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## Visions of Europe: Contrasts and Combinations of National and European Identities in Literary Representations of the Peace of Utrecht (1713)

*Lotte Jensen*

The god of peace wishes  
That no more war should rage through Europe  
But in the end that all becomes quiet, calm and still  
He lets the fatherland enjoy the fruits of peace  
And allows Friesland the full benefit of this pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

These verses were written by the bookseller François Halma (1653–1722), who lived in Leeuwarden, the capital of the province of Friesland. In 1713 he wrote an extensive poem to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht, which he dedicated to the governors of Friesland. From these verses the reader can discern that Halma identified with Europe and the Dutch Republic (here denoted as ‘the fatherland’) as well as with the province of Friesland. The point he tries to make is clear: on all these different levels the Peace of Utrecht, which ended a long and destructive war, was expected to be beneficial.

Halma was not the only poet to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht. It incited many Dutch authors to write literary appraisals: around thirty literary works, including two theatre plays, were published by a wide range of authors.<sup>2</sup> Although a large number of texts (approximately one third) were printed in Amsterdam, it would be a mistake to think that the treaty was celebrated primarily in Amsterdam. Pamphlets were also published in Harlingen, Zierikzee, Groningen, Leeuwarden, Leiden, Haarlem, Rotterdam, and Utrecht. In The

1 ‘De Vredegodt wil [...] / Dat wy geen krygsloet meer zien in Europe blaaken, / Maar alles raake, in ’t end, gerust, bedaart, en stil! / Hij laate ’t Vaderland de vredevrucht genieten, / En geeve Vrieslandts Staat daar van het vol genot’. F. Halma, *Vredezing* (Amsterdam: Johannes Oosterwyk, 1713), 26. I would like to thank Marguérite Corporaal and Liedeke Plate for their comments and suggestions.

2 The titles are listed in Lotte Jensen, ‘Nationaal versus Europees gemeenschapsgevoel. Gelegenheidsverzen op de Vrede van Utrecht (1713),’ *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (2013): 117–132, here 129. This chapter is an elaboration of the preliminary findings presented in that article.



FIGURE 9.1 *Portrait of the poet and publisher François Halma (1653–1722) by Arnoud van Halen. RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM*

Hague, Leeuwarden, and Haarlem fireworks were organised.<sup>3</sup> This outburst of activity indicates that the Peace of Utrecht was welcomed and celebrated throughout the Dutch Republic. It also becomes apparent from the contents of

3 Cf. Willem Frijhoff's contribution to this book.

these pamphlets that the Peace was a national event: the entire Dutch Republic is addressed, in terms like ‘The Dutch free state’ (‘Neêrlands vrijen staat’), ‘the Sevenstates’ (‘de Zevenstaat’), ‘the Nation of Seven Arrows’ (‘Zeven-pijlig Landt’), or, simply: ‘the Netherlands’ (‘Nederland’). In short, these pamphlets clearly express a form of national consciousness, which can be distinguished from a European or regional identity.

How should we interpret these expressions of Dutch national awareness in light of current research on the rise of national thought and nationalism? The emergence of nationalism is usually considered to be a nineteenth-century phenomenon, but these eighteenth-century texts already express a growing sense of national consciousness.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I will discuss several literary appraisals of the Peace of Utrecht, in which national identity plays a significant role.<sup>5</sup> Research has shown that literary utterances were an essential part of national peace celebrations; the Treaty of Münster (1648) was, for instance celebrated with many theatre plays, poetry and allegories.<sup>6</sup> Very little attention, however, has been devoted to peace treaties from a national-cultural perspective or to the question of how these texts relate to the rise of national consciousness and national thought in early modern Europe. Literary sources are very apt for investigating this question: it is in the field of literature that identities are most effectively formulated because literature often works with discursive patterns of self-identification, convincing images and commonplaces.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Since the 1990s a growing number of studies about pre-modern national consciousness have appeared. Some seminal studies about eighteenth century national thought in various European nations are: Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1992); Hans Martin Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland. Die deutsche Nation im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000); David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680–1800* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Pasi Ihalainen, *Protestant nations redefined. Changing perceptions of national identity in the rhetoric of the English, Dutch, and Swedish public churches, 1685–1772* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2005).

5 The rise of national thought in Europe is also discussed in Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008). In his account of the Early Modern period he focuses on the widely spread taxonomy of national characters and climate theory (36–70).

6 For Dutch literary celebrations of the Peace of Münster, see for instance J. de Gier, “Den krijg is uitgebannen”. De Vrede van Munster in de poëzie; in *Vrede, vrijheid, vaderland. Nederlandse protestanten en de Vrede van Munster*, ed. H.H.J. van As, C.R. van den Berg and R. Bisschop (Rotterdam: Vereniging Protestants Nederland, 1998), 150–171.

7 See *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*, ed. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2007), 26.

However, as the national level is shaped in relation and in contrast to the levels below and above, this national identity can be viewed only in combination with and in contrast to a regional or European level.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate how authors expressed a growing sense of 'Europe' as an international community while at the same time sought to uphold a distinctly Dutch identity by contrasting their nation's commendable contribution to the peace process with the malevolence of foreign powers threatening Europe's newly achieved political stability. These unifying expressions were, however, not homogeneous: there was a great variety in the poetical representations of national and European identity.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, some critical remarks will be made about the current framework of studies on nationalism: it will be argued that early modern writings, especially occasional peace poetry, can be used as a source to shed new light on the discussion about the rise of national thought in pre-modern times. In the second part several poems and two theatre plays about the Peace of Utrecht, which specifically address the issues of national and European identity, will be discussed.<sup>9</sup>

### National Thought and Nationalism

The question of whether nations existed in the pre-modern era has caused much debate in the field of nationalism studies. It has led to a sharp distinction between so-called 'modernists,' who regard the nation as a quintessentially modern political phenomenon, and 'traditionalists,' who believe that nations already began to take shape before the advent of modernity. While the modernist paradigm has been dominant, it has been challenged in recent years by a growing number of case studies that situate the origins of nationalism and nationhood in earlier times.

The seemingly unbridgeable gap is worsened by the varying and sometimes contradictory ways scholars use concepts like 'nation,' 'nationalism' and

8 Cf. Astrid Erll, 'Regional integration and (trans)cultural memory', *Asia Europe Journal* 8 (2010): 305–315. Accessed 4 November 2013, doi: 10.1007/s10308-010-0268-5.

9 This means that poems with less relevance for this particular theme have been left out, for example the playful account of the Spanish Succession War: *Vrede-toorts, met vreugd ontstoken op Rots-oort* (Utrecht: Willem van de Water, 1713) by Frans van Oort. This poem deserves further investigation. It is referred to in Jeroen van Heemskerck Düker, 'De "Pottebakkers Huur-Galey" van Frans van Oort,' *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 12 (1989): 84–89.

'national thought'. Here, I follow the definitions given by Joep Leerssen in his study *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (2006).<sup>10</sup> The 'nation' is defined as 'a subjective community established by shared culture and historical memories'; it can refer to local, regional and supra-regional communities, which are united by 'a sense of belonging together' but also of 'being distinct from others'. 'Nationalism' points the political ideology or doctrine of nationalism, which emerges in the nineteenth century and which takes the modern nation-state as the constitutive unity. 'National thought' refers to pre-nineteenth-century source traditions and has a broader meaning than 'nationalism'. It includes 'all pre-nineteenth century source traditions and ramifications of the nationalist ideology' and refers to 'a way of seeing human society primarily as consisting of discrete, different nations, each with an obvious right to exist and to command loyalty, each characterized and set apart unambiguously by its own separate identity and culture'. Making this distinction between 'nationalism' and 'national thought' allows us to start a dialogue between modernists and traditionalists: we can trace the idea that people belonged to the same 'nation' or 'national' community back to earlier stages of history, while it also suggests that there are continuities between pre-modern and modern developments.<sup>11</sup>

Anthony Smith in particular has emphasised the continuity between developments from the past and modernity by pointing at the older, cultural foundations of nations. He argues that the origins of the nation can be found in pre-modern ethnic ties or coalitions of ethnic groupings, while, at the same time, emphasizing the difference between these pre-modern 'ethnies' and modern nations.<sup>12</sup> Recently, Azar Gat has questioned the dichotomy between

10 All following quotations are derived from Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 14–17.

11 These continuities are, however, not always recognized in modernist accounts. Despite his ample discussion of pre-modern source traditions, Leerssen leaves little room for continuities between pre-modern source traditions and modern expressions of cultural nationalism. Although Smith emphasizes the importance of pre-modern ethnic ties, which are expressed by symbols, rituals, myths of origins and memories, these pre-modern 'ethnies' are only linked in a weak sense to the modern nation-state. See Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Lebanon: University Press of New England), 76–77. In *The Roots of Nationalism. National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600–1815*, ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming) it is argued that the divide between traditionalists and modernists is unsatisfactory, and that cultural continuities between pre-modern and modern expressions of nationhood deserve much more attention.

12 For example in: Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno / Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991); Anthony D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press,

the modernists and traditionalists by stating that it is artificial and based upon false assumptions. One of these is the emphasis on literacy, which denies the fact that 'illiterate societies had their own potent means of wide-scale cultural transmission,' such as oral epic, plays, games, festivals and rituals.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, he argues that nations and national thought predate modernity and that culture, religion, and language were major vehicles of common national identity and community.<sup>14</sup>

Although both scholars differ widely in their approach towards national thought and nationalism, they both single out the United Provinces as one of the nations that took the form of a national cultural and political community from a very early stage.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the perception of the Low Countries as the common fatherland can already be witnessed in the mid-sixteenth century. It expanded rapidly during the Revolt against Spain and took firm political shape with the establishment of the Union of Utrecht (1579), which united the northern provinces in their struggle to liberate themselves from Spanish oppression.<sup>16</sup>

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2004) and Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations. Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

- 13 Azar Gat, *Nations The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 12.
- 14 Gat, *Nations*. For other critical views on the modernist approach, see Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism. An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern German to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Against Orthodoxy. Studies in Nationalism*, ed. Trevor W. Harrison and Slobodan Drakulic (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011) and Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 15 The difference is, however, that Gat speaks of a 'national state', while Smith uses the phrase 'a growing Dutch national community, albeit incomplete'. Gat, *Nations*, 82; Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno/Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 10. Schama regards the period between 1550– and 1650 as the era in which 'the political identity of an independent Netherlands nation was established' and speaks of 'a strong sense of national identity'. See Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34, 54.
- 16 See Alistair Duke, 'The Elusive Netherlands. The question of national identity in the Early Modern Low Countries on the Eve of the Revolt,' *Bijdragen en Medelingen betreffende de de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 119 (2004) 1: 10–38 and several contributions in *Networks, Regions and Nations. Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300–1650*, ed. R. Stein and J. Pollmann (Leiden / Boston: Brill 2010), in particular those of Robert Stein ('Introduction', 1–18), Alistair Duke ('In defence of the Common Fatherland. Patriotism and Liberty in the Low Countries, 1555–1576,' 217–239) and Judith Pollmann ('No Man's Land. Reinventing Netherlandish Identities, 1585–1621,' 241–261). Also see the contributions of Simon Groenveld ('Natie en patria bij zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanders') and Guido de Bruin

The Eighty Years' War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Münster in 1648 and the official acknowledgement of the Dutch Republic as a sovereign state. The celebration of this event, as well as the ongoing commemoration of the Dutch victories during the Eighty Years' War, contributed to the increase of national consciousness. The urge for unity received a new impulse when a new power threatened the nation's freedom: the French king Louis XIV. References to the Spanish tyranny were easily supplanted by condemnations of this new French tyranny, emphasising the continuity between the past and the present.<sup>17</sup> With the signing of the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, a period of nearly forty years of ongoing war between France and the Dutch Republic came to an end.

The remembrance of the national past—the distressful moments as well as the heroic ones—and the hopeful vision of the return of a 'new golden age' play a significant role in the writings on this event. In studying the rise of national consciousness through the lens of the peace celebrations of 1713 the concept of the 'imagined community', which is usually applied to the modern era, can be of particular value. Benedict Anderson has pointed out that modern nations function as imagined communities: although members do not know most of their fellow-members, they all have an image of their community in their minds. These images are spread mainly through mass media and other institutions, such as newspapers and books.<sup>18</sup> A parallel can be drawn with early modern times because, although the circulation of printed material was much lower, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, poems, and theatre plays were also

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(‘Het begrip “vaderland” in de pamfletliteratuur ten tijde van de Republiek, 1600–1750’), both in *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis vanaf de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940*, ed. N.C.F. van Sas (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 55–81 and 143–161. In the abovementioned article, Groenveld points at the fact, that a nineteenth-century, nationalistic perspective is to be avoided: the nation was a much more complex, and layered concept in early modern times. Nevertheless, there were all sorts of elements present that contributed to a sense of a common national identity and ultimately led to the shaping of a single nation which can be equated with the national state. In a more recent study, Groenveld, Wagenaar and Van der Meer pay ample attention to centralist trends in Dutch state-politics before the nineteenth century. They were much more present than is usually assumed: Simon Groenveld, Pieter Wagenaar and Frits van der Meer, ‘Pre-Napoleonic centralization in a decentralized polity: the case of the Dutch Republic,’ *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 76 (2010): 47–64.

17 On publicity, identity and self-image of the Dutch Republic during these years, see Donald Haks, *Vaderland en vrede 1672–1713. Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013).

18 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London / New York: Verso 1987) (4th edition), 16, 38–39.



used to unite people for common causes in early modern Europe. Particularly in times of war or political crisis, feelings of patriotism and unity were spread by means of these media.<sup>19</sup> The point made in this chapter is, therefore, that writings occasioned by the Peace of Utrecht, including poetry and theatre plays, are important sources for studying the emergence of national thought in the Dutch Republic.

The limited number of prints as well as the underdeveloped infrastructure in the early modern period have been used as arguments to question the existence of pre-modern national thought. Historians have argued that most people used their village, city, region, or religious community as their main point of identification.<sup>20</sup> This might indeed be the case, but at the same time utterances of national and European thought are abundantly present in the early modern period. Not all people may have identified with these larger 'imagined' communities, but they *did* exist, at least in the minds of authors and poets.<sup>21</sup> They created different kinds of unifying images, using metaphors and topoi that surpassed regional borders, and even national or religious borders.

Of course, these 'imagined communities' are of a completely different nature than those of the nineteenth century. As Peter Burke has rightly pointed out, we should beware of interpreting early modern texts in modern terms: European consciousness was still weak compared to regional consciousness.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean, however, that expressions of national and European thought were absent in the early modern period. On the contrary, as in later times, the mental landscape of authors and readers was shaped through concepts such as 'the

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19 For an international perspective on this issue, see Orest Ranum, *National consciousness, history, and political culture in early modern Europe* (Baltimore / London: John Hopkins University Press, 1975). For some Dutch examples: Marijke Meijer Drees, *Andere landen, andere mensen. De beeldvorming van Holland versus Spanje en Engeland omstreeks 1650* (The Hague: SUN Uitgevers, 1997) and Haks, *Vaderland en vrede*.

20 For Dutch examples: E.H. Kossmann, 'The Dutch case: a national or a regional culture?', in *Politieke theorie en geschiedenis. Verspreide opstellen en voordrachten aangeboden aan de schrijver bij zijn aftreden als hoogleraar aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen* (Amsterdam: C.G. Bakker, 1987), 198–210; P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, 'Beeld en zelfbeeld. "Nederlandse identiteit" in politieke structuur en politieke cultuur tijdens de Republiek,' *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 107: 4 (1992): 635–656.

21 For a case study on peace poetry and the shaping of Dutch national identity in 1748, see Lotte Jensen, "'Toen 't volk als uit één' mond, lang leve Oranje! riep". Orangisme in het vredesjaar 1748,' *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 128 (2015): 1–22.

22 Peter Burke, 'Did Europe exist before 1700?,' *History of European Ideas* 1 (1980): 21–29, 29.

fatherland', 'the nation' and 'Europe'.<sup>23</sup> To use a phrase by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, these were concepts and metaphors people lived by.<sup>24</sup> A close reading of the texts in which these concepts play a dominant role can therefore teach us something about the way people related to these 'imagined communities': how were feelings of national and European consciousness expressed by the authors of occasional poetry and theatre plays about the Peace of Utrecht?

### Poetical Celebrations of the Peace of Utrecht

Generally speaking, the poems can be divided into three distinct categories: pastoral, historical-political, and religious poetry. These categories are partly related, but reflect three different attitudes towards the position of the Dutch Republic within the larger European framework.

The first category—pastoral poetry—celebrates the peace for bringing harmony and wealth back to Europe. Most of these poems take the form of a conversation between shepherds and shepherdesses rejoicing in the new, favourable conditions. In accordance with the genre conventions they are surrounded by nature, harmony and prosperity. Although the peace is seen as a benefit to all, the Dutch Republic is considered the best place to be. Here, cows roam freely, and butter, milk and cheese are abundant. 'Golden times' are about to return to the nation.<sup>25</sup> Some poems explicitly refer to the pastoral play *Leeuwendalers* (1647), by the well-known Dutch poet Joost van

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23 For example, from the political-juridical perspective: Heinz Duchhardt, '“Europa” als Begründungs- und Legitimationsformel in völkerrechtlichen Verträgen der Frühen Neuzeit', in Heinz Duchhardt, *Frieden im Europa der Vormoderne. Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1979–2011*. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Martin Espenhorst (Paderborn etc.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 111–120. For an overview of visual images of Europe see Michael Wintle, *The Image of Europe. Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography throughout the Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). A selection of key texts on European identity throughout the ages is given in Alex Drace-Francis, *European identity. A Historical Reader* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

24 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

25 This phrase is used in Prudentier, *De vrede. Veldzang* (Amsterdam: Johannes van Leeuwen, 1713), 4. Other pastoral poems: H. van den Burg, *Herderszang op de vrede* (Amsterdam: Marcelis van Heems, 1713); Balthasar Huydecoper, *Herderszang op de vrede* (s.l.: s.n., 1713); Johannes Schröder, *Leeuwendal, herders-zang op den vrede* (Leiden: Hendrik Mulhovius) 1713; Barend Warnaar, *Floriaan en Silvia, herderszang, Op het teekenen der vrede binnen Utrecht, den 11 april, 1713* (Haarlem: Isaäk Enschedé, 1713).

den Vondel, which alludes to the peace process that led to the signing of the Treaty of Münster in 1648. In this poem, the Dutch Republic is symbolised as 'Leeuwendal' or 'Lion's vale'; the lion refers to the heraldic representation of the United Provinces. By referring to Vondel's play, authors emphasised the continuity between the past and the present as well as the idea that the Dutch Republic could experience a new 'golden age'.

An example of such a nationally minded pastoral poem is *Herderszang op de vrede* by Herman van den Burg. His poem consists of a conversation between three shepherds and three shepherdesses. The ploughman, sower and farmer are relieved that peace has been restored while the female characters are happy that they can produce butter, cheese and milk once more. Their conversation is rife with anti-French sentiment, and the peace is attributed to the efforts of the Dutch Republic alone. All of Europe benefits from the new political stability, but the Dutch are responsible for these benefits:

I see that Friendship, Abundance and Joy accompany her [Peace]  
 She shall restore Europe in all her glory  
 [...]
   
 One cannot disturb the Dutch Virgin, without punishment  
 Whoever denies her rest, will carry his wounds with him.<sup>26</sup>

In other words: the Dutch always take revenge on their enemies and those who assault the Dutch Lion are wasting their powers and will flee shamefully. According to the shepherds and shepherdesses, the goddess of Peace has now chosen 'Leeuwendal' ('the lion's vale') as her residence and will stay there eternally.

The second category—historical-political poetry—also singles out the Dutch Republic as the best part of Europe. These poems, however, contain more references to the War of the Spanish Succession. They also reflect internal differences between the supporters of the Stadtholder ('Oranjegezinden') and their opponents ('Staatsgezinden'). The death of William III in 1702 marked the beginning of the so-called second stadtholderless period (1702–1747). Most of the provinces had not appointed a successor, and after the death of the stadtholder of Friesland and Groningen (Johan William Friso) in 1711, an Orangist reign seemed farther away than ever. His son, William Karel Hendrik

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26 'k Zie Vriendschap, Overvloed, en Wellust haar verzellen; / Zij zal Europa weêr in de oude pracht herstellen [...] / Men stoort nooit ongestraft, de Nederlandsche Maagd; / Want die haar rust betwist, zyn wonden met zig draagt'. Van den Burg, *Herderszang op de vrede*, 13–14.

Friso (the later stadtholder William IV), who was born after his father's death, had been named the new stadtholder of Friesland (and in 1718 of Groningen), but he was still too young to actually fulfil this task.

Against this background it is not surprising that most authors made no reference to stadtholders at all. The poet and lawyer P. de Bye, for instance, skipped recent history and looked towards the ancient past for exemplary behaviour. He considered the peace to be the achievement of the ancient courage and bravery of the Batavian people, who were seen as the ancestors of the present-day inhabitants of the Dutch Republic. According to De Bye, this old Batavian love of freedom and liberty of conscience manifested itself most prominently when threatened by foreign tyrants. Throughout the course of history, the Batavian people had always succeeded in protecting their territory and defending themselves against mindless oppression. However, they also knew when to stop fighting and restore the peace. In the end, the Batavians were the ones who had shown mercy and decided to end the war. Therefore, the goddess of Peace has chosen the Dutch Republic as the location for the peace negotiations: 'I have once again chosen your garden, the best part of Europe, as my residence and bower'.<sup>27</sup>

Such poetical representation of the peace negotiations did not reflect reality at all. In fact, the Dutch negotiators were resentful because they were completely overshadowed by the other European powers: the Dutch had little impact on the actual results.<sup>28</sup> However, the aim of this kind of poetry was not to give a realistic account of affairs; it reflected the contemporary rhetoric of war and propaganda texts.

Some authors, like Coenraet Droste, Jacobus de Groot and François Halma, grabbed the opportunity to make an Orangist statement. While Droste and De Groot focused on the nation's glorious past and especially the rule of William III, Halma's verses were directed more at the future. He was very explicit in his wish for the establishment of a general and hereditary stadtholdership.

The lack of a future perspective probably explains why Droste's and De Groot's pamphlets, which were published in the province of Holland (The

27 'K heb wederom uw' tuin verkoren, / Europe's allerbeste deel / Tot myn verblyf en lustprieel, / Daar niemandt licht myn rust zal storen.' P. de Bye, *Vredezing op de langgewenschte vrede tusschen Vrankryk en de Vereenigde Nederlanden. Gesloten te Utrecht Op den 11 April van het Jaar 1713* (s.l.: s.n., 1713), fol. B2.

28 David Onnekink and Renger de Bruin, *De Vrede van Utrecht (1713)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), 74–75; D. Onnekink, 'The Treaty of Utrecht 1713,' in *Peace was made here. The Treaties of Utrecht, Rastatt and Baden 1713–1714*, ed. R. de Bruin and M. Brinkman (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2013), 60–69.

Hague and Amsterdam), concentrate on the past. Both include extensive appraisals of William III in their works, stating that he had been one of the greatest defenders of true religion in the nation's history. Droste's positive references to William III are the more remarkable considering the fact that during the 1670s he had been a fierce adherent of the leader of the 'staatsgezinden', Johan de Witt. He resigned from military service in 1676 because he had not been promoted by William III.<sup>29</sup> Spreading the true Protestant faith, however, made William III a true hero and was outweighed any internal struggles from the past.<sup>30</sup>

De Groot also portrays William III as a great hero.<sup>31</sup> In his detailed description of the War of the Spanish Succession he makes a sharp distinction between the evil French and the allied forces. Accordingly, he condemns Catholicism, while praising the Protestant faith. He depicts the Peace of Utrecht as the defeat of Louis XIV and as a great victory for England, the Netherlands, and Prussia. He also showers praise on the heroes of the allied forces. The duke of Marlborough and Frederick of Prussia, for instance, are celebrated for having liberated the Dutch Republic from the 'hungry French wolves.' In contrast with most other Dutch poets De Groot gives the other allied forces most of the credit. However, by including William III in his appraisal, he does allow the Dutch Republic a significant role in his narrative. Regionalism is included as well: his poem ends by wishing all 'governors of the free Netherlands', especially those of Amsterdam, a flourishing future.

A similar pattern can be discerned in the poem by François Halma. He also represents the peace as a victory of the Dutch Republic and England over France, but his Orangism was much more directed towards the future. This can be partly explained by his Frisian perspective. In his view, a new Golden Age could be achieved only with a new stadtholder at the head of all the provinces; the Frisian stadtholder William would make an excellent candidate. Halma's poem consists of two parts: in the first half he describes the misery of war and the great damage caused by it all over Europe. In the second half his tone changes completely, when he sketches the benefits of peace and the rebirth of a prosperous nation. His Garden of Eden is clearly situated in the Dutch Republic and more precisely in Friesland. Like De Groot, Halma wrote from an Orangist perspective: the new-born Prince William IV was expected to be

29 Brugmans, 'Droste, Coenraet', in *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, vol. 6, ed. P.C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff 1924), 453–454.

30 C. Droste, *Op de vrede Tot Uytrecht gesloten den 11. april 1713, naer den Twaelf jaerigen Oorlog* ('s-Gravenhage: Gerrit Rammazeyn, 1713), 10–11.

31 Jacobus de Groot, *Vreedezang* (Amsterdam: H. van Ditmer, 1713).



FIGURE 9.2 Title page of Halma's poem on the Peace of Utrecht: *Vrede* (Amsterdam: J. Oosterwyk, 1713).

the new and great ruler of the Seven Provinces one day; in the meantime the Frisian governors would do everything they could to protect their province. In short, Halma's main concern was the Frisian State; after that came the Dutch Republic, and, finally Europe. All three identities played significant roles, but regional identity came first.

While in the first two categories—pastoral and political-historical poetry—the laudable contribution of the Dutch Republic and the return of a new Golden Age are emphasised, in the third category religious values prevail. Most religious poems were written from an explicitly Protestant and Dutch point of view, employing the topos of 'Dutch Israël', which suggested that the Dutch were the chosen people.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the tone is more humble than in the pastoral and historical-political poetry. Two women poets, Jetske Reinou van der Malen and Susanna van der Wier, paid just as much attention to the miseries of war as to the newly established peace. Pointing out the suffering caused by war strengthened their argument to be thankful for God's mercy.<sup>33</sup> Hubert Korneliszoon Poot, one of the best-known Dutch poets of that period, also expressed feelings of grief and despair. He laments the disasters that hit the Dutch Republic after the establishment of the peace. In *Rampen van het vredejaer* (Disasters of the Peace Year, 1713) he bewails the storm that destroyed the complete harvest and the rinderpest (or cattle plague) that struck the livestock. Poot even questions what purpose God might have in sending all these punishments to the Dutch Republic: why first liberate the Dutch from Spanish and French tyranny, only to send all this misery? His message, however, is clear: one should never doubt the wisdom of God. Although God's methods can be unfathomable, it is important to keep faith. Poot fills his lament with anti-Catholic statements and compares the Calvinists with God's chosen people. He states that the Calvinists have to meet many challenges, but that their faith will be rewarded in the end.<sup>34</sup>

32 The idea of the Dutch as the chosen people was often used in sermons: Cornelis Huisman, *Neerlands Israël. Het natiebesef der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht: Van den Tol, 1983) and Ihalainen, *Protestant nations redefined*.

33 Jetske Reinou van der Malen, *Olyfkrans gevlochten op Neerlands plegtighe dank- en vreugdedag over de langgewenschte vrede: gesloten binnen Utrecht den 11. April des jaars 1713* (Leeuwarden: Karst Tjallings, 1713); Susanna de Wier, *Pligtsbetragting, wegens de lang verwagte vrede; Geslooten tot Utrecht den 11. April, en Geratificeert den 12. Mey, 1713* (s.l.: s.n., 1713).

34 H.K. Poot, *Rampen van het vredejaer* (s.l. 1713). An analysis of this poem can be found in C.M. Geerars, *Hubert Korneliszoon Poot* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis; Catricum: Bert Hagen 1979), 33–36.

A universal Christian perspective can be found in the poem of Adriaan Spinniker, who was a former Mennonite clergyman now working as an accountant. In his *Vreedezang* (*Peace song*, 1713) he spends several pages explaining the causes of the War of the Spanish Succession, which nations and sovereigns were involved, and how the peace was restored. His detailed account shows that he was familiar with the various interests of the different European rulers. He clearly blamed the French king, Louis XIV, for having brought about all this misery, not only in the Netherlands, but in the whole of Europe. Nevertheless his poem was not meant to express hatred against the French or to claim Dutch superiority. On the contrary, Spinniker ends with a plea for religious peace and harmony within Europe. Ultimately, God was to be thanked for all the good that peace would bring. It was God, who decided to end the war, and it was God who appointed Utrecht the city where the negotiations were to take place. Spinniker's peace is a universal, Christian peace, which unites all European nations. He makes no distinction between Protestants and Catholics, but speaks of one heavenly kingdom of peace. This fits in with his Mennonite background.<sup>35</sup>

### Europe on Stage

On the occasion of the Utrecht peace treaty two theatre plays were published: *Europa verkwikt op't gezicht der vrede* (1712) by Jan Jacob Mauricius and *Staatkunde* (1713) by Enoch Krook. Both plays are allegorical pieces depicting how peace was brought to Europe. The plot of both plays can be summarised as follows: Europe is the main character, struggling against hostile figures, such as War, Dispute, Discord, Cruelty and Malice. At the same time, Europe is supported by friendly characters such as Friendship and Unity. The good forces win, and in the end Europe celebrates having conquered the evil forces.

The two authors, however, hold very different positions when it comes to the role of France, the Dutch Republic and the city of Utrecht in the whole process. Mauricius, a young lawyer in The Hague, wrote his play to celebrate the inauguration of the theatre in Utrecht. During the peace negotiations the prohibition on theatre performances was suspended to make the sojourn of the negotiators and ambassadors in Utrecht more pleasurable. For that purpose

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35 Adriaan Spinniker, *Zeege der vrede, behaald in Utrecht den 1den van Grasmaand in 't 1713e jaar* (Haarlem: s.n., s.a.).



# STAATKUNDE, V R E D E S P E L.

Verfierd met verscheidene Vertooningen,  
Zang, Dans en Vliegwerken.

Onder de Zinspreuk,

DOOR YVER BLOEID DE KUNST.



TE AMSTELDAM,

By de Erfg: van J: LESCAILJE en DIRK RANK,  
op de Beursfluis, 1713.

Met Privilegie,

FIGURE 9.3 Title page of Enoch Krook's play *Staatkunde* (Amsterdam: J. Lescailje en Dirk Rank, 1713).

a temporary wooden theatre was constructed.<sup>36</sup> This particular occasion also explains Mauricius' marked attention for the city of Utrecht. He creates an extremely positive image of Utrecht, praising the city as the episcopal centre of all festivities. Mauricius emphasises that Utrecht is the perfect choice for the peace negotiations as it contains the seat of a bishop, and the city can boast great victories of the past when Utrecht managed to withstand attacks from northern tribes.

Strikingly, no positive national self-image can be found in this play. Mauricius strongly condemns all European nations for having been so aggressive, including the Dutch. The allegorical figure of Peace states that the Batavian and the Englishman should stop fighting and shake hands with their neighbour and old friend, France:

These vile disputes, the plague of kingdoms,  
 Have for too long destroyed the universe  
 And hauled a horrifying harvest  
 Of thousands of corpses of heroes.  
 Stop, plagued Batavian,  
 Stop, clever Englishman  
 The time has come to plant the  
 Peace flag.  
 [...]
 This is the right time  
 To shake hands as brothers,  
 With your good old neighbour, the honest Frank  
 And to live together quietly in peace and harmony.<sup>37</sup>

Against the background of the other commemorative poems, Mauricius' reprimand of the Batavians and English on the one hand and his friendly words towards the French on the other, are remarkable. Perhaps these lines refer

36 Kornee van der Haven, "‘Een spiegel aller grooten’. Theater als deugdenspiegel voor Utrechtse regenten (1711–1728)’, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (2005): 55–76; Onnekink and De Bruin, *De vrede van Utrecht*, 91.

37 'Het vinnig landkrakeel, die pest der koninkryken, / Heeft lang genoeg 't Heelal verwoest, En eenen ysselyken oest / Gemaaid van duizenden heldenlyken. Hou op, gesarde Batavier, Hou op, doorluchtige Englander, / 't Is tyd, 't is tyd den vredestander / Te planten [...] 't Is tyd om eens ter goeder uur / Den braven Frank, uw' vriend en ouden nagebuur / De broederlyke hand te geven, / En rustiglyk in min en Eendragt t'saam te leeven'. Jan Jacob Mauricius, *Europa verkwikt op 't gezicht der vrede* (Amsterdam: Hendrik van de Gaete, 1713), 13.

to the pro-French attitude of the States of Utrecht; choosing this city as the place for the negotiations may have been a gesture towards the French king Louis XIV.<sup>38</sup>

The other play, written by Enoch Krook, is more in line with the other texts. Krook was an actor and a successful playwright in the Amsterdam theatre, who wrote three plays about important events during the war, namely the battles at Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706) and Oudenaarde (1708) and the siege of Lille (1708). He wrote his play on the Peace of Utrecht as a charity project: the proceeds were to be given to an orphanage and a home for the elderly in Amsterdam.

A central role is played by the allegorical figure of Politics ('Staatkunde'), who manages to convince all European nations, even the French king, to make peace. She has to overcome the evil forces of War, Envy, and Anger, and finally manages to get all the European nations gathered in Utrecht to negotiate peace. At first some nations have their reservations, but in the end they come to an agreement. All European nations join forces to capture Dispute while Friendship joyfully announces that trade and prosperity will flourish again. Then the allegorical figure of 'Harmony' enters the scene and claims that the Golden Age will be restored. She sketches a beautiful pastoral scene, where cows roam freely and butter and cheese are abundant. This all seems typically Dutch and recalls the pastoral play which the Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel created to celebrate the Peace of Münster sixty-five years earlier. So, although Krook's play is about the stability of Europe, he ends with a typically Dutch scene that symbolises the restoration of a Golden Age in the Dutch Republic.

Krook depicts the larger European community as a union that needs to protect its internal stability.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, Europe is represented by different

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38 M. van der Bijl, 'Utrechts weerstand tegen de oorlogspolitiek tijdens de Spaanse Successieoorlog. De rol van de heer van Welland van 1672 tot 1708,' in *Van Standen tot Staten. 600 Jaar Staten van Utrecht, 1375–1975*, ed. H.L.Ph. Leeuwen and L. van Tongerloo (Utrecht: Stichting Stichtse Historische Reeks, 1975), 135–199; Onnekink, 'The Treaty of Utrecht,' 62.

39 The concept of Europe as a Christian union (*pax christiana*), united in its fight against the pagan Ottoman Empire, plays a dominant role in the poems written on the occasion of the Peace of Rijswijk (1697). This argument seems to have been replaced by a vocabulary which circles around the idea of a balance of power. See for changing concepts of Europe around 1700: Burke, 'Did Europe exist before 1700,' 27, Duchhardt, 'Europa,' and Winfried Schulze, 'Europa in der frühen Neuzeit—Begriffsgeschichtliche Befunde,' in: *Europäische Geschichte als historiographisches Problem*, ed. H. Duchhardt and Andreas Kunz (Mainz: von Zabern, 1997), 35–65.

allegorical figures (rivers such as the Seine, Thames and Rhine), each defending its own, particular interest. In the end, however, the main characters,—the Rhine, Meuse, Thames, and Seine—agree that peace is the best solution for all of them. The Dutch Republic is completely left out of these discussions and does not play any role of significance. Despite the idealistic Dutch pastoral scene in the play, it also seems to have been coloured by reality. Although the Dutch managed to fulfil their most important wish, namely to restrict French power, in the end the results were disappointing. The Dutch negotiators had little influence on the actual outcome and were completely outweighed by the other European negotiators. The Treaty of Utrecht would also mark the end of the Dutch Republic as a major European power.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

The poetry and theatre plays written on the occasion of the Utrecht peace treaty can be used as a source to shed new light on the discussion about the rise of national thought in the early modern period. Through poetical language, authors expressed their ties to the Dutch Republic, often claiming the superiority of the nation. To see how this ‘national thought’ was articulated, it is, however, necessary to also take into consideration the levels below and above the nation: the national perspective was shaped in dialogue with the regional and European levels. For an author like Halma, the national level for instance was secondary to his provincial commitment: the welfare of the Frisian region was his main concern. Others singled out the Dutch Republic as the best part of Europe and emphasised the laudable contribution of their nation to the peace negotiations. From a Protestant perspective, it was argued that the Dutch were God’s chosen people, who, in spite of difficult times, would one day be rewarded for their perseverance. This argumentation made sense only by implying that the other European nations—especially the French—were inferior to the Dutch.

However, authors had their own particular way of conceptualising ‘Dutchness’ within the larger European framework: the fact that they expressed feelings of national unity did not imply that their views were homogenous. Quite the contrary, their writings reflect religious differences and internal

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40 Onnekink and De Bruin, *De Vrede van Utrecht*, 74–75; Onnekink, ‘The treaty of Utrecht 1713,’ 62.

political struggles.<sup>41</sup> We see how political differences seeped through. De Bye for instance used the Batavian myth as a point of reference without any references to the stadtholders of the past. Others looked for bravery in Orangist spheres by pointing toward the achievements of William III. The most explicit Orangist statement was made by Halma, who projected all his hopes on the Frisian stadtholder William. Less political were the writings of Mauricius, Krook and Spinniker. They refrained from such political statements and considered the benefits of the peace for Europe as a whole. Spinniker's European 'imagined community' was—in contrast with most other writings—based on religious tolerance: in the end, all (Christian) inhabitants of Europe were bound together in one 'heavenly kingdom of peace.'

Finally, the question might be asked whether these 'imagined communities' existed beyond the realm of the text and to what extent they appealed to a broader audience. Were these ideas restricted to the elite, or did they reflect broader tendencies in society as well? What connections can be made between the topical character of these texts and actual, historical developments? Studying commemorative writings, including poetry, in combination with other sources from transnational and transcultural perspectives may deepen our understanding of the historical grounding of different imagined communities.

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41 Cf. Smith's observations on the roots of nationalism in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, in: Anthony D. Smith, 'Nationalism in early modern Europe,' *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 405–415, 411.