4.1 Introduction: a botched beheading

In 1626, some companions of the French nobleman Henri de Talleyrand-Périgord, count of Chalais, made a decision that would have grave unintended consequences.¹ For conspiracy against the French crown, Talleyrand-Périgord had been sentenced to death by beheading. His companions, however, hoped to turn the tide by intimidating the headsman. Surely enough, the executioner failed to show up on the day of justice. Unfortunately, rather than dodging his fate, the nobleman was now subjected to the nerves of an unexperienced stand-in. From amongst the prisoners in the city, a simple shoemaker was selected to fulfil a task that required a skilled executioner. The first blow of the Swiss sword failed to behead Talleyrand-Périgord. Four blows followed, all to no conclusive effect, except for prompting a harrowing ‘Jesus Mary!’ from the count. Dropping the sword, the shoemaker took up a butcher’s cleaver and took another 29 blows to finally sever the count’s head.

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¹ Part of this chapter is based on: Michel van Duijnen, “‘Only the strangest and most horrible cases’: The Role of Judicial Violence in the Work of Jan Luyken’, *Early Modern Low Countries* 2.2 (2018), 169–197. I would like to thank the EMLC editors, the anonymous reviewers, as well as Yannice De Bruyn and Erika Kuijpers for their helpful feedback on the article in question. Part of the research for this chapter was carried out at the Gotha Research Library and made possible by the Herzog-Ernst scholarship financed by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.
This ‘very rare and horrible’ story was recounted in the 1698 edition of *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, extended, edited, and translated from German by the Dutch polymath Simon de Vries. However, it is not the gruesome story itself – barely half a page long – that stands out. Rather, it is the brand new print of the botched beheading (see figure 1.2). The etching by Jan Luyken shows the agony in the count’s face, his gruesomely maimed neck, as well as the shoemaker’s panicked stare. The print is exceedingly rare in showing in very explicit terms a botched execution, a theme not readily portrayed in the early modern period. At the same time, this peculiar print was part of a wider interest in prints of judicial violence. In the second half of the seventeenth century, explicit prints of capital punishment became an increasingly prominent theme in the Dutch publishing industry. Already in 1685, Luyken had created dozens of explicit execution prints for the second edition of the Mennonite martyr book *Het bloedig tooneel*. In turn, the etchings made for this martyrology drew heavily upon the high quality prints from the iconic 1657/1659 edition of the Reformed martyr book of Adriaen van Haemstede. Sacred and profane flowed together as these martyr books were accompanied by the burgeoning genre of ‘tragic histories’: foreign language texts concerning (political) crime and punishment that were translated and illustrated for a Dutch reading public. As shown by the example of Talleyrand-Périgord’s case in *Gottfrieds Historische kronyck*, this trend in book illustration also took root among more general histories, which were increasingly fitted with explicit and inventive execution prints that mimicked those found in martyr books and the so called ‘tragic histories’.

While executions became a booming subject in print in the second half of the seventeenth century, executions in the flesh – in the reality of everyday life – were on a temporary retour. Such a change fitted into a wider, though non-linear, pattern. Bodily disfigurement in the case of non-capital offences had become increasingly rare in the course of the seventeenth century. Moving away from protracted and elaborate death sentences, capital punishment was more and more

3. On the rise of this genre in the Dutch Republic, see: Frijhoff and Spies, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, 574.
limited to either beheading or hanging. Thus, only four criminals were subjected to the agonizing breaking on the wheel in Amsterdam between 1650 and 1700. Similar changes took root in The Hague, where executions became increasingly uncommon in the post-1650 period. In her research on the judicial system in The Hague in the period between 1650 and 1672, historian Ingrid Frederika Desanto counted only six cases of decapitation. This decline was part of a more general trend that in some cases can already be discerned in the late Middle Ages, as is the case for Haarlem. However, sharp regional differences existed even within the limited context of the Low Countries.

5. Ibid., 74.
In many ways, the proliferation of execution prints articulated a growing distance between printed representations and actual judicial practice. As people got fewer possibilities to see executions on justice days, they received many more options to gaze upon intricate and newly produced printed images of capital punishment. A closer analysis of the apparent distance between practice and print will tell us how judicial violence became something imagined or imaginable through the use of printed images, and how particular acts of violence became part of the domain of print culture rather than of lived realities. Such a cultural historical approach will equally add to the historiography of judicial violence and criminology, in which images, and book illustrations in particular, have long served only a minor role. 8

In this chapter I will discuss how execution prints were given form at a time that the practice of capital punishment was in decline across the Dutch Republic. By framing this topic in relation to the growing distance between print and judicial practice, this case study will shine a light on the broader thematization of judicial violence, the negotiation between the secular and sacred in execution prints, and the distance between print culture and lived realities in the Dutch Republic.

The first part of this chapter deals with the religious production of images as represented in two iconic and lavishly illustrated martyr books: the 1657/1659 edition of Historie der vromer martelaren, and the 1685 edition of Het bloedig tooneel. 9 Published after the height of the Religious Wars, these martyrologies were late-comers when put in a European perspective. Most illustrated Catholic martyr books, for instance, had been created at the end of the sixteenth century. Still, in spite of their relatively late arrival, the two works in question were the most extensively illustrated martyrlogies ever to be produced in the Dutch Republic, providing an enormous inventory of inventive images concerning early modern execution methods. Following this observation, my first question is: how should

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9. I use the term ‘religious’ to denote executions for heresy, specifically those portrayed in early modern martyr books. ‘Secular executions’ refers to political and more mundane crimes, even though it is important to note that both ‘types’ of executions were often the responsibility of secular authorities. On the interaction and distinction between religious executions (for heresy) and executions for non-religious crimes in the case of early modern France, see: Paul Friedland, Seeing Justice Done: The Age of Spectacular Capital Punishment in France (Oxford, 2012), chapter 5.
these violent, and expensive folio books be understood, and in what ways did they add to a growing corpus of execution prints?

In the second part of this chapter, I will address the secular counterpart of these martyr books as manifested in ‘tragic histories’ and in a wide variety of profane history works. Some printmakers and publishers would work on both types of books, and many execution prints attest to the close visual connection between sacred and profane interpretations of judicial violence. Here, I will address the second question: how did these secular history works add to the visual repertoire of execution prints, and in what ways did they overlap or diverge from their sacred counterparts as found in martyr books?

The third section will look more closely at generalized themes that can be found across the discussed works. It places the growing corpus of execution prints in a broader context that takes into account the materiality of the images, the works in which they were found, and the ways in which publishers tried to market their prints. Through such an approach I will gauge to what extent we can talk about a new and broader visual thematization of capital punishment and an overarching visual structure for sacred and profane execution prints.

In the fourth and final section, I will come back to the divergence and distance between print culture and lived realities. The final questions I ask here are: what can be said about the role of explicit execution prints in light of the declining practice of capital punishment? In what ways did judicial violence become imaginable through printed images?

4.2 A market for martyrs: publishing illustrated martyrrologies in the Dutch Republic

Illustrated Dutch martyrrologies followed a strange trajectory during the seventeenth century. Many trendsetting works from surrounding countries had been published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century as exponents of the religious conflicts that ravaged Christian Europe. Iconoclastic England could find its martyrs in the woodcuts of John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1563) (also known as ‘Foxe’s book of Martyrs’); the Catholic world could turn to the

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10. There is a great number of publications devoted to Foxe’s text and the woodcuts that accompanied it. For a number of recent publications, see: Christopher Highley and John N. King
printed works of Antonio Gallonio and Richard Verstegan as well as the many reproductive engravings of altar pieces, paintings and church statues. Yet despite the unprecedented early seventeenth-century flourishing of the Dutch printing industry, and that of the illustrated book in particular, no works of similar stature appeared in the Dutch Republic. When two extensively illustrated Dutch martyrologies were finally published in the second half of the seventeenth century, the context for their publication was strikingly different from their foreign forebears. Published after the end of the Eighty Years’ War, these works were not created with extensive reference to contemporary violence like Foxe’s and Verstegan’s propagandistic works. Instead, they visualized a type of violence that had already been absent from the Dutch Republic for at least half a century. Dutch Catholic martyrologies, on the other hand, saw no significant work in terms of illustrations in this period. The only Dutch illustrated Catholic martyr book to appear during this period, a translation of Petrus Opmeer’s Martelaars-boek, ofte historie der Hollandse martelaren (Martyr book, or history of the Holland martyrs) (1700), first published posthumously in Latin in 1625, relied almost entirely on crude copies of older prints produced in the Low Countries. While violent martyr prints had certainly been a staple of Catholic visual culture, by the time Dutch Protestant publishers and printmakers started to invest themselves in illustrated martyr books, their moment had already passed.

Even as the two editions of the martyrologies in question here, Historie der vromer martelaren (1657/1659) and Het bloedig tooneel (1685), stand out in their

12. As Gregory points out, Foxe was a contemporary of the martyrs of Mary Tudor’s reign, whereas Van Braght lived more than a 100 years’ after the most intense phase of Anabaptist persecution. Luyken, for that matter, was even further removed in time from the persecutions portrayed in Het bloedig tooneel. Brad S. Gregory, ‘Anabaptist Martyrdom: Imperatives, Experience, and Memorialization’, in James Stayer and John Roth (eds.), A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700 (Leiden, 2006), 467–506: 468.
use of explicit violence, relatively little attention has been paid to the illustrations in these works. The famous prints by Jan Luyken for the 1685 edition of *Het bloedig tooneel* have mostly been invoked without reference to the particular context of their production and dissemination,\(^\text{14}\) or they have been studied solely within the narrow context of Mennonite religiosity.\(^\text{15}\) Even fewer words have been spent on the content of the prints for Van Haemstede’s martyr book, despite their iconic status as the definite illustrations of Dutch Calvinist martyrdom.\(^\text{16}\) This lacuna, however, is now slowly being filled. Recently, literary historian Sarah Covington has broken with the limited historiography on Luyken’s martyr prints by placing *Het bloedig tooneel* within a broader context of early modern martyr books and connecting it to older illustrated Catholic and Protestant martyrologies.\(^\text{17}\) Similarly, art historian Michiel Plomp has turned the spotlight on the Van Haemstede prints, identifying the designer of the plates as Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, a friend and successful pupil of Rembrandt. Plomp’s findings situate the 1657 and 1659 editions of Van Haemstede’s martyrology as early examples of a new wave of book publications that would include high quality and original imagery, foreshadowing the boom in illustrated works that would follow in the coming decades.\(^\text{18}\)

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16. The 1671 edition, which included the plates of the 1657 edition, was reproduced up to the twentieth century. See for the 1911 edition with a foreword of Abraham Kuyper: Adriaen Cornelisz van Haemstede, *Historie der martelaren die, om de getuigenis der evangelische waarheid hun bloed gestort hebben van Christus onzen zaligmaker af tot het jaar 1655 […]* (Rotterdam: D. Bolle, 1911).


To contextualize and understand the particular place of the prints in question, it is essential to contrast the relative lack of academic interest in Dutch Protestant martyr prints with the wealth of literature that exists on the visualization of Catholic martyrdom. Such a comparison is especially important because it reveals a number of particularities concerning the Dutch prints that help to situate the place of explicit violence in the production of early modern martyr imagery at large. In the next section, I will take a closer look at the literature concerning early modern martyr imagery and violence in order to pinpoint how these Dutch Protestant and Mennonite late-comers related to their older Catholic predecessors.

4.3 Martyr prints and visualizing violence

In general, the visualization of the violent deaths of Christian martyrs has strongly been associated with Catholicism, and in particular with its early modern Counter-Reformation manifestation. In this vein, historian Brad Gregory argues that ‘Catholic martyrological images [...] overwhelm’ their Protestant counterparts ‘both in range and quantity’.\(^\text{19}\) Indeed, much research has been done on early modern Catholic martyr imagery, covering altar pieces, engravings, frescoes, and sculptures.\(^\text{20}\) At the same time, many academic works concerning the subject of early modern martyr prints have focused on a select number of iconic Catholic illustrated martyrrologies from the late sixteenth-century. Verstegan’s *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (*Theatre of Cruelties of the heretics of our time*) (Antwerp: Adrianus Huberti, 1587) and Gallonio’s *Trattato de gli instrumenti di martirio [...]* (*Treatise on the Instruments of Martyrdom*) (Rome: Ascanio and Girolamo Donangeli, 1591) especially have become shorthand for the explicit violence associated with Counter-Reformation print culture.

Effectively, much of the literature on martyr prints has been concentrated on a select number of Catholic works to the exclusion of Dutch Protestant illustrated martyrrologies. A short comparison between Catholic and Protestant martyr prints

\[^{20}\] For instance, Carolin Behrmann and Elisabeth Priedl (eds.), *Autopsia: Blut- Und Augenzeugen: Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums* (Paderborn, 2014) presents itself in the title as a bundle on ‘extreme images of Christian martyrdom’, yet on closer inspection, the work deals solely with Catholic martyr imagery, with a single side track into Byzantine art.
in John B. Knipping’s seminal work on Counter-Reformation art in the Low Countries succinctly sums up this disposition. Departing from a clearly Catholic point of view, Knipping characterizes the Protestant production as uninspiring, plain, and lacking in the spectacle of blood and violence that he deems uniquely characteristic for Counter-Reformation art.21 Yet as will be shown here, Dutch Protestant martyr images were positively awash in violence and bloodshed – all in spite of the medium of the uncoloured print.

The main issue that seems to have marginalized the Dutch Protestant martyr print is the particular timeline of its production, which contrasts with a broader European, mainly Catholic trend. Thus, the Catholic production is, as mentioned before, focused mostly on the late sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century. Art historian David Freedberg, for instance, relates the production of explicitly violent altar paintings in the Southern-Netherlands on early Christian martyrs mostly to the most famous late sixteenth-century printed works, that is, the works of Gallonio and Verstegan.22 This connection between violent Catholic martyr prints and the turn of sixteenth century fits a broader historiography on Catholic iconography. Counter-Reformation artists and theorists stressed the importance of explicit violence in the propagation of the Catholic faith on a European-wide scale, and the stimulation of devotion on a more individual level.23 According to Stephen Campbell, ‘no amount of graphic violence could be deemed excessive’ in the eyes of some Counter-Reformation Catholic reformers.24 In this vein, Paleotti’s famous tract Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane

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(Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images) (1582) deemed permissible the use of graphic violence in the service of the proliferation of the sacred image.

The violence characteristic of late Counter-Reformation Catholic martyr imagery was thus embedded within clearly articulated and overlapping religious, political, and aesthetic functions. Accordingly, such violent art has primarily been analysed as a response to the rupturing of the Church and the ensuing Wars of Religion. Yet with the relative easing of religious tensions, violent images would seem to have lost their function. This argument suggests a timeline in which violent art is directly linked to the propaganda efforts that flowed out of the heat of the Wars of Religion. In his handbook on early modern Catholicism, historian Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia sketches the timeline regarding taste and distaste for violence, the Jesuit strain in particular, as follows:

A strong attraction for suffering seemed to have characterized Jesuit taste in art until the middle of the seventeenth century: at the Gesù, the late sixteenth-century chapel of four martyrs depicted the tortures of St. Etienne, St. Lawrence, St. Catherine, and St. Agnes; and perhaps the most horrifying representation of all, The Martyrdom of St. Liévin by Rubens, depicting the bishop’s tongue torn out and given to a dog, was a painting commissioned by the Jesuits at Ghent. By the middle of the seventeenth century, under the generalship of Oliva, a gentler taste turned iconography from bloody torture to triumphant glory. Pozzo’s vault frescos of the new Jesuit church, S. Ignazio, showing the glory of Jesuit missions in four corners of the world, were a far cry from the austere and somber iconography of earlier decades.25

As this quote makes clear, martyr imagery, and in particular the visualization of graphic violence, is often associated with Catholic Counter-Reformation art in its broadest sense, though the topic is, on closer inspection, often narrowed down to the artistic output of the late sixteenth century, becoming somewhat less prominent in the first half of the seventeenth century, and petering out in the second half of the seventeenth century.26 This general development can also be identified within

26. For the same argument in relation to church decorations, see Arnold Witte, ‘From Narrative to Icon: Depictions of Martyrs in San Martino Ai Monti’, in: Carolin Behrmann and
the context of the Catholic Low Countries. The graphic martyr imagery of the early Counter-Reformation is in striking contrast with the martyrs that are found in print series of Saints from the 1640’s and 1650s. For example, Abraham van Diepenbeeck’s lavish print series on Premonstratian Saints portrayed a number of martyrs, yet does so in an iconic fashion: with the weapons of their demise in hand or neatly stuck in their ornate clothing. Pieter Soutman’s *Iesv Christo, Fideli Militantis Ecclesiae Imperatori [...] (To Jesus Christ, the faithful commander of the church militant...)* (Haarlem, 1650) took a similar approach and showed only serene Saints unaffected by the weapons struck into their otherwise intact bodies (see figure 4.1).27

Within the context of the Dutch Republic, this Catholic trajectory is the precise mirror image of the idiosyncratic development of the Protestant and Mennonite martyr print. In fact, the martyr print is conspicuously absent from what Herman de la Fontaine Verwey dubbed the ‘Golden Age’ of Dutch book illustrations: the first quarter of the seventeenth century.28 Even though there was no lack of martyr books at this time, there was no Dutch equivalent of Foxe’s copiously illustrated *Actes and Monuments*, nor anything resembling the impressive martyrological image output of the Southern Netherlands.29 The only exceptions were a number of crude and repetitive woodcuts that were inserted in editions of Van Haemstede’s martyr book from 1604 onwards.30 Yet these images were exceptional in two ways: first of all, they were the only ones of their kind produced in the Dutch Republic; secondly, their lower quality stood in shrill contrast both to the high quality of Dutch book illustrations produced at this time – with etching and engraving being the preferred techniques – as well as the contemporaneous production coming from Catholic Europe.

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27. Many thanks to Gerben Wartena for translating from Latin the original full and lengthy title of the print series.


When the Dutch printing industry finally ‘discovered’ violent martyrdom as a theme, it was in a context completely different from its foreign forebears.\textsuperscript{31}

These new martyr prints visualized a type of violence that had been absent from the Low Countries for at least half a century. Such a timeline in which martyr imagery comes after the Eighty Years’ War does not fit the logic connected to the Catholic production, in which propaganda and religious conflict are seen as the main drive behind violent imagery. In contrast to the Catholic use of martyrdom, the many prints that served the propaganda efforts employed in the Dutch Republic during the Eighty Years’ War had been built around broader and more diffuse notions of religious violence. These works had effectively focused less on individual martyrs and more on the wider religious-political struggle against Spain. For instance, the widely popular and often reprinted *Spaensche tiranye gheschiet in Nederlant* (*The Spanish tyranny acted out in the Netherlands*) (1622) portrayed only the occasional individual martyr and focused mostly on massacres of civilians and the elimination of political figures like the counts of Egmont and Horne, as well as William of Orange. An exception is the inclusion of an image of Anna Utenhove, who held the dubious honour of being the last person to be sentenced to death for heresy in the Southern-Netherlands. Yet the description of the contents of the book as portrayed on the frontispiece made clear that individual martyrdoms were not the mainstay of the works’ images. Tellingly, the subtitle, surrounded with images of executions and murders, consists simply of two textual elements: one describing the prominent noblemen killed by the Spanish authorities, the second naming the different cities sacked by Spanish forces. This preference echoes on in contemporary academic works. Even though Simon Schama’s seminal book on the Dutch Republic, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, lists ‘martyrologies’ in its index, Paul Arblaster has pointed out that the pages referred to only deal with ‘the descriptions by seventeenth-century chroniclers of random atrocities committed by Spanish mutineers, and not with the systematic judicial repression of heresy.’

32. A notable exception would be Rembrandt’s highly sought after martyr prints. Stephanie Dickey has speculated that these etchings portray Anabaptist martyrs. See: Stephanie Dickey, ‘Mennonite Martyrdom in Amsterdam and the Art of Rembrandt and His Contemporaries,’ in: William Z. Shetter and Inge van der Cruysse (eds.), *Contemporary Explorations in the Culture of the Low Countries* (London, 1996), 81–104.

33. *De Spaensche tiranye gheschiet in Neder-lant, waer in te sien is, de onmenschelicke ende wreeede handelingen der Spaengiaerden [...]* (s.n.) (Amsterdam: Cornelis Lodewijcksz vander Plassen, 1622).

34. Arblaster, ‘John Foxe in the Low Countries’, 145 n. 36.
In the end, the two martyrologies in question here have a somewhat ambiguous place in the current historiography. They do not form a part of the well-studied corpus of images and texts of anti-Spanish propaganda which was published during the Eighty Years’ War. Yet neither are they part of the domain that concerns itself with the study of religious images. While numerous cultural historical studies on religious illustrated literature have been published in the past years, Dutch illustrated martyrologies have remained more or less untouched. For instance, the most comprehensive overview of seventeenth-century Dutch illustrated religious books, Els Stronk’s *Negotiating Differences* (2011), does not consider martyrologies as part of the religious book production. Since martyr prints never triggered the same Protestant censorship debates as other forms of religious imagery, they have also remained outside the scope of the many academic works that deal with iconoclasm and the relationship between text and image in the Calvinist tradition.

In short, *De historie der martelaren* and *Het bloedig tooneel* represent two curious collections of violent martyr prints. They go against broader European trends and they do not fit the explanations that have been given for the violent content of early modern martyr prints produced by Catholics at the turn of the sixteenth century. In addition, they were the first extensively illustrated martyr books produced in a society that had long since been characterized by a rich visual culture and a thriving book industry. In what context then, or to what purpose were these violent books produced and illustrated?

Before moving to the actual content of these Dutch illustrated martyrologies, it is important to further contextualize these works as products of the Dutch book industry, and to underline the material aspects of these illustrated books.

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36. Abraham Kuyper, however, did warn the readers of the 1911 edition to not restrict themselves to gazing at the martyr prints, but to actually read the stories captured in the book. Arguably, this is very much a modern Reformed concern, as none of the seventeenth-century editions of Van Haemstede carried warnings on the use of the images inside them. See: Van Haemstede, *Historie der martelaren*, X.

4.4 The publication of Van Haemstede’s and Van Braght’s martyrologies

Both the 1657/1659 edition of *Historie der vromer martelaren* and the 1685 edition of *Het bloedig tooneel* were works that mostly organized and reworked older textual content with added martyrological ‘updates’. Despite being published some 30 years apart, they had in common that they would both come to serve as iconic editions that later seventeenth and eighteenth-century works would hark back to. The new images especially would have a fruitful afterlife in copies – though the quality of the prints would drop significantly in the course of the eighteenth century.38

Even as these successful iconic editions stood out for their high quality prints, it is important to keep in mind that both Dutch martyrologies had not been written with the issue of images in mind. This, again, is in contrast to the sixteenth-century works published throughout Europe. Foxe, Gallonio, and Verstegan, for instance, were all closely involved with the production of the images for their respective martyr books. In the Dutch cases however, even the textual authorship of the works themselves was a strenuous case in later editions; Van Haemstede’s work was continuously revised after his death in 1562 and thus ‘assumed a kind of collective editorial authorship’.39 In similar terms, Van Braght incorporated older Anabaptist martyrologies in his quest for a comprehensive overview of Christian martyrdom.40 When these books were illustrated with high quality etchings

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38. E.g. Claas Bruin, *Korte schets van het leeven en sterven der martelaaren, getrokken uit de geschiedenissen van den Heere Joannes Gysius […]* (Amsterdam: Jan Blom, 1719); Adriaen Cornelisz van Haemstede and Claas Bruin, *De Historie der Martelaren die om het getug-genisse der Evangelischer Waarheit haar bloet gestort hebben, beginnende van de tyden Christi onses Saligmakers, tot den jahre sestien bondert vyf en vyftig […]* (Leiden: Widow of Jan van der Deyster and Hendrik van der Deyster, 1747); Tieleman Jansz van Braght, *’t Merg van de Historien der Martelaren [...]* (Amsterdam: widow of Barend Visscher, 1722).


40. Ibid. In modern scholarship, the term ‘Anabaptism’ is often used as a broad term that covers all the different early modern and modern religious groups that reject infant baptism in favour of adult baptism, including the violent movements of the early sixteenth-century. Within this broad religious movement, different labels appeared over the course of the years, often taken from particular religious leaders. In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, Anabaptists were either called ‘Doopsgezind’ or ‘Mennonieten’, the last name being taken from the religious leader Menno Simons. In contrast, Moravian Anabaptists came to be known as Huterites, after the religious leader Jacob Hutter. While Van Braght aimed his work at a Dutch ‘Mennonite’ community, some martyrs in his work would be part of the
for the first time in the second half of the seventeenth century, they represented works that were already hard to attribute to a single author, let alone one who had concerned himself with the inclusion of images. Van Haemstede’s work, the original edition dating from 1559, was first decorated with simple and repetitive woodcuts in 1604 (poorly produced prints that could hardly be compared to the detailed Foxe woodcuts), only moving up to an impressive set of etchings with the 1657 edition created by the Dordrecht printer Jacob Braat and publisher-printmaker Jacobus Savery III (both Mennonites). The most extensively illustrated version of Van Haemstede martyrrology was Braat’s 1659 reprint of the 1657 edition, which included another additional 18 etchings that partly replaced earlier duplicates – a revision that underlined the importance of unique and new images. The 1657 edition, with inclusion of the prints, was already pirated in 1658, an incident which might have pushed Braat and Savery to set their 1659 edition apart from the pirated editions through the inclusion of additional images. In itself, the pirated edition and the quick rerun and update of the 1657 edition were a testament to the commercial success of Braat’s and Savery’s work. In the rest of this chapter, I will consequently refer to the 1659 edition, as it includes a number of images not present in the 1657 edition.

Het bloedig tooneel took a somewhat shorter route to its illustrious folio edition. Tielmans van Braght based his work mainly on an older Anabaptist martyrrology, Het Offer des Heeren (The Lord’s sacrifice) (first published anonymously in Dutch in 1562). Yet he also added many martyr stories, both old and new, to make his work the most comprehensive Anabaptist martyrrology available. The result was an impressive folio book with a high quality frontispiece, but without any further illustrations. Coincidentally, the first 1660 edition was printed by the broader religious movement of Anabaptism rather than being specifically ‘Mennonite’. The academic term ‘Anabaptist’ thus differs from the Dutch ‘Wederdoper’, which more narrowly refers only to the early sixteenth-century movements. See: David L. Weaver-Zercher, Martyrs Mirror: A Social History (Baltimore, 2016), xiii, 32.

41. Frederik Piiper, Martelaarsboeken (The Hague, 1924), 52.
43. Ibid.
same Jacobus Braat who had just a few years earlier published Van Haemstede’s Reformed martyrrology.

The lack of illustrations in *Het bloedig tooneel* took only some 25 years to be remedied. In 1685, Dutch Calvinist publishers brought to the market a new edition of the Mennonite martyrrology. This venture required a considerable investment, not in the least because of the addition of etchings, and was published *en compagnie* in order to share the financial risks. Initially, this enterprising group included Hieronymus Sweerts, Jan ten Hoorn, Jan Bouman, and Daniel van den Dalen. At a later stage of the project, they were joined by Jacobus van den Deyster, Herman van den Berg, Jan Blom, the widow of Steven Swart, Sander Wybrants, and Aart Dircksz. Oossaan. Naturally, these Reformed business(wo)men were perhaps more interested in profit than the religious promotion of Anabaptist martyr stories. Specifically, they would have had in mind the commercial success of the aforementioned illustrated editions of van Haemstede’s martyrrology published in 1657 and 1659.

The editorial work that set the 1685 publication of *Het bloedig tooneel* apart from the first edition of 1660 was rather modest, though not without contemporary significance. Van Braght, who had died in 1664, was still named as the author of the work, and the editor of the 1685 edition remained anonymous. Instead, it was the inclusion of the 104 etchings by Jan Luyken that most drastically changed the face of the martyr book. Van Braght’s original work had included no images, save for a frontispiece. Now, with the second edition, the Calvinist publishers brought to the market the first ever illustrated Anabaptist martyrrology. Naturally, the addition of Luyken’s fine etchings was reflected in the price. Unlike woodcuts, etchings could not be printed together with the text, and as such required a more expensive production process that included two separate print runs. With a so-called “common” edition at eight and a half guilders, and a “fine” edition with better paper at thirteen guilders, the book was aimed at the more prosperous

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members of the Dutch Mennonite community. Reflecting the success of the illustrations, Luyken’s etchings for Het bloedig tooneel soon started to live a life of their own.\textsuperscript{51} Around 1712, they were published as a picture book in Leiden with added French and German descriptions by the enterprising Pieter van der Aa, under the title: \textit{Theatre des Martyrs [...] Schau-Buhne der Martyrer}.\textsuperscript{52} This publication was completely devoid of Van Braght’s martyr stories and contained only the prints that had made the 1685 edition famous. An Italian edition of the prints had already appeared in Venice in 1696, again without any reference to the original work of Van Braght. In fact, whether the second edition of Het bloedig tooneel itself was truly a commercial success can be doubted.\textsuperscript{53} As late as 1702 one of the original publishers, Daniel van den Dalen, put out an ad in the \textit{Amsterdamse Courant} trying to find buyers for 200 leftover copies of the book.\textsuperscript{54} Van den Dalen even offered for sale to any interested party all the original plates and privileges for the works – and it is not unlikely that Pieter van der Aa, who, like Van den Dalen at that time, was based in Leiden, took up the offer.\textsuperscript{55} The fact that Van der Aa consequently decided to turn the martyr book into a picture album suggests that Luyken’s prints still garnered considerable attention, whereas few prospective buyers were left for copies of the expensive second edition of the Mennonite martyrology. As such, Jan Luyken’s prints seemed to have had a far wider reach than the Anabaptist martyr

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\textsuperscript{52} Jan Luyken, \textit{Theatre des Martyrs [...] Schau-Buhne der Martyrer} (Leiden: Pieter van der Aa, ca. 1712).

\textsuperscript{53} Wybrants significant investment in the publication would be cited as one of the causes for his bankruptcy in 1694. See: Visser, ‘De pelgrimage van Jan Luyken door de doopsgezinde boekenwereld’, 171.


\textsuperscript{55} James W. Lowry has speculated that Pieter van der Aa might have printed the etchings for the Italian edition and sent them to Venice around 1696. One of his important finds is that the etchings of the Italian edition are printed on paper from Amsterdam, suggesting a Dutch origin. However, if Daniel van den Dalen would have sold the plates to Van der Aa as late as 1702, the possibility exists that someone of the original publishers would have sent the plates to Venice. Lowry narrows these suspects down to Jan ten Hoorn, Daniel van den Dalen, and Hieronymus Sweerts. See: Lowry, ‘Martyrs’ Mirror Picture Albums and Abridgements’, 3-4, and 8 n. 28.
stories collected by Van Braght. The first translation of *Het bloedig tooneel* appeared only in 1748-1749 and concerned an unillustrated German edition published in Pennsylvania for the Mennonite community in the American colonies.\(^56\)

Illustrations thus took a central place in the production of these new editions of older martyrologies. In this respect, the two martyr books stand for a broader reorientation of the Dutch book publishing industry towards expensive illustrated books in the second half of the seventeenth century. Van Haemstede’s edition of 1657 in particular can be seen as an early example of new wave of publications that included high quality and original imagery, foreshadowing the boom in illustrated works that would follow in the coming decades.\(^57\) The works equally showed how business trumped religious identities in the book industry. In a striking reversal of religious orthodoxy, Van Haemstede’s Reformed martyrology was published by Mennonites, whereas the 1685 edition of *Het bloedig tooneel* was brought to the market by a Reformed publishing-collaborative.\(^58\) As such, the publication of these works seems to have been guided strongly by market-incentives, with publishers hoping to find untapped clientele in the Republic’s diverse religious public.

In total, the number of unique prints produced for these two books was impressive. Together, *Het bloedig tooneel* and *De Historie der vromer martelaren* included no less than 281 etchings of martyrs. Some of these prints showed martyrs discussing scripture with Catholic clergy; other portrayed pious men and women being torn away from their families by secular authorities. Yet most prints straightforwardly showed men and women being burned, strangled, or beheaded. In other words, the representation and imagination of early modern judicial violence was central to the prints produced for these martyr books. What, then, made these iconic images of violence distinct from their foreign forebears?

### 4.5 What makes a martyr print a *martyr* print

As with other types of religious subjects, martyrdom had long been portrayed in symbolic and allegorical terms. Martyrs were often shown holding the instruments


\(^{57}\) Plomp, ‘Gerbrand van den Eeckhout’s Illustrations for Adriaen van Haemstede’s Books of Martyrs of 1657 and 1659’, 186.

\(^{58}\) Visser, ‘De pelgrimage van Jan Luyken door de doopsgezinde boekenwereld’, 170.
of their death as symbols of identification rather than being subjected to them. Yet in the course of Middle Ages, artists started to work on more explicit imagery that portrayed the execution of the martyr rather than his or her iconic representation. According to the historian Brad Gregory, the twofold representation of martyrs reflected their ambiguous status in medieval society. Martyrs had a ‘present role’ in society that overlapped with that of Saints as intercessors of the divine to be prayed unto. In this, their status as a martyr was less important than their powers as Saintly figures, and their representation often mimicked that of Saints in general.59 In contrast to this ‘present role’, the explicit violent imagery of the martyr’s death pointed to their ‘past origins’, the suffering which had cemented their role as intercessors of the divine.60

As Protestantism tried to do away with the cult of Saints, Reformation imagery of martyrs equally shifted towards a more graphic representation of martyrdom. Already in the first extensively illustrated Protestant martyrology, Foxe’s monumental *Actes and Momunents*, iconic representations of martyrdom were completely replaced by actual execution scenes. Whereas a common late medieval image of St. Lawrence was that of a man holding a small griddle, signifying martyrdom by roasting, the Foxean woodcut portrayed a man being burned on an actual griddle, changing the symbol of the martyr-saint back into an naturalistic representation of an execution.61 The contrast and interplay between these modes of representation is neatly embodied in a late seventeenth-century print by Jan Goeree and Jan Luyken (see figure 4.2): the work shows a statue-like iconic image of St. Andrew carrying the Andrew’s cross and a number of fish as his attributes, set on a base that portrays the narrative scene of St. Andrew’s actual execution on the cross.62 A similar mode of representation was used in the frontispiece for the 1657 Van Haemstede edition, which shows, on the right, an iconic figure standing on a base with a small narrative scene of a crucifixion (see figure 4.3). While the name on

60. Ibid.
61. King, Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and Early Modern Print Culture, 212–13. Arguably, similar graphic (as opposed to symbolic) images of martyrdoms had already existed in late medieval Germany, yet those works had always functioned in a pre-reformation society which ascribed imagery in general with special religious qualities.
62. The print denotes Jan Goeree as designer and P. Sluyter as printmaker. The narrative scene is signed separately as ‘I:L.’, conveying the authorship of Jan Luyken.
the base reads ‘S. Andreas’ (St. Andrew), the martyr seems to have been mislabelled: the figure carries a knife, an attribute associated with St. Bartholomew (who was
flayed alive), instead of St. Andreas’ traditional fish (referring to his background as fisherman), or the Andreas’ cross (referring to his execution on a X-shaped cross).

Regardless of the impact of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, the urge to visualize the physicality of religious violence was not a strict Protestant one, let alone an early modern particularity. Similar graphic images of martyrdoms were rife in late medieval Germany, and Catholic Counterreformation art had equally included spectacular portrayals of violence in its repertoire. Here, issues of techniques and naturalism could be just as pronounced as in Protestant images. For example, a work like Gallonio’s famous *Trattato de gli instrumenti di martirio* took its visual cues not only from older martyrological imagery, but also from the popular ‘machine theatres’ of the sixteenth century. At the same time, the Counterreformation visualization of martyrdom remained focused mostly on older pre-reformation martyrs who had set iconographies and were often clearly identifiable to the Catholic faithful.

In many other aspects too, this visual culture of martyrdom remained focused on a number of elements that set it apart from more mundane execution scenes. There were many different ways in which this distinction could be visualized: the opening of the heavens, rays of light, halos, angels bringing palm branches: these supernatural elements were often used in Catholic imagery to stress the unique nature of a martyr’s execution and to set it apart, visually, from instances of profane suffering.

However, few of these religious elements were used in the representation of martyrs in seventeenth-century Dutch martyrologies. In both Van Haemstede and Van Braght, the early martyrs would still be clearly recognisable to most Christians; Christ with the cross and his crown of thorns, St. Andreas being set on the Andreas cross (in Van Braght), Bartholomew being flayed alive, John the Baptist beheaded in his cell, Lucas hung on an olive tree, Antipas roasted inside a brazen bull, Stephen stoned to death, Peter crucified on a Petrine cross, etc. Yet as we progress in the timelines of the martyrologies, the executions turn into a blur of beheadings,

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63. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*.
64. Freedberg, ‘The Representation of Martyrdoms during the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp’.
hangings and burnings, taking on early modern victims that have no set personal iconography or visual tradition. These are the images that share many similarities with the execution prints that would become a staple of illustrated history books published in the Dutch Republic.

As stated before, the two Dutch martyrrologies provide no less than 281 prints. Obviously, not all of these can or will be addressed here, yet a more general thematic overview can be given. The most important divide within the corpus of images is that between the Early Christian martyrs and their early modern counterparts. ‘Medieval’ martyrs serve as a bridge to point towards continuity in the suffering of true Christians at the hand of their persecutors. In addition, it is important to note that not all prints portray execution scenes. Both the artist behind the Van Haemstede prints and Jan Luyken addressed a number of different themes. A rough division can be made between scenes that portray the arrest of martyrs, their preaching or debate with Catholic clergy and worldly authorities, and the torture they endure before execution. Still, most scenes show an execution of some sort: David Weaver-Zercher counts 74 (out of a total of 104) images portraying or foreshadowing an execution in Het bloedig tooneel.\textsuperscript{67} Van Haemstede’s work follows a similar division, with a majority of the prints using the scaffold as a centrepiece. In contrast with Het bloedig tooneel, however, Van Haemstede’s 1657 edition also included a separate section on the massacres of the religious wars with prints portraying the recent attacks on Protestants in Ireland and Piedmont. In this, the illustrations of the two martyr books had clearly differing scopes: while the print series in Van Haemstede ended with polemic images on the recent persecution of Protestants, the last image in Van Braght concerned events of some 50 years prior to its publication date, portraying the arrest of Anabaptists in Zurich in 1637.\textsuperscript{68}

In many other aspects, however, the two print series have much in common. The most important element that the two martyrrologies share in their portrayal of executions is the fact that they have little place for the visualization of divine

\textsuperscript{67} Weaver-Zercher, Martyrs Mirror, 99.

\textsuperscript{68} Though Luyken himself produced prints on the contemporary persecutions, they remained outside the scope of Het bloedig tooneel. They were, however, included in Pieter van der Aa’s reprint of Luyken’s work for Het bloedig tooneel as a picture album. These particular works were originally produced for Gottfrieds Historische Kronyck, and included some prints on the hardships of French Huguenots. See: Van Eeghen and Van der Kellen, Het werk van Jan en Casper Luyken, vol. I, 121, 381.
iconography. The illustrator of Van Bragt included some references to the hand of God, yet these are all unrelated to the visualization of the actual execution of the martyr. In one case of divine retribution, Van Haemstede narrates how a bull killed an official during the burning of an English martyr, running off with the intestines of the chancellor on his horns (see figure 4.4). A central place is given to this violent display of God’s work, yet the execution itself bears no signs of divine intervention. In fact, the burning martyr is pushed to the background, and even remains unnamed, referred to simply as an ‘English woman’. Another case concerns the martyrdom of the famous theologian Guido de Bres; again, the execution itself is not visualized as bearing signs of divine intervention. The print shows De Bres’ lifeless body hanging from the gallows besides that of his companion Peregrin de la Grange (see figure 4.5). The divine is rather manifested in a group of soldiers going mad with bloodlust. Van Haemstede narrates that directly following the execution, the present soldiery was taken with a violent rage, killing those around them without distinction – both Catholics and Protestants. His description ends simply with the remark that this fit had overcome them ‘without any reason’. In the print, we see the soldiers dispersing from the gallows and turning on the bystanders with gun and pike.

Luyken’s prints follow a similar pattern, with few images of early modern martyrs referring directly to the hand of God. When they do allude to the inhuman endurance of some of the martyrs, it is always with reference to the physical signs of divine intervention – shunning any references to allegorical imagery. Thus, a man named David burned in Ghent was supposedly still alive after his ordeal at the stake, a sure sign of God’s work according to Van Bragt. Trying to finish the

69. Adriaen Cornelisz van Haemstede, Historie der martelaren, die om het getuygenisse der Evangelischer waerheydt haer bloedt gestort hebben, van de tijden Christi onses Salighmakers afdot den jare sestbien bondert viij-en-vijfhig toe [...] (Dordrecht: Jacobus Savery, 1659), fols. 47 verso, 48 recto. This story originated from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, and concerned a case of wishful (providential) thinking according to Gregory; other sources asserted that the chancellor in question survived his injuries and lived on for many years to come. See: Gregory, Salvation at Stake, 182.

70. Van Haemstede, Historie der martelaren, fol. 422 verso.

71. Ibid., fol. 434 recto.

72. Tielemans Jansz van Bragt, Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weerloose christenen, die, om ’t getuygenis van Jesus baren salighmaker, geleden hebben, ende gedood zijn, van Christi tijd af, tot desen tijd toe [...], vol. II (Amsterdam, Jacobus van der
A DISTANCE IN PRACTICE

Deyster, Herman van den Bergh, Joannes Blom, widow of Steven Swart, Sander Wybrants, Aart Dircksz Oossaan, 1685), 161.

Figure 4.4: Anonymous, Een Vrouwe verbrandt in Engelandt, en hoe dat de Kanselier van een Stier omgebragt is, 1657, etching, in: Adriaen van Haemstede, Historie der martelaren. Dordrecht, 1657, fol. 48 recto. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

Deyster, Herman van den Bergh, Joannes Blom, widow of Steven Swart, Sander Wybrants, Aart Dircksz Oossaan, 1685), 161.
job, the executioner punctured the martyr’s bowels three times with a pitchfork (see figure 4.6). When even this didn’t bring death quick enough, David’s neck was finally broken to seal his fate. To drive home the physicality of the ordeal, Luyken portrays the moment when the charred black body of David (showing the bare bones of his right leg) is penetrated by the executioner’s pitchfork. Another striking example is found in the beheading of Hans Misel, whose body miraculously stayed in a position of prayer after his head had been cut off. Here, Luyken portrayed the moment when onlookers react in shock to this bizarre sight (see figure 4.7), with a central place for the fountain of blood spraying out of Misel’s upright body. Again,
it is the physicality of the miracle, and not so much the distinct iconography of martyrdom that is underlined in the image.\textsuperscript{73}

Importantly, these examples represent the exception rather than the rule. Even in cases where Van Braght’s text gave plenty of opportunity to portray the dramatic gestures of martyrdom, Luyken does not always seize the opportunity to do so. For example, Van Braght recounts how in 1562 Hendrik Eemkens was executed in Utrecht by a combination of strangulation and the ignition of gunpowder (see figure 4.8). While the text states how the martyr dramatically raised his hands towards heaven after the gunpowder had been set alight, the image shows us how Eemkens meekly hangs on the strangulation pole with the gunpowder set aflame on his chest. Sarah Covington argues that the print alludes to divine intervention

\textsuperscript{73} Van Braght, \textit{Het Bloedig Tooneel}, vol. II, 562.
and interprets the rays of light emerging from the sack as supernatural in character, though the text is silent on the nature of the flames – only stating that Eemkens hair refused to burn. However, in early modern etchings, and those of Luyken specifically, explosions and fire often take the form of rays emerging from the centre of its source. Rather than the divine, the print relays the complicated reality

75. In fact, the technique returns in Het bloedig tooneel in a print on the Catholic practice of trial by fire, which shows a glowing rod of iron with similar rays of light emerging from the source of heat. Naturally, Van Braght argued against the validity of trial by fire, which he saw as a folly of men, and stated that all who were forced to hold the heated piece of iron were burned without exception and judged as heretics by the inquisition. Clearly, this glowing rod represents the opposite of the divine, yet the rays of light, like in the execution of Eemkens, are present nonetheless. See: Van Braght, Het bloedig tooneel, vol. II, 335.
of portraying a burning sack of gunpowder within the means of early modern printmaking techniques, as well as a concern with the concrete physical reality of the execution in question.76

If these images are the exception, what then, is the rule? The answer is that most images simply portray men and women on the scaffold, readied for execution, hanging lifelessly from the gallows, or kneeling before the executioner’s sword. Different authors have argued that in such cases particular iconographical signs

can be connected to the identification of martyrs. For example, the folding of hands in prayer and the raising of the eyes towards heaven are generally interpreted as ‘iconographical cues’ that identify a convict as a martyr. Yet following these cues in the case of execution prints – both secular and religious – would lead to countless misinterpretations. The first problem is that many Protestant martyr prints do not fall in line with common iconographical themes that would remain strong in Catholic imagery. Take for instance the case of the Anabaptist Jan Smit, hung by his foot from the gallows – a particularly harsh and degrading punishment in early modern Europe (see figure 4.9). The print shows the martyr hanging from the gibbet, with Smit’s arms dangling aimlessly towards the ground in this display of early modern deadly defamation. In short, the print simply portrays a man hanging helplessly from the gallows by his foot. The suggestion that he is a martyr comes entirely from text and context, that is: Van Braght’s martyr story, and its place within a martyr book.

Smit’s ignominious hanging finds a counterpart in two separate Van Haemstede prints of martyrs decaying on the gallows’ field. The prints themselves are copies of one another, the only difference being that the corpse in the first one is intact whereas it is headless in the second (see figures 4.10 and 4.11). Again, the scenes portray the culture of judicial violence and infamy in early modern Europe, with the bodies of the respective martyrs waiting for disintegration and denied the privilege of a Christian burial. Two men stand next to the gallows and point to the remains of the martyr as a bird flies over. Similarly to the case of Smit, the visualization of martyrdom focuses not on the dramatic moment of death or the iconography of the divine, but rather on the shameful display of the convict’s body as was custom in early modern execution culture.

77. Waite, ‘Naked Harlots or Devout Maidens?’ 48; Covington, ‘Paratextual Strategies in Thielman van Braght’s Martyrs’ Mirror’, 19.
79. Van Haemstede, Historie der martelaren, fols. 320 verso, 496 recto.
80. In both cases, the caption states that the bodies of the martyrs are left as prey for birds. Van Haemstede, Historie der martelaren, fols. 320 verso, 496 recto.
The martyr prints in question were thus much more likely to portray religiously charged violence as any kind of other violence familiar to the early modern European justice system. This becomes exceedingly clear when some of the aforementioned examples are compared to ‘secular’ execution prints. From 1650 onwards, history works were increasingly fitted with inventive and high quality illustrations of executions. How did these illustrated books develop, and how did they negotiate the sacred and profane in their representation of judicial violence? In the following section, I will trace this development by comparing Luyken’s work for Het bloedig tooneel with his plentiful contributions to history works published in the Dutch Republic.
4.6 Histories, tragic histories, and execution prints: an Anabaptist martyr, a Spanish noble man, and a Portuguese murderess

A year before publishing Van Haemstede’s illustrated martyrology, Jacobus Savery brought to the market *Het koninkclyk treur-toonneel, ofte Op- en onder-gangh der keyseren, koningen en vorsten* (*The royal stage of sorrow, or rise and fall of emperors, kings, and princes*) (Dordrecht, 1656). This book was a compendium of stories concerning the violent ends of powerful men and women throughout history and put together by the incredibly productive polymath and translator Lambert van den Bos. The gruesome frontispiece of the book, however, was somewhat misleading and hardly mirrored the contents of the illustrations (see figure 4.12). While the print showed a crowded stage with a variety of executions taking place, the illustrations inside the book consisted of poorly copied portraits and crude narrative scenes concerning assassinations and murder. Yet in the many editions of Van den Bos’ work that would follow in the next 50 years, high quality illustrations became an increasingly important part of these so called ‘tragic histories’. In tandem with the growing importance of illustrations, execution prints too would come to hold a central place in these compendia of violent and tragic deaths, and the final 1698 edition of this highly successful series included numerous inventive execution prints by the hand of Jan Luyken.81 This particular final edition by the hand of Van den Bos must have been a particular successful venture, as the publisher of the book, Jan ten Hoorn (who had also taken the initiative to create a second edition of *Het bloedig tooneel*), soon brought a spinoff to the market in the form of Laurens van Zanten’s 1699 *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen, of op en ondergang der vorstinnen en andere beruchte vrouwelijke personagien* (*Theatre of sorrow of illustrious women, or, rise and fall of queens and other infamous female characters*) – again illustrated with original work by Luyken.

The contents of these ‘tragic histories’ underline the importance of book illustrations in the Dutch Republic at large. Often, the textual content concerned either recycled tales from classical antiquity or more recent translations of foreign

What set these compendia apart from their foreign counterparts, such as the famous French ‘histoires tragiques’, was their liberal use of explicit and violent illustrations. Before 1670, Dutch translations would include mostly simple illustrations, some modelled on the tried and tested comic-like broadsheets of the times. For instance, the illustrated Dutch translations of John Reynolds' macabre stories of crime and punishment titled *The Triumphs of God’s Revenge against the crying and execrable Sinne of Murther* contained small and simple images of murders and executions, mostly by the hand of anonymous printmakers. Yet from 1670 onwards, a number of successful Dutch artists would lend their hand to the illustration of these Tragic Histories, including Arnold Houbraken, Herman Padvbrugge, the famous Romeyn de Hooghe, and finally, the immensely productive Jan Luyken. Being the last in line of a number of printmaking-contributors to this series, Luyken could readily rely on the inventions of his forebears. For example, works by Herman Padvbrugge and anonymous printmakers provided the basis for a number of Luyken’s etchings that were used in reruns of older editions, not unlike the way in which the works in Van Haemstede’s 1657 martyrrology provided Luyken a blueprint for the visualization of early modern martyrdom. Compare for instance prints on the execution of Georg Petersson with Luyken’s print loosely based on an earlier version by Padvbrugge (see figures 4.13, 4.14). Luyken has shifted the composition to be in vertical format, to fit the size of the book in question – yet many elements are taken from the older horizontally aligned print by Padvbrugge.

82. Frijhoff and Spies, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, 574.
83. Unlike their Dutch counterparts, the original French *histoires tragiques*, cheap works for a broad market, were never published as illustrated volumes. For the French publications, see: Friedland, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, 158.
Or take the example of Luyken’s work on the death of the legendary Viking warlord Ragnar Lodbrok – based on the work of an anonymous engraving (see figures 4.15, 4.16). In both of these cases, Luyken’s illustrations replaced the older prints in new editions of the books in question.

In many ways, then, Luyken can be approached as a uniquely productive artist whose work was nevertheless thoroughly shaped by late seventeenth-century print culture and its peculiar interest in images of judicial violence. Through the lens of the enormous output of Jan Luyken and his son, Casper, I will examine how execution prints of a secular and sacred nature increasingly blended into one

86. For a closer examination of Luyken’s relationship to violent imagery, see: Van Duijnen, “Only the strangest and most horrible cases”.

Figure 4.13: Herman Padtbrugge, The execution of Georg Petersson (no title), 1676, etching (fold-out print), in: Lambert van den Bos, Het tooneel der vorstelycke gunstelingen. Amsterdam, 1676. Special Collections University of Amsterdam.
another. While the series of ‘tragic histories’ discussed here provide the most obvious example of such a secular production, they represent only one aspect of Luyken’s
Figure 4.16: Jan Luyken, Ragnar Lodbrok thrown in the snake pit (no title), 1687, etching 13.2 x 7.6 cm., in: Georg Ziegler, Konst-spiegel der weereitlikke vermanen. Amsterdam, 1663, fol. 80. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum: RP-P-1896-A-19368-527.
diverse output. Many other instances of profane execution scenes created by Luyken can be found in a variety of books that concerned a wide array of topics: from local histories to all-encompassing world chronicles, and from the Dutch Revolt (as shown in his print on the execution of Pacieco, discussed in chapter 3) to the popular genre of exotica. So what happens if we analyse a selection of these profane works alongside Luyken’s iconic images of martyrdom?

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have argued that the prints included in Dutch martyrologies were prone to portray martyrdom in terms similar to any kind of violence familiar to the early modern European justice system. Rather than focusing on overtly religious interpretations of violence, with allegorical representations of the divine, these prints instead showcased the diverse practice of capital punishment in the early modern period. This affinity with profane works will become exceedingly clear when some of the aforementioned examples of martyr prints are compared to their ‘secular’ counterparts by Luyken as found in a diverse collection of histories and tragic histories.

Undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable examples concerns the aforementioned print of the hanging of Don Pacieco in Vlissingen, a work that preceded Luyken’s contributions to Het bloedig tooneel by some years. As discussed in the chapter on the Revolt, around 1680 Luyken had worked on a reprint of the famous historiographical account of the Revolt by Pieter Christiaenz Bor Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen (Causes, Beginning, and Continuation of the Dutch wars). In his magnum opus, Bor tells the story of a Spanish nobleman called Pacieco, who – as described in chapter 3 – ended up as a captive of the insurgents in the city of Vlissingen in 1572. Supposedly related to the much-hated governor-general, the Duke of Alba, Pacieco was sentenced to be hanged from the gallows. Refusing to reconcile himself with his impending death, he offered great sums of money for his release, and when his pleas fell on deaf ears, he begged for a noble death by beheading. According to Bor, Pacieco asked for the Dutch to ‘give him the sword’, which was misinterpreted by a rebel to mean that the nobleman wished the return of his confiscated rapier. In this misunderstanding, shifting between the morbid and the comical, the rebel who had taken possession of

88. ‘t sweert soude geven’. Bor, Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen, vol. I, 370.
the (undoubtedly valuable) rapier assured Pacieco that his weapon was safe with its new owner, and that he could freely ascend the ladder to the gallows. A song book from 1617 by Bor that simplified his history work for women and children similarly included the death of Spanish nobleman, and even further mocked Pacieco’s plea to be beheaded. In the rhyme, the rebels answer Pacieco’s call for the sword by stating that his weapon would be well kept and have a new purpose in serving to ‘eradicate the Spanish’.

In all aspects, Pacieco was described as an anti-martyr, unable to embrace death – even trying to negotiate the mode of his execution according to the privileges of the second estate. Luyken is careful to include some of the details of Bor’s story in his print: we see the man at the base of the gallows holding Pacieco’s rapier in his left hand, and nonchalantly waving away Pacieco’s worries with his right hand; we see, as described by Bor, rebels wearing the clothes of monks; we see Pacieco’s two unnamed compatriots already hanging from the gallows. Yet Luyken portrays none of Pacieco’s hesitation, or Bor’s direct references to his supposed fear of death (see figure 3.9). Instead, he shows the moment when Pacieco reaches the top of the ladder leading up to the noose, his face directed to the light of the sun, eyes towards heaven, and with bound hands folded in prayer. The contrast with the image of the martyr Jan Smit dangling gracelessly from the gallows (see figure 4.9), or the original disdainful description of Pacieco’s behaviour by Bor for that matter, is striking. It is, again, not the use of overt religious iconography that makes a martyr print. Instead, martyr prints were part of a broad category of judicial violence that followed its own visual repertoire.

The print of Pacieco is far from unique, and similar cases abound in Luyken’s oeuvre. Luyken’s visualization of the execution of the Portuguese noblewoman Bellinde de Corzora is another case in point. The story in question, recounted in Van Zanten’s *Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen*, is one of great Portuguese drama, with a chain of adulterous affairs leading up to Bellinde cutting the throat

89. Van der Steen, *Memory Wars in the Low Countries*, 74.
90. ‘Hy riep seer om het swaert / Men sey ‘t was wel bewaert, / Om Spaengaerts vvt te rooden.’ (He called for the sword / They said it was well kept / To eradicate the Spanish). See: Pieter Christiaenz Bor, *Den oorsprong, begin ende aenvanck der Nederlandischer Oorlogen, geduyrende de Regeringe vande Hertoginne van Parma, de Hertoge van Alba, ende grotend-eels vanden groot Commandeur. Beschreven deur Pieter Bor Christaensoon History-schrijver, ende nu deur den selven in Liedekens vervaet* (Leiden: Govaert Basson, 1617), 35-36.
of her sleeping husband. At the end of the narrative, Bellinde is sentenced to die at the stake for her crimes, and Van Zanten describes how this ‘murderous female abomination’ prayed many Hail Marys under her breath in the last moments before her death. Luyken chose to portray this very moment, depicting Bellinde’s hands making the sign of the cross (see figure 4.17). This image of a woman being burned at the stake who is in the midst of making religious signs is closely mirrored in Luyken’s etchings of the burning of the Anabaptists Maria and Ursula van Beckum in Het bloedig tooneel (see figure 4.18). In both images, we see a woman tied to the stake, praying as the wood at her feet is set alight. Yet while the print of the Van Beckum sisters portrayed the making of martyrs, the execution of the murderous and adulterous Bellinde was described by Van Zanten as a case of divine retribution.

This overlap is not entirely surprising. Medieval and early modern executions were rife with religious meaning, their function deeply intertwined with Christian notions of suffering, forgiveness, and redemption. The inescapable religious framing of executions is partly what makes it so difficult to relate certain ‘religious’ iconographic elements to martyrdom. In reality, most people would have prayed before their end at the executioner’s hands. Their deaths might even be lamented by onlookers as a cruel but necessary sacrifice to cleanse the community of sin. Yet from this perspective, what Luyken’s prints do is quite different. By cleansing the images of the traditional Christian iconography of martyrdom (a broader Protestant process already discernible in the famous woodcuts for Foxe’s Book of Martyrs), they efface the differences between martyrdom and capital punishment in general. Essentially, martyrdom became a constituent part of the broader visual culture of judicial violence. As shown here, such a shift brought renewed focus on the

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92. Van Zanten, Treur-tooneel der doorluchtige vrouwen, 153.


95. King, Foxe’s "Book of Martyrs" and Early Modern Print Culture, 212–215.
physicality of distinct early modern execution methods. With the disappearance of
the divine, new themes could be accentuated – in particular the destructive effects
of judicial violence on the human body.

Figure 4.17: Jan Luyken, Bellinde de Corzora, Dochter van Emanuel de Corzora, buyten de wallen
The focus on bodily destruction is most clearly illustrated by the sheer artistic diversity that is displayed across the religious and secular execution prints by Luyken. Most executions in *Het bloedig tooneel* concern burnings, yet even within this single mode of execution there is a staggering amount of diversity to be found. All of this is in sharp contrast to older Dutch martyr books. Woodcuts

96. For the importance of diversity within a specific category (for instance, animals, plants, etc.) in late seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, specifically the works of Willem Goeree and Samuel van Hoostraten, see: Thijs Weststeijn, ‘Schilderkunst als “zuster van de bespiegellende wijsgeerte”: de theoretische status van het afbeelden van de zichtbare wereld in Samuel van Hoostraten’s Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst’, *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 18.2 (2002), 184–207: 199–200.

used in the 1609 edition of Van Haemstede’s martyrology were hardly concerned with the individual fates of martyrs. Identical prints of burnings were re-used en masse throughout the book to illustrate distinct martyr stories. In some cases, even two consecutive images supposedly illustrating different martyrdoms could be completely identical. There could be good reasons for this approach; the use of repeated woodcuts – which were generally cheaper than etchings or engravings – would certainly have kept down the cost of the book. In the high quality etchings of the 1685 edition of Het bloedig tooneel however, burnings come in all sorts of forms. Luyken shows half burned bodies, bodies turned completely to ashes, bones sticking out of charred flesh; burning by gunpowder, mass burnings; burning at the stake, in a straw hut, in a boat, victims tied to a stake, to a ladder, etc. This diverse approach of Luyken also showed his indebtedness to the prints of the 1657 edition of Van Haemstede, which had not only stressed the enormous diversity in death by burning (even if these were less explicit than Luyken’s prints), but those of executions in general. Here too, most execution prints had related closely to the specific characteristics of the stories they were supposed to depict, and thus created variety even within a long list of executions mostly accomplished by fire, sword, and rope. Tellingly, the diverse nature of the martyr prints in question was one of the supposed selling points of the book. Proudly, the title page of the 1657 edition declared that the reader could find ‘all the martyrdoms very curiously engraved after the nature and characteristics of the countries and places’. In this, the illustrations made a claim to provide a true ‘inventory’ of capital punishment and took seriously the specificities of time and place in the representation of judicial violence.

The combined issues of diversity and the specificity (as every scene included details unique to the text it was supposed to illustrate) of execution methods resounded equally in the secular prints of Jan Luyken. In Luyken’s work on exotica, one could find many strange and cruel execution methods from around the world.

98. Adriaen Cornelisz van Haemstede, De historien der vroomer martelaren, die om het getuigenisse des Heylighen Evangeliums haer bloedt vergoten hebben, vanden tijde Christi af tot den jare duysent vijf hondert vier en tachtentich toe, op het cortste by een vergadert (Leiden: Henrick Lodewijcxsoon van Haestens, 1609). The consecutive woodcuts on page 457 and 472 are identical, and are also used in other places, like on page 316.

explicit prints that were supposed to make books on the ‘exotic’ world attractive market products.\textsuperscript{100} The same holds true for Luyken’s work on profane histories. The aforementioned \textit{Gottfrieds Historische kronyck} offered numerous stories and topics to be illustrated, yet the publisher – the successful Pieter van der Aa – seems to have made sure that the many execution scenes included in the book by both Jan Luyken and his son, Casper Luyken, were sufficiently diverse. Amongst other things one can find an execution by firing squad, a botched beheading, a postmortem quartering, and an execution by burning in an unorthodox form (see figure 4.19).\textsuperscript{101} In this, the printmaker and publisher definitely not always pick the most well-known and iconic executions to be illustrated. Of course one could find the beheading of the famous Dutch statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, as well as a print by Casper Luyken portraying the execution of Charles I. Yet one could also find a print concerning the curious case of the beheading of an obscure Holy

\textsuperscript{100} Schmidt, \textit{Inventing Exoticism}, chapter 3.

Roman imperial Officer by the name of Cronsbruck. His case solely seems to have been included on account of his strange execution. According to the chronicle, Cronsbruck was determined to literally dodge his fate and refused to sit still in the traditional manner expected of a convict (see figure 4.20). In the print he is shown tied to a chair, having thrown himself on the ground, with the headsman trying to finally end the charade. 102 Similarly, the unorthodox burning concerned the execution of a number of unnamed arsonists in sixteenth century Prague, on which only a few words are spent in the accompanying text. 103 The same goes for the opening example of this chapter concerning the botched beheading of the count.

102. Ibid., vol. II, 1403.
103. The execution of the men was accomplished by chaining them to a pole, but leaving them with enough room to walk in circles. Then, fires were lit, forcing the men had to run around the poles. If they stopped and sat on the ground to escape the heat, hot oil was thrown on them, as shown in Luyken’s print. The text focuses more on the execution method than the crimes that warranted it, and calls the slow death by burning a ‘most gruesome punishment’. Gottfried, Joh. Lodew. Gottfrieds Historische kronyck, vol. I, 532–533.
of Chalais, a 70 year old story that was hardly of contemporary significance in the Dutch Republic.

Indeed, the most remarkable products of Luyken’s eye for explicit violence were specifically found in his prints of botched beheadings. The theme first emerged in Luyken’s work for Het bloedig tooneel, which included a print of the execution of Wolfgang Pinder, a German Anabaptist sentenced to death by beheading in 1570. In Luyken’s print (see figure 4.21) we see Pinder’s executioner in the midst of a nervous breakdown as he is unable to behead his victim in a single strike and is forced to use his sword as a glorified knife. Such a gruesome sight would not have been uncommon in the early modern era. Beheadings required a skilled executioner with a steady hand, and we have plenty of records concerning incidents

Figure 4.21: Jan Luyken, Wolfgang Pinder beheaded by a nervous executioner (no title), 1685, etching 11.4 x 13.9 cm., in: Tieleman Jansz. van Braght, Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weerloose christenen, Amsterdam 1685, vol. II, p. 561. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum: RP-P-OB-44.297.

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in which the headsman failed to execute his victim with a single blow – often to the displeasure of the onlookers. Yet even though beheadings went awry on a regular basis throughout early modern history, explicit prints of botched beheadings are mostly related to the output of the Amsterdam print industry of the late seventeenth century, with a number of variations on the theme created between 1685 and 1698. Outside this very narrow time span, early modern printmakers seem not to have been keen on the graphic potential of botched executions. For instance, the infamous beheading of Mary Queen of Scots was botched, with the executioner having to strike at least twice with the axe. Yet this theme was never visually exploited in Catholic propaganda. In his famous print on Mary's beheading, the Catholic polemicist Richard Verstegan does show a small cut in the Queen's neck, implying that the strike that the headsman is about to deliver is the second one. However, neither crowd, Queen, nor executioner show any reaction to the unfolding of the botched beheading, and save for the small cut shown in Mary's neck, the beheading is similar to all others found in Verstegan's work. Some crude and far less explicit prints of botched beheadings appeared around 1670 following the execution of the ringleaders of the Zrinski-Frankopan Conspiracy in Austria. Yet all of these prints showed little of the messy business of botched beheadings, and celebrated the executions as victories of the Emperor over his treasonous subjects.

Botched beheadings were thus a unique visual specialty of the late seventeenth-century Amsterdam print industry. Within this modest corpus of botched beheadings, almost all of these instances of uniquely graphic violence are by the hand of Luyken, and Pinder's martyr print was only the first of its kind.

108. See: Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, Digitale Sammlungen: urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:2-41830; and: Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria, inventory number: PORT_00077805_01.
109. I have found seven instances of Dutch prints portraying a botched beheading. Luyken produced five of them; the Amsterdam based printmakers Pieter Pickaert and Adriaen Schoonebeek each created one print, both dealing with the execution of the Duke of Monmouth. For the prints of Pickaert and Schoonebeek, see the collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, respectively: B-0696-5, [http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467403](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467403), and RP-P-OB-82.798, [http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467809](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467809) (Accessed on 21 November 2017).
Another example would follow in *Gottfrieds Historische kroyck*, and concerned the aforementioned French nobleman Henri de Talleyrand-Périgord (see figure
A DISTANCE IN PRACTICE

1.2). Three other prints by the hand of Luyken refer to the botched execution of the Duke of Monmouth in 1685 (see figures 4.22, 4.23, 4.24). The would-be king of England suffered a gruesome end for his failed attempt to take the throne from James II, with the executioner unable to sever the Duke’s head even after several strikes with the axe.

In the case of Monmouth, the explicit and unique violence shown in Luyken’s prints has up until now been explained purely from the viewpoint of politics. Regina Janes, for instance, has argued that Dutch printmakers ‘executed prints for two audiences: one content to see in the execution a lawful exertion of authority, and the other eager to see in Monmouth’s mangling a judgement not on
Monmouth, but on James and his court.  

The first type represented a wide-angle print, with the executioner raising Monmouth’s severed head before a silent and disciplined crowd; the second type shows the unfolding chaos as the executioner is desperately trying to sever the Duke’s head – as is the case in the prints by Luyken. However, such an interpretation goes completely beyond the variety of material available and the complex interplay between text and image. For instance, a German broadsheet in favour of James II had no problem pointing to Monmouth’s botched execution. In this print, the executioner has discarded his axe and wields a knife, referring to the problematic beheading that had just unfolded. The accompanying text in turn states that Monmouth had been executed in the most horrible manner, an incident that is interpreted as the just retribution for the Duke’s revolt against the rightful king. In another case, a Dutch Stuart propaganda print from 1685, illustrated by the Amsterdam artist Adriaen Schoonebeek, showed the failure of the execution regardless of its condemnation of Monmouth’s rebellion, with a small print portraying the headsman stepping back in horror from the half-beheaded Duke. In turn, the accompanying text served up the popular story of how the half beheaded Monmouth had turned his head menacingly towards the bungling executioner before being subjected to two more blows of the axe, and finally, a knife to the throat.

11. In fact, to my knowledge, there are no wide angle prints of the beheading of the Duke from Dutch workshops. The wide angle print Janes refers to is in fact a German broadsheet with the wide London background copied after an earlier print of Wrenclaus Hollar concerning the execution of Thomas Wentworth. Janes, Losing Our Heads, 56.
13. Adriaen Schoonebeek, ‘Stuarts koninglijk huis’, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-82.798, http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.467809 (Accessed on 21 November 2017). The small images lettered A to Y in this pro-Stuart propaganda print were cleverly repurposed as Orangist illustrations around 1696 in a publication by Cornelis Dankerts II. For instance, the coronation of James II in the Stuart print becomes the crowning of William III and Mary in the Orangist book illustration (with matching subtitle). The botched beheading of Monmouth is also found in this publication, seamlessly changing from Stuart propaganda to anti-Stuart polemics without any change in the representation of the botched execution. See: Cornyck of Stuarts Nootlot synde alle de voornaemste rampen en
Clearly then, the political (or the religious for that matter) should not take precedent over the visual. No mistake: the fact that Monmouth’s execution was a popular topic for prints was connected to its political significance, especially in relation to the unfolding of the Glorious Revolution in 1689. As Helmer Helmers has shown, the instrumental use of Monmouth’s execution for William III’s propaganda only started in 1688, three years after the tragic beheading. In accordance with this timeline, two of Luyken’s prints on Monmouth were published in 1689 (see figures 4.21 and 4.23), and the third one in 1698 (see figure 4.22). Yet as shown here, the particular way in which the execution was portrayed is not straightforwardly connected to any partisan context. Within this light, Luyken’s prints on the Duke should not only be considered as part of the political climate in which they were produced, in the same sense that the print of Pinder’s beheading should not only be considered as part of a Mennonite martyr culture or ‘Mennonite sensibility’. The political significance of the execution of Monmouth is not the answer to the question why the botched beheading became part of the unique output of the Dutch printing industry of the late seventeenth century, and of Jan Luyken in particular. Rather, the execution of Monmouth was portrayed in such an explicit manner by Luyken and his likes because it fitted into a wider print culture that had invested itself in the diverse theme of judicial violence. It is no coincidence that two of the three prints of Monmouth by the hand of Luyken are found in publications written by the aforementioned Lambert van den Bos (the third one

gelucken die t’sedert haar begin tot desen tyt die stamme overgekome syn: de Ongelucke van K. Jacobus de Tweede ; de Gelucken van K. William de Derde (Amsterdam: Cornelis Dankerts, 1696).

114. In this respect, it is worthy of note that William’s chief visual propagandist, De Hooghe, never bothered to portray the botched execution of Monmouth. His only reference to this event known to me is his frontispiece for Hollandse Mercurius on the year 1685. Here, an allegorical figure armed with an axe holds up – as we can read in the description of the title plate – the heads of Monmouth and his accomplice Argyle. For the frontispiece, see: Romeyn de Hooghe, title plate for the Hollandse Mercurius on the year 1685. Ca. 1686. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-79.326, http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.443668 (Accessed 20 April 2019).


116. Engeland beroerd onder de regeering van koning Jacobus de II. en hersteld door Willem en Maria, prins en princesse van Orangie [...] (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1689), fol. 65; Pers and Van den Bos, Romeynschen adelaer, 406.
concerns an anonymous publication), who embodied the political as well as the popular in his exploitation of Monmouth’s execution. Van den Bos was a fervent supporter of William III as well as a successful polymath, whose compendia of death and destruction went through numerous editions from the 1650s up to 1698. In this sense, the explicit prints of Monmouth’s beheading were as much a part of Van den Bos’ political signature as it was part of his successful career as a popular writer, with a particular knack for the exploitation of the tragic and bloody histories of the world’s men of power.

Religious and secular execution prints thus blended together into a broader category of judicial violence in the course of the second half of the seventeenth-century. This category focused on the physical dimensions of judicial violence, its visual diversity, and its explicit potential in printed format. Yet if religious and secular execution prints from this period had one simple thing in common, it was that they were largely created as book illustrations. This format was not a straightforward choice. In the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, contested or politically significant executions had often prompted the creation of broadsheets or ‘news prints’ that commented on the event through a mix of text and image. The prominence of the execution print in the late seventeenth century thus also entailed a concrete shift in format: from broadsheet to book illustration. How should we read this material change, and how did it influence the way execution prints were portrayed, published, and marketed? In other words, how did a shift in form(at) go together with a shift in meaning making?

4.7 Selling violence: form and format

Amsterdam was the undisputed print capital of Europe during the seventeenth century. At the same time, publishing proved a fickle market, and entrepreneurs had to search continuously for the right textual and visual material to invest in (to publish successfully, or perish). Throughout the seventeenth century, printmaking too had its ups and downs. In the first quarter of the seventeenth century, there was a number of printmakers that were well known for their intricate and high quality broadsheet prints, like the versatile and productive Claes Jansz. Visscher.117

117. For an example of one of Visscher’s ventures, see Michiel van Groesen’s account of the production of news prints on Dutch Brasil: Michiel van Groesen, ‘A Week to Remember:
As discussed in chapter 2, the same period also saw much activity in the creation of attractive book illustrations. The production of such works, however, died down in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, and a general slump in illustrated books was only broken in the last quarter of the century. As described in this chapter, by the 1670s, some publishers had found a new niche in expensive illustrated books. Through the exploitation of such niches, publishing and printmaking proved more resilient than other cultural industries. While the market for paintings crashed after 1672, the market for luxurious illustrated books saw a renewed growth. At the same time, the proliferation of the illustrated book also accentuated growing social cleavages, with an increasing divide between low and high quality illustrated books.

Through the late seventeenth-century rise of the illustrated book, the execution print underwent a profound transformation in format. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, publishers and printmakers had often responded to tales of (political) crime and punishment through the creation of topical news prints in broadsheet format. Claes Jansz. Visscher, for instance, created exquisite prints of the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the executions of Reinier van Oldenbarnevelt and his co-conspirators, as well as the death sentence concerning the English gunpowder plotters. As art historian Maureen Warren has pointed out, these prints concerned high quality works that were sold in different formats, and were put on the market somewhat later than the more rudimentary news prints that were published quickly after the executions in question. Yet even if these works did not necessarily bring news in the narrow sense of the word, they most certainly were part of the ongoing internal political and religious conflicts that plagued the Republic at the time. As successful, popular, and politically charged market items, Visscher’s prints were copied en masse, and multiplied and distributed in numerous distinct versions. Above all, however, these broadsheets were topical items that concerned a specific event or chain of events. These prints, so to say, needed to

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Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August-2 September 1624’, *Quaerendo* 40 (2010), 26-49.


speak for themselves, as they were sold as single sheets. Textual descriptions, rhymes, events spelled out in comic-like sequences, added portraits: all were used to make broadsheets into attractive, comprehensive, and very much partisan visualizations of particular executions (for an example of Visscher’s highly detailed prints, see figure

Figure 4.25: Claes Jansz. Visscher (II), *Iustitie over enige Arminaensche verraders, geschiet in s’Gravenhaech*, 1623, etching/letterpress printing 54.2 x 47 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: RP-P-OB-81.021A.
The same modes of representation were used for the ‘timeless’ exemplary narrative scenes of justice that were printed in broadsheet format, like the medieval tale of William the Good and the cow-thief, or the justice overseen by Charles the Bold. Rather than thematising judicial violence, these works revolved around more traditional concepts of good and bad justice.

In contrast to these news prints and broadsheets, the book illustrations discussed here functioned in a more relational fashion. The prints in martyrologies functioned as a series, where the prints related to one another as well as to the textual content of the books. They thematised martyrdom and executions in a visual manner through repetition and variation (as is the case with the many different forms of death by fire in Van Braght and Van Haemstede). In a similar way, the series of execution prints in history works created broader thematic issues, as Van den Bos’ numerous compendia gave a face to the concept of ‘tragic deaths’. In this way, the prints in these works were more about thematising executions at large than they were about the topicality, news value, or exemplary nature (in the case of medieval stories of just rulers) of specific executions, as had been the case with broadsheets and news prints. For example, the three extremely explicit prints of the botched beheading of Monmouth produced by Luyken all concerned book illustrations. As argued in the previous section, the explicit content of these prints was not solely connected to the renewed topicality of Monmouth’s death in the wake of the start of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 (three years after the actual execution), but also to the themes of the book series of which they were part and the visual culture of violence that proliferated in printed book illustrations.

The priority of a thematic approach above a topical one is equally illustrated by the fact that many of Luyken’s book illustrations concerned additions to – or reinterpretations of – older textual material. For instance, the story of the rise and fall of the fifteenth-century Castilian nobleman Álvaro de Luna had already been part of the 1676 edition of Van den Bos’ *Tooneel der vorstelycke gunstelingen* (*The stage of royal favourites*), but it was only illustrated when the tale was rehashed for Van den Bos’ last 1698 edition (see figure 4.26). In essence, many of the titles published under Van den Bos’ name concerned the creative recycling of older stories

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121. For the role of the early comic strip in execution prints, see Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, chapter 6.
122. Ibid., 157-159.
with new images, exploiting and building upon a well working formula. Importantly, unlike the broadsheet execution prints by Visscher, Luyken’s execution prints did not
need to work on their own; they did not need to provide a comprehensive overview of a topical event by means of a single sheet of printed paper. Instead, they needed to function as part of large illustrated books, as part of a chain of images and in support of large sways of textual material. As has been discussed in the context of prints on the Revolt, this meant that book illustrations of executions could choose to focus on dramatic and singular moments of violence. In the print of De Luna, for example, Luyken chose to portray the executioner brandishing his knife, ready to plunge it in the neck of the disgraced nobleman as a number of onlookers, including the nobleman’s servant, are shown to turn away from the scaffold in grief and disgust. The fact that a beheading by knife was a peculiar Spanish method of execution, only very rarely portrayed, must have equally added to the value of this illustration – which essentially provided an image of a unique form of judicial violence alien to the Dutch Republic.123

The particular qualities of book illustrations underline that the explicit images discussed here should be interpreted as exponents of a print market that obliged publishers to add distinctive and new material in order to sell their goods. The publisher Jan ten Hoorn, for example, took pains to explain that his additions to the series of the *Treur-tooneel* brought new content that was in line with the (violent) spirit of previous editions. As he stated in his address to the reader of the 1699 spin-off, ‘one will find nothing common here, but, to the contrary, [only] the strangest and most horrible cases’.124 Ten Hoorn then continued by stating that the 1699 edition was a worthy successor to the 1698 precursor, likewise illustrated with ‘excellent art-plates, by the very same master [i.e. Jan Luyken]’.125 Luyken’s

123. Another print of this Spanish execution method by the hand of Casper Luyken can be found in *Gottfrieds Historische Kronyck*, showing one man already beheaded and with blood gushing out his neck, and another convict with the executioner’s knife already set in his throat. See: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-1896-A-19368-1460: http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.144584 (Accessed 20 April 2019).
125. In full, Ten Hoorn’s pitch on the prints reads: ‘waar by noch eindelijk gevoegd moet worden, dat, om het Werk in alle deelen eerlijk te maaken, en het tot een gevolgelyk Vervolg van de gemelde Treurtooneelen der Doorluchtige Mannen te doen verstrekken, wy het insgelijks, behalven alle andere aangewende moeite, met treffelijke Konstplaaten, door den zelven Meester vervaardigd, hebben doen vercieren.’ (to which we should add, that, to make the work beautiful in all the parts, and a pleasing sequel of the aforementioned Treurtooneelen der Doorluchtige Mannen, we similarly, apart from all the other efforts, have decorated it
elaborate and violent illustrations at large should be seen within this context: as additions that diversified the content of the books, while simultaneously falling in line with the themes that the reader expected on the basis of earlier editions. That this approach was specific to the publishing industry of the Dutch Republic becomes clear when contrasting studies on English and French material are used. Execution prints in seventeenth-century England were sold as single sheets with cheap woodcuts – whereas very few such items have been attested for in the case of the Dutch Republic (though the option that such cheap works have been largely lost cannot be excluded). 126 The original French Histoire Tragiques remained unillustrated throughout the seventeenth-century, in stark contrast to the lavishly illustrated works of Lambert van den Bos and other Dutch translators and authors.

Dutch publishers and printmakers thus framed the execution as a theme that was both coherent and diverse. Within the context of ‘creative industries’, Michael Hutter has described this approach as one of ‘familiar surprises’: thematic variations that combine the ‘thrill’ of the new with the ‘comfort’ of the familiar. 127 Such a description goes to the heart of the cultural production as manifested in the illustrated books of a writer like Van den Bos. In this sense, the late seventeenth-century execution prints described here created variety in two ways: firstly by illustrating previously unillustrated textual material (differentiating new editions from older ones), and secondly, by making sure that images were thematically similar, but distinct and specific enough to be differentiated from one another (so that, for instance, no death by burning in Het bloedig tooneel is quite like the other). All of this was possible because history books were essentially not dependent on actual ‘new’ information. Single sheet news prints were reactive, created in response

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to particular newsworthy events. In contrast, a writer like Lambert van den Bos created his own compendia of tragedies, scouring foreign language texts for cases of tragic deaths and horrible executions, and recycling these stories in multiple editions. Thus, even when executions were at an all-time low at the end of the seventeenth century, execution prints could still flourish – precisely because the book illustration lent itself to different topics than the news print. This peculiar shift, from executions at the market square to a market for books filled with execution prints, is the subject for the final section of this chapter.

4.8 The execution: from market square to book market?

What are we to make of the growing distance between practice and print in the realm of executions? The most obvious conclusion is that violent imagery as discussed here was aimed at a wealthy public, those who were rich enough to buy illustrated books. A second more precarious conclusion would be that execution prints became both more easily thematised and more inventive as judicial violence became more distant in terms of practice. Instead of being imagined as topical and politically charged singular events, as was the case with broadsheets and news prints, executions became part of a visual culture that stressed the serial nature of images in which not the topical, but the thematical was prioritized. In this sense, the distance in practice described here also touched upon distances in terms of place and time: many of the executions depicted concerned cases drawn from the distant past or foreign places. This is true for the martyr books – ordered chronologically from the death of Christ onwards – as well as for the diverse array of executions brought together in history books and compendia of tragic histories. As a medium, the book illustration favoured thematical rather than topical issues: even the newsworthy execution of Monmouth took a number of years before being converted into the inventive botched beheading prints that were presented earlier in this chapter.

The first conclusion, regarding the presumed target audience, can serve to break open some older discussions on the nature of executions and their ‘entertainment value’. There is plenty of literature that underlines the popularity and public nature of early modern executions.128 Justice days in the Dutch Republic

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128. For a study on the popularity of executions as spectacles in France during the early modern period, see: Friedland, Seeing Justice Done.
were often well visited and attracted onlookers from all sorts of social strata, ages, women as well as men.\(^{129}\) By the end of the seventeenth century however, some members of the higher classes started to criticize the eagerness with which their supposed inferiors, ‘the masses’, came to behold the suffering of their fellow men. In his iconic study on executions in the early modern Dutch Republic, Spierenburg cites a number of elite eyewitness accounts in which the writers try to distance themselves from the watching crowds.\(^{130}\) In this they did not present a critique of capital punishment per se; rather, they signalled a resentment of the lower classes and their interest in judicial violence. The well-studied executions at Tyburn in eighteenth-century London have similarly strengthened this image. Hogarth’s famous 1747 engraving of the procession to the Tyburn scaffold has often been cited in order to paint executions as the carnivalesque affairs of the lower classes, who came simply to marvel at the spectacle and mock the criminal and justice system alike.\(^{131}\) Yet these claims bring up the complication that there is a fundamental difference between seeing an execution in the flesh, and seeing it in print. Spierenburg argues that the elites of the Dutch Republic became somewhat uneasy with the former option. By the late seventeenth century, members of the higher classes in the Dutch Republic had started to dislike the sight of judicial violence and to be reminded of it on a daily basis. Permanent scaffolds were changed into temporary scaffolds, the magistrates slowly started to retreat from their prominent position at executions, and the masses were criticized for their supposed unhealthy interest in justice days.\(^{132}\)

Within this changing context, the execution prints discussed here become all the more important. Luyken’s work, for instance, was produced mostly around the turn of the seventeenth century and commissioned by publishers that sought to enhance their products within a competitive market. Thus, Luyken’s most intensive collaboration was with the Amsterdam publisher Jan ten Hoorn, who published not only several editions of ‘tragic histories’, but was also involved with the publication of *Het bloedig tooneel* and had Luyken illustrate ‘exotic’ execution methods for printed

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130. Ibid., 98–99.
travel accounts.\textsuperscript{133} Tellingly, Ten Hoorn had a reputation for being an unscrupulous publisher with an eye for popular demand and profit. In this vein, both Jan ten Hoorn and his brother Timotheus were vilified in a 1690 pamphlet for publishing pulp solely to attend to a ‘vulgar’ though profitable market.\textsuperscript{134} 

At the same time, as has been shown here, Luyken’s execution prints appeared in extensively illustrated books, items that were affordable only to those belonging to the middle and higher classes. For example, in 1699, the full series of three books of \textit{Gottfrieds Historische kronyck}, a work full of inventive execution prints, would set the buyer back more than 42 gulden, a small fortune at the time.\textsuperscript{135} Thus, even as Spierenburg discerns the first signs of a discourse of disgust taking form in the higher social strata, these very same groups must have been the target audience for the publications that included Luyken’s high quality and explicit secular execution prints - in the same manner that the 1685 edition of \textit{Het bloedig tooneel} was mainly marketed towards wealthy Dutch Mennonites.

While it is impossible to argue for a direct relationship between the decline in executions and a rise in execution prints, this development at least shows that images of violence need not be connected to the actual occurrence of violence, an argument that has shortly been discussed in chapter 2. In fact, the many prints of executions that could be found in illustrated books produced in the Dutch Republic would often visualize execution methods that had either long since disappeared or had never been practiced at all in the Dutch Republic. Even when Jan Luyken produced a print on execution by breaking on the wheel in 1698, visualizing the execution of the early sixteenth-century royal Danish favourite Georg Petersson, he

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} I. Leemans, \textit{Het woord is aan de onderkant: radicale ideeën in Nederlandse pornografische romans 1670–1700} (Nijmegen, 2002), 175. Leemans has connected this criticism of the Ten Hoorns, and of Timotheus in particular, to their involvement in the Dutch market for pornographic novels.
\item \textsuperscript{135} P. G. Hoftijzer, \textit{Pieter van der Aa (1659-1733): Leids drukker en boekverkoper} (Hilversum, 1999), 74. For a reference to the chronicle’s commercial success, see: ibid., 40. The chronicle’s lowest price, according to one of the many adverts that Van der Aa put out to push the book, was 35 gulden. See: \textit{Opregte Leydse courant} (Leiden: Jacob and Jan Huysduynen) 3 March 1702: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011111001:mpeg21:p002 (Accessed 1 May 2019).
\end{itemize}
would have maybe had only two or three chances to actually have seen the practice of this type of punishment in Amsterdam. And even here, the print does not seem to reflect any form of witnessing, as Luyken copies much of the composition of an older print by Herman Padtbrugge.

Instead of looking for a direct relationship between violence and its manifestation in print, I would like to propose that this distance in practice created a visual framework in which print culture became a central focal point for the imagination of executions, as opposed to actual instances of judicial violence on justice days. This chapter has also highlighted the ways in which images brought something new to the table: the gruesome stories of executions that were illustrated had often already circulated for years, if not centuries, in textual format. It was the specific contribution of the print industry in the Dutch Republic that such images would get a visual counterpart that reflected on such violence in a non-textual format, even if much of the violence they addressed was distant in terms of practice, as well as in terms of time and place. These forms of distance then, allowed for the imagination of new visual themes - of which the botched execution is undoubtedly the most striking and uniquely Dutch example. If images of executions were a prominent luxury product, these prints can perhaps be considered as items that imagineered a reflexive stance on judicial violence, to be explored from a distance within the safe confines of one’s own home rather than on the bloodstained Dam Square during justice day.