2.1 Introduction: the issue of violence

This study touches on a number of issues that require theoretical and methodological review, namely violence, its connection to images, and the role of early modern prints in relation to a collective imagination. In the following chapter, these three issues will be discussed as means to make sense of the research goals as articulated in the introduction. As a start, section 2.2 will kick off with a closer look into the use of violence as a topic within the context of historical research. The goal here is straightforward: to delineate a working definition of violence that will inform my approach to the different case studies. Following up, the specificities of violence in the form of visual representations will be discussed in section 2.3. Violence in print and violence in the flesh are two distinct issues, and the study of violent images needs to take this fundamental difference into account. In section 2.4, this chapter will discuss the rich history of the printed image. Positioned on the intersection of art history, book history, and cultural history, the historiography of the printed image is a diverse one. The aim of this section is to provide a framework for the source material at stake here, and to discuss the merits of printed images as relevant historical sources in their own right vis-à-vis text-based approaches. Finally, section 2.5 will shortly discuss the context of printmaking in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, focussing on the dominant technique of etching.
2.2 A working definition of violence

Up until now, the meaning of the term violence has not been expanded upon even as it is a central aspect of this study. The reason for this is quite straightforward: violence itself is an extremely diffuse term, both in popular and academic discourse. To start with a definition of violence is to run the risk of getting bogged down in theoretical debates even before approaching the historical sources themselves. The explicit goal here, then, is to present a working definition of violence, and to explain my reasons for narrowing down this study to the analysis of a number of particular forms of violence as represented in printed images.

In today’s historical studies, violence in itself is a booming subject. In the past decades, the term has become a central analytical category for historical research, touching upon numerous distinct research topics and with a temporal scope ranging from ancient to modern times. As historian Penny Robert’s has argued in relation to French historiography, one might even speak of a ‘violent turn’ in the discipline of history.¹

In the growing corpus of literature on the history of violence, two major academic strains can be discerned.² On the one hand, there is the interest in violence in the field of criminology and the social history of crime. In these fields, the study of violence is often concerned with quantitative approaches and the measuring of violence across time and place. On the other hand, there is the cultural historical approach that concerns itself with processes of meaning making and symbolism concerning violence – an approach that largely revolves around qualitative methodologies. Undoubtedly, one of the earliest and most famous examples of a cultural historical reading of violence is Natalie Zemon Davis’ article titled ‘The Rites of Violence’, a study on Protestant-Catholic violence during the French Wars of Religion.³ Davis herself has described this article as the result of her interest in combining the different approaches of ‘classic social history with [...] cultural

anthropology, ethnography, and literary criticism. Undeniably, all these disciplines
have greatly influenced the trajectory of cultural history at large, and its approach
to violence in particular. Cultural anthropology in specific has shared with cultural
history the understanding that violence is never ‘senseless’. To speak with the words
of the anthropologist Anton Blok, violence is always ‘meaningful’, ‘a historically
developed cultural category’ with great representative power.

Even though much has been written about the history of violence, no central
or authoritative definition of violence has emerged. One of the recurring issues with
the term violence is that it is often tied up with a normative framework. Violence
has, for example, a strong negative connotation, often implying the illegitimate
use of physical force. In this vein, studies in psychology, criminology, and political
science have long approached violence as a problem ‘to be solved, controlled, and
eliminated.’ For instance, sociological works concerning the long term evolution
of the modern state link this negative charge with the monopolization of violence
by the state. As sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has argued, the ‘modern semantics
of violence’ describe the ‘legitimate’ use of violence by the state as “‘enforcement of
law and order’” while the term ‘violence’ is often reserved for cases of (illegitimate)
private violence. This semantic framework has been in the making since the Middle-
Ages, when a distinction was created between ‘potestas’ (legitimate violence, related
to forms of state authority) and ‘violentia’ (reactive illegitimate violence). By
definition then, using the term ‘violence’ is often about making implicit or explicit
assumptions about the legitimacy of the infliction of physical harm. When one
speaks about ‘police violence’, the term often doesn’t refer to the legitimate or lawful
exertion of the state’s monopoly of violence, which is the very raison d’être of a
police force. Instead, it points to violence that is beyond what is considered to be

5. E.g: David Riches (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford, 1985); Göran Aijmer and Jan
of Violence’, in: Ronnie Lippens and Don Crewe (eds.), *Existentialist Criminology* (London,
2009), 70-93: 87.
the boundary of its legitimate use of violence. This distinction is also visible in the
different entomologies of violence, from Latin violentia, and its Dutch translation as
geweld (similar to the German Gewalt). ‘Violence’ is more related to the normative
interpretation of violence as a transgression, coming from the Latin violare which is
to impinge, to transgress, or to intrude. In contrast, geweld has meanings directly
related to (sovereign) power, force, as well as actions taken with great intensity. Incidentally, this is also precisely why the translation of Johan Huizinga’s famous
opener in his magnum opus The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924), as ‘the violent
tenor of life’ is somewhat misleading. The term has often been wrongly interpreted
as referring to the popular stereotype that physical violence was central to life in
the Middle Ages. However, ‘violent’ should be understood here in a more specific
meaning as ‘powerful’, or ‘vivid’. This interpretation relates more closely to the
original Dutch wording which reads ’s Levens felheid’ - a description perhaps more
adequately translated as ‘life’s great intensity’. The nuance here is that violence as a
physical act is only one part of Huizinga’s vision of the great intensity of life in
the Middle Ages, in which the passions run high and all emotions are experienced more
strongly than in the modern world. The normative framework attached to violence is not the only reason for the
diffuse nature of the term. With an ever growing body of literature on the history
of violence, the term has attracted a number of distinct academic interpretations
and uses. My own choice for a specific reading of violence proceeds from the very

10. Frans-Willem Korsten, Sovereignty as Inviolability: Vondel’s Theatrical Explorations in the
Dutch Republic (Hilversum, 2009), 38; Rowan Williams, ‘Violence is an Unavoidable Part
of Being Human (book review of Richard Bessel, Violence)’, New Statesman 30 July 2015:

11. See the entry in the online Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal (taken from the 1888 edi-
power, however, has disappeared in Dutch, whereas it is still present in German, for instance
in the term ‘Gewaltenteilung’ (Seperation of Powers, or Trias Politica). See: Teresa Koloma


13. Other translations, like the German edition, have more successfully tried to capture this
nuance by opening with the ‘Spannung des Lebens’ (the tensions of life) - even though here
too there remain nuances that are inherent to the art of translation, as shown by Huizinga’s
own correspondence on the German translation. See: Henning Westheide, ‘Equivalence in
Contrastive Semantics: The Effect of Cultural Differences’, in: Edda Weigand (ed.), Contras-
specific goal of this study: to analyse the growing corpus of printed images in the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. To adequately describe changes in the representation of violence from the 1650s onwards, I will use the static description of violence as proposed by the historian Pieter Spierenburg, who conceptualizes violence as the ‘intentional encroachment upon the physical integrity of the [human] body’.14 In doing so, I do not argue that violence cannot be defined so as to include non-physical harm, harm to animals, to objects, etc. However, the broader violence is defined, the less descriptive it will be, to a point, as anthropologist David Riches points out, that the term can become useless in an analytical sense.15 For instance, historian Francisca Loetz has recently tried to rid violence of its purely physical connotations by defining it as a ‘norm transgression regarded as intolerable in a society’.16 Yet such a move merely leaves the analytical work to be done by the term ‘norm transgression’ and requires that we first understand what norms a society incorporates before we can move to describe instances of violence. Here, violence cannot be the starting point of a study, as it can essentially only be discerned a posteriori, i.e. after the analytical work has already been done. This approach bites itself in the tail, as the answer to what violence is, is essentially the conclusion to the study itself: an analysis of norm transgression.

In order to select my own source material, I wish to use the term violence in a way so as to make it useful as an a priori descriptive term that can function within a diachronic framework. The goal of this approach is to be able to select certain themes relating to the infliction of intentional physical harm that became prominent in printed imagery from the 1650s onwards – this on the basis of an informed overview of the available sources. In the case of this study, these themes include executions, particular historical episodes of warfare, and popular early modern visual tropes of so-called ‘Turkish cruelty’ including cannibalism, beheading, and dismemberment. The analysis concerning meaning comes as a second step – and touches upon the aforementioned issues of norms, transgressions, legitimacy, etc. Yet these issues do

not function as the selection criteria for the source material; rather, their discussion will be part of the analysis of an established corpus.

A second argument for the choice of Spierenburg’s definition is its focus on the physical integrity of the body (and as such, closely related to the Latin root of violence). This aspect was especially salient in the early modern period, when the imagination of judicial violence, wartime atrocity stories, and foreign battlefields was intimately connected with the fragmentation of the human body.\(^\text{17}\) Indeed, as this study will show, the disintegration, fragmentation, and the dismemberment of the human body in various forms was a prominent theme in the printed image at large. At the same time, a focus on the physical will allow violence to work more adequately as a descriptive term. The inclusion, for instance, of ‘non-physical violence’, would require a number of additional interpretive steps to be made, especially in relation to visual sources. Reading non-physical violence into the printed image requires a refined approach that takes into account exactly what Loetz tries to capture under the heading of a ‘norm transgression regarded as intolerable in a society’, and as such, is ill-fitted to serve as a manageable working definition that is descriptive in character. In contrast, the imagination of executions, massacres, and (siege-) warfare connects much more concretely to a descriptive and physical understanding of violence, especially as these forms of violence were certainly not always seen as norm transgressions by early modern publics.

The use of Spierenburg’s description of violence also means that violence here is treated as a ‘category of analysis’, a term to structure and study the source material, and not as a ‘category of practice’, i.e. as a term to discuss what people in the seventeenth century themselves described or understood as ‘violence’.\(^\text{18}\) This is an informed choice particular to this dissertation rather than a statement against the study of violence from the perspective of historical actors. It is certainly important to ask, for instance, whether Catholics viewed the iconoclastic acts of Protestants as violent, even if technically no living beings were violated. In the same manner, it can be imperative to ask whether early modern men considered spoken insults as


a form of violence infringing upon their personal honour. Yet as has been stated before, such approaches do not allow for the use of violence as a workable, descriptive term, or as one that fits in a diachronic study. A new, more specified, or historicized definition of violence is part of the conclusions of such studies rather than the starting point. As Spierenburg rightly points out, such an approach is unhelpful if we wish to compare issues concerning violence within a longer timeframe or between certain political or cultural units. In such cases, a static definition is needed to show what is different or similar, whether there is change or continuation. This approach equally allows me to pose the question whether certain visual themes were either new, adaptions of older works, or disappeared altogether. Thus, as a first step, the approach to the printed image requires, in my view, a definition of violence in its most basic descriptive form, as found in the work of Spierenburg.

With a specific definition of violence as intentional physical harm, a second step lies in the use of a number of typologies relevant for my own source material. As historian Philip Dwyer has pointed out, the catch-all nature of the term violence requires that historians of violence will at least ‘demarcate the limits of the study, introducing typologies of violence specific to that study.’ In each case study presented in this study, the use of the term ‘violence’ will be informed by the source material at stake. Chapter 3 on the Revolt deals with a variety of violent acts that were central to the Dutch imagination of the Eighty Years’ War, including executions, siege warfare, massacres, and furies. Chapter 4 deals exclusively with prints of executions, whereas chapter 5 combines the subjects of siege warfare with early modern visual tropes of ‘Turkish cruelty’.

Up until now, violence has been conceptualized as a concrete physical act. Yet representations of violence in print are, of course, not physical acts, and this is perhaps something that has not been addressed properly within the broad field of the history of violence. Before moving on to the concrete historical parameters of the case studies, I will address my approach to violence in terms of representation rather than as an actual act.

20. Ibid., 18.
2.3 Violence as representation and imagination

As historian Richard Bessel has argued, modern discourses on violence tend to conflate violence as representation with actual physical violence.\(^{22}\) For the sociologist Richard Felson for instance, the difference is non-existent. As he describes watching violence as ‘a popular form of entertainment’, Felson talks about Roman gladiator fights in the same breath as violence in literature and folklore.\(^{23}\) Yet there is an essential difference between the staging of actual violence, as takes place in a gladiator fight or execution, and the representation of violence as mediated in literature or through the hand of the early modern engraver. Similarly, there is an essential difference between looking at an actual execution, and looking at a print of an execution before the invention of photography.

Even as Felson lumps representations of violence together with actual violence, writers in the early modern period certainly did not see these categories as synonymous. The seventeenth-century Dutch playwright and poet Jan Vos, for instance, was (in)famous for his extremely violent theatre plays.\(^{24}\) Yet he did not see his own plays as being on the same level as the Roman gladiator fights. In response to classicist grounded criticism on his love for violent death in theatre, he argued as follows. Horace, the great example of many early modern playwrights, had, Vos admitted, indeed argued against the portrayal of murder on stage. Yet, as Vos claimed, this was simply because the ancient Romans were used to sights of violence, having the cruel tradition of watching their fellow men being disembowelled in the arena by bears, lions, and tigers. All of this made the Romans unimpressed by staged murder – their cruel character not allowing for them to be affected by it. However, Vos argued, if shown rightly, a seventeenth-century Dutch public could very well be positively moved by a simulated murder. For had Horace himself not said, as Vos’ continued, that ‘that which one hears affects the soul less than that

\(^{23}\) Felson as quoted in Bessel, *Violence*, 34.
which one has seen with his own eyes”? In Vos’ view, the Romans were unable to appreciate staged violence because they were too familiar with the actual act in the flesh. The seventeenth-century Dutch public, however, could be emphatically moved through murder in simulated form, precisely because they were supposedly less familiar with the real deal. In Vos’ seventeenth-century argument, simulated violence moves people, whereas actual violence blunts their emotions.

A second aspect of the representation of violence that needs to be problematised is that of a direct link between the pervasiveness of violence in a particular society and the role of violence in its cultural production. Art historian David Kunzle, for instance, sees an explicit painting such as Rembrandt’s *Blinding of Samson* (1636) as ‘a reaction to the growing military violence of the age’. In turn, he links the years after the peace of 1648 to a ‘classicizing decorum and dignity’, ‘inimical to Rembrandt’s temperament but responsive to a cooling of the national belligerence’. This kind of one-on-one logic does little to explain violent images in times of relative peace, or the (contradictory) popularity of violence in the post 1648 print industry. As art historian Scott Nethersole has rightly argued, the popular notion that violent art represents a ‘direct and unmediated’ reflection on actual violence is just as untenable for Renaissance art as it is for the gratuitous violence in the modern day films of Quentin Tarantino. Interestingly, Kunzle’s argument is reversed when it comes to popular debates on contemporary representations of violence, which often involve the claim that violent media such as films and video games are bound to turn their consumers (especially children and marginalized groups) violent. Yet as Bessel has suggested, this relationship seems hard to substantiate. In the past decades, people ‘may have viewed increasing quantities of simulated death and fake blood, but this does not seem to have been paralleled by enthusiasm for participating in ritual murder or viewing real blood.’

29. This type of argument goes back to the 1800s, often relating to marginalized groups like working class youth, immigrants, and minority groups. See: David Trend, *The Myth of Media Violence: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, 2007), 20-21.
for the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, where the prominence of violence in printed images after 1648 appears to go beyond any measure of violence in society at large. In fact, violence seemed to have been a prominent visual theme especially in regards to subjects that were far away either in time (profane and religious history), or in place (exotica, wars in the borderlands of Europe, etc.). Like any type of subject matter as manifested images, violence too might stem not from actual violence, but from other cultural sources.31

Arguments such as those made by Kunzle are speculative, even if they need not necessarily to be false. Yet the most important question is if they really add to our understanding of violent imagery. From a cultural historical point of view, representations of violence are far more relevant in what they tell about how certain acts of violence – even if they take place far away in either time or place – are perceived, interpreted, and made and remade through visual means. This is an approach that takes more serious the source material itself, and it opens up a way for the historian to explore to what extent representations of violence had their own logic and dynamics. It allows this study to ask what representations of violence did differently from actual violence, and to see the visual imagination of violence as a relevant subject in its own right. Such an approach is not new, and has been employed in a number of studies in the past years. Especially in medieval studies, images of violence have become a prominent subject for historical research.32 Here, Mitchell Merback’s *The Thief the Cross, and the Wheel* (1999), is perhaps the most exemplary study, positioning contemporary executions (breaking on the wheel in specific) and Northern European altar paintings of the scene of Cavalry within a broader visual culture of violence.33

Yet even if representations of violence have been studied more closely in the past decades, Dwyer’s claim that there are ‘no manuals on how to do the history of violence, and no clear-cut methodology’ rings true for a more specific historical approach to visual representations of violence. This can perhaps be illustrated by the fact that a fairly recent theme issue of ‘History and Theory’ (December 2017) concerning violence forgoes any relation to visual material and is concerned largely with the traditional historical textual approach. Apart from a limited foray in the textual representation of violence – using a case study of Japanese war tales – the imagination, and representation of violence are completely absent. If there is no manual on how to do the history of violence, there most certainly is not a manual on how to do a history of the representation and imagination of violence. Even as the topic itself has been thematised recently in the several edited volumes, the field seems to be based on separate cases rather than on a more general and overarching approach. For instance, the volume *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2012) is rich in diverse case studies and distinct historical sources, yet the introduction of the book has little to say on shared perspectives. Rather, the extremely broad net thrown by the editors in their introduction seems to be a way to cope with the enormous diversity of issues addressed by the contributors. In the end, the proposed framework, in its being centred on a ‘beholder’, suffers from a diffuse vocabulary and terminology as identified by Dwyer in the history of violence at large.

More recently, the edited volume *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300-1650* (2015) has explored aspects of violence through the theme of the disintegrating body in medieval and early modern art. However, even as violence (in the sense of intentional physical harm) is implicit in most of the case studies, violence itself is not a term that structures the research, and the addressed topics vary widely; from violence against images in a study on execution in effigy, to an analysis of female martyrdom that forgoes any relationship with visual art. As one reviewer put it, the volume concerns ‘an eclectic collection of essays that transcend

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chronology’ despite the ‘editors’ admirable attempt to draw them together in their Introduction’.35

If anything, Beholding Violence and Death Torture and the Broken Body show that the representation of violence is a burgeoning field with ample interest, yet equally plagued by the diffuse meaning of violence as used in academic discourse at large. Interestingly, there also seems to be somewhat of an implicit time frame in recent volumes on representations of violence, with a strong focus on the late Middle Ages and the ‘early’ early modern. Death Torture and the Broken Body makes its time frame explicit in the title: 1300-1650. Yet it remains unclear why 1650 is such a pivotal moment for the representation of violence. Beholding Violence explicitly aims to examine both the Medieval and early modern period, yet there is an implicit time frame which cuts off the early modern at 1650 as well. Violence at large has perhaps more readily been identified with the visual culture of the late Middle Ages, the early Counter-Reformation, and the height of the Religious Wars, than with the period that followed after the Peace of Münster in 1648 (a year that may explain the choice for 1650 as an endpoint). A recent publication which tries to break this pattern is the edited volume Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas (2018) – which extends the early modern into the eighteenth century, while simultaneously broadening the geographical scope by including the Spanish Americas besides European cases. Necessarily, this broadened scope comes with other, new, restrictions - such as a de facto focus on Catholic imagery, which has generally been considered to be more violent – a claim that will be dissected in chapter 5.36 In any case, many recent works implicitly construct the post 1650 world as distinctive in its use of violent imagery. It is precisely this assumption that will be explored here in relation to the printed image in the Dutch Republic.

If the representation of violence is perhaps too broad of a subject to be hammered into a generalized theory or methodology, a more specific approach relevant to this dissertation can be put forward. To talk about the study of the

representation of violence, I would like to refer to the English concept ‘imagineering’ and the Dutch ‘verbeelding’. As will be argued here, both terms stress the material aspects of cultural imaginations and the active role of images (as opposed to a passive and subservient one superseded by a textual culture) in the creation and articulation of abstract concepts like ‘violence’. The former concept, ‘imagineering’, is to be understood here in the context of the FWO-NWO research project ‘Imagineering Violence’, of which this study is part. Within this overarching project the term ‘imagineering’ – a combination of ‘imagination’ and ‘engineering’ – is used to ‘consider how the material production of images constitutes collective cultural imaginations’. The claim underlying this particular usage is that the increasing commercial circulation of images in the early modern period was constitutive of possible cultural horizons. Images are not simply a ‘duplicate’ (‘doordruk’), cultural products that reflect topics and themes constructed in other compartments of society; rather, images ‘literally impressed’ (‘inprenten’) and ‘performatively altered the imagination through the effective use of a new cultural infrastructure that enabled abundance and continuous repetition.’ In other words, the flood of prints produced in the second half of the seventeenth century and the commercial infrastructure that accompanied this explosion of images actively helped to create a collective imagination of violence.

The salience of this particular understanding of images in relation to the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic can be further supported by the Dutch term ‘verbeelding’. This word connotes ‘imagination’, though with more concrete material connotations, and more specifically ‘geweldsverbeelding’ (literally ‘the imagination of violence’ as well as the process of ‘turning violence into an image’). In my view, the term verbeelding neatly encapsulates the rich visual culture of the Dutch Republic, and encompasses both notions of creating images in a technical sense, as well as the imagination that goes into the creation of a printed image. In this, I interpret the term slightly differently from Henk van Nierop, who uses verbeelding to stress the overlap and interplay between ‘fantasy’ and ‘reality’, specifically in relation to

38. Korsten et al., ‘Imagineering, or what Images do to people’.
the work of Romeyn de Hooghe. In itself, the flexibility of the term verbeelding invites a wide variety of fruitful applications. With the possibility of compound words in the Dutch language, variants of ‘verbeelding’ are found in countless forms. Huizinga, for instance, talks of a ‘verbeeldingstraditie’ in medieval Netherlandish paintings: a tradition of image and imagination. The historical-scientific Dutch dictionary (Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal) gives countless variation on verbeelding as used throughout the ages: verbeeldingsziek (imagination sickness, i.e. delusion), verbeeldingskracht (imagination, but literally: ‘power of imagination’), as well as print-verbeelding or prentverbeelding: imagination as captured in print (terms used in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century for printed images). In this wide variety of applications, the term itself is not always readily translatable to English. For example, art historian Christi Klinkert has titled a subchapter of her dissertation on Dutch news prints on the sieges of Maurice of Nassau as ‘De verbeelding: totstandkoming van militaire nieuwsprenten’ (‘The imagination: creation of military news prints’). In this section, Klinkert’s use of ‘verbeelding’ is connected to the word ‘fantasy’, yet it cannot easily be supplanted by this term as there is always the implication of a concrete physical production process underlying her use of ‘verbeelding’. Thus, she concludes as follows: the news prints she studies are ‘verbeeldingen’ of the early modern reality, pictorial constructions of a series of episodes from the past, created, possibly on the basis of eye witnesses, in a workshop far from the battlefield by an artist or mapmaker. Here, the plural ‘verbeeldingen’ cannot be aptly translated either as imagination or representation,
but instead should be taken to imply both imagination and the technical process of turning what was supposedly seen via the imagination into image. In most cases, I would argue, the word ‘verbeelding’ cannot be translated simply as ‘imagination’ without altering the meaning of the original text. ‘Verbeelding’ thus connotes the process of creation as well as the resulting material product.

Both ‘imagineering violence’ and geweldsverbeelding then, are terms that try to capture the fact that there is both the question of how the imagination of violence was turned into concrete printed images, as well as how images themselves were constitutive of a collective imagination of violence. The latter part especially makes clear the importance of the printed image in respect to the study of violence. There are a number of reasons why this study only concerns the printed image, and not, for instance, paintings, sculpture, and ephemeral material in the form of decorations for public celebrations. In a practical sense, the choice is informed by the need to keep this study manageable from a methodological point of view. Other forms of visual media have their own particularities, logic, and historiographies that cannot be addressed without sacrificing an in depth approach in regard to the aforementioned material aspects of images. As medievalist Jean-Claud Schmitt has argued, the chronology of images ‘is not necessarily the same for all products of a given society’. While different forms of images might overlap in some ways, they might also adhere to their own time lines, changing at a slower or faster pace, picking up distinct subject matter, cultivating contradictions and a multifaceted outlooks. For instance, in the case of the novels written by the Dutch painter Samuel van Hoogstraten, art historian Thijs Weststeijn has noted the books’ seemingly contradictory involvement with the themes of ‘horror, magic and violence which are wholly absent in Van Hoogstraten’s ambitions as a painter or even a draftsman’. Such an example exemplifies the need to take seriously medium, materiality, and form. Thus, in order to contextualize the printed image as part of a publishing industry and market, the choice has been made not to explore similar themes across

other forms of visual media. Even as side paths will be taken, when necessary, to contextualize printed images, other forms of visual material are explicitly not the mainstay of this study.

The choice for printed images then, is not by accident. Certain violent themes were only, or mostly, confined to the printed image. Executions were an unlikely subject for Golden Age paintings, yet printed examples are found in abundance. The same goes for paintings on ‘Furies’ (sacks of cities); while this theme was abundant in print, painted impressions are few and were mostly anonymous low quality works created for local authorities in the Low Countries. As Marianne Eekhout has shown, a broad interest in painted furies – as opposed to printed furies – seems to have been missing in the Dutch Republic. A similar argument has been made in relation to a painted version of the iconic image of the hanging corpses of the brothers De Witt. As art historian Frans Grijzenhout has pointed out, this painting is unique in its use of visual subject matter that was traditionally reserved for the domain of printed images. Here, the very fact that such a violent scene made it into painting at all speaks to the enormous political and cultural impact of the lynching of the brothers De Witt and the Disaster Year in general.

In other words: the exception proves the rule.

The earlier observation that the Dutch presses churned out a significant amount of violent imagery is thus directly related to the early modern logic of the printed image. Cheaper and mass produced, prints could expand on a number of themes that were not within reach of other forms of visual media. In some way, for the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the question of violent imagery is a question specifically of the printed image. Both in scope and in numbers, prints monopolized themes of explicit violence.

If the early modern printed image was especially suited for explicit violence, the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was especially suited for the proliferation

of violent imagery. As stated before, the Dutch Republic was unique in its enormous output of both printed text and printed images for an internal and international market, and has rightly been dubbed the printing house of Europe. The goal of this study is partly to address this simple fact of abundance from a cultural historical point of view. To further contextualize the specificities of this particular medium, the next section will deal with the historiography of the printed image in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

2.4 The printed image in history and historiography

The historiography of the printed image is carved up amongst a number of academic disciplines, most prominently art history, book history, and cultural history. Each discipline has more or less focused on different aspects of the printed image. Art history, for instance, has traditionally stressed the status of the printed image as an object of art, and consequently preferred certain subsets of prints, in particular the printed work of successful painters or the historiographical category of konstprenten (art prints). Thus, the famous peintre-graveurs have often been privileged within this domain, even as their output in absolute numbers represented only a fraction of the market for prints. Rembrandt, for instance, with his production of 320 distinct prints, was an exception to the rule, and most painter-engravers would not exceed a total number of 50 engravings. In general, art historical research has focused on workshop practices, the material qualities of the print, its place within a particular art style or art periodization, as well as on the essentialist notion of the artist as a singular creative genius.

The general focus on ‘high art’ in the domain of printed images has been reinforced by the narrow historiographical use of the term konstprent. Effectively, this term has been used to create a demarcation between (‘high’ or ‘independent’)


art and utilitarian prints such as book illustrations. However, the use of the term *konstprent* in the seventeenth century was far more ambiguous than its current historiographical use suggests. For instance, even as Van Nierop makes a distinction between book illustrations, which he sees as utilitarian, and the so called ‘konstprenten’, which served as ‘art’, seventeenth-century publishers would ascribe *konst* as a signifier for book illustrations of varying sizes and quality – even including simple book illustrations for works in octavo format. Advertisements for new books in Dutch newspapers, for instance, marketed book illustrations for religious histories as ‘konstprenten’ or ‘konstplaaten’ - even as such images scarcely fit the current historiographical use of the term. Similarly, the prints in Ludolph Smids’ *Gallery der uitmuntende vrouwen [...]* (Gallery of eminent women [...] (Amsterdam: Jakob van Royen, 1690) hardly correspond with the historiographical notion of ‘konstplaaten’ yet they are described as such on the title page of the book. As will be shown in chapter 3, explicitly violent book illustrations too could be described as artful, as was the case with the prints for the 1679 edition of Bor’s history of the Dutch Revolt.

In the past years however, the scope of art historical research in regard to prints has broadened significantly. Art historians like Ilja Veldman, Nadine

54. This was the case for the small fold out prints made by Jan Luyken and others for Dirck Pietersz. Pers and Lambert van den Bos, *Romeynschen adelaer, waer in de loffelijcke en lasterlijke daden der Romeynsche koningen, en keyseren, verhandelt werden* (Utrecht: Jurriaen van Poolsum, 1689), which were promoted on the title page as ‘curious art plates’ (Curieuse Konst-Platen).
Orenstein and Huigen Leeflang, for instance, have written extensively on the topic of Netherlandish prints, addressing a wide variety of printmakers and types of printed images. Similarly, the history of collecting and of art history itself, as well as the historical creation of distinct categories of art, have become the topic of extensive and fruitful research, as is the case with the works of Heidi de Mare and Ingrid Vermeulen. Such works have extended the scope of source material relevant for art historians, and have specifically promoted further research into the production and dissemination of early modern prints.

In contrast to art history, book history has a more diffuse relationship to printed images. In general, older book historical views on printed images have often followed traditional art historical paradigms. For instance, book historian Herman de la Fontaine Verwey characterized the first quarter of the seventeenth century as the ‘Golden Age’ of the book illustration partly based on qualifications synonymous with ideas of ‘high art’. Verwey argued that even if the number of illustrated books continued to rise throughout the seventeenth century, the ‘Dutch masters’ (i.e. painters) became less inclined to involve themselves with book illustrations, and as such, the production of the second half of the seventeenth century can only be judged to be of an inferior quality.Implicitly, the quality of book illustrations is measured by its acceptance in the circles of high art, as personified here by the ‘Dutch Master painters’. Accordingly, De la Fontaine Verwey describes the changes in book illustrations mostly through the lens of ‘national’ schools and a chronological succession of art styles.


58. This argument had already been made by Eleonore de la Fontaine Verwey in her 1934 dissertation on book illustrations in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. See: Eleonore de la Fontaine Verwey, De illustratie van letterkundige werken in de XVIIIe eeuw: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche boek (PhD dissertation; Leiden University, 1934), 16-17.

Even if an influential book historian like De la Fontaine Verwey was clearly indebted to art historical notions of connoisseurship, style, and national schools, book history has since developed towards a distinct approach to the printed image, placing its role primarily in relation to the book as material object. In the past decades, book history has tried to capture the printed image in terms of the production process of the book or as an economic aspect of the book trade. In this way, book history has perhaps focused more on markets and production processes than on meaning making from a cultural historical point of view. Book historian Frans Janssen sees this focus of book history as an essential part of the academic division of labour. Cultural history, he argues, can take on the quest of placing books within a broader historical context. Yet according to Janssen, book history is not cultural history, and as such, it should first and foremost deal with the ‘actual subject, the book’, and not primarily with its social or cultural context. However, in spite of Janssen’s remarks, the handbook on Dutch book history, *Bibliopolis: history of the printed book in the Netherlands* (2003), pays ample attention to the cultural and social context of the book, and includes separate sections on book illustrations. The contribution of art historian Peter van der Coelen on book illustration in the seventeenth century largely reproduces the narrative of De La Fontaine Verwey, yet diverges in one important aspect. Even if Van der Coelen underwrites Verwey in the claim that the ‘mediocre’ book illustrations produced after 1635 were far removed from the earlier ‘artistic high points’, he also assures that

[from a cultural-historical point of view, however, such visual material is certainly not less interesting. Its scope must, after all, have been greater in many respects than the works of the well-known book illustrators.]

In many ways, this issue of representativeness of more famous printmakers relates to early modern printed material at large. As book historians Arthur der Weduwen and Andrew Pettegree have argued, much printed work from the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic has simply been lost, either because the works were ‘used


to destruction’ (such as popular learning materials, which deteriorated through extensive use), made to be replaced (almanacs for instance), or because people simply didn’t value the material enough to preserve it and rather recycled the (costly) paper.62

Following these new perspectives, the scope of printed materials used for historical studies has been enlarged significantly in the past decades, if only because both historians and art historians are no longer constrained by the ideal of timeless masterpieces. In this vein, the printed image has also served as a perfect testing ground where the approaches of book- and art-history meet. Such a combination can be found in the edited volume *Gedrukt tot Amsterdam* (2011), in which both the techniques of print making and the workings of the print market in seventeenth-century Amsterdam are discussed by the means of a number of case studies. More recently, Claartje Rasterhoff’s work on early modern Dutch painting and publishing as ‘creative industries’ has combined elements from the fields of art history, book history, and economics in order to chart the rise and fall of the Dutch book market. Here, changes in the Dutch publishing industry are analysed and contextualized through the lens of market incentives and economic theories on cultural production. While immensely valuable for the study of print culture at large, these newer works positioned on the crossroads between art, market, and book, have mostly left the issue of meaning making to the field of (cultural) history.

Whereas the printed image in some form has more or less been an inherent aspect of book and art history, this has not been the case for the traditional discipline of history. As Peter Burke has pointed out, historians in general have had an uneasy relationship with images.63 Even as the influential early twentieth-century cultural historian Johan Huizinga already approached images as sources in their own right,64 textual sources have for a long time largely remained the mainstay of historical

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research. Consequently, there are plenty of methodological tools, theories, and forms of source criticism that allow a historian to deal with texts. However, this textual bias means that historians have been liable to treat images like texts, or worse, literally as ‘illustrations’: objects that confirm narratives argued for on the basis of purely textual evidence. Art historian Francis Haskell warned in his seminal work *History and its Images* (1993) that historians were wanton to use images ‘merely to supplement what is already known from the written word’, and that the many pitfalls of visual sources were often glossed over. In a similar vein, art historian Heidi de Mare has argued that historians have invoked images only insofar as they are ‘readable’ and interpretable to confirm or illustrate historical narratives that exist a priori. In some cases, the unfortunate placement of images might even undermine the narrative of the historian. Arie Thedorus van Deursen’s famous work on the common people during the ‘Dutch Golden Age’ included a number of illustrations in its 1980 edition. Yet these illustrations are not referred to in the text, and their placement seems to have been an unfortunate afterthought. In the section where Van Deursen discusses the cheap and affordable prices of early seventeenth-century Mennonite martyr books, the reader is confronted with two expensive Jan Luyken prints of Anabaptist martyrs - works drawn from a 1685 Mennonite martyrology that stood out for its luxurious character and marketed mainly towards a wealthy clientele.

Similar issues are easily found in older literature on the printed images used for this study. In his seminal work on judicial violence in early modern Amsterdam

68. De Mare, *Huiselijke taferelen*, 22.
(1984), Pieter Spierenburg invokes Jan Luyken’s plentiful prints on executions only insofar that the etchings support, or elaborate on, written sources. The images are never treated as sources in their own right that might conjure up questions of their own, for instance, on the imagination of violence in Dutch print culture, or why the execution became popular in print even as the number of executions dwindled in Amsterdam throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. Instead, Spierenburg sees images as transparent sources that represent an historical reality rather than being formed by their own conventions, restrictions, and particular imagination. As such, he confidently states that the popularity of executions, ‘can be easily proved’, since ‘[o]n all of Jan Luyken’s etchings on the subject it is black with people in front of the scaffold.’ I would argue instead that Luyken’s execution scenes say more about the popularity of the execution as print than about the execution as historical practice.

While the image has increasingly become a serious object of research since the 1990’s, a process described as the ‘visual turn’, the primacy of text is still a salient part of the discipline of history at large. Plenty of recent historical publications use images without even referring to them in the text, suggesting either that they should speak for themselves, or that they were added as an editorial afterthought to liven up the book. Even visually oriented historical research can show that actually looking at images is hardly self-evident. Literary historian Tim Vergeer, for instance, uses Frans Hogenberg’s print on the 1572 sack of Naarden by the Spanish army as an example of an image portraying a massacre taking place in a church. True enough, the seventeenth-century textual accounts of this massacre all stressed that Naarden’s menfolk were killed in a building that had served as a chapel. However,

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70. Spierenburg, The Spectacle of Suffering, 72, 92.
74. The building would receive three memorial tablets that served to remind of the massacre that had taken place in 1572. See: Erika Kuipers, ‘Fear, Indignation, Grief and Relief: Emotional Narratives in War Chronicles from the Netherlands (1568–1648)’, in: Jennifer Spinks and
for unknown reasons, Hogenberg’s print shows the massacre taking place on the market square – an interpretation of the event that is also stressed in the few lines of text accompanying the broadsheet print.75 Undoubtedly, Vergeer had started from the canonical textual version of the massacre, which focuses on the killing taking place in a church-like building, and then assumed that Hogenberg’s print would portray this particular version of the event. Had the actual image been considered, one could have easily seen that the killing takes place throughout the city and specifically in the central market square, with the actual town church hidden behind a row of houses. In this case, the image is completely overruled by text and does not even function in its role as illustration.

In spite of the longstanding, and continuing, disciplinary bias towards text, the historical study of printed images has gained input from a renewed cultural historical interest, as well as through the rise of ‘visual culture studies’.76 In regard to the study of the early modern period, a broad array of topics has been addressed. For instance, the works of Henk van Nierop and many others on Romeyn de Hooghe published in the past 10 years have positioned printed images as historical sources that provide insight in the verbeelding of the early modern world.77 Likewise, renewed interest in Bernard Picarts’ eighteenth-century prints on religion have sparked a number of publications on the nature of religion and the Enlightenment in which the printed image holds a central place.78 In general, works on the early modern European imagination of the non-European world, like those of Benjamin Schmidt and Michiel van Groesen, have readily explored the possibilities of different kinds of images as source material.79 The history of science, which is increasingly


75. See chapter 3.4 for a description and analysis of this print.


77. Van Nierop et al., *Romeyn de Hooghe*.


concerned with the cultural aspect of knowledge formation, has recognized the
importance of printed images, as well as imagination, particularly in regard to
information that cannot be captured in text. As Susan Dackerman has argued,
early modern prints on scientific inquiries did not only function as ‘descriptive
illustrations, but also as ‘active agents in the creation and dissemination of
knowledge. Finally, the study of religion has seen no shortage in the publication
of works in which images play a prominent role. This interest has partly been guided
by the Reformation debates on the role of religious imagery, as well as on the use
of images in Protestant denominations that have traditionally been described as
iconoclastic. In recent years, the relationship between text and image in early
modern religious literature, particularly in regard to printed book illustrations,
has been at the centre of a number of studies. In regard to the religious printed
image in the Dutch Republic, literary historian Els Stronk’s analysis of emblematic
and allegorical imagery in early modern Dutch Protestant publications is especially
relevant.

In this study, printed images will be approached as the primary source
material. On the one hand, the goal is to treat images as material objects that are
the result of particular production processes as well as concrete products of market
oriented publishers and artists. For these angles, art history and book history provide
the necessary context. In the end, however, the aim of this approach is to analyse the
cultural meaning embedded within these prints, and to understand role of violent

80. Christoph Lüthy et al. (eds.), Image, Imagination, and Cognition: Medieval and Early
81. E.g. Eric Jorinck and Bart Ramakers (eds.), Art and Science in the Early Modern Nether-
lands (= Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art/Nederlands Kunsthistorisch jaarboek
61) (Zwolle, 2011); Susan Dackerman (ed.), Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early
Modern Europe (London, 2011); Horst Bredekamp, Vera Dünkel, and Birgit Schneider
83. E.g. Mia M. Mochizuki, The Netherlandish Image after Iconoclasm, 1566-1672
(Aldershot, 2012).
84. E.g. Celeste Brusati, Karl A.E. Enenkel, and Walter Melion (eds.), The Authority of the
Word; Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1700 (Leiden, 2011); David
J. Davis, Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation
(Leiden, 2013).
(Leiden, 2011).
imagery produced in the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. To avoid the reduction of image to text, this study will look at images first, and text second. In the words of Schmitt:

 [...] an image does not simply express some cultural, religious or ideological ‘signified’, deemed to exist well before or beyond this particular expression. On the contrary, it is the image which creates this element, just as we perceive it: creates it by its very structure, form, and social effect.86

Images might thus overlap or diverge from meaning created through other means – such as text – yet they will always do so in part according through their own internal logic. Importantly, an approach that considers images in their own right as meaningful sources will also allow me to stress at what points images did something ‘new’, something that had not been previously part of a textual repertoire. In effect, this study will compare printed images across a number of books genres and print formats, some of which have not been studied in unison before. The goal here is to find visual themes first, and only then make the second step of relating their function to accompanying text and context – taking into account the broader framework of the printed image as material object.

To sum up, this study is first and foremost involved with the workings of printed images. These images will not be approached as disembodied one-dimensional illustrations to be read as texts, but as material objects that were commissioned, marketed, and copied, part of a broader print culture involving publishers, authors, and translators, as well as printmakers. At the same time, these prints will be treated as cultural products, embodying as well as actively creating meaning. Following the view of Schmitt that different forms of images can change at different paces,87 the goal is to understand the place of violence within the medium of the printed image as a distinct form with its own logic, conventions, and subject matter. As such, this study is indebted to the approaches of art history and book history described here – yet with a goal to contextualize the stuff of cultural history: processes of meaning making in a historical context. Before moving to the cultural-historical core of this study, a final section of this chapter will further contextualize

the material aspect with a short introduction to the process of printmaking in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

2.5 On printmaking

During most of the seventeenth-century, printmaking was a thriving business in the Dutch Republic. It was based on a number of distinct techniques, as well as a commercial infrastructure. Both of these aspects will shortly be discussed to contextualize the images used in this study as material objects – often commissioned and produced for specific book publications.

Printmaking, or the production of printed images on paper, has a long history, reaching back to eight-century China. The printing of images on paper in Europe took off somewhat later, around the fifteenth century, and initially relied on two distinct techniques: woodcutting, and engraving. The major difference between the two is that in the case of woodcuts, the background of the image is cut away, leaving the lines that are to be printed standing in relief. In the case of engravings, the entire plate is inked so that the lines cut out of the metal are filled up. In turn, the surface of the plate is wiped clean before being pressed into the paper, leaving only the engraved lines to be imprinted. The former technique is called relief printing, and is similar to letterpress printing; the latter is called intaglio printing. Each of these techniques had its own peculiarities and benefits. Woodcuts and letterpress printing could be done in the same print run, saving costs and labour in the production of illustrated books with in-text images. Engraving could make for more detailed images, yet required a separate print run with a rolling press. In the seventeenth-century, the use of woodcuts would often designate the use of a more accessible and cheaper alternative for the production of book illustrations.

In the course of the seventeenth-century, a specific variant for intaglio printing, etching, would slowly but surely become the favoured technique of printmakers in the Dutch Republic, especially for those working on book illustrations. Similar to engraving, etching entailed the creation of lines in a metal plate (often made out of copper). However, instead of carving out the lines directly, etching required that the plate was first covered with an etching ground made of

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wax, into which the lines of the design could be set. Afterwards, the plate was placed in an acid bath that bit out the lines where the etching ground had been removed. This process could be repeated several times in order to create a higher level of detail. In general, etchings could be produced more quickly than engravings, providing the printmaker with more ‘freedom and speed’ and ‘resulting in more lively and attractive pictures’.  
Similarly, the art of etching itself was easier to learn than engraving, as the technique of drawing the lines was more akin to sketching than to metalworking (most of the early European engravers, for instance, had initially been armour and weapon smiths). At times, a mix of etching and engraving techniques were used, depending on the requirements of the print and the types of surfaces it was supposed to depict.

Most of the images discussed in this study will concern etchings – the standard for many printed images produced in the Dutch Republic in the second half of the seventeenth-century. If they concerned book illustrations, they could either be printed as in-text images (requiring an additional print run), or on separate sheets bound into the books by the bookbinder. In most cases, it would have been the publishers that commissioned illustrations and owned the original plates. In fact, as will be shown in the separate case-studies here, authors were rarely involved with the practical or creative process of printmaking, many of them either having died years before illustrated editions of their works entered the market, or leaving the issue of images to publishers as a purely commercial affair. At the same time, the actual production of the plate itself could involve a number of persons; one could have created the design, while another cut it into the plate. In some cases, one artist would work on the background, the other on human figures. Some artists, like Jan

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Luyken, worked mostly alone, etching after their own drawings (even if this did not preclude different forms of copying); others, like Romeyn de Hooghe, oversaw large workshops with perhaps as many as 20 to 30 apprentices.93

In the end, the creation of new book illustrations was often initiated by publishers that assumed there was a market for an illustrated edition of the particular work they were about to publish – an initiative that came with serious financial risk. At the same time, plates could be used for a significant number of print runs (though less than engravings) – with touch-ups to hide some of the wear and tear. Plates could also be re-used to illustrate different books, were sold amongst publishers, or could be altered in order to serve a variety of new purposes. Some publishers gathered considerable collections of plates in the course of their career, with a concentration of ownership into large family-firms – mostly based in Amsterdam – taking place in the second half of the seventeenth-century.94 For the purpose of this study, it is most important to note that during this period, publishers – and book publishers in particular – increasingly started to order newly made plates to illustrate their books. As will be shown in the upcoming chapters, this change, with roots in the economics of printmaking and publishing, would allow for the proliferation of new and inventive violent images – work that would imagineer new ways of visualizing and understanding violence.
