

Van Oldenbarnevelt: Dutch political conflict in Dutch and English Drama

Anglo-Dutch interaction before 1625



Sonja Kleij, 3341917
RMA Comparative Literary Studies
Utrecht University
Supervisor: Jeroen Salman (Utrecht University)
Tweede lezer: Adrian Streete (Queen's University Belfast)

Inhoudsopgave

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: Political and religious background of the conflict	8
<i>Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits: The Early Years and English Involvement</i>	8
<i>The Battle at Newport</i>	11
<i>The Twelve Year Truce</i>	14
<i>The Bestandstwisten and the English involvement</i>	15
<i>Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial</i>	20
<i>The aftermath of the execution</i>	24
<i>Conclusion</i>	26
Chapter 2: Public opinion and literature	28
<i>Definitions and criteria of public opinion</i>	28
<i>The functions of literature in public opinion</i>	32
<i>Conclusion</i>	33
Chapter 3: Literary culture	34
<i>Theatre practice and aesthetics</i>	34
<i>Publishing and print trade practices</i>	39
<i>Conclusion</i>	42
Chapter 4: Background information of the authors	44
<i>Joost van den Vondel</i>	44
<i>John Fletcher</i>	47
<i>Philip Massinger</i>	48
<i>Conclusion</i>	50
Chapter 5: Interpretation of the plays	51
<i>The explicitness of the plays</i>	51
<i>Image created of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt</i>	53
<i>Image created of Maurits of Nassau</i>	55
<i>Narration of the events</i>	58
<i>Role of the English</i>	64
<i>Conclusion</i>	65
Chapter 6: Reception of the plays	67
<i>Censorship and legal consequences for the authors</i>	67
<i>Performance and publishing history</i>	73
<i>Reception abroad</i>	75
<i>Conclusion</i>	76
Conclusion	78
Works cited	83

Introduction

For a long time academics have claimed that during the Renaissance national cultures started to emerge and that countries were moving away from a unified European culture. This more national centred identity meant that there were clear limits and rules that determined what was 'English' or 'Dutch'. For example, in *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century* J.H. Huizinga argues that the Dutch culture differed greatly and in many respects from the cultures of England, France and Germany. (11) This was mainly caused by the political system, that of a republic not a monarchy, which also limited the power of nobility (Idem 18-9) and economical system, which was largely based on trade. (Idem 15)

Several scholars have also argued that the culture of the Dutch Republic was 'modern,' compared to England. Among them are Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, who argue that this 'modernity' was caused by the freedom to debate that was present in the republic. According to them this separated the Dutch culture from the cultures of other European countries, where censorship was stronger. (221) And in his introduction to *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* Maarten Prak points out that Jonathan Israel, the renowned English authority on Dutch history, even went so far as to claim that because of this freedom the roots of the Enlightenment cannot be found in France or England, but in the Dutch Republic. (3) Prak disagrees with this idea of the Low Countries as a 'modern' nation, because of the chaotic political system (3), but he nevertheless argues that it was this same system that made the Dutch Republic not only a successful, but also an extraordinary nation in comparison with other European countries. (5) Thus giving the Dutch Republic its own specific identity and culture.

In 2008 Lisa Jardine's book *Going Dutch: How England plundered Holland's Glory* raised doubt about this idea of separate national cultures. In the preface she asks the following questions:

Does each country, as was long argued, possess a distinctive, coherent, homogeneous set of tastes, attitudes and beliefs at any given moment in history, closely contained within its national boundaries, to which new arrivals (...) are allowed to contribute only within specified limits, while tailoring or reconfiguring their 'native' talents to clearly recognised, local norms? Or is a national culture rather a medley of influences, a rich mix of blended and intersecting tastes and styles, based on a dialogue amongst the many participating individuals who find themselves mingled at any given point on the globe, at any particular? (xviii)

Throughout the book Jardine shows that she is in favour of her second definition of nation identity and argues that England and the Dutch Republic were more connected through their culture than previously presumed by giving various detailed examples concerning politics, art, science and gardens. She concludes that by 1688 England and the Dutch Republic were “already so closely intertwined, culturally, intellectually, dynastically and politically, that the invasion [by William III] was more like a merger.” (349)

Though Jardine makes a good case, she overlooks an important part of culture: literature. She only uses a few poems to support her claims on gardening and art, but she does not discuss literature on its own. A strange choice since literature can easily be used as evidence for the shared culture. Though it is true that the different languages might have made it difficult for literature from either country to actually be widely read in the other country, the choices that were made with regards to the content of a literary work can tell a lot about the mutual interest in and the public opinion about historical events and political and religious discussions.

In *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450–1650* that was edited by Jan Bloemendal, Arjan van Dixhoorn and Elsa Strietman several scholars make a strong argument for the importance of literature for the development of public opinion. In this book they use a tentative definition of public opinion that is as follows: “a complex of beliefs about social, political, moral, religious and other public matters, one that can be found in larger or smaller segments of society and which originates and is expressed in a variety of ways.” (Bloemendal & Van Dixhoorn, “Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 5) By doing this they focus on the formation of public opinion rather than on the individual opinions themselves. Furthermore, they argue that public opinion already existed in the fifteenth century and as they claim in early modern society those texts that we now call ‘literature’ were crucial to the shaping and dissemination of opinions. (Idem 5) This definition of public opinion will be used in this thesis.

In *The Royalist Republic* Helmer Helmers focuses on the interaction between the English, Scots and the Dutch by analysing literature about the Stuarts, especially Charles I and Charles II that was written in The Dutch Republic. He analyses how the Stuarts were portrayed during different parts of history and how the changes in the public opinion and the interaction with the English and the Scots developed during this time is reflected in literature. By doing this Helmers shows how important it is to take literature in consideration when talking about the cultural interaction between the Dutch and the English.

Another important point of critique on Jardine's book that can also be applied to Helmers' study is that both of them overlook the period before 1625. It is worth taking a closer look at this period because it shows how both countries interacted before there was a sense of court life in the Dutch Republic. In this argumentation court life is often argued to be essential for a shared culture. This court was developed by Frederik Hendrik and his wife after he became Stadtholder in 1625, since his predecessor Maurits of Nassau was first and foremost a general who seems to have had neither time nor interest for a court.

This thesis will therefore take the idea of a shared culture between England and the Dutch Republic as formulated by Jardine and Helmers and direct the focus on the period short before 1625 in order to show that there was already a vivid cultural exchange between England and the Dutch Republic. On top of this, it will so provide further proof that literature was indeed an important part of culture and that studying it can tell us a lot what was going on in the countries and about the interaction between two cultures. It will do this by focusing specifically on the conflict between Maurits and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt that ended in the trial and execution of the latter (1619) and two pieces of literature that were written about it.

There are two important reasons to focus on this conflict specifically. First of all, because it was very controversial and remains so until this day. It was so controversial, because of the politics and the controversial religious debate that was involved in the conflict. The trial almost instantly ended the heated religious discussion between the Remonstrants and the Counter-Remonstrants about how the government should deal with religion and by doing so it shaped the Republic. In a time of fast and severe changes in the practice of religions throughout Europe this must have been an event that had people's interest. Including the English even though they had to deal with religious tensions as well. Mainly with the Puritans, who were becoming more radical and the Catholics, especially after the Gunpowder Plot. That the English were interested despite of this and James I was even actively involved in the conflict proves how close the two countries were.

The second reason is closely linked to the first: the controversy of the conflict and especially the trial is reflected in both English and Dutch literature. Several Dutch poems and many more pamphlets were written on the subject, both arguing for and against Maurits. Vondel's play *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit*, which was published in 1625, is especially interesting. The play became controversial, because of the critique on Maurits that was expressed by it. In England there were also pamphlets published, but what stands out is the play *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* by John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.

This play was performed a few months after the execution had taken place and became subject of censorship. Never before have these plays been analysed comparatively in such detail in order to shed light on the development of the heated discussion surrounding the trial of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt on both sides of the North Sea.

In order to discuss the interaction between English and Dutch culture and how this was represented in literature about Johan van Oldenbarnevelt this thesis will be divided into two parts. The first part will deal with the relevant historic and theoretical background and the second part of the thesis will contain a case study in which an analysis and comparison of the previously mentioned plays, *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit* by Joost van den Vondel (1625) and *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* (1619) by John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, will be made.

Part one is divided into three chapters. In chapter 1 the religious and political background and the conflict itself will be discussed. It will show what the views of the different parties, Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants were and what role the Synod of Dordrecht played in the conflict. I will argue that there were strong political incentives for this conflict as well. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the influence, interest and viewpoint of the English people and English politicians on the Dutch and the relationship between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt.

Chapter 2 will discuss different theories on public opinion in order to formulate the definition and criteria that will be used in this thesis. This discussion will prove that public opinion already existed in the fifteenth century and that literature fulfils important functions in forming and representing it.

Chapter 3 will discuss the literary culture of England and the Dutch Republic. It will start with an analysis of the poetics of tragedy that were important and the different statuses that theatre held in both countries. After this the publishing practices will be discussed to explain how the texts were distributed to the people.

The second part is divided into three chapters. Chapter 4 will give the relevant background information of the authors in order to give an idea of the way the authors worked and what their religious and political involvement was. This is important to better understand the choices they made while writing and thus to make a better interpretation of the plays.

In chapter 5 the content of the plays will be discussed by an in depth analysis and comparison of the content of the two plays. It will look into the level of explicitness that the plays use to convey their message. Fletcher and Massinger named the characters after the actual people, while Vondel used allegory to narrate the story. The reasons for these different methods of story telling will be explored. After this the images that are created in the plays of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Maurits and the events took place will be thoroughly analysed and compared in order to show the political view point that is reflected in the plays.

In chapter 6 the reception of the plays in both countries will be examined. Here the censoring of *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* and the controversy that surrounded *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit* will be discussed along with their performance and publishing history. This will prove that these plays were part of the public debate on the trial of Van Oldenbarnevelt in both countries and how the authorities tried to influence this debate. Furthermore, this chapter will also briefly discuss the reception of these writers abroad to show how far their impact reached and to see if Vondel and Fletcher and Massinger could have influenced one another.

Chapter 1: Political and religious background of the conflict

Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits: The Early Years and English Involvement

To fully understand the conflict between Maurits and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and the English interest in this clash, it is important to know what happened before the conflict started. How did Johan van Oldenbarnevelt rise to power? How did Maurits's start as Stadtholder go? And what was the English involvement in the Low Countries? These questions will be discussed in the following section.

In his biography of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Jan den Tex notes that although he came from humble beginnings, Oldenbarnevelt was able to work his way up the social ladder to become a lawyer. In 1570 he took a position as lawyer at Hof van Holland (Court of Holland) and in 1572 he joined the cause of William of Orange. Though he never actually fought in the Dutch Revolt, he proved himself useful because of his intelligence and his willingness to work hard. By 1582 he had become the confidant of William of Orange, which greatly increased Van Oldenbarnevelt's power and influence.

But when William of Orange was murdered in 1584 the Low Countries were left without a leader and on top of that the war was not going very well. Maurits was only seventeen years old, so he could not take his father's position yet, but the States General realized that they needed a strong leader. They did not want a monarch who was going to live in the Low Countries, but one residing abroad who felt sympathy for them and who would protect them. Of course this had to be a monarch who could rival the Spanish king. A. Th. van Deursen points out there were only two possible candidates: Elizabeth I of England and Henry III of France. However, because France was a Catholic country Henry III was not really an option (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 116-7). Elizabeth I did not become queen of the Low Countries, but through the treaty of Nonsuch, on 20 August 1585, she promised to support the States General for as long as the war would last. This help included 5000 foot soldiers and 1000 cavalry and a garrison for Den Briel, Vlissingen and Rammekens. In exchange the Low Countries would pay England back as soon as the war was over. The three cities would serve as security, Elizabeth I's representative would have the command over the forces and she would name two English members for the Council of State. As Van Deursen points out, it is important to keep this in mind, because this Anglo-Dutch relationship would last for a long time. The English would remain represented in the Council till 1627 (Idem 118).

Furthermore, Elizabeth I sent Robert Dudley, the count of Leicester over to the Low Countries to represent her in the government. But before he arrived Holland quickly named Maurits their Stadtholder, so that Leicester could not take that position. Though he did become governor-general, Leicester's career in the Low Countries was not very successful. Van Deursen claims this was because of his clash with the Hollanders on three important issues: trade, religion and how to govern. (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 120)

Let us start with the trade issue. Van Deursen states that Leicester thought that since the Low Countries were at war with Spain, the Dutch should no longer trade with the Spanish. The Dutch disagreed; because the war was mostly fought locally, a trader could travel to the land of the enemy if he took some precaution measures. Since the Dutch merchants could still travel to Spain they might as well continue to make money out of trading, so that they could support the war. (Idem 121) Because trade was such an important part of the Dutch economy and a means to support the war, cutting back on it could be disastrous. Leicester's intent to end this suggests that he did not understand the economic importance of international trade for the Dutch Republic.

Another issue was religion. Leicester strongly supported the puritans in England and when he arrived in the Low Countries he stated that he had taken on this task to spread the Word of God. (Van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau* 31) To do this Leicester wanted to make the state Calvinistic and forbid other religions. The States General strongly disagreed with this. They believed that differences between the several denominations of Christian faith should be solved through mutual respect and tolerance. Furthermore, the Dutch Republic needed to win a war. If Leicester was to force all the Dutch to convert to Calvinism, it would estrange a lot of people from the cause. (Van Deursen, *De last van geluk* 122)

The third and probably most important point of disagreement was the way in which the government had to be organized. Leicester was aiming for some sort of absolutistic regime, with himself as the head of the state. (Van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau* 31) However, the Dutch did not like this. They wished to continue in the same way as before, retaining the same level of authority for themselves. In the past they had only given the Stadtholder as much power as they felt comfortable with. The Prince was their leader, but he did not have any independent power, because Holland and Zeeland did the financing. Because of this, affairs of state had to be arranged through consultation and agreement. If Leicester was to take this faculty away from the countries, then the Revolt would certainly lose support.

As Van Deursen points out, the Dutch system works well as long as there is a leader with enough natural authority to win those reluctant to cooperate for his cause, and with

enough insight to formulate policy proposals to convince the doubters. (Idem 30) William the Silent had been such a leader; Leicester was not. However, the States General soon discovered that Johan van Oldenbarnevelt did have this quality. In March 1586 the States of Holland chose him to be the 'raadspensionaris': the advocate of the province. In theory this meant that he was simply the permanent secretary and councilman of the States. In practice, however, his advice to the States became more and more important. And thus his rise to power continued. In a short amount of time he managed to get control of the States of Holland and before long his opinion came to be equally important in the States General. Van Oldenbarnevelt became probably the most powerful person in the Dutch Republic and continued the work of William of Orange. But Leicester was still an obstacle he needed to get rid of.

He got the perfect opportunity in January 1587: two English commanders gave control of the settlement that they were protecting to the Spanish. They did this because Spain could give them the pay they had not received in a long time. This led to panic and anger among the Dutch and Van Oldenbarnevelt made clever use of this. On the 31st of January he took the authority to move troops from the English and gave it to the Stadtholder, Maurits. Van Oldenbarnevelt then continued by making Maurits admiral-general of the navy and captain-general of Holland and Zeeland. This made Maurits the chief commander of the military forces who had the States of Holland to answer to, in other words Van Oldenbarnevelt. As Ben Knapen argues this switch of power was in fact a coupe. (84)

All of this was accompanied by loud protest from the English members of the Council of State. Knapen points out Van Oldenbarnevelt seemed to have understood the power of public opinion, so he had pamphlets printed that incriminated the English and tried to win the favour of the people. (84) In this way Leicester was forced out. Van Deursen claims that the only way in which Leicester could have regained power was by using violence and Elizabeth I would never have allowed that. (*Maurits van Nassau* 40)

When Leicester left the Low Countries for good, many feared that he would urge Elizabeth I to abandon the Dutch cause. But as Den Tex states in his biography Van Oldenbarnevelt realized that Elizabeth I would keep supporting the Low Countries even without Leicester. This was because she supported the Dutch not merely out of friendship, but because she wanted to intimidate the Spanish king and get a fair peace with Spain. And as long as she could not force that herself and she had the financial resources, she would help the Low Countries (51). Knapen further states, that if England would arrange a peace with Spain that excluded the Dutch Republic, this would lead to the Spanish occupation of important

coast cities of the Low Countries, which would have been a permanent threat to England - a threat Elizabeth I could not afford to have. (84) The Anglo-Dutch relation was strong, because they needed one another in their battle against a shared enemy.

A small addition should be made in regards to Leicester's relationship with Maurits. Elizabeth I had urged Leicester to act as a second father for the young prince. (Van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau* 28) This suggests either that Elizabeth I was truly concerned about Maurits's welfare, or that she wanted to keep him under English influence or, most likely, both. Though Leicester was not very impressed with the young Maurits, he did teach him in the art of battle. (Idem 32) In 1586 Leicester asked Maurits to accompany him on a visit to England. Why this happened is not clear, but Van Deursen suspects he was trying to tempt Maurits to participate in court life. (Idem 34) However, Maurits did not go. Beelaerts van Blokland claims that Van Oldenbarnevelt did not allow this, because the Stadtholder should not leave his troops. (37) Van Deursen on the other hand gives more credit to Maurits. He claims that the young man simply was not interested in court life, and he never would be. The Hollanders and Van Oldenbarnevelt wanted Maurits to stay in Holland, because then the influence of the English on him would not get too strong and he could continue to (successfully) lead the army. So, obviously Van Oldenbarnevelt was pleased that the Prince did not go, but it was ultimately Maurits's decision. (*Maurits van Nassau*, 34-5) This shows how serious, committed and practical Maurits was when it came to politics, even as a young man.

The Battle at Newport

A turning point in the relationship between Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits was the battle at Newport. In the area of Duinkerken there had been some problems with pirates and in June 1600 Van Oldenbarnevelt sent an army to deal with it. Maurits was against it because he thought it would be too much of a risk, but he did what Van Oldenbarnevelt wanted him to do. However, on his way to Duinkerken Maurits was ambushed by a Spanish army that outnumbered his on the beach of Newport. Maurits's army had only won because of his military skills. It was considered a great victory and one that would make Maurits famous. As J.J.G. Beelaerts van Blokland points out the Battle at Newport had shown that Maurits could not only take and hold cities, but he could also defeat the Spanish army (which before this clash was considered undefeatable) in the open field. (108)

The relationship between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt changed after this event. There was now a growing tension between them (Beelaerts van Blokland 109). Maurits did not push on towards Duinkerken, but instead went back home. He believed Van Oldenbarnevelt had underestimated the risks and had put the Republic in great danger by authorizing this expedition. Geoffrey Parker points out in ‘The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurits of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy’ that although Maurits did not openly blame Van Oldenbarnevelt, many contemporary observers noticed a growing coolness between the two men. This was a result of their wrangles over strategy and tactics during the Flanders campaign. The rift widened steadily with the passage of time. (356) Because of the Battle at Newport Van Oldenbarnevelt had lost some of his prestige, while Maurits gained more. The Prince felt confident to act more independently. Instead of reporting to Van Oldenbarnevelt he would communicate more directly with the States General. This meant the chain of command became shorter. (Beelaerts van Blokland 51)

English involvement and interest

Copies of English pamphlets and a ballad written about the event show that the English interest in this battle was bigger than one might originally think.¹ The pamphlet *The Battaile fovgt betveene Count Maurits of Nassaw, and Albertus Arch-duke of Austria, nere Newport in Flaunders, the xxij. of Iune 1600* was written by an anonymous author who claimed to have been part of the battle. It was printed in London by the anonymous P.S. The pamphlet *A True Relation of the famous & renowned Victorie latelie atchieved by the Counte Maurits of Nassau, neere to Newport in Flaunders* claims to be a translation of a Dutch copy and was printed in London as well, but by the printer Ralph Blower for the not identified C.B. The existence of these pamphlets already shows the English interest in the Dutch Revolt against Spain. Furthermore, the fact that two different publishers put out a pamphlet about the same subject could suggest that they were in competition with each other in order to make money with this news. Especially since the content of both pamphlets is virtually the same. These different pamphlets were not printed to show a different view on the conflict, but both have the same message: the victory of Maurits of Nassau was well deserved. Just two remaining pamphlets are of course not enough to claim that English had a high interest in the matter. But Marijke Meijer Drees and Els Stronks claim in *Wat wonders, wat nieuws!* That the battle at

¹ The source of all the English pamphlets and the song that are discussed in this section is *The Shakespeare*

Newport became Maurits's most famous victory, even of the entire Eight Years War, partly because of the many pamphlets with reports, songs, poems and stories about the battle that were published about it. (112) With this in mind it appears that these pamphlets are in fact proof of the English interest.

A closer examination of the content of the pamphlets shows why the English were so interested. Both pamphlets give an account of the battle and a list of all the men who were killed or taken prisoner during combat, with special attention for the English participants. When comparing these lists one does find that they are not completely the same. *The Battaile fovgt betvveene Count Maurits of Nassaw, and Albertus Arch-duke of Austria* is very detailed when it comes to the slain English men, while *A True Relation* only gives the names of the English captains who were killed, but is more specific about the slain and captured enemies. Nevertheless, these pamphlets prove that the English were not merely agreeing with the Dutch case, but were also actively involved in the Eight Years War by fighting on the Dutch side.

The 184 lines long ballad *Newes from Flanners* emphasizes this image of English, Dutchmen and also Scots fighting side by side under the leadership of Maurits. This song by an anonymous author narrates the battle in some detail and makes it into more of a religious cause. Besides glorifying the English part in the battle, the ballad also points out the relationship between the English and the Dutch. The subtitle of the ballad is *A new ballad of the great ouerthrow that the valliant Captaine Graue Maurits, Sir Frances Veere, and oth of the Queene of Englands friends gaue to the archduke*. Furthermore, the song ends with the following verse:

Thus have you hearde the seruice
of thee our English friendes.
That stil with losse of life and limes
the Flemish state defends.
God banith thense idolatrie,
that English man may say:
That stil we haue in spyight of Spaine
some fended beyond the sea.

All this, but especially the last two lines, highlight the close relationship that existed between the two countries: to the English the Dutch were not just allies; they were friends. The fact

that there were English soldiers, who were willing to risk their lives to help Maurits's army, even after Leicester left, proves this.

The Twelve Year Truce

The years leading up to the Twelve Year Truce

In the 1590s the Eighty Year War had grown into an international war. But around 1606 it seemed both sides were losing their strength, because of financial struggle. Even though the economy of the Dutch Republic was growing it was getting harder and harder to find money to support the war. The Habsburgs were in even more trouble: Philip III went bankrupt in 1607. (Groenveld 90) On top of that the Dutch had also lost two of their most important international supporters. France had made peace with Spain in 1598 and England followed a few years later. In 1603 England got a new monarch: James I. Den Tex argues that James I was initially conflicted about the Dutch Revolt. On the one hand he was sympathetic towards the Revolt of his Low Countries, because of his own ingrained Calvinism. (135) According to James I "The Netherlands became the cockpit in which the reformed Church would triumph over the corruption of papistry and its most devoted supporters, the Spanish Habsburgs." (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619" 53) On the other hand the king believed that the Dutch were rebels against their lawful sovereign. (Den Tex 135) After England had made peace with Spain in 1604, the political involvement in the Dutch Republic became embarrassing. Though England and France would keep supporting the Dutch case as well willing neutral states, this did not really benefit the Dutch much in their financial need. (Groenveld 89)

As S. Groenveld points out in *Unie-Bestand-Vrede: Drie fundamentele wetten van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* there were three options for the Dutch Republic. The first option would be to work closely with the French and continue to war. (90) Maurits was not in favour of a truce or peace. He feared that their allies would no longer support them if they made a truce with Spain and, moreover, if the people got used to peace it would become more likely for them to accept Spanish rule again. Maurits was keen to go with this option, but Henry IV only wanted to increase his support if England would do the same and James I refused to do this. Beelaerst van Blokland argues that the French feared Maurits's position would be threatened if peace were to be made with Spain and therefore Henry IV offered to help by offering his sovereignty. Maurits eventually refused this, because he had already turned away the sovereignty of the enemy; he would not take it from another foreign force

either. (135) Groenveld on the other hand argues that France made the offer for its own benefits, not Maurits's. (89-90)

The second possibility was that the Northern Low Countries would work together with the South to win back all seventeen Low Countries from the Spanish and become one state again. However, this option raised the question of who was going to rule. The Northern Dutch leaders had given up on a reunion and were determined to never be under the Habsburg rule again. (Idem 90) The third alternative would be to either make peace or arrange a long armistice, but under the condition that the Spanish would give up sovereignty from all seven provinces. (Groenveld 91) Van Oldenbarnevelt was in favour of this option, because he believed it was necessary and the support for this was growing. He immediately became an important figure in the negotiations (Den Tex 143-4) However, Philip III did not want to give up his sovereignty to the 'rebels'; he would only accept temporary sovereignty of the Low Countries. Apart from this he also demanded that the Dutch Catholics be free to practice their religion. Furthermore, there would be no permanent peace, just a temporary truce. Spain also wanted the Dutch to stop their trade with the Indies and give back the Portuguese and Spanish ports they had occupied. (Beelaerts van Blokland 139) With these demands in mind both parties started the negotiation process.² (Groenveld 93)

Though Maurits was still not convinced that this was the best way to go, he gave up his opposition to a truce when France would no longer support them financially. (Beelaerts van Blokland 138-9) And eventually, after a few years of negotiations 'Het Bestand' or the Truce³ was signed by the States General of the Dutch Republic and the delegation of the Spanish Low Countries in April and announced on 13 April 1609. (Idem 104) Philip III had no choice but to accept the truce, but he signed it as late as possible: the 7 July. (Idem 105) Nowadays we call this period 'Het Twaalfjarige Bestand' or The Twelve Year Truce.

The Bestandstwisten and the English involvement

As often happens when a common enemy leaves the scene, the unity between the people of the Low Countries started to show some cracks. It was still unclear who had the authority in the United Provinces in 1609. The pressures of war had concealed contradictions in views and areas of tension, but the complex internal relations gave rise to divergent interpretations of the situation. (Prak 31) As Maarten Prak states in *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*

² For a more detailed discussion on the negotiations see S. Groenveld's *Unie-Bestand-Vrede* (2009).

³ For the exact content of the Truce see S. Groenveld's *Unie-Bestand-Vrede* (2009).

“Religious strife – which had become the common denominator of all these tensions (...) – finally led to the outburst that had seemed inevitable.” (31)

This religious strife was based on a conflict that had started a few years before the Truce. The Dutch Reformed Church was the only faith that was allowed to express its views publicly, even though the Union of Utrecht had promised freedom of religion to people of all faiths. The other faiths were forced to meet secretly. But the adherents of the Reformed Church were also divided. In 1604 two professors of Theology at Leiden University, Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus, got into a conflict. The subject was their “differing views on the precise meaning of one of the central tenets of Calvinist teaching, the doctrine of predestination.” (Idem 29) Calvin argued that God was almighty and preordained everything, including whether or not a person would go to heaven or hell. (Van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen* 227) But this raised the question of whether or not God could then be blamed for their sinfulness. And if not, how this affected the idea that Christ died for the sins of all humankind. (Prak 30) Prak explains that Arminius attempted to solve this problem by proposing that God did not confer grace in advance, but instead offered it when certain conditions were met. The faithful would embrace it and live accordingly or they would disregard it and would have to live with the consequences. (30) Arminius replaced blind election with the personal choice of the believer, which also meant that God was no longer the source of sin either. (Van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen* 229) Gomarus strongly disagreed with this introduction of freewill and human virtue into the doctrine, because it detracted from God being all-knowing. Moreover, he accused Arminius of attempting to slip in an element of Catholicism into the Reformed doctrine. (Prak 30)

This conflict could have remained an academic discussion if the university had not been founded for the very reason of training ministers of the Reformed Church. Because of this the vivid discussion between two of its professors involved the whole church. Not only was it important that clergymen agreed on the message that they spread, but also because fundamental issues, such as the role of the Reformed Church in the Dutch Republic, were at stake. As Prak points out that the most important question was where the authority of the church lay. According to followers of Gomarus the authority resided in the church itself, while the followers of Arminius argued that the Republic’s political institutions had the authority. (30)

After Arminius’s death in 1609 his supporters drew up a statement of points of difference between the Arminians and the Calvinist dogma that was presented to the States General on January 1610. (Van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen* 229) They also submitted a

petition to the States of Holland to ask for a provincial synod at which they could defend their view. Their standpoints had been set forth in their ‘Remonstrance.’ First the States of Holland put off discussing the manner till July, when it was decided that instead of calling for a synod they would give both parties a chance to discuss their views. On 11 March 1611 the new debate took place, at which the Gomarists presented their rebuttal: a written declaration, or ‘Counter-Remonstrance.’ The politicians judged that their differences in view had little consequence and ordered both sides to reach a settlement. (Prak 31) But, as Prak states, involving the States of Holland in the dispute had far overstepped the boundaries of the church. Opinions of both sides had now become a subject of a public debate, which was encouraged by the printing of their ideas. (31) In *Pamfletten en publieke opinie: massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* Roeland Harms discusses how the number of pamphlets concerning the conflict and the religious ideas behind it increased during the conflict. This had its peak in 1618. (42) The Counter-Remonstrants were very determined in their ideas that the integrity of the church was at stake. For them the religious strife was no longer just a question of faith; it was a matter of national importance. In their view the Dutch Revolt had been fought to defend the Reformed faith and anyone who meddled with the new church was in league with the enemy. (Prak 32)

The English king got involved in the dispute almost instantly, after Arminius’s eventual successor at Leiden, Konrad Vorst (Vorstius), had sent him two of his books. (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barneveldt* in 1619” 54) Though James I approved of the general tenor of the statement the Arminians had made, he did have strong views on the topics of doctrine, the toleration of dissenting views and the relation between Church and State. (Idem 54) James I was shocked by the content and believed the books to hold dangerous assertions. Through his Calvinist ambassador in Den Haag, Winwood, James I enjoined the States-General to use their influence on the States of Holland, or in other words Van Oldenbarneveldt, to not give Vorstius the chair. Van Oldenbarneveldt rejected the king’s appeal on the ground of freedom of teaching, which was important for the Remonstrants. (Idem 54) James I had also included his views on Arminius in his accusations. According to Den Tex James I stated that he warned against Arminius before and that now it appeared that his doctrines had been at the root of the damage to the church. Holland was becoming a hotbed of heresy. (188) James I even wrote a refutation of Vorstius and Vorstius’ books were publicly burned. (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barneveldt* in 1619” 54) Because the Dutch could not afford to lose England as an ally Van Oldenbarneveldt made a compromise: The States General would

depose Vorstius themselves, but without condemning his theories or banishing him from the Dutch Republic. (Den Tex 188)

This religious debate continued for a few years in the Low Countries, but around 1615 politicians got more involved. By then a Counter-Remonstrant group had formed in the States General, including delegates from Zeeland, Groningen and Friesland, while Holland was still divided. This was mainly because Van Oldenbarnevelt supported the Remonstrants. He was the advocate of Holland and formal council to the States, but as Prak points out, in reality he was the political leader of both the province and the Republic (32), which meant that his influence had great significance. Prak claims that Van Oldenbarnevelt took this stand out of political pragmatism, because in his view the church must not be allowed to play an independent role in politics. Van Oldenbarnevelt even tried to impose tolerance by degree, which aroused more resistance from the Counter-Remonstrants, because this confirmed their suspicions about political interference in religion. (Idem 32)

In 1616 the conflict got more heated. In The Hague the town councillors were Remonstrants, with Johannes Uyttenbogaert as their leader, who was also the court preacher. The leading Counter-Remonstrant preacher had been banished from the city. In late 1616, when the winter made going to other towns to attend services almost impossible, the Counter-Remonstrants of The Hague requested their own place of worship within the city. The authorities gave them the Gasthuiskerk (Hospital Church) to use, but they were not allowed to choose their own church council, since this amounted to a schism. On 13 January 1617 the States asked the stadtholder to provide troops to help maintain order, which Maurits refused. The Gasthuiskerk was too small, so in April several hundred people demonstrated at the Binnenhof, which housed both the States General and the States of Holland, to ask for a bigger building - and again no action was taken. (Prak 32-3) The provinces of Zeeland, Friesland, Groningen and Gelderland all urged Holland to call a national synod. The Counter-Remonstrants now had the support of most of the provinces, so Holland went for another defence, which was based on Article 13 of the Union of Utrecht. (Idem 33) This article states that every province is free to regulate its own policies for religion. (Groenveld 65)

But it took the States of Holland so long to decide that on 9 July the Counter-Remonstrants seized the Kloosterkerk (Cloister Church). Maurits attended a service there about two weeks later. (Prak 33) According to Beelaerts van Blokland Maurits's fear that the conflict would tear the country apart forced him to no longer be neutral. (144) However, Prak implies that it was more of a personal matter between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt. According to him the stadtholder had begun to see Van Oldenbarnevelt's foreign policy more

and more as a threat to the independence of the Dutch Republic and he had to be stopped. (33) A national crisis had now fully begun.

A national synod appeared to be the only way to settle the matter, which was widely supported by the Counter-Remonstrants. But Van Oldenbarnevelt had always done everything in his power to prevent this from happening. On 4 August 1617 a resolution was passed in Holland which declared that “a national synod was in conflict with the provincial sovereignty and that complaints against city governments were inadmissible on principle. It also granted the cities permission to recruit special troops (...) to preserve the peace.” (Prak 34) So, in response Maurits toured the cities of Holland in November to get them to submit. This failed, but, as Prak points out, he did succeed in proving that both sides were willing to play for high stakes. (34) On 31 July 1618 Maurits disbanded the suspiciously large army of order preservers of Utrecht - a stronghold for Remonstrantism. With Utrecht out of the way, most provinces now agreed to convene the national synod on 1 November, even though Holland still refused to cooperate. However, after the invitations were sent to foreign observers there was no turning back. (Prak 35)

At this point the English involvement is worth looking into. Because of James I's concern about the Arminian faith, it should be no surprise that the Counter-Remonstrants claimed the English king as their supporter and asserted that James I disapproved of the tolerance towards the Remonstrant preachers which Van Oldenbarnevelt's policies obliged them to have. (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619" 54-5) As a counter move Van Oldenbarnevelt managed to get a letter from James I in which the king sided with States' policy of religious toleration, while in fact James I had only added at the end of the draft that he thought the five Remonstrants points were not entirely in conflict with faith and salvation. (Idem 55) This attempt to neutralize James I as a supporter for the Counter-Remonstrants backfired. The king resented the manner in which his letter was used - he actually regarded them as abominable heretics, even if he thought the five points were somewhat tolerable. (Idem 55)

When Maurits asked the king in 1617 to clarify his views on the debate over whether or not a National Synod should be used to settle the argument, James I declared to the States-General that a national synod was a competent way to resolve the conflict and thus supported Maurits. (Idem 55) It is possible that James I did this, because of his former differences with Van Oldenbarnevelt. However, it is more likely that he did it for political reasons, namely to have a strong ally in the Dutch Republic. Besides advocating tolerance towards the Arminians, Van Oldenbarnevelt also maintained friendly relations with France. This was

problematic because the king needed a strong ally against Spain and France. (Idem, 55) To add to that, as Howard-Hill states, when Van Oldenbarnevelt became a party instead of a state leader he had no longer the ability to steer the Low Countries in the desired direction. James I regarded Maurits as the future head of State and thus turned to him. (55)

Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial

The fall of Van Oldenbarnevelt was another major blow to the Remonstrant cause. Detention in Holland without the consent of the States of Holland was against the law (Prak 35), therefore Van Oldenbarnevelt and Hugo de Groot had always claimed that an arrest would not be judicially possible and so it could not happen. The shock was great when the impossible did in fact happen and Van Oldenbarnevelt was arrested on 29 August 1618 and he was locked up in a room overlooking the Binnenhof. (Den Tex 244) Around the same time two of his supporters, Hugo Grotius and Rombout Hogerbeets were arrested as well and in the meantime city councils in Holland were one by one changed, by removing the Remonstrants and appointing Counter-Remonstrant followers of Maurits. (Prak 35-6)

Charges made and Van Oldenbarnevelt's defence

Before the trial could begin there was the difficulty of the jurisdiction of the court that judged Van Oldenbarnevelt. The Court of Holland argued that Van Oldenbarnevelt had too much influence in the region, which could be problematic for an objective trial. Besides this, he and his fellow accused were all from different cities. The solution to this was to have a multistate court. (Beelaerts van Blokland 150) On 15 November 1618 the trial started and it would last for seven months.

In his doctoral thesis for law *Het proces tegen Oldenbarnevelt en de "maximen in de staet"* Hendrik Gerlach gives a very detailed description and analysis of the content discussed at the trial. He summarizes the subjects that were up for discussion during the trial as follows:

1. Getting the so-called 'Sharp Resolution' accepted and proclaimed.
2. The changing of the oath of the schutterijen (voluntary city guard or citizen militia).
3. The intervention with Nijmegen's law use.
4. The plot of the eight Holland cities.
5. The imputation of Maurits.
6. The changing of the oath of the army.

7. The contact with Utrecht.
8. The wrong foreign policies.
9. The betraying of state secrets.
10. The accepting and making others accept gifts.
11. The clandestinely contact with the representatives of the Dutch Republic.
12. The false briefing towards the foreign relations. (57)⁴

It is interesting that although they did not directly accuse Van Oldenbarnevelt of high and national treason, it is certainly implied. Another interesting element of the hearings is that none were public. According to Beelaerts van Blokland, this was to avoid influencing the public opinion too much. (151)

On 15 November the interrogations began. Four examining magistrates, two of them known enemies of Van Oldenbarnevelt, were put in charge of preliminary inquiries. The advocate was refused council and access to documents pertaining to his defence. (Prak 35-6) It is not surprising that Van Oldenbarnevelt pleaded not guilty on all the charges. However, as Prak claims, his “rigidity, aggravated by his arrogance and snobbiness, had not endeared him to people in the past, nor did it induce his adversaries to be kind to him now.” (36) In February and March Van Oldenbarnevelt was questioned again, this time by the twenty-four judges. These hearings were abruptly ended on 14 April, after which it took the judges three weeks to come to a decision, “despite the prevailing view that the verdict had already been a foregone conclusion.” (Idem 36)

On 9 May Van Oldenbarnevelt was told he had been sentenced to death. He refused to let his family ask for a pardon for the same reasons that he himself refused to do so: asking for mercy would be a confession of guilt and Van Oldenbarnevelt was convinced of his innocence. (Beelaerts van Blokland 151) Some have argued that Maurits would not have granted him a pardon any way, but as Beelaerts van Blokland points out the prince was not in the position to grant pardon, only the States General could do that. (151)

Involvement of the English in the trial

Van Deursen points out the influence of the English not only during the trial but also on public opinion. The idea that Van Oldenbarnevelt was simply using tolerance towards other religions to eventually sell his country to Spain was not only untrue, but also very unlikely and unbelievable. However, Van Deursen states, that it were in fact respected diplomats who

⁴ The translation from Dutch to English is mine.

came up with it - namely the English representatives sir Ralph Winwood and Dudley Carleton, James I's ambassador at The Hague, together with the Dutch Ambassador in Paris, Frans van Aerssen van Sommelsdijk. They convinced Maurits of this would-be conspiracy and by doing that contributed greatly to the calling of the trial. (*De last van veel geluk* 198-9)

There were also French and English envoys present at the trial. Gerlach argues that this was because their monarchs were not only interested in the religious conflict, but had also, to certain extent, chosen a side. Though these representatives had instructions from their kings and ministers, it seems that they also felt directly involved in the conflict. They were dedicated to the trial with more than just good work ethics. Gerlach's main example of the English involvement in this way is Dudley Carleton, who was clearly and openly opposed to Van Oldenbarnevelt. (348)

Execution

Den Tex gives a rather detailed description of the execution. Early in the morning of 14 May the scaffold was prepared in front of the Binnenhof. There were a lot of people present at the execution. Among them were citizens of Amsterdam, but also politicians, such as members of the English delegation, who were given seats at the execution. (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel*t in 1619" 55) Den Tex states that the number of spectators was estimated around three thousand. (262)

While he climbed onto the scaffold people could hear him express his feelings about what was about to happen, stating that this was the gratitude that he received after forty years of loyal service and openly wondering what would happen to the people. (Idem 262) After he had prayed, Van Oldenbarnevelt turned towards the people and with a strong voice that broke the silence he gave, what is now, his famous declaration of innocence. He asked for God to receive his soul and his final words were directed at the executioner: "Mack 'et kort," which in this context means 'make it quick.' (Idem 262-3)

In the Dutch execution style there was no block to rest the head on. So, after his last words Van Oldenbarnevelt kneeled with his back straight and his hands positioned for prayer at his chest. The first blow was enough to take off his head and two fingers. The body and the head were put in the coffin, which was placed in Hofkapel (court chapel). The whereabouts of the body after it was taken out of the Hofkapel by his family remain unknown till this day. (Idem 263)

Interest of the English people in these events

The attention the event got in England itself is interesting. Sir Dudley Carleton wrote an account of the execution for Sir Robert Naunton to communicate to the king and he also wrote about it to John Chamberlain. Chamberlain in his reply mentioned that the news of Van Oldenbarnevelt's defeat had been learned in London from eyewitnesses. (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* in 1619" 50) The first printed description of Van Oldenbarnevelt's execution appeared on 17 May. It was a pamphlet entitled *The True Description of the Execution of Iustive done in the Gravenhage... vpon Sir John Van Oldenbarnevelt. Faithfully translated according to the Dutch copie.* (Idem 50) Moreover, it seems Fletcher and Massinger and the King's Players wanted to take full advantage of the situation by getting their play out there as fast as possible. *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* was written, submitted to the censor, revised, resubmitted, licensed and rehearsed within three months of the execution. (Idem 50) According to G.E. Bentley there were several more pamphlets about Van Oldenbarnevelt, his trial and execution circulating at the time that were printed in London and he argues that there were probably others, which are now lost, that were translated from Dutch. (417)

All this suggests that the English interest in the execution and the conflict was rather big. It was obviously an important matter at court, but the pamphlets, the play and the speed with which the people of London heard about the event shows a certain eagerness to learn more about the issue among the common people as well. The discussed pamphlet can also be viewed as proof that there was a need to shape the view of the people on the matter as the title of the pamphlet already emphasizes that the execution had been just.

According to Bentley, the English were interested in the event for two reasons. The first is simply that the execution of someone such as a 'great Dutch patriot,' as Bentley calls Van Oldenbarnevelt, would be regarded as sensational. The second reason is that the conflict between the Calvinists and the Arminians was of great interest, since England had heated debates about religion, mostly concerning the puritans, around that time as well. Bentley raised the question if it is possible that the English saw parallels between the case of Van Oldenbarnevelt and that of Sir Walter Reign, who had been executed the year before. (417)

There were also, undoubtedly, objections towards the execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt in England. There were probably people who sympathized and agreed with the Arminians, but to conclude this chapter it is important to point out what, according to Howard-Hill, was the official view of the English on Van Oldenbarnevelt's downfall:

Van Oldenbarnevelt's removal had strengthened Dutch resistance to Spanish domination, had cost the French an ally, and had rid Calvinism of the Arminian heretics' most powerful ally. Both Church and State were reformed and the Prince [Maurits] was England's one hope in the Low Countries. (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* in 1619" 55)

In other words England could be happy with the outcome of the execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt. The conclusion of the conflict between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt had many advantages for the English and had given them a powerful ally against Spain and France.

The aftermath of the execution

Synod of Dordrecht

Whether the Synod of Dordrecht should be seen as aftermath is debatable since it had started before Van Oldenbarnevelt's death. But because it finished about two weeks after the execution, it makes chronological sense to discuss it in this section.

The Synod was quite an international event. There were representatives from England, Scotland, Switzerland and Germany presented. The English Ambassador had close contact with the English and Scottish delegation of James I. (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 205) The dispute between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants was settled at the Synod. The Remonstrants got a chance to defend themselves, though, as Prak points out, they were doomed from the beginning, since all but two of the delegates were Counter-Remonstrant sympathisers. (36) In May 1619 Remonstrant notions were officially condemned as heresy and the Remonstrants themselves as 'perturbers' of church and state. (Idem 37)

Besides this more issues were discussed at the Synod. They reconsidered the entire church order and also decided to make a new translation of the Bible into Dutch. (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 205) As long as the Dutch Republic existed there never was another synod. Van Deursen explains that the government never wanted to let it get out of hand again. (Idem 205)

The Remonstrants after the Synod

After the synod, preachers who were sympathetic towards the Remonstrant cause were put on a blacklist until they declared themselves amenable to the doctrines that were adopted at the

synod. (Prak 37) Van Deursen states that those who remained Remonstrant had to sign a contract of silence and the ones that refused were brought forth to the States General and banished from the Dutch Republic. Most of them chose banishment. (Van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen* 354) According to Prak about 200 ministers lost their living. (37) Of course that did not stop the Remonstrants from keeping their faith; the services simply went underground. However, the authorities would persecute them if they were discovered, while Lutherans and Mennonites were allowed to practice their faith, as long as it was not in public. Obviously, this led to discussions about whether or not the treatment of the Remonstrants was just, but the suppression of the Remonstrants remained. (Van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen* 355-6)

Changes in the organisation of government

Not much changed after Van Oldenbarnevelt's death. As Van Deursen claims, this was mainly because, contrary to what a lot of people think, the dispute had not been about the power construction of the Dutch Republic. Though the concept of the sovereignty of the separate province was used during the conflict it had not been subject of discussion in its own right. (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 209) The States General had won some influence, and the autonomy of the provinces largely remained and further centralization of the power to the States General turned out to be impossible. (Beelaerts van Blokland 152)

Yet, as Van Deursen points out, at the same time there was quite a big change on a personal level. The provinces of the Dutch Republic had always been united behind one leader. In the beginning this had been William of Orange, and after his death Van Oldenbarnevelt. Though Maurits had stood beside him as the General of the Army, all the policy making had been Van Oldenbarnevelt's job. After his execution Maurits was the only one with enough prestige and authority to take charge. (Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk* 210) However, as Beelaerts van Blokland states, even though Maurits now got more political influence, the provinces did not want to be ruled and therefore did not allow him to make a lot of administrative changes. (153) At the same time Van Oldenbarnevelt's functions were separated and given to two different people to avoid anyone from becoming that powerful again. Adriaan Duyk became the Advocate General of the States General and Andries de Wit became the advocate of Holland. (Idem 152)

And then there was the issue of the Truce. Of course it had been a temporary arrangement since the beginning. But when the end was in sight the big question was what would happen after it ended in 1621. The options were simple: continue the war or agree on a

lasting peace. By taking out Van Oldenbarnevelt the peace party in the Republic had been dismantled. Maurits had always been in favour of continuing the war and now that he was in charge, this seemed to be the only option. The Truce expired in April 1621 and in August the first battle was fought. (Prak 37)

Views on the trial

Whether the conviction of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was just and fair was a discussion then and remains so till this day. C. Gerretson's *Moord of recht* contains two studies about the trial and conviction; one claimed it was justice, the other states that it was murder. By showing these side by side an attempt was made to give both views an equal opportunity to make their case. This way the book also shows that even when it comes to looking at a trial there are multiple interpretations possible. It depends on whether or not you believe Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was indeed guilty of the charges or if his enemies framed him. Of course it also depends on the viewpoint from which the story is told.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the relationship of Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits has evolved from protector, to political partner, to enemy. Apart from this all the matters discussed in this chapter proof how close the political relations England and the Dutch Republic were. When the Low Countries asked for help Elizabeth I became their protector and remained their ally even after her representative Leicester became the victim of a coup. And though Maurits refused to take part in court life the English respected him because of his great skills as a leader and general, whom English troops gladly fought for. They had a common enemy after all.

Even though England made peace with Spain and James I was conflicted about the legitimacy of the Dutch Revolt, he still continued the English support and was actively involved in the dispute between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants. That both Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits tried to claim him as an ally for their cause shows that they, and the Dutch people as well, valued his support. The English participants at the trial and the Synod also proof the English involvement and eagerness to have some influence.

Another point that should be emphasized is the importance of the public opinion for all these events. The coup, but especially the conflict between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants is evidence of that. Moreover, this chapter has shown that pamphlets, songs and

theatre were used, to inform people, but also to reflect, form and influence public opinion. The next chapter will therefore focus on the formation of public opinion in the Early Modern Period and the role that literature played in this.

Chapter 2: Public opinion and literature

To fully understand why public opinion was so important in politics it is necessary to discuss the different definitions and the criteria that have attributed to it. This chapter will therefore first discuss different theories and ideas about public opinion, especially public opinion in the early modern period. After that it will show what role literature played in forming it.

Definitions and criteria of public opinion

When looking into the subject of public opinion one cannot avoid discussing the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas and his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. His ideas have made a great contribution to theory about public opinion. The criteria he used to explain the development of a modern public sphere, and the place that public opinion had in it are still seen as very controversial today. It is for that reason that Roeland Harms in his *Pamfletten en publieke opinie* and Jan Bloemendal and Arjan van Dixhoorn, the editors of *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450–1650*, start their argument with a discussion of his ideas.

According to Harms Habermas' definition of public opinion is as follows: that what is expressed and shaped in the public sphere. (22) The normative concept of and the criteria for public opinion that Habermas uses is as follows: Public opinion can only occur under certain circumstances. First of all, everyone should be able to enter the public sphere. This by the public formulated opinion should be the result of a rational and critical discussion. According to Habermas this was first achieved in England at the end of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century public opinion was also achieved in several European countries. Habermas sees the existence of the public salons and coffeehouses, where oral debate took place and the creation of an independent and critical press as crucial preconditions. Considering the latter, especially newspapers were important, because these are available to everyone. The result of this is that individuals started to discuss – in public spaces – about cultural subjects, such as art, literature, theatre and eventually politics. (Harms 22-3) So, Habermas presents the public as a single entity composed of individuals. (Bloemendal & Van Dixhoorn, "Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries" 17) It is this sharp definition of the public that is discussed and critiqued by both Harms and Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn.

Harms' first point of critique towards Habermas' theory is the role of mass media. As Harms points out Habermas did not attend to the fact that the technological changes led to

new ways of communication and thus to new political processes. (23) Furthermore Habermas does not make a difference between the public opinion and the form in which this opinion is expressed, like for example in a news article. But, as Harms states, it is important to do acknowledge this difference. This is because different actors, such as the publisher who wanted make money out of it, have always influenced an opinion that is expressed in print. (23) However, Harms' also focuses mainly on the printed expressions of opinion. Though he does not deny that the early modern period had several other forms to distribute news, such as for example songs, sermons and plays, he states that printed forms of news were the only new means to do this. And as stated above, new media changed the ways of communication and political process and thus the public opinion. Harms' main point in discussing these particular issues is of course to show that pamphlets were in fact influential for the public opinion, because these spread news and opinions before there were newspapers. (25)

Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn seem to agree with these critiques, however they emphasize that printed culture was not necessarily the most important way to share opinions and news. They state that texts that were performed in some way also had an important, if not more important, role in the forming of public opinion. They proof their point by discussing the work of Robert Scribner. According to Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn he showed that during the Reformation ideas were circulated in print and were then distributed widely through oral, performative, handwritten and visual media, for example theatre. Thus "this interaction between many different modes of communication made it possible for local communities to become part of a supra-local movement, and for the ideas of the Reformation to be lent form through individual acts by ordinary people at a local level." ("Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries" 12) To add to this I would like to draw attention to 'Literature and the theatre to 1660' in which Martin Butler points out that the European war had greatly enhanced the market for news in England and that plays helped to satisfy this need. He calls these plays 'news-plays' and uses *The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnevelt* as an early example of this phenomenon. (588)

Another important issue is Habermas' claim that before 1700 the concept of public opinion did not exist. This statement should also be questioned, because Habermas creates an image of the development of public opinion that is too homogenic. In response Harms points at a study by Pollmann and Spicer. According to Harms this study shows that the way the government (decentralized and egalitarian) was organized in the Dutch Republic meant that it could create the necessary circumstances for public opinion. This was because the nobility was less important than in England, whereas the higher middle classes (merchants, regents

etc.) had an important say in politics. This form of government led to a relatively great freedom of speech in the Dutch Republic, which is necessary to form a public opinion. (24)

Early modern authorities were nevertheless concerned about this public opinion based on textual culture. These political, religious and intellectual authorities feared the divisive potential of such works and because of that they developed: “special censorship rules such as bans on the treatment of certain subjects, the checking of texts prior to performance, and thereafter prosecution and, where deemed necessary, sanctions.” (Bloemendal & Van Dixhoorn, “Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 2) This concern suggests that the public opinion that was formed by texts also had some sort of influence in the way society functioned. If this was not the case the authorities would not have been concerned enough to take action against the circulation of such texts.

In response to Habermas Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn go even further back in time and claim that public opinion already existed in the mid fifteenth century. They state that

since even in the Middle Ages and the early modern period people could become involved in an exchange of ideas about their society, by conversing with each other and through oral or performative and written literature, it is no longer tenable in an examination of the formation of public opinion to separate the early modern period fundamentally from modern times. (Idem 17)

This statement also refutes Habermas claim that the public consists of only those who follow what is written in the press and exchange ideas about social issues.

An example that Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn use to show this is the contemporary study of Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft. In *Nederlandsche Historiën* (1642) Hooft examined the significance of ‘the art of rhyming’ in the origins of the Dutch Revolt. Dixhoorn and Bloemendal pinpoint that “Hooft believed that by 1560 the Low Countries had an organized literary life, sustained by cultured minds who criticized frankly the performance of the authorities in public, reminding both citizens and people in positions of power of their responsibilities.” (Idem 2) Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn continue by stating that “The rhetoricians’ regional networks are evidence that the literary life of early modern societies helped to create supra-local communities in which, as Hooft saw it, collective opinions were formed which governments had to take into account.” (Idem, 3)

A final example, that I believe is important, is Vondel’s defense of the theater as a medium. He viewed theatre not so much as a form of entertainment but as a knowledge

transfer that conveyed specific ideas not only through language, but also by characters how act them out linguistically and physically. (Noak 116) As Bettina Noak states in ‘Vondel as a Dramatist: The Representation of Language and Body’ Vondel thought of drama “above all as a means of promoting reasonable behavior and of presenting to his readers or audiences the articles of faith to which he so deeply subscribed.” (119-20) Noak continues by explaining that Vondel was keen to use the special opportunities afforded by the theatre to do just this. She points out that Vondel argued that:

Through representation (...) in the form of images and action on stage, a process of generating knowledge is set in train among the spectators even if they are uneducated or have no access to the usual educational curriculum. (...) The stage becomes a medium of cultural reciprocity. The material, which comes from a difference cultural environment with its own system of norms (...) is transformed by its representation into a matter of contemporary concern and can therefore be understood by the audience. (121-2)

So, Vondel saw drama as a way to transfer knowledge to the audience, even the uneducated, about proper, reasonable behavior and contemporary issues. Thus drama would be a good way to start and further a debate on public issues that would also help to include people who were not highly educated. This matches Smits-Veldt’s claim in *Het Nederlandse Renaissancetoneel* that the Dutch theatre was a competitor of the sermon. Both had the goal of creating and maintaining order, only the sermon was considered with spiritual order and the theatre with the secular order. (25) These examples show that contemporaries recognized that what we now call public opinion was developing in their lifetime and thought about how literature could play a part in this development.

Thus to summarize, Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn use a tentative definition of public opinion that is as follows: “a complex of beliefs about social, political, moral, religious and other public matters, one that can be found in larger or smaller segments of society and which originates and is expressed in a variety of ways.” (“Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 5) By doing this they focus on the formation of public opinion rather than on the individual opinions themselves. They also point out that public opinion originated in the fifteenth century. Furthermore, they claim that in early modern society those texts that we now call ‘literature’ were crucial to the shaping and dissemination of opinions. (Idem 5)

The functions of literature in public opinion

After discussing Habermas and their own definition of public opinion Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn move on to explain the functions of literature in the process of forming public opinion. They identify seven functions. Literature can:

1. Put something on the agenda;
2. Announce, confirm or contest specific opinions and add arguments to a debate;
3. Be used for instruction, for the provision of information, and to raise the level of knowledge of the public;
4. Serve as a civilizing tool and equip citizens and others to express their opinions effectively in words;
5. Assist in the formation of groups (as did psalms, martyr songs and rebel songs);
6. Be deployed in a process of self-fashioning and self-presentation to become a leading opinion maker; and
7. Be used to prompt people to behave or take action in a certain way.

(Idem 35)

To further explain how literature fulfils these functions a few comments need to be made. First of all, as Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn state, it is important to note that when an opinion is cast in a literary mould, this affects the manner in which we need to study it. According to them this is because creating a literary work requires such mental effort, skill and knowledge from the author that the opinions contained in it are shaped, refined, and altered during the creative process. (Idem 34) We should therefore see a literary text as a reflection on the public opinion, not a straightforward description of it.

Secondly, the content of a literary work can reflect the opinion of a single individual or a small group, and at the same time it can have the mouthpiece function and thus claim to represent the opinion of a larger group or groups. (Idem 34) These literary works were written and read, but also spoken, heard, performed and watched. This often happened in consultation with local or supra-local authorities: the rhetoricians would sometimes present themselves as representatives of the government. But this also happened independently for rhetoricians were just as likely to express direct or indirect criticism. (Idem 34)

When analysing a literary work one should therefore also to determine whether an author gives the opinion of a small group or a larger group in society. This is important because it can help explain the content of the work, but also the impact it had on the public discussion of the subject. It is likely, but not necessary, that an author who write from the

point of view of a minority will critic the government, the church and its representatives and the community and its dominant beliefs.

Thirdly, literary texts cannot only reflect public opinion, but can also initiate debate. It can do this by opening minds to varied possibilities that are closed in the current reality. Furthermore, it can point the audience to all kinds of openings for change or stabilization. Of course literary works are able to do this through their content, but as Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn pinpoint sometimes the writing and publishing of a literary work is in itself a statement. (Idem 34)

Last but not least, it should be emphasized that the early modern period was a time of experiment and exchange of ideas. As Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn state, authors not only experimented with forms and viewpoints, but they also adapted ideas from other circles or from other regions for local voices through local literary works as well. This also happened the other way around: local voices could be adapted for inclusion in Latin texts aimed at an international audience. (Idem 34)

Conclusion

By critiquing Habermas' theory Harms and Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn form their own ideas on public opinion. Harms argues that the public opinion already existed in the Dutch Republic, because of its political structure. And Bloemendal and van Dixhoorn pinpoint that public opinion in fact originated in the fifteenth century. But Harms' limited focus on printed texts is still too narrow to apprehend public opinion and the role literature plays in it. The definition that is used by Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn and their focus on the role that all types of literature have in forming the public opinion on the other hand gives room for broader discussion. Furthermore, their theory proofs the importance of studying literature when discussing culture. I will therefore use their definition and the functions of literature that they formulated in this thesis, though I will focus specifically on drama.

As discussed above Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn argue that it is important to note that when an opinion is cast in a literary mould, this affects the manner in which we need to study it. To better understand this literary mould it is necessary to know how texts were produced and what was considered good writing. The next chapter will therefore discuss the literary cultures of England and the Dutch Republic, with special attention towards drama.

Chapter 3: Literary culture

The previous chapter has shown the importance of literature in the forming of public opinion. It is important to note that when an opinion is given in a literary form the opinions contained in it are shaped, refined, and altered during the creative process. (Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn, “Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 34) To better understand this creative process it is important to look into the ways in which literature and specifically theatre functioned and developed in the Dutch Republic and England. Therefore this chapter will discuss what was considered good theatre, how playwrights worked and what was the definition of tragedy that was used by playwrights and playgoers will first be discussed. Then a short explanation of the publishing practice will be discussed to show the function of the publishers in the literary culture.

Theatre practice and aesthetics

The definition and use of the genre of tragedy

When discussing the genre of tragedy scholars often refer to the scheme of Aristotle that would serve as a set of rules. According to this scheme a tragedy is about a noble character with a fatal flaw, whose reversal of fortunes is brought about by some moment of recognition and whose fate arouses pity and fear, and suggests some kind of spiritual cleansing. The rules for such dramas include the three unities of action, time and place. Besides this a tragedy was usually written in a highbrow fashion and often rhymed.

However, the English playwrights more often than not did not follow these rules. Especially the unity of time and place were often ignored. Furthermore, as Michael Mangan points out in *A preface to Shakespeare's Tragedies* “[i]t may be that for most Elizabethans, including Shakespeare himself, a tragedy simply meant a story which ended unhappily.” (63) Mangan also states that the Early Modern period was a time in which the tragedy was not only popular, but also often experimented with. Though Mangan points directly at Shakespeare, this could also apply to Fletcher and Massinger, since they were contemporaries of Shakespeare. So, it is also possible that they named their play explicitly *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*, because the story ends badly for Van Oldenbarnevelt, who is the lead character, but is also quite clearly portrayed as the antagonist.

On the other hand Martin Butler states in ‘Literature and the theatre to 1660’ that since it was expected that a tragedy dealt with the fall of a prince, Elizabethan tragic drama always

had some sort of political dimension. And under James I “the tragedy became preoccupied with the tensions inherent in the exercise of power.” (580) The representation of living rulers was forbidden, in order to prohibit drama to reflect on politics directly, but Jacobean tragedies were deeply conditioned by “power and the toils of intrigue, their version of the tragically hostile universe unfolded in the mysterious and inescapable workings of the state.” (Idem 580) So, according to Butler the fall of a politician of some sort was an important theme in the English tragedy. *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* does satisfy this demand.

In the Dutch Republic Aristotle’s work did not become influential until 1640, and Vondel was one of the champions of this classicist way of working. Before 1640 Horatius ideas about tragedy and drama were more important. Mieke B. Smits-Veldt discusses the influence of Horatius’ *Ars poetica* on the Dutch theatre in *Het Nederlandse Renaissancetoneel*. She states that Horatius’ work advises authors to divide the play into five acts, that the choruses should comment on the action of the play and that special attention should be paid to the decorum when portraying a character. (52) The decorum would be based on age, sex and social class. (Idem 45) Horatius also pointed out that it is better not to start the telling of a history from the very beginning, but to focus on the most important phase of it. (Idem 52)

Seneca’s plays were also very influential in both Dutch and English drama at the beginning of the seventeenth century. His tragedies were often used as an example of how it should be done. (Idem 33) Smits-Veldt points out several important elements from Seneca’s works that were used in Dutch plays. The moral hero had a firm attitude towards faith. The stoic suffering of an innocent hero was also used. (Idem 34) As a contrast to the composure of these characters there are characters who let themselves be ruled by uncontrolled emotions in such a manner that it can only lead to disaster. (Idem 35) Seneca’s focus on the moral lesson and encouraging the audience to do self-reflection were important for themes and ideas about the purpose of the play in the Renaissance theatre. (Idem 35) Dutch playwrights also used certain dramatic aspects of Seneca’s play such as the telling of dreams, in which a character describes a dream he or she had. These could include a dead family member who warns for coming danger. (Idem 49) And although horror situations and ghost appearances was not used by Seneca that often, these were considered to be typical for his work and were often used in renaissance plays. (Idem 36)

Another issue that is important for the way in which Dutch and English playwrights worked with tragedy was the required amount of realism of the plays. In *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* Jonathan

Dollimore points out that there was a discussion going on about this in English literary theory. He states that there were debates about “poetic versus actual justice, ‘poesy’ versus ‘history’, the fictive representation versus the actual representation- in short idealist mimesis versus realist mimesis.” (82). Sidney was among the few who wrote theory on poetry and drama. Robert Matz points out in *Defending Literature in Early Modern England* that Sidney attempted to defend “the courtly pleasure of poetry by claiming that such pleasure promotes warrior service.” (21) Sidney also advocated that poetry should be preferred above history. Sidney argued that the poet could instruct in a pleasurable manner, whereas an historian simply repeat the truth of a foolish world. (Dollimore 73-4) But when looking at what was actually being written at the time Dollimore points out that “drama in this period was fulfilling increasingly the function of History rather than Poesy.” (77-8) And he claims that these theories did indeed influence the actual production of plays. (Idem 82) In other words: theatre stayed more true to source and actually told what happened, instead of being just fiction.

In the Dutch Republic however, realism was less of a requirement for tragedies. Though Horatius had advised not to have supernatural, unbelievable horrors or acts of magic on stage this was more often than not ignored by the Dutch playwrights. (Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse Renaissancetoneel* 52) This is probably because of Seneca’s influence who did have such scenes in his plays. Furthermore, besides using the Greek plays as model, there was more of a tradition to use Ancient Greek source material to discuss a certain theme or problem and these often included a god or mythical creatures.

Commercial theatre versus drama as an art form

When one compares the Early Modern English and Dutch theatre an important difference stands out: the main aim for authors to write plays and artistic value of drama. For most playwrights in England (outside of the nobility) writing was a job. Martin Butler discusses the English tension between theatre as an industry and as an art form. He explains how the theatre practice had started to grow under Elizabeth I and integrated into urban life more and more during the reign of James I and describes that there were at least five theatres of three different types present in London at that time. (569) On the one hand this high number of theatres suggests a large demand for drama and the different types of theatre show that there were different wishes from the audience that the theatre companies were happy to satisfy. On the other hand it also implies that there was a large competition to attract audience. This would mean that companies were always in need of good plays to fill their theatres.

Butler claims that the two large amphitheatres were proclamations of their companies' prosperity. The Globe for example was financed by seven of the Chamberlain's Men (who would become the King's Men during James I's reign). (Idem 568) As Andrew Gurr points out in *The Shakespeare Playing Companies* the Globe was built only to be used by a London company whose residence was officially approved. (4-5) This meant that the Chamberlain's Men owned that theatre and only they could earn money from it. This shows a new level of permanency in the affairs of the company, but also of theatre in general. Butler states that from this point onwards the leading companies were identified with their settled playing spaces. (569) By the times James I was king of England the London companies were no longer temporary residents of the city of London, but established and successful commercial enterprises.

So, although in order to make a profit a theatre needed to show good quality plays, drama wasn't necessarily considered art. However, as Butler points out, at the same time that the theatres became established businesses in London, the status of plays and playwrights was changing. He draws attention to *Apology for Actors* (1612) by Thomas Heywood who linked the stage with a "flourishing metropolitan ethos." (571) Heywood thought the playhouses were more than enterprises; they were ornaments to London. According to Heywood foreigners talked about them with admiration, because London would have the largest variety of entertainment of any other Christian city. (Idem 571) That Heywood's views were attacked in *Refutation of the Apology for Actors* in 1615 shows that not everyone agreed with this new view on the theatre. (Idem 571) Whether this discussion actually shows a development towards a better status of the theatre is debatable. That the theatre gained popularity could also be seen as an argument why it should not be considered an art form. Nevertheless, there was a discussion going on while before theatre was mainly viewed as commercial entertainment. So, this discussion suggests some improvement of the status of theatre.

In the meantime there were also English authors, of whom Ben Jonson is probably the best example, who tried to profile themselves as authors with artistic and literary value. As David Scott Kastan discusses in 'Print, literary culture and the book trade' Jonson used print to establish the authority of his dramatic texts, but also his own authority over these texts. (115) In other words, by using print he established that there is one true version of the text and at the same time he claimed the texts as his intellectual property. Jonson was the first person who claimed that he was an 'author' on the title page of a play. He also turned his plays into 'works.' (Idem 115) As Kastan points out Jonson's ambition to class drama in the category of literature provoked some scorn, though others did agree with him. (115) This

emphasizes the debate about the status and literary value of theatre that was going on in England. Apart from these efforts Jonson also expressed his own ideas about writers. Butler summarizes these as follows: “Jonson’s ideal writers are an intellectual elite, consorting on equal terms with great aristocratic patrons despite the social disparity.” (571)

However, apart from the aristocratic patronage, this description seems more fitting for the situation in the Low Countries, where theatre was mainly written by members of ‘rederijkerskamers’ (‘chambers of rhetoric’s’) until 1637. In these rederijkerskamers plays were definitely considered more of an art form than an income for the authors. Most playwrights had a job, usually well paid, and wrote plays as a way to express themselves and their views on society and to be artistic. As Smits-Veldt shows in her book a fair amount of Dutch plays was never performed. For example, between 1600 and 1637 about 117 tragedies were written in Amsterdam alone and about 55 of these were performed, that we know of. (*Het Nederlandse Renaissancetoneel* 24) However, this lack of performance was not necessarily considered a failure by the playwright. Not every play was written for actual performance, it was often about the artistic challenge of writing a ‘classic’ drama. (Idem 18)

This is also shown by the manner in which performances were arranged in the Low Countries. It were the rederijkerskamers who organized these. They performed for their own members and for the general public, for example on markets. It was also tradition for them to organise performances at special public events. Around 1610 the rederijkerskamers in Amsterdam started to perform in their own buildings for a small entrance fee that was affordable for the average educated worker. A part of the profit from these performances was donated to charities. As Smits-Veldt points out this was the beginning of the professional theatre in the Low Countries. (Idem 15) But it was not until 1637 that ‘rederijkerskamers’ stopped playing a major role in the performance culture of the Dutch Republic and it was only in January 1638 that the first public and commercial playhouse was opened. (Porteman & Smits-Veldt 370-1) So, while in London theatre was already a professional and successful business, in Amsterdam this development had just begun.

Collaboration

The concept of collaboration between two or more writers is another important issue. Of course drama was a collaborative activity that included everyone in the theatre company, not

just the writer. As Gordon McMullan states in *The Politics of Unease in the plays of John Fletcher*:

It had become something of a critical commonplace that Renaissance plays were collaboratively written in the most basic sense that the individual actors, the particular theatre, the financial exigencies of the moment, and the political, moral, or economic demands upon playwright and company were all as much responsible for the received text as the playwright himself. (132)

Since theatre performances were always collaborations, sharing the authorship of a play probably seemed very natural. Furthermore, writing together was probably also time efficient. Furthermore, it would allow for playwrights to combine their specific skills, which could enhance the quality of the play.

However, in the English theatre collaborations between playwrights were far more common than in the Low Countries. As Jeffrey Masten claims in *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* collaboration was the dominant mode of textual production in English theatres. (14) Dutch plays either had one individual writer or it was done under the name of the respective rederijkerskamer. It is probably because of the commercial aspect of the English theatre that collaboration was so frequently used, while, as discussed above, Dutch playwrights often wrote to create art and simply to convey their personal message in a creative manner. And in the case of plays that were written merely for publication, the collaboration that McMullan describes would not even take place. The play would mainly be a product of the author and maybe some editing from the publisher, but not a theatre company. All of these are possible factors why working together with another playwright would not be immediately necessary for a Dutch playwright.

Publishing and print trade practices

This section looks into the publishing practices of literary texts, including play texts, in England and the Dutch Republic in order to show how the texts were distributed to the people. It will also give more insight into the orientation on the international market and a possible cultural interaction between the two countries.

London quickly became the vital centre of the book trade of England, which was very organized. There was a guild called the ‘Community of the mystery or art of Stationery of the city of London.’ The term ‘stationer’ defined everyone involved in the book trade, since

everyone who was involved in it was a member. (Kastan 98) This is no surprise since the Stationers' Company virtually granted its members monopoly on the market, because no one was allowed to print anything unless he had permission from the Company or the monarch. (Idem 99)

Apart from that the Company brought some order in the book trade by stating rules. In 'Print, literary culture and the book trade' David Scott Kastan explains how the system works. The Company granted its members the authority to publish and regulate their activities through 'licences' that were given by one or more of the Company's officers. Such a license gave a publisher the right to publish a specific text. (98) Of course the most ambitious publishers tried to get privileges not only for single titles, but also for entire categories of books. However, as Kastan points out, most books were not covered by any forms of commercial protection. And in the absence of a privilege any publisher would be free to reprint a popular book. This was actually a smart way to make money, because it was less costly and risky. (94) After having established the rights to the copy and permission to print, a publisher could have the title entered in Register. Of course this happened for a fee. This would give the publisher extra protection, because it records his ownership of the text, though it was not required by the Company. About two-thirds of the published texts were not submitted to the Register, probably to save the costs. (Idem 98-9)

However, before a book could be published it had to be checked and approved by designated ecclesiastical or governmental authority, who would give the publisher the official 'allowance.' Though this was different from the licence given by the Company, Kastan argues that the two at times served similar functions. Since Company wardens could refuse a licence in the absence of an allowance or issue a license in the absence of allowance if a book seemed "sufficiently innocuous." (99) Although this system could be used to re-enforce the government's desires to control the content of the texts that were published, Kastan argues that the Company's main purpose was to insure an orderly market and protect the rights of its members. (99) Nevertheless, there was clearly a strong form of preventive censorship present in the English book trade, which made it harder to publish controversial texts.

It is also important to note that this system's primary goal was to protect the rights of the publisher not the author. Because of this a book could be published without the author's approval or knowledge. In most cases, however, authors were paid for their work or they would get a number of copies to sell. (Idem 109) The writers had to take whatever payment they would get, because they had little leverage to challenge the system since they had no

right of possession over the text and were dependent for publication upon the Stationers. (Idem 112)

Just like London was the centre of the English book trade, so Amsterdam was the centre of the Dutch production and distribution of books. During the Twelve Year Truce over eighty printers and publishers were working in this city. (Porteman & Smits-Veldt 189) Contrary to their English colleagues they started to work more independently from each other during the seventeenth century. (Lankhorst & Hoftijzer 103) Just like in England it were the publishers who had the rights to a text, not the author. There was a privilege system in which the government would give privileges. These were only valid for a small period of time and only in the area of the institution that gave it. But the number of privileges was limited, probably because of the high cost that were charged when applying for it. (Idem 104) Since the government kept its distance when it came to internal organisation of the book market, censorship was not as prominent in the Dutch Republic as it was in other countries. (Idem 103-4) Because of this texts were mostly published without being checked before hand on sensitive material, thus initially avoiding censorship. Texts could be banned, but since this usually happened after it was already published it was hard to stop a text from spreading once it had been printed and sold. So, instead of preventive censorship there was suppressive censorship in the Dutch Republic, which was less effective.

International orientation book trade

Foreign sellers initially dominated the English book trade. And even though measures had been made to try and stop this domination, there were still foreign books sold in England. Several works were translated, especially pamphlets. However, Kastan states that from the very beginning the English book trade was almost exclusively focussing on the English consumption rather than on international markets. The result was that English books were printed most, instead of, for example, Latin texts that might have found an audience at the continent. (89) The book trade in Amsterdam on the other hand was not only focussing on the Dutch demand, but also the international book trade. Amsterdam had a few benefits compared to other European cities. First of all, the overall political tolerance in the Dutch Republic guaranteed for a high level of freedom of press, which was enhanced by the system of censoring texts after they were already published. Secondly, Amsterdam had a widespread trading network that helped greatly to export and import books. (Porteman & Smits-Veldt 190)

Publishing play texts

As Peter W.M. Blayney states in 'The publication of playbooks' there were several ways in which a publisher could get a manuscript of a play. The first would of course be directly from the writer, though it should be noted that the author usually could not do this without the consent of the theatre company. (392) Blayney argues that a reason for offering a manuscript for publication could be publicity or advertising for that play in order to increase the numbers of viewers. (386) The second way would be when a company would give a promptbook that had become obsolete, for example because many revisions were made for a revival of the play. By offering it to a publisher the theatre company could make some extra money. The third way would be when a person who has nothing to do with the theatre offered a play to a publisher. As Blayney points out a manuscript of any kind that left the playhouse for whatever reason could be copied and be used by anybody. (393)

It seems safe to suggest that the Dutch publishers got the play texts in similar ways as their English colleagues. However, it should also be considered that more often than in England the authors would go to the publishers themselves. As stated before a certain amount of Dutch plays were not meant for the stage. But, if the works were published these could be read by the general public, which could enhance the author's reputation. (Kastan 116) Since drama was more considered to be an art form in the Low Countries a reputation as a good author would be the aim of most playwrights and publishing was a means to accomplish that. Another reason could be to avoid censorship and get your message spread quickly. Whatever the reason, in the 1620s publishers in Amsterdam started to publish more plays from leading figures from the Rederijkerskamer Eglentier and other playwrights, such as Vondel. Porteman and Smits-Veldt argue that this was the beginning of a huge rise in play publications. (193)

Conclusion

Though Aristotle's scheme is the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of tragedy, this chapter has shown that before 1625 his work was not yet influential. In England tragedies were merely plays that ended badly, usually with a political tone. And in the Dutch Republic it were the works of Horatius and Seneca that acted as a model for theatre. The importance of realism in drama is another factor in which the English and Dutch poetics differed.

The status of theatre and the manner in which performances were organised is another important difference between England and the Low Countries that largely shaped the way literature was produced. In England drama was mostly a commercial business, so theatres had

to give the audience what they wanted to see. Offering work to a publisher was mostly done to get some extra money, getting printed was not the main aim when writing. However, in the Dutch Republic the commercial theatre was just slowly starting to develop. Drama was considered an art form and authors wrote with the aim of creating art, and it was not necessarily meant for performance. Plays were therefore more often offered to publishers.

A last point that needs to be emphasized is the difference in censorship in both countries. In England there was a strong and very organized form of preventive censorship present in the book trade, while in the Dutch Republic there was little censorship, which was usually applied after a work was already published. This is important to keep in mind when analysing works that spread a controversial message.

Now that we have a clear view of the historical background, public opinion and literature's function in it, the dominant poetics and how the literary cultures were organised, we can move on to the case study to show how all this was brought into practice. This will start in the next chapter which focuses on the backgrounds of the authors, to show their views on politics, religion and how these should be discussed in theatre.

Chapter 4: Background information of the authors

In the first part of this thesis we have discussed the political and religious background of the conflict, public opinion and literature's role in it and the literary culture of England and the Dutch Republic. We now move on to the case study. Before the analysis of the plays can start it is important to look at the views that the authors had on religion, politics and literature to better understand the choices that they made in the plays. The relevant background information of the authors will therefore be discussed in this chapter.

Joost van den Vondel

Biography

Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age includes a chapter entitled 'Vondel's Life', which is written by Mieke B. Smits-Veldt and Marijke Spies. The description that will be given in the following section is based on this biography. If anything is added to this biography from other sources this will be indicated in the usual manner.

Joost van den Vondel was born in 1587 in Cologne. His parents were Mennonites from Antwerp and had fled this city on religious, and perhaps also financial, grounds. In the 1590s Cologne became too dangerous so they moved to the Dutch Republic in 1597 and eventually settled in Amsterdam. Vondel went to school in Amsterdam and lived there for the rest of his life. When he was 23 he married Mayken de Wolff and together they had four children, two of which died in infancy. When his father died in 1608 he took over the family business selling silk socks. He joined a Brabant 'rederijkerskamer' (chamber of rhetoric's) called 'Het Wit Lavendel' ('The White Lavender'), for whom he wrote his first play. He also started to learn Greek and Latin.

During his lifetime he wrote 33 plays. Most of them were original plays, but the others were translated from Latin or Greek and apart from drama Vondel also wrote many poems. Vondel was the most important Dutch playwright of the seventeenth century, even though he only started to write major works for theatre when he was already 50 years old and only half of his plays were performed during his lifetime. Vondel was an exceptional writer and he had well-considered ideas about what would make good theatre. In 'Vondel as a Dramatist' Bettina Noak discusses several of these ideas and the special qualities in his work. Firstly, he goes his own way when choosing themes for his dramas. Though he also used some classical

Greek themes, he mostly worked with biblical material. Secondly, Noak points out that Vondel was also a theoretician of the stage. He added forewords to several of his tragedies. In these he would expand on his views on poetry or discuss the historical or theological embedding of the chosen subject. (116-7) He was one of few authors to concern himself with theatre theory. (Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse Renaissance Toneel* 51) Thirdly, though Vondel was first influenced by the work of Seneca and the ideas of Horatius, he later was one of the few authors anywhere in Europe who was powerfully influenced by Greek drama and especially by Aristotle's writing on drama from as early as 1640. (Noak 117) Finally, as discussed earlier, Vondel was a strong promoter of the theatre. Noak analyses all the forewords and comes to the conclusion that Vondel believed the stage had an important function in conveying knowledge to the general public and he was keen to use it for this reason. (120)

He died in 1679 at the age of 91 in Amsterdam. He was buried in Amsterdam as well in de Nieuwe Kerk (New Church).

Religious views

For Vondel religion and religious debate was important. He was brought up as a Mennonite, but as Judith Pollmann states in 'Vondel's religion' it was also quite normal that church membership was not transferred automatically to the next generation. Instead each generation decided for themselves when to join officially, and many children took their time to committing themselves to a church. (89) It seems he joined a different community than his parents, but apart from that Vondel's doctrine was Mennonite. He accepted adult baptism, married a Mennonite girl and from 1616 he was a deacon in his church. (Idem 89-90) Within this doctrine Vondel emphasized the importance of Scripture. Pollmann claims, "this was coupled with a fear of disorder and a desire for certainty and stability in matters pertaining to faith." (90) However, he did not like enforced uniformity. (Idem 90)

This became an issue when the debate between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants got a grip in the Low Countries. Many Mennonites sympathized with some Remonstrant viewpoints, but decided not to get too involved and tried not to get too closely associated with the controversy. However, Vondel did not keep silent. He openly supported his Remonstrant friends against what he saw as injustice. (Idem 91) As Vondel's contemporary and author of the biography *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel* (1682), Geerardt Brandt states this caused many to believe that Vondel was in fact a Remonstrant, while in reality he remained a Mennonite. (18)

However, in 1640 Vondel converted to Catholicism - a strange choice, since Catholics had persecuted the Mennonites, including Vondel's own family. Vondel's conversion has been the subject of many scholarly studies, but the real reason behind this decision cannot be given, because Vondel did not describe a conversion experience. However, one thing we do know for certain is that, by making this decision, Vondel used the right to choose. This was a right that he valued highly and that he had defended in several texts. And as Pollmann points out "throughout his life, themes of persecution, exile and sacrifice remained of enormous interest to Vondel, but he was not inclined to see them as vindication of one brand of Christianity alone." (94)

Political views

The seventeenth century was an era during which there were fierce political and religious conflicts that threatened to tear communities apart. As Frans-Willem Korsten states in *Vondel belicht: Voorstellingen van souvereiniteit* Vondel dealt with the question of how to end the violence in his work. Vondel resists the idea that the violence should be dealt with through counter-violence, no matter how well it might be legitimised. Instead Vondel was fascinated by the positive and structured power that was hidden in nature and society. (Korsten 9) Most theorists saw the monarch or the sovereign as the highest political and juristic power in a country. However, Vondel paid more attention to the sovereignty and capability of the people. In his work Vondel deals with the tension between the external order that is placed on a society by force and the internal, natural order, that should be developed or defended. (Korsten 9)

This is shown in the section on his religious views; he took sides with the Remonstrants, partly because he thought they had a point, and partly because he thought they had been unjustly treated. Maurits had forcefully and violently ended the debate between the Remonstrants and the Counter-Remonstrants. So, when it comes to politics Vondel's most important point seems to be that a ruler should be just and give his subjects the right to choose their own faith. Thus we can conclude that Vondel's political views were closely linked to his religious views.

John Fletcher

Biography

In the first chapter of *The Politics of Unease in the plays of John Fletcher* Gordon McMullan gives a biography of Fletcher. What follows is a brief description based on this biography.

John Fletcher was born in 1579. His father had been bishop of London and he studied in Cambridge at Bene't college (now Corpus Crisiti), like his father. He probably started his BA in 1591 at the age of 11 and most likely proceeded to do a MA in 1598. It is unclear what he majored in. It's uncertain when Fletcher started as a playwright, but we do know that he wrote plays for several children's theatre companies in London in 1606. During his career he wrote 16 solo plays and several successful plays in collaboration with Francis Beaumont. They were close friends and even lived together until Beaumont's marriage in 1613. Beaumont then stopped working in the theatre and Massinger became one of Fletcher's regular collaborators. Several of Fletcher's plays were written for the King's Men and it appears he took Shakespeare's place within the company after his death. Unlike some of his colleagues such as Shakespeare and Jonson there is no proof that Fletcher was an actor before he became a playwright. He died of the plague in 1625 in London and was buried in Southwark.

Religious views

As was shown in the biography, Fletcher was born into a Protestant family and was thus raised as a member of the Anglican Church. And as McMullan points out his family also openly distanced themselves from the Puritans, especially the radical Puritans. So, it is no surprise Fletcher was seemingly a vowed enemy of Puritans and Catholics alike. Furthermore, he was opposed to religious liberty. (Makkink 131)

Political views

Fletcher was a firm believer in the divine right of kings and was in favour of an absolute monarch. In *Philip Massinger and John Fletcher: A Comparison* H.J. Makkink claims that Fletcher not only thought that kings were God's deputies, but that kings were also something like gods. (145) The king had the right to set the laws as he liked and therefore the king would be above the law. According to Makkink passive obedience of the subjects was thus Fletcher's ideal, which his characters would demonstrate. Noble characters do not criticize their monarch and those that do are disreputable. Makkink also claims that it is therefore a

natural consequence that no allusions were made political events in Fletcher's work. (149) However, he seems to overlook the existence of *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*, which is not just an allusion to politics, but quite literarily a narration of a controversial political event. It is possible that Fletcher felt more freedom to write about the trial of Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt because it was a foreign event.

Furthermore, as Gordon McMullan states in his book, Fletcher's political ideas and treatment of them in his plays were somewhat more complex and nuanced than Makkink leads us to believe; for example, his claim that Fletcher was against flattery, when he actually critiqued court masques as a good form of theatre because these are tied to rules of flattery. (McMullan 21) A further example of this, is that Fletcher *did* critique his government, though not the monarch directly, during the threat of a new war with Spain. A letter from Fletcher that McMullan discusses in his book, shows that Fletcher shows that the playwright wishes "the uncertainty would stop and England would exercise her power as a Protestant nation." (21) This shows criticism of England for not acting upon the threat, but it also suggests that Fletcher believed that a Protestant country had more power than a Catholic country and was therefore more likely to win the war. McMullan argues that Fletcher did discuss politics in his works, albeit in a more subtle way and not directly related to current events.

It is also worth noting that Fletcher expressed his love for England in several of his plays. (Makkink 145)

Philip Massinger

Biography

T.A. Dunn begins *Philip Massinger: The Man and the Playwright* with a long biography of Philip Massinger. What follows is a brief description based on this biography.

Philip Massinger was born in 1583 in Salisbury. He began to attend university at Oxford in 1602. It is unclear what he studied and since he did not leave with a degree it is unclear when he left exactly. He probably was an actor before he started to write plays and in 1613 Massinger had already written several plays in collaboration with other authors for Philip Henslowe, a theatre manager. This was about ten years before any play was credited to him as sole author. During his career Massinger wrote 16 works by himself, but many more in collaboration with others, including John Fletcher. After the death of Henslowe in 1616 he

started to write for the King's Men and he continued to write for them on a regular basis until his sudden death in 1640. He was buried in Southwark, in the same grave as Fletcher.

Religious views

Massinger was a devout man, though scholars do not seem to agree on his religious views. Dunn claims that Massinger's faith was central and orthodox, which would be a result of solid convictions and a natural conservatism, but we do not know for sure. H.J. Mannink adds to this that he was an open-minded believer. What Massinger found most important was that a person was devout in their faith, whatever it was, and he did not look down on people with a different religion than himself. Mannink even goes so far as to call Massinger "an apostle of tolerance." (121) This is reflected in his work. In his plays Massinger takes a "standpoint of a morality unquestioned and venerable, and behind all his morality lie the generally unstated but undeniable sanctions of Christianity." (Dunn 177) His good characters are always devout, though not necessarily Christian, and the evil characters are always breakers of the laws of God. (Idem 177)

Political views

According to Dunn, Massinger had two main concerns when it came to politics: liberty, and wise and just government, which were strongly linked for Massinger. Political liberty is based on an ethical conception of the liberty of the individual soul, and can only be attained when reason prevails over passion. (163) Dunn then continues to discuss the qualities of a good ruler. A king who rules with his passions and who places his personal interests above that of his people, is a tyrant. Eventually a tyrant will always be brought to justice for his foolish and evil actions. On the other hand, a good king is to rule his people disinterestedly, justly and wisely - not with harshness, but with sympathy and mercy. Dunn states that according to Massinger a king or ruler has a twofold duty: to God, who created him as man and monarch, and to his subjects. To properly carry out this double duty he must rule not according to mere man-made law, but according to the Moral Law or Justice of God. (Idem 172) However, Mannink points out that even though Massinger was in favour of an absolute monarch and he believed in the divine right of kings, the author did not see them as kinds of gods. Furthermore, Massinger was well aware that kings were also humans with flaws and weaknesses. Therefore, he concluded that kings had their duties as well as their rights – and one of these duties was to obey the law. (140-2)

Thus a king not only answers to God, but to his people as well. Massinger's side characters emphasize this. Among the noblest characters in Massinger's plays are men and women who do not approve of or agree with everything their sovereign says and does. Most importantly, these characters express their opinions to their monarch. (Makkink 142) Among the characters that cannot be trusted are those that keep their opinions to themselves and instead flatter their sovereign and let them have their way all the time. (Idem 144) In *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* we also find such side characters, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Dunn also points out that Massinger often wrote about the politics of his day, albeit mostly indirect. He was a close, thoughtful and forthright observer of the actions of his own monarchs and government and discussed these in his plays. (Dunn 172-3) That Massinger wrote *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*, so quickly after the actual events, shows that he was also interested in foreign politics as well as historical events.

It is also worth noting that Massinger expressed his love for England and the English in several plays, but also discusses the faults that he believed the English had. (Makkink 138)

Conclusion

This chapter shows that all the authors were active writers who created many plays during their lifetime. However, Fletcher and Massinger wrote mostly for profit, while Vondel had other ideas about theatre: his theories about drama and support of the medium proofs that he believed drama to be an art form and a useful one as well, as it was a way to convey knowledge to people of all classes. Religion was important, both in the life and work, of all three of them. It is interesting to see that Massinger and Vondel were fairly tolerant, while Fletcher strongly opposed Puritans and Catholics. This idea of tolerance is also visible in Vondel's view on politics. He thought a good ruler should be just and tolerant towards the faith that his subjects choose. Moreover, he believed the sovereignty and capability of the people was also important. However, Fletcher and Massinger believed God appointed a sovereign. According to Fletcher a king was above the law, while Massinger thought a monarch had to answer to his people as well as God. This difference in view is probably based on the fact that England was a monarchy, while the Low Countries were a republic. Now that their views on religion, politics and literature are clear we can move on to the analysis of their plays in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of the plays

In the previous chapter the viewpoints of the authors towards religion, politics and literature were discussed. So now we can look specifically at the conflict between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt and how this represented in the plays. It is important to note that in this analysis of *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* the focus lies on how it was before it was censored. Normally one should be wary of looking into the intend of the author. However, in this case I believe it necessary to look at the message that the authors wanted to convey to the audience and what the authorities wanted them to cut. This chapter will therefore look at the original version of the play and its possible meaning according to the authors' intentions and the next chapter will deal with the censorship and what that tells us about the English debate about Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. Though Vondel got in to trouble because of *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnoozelheit* the content of the play itself was never censored.

The explicitness of the plays

Fletcher and Massinger took a direct approach towards this subject. They used the names of the actual people that their play is about. Some names were slightly changed, but this is probably because of the English pronunciation of his name. Vondel however used a more subtle way to tell the story: allegories. But despite this literary form, people quickly figured out what the message was. As Nina Geerdink points out in 'Politics and Aesthetics – Decoding Allegory in *Palamedes* (1625)' it was "in vogue to decode the play as a narration of the real-life drama of Oldenbarnevelt." (225) Proof of this can be found in surviving prints. In the Special Collections Department of Utrecht University Library they have a first edition of *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnoozelheit* published by "Boekvercooper op 't Water/ in de vyeruge Calom" in Amsterdam.⁵ This copy has been rebound sometime after it was printed and this rebound includes two sets of notes that show how the reader was deciphering the allegories. The paper with the notes is of a different quality than that of the rest of the book, which proofs that they were added later. Possibly the owner of the book added this to make sure that other readers would understand the play, or for his own use.

Another surviving copy of the play, which dates from 1652 and was published by Abraham de Wees in Amsterdam⁶, shows how a reader of the play wrote the names of the

⁵ Moltzer 6 A 40 in the Special Collections Department of Utrecht University Library.

⁶ Moltzer 7E3 in the Special Collections Department of Utrecht University Library.

historical figures directly next to the Greek character names. The fact that someone wrote the explanations of the allegories directly into the book shows that the reader was studying the text and made a serious effort to understand it completely. In 1705 the Amersfoort publisher Pieter Brakman, printed a new edition of *Palamedes of Vermoorde Onnozelheit*.⁷ The title page claims that this version includes notes that were given by Vondel himself but never had been published before. This was probably a commercial stunt. These types of ‘information’ were often added to a new edition of book to make them more attractive to buyers. And since there was no such thing as copy right for the writer, publishers could change, added or delete anything from a text that they wanted if they thought it would boost the sale. These types of claims should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt. But this book does include the Dutch names next to the character names and the famous image of the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt.⁸ This suggests that by this point (eighty years later) the interpretation that *Palamedes* was about the conflict between Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits was widely accepted.

The reason Vondel, Fletcher and Massinger chose a different approach to Van Oldenbarnevelt’s story probably had to do with both their style and circumstances. Massinger was known for writing about contemporary issues (Garrett 8) and was therefore used to working with this type of subject. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 2, realistic theatre was more common and appreciated in England than it was in the Dutch Republic. Besides this Massinger and Fletcher probably wanted to make sure that their message was absolutely clear to their English audience. Though a lot of people had no doubt heard about the conflict, chances were they did not know all the ins and outs about it, simply because it did not happen in their own country. *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* might have been the first occasion they learned the details about the events. Therefore, the chance of being misinterpreted when using other names was too big. A direct approach would be more successful.

Though Vondel sometimes wrote explicitly about historical events, he was best known for writing plays based on biblical and ancient Greek material as was more common in the Dutch theatre. Therefore, using the Greek story of Palamedes to tell the history of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt is a logical step. Furthermore, as Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn explain a way to avoid censorship might be to veil the message in allegory or mythology, and by doing so not attack a contemporary authority or group of people directly. (“Early Modern Literary Cultures and Public Opinion” 281) It is therefore well possible that Vondel also choose this

⁷ UB-Zuid ODA 8803 in the Special Collections Department of Utrecht University Library.

⁸ This is the same image as is featured on the title page of this thesis.

method to conceal his true message for safety reasons as well. However, if this was the case it did not work very well. Since, there still was a lot of controversy and Vondel had to flee Amsterdam for a while. But if he had made it more explicit the critique would have been even more severe and the consequences for his business and personal safety would have been more far reaching.

Image created of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt

In *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* Van Oldenbarnevelt is called Barnevelt, probably because of the English pronunciation of his name. In Vondel's play Palamedes represents Van Oldenbarnevelt. In this analysis these names are used when discussing the characters and their actions in the play and Van Oldenbarnevelt is used when the actual person is discussed.

Noble versus corrupt

In *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* Fletcher and Massinger portray Barnevelt as the over-ambitious antagonist. His arrogance is shown in the opening lines of the play in which Van Oldenbarnevelt states: "The Prince of Orange now, all names are Lost els/ the hee's alone the Father of Cuntri?/ said you not soe?" (I.1, 1-3) This continues to show Barnevelt's jealousy of the prince's reputation and status in the Dutch Republic. He goes on to state that Orange's courage is simply based on his armies, that he is a usurper of Barnevelt and that the country should be more grateful towards him for saving them from the Spanish.

Barnevelt is also portrayed as cruel and he is willing to do anything to save himself. An good example of this is Barnevelt final conversation with Leidenberch. This character is no doubt based on Ledenberg, the secretary of the States General and Van Oldenbarnevelt's right hand. He matches the description that Makkink gave of the way Massinger often characterized people that cannot be trusted: those that keep their opinions to themselves and instead flatter their sovereign and let them have their way all the time. (144) But even though he is a character that cannot be trusted completely, what happens in their last conversation is severe. Barnevelt is furious about Leidenberch's confession, and even though this is understandable, he goes too far in his treatment of Leidenberch by verbally assaulting him: "how I could curse thee Foole: despise thee, spurne thee:/ but thou art a thing, not worthie of mine anger,/ a Frend? A dog: a whore had byn more secreat,/ a common whore, a closer Cabinet." (Fletcher & Massinger III.4, 1493-6) To Barnevelt Leidenberch is not even a human

being any more, but an animal that can and should be disposed of: he urges Leidenberch to commit suicide. “Dye un compelled: and mock their preparations,/ their envyes, and the Iustice.” (Idem III.4, 1528) Barnevelt sees Leidenberch’s death as a solution for his problem. The authors added this encouragement to commit suicide. Ledenberg was indeed accused of corruption, but he committed suicide because one of the judges was a personal enemy of him. (Beelaerts van Blokland 151) This was probably done to underscore Barnevelt’s role as the antagonist.

However, in Vondel’s play Palamedes is the noble and stoic hero; an true example of the moral hero as Seneca used them. In ‘Politics and Aesthetics – Decoding Allegory in Palamedes (1625)’ Geerdink points out that this is partly because of his style and language. He is the only character who speaks almost entirely in poetic language and he employs the occasional Senecan stoic maxim. This enforces the image of quiet and wise old man. This character is different from the classical Palamedes, who was a young man, so Vondel must have done this to make Palamedes a more convincing allegory of Van Oldenbarnevelt. (242)

The content of Palamedes’s speeches shows this. For example during his trial he states: “’t Is beter dat ick lij, dan dat ick mijne sege/ Met burgermoord beveleck,” (Vondel 52) (It is better that I suffer, than that my victory/ is stained with civilian murder.)⁹ He knows he is innocent, but he would rather suffer himself than let the common people become a victim, which is a noble act. Later on the audience finds that he is at peace with the prospect of being executed: “Ick steun op mijn gemoed, en op mijn goede saecke./ Ick stap mijn' dood te moet: sy streck' 't gemeen tot baet,/ Als ick mijn bloed vergiet ten offer voor den staet.” (Idem 55) (I am supported by my soul and my good case./ I greet my death: she makes the bad into gain/ As I spill my blood as a sacrifice for the state.) This he shows that has a stoic attitude towards his death and faith. He knows he is innocent, but is nevertheless willing to die for his country, moreover it appears he wants to die as some sort of redemption.

Leadership

The impression the audience gets of Barnevelt in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* is that he is a great leader who has done a lot for the Dutch Republic. But this image is mainly created by Barnevelt himself, which takes away some credibility. On top of this he is a corrupt leader, who does not want to share the power. This shown by him actively plotting against Orange and the fact that he does not take advise from his lords. Modesbargen tries to tell his leader

⁹ All the translations from Dutch to English in this chapter were made by me. I focused on the content of the speech and translate it to modern English.

that he is not making a well thought through decision. Modesbargen shows his respect and love for Barnevelt, but he also recognizes that Barnevelt has changed and he tries to tell Barnevelt in a polite manner that his actions are foolish. Vandort attempts to stop the critique by pointing out to Modesbargen that he is offending Barnevelt. Modesbargen replies: “’t better then to flatter him, as You doe.” (Fletcher & Massinger I.1, 82) Barnevelt however, does not take Modesbargen advice seriously. Throughout the play Modesbargen is portrayed as a noble character, who fits nicely in Massingers view of a noble character: someone who disapproves or disagrees with his sovereign, especially, someone who expresses his opinions to his monarch. (Makkink 142) So, when Barnevelt ignores his advice time and time again this shows that he is not open-minded towards other opinions and critique and believes that his way is the only way.

In Vondel’s play it is less obvious what type of leader Palamedes is because the accusations against him were already made. In the opening monologue that Palamedes gives he already refutes the charges made against him. So, it is clear that he is innocent, which could mean that is a good leader. His willingness to die for his people also points in this direction. Geerdink claims that Agamemnon views Palamedes as a competitor. (237) And Bettina Noak states that the dispute is “the conflict between two characters who are at the same level and therefore have a kind of ‘mirror relationship’ (...), the one wanting what the other has: power.” (133) A statement by Ulysses supports this: “De wereld geensins lyd twee schitterende sonnen:/Soo duld geen heerschappye twee hoofden in een rijck (Vondel 34) (Like the world does not tolerate two shining suns/ A state does not tolerate the rule of two leaders.) The celebration of Palamedes’s death by Priam and Hecuba, who were recognized as the Spanish rulers of the Southern Low Countries, suggests that their enemies considered him an important leader. So, Palamedes was apparently Agamemnon’s equal when it came to leadership and because he is nobler than Agamemnon it can be concluded that he is a better leader.

Image created of Maurits of Nassau

In *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* Maurits is called Orange or Prince. And in *Palamedes* Agamemnon is the personification of Maurits. In this analysis the names of the characters are used when discussing the characters and their actions in the play and Maurits when the actual person is discussed.

Humility versus arrogance

In *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* Orange is a humble character. In act 1 scene 3 the prince is refused access to the council by a guard. Instead of arrogantly claiming his place in council Orange asks: “[H]ave I lost my place in Councell? are my services/ growne to so poore regards, my worth so banckrupt,/ or am I tainted with dishonest actions/ that I am held vnfit my Cuntris business?” (Fletcher & Massinger I.3, 403-6) This shows that Orange believed that he serves the Republic, not the other way around and his first impulse is therefore to doubt himself and his actions and not to question the council. So, he tells his followers to acknowledge the will of the council in a graceful manner by saying: “[T]hey are your Masters, yor best masters, noblest,/ those that protect yor states, hold vp Yor fortunes,/ (...) I, and all Soldiers els, (...) are doble paid tyde in faith to obserue their pleasures.” (Idem I.3, 448-54) This humility is in sharp contrast with Barnevelt’s arrogance later in this scene, The Collonell emphasizes this by calling him: “[A] Prince of rare humanitie, and temper.” (Idem I.3, 455)

In *Palamedes* on the other hand Maurits is an arrogant character who believes that because he is king, people should do what he wants. If not there are severe consequences. For example when Palamedes refuses to give the answers that Agamemnon wants to hear he demands than the use of torture. (Vondel 57) But as Geerdink points out that Agamemnon is also a rational character, who, in comparison to other characters, is less emotional. (238) This image resembles Maurits, who was in fact a very rational person. However, Agamemnon is more passionate when it comes to Palamedes’s trial. For example when he calls Palamedes ‘hondsvot’ (scoundrel) his well-balanced use of language is disrupted. (Idem 238) This suggests that the charges were not rational decisions and therefore unjust.

Leadership

Fletcher and Massinger create the image of a true leader, whose status is almost like a monarch. For example in the scene previously discussed scene, Orange’s uncle William is shocked when the Prince’s excess to the council is denied: “Is the Prince of no more value, no more respect/ then like a Page?” (Fletcher & Massinger I.3, 396-7) This statement shows that William believes that Orange should be treated with respect because of his position.

And when Captain 1 is asked to join Barnevelt’s cause he replies: “We are entertained/ to serve the general States, and not one Province:/ to fight as often as the Prince of Orange/ shall lead vs forth, and not to stand against him:/ to guard this Cuntrie, not to ruyn it.” (Idem

II.1, 627-31) This not only shows the loyalty of the army towards their general, it also connects Orange and the States General. And according to the captain Orange is a leader for the whole country, while Barnevelt only leads a province. Moreover, this statement shows that Orange's leadership protects the country and that Barnevelt is destroying it. It is also important to note that right before his death Barnevelt express his hope for Orange and the way the country should be ruled: "[N]ow let him raigne alone,/ and with his rayes, give life, and light to all men,/ May he protect with honor, fight with fortune,/ and dye with generall love, an old and good Prince." (Idem V.3, 2984-7) Not only does Barnevelt admit his defeat here, but he also makes Orange into great Prince who can now reign alone.

The final example that should be discussed are the very first words that Orange speaks when he appears on stage for the first time are: "I now, methincks, I feele the happynes/ of being sproong from such a noble Father/ that sacrificzd his honor, life, and fortune/ his lov's Cuntry." (Fletcher & Massinger I.3, 333-6) By opening in this way the link between Orange and his highly respected father is emphasized and some of this father glory rubs off on him instantly. This is a character that knows he has big shoes to fill in his function as Stadtholder, but who at the same time has the potential to do this because he has his father's blood in his veins. But these lines also echo the first line of Van Oldenbarnevelt who questioned Orange's reputation of Father of the Country and expressed his jealousy towards this status. By having the prince discuss his heritage with such humility in his first lines shows the viewer that Orange is indeed the right full leader and like his father William of Orange before him, the father of the Dutch Republic.

But in *Palamedes* Agamemnon sees himself as an absolute monarch, at least he wishes to be. Agamemnon's view on his power and how he should be able to use it, is best shown in his discussion with Nestor, the impartial judge:

Agamemnon: Wat Agamemnon drijft dat moet voor al geschien.
't Betaemt den minderen voor meerdre macht te duycken.

Nestor: Een Koning kan zeer licht d'ontfange maght misbruycken.

Agamemnon: Dat oordeel staet aen hem. (Vondel 48)

Agamemnon: What Agamemnon motivates should happen
It becomes inferiors to move for superior power.

Nestor: A King can very lightly abuse the given power.

Agamemnon: That judgement belongs to him.

This proves that Agamemnon believed that people should do what he wants since he is superior to them and he is also the one who decides when power is abused. In other words, in Agamemnon's view he can do and demand what he wants and no one can call him out on it.

In *Palamedes* the link to William of Orange is also made. When Agamemnon threatens with torture, Palamedes states in his defence that Agamemnon's father believed that issues of laws and rights were better dealt with through agreements on paper, than war and violence, such as Agamemnon is using. (Idem 58) So, here the comparison is a negative one. While this father was the ideal leader, noble and reasonable, Agamemnon is an unnecessary violent ruler.

But the image that probably stays with the reader after finishing the play is that of Agamemnon drinking Palamedes's blood. (Idem 96) It shows that Vondel believed that the execution was a horrific crime, but moreover it shows how he viewed Maurits: a bloodthirsty tyrant. The contrast with the humble prince from *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* could not possibly be bigger.

Narration of the events

Conspiracy

In *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* Barnevelt does indeed plot against Orange. Though it is unclear what this plot actually entails until the trial it is evident from the first scene that there is indeed a conspiracy, because of the discussion that he has with his lords. Here Fletcher and Massinger make it into a conspiracy between the secular and clerical powers. Barnevelt promises to support Utenbogart and Taurinus, both important Arminian preachers and they support him. And it seems he also uses the Arminian cause to cover it up as Modesbargen warning shows: "[W]here Religion/ is made a cloke to or bad purposes/ they seldom have succes." (Fletcher & Massinger I.2 269-71) Barnevelt ignores this and continues with his plans.

In *Palamedes* it is not Palamedes who is involved in a conspiracy. The accusations that were made against are refuted in his opening monologue. However, Ulysses and Diomedes conspire to frame Palamedes. Ulysses planned it and wrote the letter discussing a bribe that was sent supposedly by Priam and he then has Diomedes pretend to intercept the letter and kills a Trojan slave to make it believable. This letter is brought to Agamemnon and serves as proof for the charges that are made against Palamedes. (Vondel 33)

Just as in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* religion is part of this plot as well. When Ulysses tries to convince Diomedes that the conspiracy will be successful he states: “WY hebben op ons' sy' de weereldlijcke machten,/ En geestelijcken arm gesterckt met domme krachten.” (Idem 32) (We have the worldly powers on our side/ and the religious arm is strengthened by dumb forces.) In *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* it are the clerical and secular leaders who plotted against Orange, but there is no divine intervention in the play. But here Ulysses is the fate that will bring about Palamedes’s downfall. This idea of fate is again emphasized in the choruses at the end of the act. These choruses are the Peloponnesers and Ithakoizes, who both represent followers of Maurits. They discuss and praise the fate of several gods. In *Vondel belicht: Voorstellingen van soevereiniteit* Frans-Willem Korsten states that these choruses represent the parties that Vondel critiqued not only for their treatment of Van Oldenbarnevelt, but also because of their religious view. (131) Korsten claims that fate should be seen as an allegory for the Calvinistic view on predestination. The discussion on this view was what started the whole conflict. (132) But apart from fate there is also help in the form of a priest: Calches, who is an allegory for Bogerman, the chairman of the Synod of Dordrecht. He is supportive of the charges against Palamedes, which has a large influence on the discussion making. Geerdink points out that the cunning of Calches is one of the main reasons why Palamedes is eventually convicted. (237)

Deciding to persecute Van Oldenbarnevelt

In *Palamedes* Vondel follows Horatius advice to focus on the important phase of the action, which is Palamedes actual downfall. Therefore the accusations against Palamedes were already made before the action of the play starts. So, the moment at which Agamemnon decided to take Palamedes down is not narrated. But in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* the moment when Orange decides that Barnevelt should be taken out of his political position is quite easy to pinpoint in act one scene three. Orange’s patience has run out and he confronts Barnevelt about his crimes and arrogance:

[W]ho raised theis new religious forces, Sir?
 and by what warrant? what assignment had ye
 from the States generall: who blew new fires,
 even fires of fowle rebellion, I must tell ye,
 the bellows to it, Religion. you nere lou’d yet
 but for yor ends; through all the Townes, the Garrisons

to fright the vnion of the State, to shake it?
what syns are theis? you may smile with much comfort,
and they that see ye, and not looke closely to ye,
may crye too, er't be long. (Fletcher & Massinger I.3, 519-28)

These lines give a preview of the charges against Van Oldenbarnevelt: his political moves concerning religion have endangered the Dutch Republic, he acted on his own without any regard for the States General and he did it all to serve his own ends. Barnevelt ignores the critique and it is at this point that Orange decides that Barnevelt should be stopped: “[S]poiles all,/ he that dare live to see him work his ends out,/ vncrossed, and vnprevented; (...) Consider my best Lords, my noblest Masters,/ how most, most fitt, how iust and necessary/ a sodaine, and a strong prevention.” (Idem I.3, 539-45)

Trial

Fletcher and Massinger attempted to make the trial of Barnevelt look as much like the actual trial as they could with the material that they had. The structure is the same. Witnesses are called for evidence including Ledenberch's statement. Barnevelt seems surprised that even though Ledenberch has committed suicide, his testimony is still used. The charges that are made against Barnevelt are based on the confessions of Barnevelt's associates Ledenberch and Taurinus, in other words a witness from the secular and the clerical powers that were present in the plot. The charges are:

First that the Arminian Faction (of which Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt (...) was without contradiction the head) had resolved, and agreed, to renounce, and break, the generality, and vnitie of the State.

Secondly Change, and alter the Religion: and to that end without the Consent of the general States, had raysed vp and dispeised 3000 Arminian Soldiers

Thirdly. To degrade the Prince of Orange.

Fourthly. To massacre the people of the Townes, which were their greatest Enemies; or offered resistaunce.

Fiftly yf that fayled to take in assistaunce of some forreigne Potentates as Spaine, or Brabant, delivering vnto them

Vtricht, Nimweghen, Bergen op zone, and the Brill. (Fletcher & Massinger IV.5, 2193-209)

These charges are roughly the same as from the actual trial, but they are formulated in a sharper tone and Barnevelt is more explicitly accused of high treason. Barnevelt then gets the chance to defend himself. His main defence strategy seems to be to arrogantly emphasize that the country should be grateful towards him for saving and making the country to what it now is, accusing Orange of being a bad general and accusing him of wanting to get rid of him in order to become an absolute monarch. None of these arguments found to be convincing.

It is interesting that Modesbargen is brought back during the trial. Modesbargen is probably based on Van Oldenbarnevelt's son in law Moersbergen, who was informed that charges would be made against him and he escaped persecution by fleeing the country. (Beelaerts van Blokland 151) But in the play Modesbargen eventually gets arrested for his participation in Barnevelt's plans. The reason for this could be to have a strong witness at Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial that the audience was already familiar with, since Modesbargen only action after his arrest is to testify against Van Oldenbarnevelt in order to get to a final conviction. This makes the trial seem more fair and just, because it is based on actual evidence.

In Vondel's play the main charges that are made against Palamedes are conspiring with the opponent and taking enemy money. These match the Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial: taking gifts was an actual charge and conspiring with the enemy was strongly implied. The letter and Diomedes's testimony are used as evidence for this and are considered to be very convincing. During the questioning Palamedes gets the chance to defend himself. He is consistent in his claim that he is innocent but he remains stoic. Maybe because he knows that the decision to convict him has already been made. This was somewhat the same situation as Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial, even though Van Oldenbarnevelt did defend himself fiercely till the very end. However, an important difference is that Agamemnon calls for torture when Palamedes refuses to confess while there was never any threat of violence used against Van Oldenbarnevelt during the actual trial. Though the torturing does not take place, Agamemnon's suggestion was probably added to make him look more like a cruel and unjust leader. This fits within Vondel's opposing view towards violence, only a bad ruler would use it.

There are several Greeks present at the trial that participate in the trial. One of them is Nestor who is neutral about the case and who believes that no judgement should be made until they know all the facts. He is the voice of reason while the others are eager to jump to conclusions and get rid of Palamedes. But even though Palamedes is not completely without

an ally, he cannot escape a conviction since it is Agamemnon who passes judgement and has him officially arrested. (Vondel 61) This is an important difference with the trial of Van Oldenbarnevelt. He was judged by 24 judges and Maurits had nothing to do with it. Making Maurits the only judge through the allegory of Agamemnon suggests that the judges were all corrupt and in Maurits's pocket from the beginning. Maurits wanted a conviction and he got one.

Execution

In *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* the execution has some similarities to the actual event. It is on a scaffold in public and while on the scaffold Barnevelt again states that this is the thanks he gets for his good work. Van Oldenbarnevelt is reported to express similar sentiments as he climbed the scaffold. Barnevelt is also killed by beheading. Orange is not present at the execution just like Maurits was not present at Van Oldenbarnevelt's death.

However, Barnevelt's declaration of innocence is missing. Instead Barnevelt expresses his hope that Orange will be good and successful ruler and he asks the people to forget him, because it would hurt him even more than their malice. (Fletcher & Massinger V.3, 2984-90) This is an understandable adjustment since Barnevelt is clearly guilty in the play, so it makes more sense for him to admit defeat, than to declare his none-existing innocence. It also once again emphasizes that Orange is the rightful and just ruler.

In *Palamedes* the execution does not take place on stage, but is described in great detail to Oates by a messenger in the fifth act. Palamedes's death does not resemble Van Oldenbarnevelt's execution, since he is stoned to death. However, Van Oldenbarnevelt's famous declaration of innocence and the last words of Palamedes are very similar. The messenger describes it as follows:

So staende in t'openbaer, met opgerechten hoofde,
O mannen, seyd hy, of uwe heusheyd noyt geloofde
Al 't geen de valscheyd heeft van landverraeder dicht,
Dat was mijns harten wensch. 'k heb volgens mynen plicht
Gants vroom, en ongeveynst, en opentlijck gehandelt,
En sterf een oprecht Grieck, gelijk ick heb gewandelt. (Vondel 83)

So standing in public, with head held high
O men, he said, please do not believe

All the false accusations that I would be a traitor
That was my heart desire, I have according to my duty
Very pious and honestly and openly acted
And die a faithful Greek, the same as I was in life

While Den Tex quotes the speech, which was addressed to audience with a strong voice, from witness reports: “Mannen, gelooft niet, dat ick een Landt- verrader ben, ick hebbe oprecht ende vroom gehandelt, als een goed Patriot, ende die sal ick sterven.” (Den Tex, 262) (Men, do not believe that I am a traitor, I have acted honestly and pious, being a good Patriot, and like that I will die.) When comparing the texts the reader noticed that the speeches are virtually the same. Vondel must have known the speech, which was no doubt printed in pamphlets, and adapted it to fit his rhyming scheme. This was no doubt to emphasize the allegory and to stress the innocence of both the character and Van Oldenbarnvelt.

Another element of the execution is that the reaction of the audience is the same. Den Tex describes that at Van Oldenbarnevelt’s execution the crowd robbed all his blood of the scaffold to sell or to save as a keepsake. (263) This already horrific scene becomes even worse in the play. The messenger describes to Oates that “Veel dooptender in 't bloed de vochtbesweete doecken,/ En wrongen 't uyt in wijn, en soopen 't op met vloecken,” (Vondel 84) (Many dipped fluidabsorbing clothes in the blood/ and extord it the wine and drink it while cursing.) And as discussed previously Agamemnon was one of them. This image was no doubt meant to make the execution look even more unjust and Van Oldenbarnevelt’s enemies make into barbarians.

Aftermath

Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt ends with the execution of Barnevelt, but in *Palamedes* the last act is dedicated to the aftermath of the execution. Priam and Hecuba and the chorus of Trojan virgins that ends the play, who are an allegory for the Spanish all celebrate Palamedes’s death. This was probably added to discuss the consequences of Van Oldenbarnevelts execution for the country and suggests that by killing him the Dutch had helped their enemy.

Another striking element of the last act is when the desperate Oates asks Neptuyn (the god Neptune), to take revenge for the death of his brother. Neptuyn then proceeds to give a long prophecy, in which he explains the horrible faith of the Greeks who were involved in the conviction, including Ulysses and Agamemnon as a consequence of their treatment of Palamedes. However, the prediction contains only a few parallels with the actual events. Most

of it comes from the classical sources that Vondel would have used. Geerdink points out that only the death of Agamemnon might have motivated an allegorical reading. Unlike Agamemnon, Maurits was not killed by his wife, but their resemblances are underlined by their encounter with a storm: Agamemnon on his way home and Maurits during the battle at Antwerp. Geerdink suggests that Maurits's death might have been interpreted as a fulfilment of the prophecy in the play. (241) Noak seems to agree with this and states that this prophecy represents "the principle of nemesis, who depicts the downfall of the tyrant Agamemnon and in so doing promises that righteousness will be restored in the future." (134) This way the play would still have a sense of justice and it shows that those who are corrupt will not get away with it in the long run.

Role of the English

What makes the representation of the events in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* even more interesting is that the play emphasizes the English involvement by including English characters and mentionings of the English on several occasions. The English gentlewoman is an interesting character. She asks the Arminian Holderus about the Dutch Women: "[C]an theis holly Woemen/ that you have arm'd against obedience,/ and made contempners of the Fooles, their husbands,/ examiners of State, can they doe any thing? can they defy the Prince?" (Fletcher & Massinger II.2 831-5) Holderus responds that they can. (Idem II.2 836) This shocks her. When the city is taken by the English and everyone starts to panic the English Woman points out that they cannot put their money where their mouth is, by saying "Now, wher's yor valors?/ You that would eat the Prince?" (Idem II.6 934-5) This openly critiquing makes her into a moral contrast with the Arminian women.

Another way in which the presence of the English stands out, is that they are mentioned as the cause for Remonstrants undoing on several points in the play. When they hear that the English troops have sided with Maurits Leidenberge says "[T]hose English are the men borne to undooe vs." (Idem II.5 924) Another example of this is when Van Oldenbarnevelt snaps against his daughter after he has realized that he is indeed in trouble: "[G]oe marry an English Captaine, and hee'll teach thee/ hoe to defy thy Father, and his fortune." (Idem, IV.3 1953-4) And the English troops are indeed the undoing of Barnevelt when they help to take over the remaining resistant cities in the name of Orange.

The direct presentation of the English in this manner was probably done in an attempt to highlight the involvement in the conflict. As mentioned in chapter 4, according to Makkink

both Fletcher and Massinger often expressed their love of England in their plays (138; 145) and they probably could not pass up on an opportunity to show the influence of the English in other countries. Moreover, it could be argued that the English involvement in Van Oldenbarnevelt's downfall was a way to avenge the way in which Leicester and James I were, from the English viewpoint, mistreated by the politician.

One first sight it seems that there are no English characters or influences in the play. However, it can be argued that Diomedes was not supposed to be William of Orange, the count of Friesland, as was assumed, but Sir Dudley Carleton. In the play Diomedes is an ally in the conspiracy of Ulysses who supposedly represented Van Aerssen. Though William of Orange did side with his nephew on the conflict, he was not involved in the accusations raised by Van Aerssen. Carleton on the other hand was. And since he was The Hague, while Van Aerssen was in France, it is possible that he was in direct contact with Maurits on the issue. Carleton would then be the messenger of the plot, just like Diomedes is in the play.

Nevertheless, in none of the analyses of allegory that remain from that time are any English characters identified. One possible explanation could be that including criticism towards England and James I would push the limits too much and Vondel therefore left it out. However, it is more likely that Vondel and the Dutch people saw the conflict between Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt primarily as a Dutch conflict and was therefore treated it as such. In Vondel's view Maurits was the main perpetrator and Van Oldenbarnevelt the victim and he might have that thought the English influence had been not significant enough to discuss.

Conclusion

Both plays are clearly based on the same events, but take a very different stance on the matter and use different styles to express this. To Fletcher and Massinger Van Oldenbarnevelt was the enemy of Maurits, the rightful ruler, and a traitor of his country. They show this in a realistic manner to prove that this is what happened. Vondel on the other hand views Van Oldenbarnevelt as a righteous man and great leader, who became the victim of a foil conspiracy and the hunger for power of the tyrant Maurits. He expresses this in the form of an allegory and the symbolic value that this adds to the story emphasizes his point. All the authors take from the actual events is that which proves their views and underline the images that they create of Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt.

However, it is interesting that in both plays religion and its involvement in the conflict is important. This shows that the authors and probably their aimed audience as well, viewed this conflict as being both political and religious.

The English involvement is another important issue. It is no surprise that the English play would highlight this. But it is a bit strange that Vondel does not, since the English influence was clearly present during the conflict. Though the comparative approach that is used in this thesis sheds new light on Diomedes as a possible allegory for Sir Dudley Carleton, as far as we know contemporaries did not make this link. This is probably because Maurits and Aerssen were viewed as the main perpetrators.

It should also be stressed that both plays show the viewpoint of a specific community. Fletcher and Massinger show the ideas that most English probably had about the Dutch situation, while Vondel wrote from the perspective of a minority that was formed by the Arminians who criticised the Gomarist and the policy of Maurits, to stand up for the rights of the suppressed Remonstrants, whom he strongly sympathized with. And now that the messages of the plays are clear we can move on to discuss the reception of these works. This will tell us more about the role these plays had in forming and representing the public opinion on this conflict. It will also give more insight into the interaction between England and the Dutch Republic.

Chapter 6: Reception of the plays

This chapter will discuss the reception of the plays. As T.H. Howard-Hill states in ‘Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* in 1619’:

A censor who reads attentively a play submitted to his judgement and traces his progress through the play with marginal annotations provides challenging evidence of the concerns of a contemporary reader and direct a modern reader to of may thereby interpretations passages he might other wise have neglected. (39)

So, by looking at what was censored in the plays we can find out what were the important issues and concerns of the authorities. Therefore this chapter will first look into the censorship and legal consequences for the authors. After that I will look into the performance and publishing history of the plays, because these can tell us more about how they were received by the audience. This will then be followed by a short discussion of the reception of the authors abroad, in order to see whether or not the plays themselves could have been part of a shared transnational culture and international debate.

Censorship and legal consequences for the authors

As Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn state the sixteenth century political, religious and intellectual authorities were concerned about the persuasive power of literature. Out of fear of the divisive potential of such works, they developed special censorship rules. Among these were bans on the treatment of certain subjects, the checking of texts prior to performance, and thereafter prosecution. (“Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 2) What these concerns were could shift over time depending on what was more important to the government. In ‘Greater Themes for Insurrection's Arguing': Political Censorship of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage’ Janet Clare states that Elizabeth I had been worried about a possible rebellion in her own country and had therefore installed a sharp surveillance on subjects such as English history. James I on the other hand seems to have been more concerned with the representation of foreign affairs. (181-2)

Both *Palamedes* and *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* were subject to censorship and here the consequences for the authors, but also for the content of the plays, will be discussed.

The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt

The play has survived in manuscript form.¹⁰ The great advantage of this is that it shows notes from the different editors that were involved in making the final text, which are less often included in a print. A disadvantage is of course that the readability can be less, because of the handwriting and the crossing out of lines by note givers. According to T.H. Howard-Hill, who has done a lot of research on *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* and its manuscript and censorship, the manuscript is written in the mixed hand of Ralph Crane, a professional scribe. In addition, the King's Company bookkeeper added the names of actors of minor parts and stage-properties. On a textual level the bookkeeper made a few alternations and indicated a few deletions, but did not suggest major changes to the actual content. The hand of Sir George Buc, Master of the Revels, may also be observed in the marks of censorship and textual alterations that can be found throughout the text. (Howard-Hill, "Introduction" vi) One could wonder why the hand of the authors cannot be found in the manuscript. As Peter Stallybrass and Roger Chartier explain professional dramatists wrote for professional actors, whose job it was to translate the script into performances. They did this according to their own exacting standards. Compositors, and sometimes scribes as intermediaries, had to take performance scripts and turn them into readable texts, usually for the Master of Revels to have it checked. (36-37) So, Crane had been the one to actually make the text to send to the Master of Revels from what he had gotten from the authors. His influence on the text, as far as visible, is therefore also interesting to take a better look at. The identification of these different note givers, especially Buc's, allows a thorough analysis of what was censored and why. In order to do this some of the more striking cases of censorship will be discussed in this section.

As discussed in the previous chapter the first scene of the play shows Barnevelt's jealousy of Orange. Overall Buc did not have a problem with this scene, probably because it makes Barnevelt in to the antagonist straightaway. However, he did scratch out some details that could be offensive to Maurits. In lines 35 when Barnevelt discusses the prince's courage Buc scratches out "increasd with al the Armyes" with was replaced by the scribe with "though I must say 'tis great." (Fletcher & Massinger I.1, 36). Instead of a stab at Maurits, the remark

¹⁰ Which is located in The British Museum. (BM Department of Manuscripts. *Minutes: acquisitions, 1849-1851, f. 485*) In this thesis a reprint of this manuscript, which was edited by Howard-Hill, which includes all the notes from the different editors, is used.

is now an acknowledgement of his courage as something genuinely great. A few lines down the words “vsurper of what’s mine” (Idem I.1, 51) were scratched out. The idea of the Prince of Orange as a usurper was probably unacceptable even if it came from the antagonist. Since normally it was forbidden to represent living rulers on stage (Butler 580), this play was already pushing the limits, because Maurits was still alive. Therefore, the play could not afford to make the prince look bad in any way.

Another example is the scene in which the council denies the prince’s access to the meeting. When asked why the Stadtholder cannot enter the council meeting the second guard replies with great respect that they are just following orders. Next to this conversation Buc wrote some commentary: “I like not this: Neith[er] do I think yt the pr[ince] was thus disgracefully used.” (Fletcher & Massinger 13)¹¹

In his discussion of this scene McMullan states that “The effect of a scene of this nature, particularly about a well-known republican leader, is (...) to foreground the possibility of subjects’ autonomy and agency in face of absolutist claims.” (88) In other words this scene shows the power the people have against their sovereign. McMullan’s observation points towards a possible reason to cut or at least change this part: the common people could get the idea that they have or should have more agency than they currently have. Because according to this scene authority should be with the people, not the sovereign. This is of course dangerous for James I and his government, because it would limit and endanger their power.

However, another reason could be that Buc objected to the scene because of the historical incorrectness of the event. As Howard-Hill argues in ‘Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* in 1619’ he had followed the conflict closely and so it is possible that he knew the prince was never ‘thus ungracefully’ treated by the council. (57) Howard-Hill continues by pointing out that Buc probably understood the strategy of the writers to show Maurits’s humility through this scene, because he does not give further marks to the scene. (Idem 58) So, his critique would than be purely based on the historical facts not so much on the image that it creates of Maurits, since this is a positive one.

Another scene that according to Buc required cutting is scene 5 of act 4. This scene shows the trial and during the questioning Barnevelt points out to Orange that he himself was the mind behind the prince’s victories, as was discussed in the previous chapter. He also accuses Orange of being a coward. When Barnevelt brings up the battle at Ostend Maurits replies by saying “I was in person there.” (Fletcher & Massinger IV.5, 2347) This statement

¹¹ This is a page number, because Buc wrote it in the margins.

seems to be his defence against the accusation, because how could he possibly be a coward if he was present at the battle? Van Oldenbarnevelt immediately refutes this by saying: “[A]nd yet you clayme/ as little in the victory as I,/ that then was absent. (...) I must confes ‘tis fit a Generall/ should looke out for safetie.” (Idem IV.5 2350-4) These lines imply that Maurits would be a coward and disgraces the position of general and this is problematic for the image that the authorities wanted the English to have of the prince, so it had to be cut.

It appears the Master of Revels was also concerned about the closing lines. In these lines (2434-46) Barnevelt claims that by getting rid of him the prince is making his passage to an absolute monarchy. Barnevelt does this first of all by making a comparison to Octavius and Cato. Buc first tried to rewrite this:

Octavius, when he did affect the Empire,
And strove to tread vpon the neck of Rome,
And all hir auncient freedoms, [tooke that course] **cut of his opposites.**
[that now is practisd on you]: for the Cato’s
and all free speritts slaine, or els proscibd
that durst have stird against him, he then sceasd
the absolute rule of all [you can apply this] (Fletcher & Massinger IV.5, 2434-40)

In this citation what should be deleted is placed between hooks and what is added is marked by bold type as Howard-Hill did in ‘Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619.’ (58-9) By taking out the direct invitation to apply this analogy to the present situation, Buc probably attempted to amend the scene. It would than just be an example from ancient history with which Barnevelt tried to show of his knowledge.

Later in the scene Barnevelt makes his charge more explicit: “(...) [W]hen too late you see this Government/ changd to a Monarchie, you’ll whole in vaine/ and wish you had Barnevelt again.” (Fletcher & Massinger IV.5 2444-6) As Howard-Hill points out Buc first tried to rewrite them: “To a Monarchie” was to become “to another forme”. (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619” 59) This would have been more acceptable since the Low Countries remained a Republic after Van Oldenbarnevelt’s death and Maurits did not show any intention to change that.

However, Buc must have thought that even after his changes the scene could still lead to unwanted interpretations, because he finally marked the lines 2434-46 for deletion. Howard-Hill gives an interesting and plausible explanation for this. According to him the

analogy of Octavius and Cato could not only be applied to the situation of Van Oldenbarnevelt with Maurits, but also to James I. The English king asserted absolute rule over the prerogatives of Parliament and there was a severe restriction on all forms of dissent during his reign. (Idem 59) Thus, applying the analogy to the Dutch situation was already problematic, because it made Maurits look bad, but applying it the English situation would be critique on James I and that hit too close to home. Therefore the passage had to be cut entirely.

The censorship of the religious aspects of the play is more problematic to discuss, since it is mostly Crane, the scribe, who made these alterations. This raises the question whether these alterations were made for dramatic reasons, such as shortening the scenes or because of censorship. The last could be very well possible, because, as Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn point out, self-censorship was of course common at the time in order to avoid trouble. (“Early Modern Literary Cultures and Public Opinion” 281) And Howard-Hill points out some reasons why we can conclude that censorship was probably the reason for these alterations. In act 1 scene 2 for example the Arminian preachers Taurinus and Utenbogart are replaced with Hogerbeets, which creates a loose end because Van Oldenbarnevelt stil refers to “Reverend men.” (Fletcher & Massinger I.2,240) This makes no sense since Hogerbeets was a civilian. (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel*t in 1619” 60) This replacement also causes the loss of an important element of the play namely the conspiracy of the worldly powers with the clerical powers that was discussed in chapter 5. (Idem 60) As was shown in chapter 2 it was perceived by many people that Van Oldenbarnevelt used the religious conflict to reach political goals and was helped in this by Remonstrant preachers. In other words, it was a conspiracy between secular and religious powers so that he could get full control. The play initially tried to highlight this, but by making Hogerbeets a civilian, this element is lost.

Another interesting alteration by Crane can be found in act 2 scene 2 when the Second Dutch-Woman describes Holderus, the Arminian preacher, to the English Gentlewoman. In the original text the English woman asks: “and a Preacher do you say?” (Fletcher & Massinger II.2, 803) To which the Second Dutch-Woman replies: “a singular Preacher” (Idem II.2, 804) In both lines Crane replaced the word ‘Preacher’ with ‘Teacher’, and by doing that he took away the clerical status of Holderus. Howard-Hill states that this alteration made the Arminian preacher “analogous to a Puritan or nonconformist preacher, who, unwilling to take the ‘oaths required of beneficed clergy by the 1604 Canons’, obtained instead a lectureship which enabled him to preach to congregations with the law.” (61) So this way they could

teach the views without being an official priest. But by doing this the play denies the Arminians any colour of theological validity. This comparison between the Remonstrans and Puritans emphasizes that both are troublemakers, which also fits nicely within Fletcher's hatred for the Puritans and his belief that they only bring disorder to the community. (Makkink 131)

Howard-Hill points out that after all these alterations the only clerical Arminians left are the undisciplined Dutch women. All the other Arminians have become secular and were conspirators who used religion for their own political ambitions. In other words the religion itself was not the problem; it simply was misused. By doing this any religious objections that the Bishop of London might raise were taken care of. (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* in 1619" 62)

This brings the discussion to yet another way in which the different authorities censored *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*: The Bishop of London temporarily banned the play. (Garrett 8) Concerning this topic G.E. Bentley discusses an exchange of letters between Thomas Locke and Sir Dudley Carleton, who in his position as ambassador for James I in The Hague was very interested in the reputation of Van Oldenbarnevelt after his death. In August Locke reported to him that the players were prohibited from bringing the play on stage. However, two weeks later Locke wrote to Sir Carleton that the players had found the means to go through with the performances. (415) Though no evidence survives it seems safe to assume that the Bishop of London did not approve of an earlier version of the play, probably the version of the surviving manuscript, but did allow it after the revision. After all it was a subject that people were interested in and wanted and needed to be informed about, but it should be the 'right' version of the story: the official view of that the English government and especially the Anglican Church approved of.

Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit

Even though their play was censored and temporarily banned, Fletcher and Massinger themselves did not suffer legal consequences for their play. Vondel on the other hand did. His play was published in 1625, shortly after Maurits's death, and though he had used an allegory, the public quickly noticed the message. Authorities, especially the Calvinist clergy suspected that the play was addressed to them. This led to a charge by the Hof van Holland (High Court of Holland) and the controversy that surrounded his play was so big that Vondel feared that he would be arrested and transferred to The Hague. Here the Calvinists were in full command of the government and would surely convict him. Thus he took refuge with the Baek family.

(Smits-Veldt & Spies 61-2) The charge was supported by several of the magistrates of Amsterdam, who were allies of Reynier Pauw. Pauw was a fierce Calvinist and he had been a member of the court at Van Oldenbarnevelt's trial. (Porteman & Smits-Veldt, 357) It is therefore understandable that he viewed the play as a direct critique towards him personally. Which was probably justified, since in surviving notes and in the printed editions that were later sold by the publisher Pieter Brakman the character Megeer is indeed identified as Reynier Pauw. However, several other magistrates of Amsterdam protected Vondel. (Idem 357) Thus the Amsterdam city council refused to extradite him to The Hague and satisfied itself with a fine and a ban of the play. (Smits-Veldt & Spies 62)

However, it seems this ban had little effect in limiting the spreading of Vondel's critique. On the contrary, it enhanced the interest of the public. And as Smits-Veldt and Spies point out it was actually rather beneficial for the publisher. One illegal print after another quickly sold out and, as was discussed in the previous chapter, it had become a trend to figure out the allegory. So, the public knew very well what was going on in the play and was discussing it. Vondel himself did not gain much from the popularity of his play. Not financially anyway, since copyright did not exist at that time. However, it gave him the reputation of being a controversial writer and the success of *Palamedes* seems to have persuaded Vondel to leave behind his doubts and to start presenting himself as a socially engaged poet. (Idem 62)

Performance and publishing history

It is important to look at the performance and publishing history of the plays, because these show how the message of the plays was spread to the public and can give an indication of the amount of people that was reached. Moreover, it can tell us more about the influence it had on the public opinion.

The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt

Fletcher and Massinger wrote the play for commercial performance. The reason could be that they wanted to take advantage of interest in the events to make a profit, but it's also possible that they wanted to inform the public at the same time. It appears the play was well received. The previously discussed letter from Thomas Locke to Sir Dudley Carleton about the censorship of the play also tells that many viewed the play and that it received applause from the audience. (Bentley 415) And in appendix 2 to his extensive study of Fletcher's work

McMullan gives an overview of all of Fletcher's plays and his collaborators and where possible also dates of when the play was licensed or performed. According to this list *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* was performed from 14 till 27 August 1619. (268)

This indicates a great interest from the audience. Plays were a big source of entertainment, so commercial theatres needed to vary their repertoire fast and frequently in order to keep people interested. That the play was on stage for about two weeks shows that the audience did not tire of it quickly. However, as far as we know, the play was never revived after these two weeks. Furthermore, from what we know the play was only published for the first time in 1883 when it appeared in A.H. Bullen's *Collection of Old English Plays*. (Bentley 415-6) So, it took almost three centuries for the play to finally appear in print. There are two possible reasons why it took so long for the play to be published.

Firstly, the lack of a revival and the absence of a contemporary publication of the play could indicate that the public interest in Van Oldenbarnevelt and the conflict did not last long after the summer of 1619. And if the interest died down it would not have been profitable for a publisher to make a print of the play. However, argues that even though the play may not be the greatest Fletcher and Massinger ever wrote, it is interesting enough to expect a quarto to sell good, even after the play had lost its first appeal. Bentley suggests that perhaps the press censors were more timid than the Master of Revels was. (417) And it is indeed very well possible that it was not so much the interest of the people that prohibited the revival or print of the play, but the controversy surrounding it. As Howard-Hill points out *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* is the most heavily censored manuscript from Buc's period of active involvement in the revels office that has survived and in 'Crane's 1619 "Promptbook" of "Barnevelt" and Theatrical Processes' he states that Buc might "have claimed a copy of the play- in fact, the manuscript which showed precisely where he had required reformation-as his security in the event performances had later repercussions or in the event the play was to be revived or published." (148) So, if trouble did occur he would be able to show that he had done his best to make the play appropriate for performance and was thus free of blame. But just the fact that this is the most censored play and that Buc apparently felt the need for more security already shows just how controversial the play actually was.

Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit

Vondel's play on the other hand was not put on stage straightaway, but was published in 1625 by the publisher Colom. This was probably to avoid preventive censorship and to make sure his message was spread. As Porteman and Smits-Veldt point out the play was probably used

as a political pamphlet from the day it first appeared in print. (357) Of course by publishing he did seek the confrontation with the authorities. But even though the play was banned the print was a great success. As Eddy Grootes and Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen show in ‘Vondel’s Dramas: A Chronological Survey’ *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnozelheit* went through seven editions of the 1625 imprint. (2) So, it is safe to presume that a large audience was reached with the printed version of *Palamedes*.

In ‘Vondel’s Dramas: Their Afterlife in Performance’ Mieke B. Smits-Veldt discusses how the play eventually found its way to stage, though it did take a few decades. The travelling companies of Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh first performed the play in 1664 in Rotterdam and a number of performances in Amsterdam followed. (162) This is interesting timing, since this was during the Eerste Stadhoudersloze Tijdperk (First Stadtholderless Period), which lasted from 1650 to 1672. Smits-Veldt points out the play was part of the revived discussion about the future of William III and the Republic. (Idem 162) During the Tweede Stadhoudersloze Tijdperk (Second Stadtholderless Period), which, in Holland, was from 1702 till 1747, the play experienced another revival. In 1707 the Amsterdam Schouwburg relaunched *Palamedes*. There were thirty performances over the forty years that followed. (Idem 162)

It is interesting that the play received so much attention when the Oranges were not in power. The most obvious reason would be that it was safe to perform the play then. Another reason is because that the play could open a discussion about politics, especially about the Orange family and their position in the Dutch Republic. Those who did not support the Orange family could even go so far as to use it as a warning against their reign.

Reception abroad

In order to discuss whether or not these writers influenced the debate about Van Oldenbarnevelt on the other side of the North Sea, it is also important to know how they were received abroad. In ‘Between disregard and political mobilization – Vondel as a Playwright in contemporary European context: England, France and the German Lands’ Guillaume van Gemert explains that the extent of reception can be measured “in terms of translation of (...) writings into the respective vernacular, of their adaptations and of referring to them by individual foreign authors.” (173) Of course this can be applied to Massinger and Fletcher as well.

When using this method, it appears Vondel was not well known abroad during his own time. Contemporary translations of Vondel's work were only made in the German lands. From the English there are only sporadic references that do not have much significance. (Idem 172-3) Van Gemert gives several possible explanations for this limited reception in Europe. The first is quite obvious: the language barrier caused by the small spread knowledge of Dutch outside of the Low Countries. Another reason was that Vondel did not hold a scholarly rank, to give him more prestige. (Idem 197)

In his introduction to *Massinger: The Critical Heritage*, an extensive collection and study of English responses to the author's work, Martin Garrett points out that we know the least about the reputation of the collaborative plays that Massinger had a share in before 1625. This would of course include *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* and that it was not printed before the nineteenth century obviously did not help. Even less is known about the reception of Fletcher's work abroad. This could mean that no significant research has been done on this subject, but it could also mean that, just like Vondel, they were not that well known outside of England.

Conclusion

In the case of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* it seems the government wanted the people to favour Maurits over Van Oldenbarnevelt so strongly that they tried to force out any nuance that was originally given to the characters. Howard-Hill states that the play "gives striking evidence of the difficulties during James's reign of writing a play for performance on a theme of contemporary interest." (x) This suggests that *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* was not the only play on a contemporary issue that suffered from censorship in England. This implies that the government tried to make sure that the people would only get a certain version of a story: their version. The same can be said about *Palamedes*. The entire play was forbidden, since it was completely against the official version of the story.

It can be argued that by attempting to control the content of the plays the government tried to control, or at least influence, the public opinion. The censorship of both plays thus acknowledges some of the functions for forming public opinion that, according to Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn, can be attributed to literature. In regards to *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* the function of providing information, and to raise the level of knowledge of the public was especially important. The play was eventually allowed to be performed,

probably (partly) because of this function but at the same time the authorities wanted to make sure that the ‘right’ version was told.

The authorities also seemed to understand that literature could prompt people to behave or take action in a certain way as the objection to the scene in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* where Maurits is rejected from the council meeting shows. So, in short, the government was aware of the effect that literature could have on the public opinion and by using censorship tried to stop certain ideas and debate from taking root and causing trouble for their reign.

Both plays also announce, confirm and contest specific opinions and add arguments to the debate that was going on about Van Oldenbarnevelt and the censorship tried to control these arguments. Vondel did this by voicing the opinion of the opposition and *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* strongly confirms that the opinion that Maurits was the rightful leader of the Dutch Republic and that Van Oldenbarnevelt was a corrupt politician. But as a careful examination of the of play shows, it also attempted to add arguments to the English debate about religion and the trouble it can caused when there are conflicting views, by creating a parallel between the Remonstrants and the Puritans. Moreover, this parallel can also function as a warning towards to Puritans of what could happen if they would not adjust their views.

Vondel’s play put the trial of Van Oldenbarnevelt on the agenda again. It had been six years after the execution, but the play started up the debate again. Banning it was a fruitless attempt to silence this debate, since it actually enhanced the public interest. This is proven by the large amount of editions that were published and the public debate, which is shown by the hype to decode the allegory and the revivals in the Stadtholderless Periods. The performance history of *Palamedes* shows that it kept this function, since the play remained linked to the debate about politics and the Oranges for at least a century after its first publication. *Palamedes* also equipped citizens with tools to express their opinions effectively in words by giving them the allegories to use in debates with instead of the actual names.

Conclusion

Before coming to the conclusion let's look back shortly on the academic debate on the interaction between culture in England and the Republic. For a long time academics have claimed that during the Renaissance national cultures started to emerge and that countries were moving away from a unified European culture. The identity of the Dutch Republic for example was formed by their political system and economical system that differed from the rest of Europe. Lisa Jardine on the other hand argues that England and the Dutch Republic were more connected through their culture than previously presumed. According to her the intertwining of the cultures started in 1625 with the emerging of court life in the Republic. And Jardine concludes that by 1688 England and the Dutch Republic were "already so closely intertwined, culturally, intellectually, dynastically and politically, that the invasion [by William III] was more like a merger." (349) The aim of this thesis was to add to this theory of a shared culture between England and the Dutch Republic by discussing the interaction between the countries before 1625 and by including literature in the debate. And to frame this it focused on the conflict between Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits of Nassau and the English involvement and interest in this matter and its representation in two plays.

Chapter 1 did not only discuss the development of the relationship between Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurits. It also proves how close the political relations England and the Dutch Republic were before 1625 and before the existence of a court life in the Republic. Moreover, even though Maurits refused to take part in the court life of England the English respected him because of his great skills as a leader and general and English troops gladly fought for him. And even after England had made peace with Spain the English remained supportive and were actively involved in the dispute between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants. This was not yet a court or dynastic interaction, but a military and political exchange and debate was definitely taking place. The conflict with Van Oldenbarnevelt could be considered a test of the Anglo-Dutch relationship and it seems that it only made it stronger.

Chapter 1 already attracted attention to the influence of the public opinion on the conflict and how this was expressed in several texts and chapter 2 gives a more detailed debate about this. Contrary to what was previously argued Bloemendal and van Dixhoorn pinpoint that public opinion in fact originated in the fifteenth century. Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn's definition of public opinion: "a complex of beliefs about social, political, moral, religious and other public matters, one that can be found in larger or smaller segments of

society and which originates and is expressed in a variety of ways.” (“Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries” 5) and their explanation of the functions that all types of literature have in forming the public opinion, proof the importance of studying literature when discussing culture.

Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn also argue that it is important to note that when an opinion is cast in a literary mould, this affects the manner in which we need to study it, so we need to know the dominant poetics. The poetical analysis of the English and Dutch literary culture in chapter 3 shows that in England tragedies were merely plays that ended badly, usually with a political tone. So, in England the audience valued the interaction between literature and the public opinion and expected this of plays. In the Dutch Republic it were the works of Horatius and Seneca that acted as a model for theatre. But these models were also used to discuss contemporary themes. The importance of realism in drama is another factor in which the English and Dutch poetics differed. In England this was of great value, while in the Republic it was less important.

The status of theatre and the manner in which performances were organised is another important difference between England and the Low Countries, that largely shaped the way literature was produced. In England drama was mostly a commercial business, so theatres had to give the audience what they wanted to see. Offering work to a publisher was mostly done to get some extra money, but getting printed was not the main aim when writing. However, in the Dutch Republic the commercial theatre was just slowly starting to develop. Drama was considered an art form and authors wrote with the aim of creating art. It was not necessarily meant for performance and plays were therefore more often offered to publishers. And the censorship that was involved in this is also vital. In England there was a strong and very organized form of preventive censorship present in the book trade. While in the Dutch Republic there was little censorship, which was usually applied after a work was already published.

This is all brought together in the case study. Chapter 4 shows the backgrounds of the authors. Fletcher and Massinger wrote mostly for profit, while Vondel had other ideas about theatre: he believed drama to be an art form and a useful one as well, as it was a way to convey knowledge to people of all classes. Religion was also important and it is interesting to see that Massinger and Vondel were fairly tolerant, while Fletcher strongly opposed Puritans and Catholics. This idea of tolerance is also visible in Vondel’s view on politics. He thought a good ruler should be just and tolerant towards the faith that his subjects choose. Moreover, he believed the sovereignty and capability of the people was also important. However, Fletcher

and Massinger believed the divine right of kings. According to Fletcher a king was above the law, while Massinger thought a monarch had to answer to the people as well as God.

Chapter 5 then continues to show how these ideas were reflected in the plays. Both plays are clearly based on the same events, but take a very different stance on the matter and use different styles to express this. To Fletcher and Massinger Van Oldenbarnevelt was the enemy of Maurits, the rightful ruler, and a traitor of his country and they show this in a realistic manner to prove that this is what happened. Vondel on the other hand views Van Oldenbarnevelt as a righteous man and great leader, who became the victim of a conspiracy and the ambitious tyrant Maurits. He expresses this in the form of an allegory and the symbolic value that this adds to the story emphasizes his point.

However, it is interesting that in both plays religion and its involvement in the conflict is important. This shows that the authors and probably their aimed audience as well, viewed this conflict as being both political and religious.

The English involvement is another important issue. It is no surprise that the English play would highlight this, but it is a bit strange that Vondel does not. Though the comparative approach that is used in this thesis opens the option of Diomedes as an allegory for Sir Dudley Carleton, as far as we know contemporaries did not make this link. This is probably because Maurits and Aerssen were viewed as the main perpetrators.

It should also be stressed that both plays show the viewpoint of specific communities. Fletcher and Massinger show the ideas that most English probably had about the Dutch situation, while Vondel wrote from the perspective of the suppressed Remonstrants, who he strongly sympathized with.

Chapter 6 proves that the reception of these works tells us more about the role these plays had in forming and representing the public opinion on this conflict. It also gave more insight into the interaction between England and the Dutch Republic.

In the case of *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* it seems the government wanted the people to favour Maurits over Van Oldenbarnevelt so strongly that they tried to force out any nuance that was originally given to the characters. This implies that the government tried to make sure that the people would only get a certain version of a story: their version. The same can be said about *Palamedes*. The entire play was forbidden, because it was completely against the official version of the story.

It can be argued that by attempting to control the content of the plays the government tried to control or influence the public opinion. The censorship of both plays thus acknowledges several of the functions for forming public opinion. In *Sir John Van Olden*

Barnevelt the function of providing information was especially important. The play was eventually allowed to be performed, probably (partly) because of this function, but at the same time the authorities wanted to make sure that the 'right' version was told.

The authorities also seemed to understand that literature could prompt people to behave in a certain way as the objection to the scene in *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* where Maurits is rejected from the council meeting shows. So, in short, the government was aware of the effect that literature could have on the public opinion and by using censorship tried to stop certain ideas and debate from taking root and causing trouble for their reign.

Both plays also announce, confirm and contest specific opinions and add arguments to the debate and the censorship tried to control these arguments. Vondel did this by voicing the opinion of the opposition. *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* on the other hand strongly confirms that the opinion that Maurits was the rightful leader of the Dutch Republic and that Van Oldenbarnevelt was a corrupt politician, even without the censorship. The play also attempted to add arguments to the English debate about religion and the trouble it can cause when there are conflicting views, by creating a parallel between the Remonstrants and the Puritans. Moreover, this parallel can also function as a warning towards Puritans of what could happen if they would not adjust their views.

Vondel's play put the trial of Van Oldenbarnevelt on the agenda again. Banning it was a fruitless attempt to silence this debate, since it actually enhanced the public interest and the public debate. The performance history of *Palamedes* shows that it kept this function since the play remained linked to the debate about politics and the Oranges for at least a century after its first publication. *Palamedes* also functioned in the process of forming public opinion, because it equipped citizens with tools to express their opinions effectively in words by giving them the allegories to use in debates with instead of the actual names.

So, by using a comparative method and analysing the historical events, the literary cultures, the role that literature plays in public opinion and the two plays this thesis has proven that there indeed was a strong interaction between England and the Dutch Republic before 1625. This interaction was mainly focused on the politics and religion. And even though the literary cultures of both countries were different, the functions that literature had in forming and representing the public opinion are the same in the England and the Dutch Republic. Thus proofing that literature was and is in fact an important part of culture and a good means to study it. But the cultural interaction between England and the Dutch Republic was still slightly one sided, as the case study shows. *Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt* reflects on the

Anglo-Dutch interaction, but it seems that Vondel left the relations with the English completely out of his play. However, this does show that both cultures were moving more towards each other. Thus this thesis proves that the process of intertwining to create a shared culture between England and the Dutch Republic, as was discussed by Jardine, had in fact begun before 1625.

Works cited

- Bloemendal, J. & Dixhoorn, A. van. 'Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries.' *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450-1650*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal Etc. Leiden: Brill 2011.1-35. Web. www.oopen.org
- 'Early Modern Literary Cultures and Public Opinion: An Epilogue in the Form of a Discussion.' *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450-1650*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal Etc. Leiden: Brill 2011. 267-91. Web. www.oopen.org
- Beelaerts van Blokland, J.J.G. *Maurits Prins van Oranje, Graaf van Nassau : redder van de Republiek 1567-1625*. Oosterbeek: Jhr. J.J.G. Beelaerts van Blokland, 1999. Print.
- Bentley, G.E. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Plays and Playwrights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967. Print.
- Blayney, P.W.M. 'The publication of playbooks'. *A New History of Early English Drama*. Eds. John D. Cox & David Scott Kastan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 383-422. Print.
- Brandt, G. *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel*. (1682) Ed. Marieke M. van Oostrom and Riet Schenkeveld van der Dussen. Amsterdam: Querido, 1986. Print.
- Butler, M. 'Literature and the theatre to 1660.' *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*. Eds. David Loewenstein & Janel Mueller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 565-602. Print.
- Clare, J. "'Greater Themes for Insurrection's Arguing': Political Censorship of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage." *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 38.150 (1987). 169-183. Print.
- Deursen, A.TH. van. *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen: Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldebarnevelt*. Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V., 1974. Print.
- *De last van veel geluk: De geschiedenis van Nederland 1555-1702*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2004. Print.
- *Maurits van Nassau: De Winnaar die faalde*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2000.
- Dollimore, J. *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984. Print.
- Dunn, T.A. *Philip Massinger: The Man and the Playwright*. Toronto: Thomas Nelson and sons LTD, 1957. Print.
- Fletcher, J. & Massinger, P. *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*. 1619. Ed. T.H. Howard-Hill. The Malone Society Reprints, 1979. Print.

- Frijhoff, W. & Marijke Spies. *1650 Bevochten eendracht*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999. Print.
- Garrett, M. *Massinger: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Geerdink, N. 'Politics and Aesthetics- Decoding Allegory in *Palamedes*.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 225-48. Print.
- Gemert, G. van. 'Between disregard and political mobilization – Vondel as a Playwright in contemporary European context: England, France and the German Lands.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 171-98. Print.
- Gerlack, H. *Het proces tegen Oldenbarnevelt en de "maximen in de state"*. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & zoon N.V., 1965. Print.
- Gerretson, C. *Moord of Recht? Twee studies over Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*. Baarn: In den Toren, 1969. Print.
- Groenveld, S. *Unie-Bestand-Vrede: Drie fundamentele wetten van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden*. Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2009. Print.
- Grootes, E. & R. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen. 'Vondel's Dramas: A Chronological Survey.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 1-6. Print.
- Gurr, A. *The Shakespeare Playing Companies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Harms, R. *Pamfletten en publieke opinie: massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print.
- Helmets, H.J. *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639-1660*. Doctoral thesis, Leiden University. 30 juni 2011.
- Howard-Hill, T. H. "Crane's 1619 "Promptbook" of "Barnaveit" and Theatrical Processes." *Modern Philology* 86.2 (1988).146-170.
- Huizinga, J.H. *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century and other essays*. Ed. Pieter Geyl and F.W.N. Hugenholtz. Trans. A.J. Powerands. London: Collins, 1968. Print.
- 'Buc and the Censorship of Sir John Van Olden Barnaveit in 1619.' *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 39.153 (1988). 39-63.
- 'Introduction.' Fletcher, J. & Massinger, P. *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnevelt*. 1619. Ed. T.H. Howard-Hill. The Malone Society Reprints, 1979. Print.
- Jardine, L. *Going Dutch: How England plundered Hollands Glory*. London: Harper Collins, 2008. Print.

- Kastan, D. S. 'Print, literary culture and the book trade.' *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*. Eds. David Loewenstein & Janel Mueller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 81-116. Print.
- Knapen, B. *De Man en Zijn Staat: Johan van Oldenbarnevelt 1547-1619*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2005. Print.
- Korsten, F.W. *Vondel belicht: Voorstellingen van soevereiniteit*. Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2006. Print.
- Lankhorst, O.S. & P.G. Hoftijzer. *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezer in Nederland tijdens de Republiek: Een historiografische en bibliografische handleiding*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1995. Print.
- Makkink, H.J. *Philip Massinger and John Fletcher: A Comparison*. Rotterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar's Uitgevers, 1927. Print.
- Mangan, M. *A Preface to Shakespeare's Tragedies*. Harlow: Longman, 1991. Print.
- Masten, J. *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.
- Matz, R. *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.
- McMullan, G. *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. Print.
- Meijer Drees, M. & Els Stronks. *Wat wonders, wat nieuws! De zeventiende eeuw in pamfletten*. Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2002. Print.
- Noak, B. 'Vondel as a Dramarist: The Representation of Language and Body.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 115-38. Print.
- Parker, G. 'The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurice of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy.' *The Journal of Military History* 71.2 (2007). 331-372. Print.
- Pollmann, J. 'Vondel's Religion.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 85- 100. Print.
- Porteman, K. & Smits-Veldt, M.B. *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1560-1700*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2009. Print.
- Prak, Maarten. *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*. Trans. Diane Webb. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

- Shakespeare Association. *Shakespeare Association Facsimiles No. 9: The Battle of Nieuport 1600*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935. Print.
- Smits-Veldt, M.B. *Het Nederlandse renaissancetoneel*. Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1991. Print.
- 'Vondel's Dramas: Their Afterlife in Performance.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem
- & M. Spies. 'Vondel's Life.' *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*. Eds. Jan Bloemendal & Frans-Willem Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 51-83. Print.
- Korsten. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 157-70. Print.
- Stallybrass, P & R. Chartier. 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590-1619.' *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, Ed. Andrew Murphy. Blackwell, 2010. Print.
- Tex, J. den & Ali Ton. *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980. Print.
- Vondel, J. van den. *Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnooselheyd*. Amsterdam: Jacob Aertsz Calom, 1625. Web. Dbnl.nl.