', *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 24 (2001) 104-117, at 104-107.

the States of Friesland from 1738 to 1767. During this time, he was also elected mayor of Dokkum multiple times.²⁵ In the late 1730s Burmania wrote two *Schuitepraatjes* [Barge Talks] (1736 and 1737) wherein he refuted Republican arguments against the stadtholderate and defended William IV his right to the Marquis of Veere and Vlissingen. The second of these was in part a response to Beaufort's *Het leven van Willem I* [The Life of William I of Orange] (1732).

Lastly, Itsma was the son of a cavalry officer. He studied law in Franeker and became a magistrate in Dokkum and deputy to the States of Friesland from 1739 to 1746. He then became magistrate in Harlingen until his death in 1759.²⁶ Itsma wrote two *Jagt-praatjes* [Yacht Talks] (1737 and 1738) criticizing and refuting Beaufort. After Laar published his *Vrymoedige bedenkingen*, Itsma wrote a third *Jagt-praatje* (1738). Laar responded with a pamphlet called the *Aanhangsel van de Vrymoedige Bedenkingen* [Supplement to the Candid Reflections on Liberty] (1739).

There may also have been a public or political interest since pamphlets were often written to convince an audience.²⁷ The goal of these pamphlets, however, was probably not to sway large swaths of the population.²⁸ Even though the Orangists complained about the inadequate political and historical knowledge of the common man, their pamphlets include occasional inserts of Latin texts, which suggests they were not meant for a very broad audience. The Orangists also cast their arguments in the form of a conversation, but the result of this was not really a narrative explanation of Dutch politics and history but an often jumbled rebuttal of Republican arguments. In this respect, Beaufort did a much better job. His *Verhandeling* is the most accessible to read because of its clear wording and occasional repetitiveness. Laar even made the effort to translate some of the Latin the Orangists quoted in his *Letters*, but while he did try to group sets of arguments in different letters, his arguments are often more difficult to understand than those of the others.

Historiography

The polemic has never received much attention, but despite this, we can still distinguish two distinct analyses. The first of these was written by Wyger Velema,

²⁵ P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 4* (Leiden 1918) 362-363; Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer*, 217-221.

²⁶ P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 10* (Leiden 1937) 411-412; Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer*, 217-219.

²⁷ M.M. Drees, 'Pamfletten. Een inleiding', in: J. de Kruif and M.M. Drees (eds.) *Het lange leven van het pamflet. Boekhistorische, iconografische, literaire en politieke aspecten van pamfletten, 1600-1900* (Hilversum 2006) 9-28, at 9-18; F. Deen, D. Onnekink and M. Reinders, 'Pamphlets and Politics: Introduction', in: *ibidem* (eds.) *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden-Boston 2010) 1-30, at 6-9; R. Harms, *Pamfletten en publieke opinie. Massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 2011) 15-19, 22-26.

²⁸ Clazina Dingemanse also argued the Orangist pamphlets were not accessible to a wide audience. C. Dingemanse, *Rap van tong, scherp van pen. Literaire discussiecultuur in Nederlandse praatjespamfletten, 1600-1750* (Hilversum 2008) 265.

whose article from 1987 and its 2007 reprint still provide the most detailed explanation of the Republican and Orangist arguments to date. It built upon the works of Pieter Geyl and Isidore Leeb, who barely scratched the surface. Geyl saw Beaufort's *Verhandeling* as a stubborn expression of conservatism and implied the Orangist arguments were superficial and dodging the goalpost since they spent little time arguing the competencies of William IV.²⁹ Leeb argued the similarities between Republicans and Orangists were greater than the differences, 'a fact which lends an air of abstraction and irrelevance to the whole dispute.'³⁰ Velema disagreed with these views and showed the Republican and Orangist arguments were neither superficial nor irrelevant but fundamental and important. 'No doubt the participants in this intense and prolonged polemic would have shown great surprise upon hearing that their intellectual exertions were futile and superfluous', he wrote.³¹ After all, Republicans and Orangists not only disagreed on the legitimacy of the stadtholder but even held different modes of arguing: whereas the Republicans appealed to theology and natural law, Orangists dismissed these arguments as irrelevant and appealed to political traditions and constitutionalism instead.³²

However, Velema overlooked the dialogue between Republicans and Orangists on Dutch history. Beaufort cycled back to Dutch history in the last chapters of his *Verhandeling* and Laar wrote extensively on Dutch history in the second part of his *Vrymoedige bedenkingen* and his later written *Aanhangel*. While it is true the Orangists dismissed some Republican arguments as irrelevant to the discussion, we will see that they thought it was very much worth engaging with the Republican arguments about Dutch history.

The second analysis of the polemic did not overlook this debate about the past and was written by Hans Blom. Unfortunately, his article from 2010 does not respond to Velema, yet this may also be why his perspective on the polemic is quite different. The article's focus is on the contemporary meaning of national decline during the times of Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733).³³ Blom showed that the Republicans and Orangists 'contest[ed] when the decline [of the Dutch Republic] did set in, during the States Government or the Prince Government [...]'.³⁴ Whereas the Republicans argued only a stadtholderless government could keep Dutch prosperity afloat, the Orangists warned against 'the venality and nepotism and discord' such government brings about and argued a stadtholder is the requisite antidote to such political decay.³⁵ With this, Blom showed us that both Republicans and Orangists appealed to Dutch history and to political moralism to argue for or against the stadtholderate.

²⁹ Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam. Deel II*, 312-314, 330.

³⁰ I.L. Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution: History and Politics in the Dutch Republic, 1747-1800* (Den Haag 1973) 54-57.

³¹ Velema, 'Early eighteenth-century political languages', 55.

³² Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie'; Velema, 'Early eighteenth-century political languages'.

³³ H. Blom, 'Decay and the political gestalt of decline in Bernard Mandeville and his Dutch contemporaries', *History of European Ideas* 36 (2010) 153-166, at 153-155.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 163.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 163-165.

However, like Velema, Blom did not do much to characterize the Republican and Orangist views on Dutch history either, even though his study argued that their differing views of the past were an important part of their disagreement. This study aims to fill this missing gap and in doing so, it will focus on the use of the past as an argument in its own right: as a myth rather than a gateway to factual disputes about law. The use of “myth” is not intended to dismiss the Republican and Orangist arguments as fictional and untrue. Instead, I follow the work of Coenraad Tamse, who argued that myths are never antithetical to reality because they will always be real to the people who hold them to be true. There is therefore ‘little to be gained by supposing that the mythical and historical interpretations of reality are completely opposed.’ Tamse proposes we examine the historical importance of myths instead.³⁶

Myth can be better defined as a cultural memory which is employed with a purpose. Cultural memory is a metaphorical memory. It is collective, but it is not a personal memory of an event you experienced with others, like a family holiday. Instead, it is the knowledge in society about the past. A cultural memory of a past event can be remembered by people that lived through that event, and who might therefore also have personal memories about the event, but it can also be “remembered” by people who did not experience the event themselves.³⁷

However, a myth is more than such a memory alone. Tamse argued the key difference between the past and myth is the normative character of a myth.³⁸ A cultural memory is itself normative to some extent. Barry Schwartz argued that collective memories match ‘the past to the present, as a model *of* society—reflecting its needs, interests, fears, and aspirations; and a model *for* society—[as] a template for thought, sentiment, morality, and conduct.’³⁹ Myth has a stronger emphasis on this second element. Aleida Assmann differentiated between cultural and political memory for this reason, arguing that political memories, or myths, ‘acquire the quality of normative symbols’ which are ‘constructed, staged, used, and abused for political action and the formation of group identities.’⁴⁰

The Dutch Golden Age

³⁶ C.A. Tamse, ‘The Political Myth’, in: J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds.) *Some Political Mythologies: Papers Delivered to the Fifth Anglo-Dutch Historical Conference* (Den Haag 1975) 1-18, at 3-4.

³⁷ A. Assmann, ‘Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past’, in: K. Tilmans, F. van Vree, and J.M. Winter (eds.) *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Europe* (Amsterdam 2012) 35-50, at 40-44; A. Erll, ‘Cultural memory studies: An introduction’, in: Ibidem and A. Nünning (eds.) *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin 2008) 1-18, at 4-6.

³⁸ Tamse, ‘The political myth’, 7, 12-17.

³⁹ B. Schwartz, ‘Rethinking the concept of collective memory’, in: A.L. Tota and T. Hagen (eds.) *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (London 2015) 9-21, at 15.

⁴⁰ Assmann, ‘Re-framing memory’, 44, 49.

Although Blom did not make the connection, his study is inseparable from the concept of the Dutch Golden Age, a political memory *pur sang*. The debate about Dutch decline implies a notion of earlier, better times, and those times were starting to be idealized as a golden age in the early eighteenth-century. Velema and Elea de la Porte have argued the concept of the Dutch Golden Age first emerged in the early eighteenth rather than the late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century. They argued the concept was initiated by Justus van Effen (1684-1735) and his *Hollandsche Spectator* (1731-1735), a weekly and later twice a week magazine which intended to school or enlighten society. In these magazines, Effen and his co-authors romanticized the seventeenth-century for its good morals and manners, which they used as exemplary for a prosperous society.⁴¹

The concept of a golden age was nothing new in the Dutch Republic and was first popularized in the late sixteenth century after Ovid's *Metamorphosis* was translated into Dutch and published in 1552. Other translations and adaptations soon followed suit.⁴² In the seventeenth century, there was a boom in the arts and sciences, there had been military and diplomatic victories, and there was economic growth, which left people were wondering if they were not living in a golden age themselves.⁴³ What characterized the concept during this time was that it never really had a cut and dried definition, and this was largely still the case by the early eighteenth century.⁴⁴ For example, Joannes van Septeren (1699-1739) asked himself 'if and when there had ever been a Golden Age?' Perhaps there had been a Golden Age in ancient history, or perhaps only in the Garden of Eden, but Septeren was unconvinced and thought it more likely there had never been a Golden Age at all. Instead, the concept was a metaphor for a utopia imagined by poets, and Septeren embraced the concept as a metaphor for joy and happiness that could even be found in times of adversity.⁴⁵

This is very different from the concept of the Dutch Golden Age, which was specifically about the Republic in the seventeenth-century and its moral as well as its material and political standing. Additionally, whereas the concept of a golden age was not necessarily in opposition to the present, the concept of the Dutch Golden Age very much invoked the idea that something had been lost and had to be regained, which for Effen had been cultural. By the end of this study, we will see that the Orangists and Republicans shared this cultural concern with Effen.

⁴¹ W.R.E. Velema, 'Polite Republicanism and the problem of decline', in: ibidem (ed.) *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden-Boston 2007) 77-91, at 76-91; E. de la Porte, *Verlichte verhalen. De omgang met het verleden in de Nederlandse Verlichting* (Amsterdam 2023) 72-75.

⁴² J. Blanc, 'Introduction', in: ibidem (ed.) *Dutch Golden Age(s): The Shaping of a Cultural Community* (Turnhout 2020) 7-24, at 7-16; M. Holtrop, 'Aurea aetas or golden age: Changing notions of the Dutch seventeenth century', in: J. Blanc (ed.) *Dutch Golden Age(s): The Shaping of a Cultural Community* (Turnhout 2020) 193-204, at 196-197.

⁴³ L. Jensen, *Vieren van de Vrede. Het ontstaan van de Nederlandse identiteit, 1648-1815* (Nijmegen 2016) 35-41; J. Blanc, 'Gouden eeuw: The invention of the Dutch Golden Age during the sixteenth and seventeenth century', in: ibidem (ed.) *Dutch Golden Age(s): The Shaping of a Cultural Community* (Turnhout 2020) 65-96, at 69-80.

⁴⁴ Blanc, 'Gouden eeuw', 80-93.

⁴⁵ J. van Septeren, *Bondelken van Fraaije Mengel-stoffen* (Amsterdam 1722) 3-16.

However, they did not share his concept of the Dutch Golden Age. The third chapter of this study will focus on this difference, explaining how Orangists and Republicans drew parallels between different episodes from the past to argue the importance of moral government. Rather than a Dutch Golden Age, continuity was key to the Orangist and Republican uses to the past. This will become most clear in the second chapter, which argues that the Republicans and Orangists drew parallels between the past and present to argue about the aptitude of William IV. The first chapter, however, will focus on the sentiment of gratitude towards William of Orange with which this introduction started.

1 A nation under God: The founding of the Dutch Republic

Prince William of Orange is sometimes known as the Father of the Fatherland, the Dutch Republic and even the Netherlands, and there is something to be said in favour of this accolade.⁴⁶ To cut a long story short, the Republic was born out of a rebellion against the Habsburg monarchy to oppose political centralization and the persecution of the Calvinist Reformed. Before turning to arms, disgruntled nobles, among whom William of Orange, had attempted to sway their king Philip II of Spain (1527-1598) to moderate the religious persecutions in a covenant known as Compromise of Nobles (1566), but that same year, a wave of anti-Catholic iconoclasm had Philip II double down and send the Duke of Alba (1507-1582) to restore order and punish wrongdoers. William of Orange and others fled abroad, and open rebellion of towns, noblemen, and citizens had begun. William of Orange developed into a leading figure of the revolt, organizing armies when the rebels made their first headway with the capture of Brielle in 1572 and swore off Philip II as their king in 1581. His defiance led to his assassination in 1584. Four years later in 1588, the rebel states declared themselves a republic.⁴⁷

In the 1730s, this history was disputed. Orangists like Burmania and Itsma applauded William of Orange as the Father of the Fatherland, but Republicans like Beaufort and Laar waved this off hand and argued that God was the Founding Father of the Republic instead. The Orangists did not deny divine intervention altogether but argued that God had ordained William of Orange to lead the rebels and lay the foundations for the Dutch Republic. From this, they argued that the Republic owed immense gratitude to the House of Orange and was obligated to honor its heirs. The Republicans challenged this argument by contradicting its core premise, arguing that William of Orange was not the master of his own success but a mere instrument in the hands of God. However, all four polemicists were adherents of the Reformed faith, raising the question how Orangists and Republicans navigated this disagreement. This chapter will show the Republicans and Orangists avoided discussing the theological premises of their arguments and argue their main concern was not historical accuracy but political expedience. First, we will look at the roots of the Orangist use of the past to argue for gratitude.

Orangist gratitude

The purpose of the Orangist myth about William of Orange was to argue that the Dutch owed him gratitude for his role in the Dutch Revolt, gratitude for his role in

⁴⁶ P. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca-London 2008) 260-303.

⁴⁷ H.H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders of the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge 1988) 8-31; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 5-15.

establishing the Dutch Republic, and gratitude for his role in protecting the True Religion, the Reformed faith. This use of the past was already in use during the First Stadtholderless Period, but its roots were older and lay in the ideological support for the House of Orange itself. This support first developed during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) when a religious dispute on predestination and a political dispute on the continuation of the war with Spain interlocked and came to be known as the *Bestandstwisten*.

First, a religious dispute on predestination divided the Reformed Church. Liberal Reformed followers of the Leiden theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) argued against the orthodox view on predestination, which held that as God was the author of creation, salvation is not in the hands of man but in the hands of God alone, and faith an expression of divine election. Arminius and his followers argued that the conclusion of this belief would be that God is not just the author of virtue, but also of vice. They offered an alternative interpretation of predestination in which God extends his grace to everyone, but man can reject salvation by wrongdoing, which means that man the author of vice instead. When the tide turned against the liberal Reformed, they turned to the States of Holland in a remonstrance in 1610 and became known as the Remonstrants. They asked the state to intervene on their behalf and command the Reformed Church to tolerate their views on predestination. The orthodox Reformed were displeased by this move, in part because they thought the Remonstrant view of predestination was wrong, but more importantly because the Remonstrant plea threatened the Church's sovereignty over her theologies.⁴⁸

At the same time this theological dispute unfolded, a political dispute over the continuation of the war with Spain divided Dutch politics. Proponents of peace argued that an end to the war would bring about an end to the bloodshed and the costly economic burden of war, whereas proponents of war argued that they could avenge the crimes of their enemy and liberate the enemy-held southern lowlands where the Reformed faith was outlawed and Catholicism compulsory.⁴⁹ A fierce propaganda war ensued in which the pro-peace faction aligned with the Remonstrant cause and the pro-war faction with the orthodox cause. Tensions rose until both disputes were settled through an intervention by stadtholder Maurits in favor

⁴⁸ E.H. Cossee, 'Rekkelijk of precies. Remonstranten en contraremonstranten ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt', in: T.G. Kootte (ed.) *Rekkelijk of precies. Remonstranten en contraremonstranten ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt* (Utrecht 1994) 9-35, at 9-19; I. Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek. Het gebruik van vaderlandretoriek in Nederlandse pamfletten, 1618-1672* (Rotterdam 2012) 50-53; J. Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje. Over de wortels van het orangisme, 1600-1618', in: H. te Velde and D. Haks (eds.) *Oranje onder. Populair orangisme van Willem van Oranje tot nu* (Amsterdam 2014) 27-45, at 37-39; C.H. Parker, 'Reformed Protestantism', in: H.J. Helmers and G.H. Janssen (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge 2018) 189-207, at 198-199; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 54-56.

⁴⁹ Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek*, 41-45; Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje', 34-35; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 52-54.

of the orthodox and pro-war faction.⁵⁰ The memory of this event was also a point of contention in the early eighteenth-century polemic, but this shall be discussed in the next chapter.

As the orthodox Reformed and the pro-war faction aligned, Maurits came to be propagated as the 'guardian of Church and Fatherland.'⁵¹ Republicans and Orangists ended up fighting over not just theology and foreign policy, but also the history of the Republic and the purpose of their revolt against Spain. In the orthodox Reformed, pro-war, and Orangist myth, this led to a reappraisal of William of Orange, who was exalted a savior and a champion of the Reformed Church and savior of the Dutch Republic.⁵² What had therefore started as two separate disputes in church and politics culminated in the image of the House of Orange as guardians of Church and Fatherland.⁵³

This narrative developed into an argument in support of the stadtholderate after the death of stadtholder William II (1626-1650), which had sounded the First Stadtholderless Period. His son William III was set to be next in line, but his succession was delayed by political opposition until 1672. During this stadtholderless period, Orangists used the narrative of the House of Orange as guardians of Church and Fatherland to argue that the Dutch owed the Princes of Orange gratitude. This argument was still in use by Burmania and Itsma in the early eighteenth century. Stadtholders William of Orange and Maurits, but also Frederik Hendrik and William II had shown such loyalty to the Republic, Orangists argued, that the young William III, and in the early eighteenth century, William IV, should receive the office out of sheer gratitude to his forefathers.⁵⁴

Republican gratitude

To undermine Orangism in the early eighteenth century, Beaufort put forward a different interpretation of history and argued that the Dutch Republic only owed its existence to the will of God, and not the valor of William of Orange. Beaufort did

⁵⁰ Cossee, 'Rekkelijk of precies', 19-22; M. Bodian, 'The biblical Jewish Republic and the Dutch new Israel in seventeenth-century Dutch thought', in: G. Schochet, F. Oz-Salzberger, and M. Jones (eds.) *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought* (Jerusalem 2008) 148-166, at 153-155; Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek*, 97-98; Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje', 29-30, 39-41, 42-45; T. Basoski, *Voor de Heer en voor Oranje. Simion Oomius en zijn orangistische bazuinen, 1672-1674* (Hilversum 2020) 56-57; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 55-56.

⁵¹ Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje', 42.

⁵² Steen, 'A Contested Past'; Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje', 35-36. See also E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, 'Willem van Oranje in de historiografie van de zeventiende eeuw', in: E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and A.E.M. Jansen (eds.) *Willem van Oranje in de historie, 1584-1984. Vier eeuwen beeldvorming en geschiedschrijving* (Utrecht 1984) 32-62, at 34-46.

⁵³ Pollmann, 'Schuilen onder de vleugels van Oranje'.

⁵⁴ Stern, 'The Orangist Myth', 42-48; Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image*, 160-165. See also Haitsma Mulier, 'Willem van Oranje in de historiografie van de zeventiende eeuw', 47-49, 52-54; Basoski, *Voor de Heer en voor Oranje*, 53-58.

believe in human agency, but he vehemently denied the strength of this agency by making it very clear that the Dutch struggle against the Habsburg monarchy had been a Herculean task. If not for divine intervention, the Dutch rebels would have never been able to resist the tyranny of Philip II, who, Beaufort explains, had been one of the most powerful men in European history and had ruled a vast empire, had an abundance of gold and silver from his dominions in the New World, and had employed numerous, battle-hardened soldiers.⁵⁵ 'In those days, Holland and Zeeland could not be compared to such great and mighty king, and their odds were so unequal, like that of a little dwarf standing against a giant.'⁵⁶

By emphasizing this discrepancy, Beaufort sought to make a sheer human victory seem absurd and divine intervention more likely. Rather than focusing on the theological basis this argument required, he tried to convince his audience by underscoring the flaws and shortcomings of the rebel provinces. These provinces had been divided internally, because not all towns had been behind the rebel cause, but many of the towns who had supported the cause had also been either besieged or occupied by the enemy. For example, in Holland, Amsterdam—by far its largest and richest town—did not join the rebel cause until after a coup d'état in 1578, while the siege of Haarlem (1572-1573) by Habsburg soldiers resulted in a rebel defeat and the subsequent occupation of the town that lasted until 1577.⁵⁷ The plight of the rebels was cause for desperation, and 'there was no hope or expectation in a human effort that could stand against the king of Spain and avert his violence.'⁵⁸

Yet despite this desperation and against all odds, the rebel soldiers and townsfolk defended their towns and liberated their lands with great courage when they captured Brielle in 1572 and withstood the sieges of Alkmaar (1573) and Leiden (1573-1574). 'What else is there to say, other than to acknowledge God's almighty hand?'⁵⁹ Well, Haarlem, Alkmaar and Leiden were defended by fierce bravery—this was their finest hour—but 'such fearless courage and steadfastness, of so many people of various classes and sexes,⁶⁰ and in such numbers, is not inherent to humankind', Beaufort wrote. '[I]t transcends what humans are capable of, and so we must conclude that there had been a supernatural power who gifted these

⁵⁵ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 550-551.

⁵⁶ 'By sulk een groot en machtig Koning was Holland en Zeeland, bysonder in die tyd, in het minst niet te vergelyken, en het was sulk een ongelyke party, als die van een dwergje tegen een reus.' [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 551.

⁵⁷ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 551-553.

⁵⁸ '[...] was er immers geen de minste hoop nog verwagting, jae geen menschelyke uytkomst, om het soo lang, op die wyse, tegen den koning van Spanjen te kunnen uythouden, en syn geweld af te keeren. [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 554.

⁵⁹ 'Wat valt er derhalven in desen anders te doen, als de machtige hand Gods te erkennen?' [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 554.

⁶⁰ For example, see E. Kloek, *Kenau. De heldhaftige zakenbrouw uit Haarlem, 1526-1588* (Hilversum 2001) 7-11, 53-54, 62-63, 73-82, 87.

people an extraordinary heroism and helped them against their fears and woes so that they would not succumb.⁶¹

In other words, the rebels were used as instruments to bring about a (Reformed) victory. In effect, Beaufort repurposed the Orangist argument from gratitude. The Dutch Republic did not owe its existence to William of Orange or any other army man, not even to the Dutch citizens themselves, but only to God. To the twenty-first-century reader, this explanation leaves much unsaid and many questions unanswered. What about William of Orange; what about those brave citizens; and what about human agency? As we will see, these sentiments are nothing new and the Orangists dismissed Beaufort's explanation off hand. However, Beaufort's explanation would have had its appeal in his day and age because of the belief in the Dutch Republic as the second Israel.

The Second Israel-idea

The Second Israel-idea was an analogy between ancient Israel and the Dutch Republic to explain the relationship between the latter and God. It developed in the late sixteenth-century during the struggle of the Reformed rebels against their Catholic overlord. To make sense of their new political identity and the success of their revolt against a much bigger hegemon, the rebels turned to history to find precedents and explanations. In biblical history, they found the story of the chosen Children of Israel who had escaped the tyranny of Egypt and settled in the promised land, and they saw many analogies between their revolt against Philip II and this Exodus. For example, like the Children of Israel had lived under Egyptian tyranny, so the Reformed had lived under Habsburg tyranny, like God had sent Moses, so He had sent William of Orange, and like God had made a covenant with the Israelites, so He had made a covenant with either the Dutch Reformed Church or the Dutch Republic.⁶² These analogies were still in use in the early eighteenth-century.⁶³ Beaufort lamented that the 'servitude and oppression of the Dutch' by Philip II was

⁶¹ 'Sulk een onverschrokke moed en standvastigheid, van soo veele menschen, van allerley staet en sexe, en in soo menigvuldige gevallen, is niet eigen aen den mensch, dat gaet de menschelyke krachten te boven, en derhalven moet men besluyten, dat er een bovennatuerlyke kracht is geweest, die de mensch met sulken buytengewoonen heldenmoed heeft aengedaen, en haer in de uysterste angsten en gevaeren heeft ondersteunt, opdat sy niet zouden beswyken.' [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 556.

⁶² W. Verboom, 'The Netherlands as the second Israel', in: A.J.G. van der Borcht, D. van Keulen, and M. Brinkman (eds.) *Faith and Ethnicity. Volume 2* (Zoetermeer 2002) 93-108, at 94-96; Bodian, 'The Biblical Jewish Republic', 148-151; T. Dunkelgrün, 'Political Theology, Christian Hebraism, Biblical Antiquarianism, and Historical Myth', in: L. Cruz and W. Frijhoff (eds.) *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Leiden-Boston 2009) 201-236, at 201-203. See also G. Bartolucci, 'The Hewbrew Republic in sixteenth-century political debate: The struggle for jurisdiction', in: W.R.E. Velema and A. Weststeijn (eds.) *Ancient Models in Early Modern Republican Imagination* (Leiden-Boston 2018) 214-233, at 214-222, 232-233. For Jewish responses to these analogies, see Bodian, 'The Biblical Jewish Republic', 156-162.

⁶³ See also M.H. Wieldraaijer, *Oranje op de kansel. De beeldvorming van Oranjestadhouders en hun vrouwen in preken, 1584-1795* (Amsterdam 2014) 240-242.

undoubtedly 'harsher and crueler' than that of the Israelites by Egypt and the most important difference had been that the Israelites were never compelled to abandon their religion, but the Reformed were.⁶⁴ In this comparison, Beaufort emphasizes the hardship and desperation during the Dutch Revolt again, and because of this hardship, he argues, God liberated the Reformed from tyranny like He had liberated the Israelites and He 'instituted a superb free government', the Dutch Republic.⁶⁵ Even though Beaufort did not believe God had sent William of Orange like he had sent Moses, Beaufort did adopt the Second Israel-idea to argue his case, and he did so with the hopes of reaching a diverse audience.

The Second Israel-idea was variously applied to the Dutch Republic as there were different views on who the new chosen people and the second Israel were, which was a point of contention between different religious denominations. Sometimes, the Second Israel-idea was only used as a comparison between Israel and the Dutch Republic, in which Israel served as a cultural and political example.⁶⁶ This phenomenon is not always studied under the guise of the Second Israel-idea but is also studied as political Hebraism. Eighteenth-century examples can for instance be found in poems dedicated to William IV in 1747. For example, Jan Meyer compared William of Orange to Jephthah, who had led the Israelites in battle against the Kingdom of Ammon. Meyer wrote that the Dutch had 'embraced a Jephthah' during the Revolt, 'a savior from dangers, whom they honored as head of the army and navy.'⁶⁷

At other times, the Second Israel-idea had a stronger emphasis on theology and the relation between politics and religion.⁶⁸ For example, the orthodox Reformed Abraham van de Velde (1614-1677) argued that there was a covenant between God and the Dutch Republic. So long as the Dutch Republic upheld the True Religion—the orthodox Reformed faith—the covenant was upheld, and God would watch over the Dutch Republic. Straying away from the True Religion put endangered Dutch society and so orthodox ministers had to try their very best to keep the nation on the right tracks in a movement that came to be known as the Further Reformation.⁶⁹ This interpretation of the Second Israel is usually associated with Orangists. For example, Reformed ministers praised stadtholder William IV in funeral sermons after his death in 1751 for upholding the Reformed faith against strayers and libertines.⁷⁰

However, whereas Velde held that the Reformed were God's chosen people and their country the second Israel, there were others for whom these were

⁶⁴ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 540-549.

⁶⁵ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 549-550.

⁶⁶ Verboom, 'The Netherlands as the Second Israel', 96-97.

⁶⁷ '[...] Omhelsde een Jephthah, een verlosser in gevaaren, hem eerende als het hoofd van land en waterschaaren.' [J. Meyer], 'Spiegel der waarheid', in: Theodorus Crajenschot (ed.) *Dichtkundige lauwerbladen voor zyne hoogheid* (Amsterdam 1747) 34-40, at 39.

⁶⁸ Verboom, 'The Netherlands as the Second Israel', 97-99. See also Bodian, 'The Biblical Jewish Republic', 153-156; R. Koekkoek, 'The Hebrew Republic in Dutch Political Thought 1650-1675', in: W.R.E. Velema and A. Weststeijn (eds.) *Ancient Models in Early Modern Republican Imagination* (Leiden-Boston 2018) 234-258, at 234-237, 257-258.

⁶⁹ Koekkoek, 'The Hebrew Republic', 237-242. See also Parker, 'Reformed Protestantism', 197-198, 200-203; Basoski, *Voor de Heer en voor Oranje*, 50-53.

⁷⁰ Wieldraaijer, *Oranje op de kansel*, 248-250.

separated. For example, the Remonstrant Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) argued that God had blessed the Dutch Republic because she abstained from religious compulsion. The chosen people of God were the Remonstrant believers, but He would watch over the Dutch Republic so long as His faithful were tolerated.⁷¹ In the words of Theodor Dunkelgrün, these two different interpretations of the Second Israel-idea 'reflected a deeper opposition between two conceptions of the Reformation itself.' Whereas the orthodox Reformed strove for a more rigid conformity to their creed, other liberal Reformed were laxer and opposed dogmatism and intolerance towards different Christian doctrines. Therefore, and above all, the Second Israel-idea served as a utopian ideal of government and society.⁷²

Beaufort used the Second Israel-idea to argue his own utopia. His work focused on politics, and his utopia therefore constituted that 'superb free government' of the Republic God had instated. Insofar as Beaufort made a theological argument to support his arguments against the Orangist myth of gratitude, this was it. He sacralized the Republic to show that the Dutch did not owe gratitude to the House of Orange, but to God. His use of the past was therefore enabled by a broader cultural and religious context. By this, he challenged the Orangists in such a way that could unite different groups who believed in the Republic as the Second Israel in opposition to the stadtholderate.

The Orangist response

Not everyone was convinced by Beaufort's arguments, least of all the Orangists. Like Wyger Velema has argued, they dismissed the Republican way of arguing. For example, Itsma argued that it is 'no sensible explanation befitting a historian' to attribute all happenings to predestination and providence.⁷³ However, like Beaufort did not deny human agency altogether, Itsma did not deny divine intervention altogether. Itsma believed that God's guiding hand can be seen in the deeds of William of Orange and others, but that He was not the puppet master Beaufort made Him out to be. Surprisingly, Itsma did not write much to rebuke Beaufort's appeal to predestination, but as it is one of the first things he wrote about in his *First Yacht-talk* it certainly caught his eye and he recognized its importance.⁷⁴ Additionally, like Beaufort, Itsma did not focus on the underlying theology that would support his argument. He instead argued why the interpretation of Beaufort would be absurd. To this end, he compared the argument of Beaufort to the thought of Dirck Graswinckel (1600-1666).

Graswinckel had studied law in Franeker and came from a Republican family. His father had been a town magistrate from Delft who had supported the

⁷¹ P. Rooden, 'Dissenters en bededagen. Civil religion ten tijde van de Republiek', in: *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 107:4 (1992) 703-712, at 707-708.

⁷² Dunkelgrün, 'Political theology, Christian Hebraism, biblical antiquarianism, and historical myth', 210-211, 230-231, 235-236.

⁷³ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 66-67.

⁷⁴ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 2.

Remonstrants against stadtholder Maurits, and he himself had been a pupil of the Republican Hugo Grotius after his studies in Franeker.⁷⁵ In his treatises, Graswinckel argued that every polity has been created by God and was given its own unique characteristics. These characteristics manifest themselves in constitutions, but these constitutions have changed over time. He then argued that as the original characteristics of such constitution were willed by God, it is our duty to study, preserve, and restore our original constitutions. The Holland constitution was one such constitution and in it, God had endowed the supreme power over Holland not to counts, lords, or stadtholders, but to the States of Holland. Consequently, the men who had claimed dominion over Holland, like Philip II, were usurpers.⁷⁶

While Itsma agreed with Graswinckel about the importance of constitutions, he disagreed with the subtraction of human agency from the founding of these constitutions. This was a neglect Graswinckel and Beaufort shared. Graswinckel argued the States derive their constitution immediately from God, and Beaufort argued the States derive their freedom immediately from God.⁷⁷ Itsma was aware of the, in his mind, radical conclusions that followed from such a worldview. Graswinckel had argued that property rights were ultimately subordinate to the will of the States, asking rhetorically if the States 'have no less power than sailors to throw their cargo overboard if there is no other means to save the entire ship?'⁷⁸ Republicans in the early eighteenth century had argued similarly that the States of Zeeland had the sovereign right to dissolve the marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen to save the ship of state from the clutches of William IV.⁷⁹

To dispute the conclusions which Republicans drew from immediate, divine intervention, it was up for the Orangists to offer an alternative analysis of history and the role of God therein. The most important aspect of this analysis was a different appreciation of human agency, which enabled the Orangists to argue that the Dutch did not only owe gratitude to God, but also to William of Orange and the House of Orange. They then concluded from this gratitude that the dissolution of the marquisate or other political hurdles thrown at William IV were uncalled for.

Itsma took a special interest in the capture of Brielle in 1572, which Beaufort had described as 'the beginning of our freedom.'⁸⁰ According to Beaufort, the rebels did not take the initiative to capture Brielle, they did not even think of going there, but they were led there by God.⁸¹ Itsma contradicted him and argued that the rebel forces were following orders from William of Orange. William his orders were not contingent on God, but on himself, and he could just as well have sent the

⁷⁵ P. Wagenaar, 'Studying the stillborn: The ideology of the estates' absolutism and proto-bureaucratic thought in the 17th century Dutch Republic', *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 68:1 (2002) 95-112, at 102.

⁷⁶ Wagenaar, 'Studying the stillborn', 103; Koekkoek, 'The Hewbrew Republic in Dutch political thought', 246.

⁷⁷ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 3.

⁷⁸ Graswinckel, cited by Wagenaar in 'Studying the stillborn', 103-104.

⁷⁹ Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 261-266, 290, 293.

⁸⁰ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 567.

⁸¹ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 567-568.

rebels to other towns like Hoorn or Enkhuizen instead.⁸² Itsma concluded that William of Orange was therefore responsible for ‘the beginning of our freedom’ and must therefore be seen as the Founding Father of the Dutch Republic.⁸³

However, the capture of Brielle was not the only significant feat of William of Orange. Itsma argued that William of Orange had also borne the brunt of the costs for the war on land, ‘which’, he wrote, ‘all contemporary historians unanimously attested.’⁸⁴ Itsma did not name any of these historians, but he had given an example earlier in his pamphlet to underline the same point. He cited the States-General, who had praised William of Orange as a man ‘who sacrificed his interests and that of his kin for the well-being of the Netherlands. Who twice levied mighty armies mostly with his own money, [...] who expelled the Spanish tyranny on the authority of the States [and who] restored the practice of the True Religion and the old laws of the fatherland [...]’.⁸⁵ The decisions of William of Orange had therefore been important to the entire Dutch Revolt.

Beaufort was no longer around to respond to these views—he had died in 1730—but this task was taken on by Laar. Like Beaufort, Laar put a strong emphasis on divine intervention, as in response to Itsma, he wrote:

I cannot understand what you hold against [divine intervention], unless you mean to mean to deny God’s divine rule, which I do not think you mean to do. Perhaps you take offense at the word ‘immediate’, but this word ‘immediate’ does not mean God did not use any instruments, but these instruments were in the hands of that great Musician, and like a tune is attributed to a musician rather than the instrument, so too do we owe all causes to God.⁸⁶

⁸² [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-Praatje*, 65-66. Modern historiography argues that William of Orange had little to do with the march on Brielle. The seafaring rebels were harbored in England but were expelled by Queen Elizabeth I on the first of March and sailed for Brielle on their own accord where they captured the town on the first of April. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 13-14; A. van der Lem, *De Opstand in de Nederlanden, 1568-1648. De Tachtigjarige Oorlog in woord en beeld* (Nijmegen 2018) 78; R. van Stipriaan, *De Zwijger. Het leven van Willem van Oranje* (Amsterdam 2021) 374-378.

⁸³ Itsma also called the Union of Utrecht (1579) the ‘masterwork’ of William of Orange and his brother John of Nassau-Dillenburg. [Itsma], *Derde Jagt-praatje*, 141.

⁸⁴ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-Praatje*, 66.

⁸⁵ ‘[...] die om de welvaart van Nederlant syn eigen belang en dat der syne heeft opgeoffert: Die tot tweemaal toe seer machtige legers meest met syn eigen geld op de been heeft gebragt [...] die op ‘t gesag der Staaten de Spaanse tyrannie verdreeven heeft, de oefening van de waare Godsdienst en de oude wetten des Vaderlands hersteld [...]’ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-Praatje*, 16-17.

⁸⁶ ‘Ik kan niet begrypen wat uwe daar tegens hebt; of gy moest de regeeringe Gods, over alles wat in de waereld voorvalt ontkennen, dat ik niet geloof. Maar gy zult mogelyk zeggen, dat woord ‘onmiddelyk’ stoot my teegens de borst; maar dit woord ‘onmiddelyk’ beteekend hier niet, dat God geen middelen gebruikt, neen; maar die middelen zyn als zo veel werktuigen in de hand, van dien grooten Werkmeester, en zodanig een werktuig word nooit geen oorzaak, maar is en blyft een werktuig, en de verplichting voor zodanig een ontsage weldaad, zyn en blyven wij aan God als de eenige oorzaak onmiddelyk verschuldigt; daarom moet een mensch, God onmiddelyk daar voor danken.’ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 170-171.

We cannot say for certain whether Beaufort agreed or disagreed with this argument. Unlike Laar, Beaufort made a distinction between two different types of divine causation. He argued that the fierce courage of the rebels had *transcended* the courage that is natural to mankind. He ascribed the origin of this transcendental courage to God, but he wrote nothing on the origin of the natural courage of man. This distinction between natural dispositions and transcendental impositions was ignored by Laar.

The distinction between natural dispositions and transcendental impositions also clearly shows that the Orangists did not deny God as the author of creation. Instead, they denied that William of Orange was guided by transcendental impositions. In an ironic twist of fate, Laar was defending Reformed orthodoxy while Itsma was inclined to a more liberal or Remonstrant interpretation of human agency. Laar jokingly suggested that Itsma could even be defending a Catholic interpretation, but this would have been very unlikely a man eyeing a political career in public office which required his adherence to the Reformed faith.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, Itsma did not press the matter in his third and final Yacht-talk. Whether he saw these differences, found it unproductive to address it, felt unequipped to address theological matters, or ignored it for some other reason, is probably lost to history.

Conclusion

When it came to the memory of William of Orange, theology was an important Republican tool which Beaufort and Laar used to undermine the Orangist appreciation of William of Orange. The Orangists upheld a long tradition of Orangism by arguing that William of Orange had saved the young Republic and that the Dutch therefore owed gratitude to the House of Orange. Conversely, the Republicans used their memory of divine intervention to argue such gratitude was folly. Republicans used the past to argue the Dutch only owed gratitude to God instead. The polemicists never got into the weeds of this disagreement, perhaps because such religious matters lay sensitive. Nevertheless, both sides used the past to argue about gratitude, and neither side rejected its importance. Gratitude was therefore not just a Republican or Orangist reason to use the past for political expedience, but it was a shared reason.

Although the dispute about human agency and the role of God was never settled in the polemic, it shows how religion, history, and politics could be intertwined in the early eighteenth century. It should therefore make for an interesting case study of early eighteenth-century popular theology, and it might also warrant a study of the writings of Reformed ministers to see if they wrote about this dispute and what they made of the arguments on religion, and whether they thought the Republic owed any gratitude to William of Orange or to God alone. However,

⁸⁷ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 171.

gratitude was not the only reason Republicans and Orangists argued about the past. They also used the past to argue about the aptitude of William IV, and unlike the subject of gratitude, they shared a common mode of arguing for this topic. This theme is the subject of the next chapter.

2 A shared mode of arguing: The aptitude of William IV

Pieter Geyl has rightly remarked that the polemicists did not write much about William IV himself, and most strikingly, they did not discuss his aptitude, while we would think this is be one of the most important things to consider when you want someone to assume more or less powers in government.⁸⁸ We might be tempted to explain this by pointing to William's young age and lack of accomplishments, but it is not as if there was nothing to discuss at all. For example, William had personally patrolled the streets of Leeuwarden in the night of June 24th in 1734 because a couple of months prior, a rumor had spread that Catholics all over the Republic were plotting to 'exterminate and assassinate all the Protestants in the United Provinces' that night. Some anti-Catholic measures were taken as a precaution, like the issue of search-warrants to find hidden caches of weapons, or the arrest of several Jesuit preachers, but nothing out of the ordinary happened the night itself.⁸⁹ Not long after, in the summer of 1734, William went on a short, educational excursion to Prince Eugene of Savoy, who led an army of the Holy Roman Empire in battle against the French along the Rhine River. William did not experience battle here but did learn more about the organization and logistics of an army.⁹⁰ The Orangists could have used these events to show that William had at least some experience and was eager to defend the common good, but they chose not to.

The early eighteenth-century polemicists did not discuss these or other events, and though this affirms Geyl, the polemicists would not have seen it this way. They believed that the past could be indicative for the future, and so by arguing about the past and by discussing the aptitude of previous stadtholders, they felt they did argue about the aptitude of William IV. The lack of mention of the late-night patrol or the fieldtrip should be seen in this light. In a way, this is a most literal example of what Robin Wagner-Pacifici has argued memory is all about. Wagner-Pacifici argued that our memories of the past are best understood as ongoing events. She gave the example of the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States, which is at one time a thing that has happened and ended—Wagner-Pacifici has called this the 'inchoative and terminative aspect' of 9/11—but at the same time a thing that is still ongoing as a landmark in the collective memory of the United States which influenced its mentality, discourse, and rituals.⁹¹ This chapter will look at the past deeds of the stadtholders of the Dutch Republic as such ongoing events. To

⁸⁸ Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam. Deel II*, 330.

⁸⁹ W. Frijhoff, 'Prophecies in society: The panic of June 1734', in: ibidem (ed.) *Embodied belief: Ten Essays on Religious Culture in Dutch History* (Hilversum 2002) 181-213, at 181-188, 190-191.

⁹⁰ Jagtenberg, *Willem IV*, 376-384.

⁹¹ R. Wagner-Pacifici, 'Theorizing the restlessness of events', *American Journal of Sociology* 115:5 (2010) 1351-1386, at 1351-1383; R. Wagner-Pacifici, 'Reconceptualizing memory as event. From difficult pasts to restless events', in: A.L. Tota and T. Hagen (eds.) *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (London 2015) 22-27, at 22-26.

this end, we will look at how the seventeenth-century past was used to support or discredit the ambitions of William IV to become a general in the States' Army.

The States' Army

The controversy about a profession for William IV in the States' Army first arose in 1726, but the matter was quickly put on hold as supporters and opponents of the stadtholder could not easily find common ground as William's appointment would mean others would miss out on a promotion. Besides, William was still underage and could do little himself. While the Frisian States had elected William stadtholder in 1711 already, his mother Maria Louise (1688-1765) was his regent until his coming of age in 1731.⁹²

The office of stadtholder had never been a military function but has always been closely associated with the army because it was tied to another provincial office, the office of captain-general, the overseer of the army in the province.⁹³ The responsibilities of this overseer had changed over time. Formally, he was restricted by ordinances from the Council of State, but as the Council was elected by the States-General, and the stadtholders would usually wield at least some influence in the States-General, the stadtholder captain-generals tended to assume more leeway to make their own decisions.⁹⁴ This was one of the reasons why Republicans wanted to keep William IV out of the army, to inhibit him from assuming more power over the army and thereby, through nefarious means, on politics.⁹⁵ Indeed, while the Orangists tried again in the 1730s, they would not have any success until war loomed with France in the late 1740s and citizen movements coerced their governments to act.⁹⁶

The Orangists tried to argue their case in the 1730s by turning to various arguments. The most important of these was an argument from the sovereignty of the province of Friesland. First, Orangists pointed out that William IV had been duly elected stadtholder by the States of Friesland. They then argued that as an equal member of the Republic, Friesland was entitled to have its stadtholder be granted what stadtholders had always been given in the past, and among those privileges was the rank of general in the States' Army.⁹⁷ This argument was so important because support for William IV among the other provinces had dwindled.⁹⁸

At the same time, the Orangists also appealed to the mythos of the House of Orange. There would have been an interplay, a sort of chicken or the egg story,

⁹² Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 274-280; H.L., Zwitser, *Het Staatse leger, 1568-1795. Deel IX. De achttiende eeuw, 1713-1795* (Amsterdam 2012) 107-108.

⁹³ H.L. Zwitser, *De militie van den Staat. Het leger van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 1991) 30.

⁹⁴ Zwitser, *De militie van den Staat*, 25-38.

⁹⁵ Zwitser, *Het Staatse leger*, 107-108.

⁹⁶ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 159-162, 163-185; Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 366-367; Zwitser, *Het Staatse leger*, 331-336.

⁹⁷ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 1-5, 15.

⁹⁸ Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 341-346.

between this mythos and the Orangist quest for a profession in the army for William IV.⁹⁹ The mythos will have inspired the Orangists by showing them what the Orangist cause had historically been, and thereby gave the Orangists something to strive and aim for, while this aim would also have given the mythos relevance and appeal as a rhetorical tool. This chapter will expand on this mythos and argue the past was used to argue the aptitude of William IV as general.

First, we will look at the memory of Maurits, the stadtholder and captain-general of Holland in the early seventeenth-century who put an end to the *Bestandstwisten*. This episode in Dutch history was used by the Orangists to argue that William IV would be a guardian of unity just like Maurits had been, but the Republicans used it argue the opposite, that this would empower William to be a source of strife and discord. Secondly, we will look at the memory of William III and his intricate relationship to the royal family of England, which was relevant in the early eighteenth century because William IV had married Anne of Hannover (1709-1659), daughter of king George II of Great Britain (1683-1760), in March 1734.

Stadtholder Maurits

The memory of Maurits was used to support or undermine the Orangist causes just like the memory of William of Orange. However, the memory of Maurits was disputed in greater detail as Orangists and Republicans engaged in source criticism to bolster their own narrative and undermine the other. Therefore, contrary to what Wyger Velema has argued, the Orangists and Republicans did share a common mode of arguing. The premise of this mode of arguing was that the past can be indicative of the future, and the means of this mode of arguing were storytelling and source criticism. We will first look at the element of storytelling.

The origin of the ideological support for the House of Orange had been a political struggle within the Republic, the *Bestandstwisten*, settled through an intervention by stadtholder Maurits. His intervention was mythologized, celebrated, and justified by early eighteenth-century Orangists. Itsma, for instance, argued that the States of Holland had crossed a line when they attempted to prevent a national synod of the Reformed Church, which was meant to solve the dispute between the orthodox Reformed and Remonstrants. Even worse, Holland had allowed its towns to hire mercenaries without the seal of approval of Maurits, who should have had oversight as captain-general of Holland.¹⁰⁰ Holland had violated the law, which Maurits then loyally upheld by, and crucially, he did so as a servant of the States-General who had asked him to intervene.¹⁰¹

Strikingly, and paradoxically, however, Itsma argued that Maurits' intervention had not been lawful as it had violated the sovereignty of Holland, though he

⁹⁹ See in this context also Wagner-Pacifici on the performative feature of memory in Wagner-Pacifici, 'Theorizing the restlessness of events', 1358-1359; Wagner-Pacifici, 'Reconceptualizing memory as event', 24.

¹⁰⁰ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 48-50.

¹⁰¹ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 54-55.

did think the intervention had been reasonable at the time. This view put the memory of Maurits in a predicament, because if the intervention had not been lawful, Maurits had indeed been a usurper as the Republicans argued. However, Maurits could not have been a usurper, Itsma argued, because this would require a nefarious intent to breach laws, but everyone, including Maurits believed that they were acting in accordance with the law because they believed 'that many more rights were entrusted to the States-General than careful analysis has shown to be the case.'¹⁰² This argument was strong for two reasons. First, it explained why no single individual or group of people could be blamed for violating the sovereignty of Holland. The mythos of the House of Orange as guardians of the Republic could thereby be saved. At the same time, the argument took aim at a strongly centralized States-General and defended provincial sovereignty. This was important because the Orangists used the sovereignty of Friesland to argue that William IV had a right to a profession in the army.¹⁰³ Itsma had therefore found a way to iron out the incongruities between the events of the past and his political concerns in the present so that Maurits could be used as an example to argue in favour of William IV.

Despite the risk of army centralization, Holland was at times willing to accommodate Friesland and its concern over its sovereignty. Their compromise was to offer William IV a profession in the army, just not as general. However, William turned these proposals down as he and the Orangists argued he deserved better.¹⁰⁴ Republicans like Beaufort and Laar would have breathed a sigh of relief because if history taught them anything, it was that the stadtholders had always tended abuse their power sooner rather than later. They challenged the Orangist understanding of the *Bestandstwisten* and argued that Maurits had not been a guardian but a transgressor who had abused his powers as captain-general of Holland and general in the States' Army.

Like Itsma, the Republicans took a keen interest in provincial sovereignty. According to Beaufort, Maurits had stirred up civil unrest and caused the *Bestandstwisten* so that he could usurp power during the chaos and eliminate his political rivals.¹⁰⁵ Laar was also damning of Maurits, but whereas Beaufort argued that Maurits' deeds had been indicative of his lust for power, Laar argued that lust for power was natural to any ruler and never explicitly agreed that Maurits had caused the *Bestandstwisten*, though he did not absolve him either.¹⁰⁶ Whereas Orangists defended Maurits as a defender of provincial sovereignty, Republicans therefore attacked Maurits as a usurper of sovereignty.

To support their stories about Maurits, Republicans and Orangists turned to source criticism. To illustrate this, I will use two examples from Beaufort and the Orangist criticisms of his sources. Beaufort relied on two questionable testimonies. Beaufort presented the first testimony as an eye-witness account by Johan van

¹⁰² '[...] dat veel meer aan de Collegien van de Generaliteit was gedemanteert, als eygentlyk na naukeurig ondersoek waar was.' [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 47.

¹⁰³ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuite-praatje*, 1-5, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 333-346.

¹⁰⁵ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 562-564.

¹⁰⁶ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 195-198, 200-205, 268-269.

Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1618), the Grand Pensionary of Holland who had sided with the Remonstrants against the orthodox Reformed. As Grand Pensionary, Oldenbarnevelt had been responsible for the daily proceedings of the States-General and had been an advocate of peace with Spain, which had put him at odds with Maurits who had advocated for its continuation. When Maurits intervened to settle the *Bestandstwisten*, Oldenbarnevelt was among those held responsible for the conflict and was put on trial, and he was found guilty and executed for his crimes against the state.¹⁰⁷ Beaufort did not actually cite any eye-witness account by Oldenbarnevelt. Rather, he cited a book on the life and death of Oldenbarnevelt, which explained that Oldenbarnevelt had been accused of defaming Maurits for accusing him of plotting to usurp the sovereignty of Holland. Oldenbarnevelt had admitted to this to this in court, but he had also explained why his accusation had been a valid concern. The court had used this to find him guilty, but Beaufort used it to validate his characterization of Maurits as a usurper.¹⁰⁸

The second testimony Beaufort put forward was from Benjamin Aubery du Maurier (1566-1636), a French ambassador to the States-General during the *Bestandstwisten*. Aubery had written a manuscript in which he recounted the turmoil in the Dutch Republic. Supposedly, Oldenbarnevelt had told him he was approached by Louise de Coligny, the widow of William of Orange, with the request if he would help Maurits usurp the sovereignty of Holland.¹⁰⁹ This testimony is relevant substantively because it corroborates Oldenbarnevelt's testimony and Beaufort's argument, but it is also relevant rhetorically because whereas Oldenbarnevelt had been a political opponent of Maurits, Aubery had been an ambassador of a foreign country, which was used by Beaufort to frame him as a supposed neutral by-stander who cannot be doubted 'because [he] could not be perceived as partisan against the House of Orange.'¹¹⁰

Beaufort's appeal to Oldenbarnevelt's eye-witness account and Aubery's neutral report is a stark contrast to his unsourced claims about William of Orange we saw in the previous chapter, and because his claims were better argued, it also required more engagement to rebuke them. The Orangists could have chosen to simply invert the Republican argument and only argue the virtue of Maurits, but they chose not to do so. Instead, they also engaged in source criticism.

Burmania cited the letters of Pierre Jeannin, a French ambassador involved in the negotiations for the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) and wrote that these letters show there had been a clique of politicians conspiring against Maurits, which killed two birds with one stone. Aubery may have been portrayed as a neutral by-stander by Beaufort, but all he ever did was convey the words of Oldenbarnevelt, a political opponent of Maurits and member of that sinister clique who could

¹⁰⁷ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 34, 37, 44-51.

¹⁰⁸ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 564-567.

¹⁰⁹ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 564.

¹¹⁰ '[...] aengesien die schryver in het minst niet voor partydig tegen het Huys van Oranje gehouden kan werden [...].' [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 564.

therefore not be trusted as a source.¹¹¹ Itsma agreed and affirmed this argument but added that Oldenbarnevelt had also been a brave man who would have made his accusations public to protect his own life had they been true.¹¹² Orangists and Republicans shared therefore a common mode of arguing characterized by source criticism and an appreciation of the past, and they used this mode to support or attack Maurits as a guardian of church and fatherland, which served as a mirror for William IV in his quest for a profession in the States' Army.

Stadtholder William III

Republicans and Orangists not only disputed the aptitude of William IV as a protector from the enemy within, but also as a protector from the enemy without. An important part of this debate was the relationship between the stadtholders and Great Britain. Only a few decades before the polemic, the Republic had fought alongside England in the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713). This war had had grave consequences for the Republic as a huge debt crippled state finances and the army and forced the Republic to adopt a policy of non-intervention and neutrality.¹¹³ The Republic had to stay on good terms with its neighbors, now more than ever. Consequently, the Orangists welcomed the marriage between William IV and Anne of Hannover, daughter of the king of Great Britain, while the Republicans had mixed feelings. On the one hand, a strong alliance between Great Britain and the Republic could strengthen the Republic in geopolitics, but on the other hand, Republicans were wary of the Orangists and feared England might coerce Holland and the other stadtholderless provinces to make concessions to William IV.¹¹⁴

These fears were not without merit, but ultimately overblown. William appealed to Great Britain in 1736 to help him in the dispute over the marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen. King George II then sent a letter to the States-General, asking them to intervene and prevent the dissolution of the marquisate, but this had already transpired in 1734. Holland and the States-General replied in no uncertain terms that the dissolution of the marquisate was an internal affair of Zeeland and that neither the States-general nor Great Britain had any right to interfere. William appealed to Great Britain again in 1737, this time to have British diplomats talk the deputies of the States-General into supporting his quest for a rank in the States' Army, but British diplomats were unreceptive of this plan. They remembered their prior misstep and thought the opposition towards William was too entrenched and the risk of a backlash against British interference too great.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 7-8.

¹¹² [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 46, 62-63.

¹¹³ Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 184-193.

¹¹⁴ P. Geyl, *Willem IV en Engeland. Tot 1748, Vrede van Aken* (Den Haag 1924), 6-16; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 158-159; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 198-199.

¹¹⁵ Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 304-307, 343-345.

However, Republican concerns were not only based on contemporary politics between the House of Orange-Nassau, the Republic, and Great Britain, but also on history. A lively and important memory for the Republicans was the Anglo-Dutch Wars that had been fought in the seventeenth century, particularly the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674).¹¹⁶ In the runup to this war, England and France had agreed to a secret alliance in 1670 to invade the Republic. Republicans would have wanted to avoid a repeat of such a diplomatic predicament in the early eighteenth century at all costs, but there was more at play. When the alliance between England and France was noticed in late 1671, anxious politicians and citizens had turned to the House of Orange for hope. Town militias sided with citizen movements and coerced their governments to support William III, whom they then elected captain-general of the Republic in February 1672 and stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland in July. This made no difference at first when France invaded the Republic in July 1672. Many of the Republic's towns were quickly overrun and only Holland, Friesland and Groningen managed to hold out. When the French were forced to retreat, however, Orangists dedicated the Republic's victory to William III and used his victory to discredit the Republicans and legitimize the restoration of the stadtholderate. They argued William had to make do with the sorry States' Army which had been neglected and left unprepared under thirty years of Republican rule, yet under his lead, the Republic was saved from total defeat.¹¹⁷

Republicans like Bernard Costerus (1645-1735) believed in a different account of events. Costerus had been a lawyer, bailiff, and mayor of Woerden and had written a book on the government of Holland since 1572 and the Disaster Year of 1672, which was first published in 1707 and later republished in 1727 and again in 1737.¹¹⁸ I will not write much about the work of Costerus because it is not subject to this study, but the appendix is said to have included letters between William III and Charles II, King of England and William's uncle. In Burmania's Barge Talk, an Amsterdam Republican is in dialogue with an Orangist Groninger, and the Amsterdammer argues these letters show that William was willing to give in and abandon the Republic, concede victory to England, on the condition that he would be made sovereign of Holland. Burmania, by mouth of the Groninger, engages in source criticism to show that the proposals could not have been made by William to Charles, but were made the other way around by Charles to William. For instance, he cites examples of other English letters to William and the States-General which show that identical proposals and demands had been made from the English side, and not by William.¹¹⁹ Burmania concluded that the family bond between William and Charles therefore never posed a threat to the Republic.

¹¹⁶ The First Anglo-Dutch War had been in 1652-1654, the Second in 1665-1667 and the Third in 1672-1674. There was to be a Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in 1780-1784.

¹¹⁷ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 11-12; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 124-127, 131-142; Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, 119-127; Onnekink and Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World*, 101.

¹¹⁸ A.J. van der Aa, 'Mr. Bernard Costerus', in: *ibidem* (ed.) *Biografisch woordenboek der Nederlanden. Deel 3* (Haarlem 1858) 772-774.

¹¹⁹ [Burmania], *Tweede Schuitem-praatje*, 16-22.

This was particularly relevant to the aptitude of William IV because the life of William III was not a historical example but more like a script for the Orangists since there were key similarities between both men. For starters, they were born after the death of their fathers. William III was born just eight days after the sudden death of William II in 1650, and William IV was born in September 1711 after his father Johan Willem Friso had died in July. Both men were also born during a stadtholderless period which forestalled the inheritance of the dignities their forefathers had held. Lastly, both men had also been married to a daughter of the kings of England. William III was married to Maria Stuart, daughter of king James II, and William IV to Anna of Hannover, daughter of king George II. The Orangists saw these similarities and hoped that William IV would be able to overcome his political challenges like William III had done before him in 1672.¹²⁰

As the similarities were undeniable, the Republican case against William III should also have sounded the alarm bells on William IV even louder. Conversely, however, Beaufort and Laar did not take after Costerus and did not question the loyalties of William III. Laar explicitly stated the accusations against him were untrue.¹²¹ On the one hand, this may seem surprising. They were fierce opponents of the stadtholderate and the relation between William IV and Great Britain could have had them worried. However, the Republic would also have benefitted geopolitically from an alliance with Great Britain. It was therefore not in their interest to frame Great Britain as a rival. Besides, there were other ways of undermining William IV by focusing on the talents of William III. Beaufort referred to the recent War for the Spanish Succession and argued that despite the death of William III in 1702, the Republic had still managed to stand its ground.¹²² If this were true, the Republic would not benefit from having William IV as a general either.

Itsma counteracted Beaufort by arguing that this had only been possible because of the formidable army William had left behind. He also argued that the recent war had been an offensive war, not a defensive war like the Dutch Revolt or the Disaster Year, in which the stadtholders had always excelled.¹²³ Laar was unconvinced by these arguments. He wrote that Itsma undervalued the officers in the army and gave too much credit to William III, who, as Beaufort had argued, had not been necessary to wage war on the enemy.¹²⁴

Conclusion

It has not been the goal of this chapter to argue about the truth of the Orangist or Republican claims about Maurits and William III. Instead, I hope to have shown that Orangists and Republicans were engaged in a shared mode of arguing that was

¹²⁰ The comparison between William IV and William III was a conscious decision. See Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje*, 338-340.

¹²¹ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 162-163.

¹²² [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 263-265.

¹²³ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 40-45.

¹²⁴ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 189-192.

characterized by an appreciation of the past and the use of source criticism to argue the aptitude of William IV. The reasons why Republicans and Orangists used this mode of arguing differed between myths. The memory of Maurits was used by Republicans and Orangists alike to show the fragility of provincial sovereignty. The worry of Republicans was that it could be breached by a stadtholder, and they used this worry to argue William IV should not assume a rank in the army. The Orangist worry revolved around the fear of a tyranny of magistrates. They were upset by the provinces who denied William a rank in the army, arguing this was a breach of the sovereignty of Friesland. They had to defend Maurits from accusations of being a usurper and argued he had been a loyal servant against disunity instead.

The memory of William III was used for wholly different reasons. The Orangists needed to rectify a distorted image of William III which accused him of treachery and inaptitude. This served to legitimize the marriage between William IV and Anne of Hannover, and William's quest for a rank in the States' Army. Beaufort and Laar did not question the loyalties of either William III or IV, but they sought to discredit them as military leaders.

While it is true that the polemicists did not discuss the aptitude of William IV directly, they did discuss the aptitude of his predecessors which the authors saw as indicative of William's own aptitude. Three observations have led us to this conclusion. Firstly, the authors did not discuss the life of William IV, even though this would have been a logical point of contention. Secondly, the past was tied to current affairs, like provincial sovereignty and the marriage between William IV and Anne of Hannover, which made the past relevant to the present. Lastly, unlike the memory of William of Orange, the memories of Maurits and William III were disputed through source criticism. Whereas the memory of William of Orange was only a sentiment and an expression in favor or against of the mythos of the House of Orange, the memories of Maurits and William III were evidently more than that. In a way, they were ongoing events. They had happened and ended but were still alive and present, not as timeless truths, but through the mentality and discourse of Dutch politics in the early eighteenth century which identified them with William IV. However, Orangists and Republicans did also believe in timeless truths. They not only used the past as an ongoing event, but they also used the past to argue about the importance of moral government. This is the subject of the next chapter.

3 A grumbling hive: The importance of moral governance

In the previous chapters of this study, we have seen that Republicans and Orangists used the past to argue about gratitude for the House of Orange-Nassau and about the aptitude of William IV. However, they also put great emphasis on the role of morality in government. To illustrate this, let us return to the first chapter of this study and the myths of William of Orange. Whereas Republicans argued that William was of little importance to the founding of the Republic, Orangists argued his role had been of great importance. Orangists used their myth to argue the Dutch owed gratitude to the house of Orange-Nassau, whereas Republicans used theirs to argue the Dutch did not. However, there was a second argument Republicans used against gratitude for the House of Orange. Beaufort argued that William of Orange had not been a noble hero but a self-serving vagabond. ‘Most of his thoughts, attempts, and pursuits’, Beaufort wrote, ‘were, from the very beginning, aimed towards obtaining rulership over these lands for himself and his house, and to crown himself Count of Holland and Lord of Utrecht [...].’

Laar was less damning of William of Orange. He argued that William of Orange had joined the Compromise of Nobles—the alliance meant to have Philip II moderate his religious persecutions of the Calvinist Reformed—to preserve his own privileges. Religious persecutions were not the only grievance of the Compromise, but Philip II also favoured foreigners rather than inborn for political offices in the Habsburg Netherlands. William of Orange might have been a true believer in the Reformed faith, Laar conceded, but his concerns about the faith were subordinate to his political interests.¹²⁵ When Philip II had sent the Duke of Alba to ‘exterminate’ the foremen of the Compromise, William of Orange abandoned his estates and fled abroad. He joined the Dutch Revolt to regain control over his properties.¹²⁶ However, although his motives were not noble or pious, Laar did not hold him in contempt. Instead, he praised him as ‘he was willing to risk it all out of a longing for freedom, [and] as a right-minded Dutchman, rather than to voluntarily subjugate himself to slavery.’¹²⁷

The Orangist response to these accusations was pointed. For example, Burmania did not deny the accusations of Beaufort. Instead, he explained that the Dutch rebels had not wanted to form a republic when they first rose up in arms. After the rebel states formally declared independence from Philip II in 1581, Holland first sought a new count to be its sovereign. Only in 1588 was the Dutch Republic born, four years after the assassination of William of Orange. Besides, William of Orange had only considered becoming count of Holland to protect the

¹²⁵ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 118-119.

¹²⁶ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 117-118.

¹²⁷ ‘[...] hy uyt een zucht tot de vryheid, als een recht geaard Neederlander, liever alles heeft willen waagen, als zich aan de slaverny vrywillig te onderwerpen.’ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 119.

freedom and peoples of Holland, Burmania argued. It was therefore not a problem that William of Orange had wanted to become the sovereign of Holland.¹²⁸

This interaction between Republicans and Orangists on the motives of William of Orange show a great emphasis on morality. Republicans and Orangists could have debated the lawfulness or the pragmatic implications of William's aspirations, but they chose to debate his character instead. However, there were different types of stories that could be told about a person's character in the early eighteenth century. The chapter will look closer at the moral myths told by Republicans and Orangists, and what the goal of these myths were. First, we will look at different types of moral myths in the early eighteenth century.

Moral myths in the early eighteenth century

There were two key moral myths in the early eighteenth century. First, there were enlightenment myths. Elea de la Porte studied so-called 'narratives of enlightenment' or 'enlightened narratives' in various eighteenth-century Dutch literary sources. She borrowed this concept from Karen O'Brien, John Pocock and Dan Edelstein, who defined the enlightened narrative as a narrative about the past and present, which imagines the present to be better than the past and explains how this difference between past and present has come to be.¹²⁹ Following the works of Pietro Giannone (1676-1748), Hugh Trevor-Roper has called the enlightened narrative a 'civil history'. '[It] meant the explanation of social change, illuminated, as [Edward] Gibbon wrote, by 'criticism and philosophy'; and it was to show, as Voltaire and [William] Robertson showed, the progress of mankind.'¹³⁰ A key element of the enlightened narrative is the conscious admiration of the present. 'More than anything', Edelstein wrote, 'the Enlightenment seems to have been the period when people thought they were living in an age of Enlightenment.'¹³¹ A second key element of the enlightened narrative is the belief in progress. This was emphasized by O'Brien, who defined the main idea of the enlightened narrative as 'the central idea, shared by all of the historians examined here, that they were living in an age more enlightened than the past.'¹³² If Dutch history was used to convey an enlightened narrative in the early eighteenth-century polemic, we should expect to find an admiration for the present because it contained something good which distinguishes the present from the past.

Secondly, there were humanist or neoclassical myths, which used the past as a moral school. 'There existed no research problem' for humanist historians,

¹²⁸ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 6-7.

¹²⁹ Porte, *Verlichte verhalen*, 20-27.

¹³⁰ H. Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven 2010) 7-8.

¹³¹ D. Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago-London 2010) 73.

¹³² K. O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge 1997) 11.

wrote Eco Haitsma Mulier, but ‘there was an ethical problem.’¹³³ The humanist historian did try to understand the past, and the workings of society more broadly, but wanted to understand and use the past as a moral *exemplum* to teach himself and his audience about proper conduct, etiquette, and rituals in society.¹³⁴ If Dutch history was used to convey a humanist narrative in the early eighteenth-century polemic, we should expect to find the past being used as a moral *exemplum*.

The big difference between the enlightened and humanist narratives is that the enlightened narrative admires the present, whereas a humanist narrative admires the past. However, this difference does not make the two narratives incompatible, and Porte has shown that they existed side by side in Dutch *spectators* in the eighteenth century. In these magazines, authors told the enlightened story of the Dutch provinces who had become more prosperous, respectable, and virtuous over time. At the same time, they were aware of a cultural decline in Dutch society and idealized the seventeenth century as a Dutch Golden age, which they took lessons from as moral *exempla*.¹³⁵

Let us now turn to what we know about the Orangist and Republican myths so far. The Orangist myth seems to be more removed from the enlightened narrative than the Republican myth. After all, Orangists were melancholic about the present because William IV was denied his rightful claim to marquisate of Veere and Vlissingen and a rank in the army. At the same time, we saw in the previous chapter that Orangists were optimistic about the possibility of an Orangist restoration. They therefore held a sincere belief in the progress of their cause, and so the present was not all doom and gloom. I will expand on this optimism and belief in progress, or rather, restoration in this chapter.

The Republican myth is a different story. Republicans could boast that they had bested the Orangists and eliminated the threat of usurpation by a stadtholder, at least for now. They admired their current government as a guarantor of freedom and such admiration could be a key element of an enlightened narrative. If history had taught the Republicans anything, however, it was that things could always make a turn to the worst. Their admiration of their current government was therefore accompanied by a worry rather than optimism. In this chapter, I will also expand on this worry by looking at the precautions advocated for by Republicans.

Parallels in history

The foundation for Republican and Orangist appeals to morality was parallels in history, as it showed a historic constant which could prove the timeless truth of the

¹³³ ‘Eigenlijk bestond er geen onderzoeksprobleem, er was een ethisch probleem.’ E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, ‘De humanistische vorm. Over de stilering van de politiek’, in: J. Tollebeek, T. Verschaffel, and L.H.M. Wessels (eds.) *De palimpest. Geschiedschrijving in de Nederlanden, 1500-2000* (Hilversum 2002) 27-44, at 30.

¹³⁴ Haitsma Mulier, ‘De humanistische vorm’, 27-43; P. Findlen, ‘Historical thought in the Renaissance’, in: L. Kramer and S. Maza (eds.) *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford 2006) 99-120, at 111-116; Porte, *Verlichte verhalen*, 14.

¹³⁵ Porte, *Verlichte verhalen*, 67-98.

importance of moral governance. It was therefore very important to Orangists and Republicans alike that the story of Maurits, for instance, shared much with that of stadtholder William II. The *Bestandstwisten* so associated with Maurits had been a religious struggle between orthodox Reformed and Remonstrants, and a political struggle on the war with Spain and provincial sovereignty. The struggles William had been involved in in 1650 were similar in that they were also about the war with Spain and provincial sovereignty. During the *Bestandstwisten*, there was debate on the continuation of the war with Spain after the agreed upon Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621). In the 1640s, proponents of war pulled the short end and peace was signed with Spain in 1648. A debate then arose on reigniting the war with Spain. Like during the *Bestandstwisten*, Holland was an opponent of war, while stadtholder William II and the provinces that were firmly under his control were proponents. The other political question revolved around provincial sovereignty, which was again reminiscent of the *Bestandstwisten*. During the *Bestandstwisten*, Holland had argued it was exercising its sovereignty when it hired mercenaries without the involvement of Maurits as captain-general of Holland, who the Orangists argued was wrongfully sidelined.¹³⁶ Now in the 1640s, Holland argued it should be allowed to dismiss some number of soldiers, which requires some further explanation.

Since the *Bestandstwisten*, Holland had not turned around its defeat into victory. The soldiers it sought to dismiss were not officially its but beholden to the States-General. In practice, however, the States' Army operated under a system of *repartitie* (apportionment) by which soldiers were *de jure* raised and paid by the States-General but were *de facto* paid by the province they garrisoned. Although in theory an army of the Union, the troops of the States' Army could be argued to be in service of the province rather than the States-General. Subsequently, Holland argued it could therefore also dismiss its soldiers, while the States-General, backed by William II, argued that it could not.¹³⁷

Like Maurits, William II had been no stranger to political coercion by (ab)use of his authority as general, such as when he used the army to intimidate his political rivals in Nijmegen in January 1649 to compel the city to extend him the right of appointment of the magistrates.¹³⁸ This manner of politicking, in which laws were discarded in favour of hard power politics, put him on a collision course with Holland. William and Holland had already been in an ongoing dispute over the war with Spain since 1648, but this escalated when Holland dismissed some companies of soldiers without the seal of approval from the States-General in 1650. After some back and forth, William conspired to coerce Amsterdam like he had done to a town like Nijmegen before. A siege of Amsterdam was only avoided because rival factions in Amsterdam forced their current mayor to resign and made some concessions to

¹³⁶ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 45-50, 81-84; Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek*, 41-59, 123-128. See also chapter one, 'A nation under God' of this study.

¹³⁷ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 84; Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek*, 129-131; Zwitzer, *De militie van den Staat*, 32-38.

¹³⁸ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 80.

William. The sudden death of William in November 1650 changed the political power balance and ushered in the First Stadtholderless Period.¹³⁹

In the previous chapter of this study, we have seen that Republicans and orangists put great emphasis on provincial sovereignty. Orangists were wary of a tyranny of magistrates which violated the sovereignty of Friesland, whereas Republicans feared William IV would abuse his powers and infringe the sovereignty of their provinces. William II posed a challenge to the Orangists because he had violated provincial sovereignty in two ways. First, he had sent delegations to the individual towns of Holland on behalf of the States-General to dissuade them from dismissing the troops, which violated the unity of Holland as a member state of the Dutch Republic. Secondly, he had violated provincial sovereignty by acting on behalf of most of the provinces of the States-General, which were coincidentally also under Orangist control, while decisions of the States-General had to be taken unanimously.¹⁴⁰

However, William II his disregard for provincial sovereignty was muffled away by Orangists in the early eighteenth century. Only Itsma made a short mention of it by likening the events of 1650 to the *Bestandstwisten*. He thereby argued William could not be blamed for infringing on the sovereignty of Holland, because provincial sovereignty was undervalued by everyone at the time. Itsma then accused the States of Holland of hypocrisy as Holland had also infringed on provincial sovereignty. Just a few decades prior, in the 1630s, the Council of State had sent the army to Friesland 'on the instigation of Holland' to coerce her to reorganize her tax system because she was stalling behind on her dues to the defense budget. The Council had calculated in 1637 that Friesland owed the Generality about six and a half million guilders, while the tax revenue of the province amounted to only two million guilders annually. Holland wanted reform and intervened. Friesland defended itself against this coercion with many of the same arguments as Holland did in 1650, Itsma wrote, but to no avail.¹⁴¹

The Republicans did not respond to this comparison, and Laar misunderstood or misconstrued the Orangist argument, thinking Itsma agreed with the legality of the interventions of Maurits and William.¹⁴² However, while Itsma did argue the interventions were morally right insofar Maurits and William conducted them on behalf of the States-General, Itsma did not defend the legality of the interventions but argued that the stadtholders had done nothing wrong because everyone at the time had misunderstood the legality of the interventions instead.¹⁴³ Indeed, servitude is the crux of the Orangist argument. Despite the moral shortcomings of state officials and other shortcomings like knowledge of law and history

¹³⁹ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 87-94; Vroomen, *Taal van de Republiek*, 131-142.

¹⁴⁰ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 87-88, 93-94.

¹⁴¹ [Itsma], *Eerste Jagt-praatje*, 88-95; Zwitter, *De militie van den Staat*, 65-73; H. Spanninga, 'Zonder last of ruggespraak? De Friese Vrijheid en de Unie in de eerste decennia van de zeventiende eeuw', in: I. Nijenhuis, J. Roelevink, and R. Sluijter (eds.) *De leeuw met de zeven pijlen. Het gewest in het landelijk bestuur* (Den Haag 2010) 73-93, at 73-81, 86-91.

¹⁴² [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 202-203.

¹⁴³ [Itsma], *Derde Jagt-praatje*, 28-29.

of Republicans and Orangists alike, the stadtholders had always been dedicated to the constitution of the Dutch Republic. They agreed with Republicans that the stadtholders had broken laws and customs in the past, but every other family, faction and party had as well. Corruption, mismanagement, and ignorance were seen as an inseparable tragedy of governance, but while the vices of some politicians had mostly been self-serving, the vices of the stadtholders had always been for the common good.

This belief was grounded on an image of humanity, shared by Republicans and Orangists alike, that 'people naturally pursue their own interests more than that of others.'¹⁴⁴ The consequences of this nature are dire. People are willing to 'sacrifice the common wellbeing for their own particular interests, because of which laws are trampled and subject becomes slave.'¹⁴⁵ Consequently, however tragic, the behavior of William of Orange, the States of Holland, or William II had to be expected. The subsequent question was how to best defend the common good against the nature of man.

Solutions to decay and corruption

The Republicans and Orangists had two answers to the problem corruption posed. The first revolved around the institutions of the Dutch Republic. Contrary to what Blom has written, Orangists and Republicans did discuss an institutional solution to the problem of human depravity, and this revolved around the stadtholderate.

The Republicans argued the stadtholderate was a hotbed of vice and sin. The stadtholder offered patronage and represented a gateway to power. Consequently, he attracted all sorts of vagabonds and sycophants, so that even if someone like William IV was a most noble and pious man, his entourage would foster vice and they would enrich themselves at the expense of the Republic.¹⁴⁶ The stadtholderate was therefore a detriment to a free government.

Instead of such a decadent and, for reasons also discussed in the previous chapter of this study, dangerous institution, the Dutch had to follow the footsteps of historical figureheads.¹⁴⁷ One of those figureheads was Johan de Witt (1625-1672), the grand pensionary of Holland during the First Stadtholderless Period, who Republicans upheld as an example of political virtue and the dangers of Orangism. Witt was praised for his political virtue because France had attempted to bribe him in the runup to the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678), but he had resisted and stood

¹⁴⁴ '[...] alle Menschen van natuuren meer haar eige voordeel, als die van een ander zoeken [...].' [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 87.

¹⁴⁵ '[...] offerende het gemeen welzyn op, aan haar byzondere belangen, waar door de Wetten vertreedden, en den Onderdaan tot een Slaaf word.' [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 87.

¹⁴⁶ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 245-247; [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 106-113; Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 482-484.

¹⁴⁷ See also Velema, 'God, de deugd en de oude constitutie', 484-485, 488-489.

steadfast in his patriotism to the Dutch Republic.¹⁴⁸ In 1672, however, rumors had spread that he had in fact been bribed by France, and his brother was accused of having conspired to assassinate William III, which led to their lynching in The Hague on August 20 1672.¹⁴⁹ Neither Beaufort or Laar accused William III of having a hand in this event. Instead, Laar used the event to impeach Orangism altogether. He held the (Orangist) masses responsible for the murder, on whose wave William III came to power.¹⁵⁰ The event is yet another example of the moral failing of Orangism and the danger the stadtholderate poses to governance.

Whereas the Republicans put forward a negative case for the stadtholderate, the Orangists put forward a positive. They argued that it had never been the stadtholder or his entourage who had succumbed to corruption first, but that this had always been the Republican politicians. We saw this idea at play in the previous chapter of this study, when Burmania excused Maurits by explaining that he had been opposed by a clique of malign politicians, conspiring against him and the House of Orange. These politicians had been unsuccessful then, but they were successful after the death of William II, which heralded the First Stadtholderless Period.

The Republican personification of the First Stadtholderless Period, Witt was 'a man of extraordinary talent' but also a victim of an 'intemperate passion' against the House of Orange.¹⁵¹ Such hatred had Holland side with Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) against the House of Stuart which had ruled England before the English Civil War (1642-1651). The reasons behind this support were folly. William II had married Maria Stuart, daughter of king Charles I of England. The only reason Republicans sided with Cromwell was to impede their son William III, which in turn hindered the House of Stuart and aided Cromwell. No wonder then, argued the Orangists, that when the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654) broke out, Republicans 'preferred a preposterous and disadvantageous peace with Cromwell, which robbed us of our English trade.'¹⁵² Most preposterously, the treaty had also included a secret clause on the exclusion of William III from political office, which the Republicans were all too eager to sign. A strong stadtholder could keep these politicians in line and protect the common good of the Republic against personal vice like Maurits, William II, and eventually William III had done.

The second answer to the problem of the innate egoism of man revolved around education, or what we might call enlightenment. Contrary to the institutional debate, Republicans and Orangists agreed on this answer, though that is not to say they did not have their differences. Firstly, they agreed that citizens had to be enlightened. Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt have argued that the early eighteenth century saw rise to a new sense of moral citizenship. Citizenship had

¹⁴⁸ [Beaufort], *Verhandeling van de vryheit in den burgerstaet*, 323-326.

¹⁴⁹ M. Reinders, *Printed Pandemonium: Popular Print and Politics in the Netherlands, 1650-72* (Leiden-Boston 2013) 149-172.

¹⁵⁰ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheit*, 84-86.

¹⁵¹ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 10.

¹⁵² '(...) men verkoor liever een schandelyke en nadeelige vrede van Cromwel te ontfangen, waar door onse Engelse handel ten eenemaal is bedorven.' [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitem-praatje*, 10.

been moralized ever since the rise of civic communes in the Middle Ages, but this citizenship had been a legal status.¹⁵³ In the early eighteenth century, a new sense of citizenship emerged which not only incorporated those citizens but also the entire urban or even national community.¹⁵⁴ The Orangists and Republican polemicists did not have this new notion of citizenship in mind when they were critiquing the knowledge of their fellow man. After all, they were discussing politics, and in politics, only the nobility and the traditional citizen community were formally relevant as they were the ones who could assume political office, not the wider urban community.

Secondly, Republicans and Orangists agreed on a moral problem in society which enlightenment had to solve. This problem was decadence, embodied by the *petits maîtres*—the young sons of politicians who dress in fine garbs, are self-righteous, womanize, and idle their days in coffeehouses and salons.¹⁵⁵ Burmania and Laar agreed that these young men posed a challenge and even a danger to the Republic because they involved themselves with politics and the future of the Republic.¹⁵⁶ However, they disagreed on where the problem had come from. Laar blamed the phenomenon on the gallicization of society—the process of adoption the French ways and language.¹⁵⁷ Burmania, however, stood up for France, praising her economy, scientific discoveries, and cultural dominance.¹⁵⁸ He argued the phenomenon was mostly a problem in Holland and wrote that ‘so many people from [Friesland] are so honest, they think of The Hague as the fatherland of the *petits maîtres*.’¹⁵⁹ This was no wonder, Burmania argued, because the *petits maîtres* were an old phenomenon already. For example, they were already mentioned in the works of William Temple (1628-1699), who was an English ambassador to the Dutch Republic and published a travelogue on the Dutch provinces.¹⁶⁰ In response, Laar ridiculed Burmania: ‘You seem to sympathize with [the French] on more issues, if only on your image of freedom.’¹⁶¹ However, Republicans and Orangists agreed that French freedom was no freedom but tyranny. Laar made this remark to dismiss the Orangists as tyrants.

Conclusion

¹⁵³ See also Prak, *Citizens without Nations*, 41-48.

¹⁵⁴ J.J. Kloek and W. Mijnhardt, *1800. Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (Den Haag 2001) 149-153, 165-185.

¹⁵⁵ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 38-40; D. Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht. Sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1998) 147-150.

¹⁵⁶ Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 38-39; [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 150-151.

¹⁵⁷ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 150-152.

¹⁵⁸ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 40.

¹⁵⁹ ‘(...) veel menschen in myn land syn so eenvoudig, dat sy Den Haag voor het vaderlant van de *petits maîtres* houden (...).’ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 43.

¹⁶⁰ [Burmania], *Eerste Schuitempraatje*, 42-43.

¹⁶¹ [Laar], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de vryheid*, 151.

The historical parallels between the histories of Maurits and William II served to posit a constant throughout history, namely that morality was inseparable from good government. A belief in the depravity of man meant that it was never a debate about eliminating corruption from governance, but rather about preventing it and mitigating its excesses. The Orangist and Republican narratives about the past therefore best represent the humanist tradition, which used the past as a moral school for the present.

The Republican and Orangist myths were certainly no enlightened narratives. They did not believe that the present was all that different from the past. In fact, they believe the opposite. The present was very much like the past, which is why the past served as such a strong example, either as an ongoing event to argue the aptitude of William IV, or as an argument for moral government. However, in the introduction of this study, I had likened the Republican and Orangist arguments about Dutch decline to the myth of the Dutch Golden Age, which was a different humanist myth. Let us therefore make up the balance in the final part of this study.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this study, I introduced two distinct analyses of an early eighteenth-century polemic between Republicans and Orangists. The first analysis was by Wyger Velema, who responded to earlier studies of the polemic by Pieter Geyl and Isidore Leeb. Geyl had argued that the polemic was superficial, whereas Leeb had argued that the polemic shows that the differences between Republicans and Orangists were not as great as they would eventually be in the late eighteenth century. Velema challenged their views and argued that Orangists and Republicans held two distinct modes of arguing. The Republicans argued from theology and natural law, whereas Orangists appealed to political traditions and history. The polemic was therefore not superficial but showed real differences between Republicans and Orangists. However, the second chapter of this study has shown that Republicans and Orangists also shared a common mode of arguing. This mode was built on an appreciation of the past and characterized by source criticism. There is therefore more to Leeb's characterization of the differences between Republicans and Orangists than Velema would have us believe, as Orangists and Republicans both valued the past and used it in similar ways to argue their case.

This study has argued that Orangists and Republicans used the past for three distinct purposes. The first was to argue about gratitude. Orangists held onto a long tradition of gratitude for the House of Orange, arguing that as William of Orange had saved the rebel provinces during the Dutch Revolt and effectively founded the Republic. Consequently, Dutch had a duty to honor the House of Orange-Nassau. Republicans challenged this argument from gratitude and turned to supernatural explanations of the founding of the Republic, arguing that the Dutch only owed gratitude to God. This revealed two distinct appreciations of the Dutch Republic. Whereas Republicans argued the Republic was a nation of God, the Orangists argued the Republic was a nation under God.

In the second chapter, however, we saw that Republicans did not attribute everything to God. Beaufort and Laar argued that stadtholders Maurits and William III had been inapt and that not God, but Maurits and William themselves were to blame for their actions. This reveals a cunning contradiction. Whereas the Republicans first alluded to a firm, orthodox belief in 'God's divine rule', which held that 'we owe all causes to God', when they discussed the honorable founding of the Dutch Republic, they let go of this frame when they discussed the arrogant wrongs of the stadtholders. Conversely, the Orangists were more consistent. They attributed the founding of the Republic to God's ordainment, but also the valor and heroism of William of Orange and did not let go of this belief in human agency in other arguments.

A second use of the past revolved around the aptitude of William IV, as Republicans and Orangists both drew parallels between the past and the present to argue that the deeds of Maurits or William III were indicative of the aptitude of William IV. Like Velema had already concluded for different reasons, the polemic was therefore not superficial like Geyl had argued.

Lastly, Republicans and Orangists used the past to argue about the importance of morality in government. They not only drew comparisons between the past and the present, but also drew comparisons between different events from the past. They did this to argue that there had been a constant in politics, namely the force of morality, and to warn about the dangers of the depravity of man. This ties into Blom's analysis of the polemic. Blom has argued that Republicans and Orangists argued about the moment when the decline of the Dutch Republic had set in, and this study has built on this argument. Contrary to what Blom has argued, I have argued that Republicans and Orangists did also discuss an institutional solution to decline. Orangists argued that a nation could succumb to tyrannical and jealous magistrates. A stadtholder was necessary to quell this depravity. Republicans disagreed and argued a stadtholder would worsen this depravity. He would attract vagabonds and sycophants who would enrich themselves at the expense of the nation. Besides, the stadtholder could be a dangerous usurper himself, as the memoirs of Maurits and William II had shown.

Their emphasis on the importance of morality was not obvious. In his article, Blom compared the polemicists to the thought of Bernard Mandeville, who had argued that national decline was about economics.¹⁶² Republicans and Orangists, however, argued that decline was about political traditions and managing the depravity of man, and they used the past to argue this. With this in mind, the argument from gratitude can now be seen in a different light. Gratitude did not just follow from history, it was also an imperative against national decline, as ingratitude was a form of national decline. This takes us back to the introduction of this study, which likened the Republican and Orangist arguments about Dutch decline to the myth of a Dutch Golden Age. The notion of a Dutch Golden Age emerged during the early eighteenth century as a humanist myth and an antidote against Dutch decline. Much like the Republican and Orangist myths, it served as a moral *exemplum*. However, the Republican and Orangist myths differed in an important way from the myth of the Dutch Golden Age: whereas the Dutch Golden Age upheld the seventeenth century as exemplary, Republican and Orangist myths sought to show the good, the bad, and the ugly of that century as a warning and beacon of hope for their world today.

¹⁶² Blom, 'Decay and the political gestalt of decline in Bernard Mandeville and his Dutch contemporaries', 157-162, 165-166.

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